

Corporate Parenting Board

21 July 2016

Report title	Children and Young People's Participation Strategy	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Children and Young People	
Originating service	Children and Young People	
Accountable employee(s)	Alice Vickers Tel Email	Corporate Parenting Officer 01902 553005 Alice.Vickers@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Corporate Parenting Board Cabinet	20 June 2016 28 June 2016 21 July 2016 14 September 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2016-2019 in readiness for Cabinet in September 2016.
2. Endorse the Council's commitment to children and young people having influence over decisions and actions on services that affect them.

Cabinet Meeting

14 September 2016

Report title	Children and Young People's Participation Strategy	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett	
Originating service	Children and Young People	
Accountable employee(s)	Alice Vickers Tel Email	Corporate Parenting Officer 01902 553005 Alice.Vickers@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Corporate Parenting Board	20 June 2016 28 June 2016 21 July 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

3. Approve the three year Participation Strategy
4. Endorse the Council's commitment to children and young people having influence over decisions and actions on services that affect them.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the City of Wolverhampton Council commitment to the importance of effective participation of children and young people in the services that affect them.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 52 standards that set out the Rights of a Child. Most countries including the United Kingdom have signed up to the convention. Many countries use the standards wholly or in part to promote children and young people's involvement. The standards of most relevance to the participation of service users are:

Article 12: Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children and young people have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.

Article 17: Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information.

Article 23: Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their community.

Article 2: Requires all of the rights in the convention on the Rights of the Child to be implemented for every child, without discrimination.

- 2.2 The City of Wolverhampton Council has a long and impressive history of effective participation of children and young people with the Youth Council (Youth Service) and Children in Care Council (Looked After Children). Both the forums and children and young people's participation is supported by 1.5 Participation Officers based in the COPE team.
- 2.3 The Participation Strategy was developed and designed using workshops with members of the Children in Care Council and the Youth Council during 2015/16. These workshops focused on what good participation means to young people and how they wanted to be engaged in service development and decisions.
- 2.4 The participation workshop group also explored the different forums for young people and how they could share the outcomes of consultation with young people ie: School Councils and vulnerable young peoples' groups. These links have now been strengthened with representation from school councils, Be Safe and voluntary groups sitting on the Youth Council from November 2015.

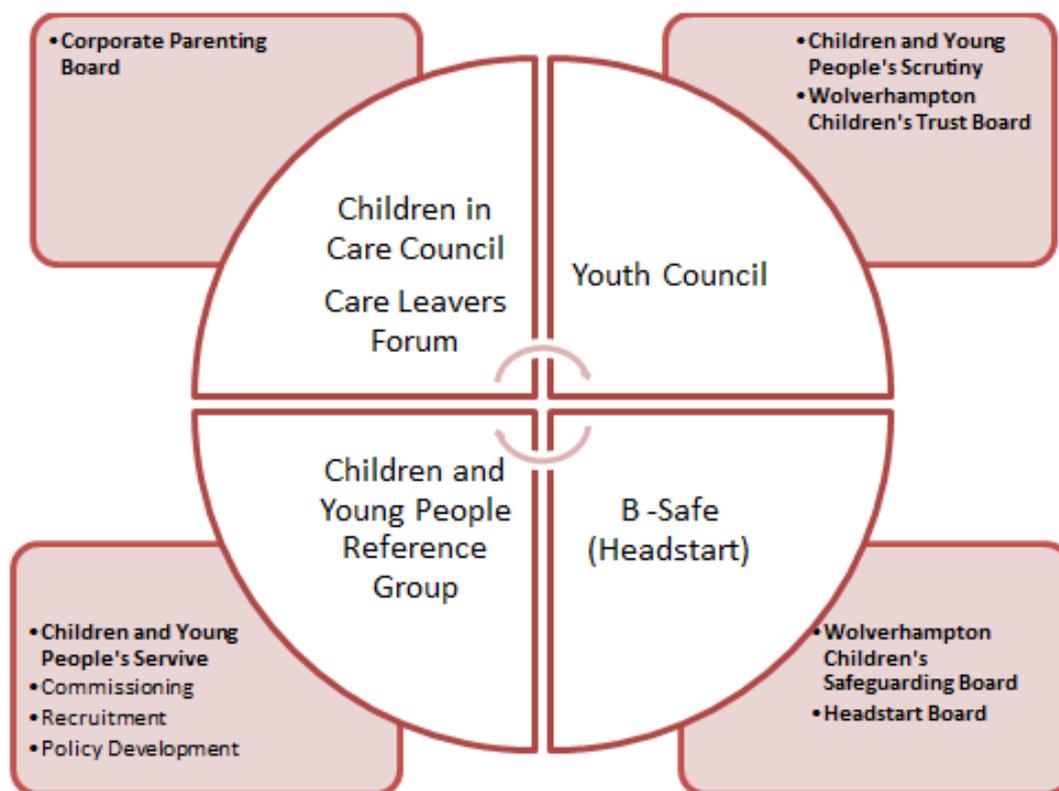
3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

- 3.1 The Participation Strategy sets out clear standards of participation for children and young people to ensure that it is not tokenistic and remains relevant.

These standards are:

- The right to participate or not. If they choose to participate, they have the right to understand their responsibilities.
- Participation should be delivered within Wolverhampton's equality and diversity duty.
- There should be clear evidence of commitment to participation from members of the Children and Young People's Trust Board, Safeguarding Children Board, Council Leaders, City of Wolverhampton Council staff and other relevant organisations.
- Services should agree to the Hear by Right quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people. For example: set out how confidentially and child protection issues will be handled.
- Participation should be embedded in strategic planning, delivery, commissioning, communication, business improvement activities, and recruitment.
- Opportunities and support should be provided so all staff and volunteers can develop the skills and attitudes to work effectively with children and young people.
- Children and young people's involvement should be valued. They should be treated honestly. This means that their expectations are managed and they are helped to understand any practical, legal or political boundaries of their involvement.
- Children and young people's contributions (appropriate to their age and maturity), should be taken seriously and acted upon. There should be regular feedback from children and young people to confirm that this happens.
- Feedback to children and young people on the impact of their involvement should be timely and clear.
- Children and young people should have equal opportunity to get involved. They should not be discriminated against, or prevented from participating effectively, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sexuality, disability, age, ethnic origin, language, where they live, or the location of services.
- Services should proactively target those facing the greatest barriers to getting involved. For example, younger children, children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, children missing school, young people in the youth justice system, refugees, traveller children, disabled and other children with special needs. Services should make sure that children are aware of opportunities to have their say, and encourage them to use them.
- Children and young people are encouraged and supported to develop skills that enable them to contribute effectively, and to realise the benefits of doing so.
- Relevant information should be made available to children and young people. It should be at the right time, in the right format, no jargon, culturally appropriate and accessible. Policies and standards for participation should be provided, evaluated and continuously improved.
- Services should say from the beginning how they will know if they are doing a good job of listening to children and young people.
- Children and young people should be involved in reviewing lessons learned.
- The participation strategy should be considered in partnership contracts and service level agreements with providers, whenever possible.

3.2 Each of the participation groups and forums has direct lines of governance as outlined in the diagram below. This ensures that members and officers are able to support children and young people in having their opinions heard at a corporate and strategic level.



3.3 Once agreement has been granted in adopting the principles laid down in the Participation Strategy, information leaflets will be disseminated to internal and external partners for colleagues to be clear of their role in ensuring the voice of children and young people is represented in their service developments.

3.4 In addition, there will be a programme of awareness raising for children and young people in the understanding of their role, and the opportunities available to them in engaging in formal participation and consultative groups; through schools, community groups, the voluntary sector and specialist service provisions.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any costs associated with the implementation of the Strategy will be funded from existing budgets.
[AS/08062016/P]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications.
[Legal Code: TS/06072016/P]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 An equalities analysis is being undertaken, in partnership with the Equalities and Diversities Team. As the work that underpins this strategy is to overcome any inequality, the analysis is aspirational and will need to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 Children and Young Peoples Participation Strategy 2016 -2019

Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2016- 2019



Our vision

In Wolverhampton we want children and young people to participate in the broadest sense of the word in issues, services and decisions that affect them.

The City of Wolverhampton Council wants to ensure young people are engaged, informed, consulted and initiated discussions about all aspects of the council.

We want the children and young people of Wolverhampton to:

- be involved in designing services of the future
- contribute to and benefit from involvement in their local communities
- feel that they are being heard and valued
- be able to make a difference
- Improve education and skills through participation opportunities

In Wolverhampton, this is what we mean when we talk about 'participation'.

How we will achieve our vision

Using the above Vision as the action points, monitoring and SMART planning will be used to continuously monitor the effectiveness of participation of children and young people in the design and development of services. This will include the Youth Council and Children in Care Council and other Sub groups. School Councils and voluntary groups (who support the most vulnerable of our children and young people) will be actively encouraged to participate in the Youth Council as well as.

Children and Young People will be supported and educated in their roles and responsibilities in being effective and representative of the community they represent.

Children and Young People will be involved in the recruitment and selection processes of relevant staff and train and develop staff in areas of corporate interest in relation to the needs of Children and Young People.

The Children and Young People will develop ways of engaging other Children and Young People to have their voice heard in arenas where their knowledge and experience can influence decision makers.

The City of Wolverhampton Council will publicise the work of Youth Council and communicate with young people in Wolverhampton by utilising social media.

The Children and Young People will be consulted on Policy and Strategy developments from the Children and Young People's Service as standard practice.

The Children and Young people's Participation Action plan will accompany this strategy and reviewed annually.

What does good participation look like?

Participation is not just "taking part" or "being present" but having influence over decisions and actions. Children and young people should be involved in the whole process of deciding the best services for all.

Children and young people having a say in decisions about their own lives.

Services are developed and improved, based on information we get from children and young people.

Why is this important?

There is evidence that everyone benefits from involving children and young people in decision making

- Children and young people
- Organisations
- The wider community

There are also laws and policies which ensure children and young people are involved in decision making.

Who will make sure all this is happening?

The Participation Team will be working with groups of children and young people and supporting them to have their voices heard.

Their work will be monitored and evaluated by the young people, The Children's Trust Board, Wolverhampton's Children and Young People Scrutiny Board and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Standards

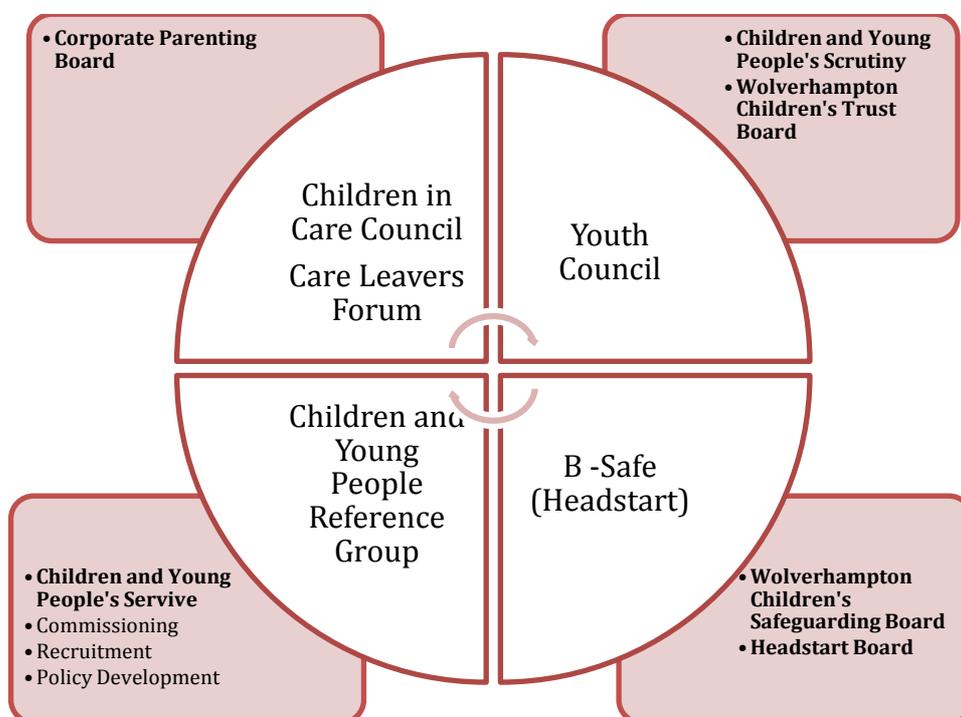
Children and young people have the right to participate or not. If they choose to participate, they have the right to understand their responsibilities.

- Participation should be delivered within Wolverhampton's equality and diversity policies or structures.

- There should be clear evidence of commitment to participation from members of the Children and Young People's Trust, Safeguarding Children Board, council leaders, City of Wolverhampton Council staff and other relevant organisations.
- Services should agree to the Hear by Right quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people.
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Wolverhampton's Participation Network



The Groups

- **Wolverhampton's Youth Council**

The Youth Council is made up of young people elected by their school, community group or specialist service to contribute to the City Council's development of services that effect young people for example community engagement, health and wellbeing, children and young people and city developments. This is achieved by the inclusion of the group in the Council's scrutiny away days, two seats on the children and young people's scrutiny panel and community cohesion board.

The group meets as a whole monthly, but also meets in task groups focusing on specific issues as highlighted by their agenda or that of the councils. Workshops and training is completed with the group to ensure that the young people are well supported and skilled in tasks required of them. This group also engages in the national youth forums – two youth MPs and two Youth

Crime Commissioners are elected through the group. The group holds an AGM and shares its annual reports with Council Leaders.

- **Wolverhampton's Children in Care Council**

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is made of young people aged 11-18 who are in care of the City Council, some living with foster carers, residential homes, friends and family carers and some living independently. These young people are nominated to become members by their social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO), foster carers or other professionals who feel that young people would benefit from the skills acquired as part of the council. CiCC is a statutory requirement as laid down by the Care Matters white paper 2007.

This group meets monthly and is incentivised by 3 monthly group activities. The young people completed induction training; interview training and some will complete the Total Respect Training. In addition to the group meeting they meet twice a year with the Corporate parenting Board. The CiCC work plan includes all of the reports sent to this board. This process is to ensure the experiences and opinions of the young people are imbedded into service delivery and development. This group attends national forums through the National Children's Board (NCB) which advises on national policy.

- **Wolverhampton's Care Leavers Forum**

The Care Leavers Forum (CLF) is made up of young people who are supported by the council leaving care team known as the Transitions Team, these young people are 18 -25 (depending on their educational status) and are either living independently, living with a host or staying put with foster carers. They are recruited to the forum through advertisements on Facebook, through their Young Person's Advisors (YPA) or social worker.

The group meets monthly and has its meeting combined with a peer support element as these young people can be very isolated. The formal part of the meeting is for an hour and half where they look at policy developments and service provision and give feedback to officers. This group also takes part in the national benchmarking forum which feeds into national policy development for Care Leavers.

- **Wolverhampton's B-safe Team**

The B-Safe Team is Wolverhampton's Junior Safeguarding Children Board, made up of local young people who get involved with safeguarding activities and decisions across the city.

The board enables the voice of Wolverhampton's young people to be heard and reflected in safeguarding business and activities, empowering young people to contribute to the processes and methods to keep them safe, and to increase awareness of safeguarding amongst parents and professionals.

- **Wolverhampton's Young People's reference Group**

This group is made up of young people from all of the above groups/forums. They complete interviews for new staff within the council and with its partners, attend focus groups for consultation, deliver training and other bespoke opportunities.

Depending on the commissioning, policy development or requirement of young people's view being consulted on, the young people are nominated through their group to participate. It may be that due to their availability, area of special interest, individual experience and skills required that they are nominated to participate.

Principles of the Engagement Framework

- Young People should be the prime designers of the Participation Strategy.
- The City of Wolverhampton Council's Cabinet Boards and Scrutiny Panels may work directly with the Youth Council.
- Provide a way for all children, young people and families in Wolverhampton to have a voice, to be heard by key decision makers and get as involved as they want to in shaping what happens to them.
- Develop a way of making sure that children, young people and families can check whether their voice is being acted upon or not.
- Provide support to children, young people and families to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to participate.
- Ensure that practitioners working with children, young people and families have the skills and knowledge to involve them effectively.
- Evidence systematically that what children and young people tell us actually influences design and delivery, and improves outcomes
- Provide opportunities for ALL children, young people and families to contribute and challenge where there are gaps in provision.

Benefits of participation

Consideration should be made in evaluating the need for:

- Rewards for involvement
- Accreditation of involvement
- Training for involvement
- Young people 'peer mentoring' children
- Partnership board members mentoring Young People's Council members

Opportunities for children and young people include:

- Personal development
- Self confidence
- Influence decisions which affect their lives
- Develop social network
- Feel valued and empowered
- Better understanding of how organisations work and make decisions
- Involvement in commissioning services and recruiting staff
- Helping to monitor and evaluate services ('young inspectors')

Opportunities for organisations

- Services increasingly responsive to children and young people's needs and concerns
- Fresh perspectives and new ideas on services, policies and democratic processes
- Services and policies designed for actual rather than presumed needs
- Become more accessible to children and young people
- Become more efficient, as they provide a more effective service for children and young people
- Decision making improves and becomes more accountable
- Raises aspirations for all

Opportunities for the wider community

- More vibrant local democracy
- Community cohesion
- An empowering environment
- Opportunities for increased political awareness and fair representation
- More children and young people involved in the democratic process.
- Children and young people have a greater opportunity to influence decisions.
- Children and young people will be more able to scrutinise political decisions that affect their lives.

Review

This is a 3 year strategy for the council, to ensure its relevance, to monitor progress and influence the participation action plan, an annual review will consult with all relevant staff, partners and young people.