

CYP Involvement in Services Report

Report of the Head of Commissioning, Children's Services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The involvement of Children, young people and families in the co-design of services is a commitment and value of the Devon Children and Families Partnership.
- 1.2 A group of children called "Champions for Change" have designed a standard that has been adopted. This calls for us all to Listen, Hear and Understand.
- 1.3 Recent inspection outcomes (SEND, focused visits, peer reviews) and our own review tells us that participation and engagement currently happens across the partnership and children's services in pockets well, but this is not systematic, routine or embedded.
- 1.4 We have recently agreed significant increase in LA and partnership resources to the participation team to grow the capacity for this work as it is an area of substantial improvement for the year ahead.
- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to provide Children's Scrutiny Committee Members with an overview of the activities that promote the involvement, engagement and participation of children and young people and plans for improvement.

2. Link to relevant inspection criteria

- 2.1. The work detailed in this report is relevant to the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework section 1.04, which looks at *"the local authority's arrangements to gather feedback from children and their families, complaints and serious case reviews and what the local authority has done in response to improve practice"*
- 2.2. Ofsted and CQC jointly inspect local areas to see how well they fulfil their responsibilities for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).


In reaching their judgement, inspectors will give attention to a range of indicators and outcomes includes *"how well the local area engages with children and young people, and their parents and carers, to inform decisions about the strategic commissioning of services (joint strategic needs assessment)."*

3. Defining and assessing "Good"

- 3.1 There are several nationally developed models and frameworks that could be applied to this area. Hear by Right, is a nationally recognised and validated system and is similar in its approach to [the LILAC standards](#) (for assessing and progressing the participation of Children in Care) which Devon has previously engaged with.

- 3.2 [Hear by Right](#) is an organisational development tool built on a framework of seven standards with 20 indicators that describe best practice, supporting organisations to plan, develop and evaluate their participation practices and provision.
- 3.3 This tool was established over 10 years ago and was created with and for young people to support organisations within the youth sector to transform more young people's lives by developing their voice, influence and place within society. It is hosted and facilitated by the National Youth Agency.
- 3.4 At Appendix One we have set out the health check of our current activity against Hear By Rights and actions. Scrutiny may want to consider tracking the progress against these standards at future meetings.
- 3.5 Below are areas of participation and engagement currently underway and how these will be developed.

4. Childrens involvement in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services

- 4.1 As part of DCC's SEND Strategy, we support young people with SEND to be part of a young person's participation group, "[Champions for Change](#)".  The logo for Champions for Change features three stylized human figures in orange, yellow, and green, with the text 'Champions for Change' below them.
- 4.2 Recently the Champions for Change launched a campaign called Listen Hear and Understand. Aimed at children and young people, as well as professionals and services, [the film](#) helps children and young people with additional needs understand their rights, to have a voice and to be heard.
- 4.3 Our ongoing support and commitment to Champions for Change, and the drive to ensure that this work continues to be developed so that more children and young people can be involved is outlined in the [SEND Written Statement of Action](#).

5. Parents' involvement in Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

- 5.1 Parents and carers in Devon are engaged through Devon Parent Carer Forum, which is hosted by Devon Communities Together. Contact, which is a National organisation, provides support and challenge to the local Forum.
- 5.2 The forum is a group of parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Their aim is to make sure the services in their area meet the needs of these children and their families. The parent carer forum is not about providing individual support; it is there to enable parents to shape services.
- 5.3 We also support a [Local Offer Reference Group](#). The SEND Local Offer Reference Group (LORG) is made up of parent carers who work with us to improve things for children and young people with SEND and their families. The LORG meets every half term and contributes to the review and development of the SEND Local Offer, undertaking a mixture of practical activities and more formal meetings.
- 5.4 Parent Carer representatives from the LORG regularly attend the SEND Improvement Board to ensure parent carers' voices and experiences are considered when decisions are made. They are valued and their opinions are taken seriously. Actions resulting from their work and involvement are then delivered through the Improvement Board sub-groups.
- 5.5 Examples of the work recently undertaken by the LORG includes;

- Changes to the Education, Health and Care Plan format and communications from SEN 0 - 25 Team so that parent carers are better informed and communicated with during the EHCP process,
- Changes to the SEND Local Offer webpages so that parent carers find the information they need to help support their child or young person,
- Development of SEND e-learning so that the training content incorporates the things parents feel are priorities for workers to know and understand.

5.6 The LORG were engaged as a key stakeholder group in the development of our Written Statement of Action. Detailed discussions around the draft plan were facilitated with parent carers that covered the actions identified, the outcomes we were looking for and the timescales we would work to.

5.7 These groups have a small number of very committed parents who work closely with us to improve services. The Written Statement of Action sets out how we will significantly increase our reach and how parent led forums will be supported and developed to engage more parents. As an example of recent progress, 350 parents have come forward expressing an interest in working with us on designing future services.

5.8 Parents are supported by Devon Independent Advice Service (DIAS). DIAS provide free, impartial, confidential and accurate information, advice and support about education, health and social care for children, young people and their parents on all matters relating to SEND. This helps to promote independence and self-advocacy for children, young people and parents.



6. Children Looked After and Care Leavers

6.1 [Stand Up Speak Up](#) (SUSU) is the name chosen by children in care for Devon's Children in Care Council.



6.1.1 SUSU gives young people an opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions on the help and support they get from the Local Authority, and to provide their views and input into the work of Children's Social Care as experts by experience.

6.1.2 Members of SUSU help organise local campaigns and activities for those in care and care leavers. They help and advise the local authority on issues that affect young people in care, and they keep their members up to date on changes that are being made to improve the support received.


6.1.3 Awareness of SUSU and levels of engagement have declined over the past 18 months. We have listened to young people and reviewed national best practice and we will have a redesigned and refocused SUSU being delivered across localities from the Autumn 2019.

6.1.4 We will ensure that this work dovetails and informs the work of Corporate Parenting Members Group, and that we support and facilitate increased opportunities for children and decision makers to meet. Additional work planned is to pilot new innovations using online tools to reach a wider audience of young people (including a refresh of the SUSU website), to review "The Pledge" and to consult with young people on different models for membership of the Children in Care Council.

6.2 Care Leaver Forum

- 6.2.1 The Ofsted Focused visit to Devon County Council children's services that took place in September 2018 reported that "while some care leavers are aware of the Children in Care Council, most do not feel engaged in the matters discussed or outcomes from council meetings."
- 6.2.2 Mark Riddell the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers within the DfE carried out a 3 day visit to Devon from 5th to 7th February 2019. He offered suggestions to further strengthen practice and recommendations.
- 6.2.3 For example, the development of a Care Leaver Forum. There is currently one Care Leaver Forum established (North Devon), and work will be undertaken to establish these spaces in other localities across Devon during Q3 2019.
- 6.2.4 To further develop this work, we are currently researching and consulting on the prospect of creating "Care Leaver Ambassador" roles". The ambition is that these ring-fenced apprenticeships are created to provide additional work and learning opportunities for some of our care experienced young people whilst also further strengthening and adding credibility and authenticity to our participation and engagement work. This work is being developed in partnership with Step Forward colleagues.

6.3 Bright Spots

- 6.3.1 This research is part of the Bright Spots programme: a partnership between the University of Bristol and Coram Voice, with the aim to:
- improve the care experience for all looked after children and care leavers;
 - give young people a voice on their own well-being; and
 - highlight the 'Bright Spots' of practice that contribute to children flourishing in and after care.
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- 6.3.2 We have participated in both the "Your Life, Your Care" surveys for children and young people in care (4-18yrs) and the "Your Life Beyond Care" survey for care leavers.
- 6.3.3 The survey identifies the areas where children in care / care leavers are doing well and where things could be improved, providing an insight into young people's experience and well-being to inform service improvements.
- 6.3.4 We are currently disseminating and consulting on the feedback received from the care leavers survey and will be co-producing actions to progress with young people during National Care Leavers Week (October). Key findings from this survey include:
- A significant proportion of care leavers feel involved in the production of their pathway plans, which was recognised as a Bright Spot of practice,
 - 100% of care leavers in "Staying Put" arrangements report satisfaction with these arrangements in relation to safety and stability,
 - The importance of the quality of relationship between young person and Leaving Care worker / P.A was highlighted as an area of high satisfaction and positive feedback,
 - A quarter (26%) didn't know why they had been in care or wanted to know more about their care history,
 - 53% of care leavers reported that they "felt settled where they lived"
 - 26% of care leavers young people identified with two or more of the following well-being indicators and are considered to have "low well-being":

- “Always feeling lonely, having no-one to trust, no-one who believed in them”
- “Not ‘always’ safe or settled at home, struggling financially”
- “Disliking appearance”
- “Not knowing why you were in care”
- “Little or no involvement in Pathway Plan”
- “No goals and plans for the future”

7. Mind Of My Own - digital participation tools

7.1 [Mind Of My Own](#) helps children and young people express themselves and communicate with professionals in their lives making sure each and every one is heard.



7.2 These two award-winning apps (One and Express) have been co-produced with children and young people to ensure they are understood by them and activate their participation.

7.3 Uptake of these tools is promoted by the Participation Team, and regular monitoring is reported to the Quality Assurance Quarterly Review Group.

7.4 There is a Steering Group that supports the development of this work across Children’s Social Care, with aim to fully embed the use of these tools within Child in Need and Child Protection processes (in addition to existing use within Child in Care Reviews) as a way of further strengthening and evidencing the voice of the child in these areas of practice.

8. Advocacy Services

8.1 It is very important for children and young people to be supported by Advocacy services when receiving Childrens Social Work services. This offers them a voice to influence the plan for them and their family when they may not feel able to express their views themselves.

8.2 Of the children and young people aged 11 years and under who provided feedback this year having accessed the issue-based advocacy service:

- ✓ 100% were happy with the help they had received from their advocate and felt they received the help they wanted from their advocate.
- ✓ 97% identified during planning for the future they get a chance to let adults know their views, wishes and feelings.

“I was so glad it was the same advocate, you have supported me in care and on a CP plan you understand what has happened and why?”

8.3 Of the children and young people aged 12 years and over who provided feedback this year having accessed the issue-based advocacy service:

- ✓ 100% agreed or strongly agreed they had been happy with the service they had from their advocate and that they got the help they wanted from their advocate.
- ✓ 92% agreed or strongly agreed they knew what their rights are, 91% knew what was happening to them and 97% agreed or strongly agreed they knew how to get help.
- ✓ 94% agreed or strongly agreed that ensuring planning for their future they had the opportunity to express their views, wishes and feelings.

“I am glad I was listened too, and changes were made to the plan to reflect that. Thank you for being the person who fed back to me as it helped me to understand.”

9. Young Carers

- 9.1 Young Carers service delivered by '[Devon Carers](#)' facilitates a Young Carers Council. The Young Carers Council is run as activity groups in each locality and supports young people aged between 10-24.
- 9.2 The report to Scrutiny "Young Carers and Young Carers Support Services" provides information about the delivery of the Young Carers Council and details recent activity to increase engagement and involvement of children and young people. This Council will be further developed to also increase the reach to more vulnerable young people.

10. Children young people and family's engagement in the commissioning and development of services

- 9.1 Routine engagement of children and families in the commissioning and development of services is in place.
- 9.2 All providers are expected to engage children receiving services in service development. This is monitored through routine contract monitoring.
- 9.3 When a service is re-tendered families are consulted with as part of that process and involved in the design of services.
- 9.4 Young people were recently consulted via focus groups and online engagement (led by Devon's Youth Parliament) across the county to help formulate the service specification and questions for the recommissioning of Devon's Youth Service.
- 9.5 Current work is being progressed to engage with families about the provision of Short-breaks for disabled children.
- 9.6 Due to the reduced capacity of the Children in Care Council it has not been possible for Children and young peoples views to be fully considered when recently re-commissioning placement services. This is an area for development, as outlined in the Sufficiency Strategy and will be completed ahead of the re-refresh later this autumn.

10 Summary

- 10.1 There are already many of the structures, strategies and shared values in place for this work to develop in a meaningful and successful way. Senior managers and leaders are continually supportive of participation initiatives and challenging where the views and voice of the child are not central to decision making.
- 10.2 We have provided a range of examples of the ways that children and young people and families are currently involved in participation activities, including engagement in focus groups, recruitment of staff, and training of staff.
- 10.3 The increased capacity of the Participation Team and the support from Children's Services Leadership Team and DCFP will enable us to embed our locality-based approach, which will enable us to reach an increased number of young people and from a wider demographic, and we will co-produce a range of spaces and structures that support participation of children and young people.

10.4 Where this initial self-assessment has identified gaps or areas of development, some of this work is already planned and underway (e.g. as per SEND Written Statement of Action). Further involvement in the Hear by Right programme to support us to assess our position and to identify, plan and undertake the actions required so that we are confident in our accomplishment of all the indicators set out in the framework.

Fiona Fleming
Head of Commissioning, Children's Services

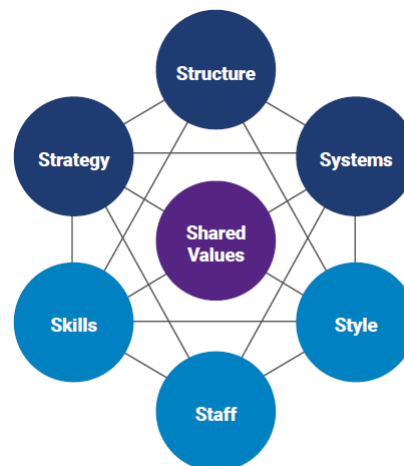
Appendix One

Framework for recording areas of CYP involvement

There are different models and frameworks that could be applied to this work. The chosen tool, Hear by Right, is a nationally recognised and validated system and is similar in its approach to [the LILAC standards](#) (for assessing and progressing the participation of Children in Care) which Devon has previously engaged with.

[Hear by Right](#) is an organisational development tool built on a framework of seven standards with 20 indicators that describe best practice, supporting organisations to plan, develop and evaluate their participation practices and provision.

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Current evidence of CYP involvement and proposed work to strengthen or improve practice

Shared Values	Existing	Proposed
1.1 We have a central commitment to participation	<p>DCFP Children & Young People's Plan 2019-2022 describes "How we work" in a way that "Listen, hear and understand".</p> <p>Devon County Council "Better Together 2014-2020" sets out our aims include to work in a way that is "Collaborative", "Designing and producing services with people that use them"</p>	
1.2 We show clearly our shared values on participation	<p>DCFP Children & Young People's Plan 2019-2022 sets out "Our Core Values" which includes "Engagement" and "Partnership".</p> <p>Our Pledge to children and young people in care outlines a list of commitments made, with clear values of involvement and participation.</p> <p>Our Local Offer to Care Leavers includes our commitments under the heading of "Participation".</p>	<p>Our Pledge will be reviewed, refreshed and re-launched through Children in Care Council workshops across Devon.</p> <p>Our Local Offer to Care Leavers is currently being reviewed and will be scheduled for annual review through Care Leaver Forums.</p>

Shared Values	Existing	Proposed
1.3 We recognise and promote Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	There has been previous work to promote this, with an art project undertaken and posters produced which confirm our recognition and commitment to Article 12.	Focused promotion (internally and externally) of Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child during 2019, to celebrate 30 years of the UNCRC and re-affirm our commitments.
Strategies		
2.1 We have undertaken an audit of our resources that support participation		Sign up to Hear by Right and undertake full audit as part of this assessment.
2.2 We have a strategic plan for participation	<p>Devon County Council’s “Engaging Devon” provides the strategic framework and commitments to working in a way that is participative.</p> <p>Within Children’s Services there are area specific participation and engagement plans, such as “SEND Participation & Engagement Strategy”.</p>	Production of a DCFP Participation & Engagement Strategy, which sets out our plans and approach for the next 24 months and is aligned to the DCFP CYP Plan.
Structures		
3.1 Young people tell us how they want to participate		<p>CYP involvement in the production of Participation & Engagement Strategy to determine the different ways that young people can participate.</p> <p>Improved processes for finding out individual preferences of children in care and care leavers, including young person designed process for those entering care to be engaged and informed.</p>
3.2 We have lots of different ways for young people to participate	<p>We have several different ways for young people to participate, dependant on individual circumstances. These include:</p> <p>Children in Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand Up Speak Up (Children in Care Council), • Mind Of My Own, • Advocacy service, • Bright Spots and other surveys, • Social Media, • Focus groups 	<p>Within existing structures there is need to develop and improve our reach to more children and young people. Investment into the Participation Team has enabled us to recruit additional colleagues and to build on previous practice whilst establishing locality-based delivery.</p> <p>There are also areas of practice where participation is less established, and a Participation & Engagement Strategy will identify</p>

Shared Values	Existing	Proposed
	<p>Care Leavers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care Leaver Group / Forums <p>Children with SEND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions for Change group / network <p>All young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Parliament 	<p>these and outline plans to develop additional opportunities for participation of children and young people.</p>
<p>3.3 We make sure lots of different young people are included in participation</p>		<p>Increasing our reach is a key priority for the next 12 months.</p> <p>Establish baseline and Key Performance Indicators for levels of reach and engagement.</p> <p>Locality-based working and improved with partnership with stakeholders (internal and external) will provide us with opportunities to reach a wider pool of young people. Actions to achieve this will be set and monitored as soon as team members are recruited.</p>
Systems		
<p>4.1 We have a range of policies in place to support participation</p>		<p>Sign up to Hear by Right and undertake full audit of policies as part of this assessment.</p>
<p>4.2 We have budgets and finance systems in place to support participation</p>	<p>There is a fully resourced Participation Team within Children’s Services, with budget for associated costs. This includes a short term contribution from the DCF Partnership. Sustainability for longer term investment in this will need to be secured.</p>	<p>All service budgets include costs associated with participation.</p> <p>Training and development needs across services are yet to be identified to ensure that participation, engagement and co-design are routine.</p>
<p>4.3 We record and promote ‘what’s changed’ because of participation</p>	<p>The Children and Young Peoples Plan priorities were developed from the engagement messages from children and families. This sets the priorities for the partnership for the next three years.</p>	<p>Develop and embed mechanisms to close the feedback loop (e.g. “You Said, We Did”) and systems for ensuring these are consistently completed.</p> <p>Define and record team “impact measures”, with quarterly report.</p>

Shared Values	Existing	Proposed
Staff		
5.1 Job descriptions of key staff include skills and commitment to participation	This is current practice and is well embedded into job descriptions within Children's Social Care.	Sign up to Hear by Right and undertake full audit of job descriptions from across wider Children's Services as part of this assessment. Evidence through workforce development of that changing practice.
5.2 Young people participate in the recruitment and induction of key staff	<p>We are currently supporting a pool of young people who have participated in training so that they can input into the recruitment decisions for appointments in services for children in care / care leavers.</p> <p>Recent activity has included recruitment for CIC Health Nurses, Social Work Academy placements and O.U Social Work placements, and feedback from all involved has been consistently positive.</p>	There is a Participation Team handbook which outlines our approach to involving children and young people in recruitment. This will be developed to ensure consistent principles are applied in all relevant recruitment activity and will be supported by a toolkit.
Skills & Knowledge		
6.1 Young people receive participation training	<p>Champions for Change training delivered by Participation Worker.</p> <p>Members of Youth Parliament supported to attend external training.</p> <p>Existing practice in this area is inconsistent with areas of good practice</p>	<p>Co-production of training model and content with children and young people.</p> <p>Ensure that all young people can access appropriate participation training, including those who are not already engaged in our participation structures (e.g. children in care who are not already attending SUSU).</p>
6.2 Staff receive participation training	<p>Children and young people are involved in the training programme for:</p> <p>Student Social Workers Newly qualified Social Workers Newly appointed Foster Carers Children in Care Nurse Team</p>	<p>Work with H.R and Social Work Academy to determine scope, gaps and opportunities to deliver staff training.</p> <p>Co-production of training model and content with children and young people.</p>
6.3 Young people have enough information to participate fully		Sign up to Hear by Right and undertake full audit information available to young people, and feedback from young people on accessibility of information as part of this assessment.
Leadership		
7.1 Senior managers and leaders are	There is regular communication and promotion of participation by Children's Services Leadership Team and includes	Members training in becoming champions for participation.

Shared Values	Existing	Proposed
champions for participation	<p>Member champions via Corporate Parenting Members Group.</p> <p>Children's Scrutiny Committee also fulfil important role in the championing and challenging the service to demonstrate and evidence participation of children and young people.</p>	<p>Cascade training and workshops for all manager across Childrens Services in increasing participation of children as routine to service delivery and development.</p>
7.2 Senior managers and leaders support innovation in participation practice		<p>We are focusing on developing our infrastructure and engaging more children and families. Senior managers are encouraging innovation in this through child and family led co-design.</p>
7.3 Senior managers and leaders take an active part in participation events	<p>Senior Managers joined with Parents to review the Written Statement of Action and to co-design the action plan.</p> <p>Senior Managers will attend the Champions for change fun day in September.</p> <p>Children in Care celebration evening attended by Senior Managers and Lead Members including Scrutiny Chair.</p>	<p>As all the above actions are progressed, particularly with the re-established Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forums and expanded Champions for Change network there will be increased opportunities to achieve this.</p> <p>Evidence to be recorded and shared in quarterly report.</p>