



Strategic Engagement: Parent Carers and Young People

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What does success look like?

The engagement and participation of children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and their parent carers is at the heart of current legislation and guidance.

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 sets out that children and young people with SEND should have the opportunity to share their views, wishes and feelings and be supported to participate as fully as possible in decision making.

The requirement for strategic engagement is set out in Section 30 of the Act in expectation that Local Authorities (LAs) will develop their Local Offer and conduct their commissioning processes together with children, young people and parent carers.

In practice, this requires the LA to work across organisational boundaries to include children, young people and their families in planning services and support both for their own needs and in strategic planning and commissioning.

This includes:

- Ensuring that specific work with groups forms part of the wider local engagement strategy for all children and young people and families
- Providing a range of opportunities to accommodate different communication needs and methods
- Being transparent about how information is used and acted upon

Aims

Dudley, Hertfordshire, Kingston and Richmond and Leeds have been working on the strategic engagement of young people and their parent

carers as part of their work as PfA demonstration sites.

Each demonstration site worked with the PfA team to produce a Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes (CMO) map which identified the key aims and outcomes they planned to work towards:

- Ensuring children, young people and their families have an increased and amplified voice and can see the impact of their involvement
- Meaningful and active engagement in coproducing strategic planning and commissioning of services
- Active involvement of children, young people and their families in all partnership work opportunities

Getting started

Each demonstration site identified a number of actions needed to start this work and achieve these aims.

This led to a range of activity across the areas:

- Engagement and liaison with existing groups e.g. Parent Carer Forums and establishing consultation groups of children and young people
- Showcase and promote work on young people's participation locally to encourage support from other organisations
- Identifying staff across services to champion young people's participation.
- Review work to date and use this to produce a strategy for future development

Overcoming the challenges

Each demonstration site had existing work in place to build on and develop. During the

initial planning process, areas identified a number of challenges to be addressed. These challenges related to children and young people's engagement more than that of parent carers. The two main issues were the time and resources needed to integrate children and young people into strategic level discussions and groups in a meaningful and sustainable way, as well as gaining the support needed for this work across teams and organisations.

In order to achieve these aims the Local Authorities (LAs) identified that:

- The engagement of children, young people and parent carers needs to be promoted through strategic boards and by senior leaders across organisations
- Engagement of children and young people with SEND should be part of the wider local strategic engagement plan with sign up from all partner organisations
- Tested and successful work on engagement needs to continue in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach, and to encourage support from teams and organisations
- Staff need to be provided with time and support to build up relationships across teams and organisations to support participation
- More active recruitment and training of children and young people, e.g. as young commissioners, is needed

Making progress

Work in each demonstration site is ongoing, with a strong commitment in place to improving and maintaining practice locally. Outcomes achieved to date include the following:

Dudley has an active Parent Carer Forum (PCF), 'Working Together for Change', which is involved in a range of activities that aim to influence services for young people. They played an integral role in the decision to co-locate the Children with Disabilities Team with the Adults and Transitions Team. Council staff and partners are engaging the PCF in discussions to coproduce service improvements across the board. To support

this, Dudley have worked to develop a map of the strategic involvement of parent carers which can be viewed here: [\[link to PDF\]](#). They also developed 'Chatterbox', a virtual online platform created for staff and volunteers.

Hertfordshire is running a programme with the SEND Commissioning team to train young people aged 16-25 to become Young Commissioners. The programme includes training modules on understanding the commissioning cycle and visits to commissioned services. The Young Commissioners receive a qualification and certificate and they get paid for every hour they work. They have developed a video which showcases some of the training and work that the young people involved have completed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBThHDkEsaA&feature=youtu.be>

Kingston and Richmond has involved members of the 'Young People's Recruits Crew' in recruitment of PfA EHC plan Co-ordinators. In addition, there is increased attendance and involvement of young people in a range of strategic management work, including the Local Offer Development Group, Integrated Service for Children with Disabilities Management Board and Kingston All Age Learning Disability Programme. Young people are trained in interviewing staff and attending team meetings, and they receive vouchers for their time taking part in formal interviews. You can find out more information here: <https://www.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/assessment-and-education-health-and-care-planning>

Leeds is using their 'Child friendly Leeds' strategy to bring together work across the city aimed at creating better outcomes for all children and young people. Engagement is reported periodically to strategic groups and demonstrates the range of work taking place. The following is an example of the clear reporting format and range of activity completed - Voice, Influence and Change (VIC) Children's Trust Board: Complex Needs Report Card (page 20) <http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s152883/Childrens%20scrutiny%20performance%20report%202016-12%20v0.2.pdf>

In addition, Leeds has extended the reach of their Parent Participation forum (EPIC Leeds) to sit on

eight strategic boards, groups and processes across the authority. These include the Children and Families Implementation Board, the Complex Needs Partnership Board and the Short Breaks Steering Group and Commissioning Board.

This strategic engagement is supported by the activities EPIC run to engage with parent carers across Leeds, including a fortnightly soft play session. More information about EPIC can be found here:

<http://www.epicleeds.org.uk>

Portsmouth set up 'Dynamite', a group for young people with SEND which aims to make sure that young people with a disability have a say in how things are run. Dynamite has helped to develop and deliver training for professionals, including a training day for Leonard Cheshire on the theme of listening to young people, which was well received by professionals. Dynamite is also running a new Young Inspector scheme in which young people with a disability visit services and are supported to write reports on their findings.

Tools and resources

Somerset engagement and participation quick read strategy

<http://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/resources/all-resources/somerset-engagement-and-participation-quick-read-strategy>

Embedding inclusive practices in opportunities for youth social action

<http://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/resources/all-resources/embedding-inclusive-practices-in-opportunities-for-youth-social-action>

Best practice examples of young people's participation across health services

<http://preparingforadulthood.org.uk/resources/all-resources/taking-on-the-challenge>