

Meeting: Children and Young People Committee Meeting
Subject: Children's Service Participation & Engagement Strategy
Date of meeting: Monday 9th March 2015
Report of: Executive Director, Children's Services
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Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present a draft Children's Service Participation & Engagement Strategy for approval and to seek agreement to consult with key partners.
- 1.2. To highlight the collaborative approach to developing the strategy as described in paragraph 5.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees to the draft Participation and Engagement Strategy attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees to a final period of consultation with key stakeholders as described in paragraph 5.4.
- 2.3 That the Committee delegates to the Director of Children's Services responsibility for finalising and implementing the strategy through the council's commissioning, business planning and partnership arrangements.

3. Context / Background information

- 3.1 This strategy is determined by the principles and priorities in:
 - The Connected City Strategy to increase equality and improve engagement, especially 'It's a particular character of the city that people and communities expect to be asked their opinions and furthermore that those opinions will be taken into account. In Brighton & Hove the legitimacy and right of communities to be heard is not questioned, but encouraged with time, and resources deployed, to turn those opinions into actions. As a partnership we expect our members to talk to the people they provide services for and to listen and act upon what they say'.
 - The Council's Corporate Plan priorities: Strong Civic Leadership - strengthening our partnership delivery arrangements and building collaborative, trustful and empowering relationships between the council and citizens; and Quality Public Services - a council that understands communities and ensures the right services are provided well, managing rising demand and putting staff, partners and citizens at the heart of delivery. This means: knowing what drives demand for services by engaging with our diverse communities and understanding how effective our services

are in meeting citizen's needs, together with building more collaborative relationships between citizens and the council to empower people to do some things for themselves in partnership with us.

- The Children's Service Directorate Plan particularly ensuring the voice of children, young people and their families is central to our work and demonstrating that we are a child friendly city."

3.2 Effective participation and engagement already underpins the work of the Children's Service, from individual statutory social care, health and education plans, through early help and family plans to the delivery of parenting children's centre activities. The purpose of this strategy is to improve the coordination and consistency of that work so that the voice of children, young people and service users is central to the planning, commissioning and delivery of services by the council and its partners.

3.3 The Children's Service Participation & Engagement Strategy is based on the 7 Standards Model, a nationally used and well recognised framework. These standards and actions are the building blocks for the active involvement of children, young people and families. They are:

1. Shared values – Living Our Values Everyday, collaboration, respect, openness, efficiency, creativity and of course customer and client focus, are at the core of our civic leadership
2. Strategy – commissioning and business plans are simple and understandable with Participation and Engagement clearly evidenced
3. Structure – opportunities to engage and participate are accessible and celebrate involvement
4. Systems – standards and quality assurance for safe and sound practice are in place
5. Staff – we have the right people in place across the organisation, including members and governors; all play an important role in the active involvement of children, young people and their families in decision making. From taking part in recruitment and selection to being employed in the organisation: we all need to champion the benefits.
6. Skills and knowledge - workforce development and training for all (staff including our partners, elected members, young people and parents/carers) to develop the skills and confidence to participate fully.
7. Style of leadership – promoting and embedding participation and engagement in our culture requires strong leadership. Support at senior and executive level is essential to develop structure, systems and resources to maximum impact.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The effective participation and engagement of children and young people in the planning, commissioning and delivery of services that affect their lives is not optional.

- 4.2 This strategy has been developed by a multi-agency, cross sector working group comprising officers from the councils' Children's Service including Youth Work Sure Start , Social Work, the Integrated Disability Service, Education and Inclusion, and Stronger Families Stronger Communities Years; other council staff including Communities and Equalities and Public Health teams; and representatives from the Community and Voluntary Sector.
- 4.3 The working group considered alternative models to support the participation and engagement of young people and their families. But in the context of diminishing resources, supportive city wide strategies and organisational development programmes and current good practice the group concluded the most effective option is the implementation of a standards framework through existing commissioning, business planning and contracting arrangements.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Members of the Brighton & Hove Youth Council formed a Young Persons Participation Strategy Group to complement the working group. Young people reviewed proposals and advised the working group throughout every step of the development of the Participation & Engagement Strategy – using the insight gained from being young 'service users' already involved in participative activities.
- 5.3. The Children's Service Staff Roadshows 2014 provided an opportunity for evidencing good practice of effective and innovative participation and engagement work with children, young people and families which has informed the proposed strategy.
- 5.4. If the Committee approves the draft Participation and Engagement Strategy (Appendix 1) it is proposed to undertake a final phase of consultation with key stakeholders to:
- Agree or amend the framework and
 - Identify success indicators and targets
 - Make arrangements to coordinate, and monitor and report on activity

Because this has already been a collaborative process we envisage a limited discussion with:

- Brighton and Hove Youth Voice Groups, including the Youth Council
- Schools and Colleges
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board
- Community Works
- NHS partners

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Meaningful participation and engagement is fundamental to achieving the long term vision for Children's Services and the principles and priorities set out in the Connected City Strategy and the council's Corporate Plan.
- 6.2 The approach set out in this strategy takes a joined up, whole systems approach to improving participation and engagement by seeking to incorporate it within existing business planning systems.

7 FINANACIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial and other implications

The current 2015/16 budget for the Youth Participation Service is £0.138m and, subject to the outcome of ongoing budgetary discussions, in the context of this report there is no foreseeable financial risk as a consequence of the recommendations proposed.

David Ellis, Accountant, Children's Services Finance 06/02/2015

7.2 Legal Implications

Sent to Natasha Watson

7.3 Equalities Implications

This Strategy is compliant with the Council's Equality Duty and will pay particular attention to the needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families including those with the following protected characteristics and, by association, those who care for them i.e. Age; Disability; Sex; Gender reassignment; Race; Religion and belief; Sexual orientation; Pregnancy and maternity; Marriage and civil partnership (in respect of having due regard to eliminate discrimination).

7.4 Sustainability Implications

None

7.5 Any Other Significant Implications

None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Children's Service Participation & Engagement Strategy 2014-2017

Documents in Members' Rooms

Children's Service Participation & Engagement Strategy 2014-2017

Background Documents

None

