



Children and Young People's Participation Strategy

West Sussex Voice + Participation



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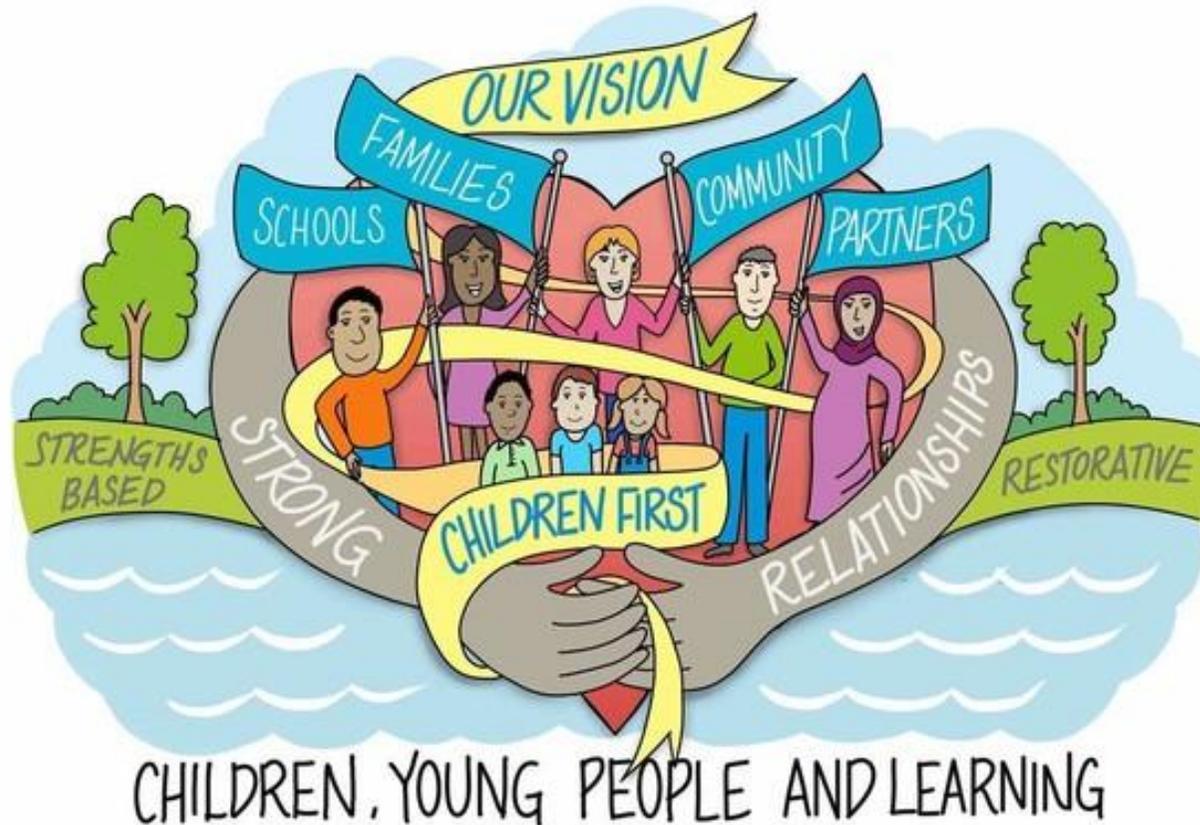
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1. Our Vision

1.1. Vision for Children, Young People and Learning

The West Sussex approach puts the child first. We work with children, families, communities, our partners and each other in a restorative, strength-based way. Strong Relationships are at the heart of what we do.



1.2. Foreword from Daniel Ruaux, Assistant Director for Children's Services



As the Assistant Director for Children's Services for West Sussex County Council I am proud to introduce our Engagement & Participation Strategy, which sets our out values, commitment and aspiration for how we will work in direct partnership with children, young people, parents and carers. Professionals from across the children and young people's system offer a range of expertise, skills and knowledge that support children and young people achieving the best possible outcomes, but parents and carers know their children above everyone else and have their children's best interest at heart. We are committed to work with all our children and parents, valuing them as equal partners, working with and not 'doing to'.

Our children and young people's voices, their experiences, wishes and needs are at the centre of everything that we do. Getting the best outcomes for our children, where they feel listened to heard, and that this is acted upon; is achieved though co-production, meaningful consultation and engagement at all levels, with mutual respect and regard for the voices and experiences of our children, young people, parents and carers. Delivering inclusion, where our children and young people can have their needs met by local services, in our local communities in which they can develop and flourish, requires collaboration, accountability, transparency and openness, working with and not against one another, with a shared and relentless focus on the child. All of our children and young person are individuals and they and their families will have diverse needs. Our approach to engagement and participation is about redressing power imbalances and empowerment, through building an alliance, ensuring that we reach as many of our children, young people and parent carers as possible. It is value and outcome led; where our shared and common purpose, achieving the best for our children and young people in the county, is what drives and unites us as a partnership.

1.3. Our message to Children and Young People

You have given us clear messages and we are building a children and young people's strategy that responds to them.

You have told us what it feels like when you are not listened to, leaving you feeling excluded, isolated and fed-up. It can feel like nobody understands what life is like for you and you've got no one to talk to.

You have told us how important it is for people to believe in you and your aspirations and how you dislike people suggesting that you do things that don't seem right for you. You get frustrated when you are asked to fill out survey after survey but don't know what has been done with your views.

You tell us it's important to have a place where your voices are heard, acted upon and make a difference.

The purpose of the children and young people's participation strategy is to provide a platform for you to speak, share ideas and know that you're being listened to.

Asking you what you want only works when adults are willing to act on these views; it is our job to make sure this happens.

Participation is not just about attend meetings with adults or filling out a survey; it is about you having the power to discuss the things that are important to you in ways you want to engage with.

We have a duty to ensure all your people can share ideas, understand about their services and their rights and get the support they need in the right way at the right time.

We know that by listening to you, providing you with opportunities to authentically engage and have fun, we can make services the very best for all children and young people. It is our job to speak on behalf of children and young people and provide a platform and opportunities for you to speak for yourselves.

We want every young person to be heard and know that they have somewhere to go where they will be listened to. Our mission is to take a youth led approach to making a difference in the lives of children and young people in an honest, energetic, creative and supportive way.



2. Context – Executive Summary

We have developed this strategy as part of our commitment to children and families through our new vision - Children First.

Research

Working alongside West Sussex Children's services, the partners and the Voice and Participation Service, over a six-month period, we engaged staff and children and young people in training, workshops, and consultancy to help us understand their experiences, challenges and aspirations, as the basis for building a participation strategy that ensures meaningful engagement with children and young people.

Shared principles

Through this engagement we have developed:

- 3 'Pillars of Participation' to capture the principle that we will listen, share and act on the voices of young people
- 6 'Organisational Challenges' that we will take on to ensure our actions are effective
- 5 'Rules of Engagement' that ensure that our listening is respectful and tactful.

These developments build on the lived experiences of children and young people within our services and the expectation that participation and engagement with children and young people is everyone's responsibility.

Champions

To take our commitment to participation forward we have set up a forum of senior leaders who will act as participation 'Champions'. The Champion's role is to identify participation opportunities within their service areas and work together to share resources, knowledge and collectively ensure that participation opportunities are known and developed with the whole service.

A brand for participation

We have worked with the Voice and Participation Team to develop a new brand for participation and engagement, ensuring we have a visual approach that's right for our children and young people. This enabled a direct link with children and young people, who were consulted and informed throughout the process of developing the brand.

Understanding current activity and building the base for the future.

In Section 6 we have described current participation activity, opportunities and groups and in Section 7, 8 and 9 we outline opportunities for development.

This strategy document outlines how West Sussex can take forward an effort with children and young people. It creates a challenge, which if acted upon via an appropriately resourced, owned and co-created development plan, will make a difference to young people. By having a principled, ethical and practical approach to engagement and overcoming barriers together, we believe that we can provide a model of participation that engages children and young people and puts Children First.

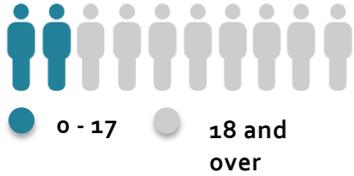


3. Our Children and Young People

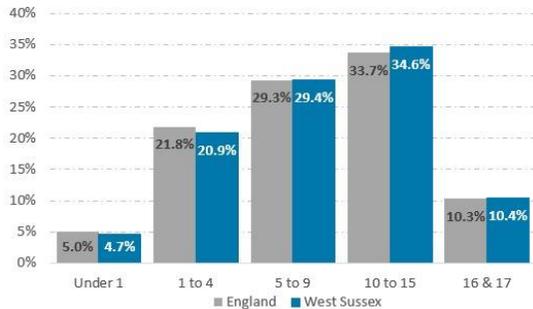
We are responsible for over 233,900 children and young people. It is important for us to know about who they are, their lives, experiences, and aspirations so that we can provide the best services for them. Knowing our children and young people, hearing their views, and capturing the right data will give us the best evidence to develop services that put our Children First.

Knowing our Children, Young People & Families

20% children and young people as a % of total population



Children and Young People by age band - mid-2020 populations estimates



children under 18 who are BME



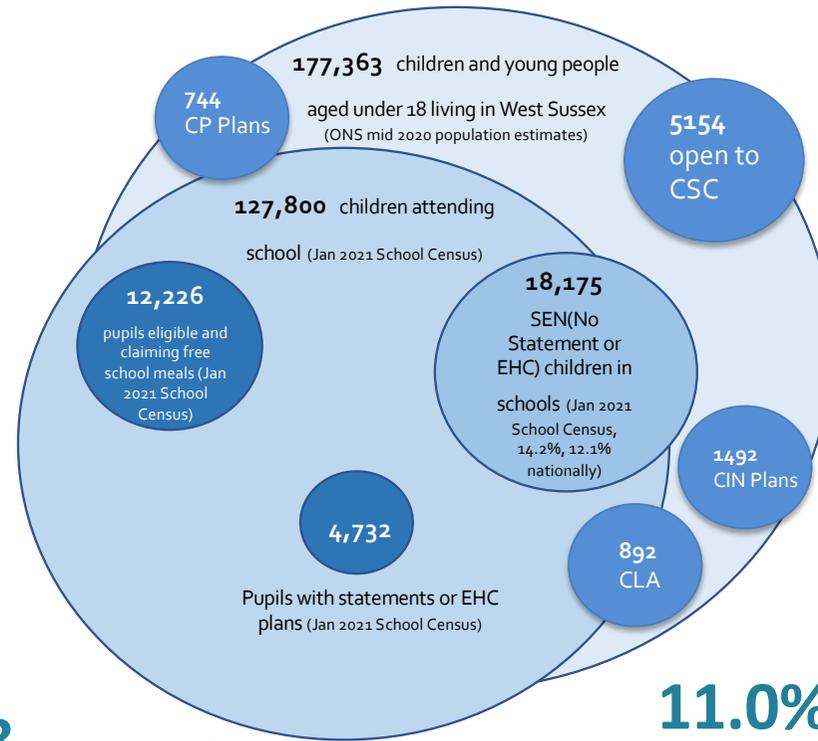
children living in relative poverty

5,288 families turned around and claimed for against national vulnerability criteria (Supporting Families Programme – Sep 21)

148 Care Leavers who are NEET (38%, Sep-21)

11.0%

pupils classed as persistent absentees in 2020/21 autumn term (13.0% nationally)



4. Our Challenge to Improve Participation

We have challenged ourselves to improve our participation service for children and young people. We recognise that this is not the job of one service area but of the whole of West Sussex Children's Services and their partners.

To ensure our approach is effective, and we know exactly how we engage with children and young people and what we will do with that engagement, we have created '**3 Pillars of Participation**' that will underpin the work of the Voice and Participation Team and communicate how we engage with children and young people to the wider service.

To ensure our organisation can provide the best platform to engage with children and young people and act on their views we have identified '**6 Organisational Challenges**'.

To ensure we engage with children and young people ethically and tactfully, especially when working with children and young people from vulnerable backgrounds or with additional needs, we have developed '**5 Rules of Engagement**' that individuals will follow.

Participation is everyone's responsibility, and we believe by being clear about the mechanisms of engagement we will create a systemic approach for our organisation, services and our people to ensure we put Children First.

4.1. 3 Pillars of Participation

We have '**3 Pillars of Participation**'- listening, sharing, and acting. These pillars guide all our work with children and young people, ensuring that we work to a clear methodology to provide authentic and meaningful engagement.

Pillar 1: Listening

We offer several formal groups, and host activities for children and young people to share their views and engage in interesting conversations about what's important to them.

Our formal groups include all those described in Section 6.2:

- Children in Care Council

- Youth Cabinet
- UK Youth Parliament
- Care Leavers Executive Group
- Care Leavers Advisory Board
- Young Voices

Our activities bring children and young people together to experience new things, have fun and meet new people. As well as all those opportunities outlined in Section 6.3, we provide the following activities:

- Outdoor activities
- Creative days
- Days out
- Online engagement

Pillar 2: Sharing

Hearing and sharing the views of children and young people is crucial to ensuring children and young people are heard and services can act on their ideas and views. We listen and share views in the following ways:

- Consultations
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Training

Pillar 3: Acting

To enable positive change, we act based on the views and ideas of children and young people. We work collaboratively with the service to offer children and young people a number of opportunities to be active participants in change such as:

- Attending decision making meetings and interviews
- Children and young people's scrutiny committees

- Engaging in policy change
- Involvement in service review and design.

We believe by listening to children and young people and sharing their views and ideas, we can inform action that leads to positive change.

4.2. 6 Organisational Challenges

We have identified '**6 Organisational Challenges**' that we are working to overcome as a part of this strategy. These challenges relate to what our services need to overcome to enable meaningful engagement with children and young people so that their views and experiences are listened to, shared and acted upon.

Our challenge areas are:

1. Timing

- The problem: Involving children and young people too late in the process
- The challenge: Involve children and young people at the earliest possible stage.

2. Power

- The problem: Not providing children and young people adequate power
- The challenge: Devolve appropriate power to children and young people to ensure non-tokenistic engagement.

3. Diversity and Inclusion

- The problem: Not having a sufficiently diverse group to ensure representation of the diversity of children and young people's experiences
- The challenge: Provide a wider range of inclusive and accessible opportunities that engage with a wider group of children and young people from diverse backgrounds, experiences and needs.

4. Traditional

- The problem: A tokenistic consultation model that does not engage or empower

- The challenge: Move into a co-production model.

5. Geography

- The problem: Large county can be hard to engage with children and young people in rural areas
- The challenge: Increase our digital capacity to engage.

6. Ownership

- The problem: Consulting children and young people using their personal experiences as the point of reference can be intrusive
- The challenge: Give children and young people ownership over how they are asked to engage, the power to say no and adequate support from the service when they do wish to share personal experiences.

4.3. 5 Rules of Engagement

To ensure that all individuals understand the fundamentals of engagement and how to engage ethically and tactfully with children and young people, we have developed '**5 Rules of Engagement**'.

Our 5 Rules of Engagement are:

Rule 1: Be clear about what we will do with children and young people's feedback before we engage with them, so we do not raise false expectations.

Rule 2: Agree how children and young people will be recognised and rewarded for their contributions.

Rule 3: Let children and young people know the impact of their engagement, in a way that is meaningful to them and share with them the feedback timescale.

Rule 4: Provide children and young people with a clear brief about how we would like to engage with them: the purposes, powers and timescales involved.

Rule 5: Give children and young people the right to say no to engagement.

5. The Voice and Participation Team

We listen; we share; we act.

“Making sure that children and young people’s voices are at the heart of everything we do isn’t the responsibility of just one person, or one team, or one organisation. For participation to be fully embedded across the board, the support of all people whose work involves children and young people is required.”

5.1. Foreword: Participation is everyone's responsibility

Developing a voice for young people happens through a collaborative process between a young person and the services they are working with. When these work together, with equitable distribution of power, clear expectations and shared goals and outcomes, we see fantastic change taking place. As young people and services work together, they can start to recognise shared priorities, and equally where the challenges may lie. The best work allows for 'what ifs', so young people and adults are prepared for a range of outcomes, not just their preferred option. Through this co-production, the challenges become opportunities for a shared ownership of solutions. To give just one example, by working together young people and services were able to reduce the number of young people we care for being taken out of lessons for meetings – something they intensely dislike - from 327 to just 12.

The Voice and Participation Team can offer support, advice and leadership with the challenges and opportunities that teams and workers at West Sussex County Council may come across. Many practitioners share the vision that the child's voice should be at the heart of everything they do and strive to allow young people to express their rights under Articles 12 and 13 in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. Training, the introduction of the Voice Quality Mark and representative groups, such as the voice champions, allow us to make sure all voices are heard, we listen, share and act leading to positive change for our young people.

We recognise the key role 'the participation of children and young people (and parents) in decision-making at individual and strategic levels' plays within the SEND (Special educational needs and disabilities) code of practice 2014. A young person summed this up as 'Let me have a say and give me some help to have a say.' The SEND Participation Lead can offer specialist support and advice on accessibility and inclusion, so all young people are able to express their views in a way that works best for them. Young people with SEND have told us that there are some specific things to consider when working with them such as, aiming to present information and communicate in the most universally accessible ways, including the wider use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) , 'presuming competence' by asking them directly not just their parent carers, and treating them as a whole person with their own strengths and support needs not as a collection of 'diagnoses' .

Our Mission

Our mission is to take a youth led approach to making a difference in the lives of children and young people in an honest, energetic, enthusiastic and creative way.

5.2. About us

We work by supporting children and young people to get involved in opportunities that enable them to communicate ideas and views about how services can be shaped to support children and young people in the very best way. This includes forums, activities that bring children and young people together, consultations and celebration events to recognise and share the successes of our children and young people.

The Voice and Participation team work with children's services and their partners to help them develop ways to engage with children and young people in their departments. We believe that our role is to ensure engagement is non-tokenistic, children and young people are involved in projects at the earliest possible stage, to challenge negative perceptions and think of less traditional, creative ways to engage with children and young people.

Everything we do is underpinned by our mission, to be honest, energetic, inclusive, enthusiastic and creative and we use these traits to develop ways to involve children and young people, hear their views, celebrate their successes and ensure all children and young people in West Sussex know we put them first.

5.3. Our Services

The Voice and Participation Team

The Voice and Participation Team is here to make sure West Sussex Council and its partners listen, share and act on the views, ideas and opinions of children and young people. We are passionate about putting Children First and ensuring that services, individuals and decision-makers have children and young people's views at the heart of everything that they do.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Participation Lead

We know that young people with SEND can face extra barriers to being heard. The SEND Participation Lead is here to make sure that young people with additional needs, disabilities or who are neurodiverse are supported to express their views so they can take an active part in shaping services.

6. How we Engage with Children and Young People now

6.1. Refreshing our Youth Participation

Overview

The purpose of our work with children and young people is to listen to what they say, ensure their views and ideas are shared and appropriate action is taken in response.

In developing this strategy, we have collated the views and ideas of children and young people from projects that have been happening over the last 3 years and gained valuable understanding to inform the future development plan in Section 7 so we can provide the best support for children and young people and so children know they are put first.

6.1.1. Rebrand for Voice and Participation

Development of child and young person focused brand, documents, and materials

The challenge was to provide materials and documents that were designed for a youth audience. Drawing from brand guidelines for West Sussex County Council and working with the graphics team, we have created a new brand for participation that is clearly linked to the council and that communicates with children and young people and therefore increases the chance of them engaging with us.

Our focus is to develop appealing, accessible and appropriate materials for a young audience, avoiding documentation with an overly adult, corporate tone. Through our formalised groups of children and young people, consultations and surveys we redesigned documents including:

- 1) Looked after Review consultation form
- 2) YourSpace webpages, offering information for children and young people in West Sussex
- 3) Promotional information for the Independent Visitor Scheme and Advocacy service

We believe with a new brand and the ability to create child centred designs and youth focused materials we can increase our engagement with children and young people across West Sussex and show children that they are put first.

6.2. Our Youth Forums

Forums provide a space where children and young people are listened to, can freely communicate and share views and ideas alongside their peers and work with the wider council to agree actions that inform service delivery.

Our forums align to Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, that states that children and young people should have the right to 'express their views' and their views are 'given due weight'. We are also informed by the 'Lundy Model for Child Participation' which proposes that children and young people are provided 'space' and 'given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views'. We provide children and young people with an appropriate space to share views and support the service with the relevant powers and governance to act on the views given.

6.2.1. Children in Care Council

Our Children in Care Council is a group of children and young people aged 10-16 that meet fortnightly. Members are children who are cared for by West Sussex. The group enables children to have a voice in services that impact their lives by offering them opportunities to:

- Give their views in Children We Care For to consultations
- Influence positive change
- Meet other children with shared experiences in a safe space

Our Children in Care Council has successfully worked on a number of projects including

- Campaigned to reduce professional visits in school time where Children We Care For are taken out of class – reduced from around 300 per month to 12 per month.
- Design of a social worker profile card to enable Children We Care For to know who their social worker is and how to contact them
- Recording videos for social work training on the impact and effect of good life story work
-

The group is led by the Participation Lead for Children We Care For.

6.2.2. Youth Cabinet and UK Youth Parliament

The Youth Cabinet and UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) members are children and young people aged 11 to 18, elected to represent the views of children and young people in West Sussex. Members also represent views nationally, attending an annual debate in the House of Commons in London.

The Youth Cabinet develop their own manifesto to ensure the issues they focus on are relevant to children and young people in West Sussex, their current manifesto focuses on:

- Homelessness
- Knife Crime
- Mental Health
- Domestic Abuse
- Refugees
- Racial Inequality
- Political Engagement
- LGBTQ+
- Environmental Issues
- Free University

Our Youth Cabinet currently meet online monthly between 6-8pm, with other meetings on particular aspects of their manifesto and campaign work. Members also contribute to events focusing on important social and political issues such as:

- The Sussex Police Independent Advisory Group to support children and young people's voice and inform policy and practice
- Local and regional environmental meetings such as Fairer World Lindfield and Communities against Gatwick noise Emissions
- Meeting with the High Sherriff of West Sussex to ensure understanding youth crime remains on the agenda and is informed by the views of children and young people

They engage with other children and young people from around West Sussex by using online surveys, social media, and campaign for changes by producing films, blogs and other media.

The group is led by the Participation Lead worker.

6.2.3. Care Leavers Executive Group

The Care Leavers Executive Group is an online group exclusively for care leavers from West Sussex to connect with each other, access important information and discuss key topics.

The group is open to care leavers aged 16-25 and focuses on:

- Discussing important topics relevant to care leavers
- Sharing comms and messages from the Leaving Care Service and Council in a relevant and appropriate form
- Accessing opportunities to train professionals, conduct interviews of staff, and engage in social action campaigns

The group is led by the Participation Lead worker.

6.2.4. Care Leavers Advisory Board

The Care Leavers Advisory Board meets regularly to discuss ideas, share views and give feedback to services. This forum is for children and young people aged 16-25.

The purpose of the board is to ensure the voice of care experienced children and young people is heard, to have a community of people who have similar experiences and to involve care leavers in meaningful work that will ensure services are the best for children and young people.

The board has opportunities to:

- Attend decision making meetings
- Engage with staff working in children's social care
- Advise and consult on service development
- Capture the views and voice of other care leavers and develop changes to practice with the Leaving Care Service

Examples of the work of the Care Leavers Executive group include: supporting four days of interviews about the restructure of the IRO service; being part of the interview panel with the Leaving Care service which successfully appointed a new team manager, an interim team manager and PA roles.

One of the team managers said that, *'It was a pleasure to have [member] with us and she brought great insight to the process. We very much valued her opinion as part of the process.'*

One of our care leavers is now of part of the 16-25 steering group. The group tasked the children and young people, 'What are the main mental health priorities for care leavers?'. The children and young people researched this question, fed back and now the steering group will respond to explain what action is going to be taken.

Another exciting project has been the development of a new 'inspection' pack, led by care leavers. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of 16+ accommodation providers by carrying out inspections of services in partnership with the commissioning team, to give feedback about what needs to be improved and ideas to go forward with. A team of 15 children and young people are being trained to carry out inspections. Inspections will start in 2022.

The group is led by the Participation Lead for Children We Care For and care leavers

6.2.5. Young Voices

Young Voices is our youth forum and associated outreach projects for young people with additional needs and disabilities, aged up to 25. Outreach work includes online engagement sessions, visits to schools and activity providers, activity days, creative craft packs, and use of accessible online platforms to create ideas boards.

The purpose of Young Voices is to ensure the voice of children and young people with SEND is heard. Young Voices forms a supportive and inclusive network of young people who empower each other to develop self-advocacy skills, and act as 'experts by experience' in co-production with services across social care, education and health services. This encompasses work across 'universal' services (used by all young people), and more specialist services used by young people with SEND.

Young Voices members have opportunities to:

- Sit on decision making steering groups
- co-deliver training for practitioners and workshops for young people
 - Advise on accessibility and inclusion within services
 - Take part in commissioning panels to jointly make funding decisions and create service specifications with commissioners
- Interview panels

Examples of Young Voices work include

- Videos created with our youth ambassadors to support the Autism Schools programme, in which autistic young people share their lived experiences.
- Visits to services to give advice on inclusion and accessibility, using feedback tool kits co-designed with young people and service providers
- Online workshops for primary school students to raise their awareness of disability
- Design of the key image used across the SEND and Inclusion Strategy
- Attending meetings of the SEND information advice and support service (SENDIAS) Steering group
- Co-designing information sheets for young people
- Co-writing a version of the short breaks statement for young people
- Online multi-sensory art sessions designed to reach those who use non-speaking communication
- Ongoing involvement in development of the WSCC SEND and Inclusion Strategy and it's workstreams including, transitions and pathways to adulthood.
- Young people's Autism focus group which looks at the neurodevelopmental pathway (autism diagnosis and support) , sensory support and Autism Schools projects .

Our Projects

Our services actively involve our children and young people to ensure their views are central to how we develop services, these opportunities are outlined below.

6.3.1. Language That Cares

Ensuring that the language used is appropriate, inclusive and child friendly.

Children We Care For have told us that they don't understand acronyms and technical language used in conversations or reports about them. This is especially true when they are looking through the records made about them.

Through our project 'Language that Cares' we engaged with children and young people by asking them about the effect of language that is used by professionals. Children and young people recorded videos detailing how the language made them feel and offered alternatives. This was submitted as part of the national 'TACT - Fostering and Adoption Agency - Language That Cares Second Version Report'. Care leavers also gave their views on the impact of reading language in their files. This has led to their views being incorporated in the new recording principles used by professionals in West Sussex.

Our focus is to ensure that the service uses appropriate language when speaking about children and young people in care to ensure they are authentically communicated with and about. We want to ensure that we don't segregate or stigmatise children and young people with the use of professional jargon, acronyms, and technical language.

Specific focuses of the work of Language that Cares will be:

- Statutory recording
- Meetings and reviews
- When speaking directly to children and young people
- When communicating about children and young people with peers

We plan to embed this important work by:

- providing training to professionals that helps them change their language
- ensuring staff consider how what is written today may affect the children in the future
- providing feedback on a local and national level on the effect of language for care experienced children and young people.

6.3.2. 'The Promise'

Our Promise to care experienced children and young people.

The Promise 2020 is a partnership commitment to support children and young people in care and care leavers. It has been written by children and young people in care, care leavers, professionals who work with them and the West Sussex Corporate Parenting Panel.

Our promise is broken down into 5 clear commitments to care experienced children and young people that focus on: involving children and young people; supporting their health and happiness; supporting and advising them; education, employment, and training; leaving care.

To develop 'The Promise' we engaged with children and young people by sending out a survey asking for their views on what they thought was important to remember from their point of view. We received over 100 responses, and these were shared with a workshop group consisting of children we care for, care leavers, service leads, and members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. From this they created 'The Promise', a document which outlines the West Sussex Corporate Parenting Panel commitment to Children We Care For and care leavers.

To see 'The Promise' click this link: https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/14891/the_promise_2020_yspace.pdf

6.3.3. Bright Spots

A bi-annual survey that captures views on of care experienced children and young people.

The Bright Spots Programme is a partnership between Coram Voice and the University of Oxford, funded by the Hadley Trust. It supports local authorities to listen systematically to their children in care and care leavers about the things that are important to them.

In West Sussex we consulted with 135 children and young people through the Bright Spots survey. Coram Voice analysed the results and created a report which was used by children, young people and professionals to create a 12–18-month action plan to improve services.



WSSC Bright Spots Your Life, Your Care WS Bright Spots
You Said We Will 05.1West Sussex full reportAction Plan updated a

6.3.4. Mind Of My Own

A digital tool for care experienced children and young people to share their views

West Sussex commissioned the Mind Of My Own app to enable children and young people to share their views via an accessible digital tool.



The Mind Of My Own app is a simple digital tool that can be used on the internet, smartphones and other digital devices and gives children and young people the ability to share their views for things such as Children We Care For reviews. In 2020 the app received over 650 statements, the majority regarding worker visits and children and young people informing us about their wellbeing. In 2020 there were over 350 children and young people accounts and 300 worker accounts.

To ensure the app is used widely, we have a steering group and Mind Of My Own Champions. The Champions promote the use of the App, and the steering group, which meets six weekly, receives user feedback and channels this into further developments of the project.

6.3.5. EPIC Awards

Recognising Exceptional People in Care

The Exceptional People in Care (EPIC) awards have been running since 2011 and are organised by children, young people and staff from West Sussex Children in Care Council, and West Sussex County Council.

Children and young people in care and care leavers aged 5-25 are nominated by professionals and carers in four categories: Big Hearts; Big Thinkers; Big Talents; and Big Strength. Awards are given at an annual ceremony, organised with children we care for, which celebrates these achievements and also the successes arising from the commitments made in 'The Promise'.



6.3.6. Digital Communication

Sharing children and young people's views digitally

To ensure children and young people are heard, we have various digital methods to engage with and share the views of children and young people, including newsletters and our social media channels.

Children and young people co-author our termly newsletters, which include their views on announcements and initiatives by West Sussex Council, recipes and top tips.

Our social media channels include:

- Instagram
- Twitter
- TikTok
- Facebook
- Snapchat
- Linked In

We use our social media channels to engage in different ways. We inform children and young people of initiatives and share information and messages. We use these channels to inform professionals and partners of the work we are carrying out and ask for their feedback. We inform the general public about what we are doing and raise awareness.

6.3.7. YourSpace

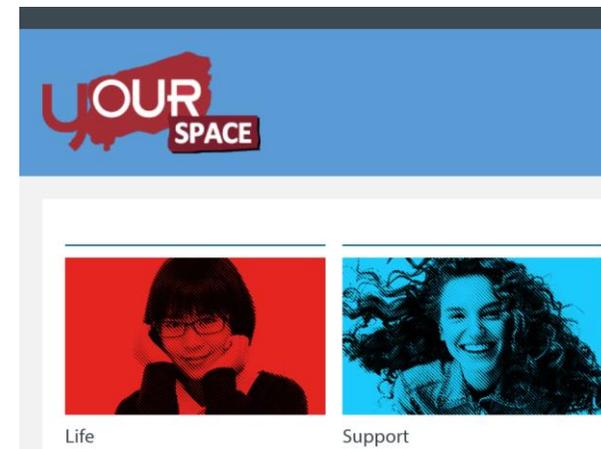
Our website to provide information to children and young people in West Sussex

YourSpace is our website that provides crucial information to children and young people including: support, health, work, education and more.

YourSpace is available to all children and young people in West Sussex regardless of their background. Our focus is to ensure that they have relevant information that supports them navigate life, access opportunities and find out about crucial services and how to access them.

We provide regular updates that include new training opportunities; health advice; information on current voice opportunities; updates on voice activities that have taken place.

Children and young people are involved in YourSpace by regular review of the content and format of the site, providing content for newsletters and videos hosted online.



YourSpace is managed by the Voice and Participation team with the support of the Participation leads and Team Manager.

You can visit YourSpace here: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/your-space/>

6.3.8. Supporting Our Partners

Involving children and young people with our partners

We understand how crucial it is for children and young people to be involved in the work of our partners, to ensure everyone hears children and young people's views in line with our vision - Children First.

We ensure our children and young people are involved in supporting our partners including:

- Police – attending the Independent Advisory Group for Sussex Police
- Health – children and young people's views being represented at the health sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and the West Sussex Children Looked After Health Operation Group, Public Health Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Forum, Sussex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust 16-25 steering group,
- Housing – Children and young people attend the 16+ provider forum and work closely with the housing teams

As a result of this involvement with partners, CYP/we have seen changes such as professionals hearing from children and young people about the transition from child to adult mental health services, and the development of a new inspection package by care leavers for supported accommodation.

6.3.9. Staff Recruitment

Children and young people's involvement in recruiting staff

We know how important it is to have the right staff for our children and young people, that is why it is a priority for us to ensure we have children and young people involved in the recruitment of the people who support them.

We have involved children and young people in recruitment by:

- Creating a guide for professionals on how to involve children and young people in the recruitment process
- Developing our links with the recruitment, resourcing and talent teams to ensure children and young people are involved at the earliest possible opportunity in the best way
- Creating a children and young people's training course in recruitment and interviewing, through which we have trained over 20 children and young people.

Our vision 'Children First' is focused on working closely with our partners. We have involved children and young people in the recruitment of:

- Leaders in West Sussex County Council, including Executive Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Leads
- Health staff including Children We Care For Nurses
- Social care staff, especially those on the front line
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Our SEND Participation Lead and Participation Assistant

6.3.10. Involvement in Local and National Decision Making

Involving children and young people in making decisions for the services they receive.

We want to be held accountable, to ensure the services we provide are the best for the children and young people who use them, that's why we invite our children and young people to attend our crucial meetings such as:

- Children First Meeting
- Children and Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee
- Good Practice Panel
- Journey to Independence

Where possible we encourage and support children and young people to co-chair meetings such as at Corporate Parenting Panel, Journey to Independence Group and Children First Panel. Where this is not practical, we ensure

that children and young people are present at the meeting to represent other children and young people's views and offer scrutiny and challenge, such as at the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

We want children and young people to ask the questions that are important to them, share their views, tell us their opinion of the job we are doing and guide us to develop the best services. It is crucial to us that, when we are making decisions about our services, changing policies or scrutinising services, children and young people are present to influence and guide us.

We also support and encourage our children and young people to engage with national discussions about the services children and young people receive across the UK. It is important that our children and young people have a national voice, they can share feedback from the perspective of young people from West Sussex and learn about other local areas and how they support their children and young people.

The 'impact table' below explains the role of children and young people have in decision making and the impact it has had.

Impact Table – Involvement in Local and National Decision Making

Decision Making Space	Frequency	Local / National	Information	Children and Young People's Role + Engagement	Impact
Children First Board	Quarterly	Local	Board to improve outcomes for all children and young people in West Sussex. Ensure all agencies work together. Listen and respond to the views and voice of	Co-Chair alongside Cllr Jacquie Russel, Lead Member for Children and Families Young person with additional needs attends and participates	Group is currently creating a children and young people's plan for West Sussex. Children and young people are developing a Youth Voice network to ensure connection of youth voice across the county and as a means to gauge the

			children, young people and families.		impact and needs of children and young people in relation to the Children and Children and young people's plan.
Children and Young people's Service Scrutiny Committee	Bi-monthly	Local	The Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny of the Children and Children and young people's Services portfolio (apart from public health for children) Learning and Skills portfolio	Two children and young people representatives sitting on committee meetings	Enabling children and young people's voice to be directly inputted at highest level of scrutiny
Journey to Independence	Bi-monthly	Local	Meeting with partners relevant to supporting care leavers. The purpose of the meeting is to develop and share services for care leavers and to ensure care leavers	Attendance from the Chair of the Care Leavers Advisory Group acting as an advisor on the JTI board. Children and young people were invited to a series of workshops	Development of a new Local Offer for Care Leavers

			transition effective into independence.	(8) that explored the local offer for care leavers. These 8 workshops gave adults and children and young people the opportunity to critique, rewrite and develop a new leaving care offer, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relationships 2. Participation 3. Employment and Volunteering 4. Education and Training 5. Physical Health 6. Mental Health 7. Finance 8. Accommodation 	
All Party Parliamentary Group	Termly	National	The APPG organises meetings which bring together people with different personal and professional	Up to two children and young people from West Sussex attending to represent views on Children We Care For and care leavers	Children and young people from West Sussex represent views which help shape the care system at a national level. Have impacted on

			<p>experiences, including those with lived experience of care, professionals and carers, voluntary sector organisations and others to share their expertise with decision makers in government, Parliament and local authorities. The APPG also carries out inquiries which explore specific issues in the care system and makes recommendations to government.</p>		<p>Spotlight Inquiry which aims to shine a light on the care system[s] across the country. We are exploring themes of care and community and will be hearing from care-experienced children and young people and adults, carers, professionals and others</p>
National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum	Quarterly	National	<p>This national forum is a network of over 100 local authorities promoting the development of quality leaving care services with member authorities</p>	<p>Up to four children and young people attend either online or in person events at children and young people's benchmarking forum. The young people's benchmarking forum</p>	<p>Developed work at national level especially around apprenticeships and care leavers offer. West Sussex care leavers played an active role in planning and delivering this national event. Care leavers attended Spotlight</p>

			and partner organisations through a process of benchmarking and shared learning on a national scale, to enrich outcomes for our nations care leavers.	works alongside the National care leavers benchmarking forum to complete an annual work plan with the aims of improving understanding of children in care, improving services and producing advice, information, resources and participation opportunities for other children and young people. The group prioritises issues highlighted in the NLCBF workplan and co-deliver all forum events with the NLCBF team.	review as part of APPG to influence social care spotlight review.
Child Exploitation Scrutiny day	Local	Annual	Multi agency review day looking at results from audit undertaken by West Sussex children's	Up to five children and young people attend to review findings and give their views, recognise improvements and suggest solutions	Held agencies to scrutiny at highest level in safeguarding

			safeguarding partnership board.		
Corporate Parenting Panel Sub-groups	Local	Varies	Subgroups looking at thematic areas of Corporate Parenting Panel workstream	Young person sits on panel and informs change	Young person on Emotional wellbeing and mental health board has described impact of mental health services, leading to training video being show to professionals.
SENDIAS Steering group	Local	Quarterly	Reviewing overall performance and key challenges for the SENDIAS service	Young person with additional needs sits on the steering group. Short breaks commissioning panels, local, varies, developing services for young people with SEND , young people supported to sit alongside commissioners to make decisions about what provision is needed , short breaks services better meet the needs of families and are more person-centred	Information and advice is presented in a more accessible and youth-friendly way. Making Participation Work youth conference , national, annual, discussion on themes relevant to young people with SEND and their voice, 4 youth reps attend from the Young Voices group , young people are able to contribute to national research, campaigns and consultations

6.3.11. Training and Facilitation

Children and young people involved in the development of our staff

Children and young people are trained and supported to engage in training and facilitation opportunities that develop the adults who support them. By incorporating expertise from lived experience we are able to provide valuable insights for our staff about children and young people’s experience of services and how best to support them.

These opportunities are outlined in the table below.

Training and Facilitation Table

Training or Facilitation Opportunity	Frequency	Information	Children and young people’s Role + Engagement
The Skills to Foster	Frequency based on demand	Mandatory training for potential foster carers as part of their recruitment to become a foster carer.	Children and young people give presentation – ‘Top tips for foster carers’, in which they share their experiences in care.
Total Respect	Frequency based on demand	Mandatory training for foster carers in their first 18 months with West Sussex. Training for professionals and carers. Total Respect is a national award-winning training resource delivered by care experienced trainers. It supports the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It develops a thorough understanding of children’s rights, including the right	Care leavers deliver training

		to participation, and relevance to the delivery of child centred services; explores assumptions about children and young people, listening to young people, and the experience of being a child in care; it teaches about involving young people within care planning, young people's involvement in policy development and effective advocacy.	
Autism Aware Award and Autism Schools	Frequency based on demand	Part of a national project to improve the support and awareness of autism in schools. The young people talk about their lived experiences including how the sensory environment affects their wellbeing and education, effective strategies to support autistic students, and gaining the authentic voice of autistic students. Young people are also involved in developing resources and tools for schools to use to support students. The videos created are also being used by other services such as social care to support staff development .	Young Voices youth ambassadors deliver part of the training , currently delivered by pre-recorded video and video conferencing. They are also involved in 'sensory audits' of schools as the experts by experience.

The Future of Participation

Our Development Plan

We want all children and young people to be listened to; we want to share their views and we want them to know that we act on what they say: that is why our development plan is based on three priorities:

1. Create the **Youth Voice Network** to connect the voices of all children and young people across West Sussex.
2. Work with our **Participation Champions** to improve youth engagement within West Sussex and across the partnership
3. Provide opportunities for children and young people based on our **3 Participation Pillars: Listening; Sharing and Acting.**

This section of the strategy shares how we will act on these priorities and ensure that in doing so we put **Children First.**

6.4 Youth Voice Network

Connecting the voices of all children and young people across West Sussex

6.4.1. Overview

The Youth Voice Network is a network that will enable children and young people to be active participants in service delivery and improvement and join us in our vision to put Children First.

The aim of the **Youth Voice Network** is to **hear and amplify voices, so they lead to change**. We plan to bring together the views, ideas and opinions of all young people from across West Sussex so that we can listen, share and act ensuring we have a network that is putting Children First.

To ensure the success of this strategy and the future of participation in West Sussex, we must have an active group of children and young people, who are trained, supported and properly resourced to engage with us confidently. A successful Youth Voice Network will mean we have children and young people who are connected, skilled and engaged with our service and active participants in our vision to put Children First.

6.4.2. The 3 Priorities

We have 3 main priorities for the Youth Voice Network:

1. Connect all youth forums across West Sussex – linking the groups in Section 6.2
2. Provide development opportunities for children and young people – building on those outlined in Section 6.3
3. Engage children and young people in service delivery and improvement – building on Section 6.3

1. Connect all youth forums across West Sussex

Youth Voice Network is a space for all children and young people's voices to be captured and shared. How we plan to create this network is by bringing together all youth forums to create a hub and spoke model to ensure a central space for all youth voice.

These forums include:

- School Councils
- Youth Cabinet
- Care Leavers Advisory Board
- Children in Care Council
- Young Voices (SEND)
- Young leaders programme

2. Provide Development Opportunities for Children and young people

If we want children and young people to support us in developing our services, we need to make sure they have the appropriate skills to do so. Therefore, we will provide development opportunities to all children and young people across our Youth Voice Network including:

- Research skills
- Interview skills
- Young journalists
- Presentation skills
- Service design
- Peer to peer support

3. Engage Children and Young People in Service Delivery and Improvement

The purpose of the Youth Voice Network is to have a central space for all children and young people to connect, share and engage in participation activities and ensure:

- We have the right staff
- Our services are fit for purpose
- We avoid tokenistic consultation

- Young people are engaged in quality assurance
- Children and young people's views are listened to, shared and acted upon

6.5. Participation Champions

Engaging Leadership with Children and Young People's Participation

6.5.1. Champions Programme

A forum of individuals from children's services focused on creating opportunities for children and young people to develop themselves and the services they receive.

We understand we need to engage individuals and services in youth participation. We know that the perception of participation is focus providing consultation opportunities for children and young people and we believe participation is so much more.

Our Champions Programme brings together individuals from across children's services and the partnership to develop creative ways to engage with children and young people

Based on our participation principles, the champions have 3 clear aims:

1. **Listening:** We define listening as the act of listening to children and young people and their opinions, views and ideas being unconditionally welcomed. Opportunities for listening include our forums, hosting events for children and young people and more.
2. **Sharing:** We define sharing as the act of communicating children and young people's ideas, views and opinions. This can be done through conversation at meetings, using digital and media, engagement in training, recruitment of staff and more.
3. **Acting:** We define acting as taking tangible action based on the views, ideas and opinions of children and young people. This includes feedback and changes to services, developing children and young people's ideas, committing resource and more.

6.5.2. How the Champions Work

The Champions are volunteers from across Children's Services who work together for 12-months before nominating someone else to become a Champion. There are representatives from:

- Children's commissioning
- Youth Justice
- Children First
- Residential Services
- Voice and Participation
- Virtual School
- Fostering
- Communications and Engagement for Children and Young People's and Learning
- Children in Need
- Children under Child Protection
- Children We Care For
- Care Leavers
- SEND Commissioning and Education and Skills

They attend a Champions bootcamp where they learn about engagement and develop opportunities for children and young people to develop themselves and the services they receive. Champions commit to a 12-month term and support with the selection of their replacement to ensure the programme grows and is sustainable. Every service area commits to providing a champion to ensure that service areas are committed and engaged with youth participation activities across West Sussex County Council and partners.

Champions have 4 meetings a year where they discuss the opportunities that they have developed for children and young people and they nominate adults and children and young people for 'recognition awards' so that we can celebrate good things that happen.

A big part of the Champions programme is their work with Youth Voice Buckinghamshire and decision-makers to remove barriers that might prevent children and young people from engaging.

6.5.3. Champions Commitment to Participation

Our Champions are developing opportunities for children and young people to engage in their service area. They recognise that for participation to be successful, a joined-up approach must be taken across West Sussex to the development of a robust and meaningful youth participation offer.

As part of the programme, Champions were asked to research and identify:

- Current participation activities in their service
- Their vision for participation
- The barriers that are preventing them from achieving their vision
- The impact of achieving their vision

To support Champions to explore these areas, we facilitated 6 workshops and provided a survey for service areas to respond to. From these responses, we synthesised, categorised and identified opportunities to develop participation across the whole service. This gives us vital information to enable Champions to think creatively about solutions to providing meaningful engagement opportunities for children and young people.

Champions Survey Answers – Table

Service Area	Survey Question					Identified Opportunities to Develop Participation
	What does your participation with children and young people look like now?	What is your vision for participation ?	What barriers do we need to overcome to achieve your vision?	Why is it important to achieve this vision?	What impact will your vision have?	

Children's commissioning	involving children and young people in the procurement of 16+ external supported accommodation services. children and young people reviewed and contributed to the service specification, the same group of young people designed their own method statement question and independently evaluation the responses. to ensure this was meaningful their verdict	We create a platform to engage with young people directly on what and how they would like to be involved in engaging and effecting change in the Council. we have a clear ethical structure to implement this work with young people	we will need to engage all departments of the council in the vision in order to support how we navigate governance protocols and that young people are supported to understand these processes and how they can contribute to them	to ensure all we do and deliver has the aspirations of the young people at its core and design	improve the experiences and maximise the outcomes for the young people who we care for	Create a platform to engage with young people directly on what and how they would like to be involved in engaging and effecting change in the Council
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	decided whether the whole application failed. young people will continue this level of involvement though out the life of the framework (5yrs). young people will be carrying out their QA visits to services alongside the commissioning team					
Youth Justice	Our participation offer is patchy. Case Managers do take feedback during reviews from children, young people, families and	A much more structured and embedded approach. Something where there is the opportunity for contribution	I think we get overwhelmed and don't know where to start. If we do start it feels tokenistic and	Because we need to be able to deliver the best service that has the most positive impact for those who	I hope it would improve our service and the experience of those using it and delivering it. It would hopefully be more responsive,	Move away from gathering feedback only on items on our (professional) agenda.

	<p>victims but it is not centrally collected nor is it analysed. It does not feed into development or plans. We are required by National Standards to complete an electronic survey called "about me" with children and parents each time we complete or review an assessment. They are universally hated by staff who find them embarrassing to complete due to how they are written. Again,</p>	<p>on a range of levels at all stages of involvement with our service by all who use it. I think our foundations need to be built in structural expectation of feedback and participation. I want it to permeate all areas of our work, ultimately, I would like development of services to be based on participation and run and managed by service users with support. I want to value</p>	<p>inadequate. I think we work in an industry where we are used to telling people what to do and are used to being "right" I think this makes it difficult to really imbed participation and the power dynamics are weighted against it. I think we are very tight resource wise; this means people have their heads down and struggle to</p>	<p>use it. We are currently all work so very hard but for many children we are not supporting them to make the sort of longer-term changes that really impact positively on their futures. Our structures and processes also end up meeting our needs.</p>	<p>more effective, more respectful, and empowering.</p>	<p>Services to be based on participation and run and managed by service users with support.</p> <p>Break the cycle of participation being a response to a certain issue as opposed to a culturally normal fundamental pillar of our service structure.</p> <p>Properly compensate people for their participation.</p>
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	<p>they are not collated in anyway. We do have an "end of order questionnaire" which is infrequently completed and collated or evaluated in anyway. We have in the past included children and young people in recruitment. I think this is actually something we did well. We spent time with them looking at how they wanted to manage their part of the process (this varied from exercises</p>	<p>the contribution and move away from us "mining" our service users to meet our own needs. Whilst feedback is good I would like to move away from gathering feedback only on items on our agenda. I would like to see a post created to focus solely on participation. I think it is necessary to break the cycle of it being a response to a certain issue as opposed to</p>	<p>see the benefit of participation and it feels like "extra" work that they do not have the capacity for. We worry about risk and surrendering power makes us feel vulnerable to things going wrong, people getting hurt and us being to blame. I think we can be very paternalistic towards our service users. We learn about the very</p>			
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	<p>that they designed to more traditional interview questions), agreed percentages, and fully included them in the discussions at the end and the subsequent decision making. We paid them in vouchers for this. However, this has not happened for several years. We have undertaken specific consultation on key issues, most notably our service</p>	<p>a culturally normal fundamental pillar of our service structure. I would also like to properly compensate people for their participation. I feel very strongly that this is a more respectful way of working with people and properly values them.</p>	<p>difficult lives many of them have had and we become protective over them, we don't want to burden them we want to look after and help them...but I think this is also about the fact we don't trust them to make good decisions and we don't have very high expectations of them (a VERY honest reply there!)</p>			
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	redesign. We conducted semi structured conversations with children and their families. We chose to do this with a relatively small cohort of 10 families but spent at least an hour with each. I think this was a more successful way of gaining opinion but not perfect.					
Programme Management Office - Children First	Usually surveys or approaching the CIC for views. This is often done at a late stage rather than	Clear communication to teams / Programme Management Office about how to engage early in the	Conflicting priorities across the organisation. The pressure to deliver sometimes gets in the	We may think that we know what young people want / need - but often we don't. There	Reduced duplication / saving time, good opportunities for YP to be involved, better services,	Clear communication to teams / Programme Management Office about how to engage

	<p>project initiation.</p>	<p>process. For teams to see it as the first thing that they think about. Different and innovative ways of engaging Young People, not just surveys. Ensuring their is time to incorporate feedback into plans. Clear routes to communicate back to Young People about the impact that their participation has had.</p>	<p>way of thinking about participation early. Feedback often gets lost as there are so many other priorities that staff need to consider. Covid restrictions. Some project managers don't have a good understanding of what Voice and Participation can offer. Young Persons engagement is seen as a tick box exercise.</p>	<p>are unintended consequences of practice and language that may not be obvious. Thinking about participation earlier will save time later and reduce duplication. Feedback may be used for more than one purpose.</p>	<p>and ultimately outcomes for YP.</p>	<p>early in the process.</p> <p>Different and innovative ways of engaging Young People, not just surveys.</p> <p>Clear routes to communicate back to Young People.</p>
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<p>Children's residential services</p>	<p>For what i see in residential services it can be very patchy. We get a phone call requesting participation at the last minute and it seems a little rushed. I feel we do not work together or at times have the right communication to involve young people in more activities and planning for participation.</p>	<p>Communication between the Participation teams and residential to be extended and look for a way forward so we have more of an awareness of how we can support our young people to engage with this service. I feel that there needs to be more connection for the young people with the participation team, develop relationships and this will aid participation</p>	<p>Process, how we work together, Time restrictions. Archaic views and tick box exercise! To think about what will actually work and change the lives of the young people.</p>	<p>Its important to give young people opportunities to have their voice heard. I dont always think the voice of the child is heard or if it is at times this is swept aside due to the need to have things completed and tick boxes filled!</p>	<p>It will give the young people positive role models that they can look towards. It can give young people some opportunities to use the skills they have gained and make their experience with social services positive</p>	<p>Communication between the Participation teams and residential.</p> <p>More of an awareness of how we can support our young people to engage with this service.</p> <p>More connection for the young people with the participation team.</p> <p>Give young people meaningful reward and praise for their efforts</p>
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		and an understanding for the young people on what is going on. We have a lot of resources within West Sussex and I feel we can offer bigger and better things to our young people and capitalise on their experiences and views. Give them Meaningful reward and praise for their efforts.				
Voice and Participation Team	Formal and informal voice groups, including youth cabinet and children in	All young people in West Sussex can have their say on issues that affect them	Access to translation services. Access to buildings to meet with	So all young people have a chance to contribute at the earliest point and all	Young people will feel part of the community and services in which they live. Services will	Development of Voice Charter Mark. Use of Service Strategy to ensure voice

	<p>care council offering young people a chance to have their voice heard at a local and national level. Training and development opportunities, including interviewing and Total respect courses. Opportunities for young people to take part in informal activities to meet other young people with shared circumstances to themselves. Opportunity for young people to have</p>	<p>and know that those views are listened to, and positive change will happen as a result through co-production.</p>	<p>young people. Time and resource/staff to be able to plan with teams and for teams to offer their time and staff to develop new opportunities . For all in West Sussex to share power with young people for making positive change.</p>	<p>feel their voice is heard. So that services working with young people can hear the voice of all young people, and develop their services within a framework of the Children First vision</p>	<p>better represent the young people they work with. Young people's engagement with services will improve.</p>	<p>is seen as key part of everyone's role in West Sussex. Development of Voice Champions. Development of discrete voice groups ie out of county, children seeking asylum. Development of under 10's Children We Care For work. Development of Informal activities for young people we care for and care experienced young people. Revised</p>
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	their voice heard in services ie Mind of My own app					Comms strategy.
WSSC virtual school	Young People being actively involved in the planning, preparation and delivery of events that affect them and their peers	That all service sectors have a joined-up approach to participation and that there is a clear strategy in place that steers it to become the most effective it can be	Engagement from various sectors, people, management within the Council and promoting that the young people will actually make a difference and that participation is not simply paid lip service to	So that we can support more of our young people more effectively	That the mistakes and errors of the past will not be repeated	All service sectors have a joined-up approach to participation and that there is a clear strategy. Staff, foster carers and children/young people in involved in activities together
Fostering	All current activity is via the Participation and Engagement	I want to see all staff, foster carers and children/young people in involved in activities	All (or most) of our policies are not children focused, most children and young	because it will put Children First and not just a fancy strap line that is	Should improve the quality of the services we provide	Training should include all senior managers, foster carers, staff etc with young people

	team in the service.	together so when we have training it includes everyone eg Total Respect training should include all senior managers, foster carers, staff etc with young people	people would not read or have any involvement in our policies and practice guidance. We need to ban the use of acronyms in our literature and meetings!!!!	visually appealing. Children will understand what we are trying to do to improve their lives		
Communications and Engagement for Children and young people YPL	It's run by a team who genuinely care about our children and young people who want to ensure that all children and young people have a voice that is truly heard. Some of the things we ask children and	Children and young people feel empowered to work with us, they can see the impact of their input and benefit personally from engagement e.g. learning new skills, meeting new people,	We can get stuck sometimes into the thought process of 'This is how we do things here' and we need to be open to change and doing things differently. In the past we have	To gain greater engagement and to get children and young people excited to be involved.	More engaged children and young people and a clearer offer to our colleagues.	Young people see the impact of their input and benefit personally from engagement

	<p>young people to do can be very focused on consultation and feel a bit like an afterthought and in anything we do with them I think it is important they see the footprint they have created.</p>	<p>building confidence, feeling valued.</p>	<p>given children and young people a free reign on things (like knife crime posters) and then when it hasn't worked out other people have been blamed and the children and young people feel disengaged - we need the right people in the room, to have honest conversation and boundaries with our young people - this is (I believe) how</p>			
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			most of us would behave with our own children so why would this scenario be different?			
Children We Care for and Care Leavers	Some inconsistent involvement in interviews, some improved work with the Care Leavers Advisory board which needs more embedding, but a lack of participation in thinking about systemic change	That participation is the starting point- young people chairing reviews and setting agenda, it being mandatory to include them interview processes, but also to include their views when it comes to the design of policies, processes and forms	It needs a whole service commitment- and for this to be a priority- where young people set agendas some professional priorities might go by the wayside- and we need senior level support to say that's OK- we also need to adequately provide	We will never be 'Children First' without putting participation centrally	Children and young people will be engaged and empowered, and our priorities will be their priorities- which means they will have more confidence we have listened, that we care and that they matter	Young people chairing reviews and setting agenda Include their views when it comes to the design of policies, processes and forms

			support to young people to assume these roles			
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6.5.4. Champions Opportunities to Develop Participation - Table

This table highlights the opportunities for children and young people to engage in service areas identified from the Champions Programme.

Service Area	Identified Opportunities to Develop Participation
Children's commissioning	Create a platform to engage with young people directly on what and how they would like to be involved in engaging and affecting change in the Council
Youth Justice	<p>Move away from gathering feedback only on items on our (professional) agenda.</p> <p>Services to be based on participation and run and managed by service users with support.</p> <p>Break the cycle of participation being a response to a certain issue, as opposed to a culturally normal fundamental pillar of our service structure.</p> <p>Properly compensate people for their participation.</p>
Programme Management Office - Children First	<p>Clear communication to teams / Programme Management Office about how to engage early in the process.</p> <p>Different and innovative ways of engaging Young People, not just surveys.</p> <p>Clear routes to communicate back to Young People.</p>
Children's residential services	<p>Communication between the Participation teams and residential.</p> <p>More of an awareness of how we can support our young people to engage with this service.</p> <p>More connection for the young people with the participation team.</p>

	Give young people meaningful reward and praise for thier efforts
Voice and Participation Team	Development of Voice Charter Mark. Use of Service Strategy to ensure voice is seen as key part of everyone's role in West Sussex. Development of Voice Champions. Development of discrete voice groups i.e. out of county, children seeking asylum. Development of under 10's Children We Care For work. Development of Informal activities for young people we care for and care experienced young people. Revised Comms strategy.
WSCC virtual school	All service sectors have a joined-up approach to participation and that there is a clear strategy. Staff, foster carers and children/young people in involved in activities together
Fostering	Training should include all senior managers, foster carers, staff etc with young people
Communications and Engagement for CYPL	Young people see the impact of their input and benefit personally from engagement
Children We Care For and Care Leavers	Young people chairing reviews and setting agenda Include their views when it comes to the design of policies, processes and forms
SEND Commissioning	SEND Participation forum Intensive Planning Team
Education and Skills	Autism in Schools programme SEND and Inclusion Strategy

7.5.5. Champions Action Plan – Developing Participation

How the Champions will support the development of participation with children and young people

Over the next 12 months Champions will work collectively to a create action plan to develop the participation opportunities that have been identified in our work with them.

From the work with Champions so far, we have identified some early opportunities that will support the development of meaningful engagement with children and young people.

Annual Surveys

Champions to develop annual surveys to consult with children and young people

We recognise that capturing of the views of children and young people is key to ensuring that our services can be developed to best support them. We also understand that service areas request consultations at different times throughout the year, many surveys ask similar questions and can lead to 'over consultation' with children and young people.

Through the Champions we will agree annual surveys to hear the views of children and young people. These surveys will be designed to ensure we ask children and young people relevant questions, so that all service areas can benefit from children and young people's feedback. We will also ensure that surveys will be scheduled mindfully throughout the year so that children and young people are not 'over consulted' or asked the same question multiple times.

Training

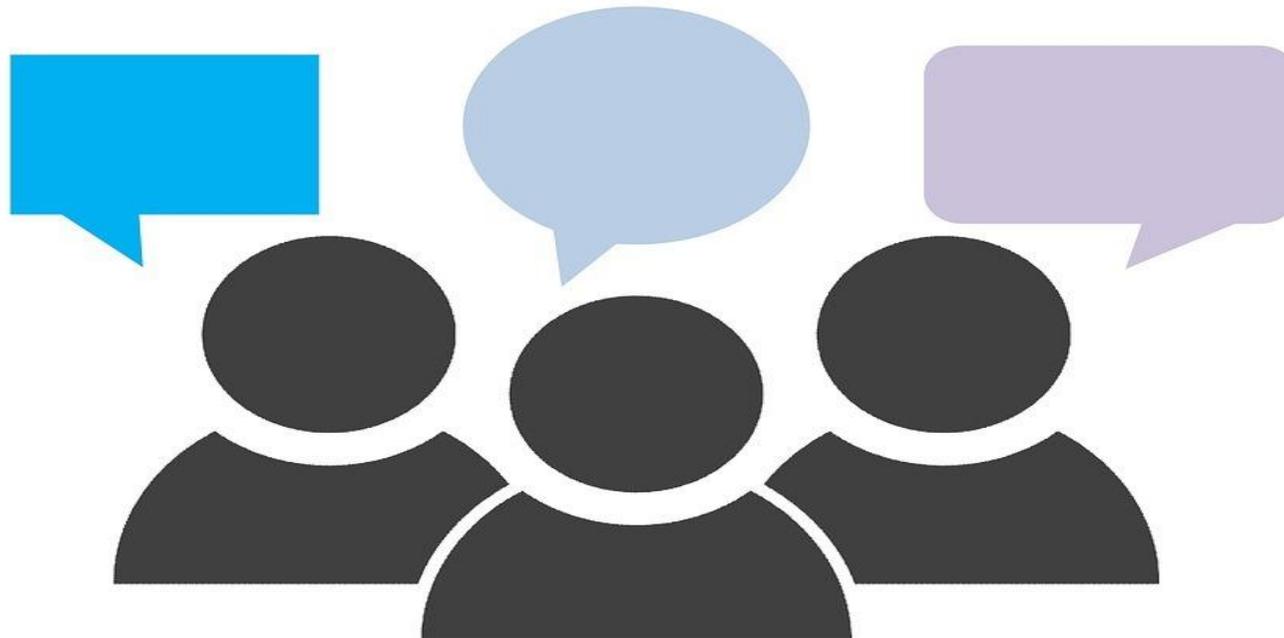
For children and young people, staff and leaders

It is important to develop the relevant skills to understand how to engage with children and young people. Providing development opportunities to staff, children and young people and leaders will help us build a culture of outstanding participation.

We plan to explore development opportunities for children and young people to learn skills in facilitation, presenting and leadership, so they can effectively engage with our service. For staff we aim to offer training that develops their skills in engaging with children and young people, with a particular focus on engagement with LGBTQ+. Finally training for leaders which will be based on our new approach to participation ensuring we have buy-in at every level of West Sussex.

7. Acting on our 3 Pillars of Participation

How we plan to ensure children and young people are listened to, their views shared, and we act upon what they say.



7.1 Listening

We define listening as the act of listening to children and young people and their opinions, views and ideas being unconditionally welcomed. Opportunities for listening include our forums, hosting events for children and young people and more.

7.1.1. Developing our Forums

We know that we need to engage with more children and young people of different ages, and needs, from diverse backgrounds and ensure that we have a space for them to regularly meet, discuss and share views about the services they receive. We have committed to developing our forums to ensure we provide a space for all children and young people.

- **'Mini' Children in Care Council**
A forum for children and young people aged 6-10 years old
- **Forum groups for specific children and young people**
Engagement with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Children in Need
- **SEND peer support sessions**
to support young people with more complex communication needs to engage in our Young Voices forum

7.1.2. Monthly Activities for Children in Need, Children We Care For, and Care Leavers

*Monthly opportunities to bring **Children in Need, Children We Care For, and Care Leavers** together*

We plan to work alongside the services to provide opportunities for care leavers to have a space to connect with their peers, have fun and learn new things. We plan to host monthly events such as:

- 1) Cooking sessions in partnership with local restaurants
- 2) Skills workshops with tradespeople to allow children and young people to learn simple household skills like tiling, and minor household repairs
- 3) Informal fun activities such as bowling, games nights and pizza evenings

Our events will be shared with young people via our social media pages including YourSpace.

7.2. Sharing

We define sharing as the act of communicating children and young people's ideas, views and opinions. This can be done through conversation at meetings, using digital and media, engagement in training, recruitment of staff and more.

7.2.1. Lunch and Listen

Children and young people sharing their views directly with senior leaders

Our 'Lunch and Listen' events aim to bring together children and young people and senior leaders to have lunch and talk. We think it is important to create informal, accessible environments for children and young people of their choosing so they are able to share openly and directly with people who make decisions about the services they receive.

The senior leaders we will invite to our lunch and listen event will be those who are able to influence change directly, such as the Director and Assistant Director, as well as relevant service leads.

We hope, by bringing children and young people and leaders together, we will help leaders hear the views of children and young people directly and allow children and young people to have their voice heard. Together leaders and children and young people can work to create positive change.

Young Inspectors

Care Leavers inspecting and providing feedback on our services

There is no better person to give us feedback on our leaving care services than care leavers. That is why we plan to develop a 'Young Inspectors' programme to provide care leavers with the skills and opportunities to inspect what we do and share with us their feedback.

The services we plan to engage Care Leavers in inspecting are:

- Residential Children's Homes
- Supported Accommodation

7.2.2. Young Person's Scrutiny Committee

Children and young people holding our leaders to account

We aim to set up a young person's scrutiny committee that will hold our leaders to account. This group will meet on a bi-monthly basis and allow children and young people in care and care leavers to bring challenge to decision makers such as the Assistant Director and Cabinet Member for Children and Children and young people. The decision makers will then be able to hear, discuss solutions and feedback at subsequent meetings the differences and outcomes that have been achieved. The challenges will come from collated actions from the facilitated groups and forums outlined in Section 6.2. These are made up of children and young people including those in care and care leavers, and West Sussex County Council .

7.3. Acting

We define acting as taking tangible action based on the views, ideas and opinions of children and young people. This includes changes to services, developing children and young people's ideas, committing resource and more.

7.3.1. Development of the Children and Young People's Plan

Engaging children and children and young people in creating a plan that is right for them.

We know that it is important to have a plan for our children. We also believe that children and young people should have a say in how we support them. That is why we will work with children and young people on their own version of the Children and Young People's plan, and this will guide and focus the review of our current plan in 2022-2023.

Our plan has 6 key principles that explain how we will support children and young people:

1. Voice and Children First
2. Welfare Safeguarding and Exploitation
3. Mental Health and Wellbeing
4. Early Intervention
5. Access to Services and Resources
6. Transitions

We aim to engage children and young people with the current plan by:

1. Creating an Accessible Version of the Current Plan

We know that it's important for all children and young people to access our plan. We will be working with our graphics, digital and relevant teams to ensure we have a version of the plan that is accessible to all children.

2. Developing Lesson Plans for Schools to Engage Pupils

These plans will help us to: communicate the CYPP and ensure children and young people are aware of it; hear feedback on what children and young people hope it will change; feedback into the Children First Board, creating youth accountability, consistent feedback, and actions.

3. Youth Accountability Workshops

We will facilitate 3 workshops to explain the plan, capture expectations and gain feedback from children and young people about the changes they feel have happened since the plan's launch and celebrate successes.

- **Launch workshop**
To launch and highlight the plan and engage by asking them to share their expectations and changes they would like to see.

- **Expectations workshop**
Reviews children and young people's expectations and hear the changes that they feel have happened in the past 6 months

- **Celebration workshop**
To capture and share positive changes that have come from the commitments in the plan.

7.3.2. Participation Training for our Service and Partners

Sharing this strategy with the whole service

To change the way we provide participation in West Sussex, this strategy must be widely understood and shared across our service and our partners.

We plan to develop training for our whole service that focuses on:

- 3 Participation Pillars
- 6 Organisational Challenges
- 5 Rules of Engagement

We know that if we can provide a clear understanding of how our participation works - 3 Participation Pillars - what we are trying to overcome - 6 Organisational Challenges - and what meaningful and ethical participation looks like - 5 Rules of Engagement - we can align our service under a common vision to ensure we are all working collectively to put Children First.

7.3.3. Children's Charters

Building on The Promise for children and young people

Our 'Children's Charters' will show we are committed to building on the work we have done to develop 'The Promise' for children and young people.

These Children's Charters will be developed to enable them to be created for children and young people who are:

- Children in Need
- Children under Child Protection
- Children who engage with our Family Safeguarding model
- Children We Care For
- Care Leavers
- SEND

The charters will be co-produced with service leads and children and young people in 2022. We hope that our Children's Charters will enable children and young people to hold services accountable and enable them to know what they can expect. It will also allow for the development of children's voice within these services.

7.3.4. Annual Events

Celebrating with children and young people

We recognise the importance of celebrating with children and young people, highlighting positive moments and making sure children and young people feel valued and seen. We plan to facilitate 5 large annual events that bring children and young people together in an informal and celebratory way, these include:

- 1) Our Exceptional People in Care awards to take place each Summer
- 2) Christmas Celebration for Children We Care For and care leavers

- 3) A listening celebration event, allowing children and young people in West Sussex to have their voice heard in the Children and Young People's Plan
- 4) A celebration particularly focused on our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children and young people.
- 5) SEND Festival and fun day

8. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

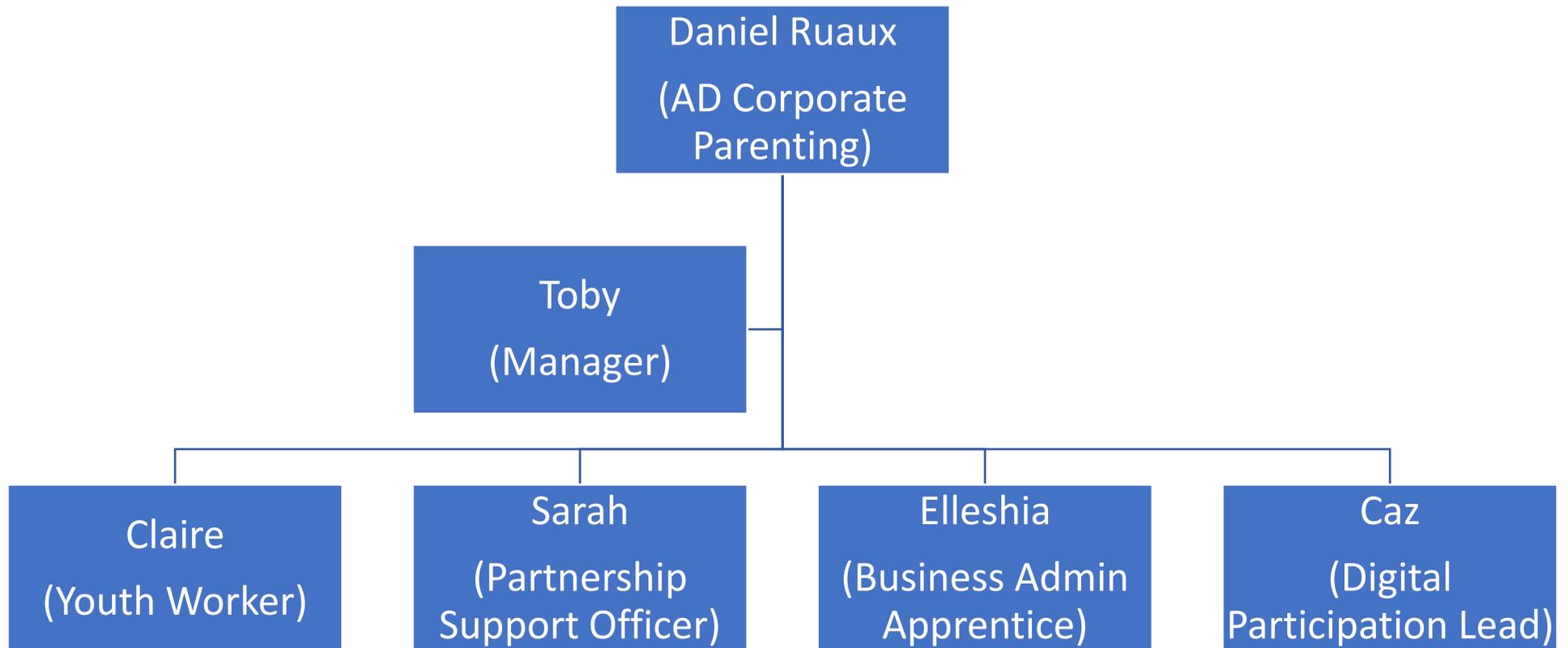
Over the next three years we are committed to ensuring children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities are listened to, their views are shared, and we act to provide the best services. It is our ambition that we have an inclusive participation service that shows we put all Children First

The Voice and Participation Team mission is to take a youth led approach to making a difference in the lives of children and young people in an honest, energetic, enthusiastic and creative way. To commit to this we have a strong and dedicated team of staff who are focused on putting Children First.

9.1. Current Team Structure

How West Sussex currently structures the Voice and Participation Team

Current Structure Map



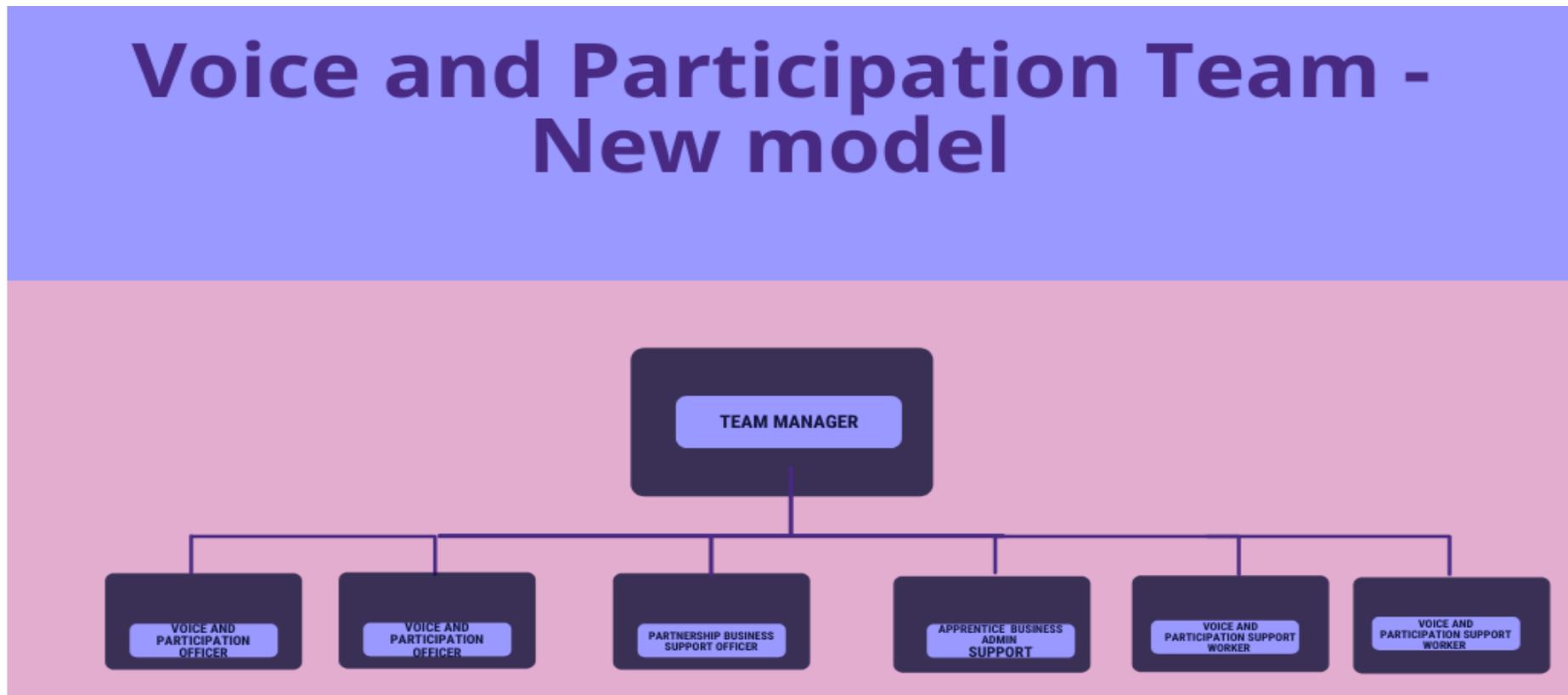
Current Roles and Responsibility – Table

Role	Full/Part Time	Main Responsibilities	Grade
Team Manager	Full Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinating and developing partnership work and projects with a range of appropriate local partners and internal services • Managing Voice and Participation team and ensuring Children's voice at heart of council services, service user involvement and working in partnership. 	12
Youth Worker	Full time	Facilitating youth work session with young people	YW2
Partnership Support Officer	Full time	'Support key developments and projects including EPIC Awards, Social Media communications and other CICC/Care Leaver Activities, as well as leading on communication strategies and reporting	8
Business Admin Apprentice	Full time	Provide administration support for team	3 (end date July 2022)
Digital Participation Lead	Full time	Provide digital lead work on social media, website and youth cabinet	10
Senior Advisor	Full Time	Provide project management on voice work	11 - Vacant
Based in SEND Commissioning Team			
SEND Participation Lead	Full time	Coordinating and developing SEND youth participation across services, working with partners Facilitating Young Voices youth forum	10
SEND participation assistant	Part time	Provide administration support Support delivery of Young Voices outreach and activity days	(end date July 2022)

9.2. Future Team Structure

How West Sussex plans to structure the Voice and Participation Team to adapt to the needs of children and young people today.

Future Structure



NB: The Apprentice Business Admin Support role ends in Summer 2022.

Recruitment to the Voice and Participation Support Worker roles will come from our care experienced young people.

Future Roles and Responsibility – Table

Role	Full/Part Time	Main Responsibilities	Band/Salary
Team Manager	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinating and developing partnership work and projects with a range of appropriate local partners and internal services • Managing Voice and Participation team and ensuring Children's voice at heart of council services, service user involvement and working in partnership. 	12
Participation Lead (wider voice groups)	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be engaged in face-to-face youth work including evenings • Actively developing and delivering innovative voice and participation youth work programmes • To undertake a lead for targeted groups and projects for Voice and Participation team 	10
Participation Lead (Children We Care For (and care leavers))	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be engaged in face-to-face youth work including evenings • Actively developing and delivering innovative voice and participation youth work programmes <p>To undertake a lead for targeted groups and projects for Voice and Participation team</p>	10

Partnership Business Support Officer	F	'Support key developments and projects including EPIC Awards, Social Media communications and other CICC/Care Leaver Activities, as well as leading on communication strategies and reporting	8
Apprentice Admin Support (Contract end date July 2022)	F	Provide administration support for team	3
Participation Support Worker	F	Role for care experienced young person to act as support worker for voice groups with targeted children and young people.	3
Participation Support Worker	F	Role for care experienced young person to act as support worker for voice groups with targeted children and young people.	3

10. Key Performance Indicators

How we will know that our participation with children and young people is effective

Measuring the impact of our work is important to ensuring that children know they come first. We want to be held accountable for ensuring that children and young people's views are listened to, shared and acted upon so that we can continue to shape and develop our services to meet their needs.

In the 'Key Performance Indicator – Table' below we set out how we will measure the impact of our services mapped against our '**6 Organisational Challenges**' with an explanation of the aim, the strategy and the specific measures.

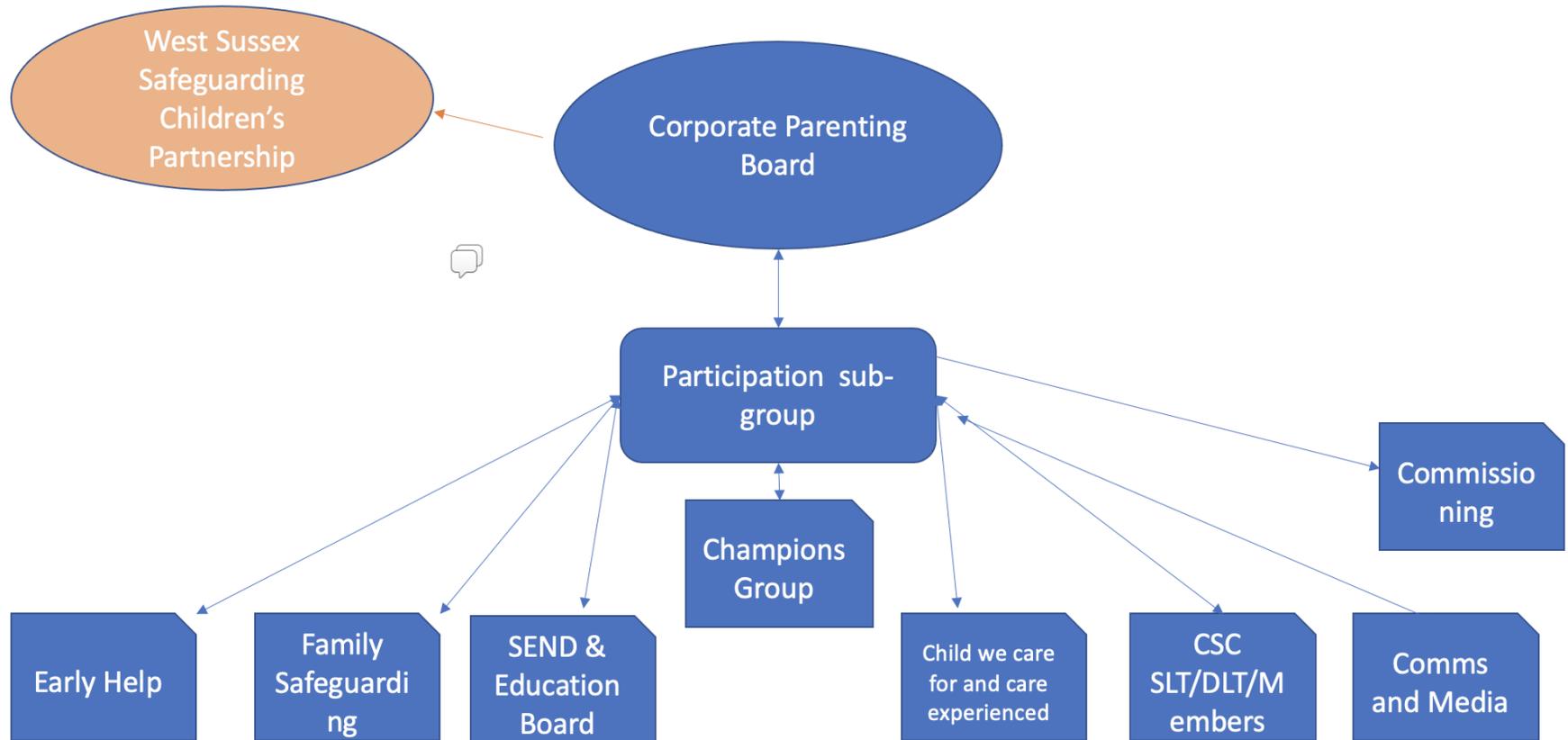
Key Performance Indicator	Organisational Challenge	Aim	Strategy	Impact Measurement
Increased forum engagement	Diversity and inclusion	To increase the numbers of children and young people who attend the following forums: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children in care Council - Care Leavers Advisory Board - Young Voices 	Clearer marketing materials designed for children and young people More frequent communication about the forums	Recording the number of children and young people who attend
Increase Diversity and inclusion of engagement	Diversity and inclusion	To increase the engagement of children and young people from all backgrounds, including but not exclusive to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Black and Asian backgrounds 	Develop relationships with external organisations supporting children and young people	Recording the identity and number of children and young people who engage across all opportunities

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LGBTQ+ - SEND, including those with more complex needs 	<p>from diverse backgrounds</p> <p>Hosting events targeted at children and young people from diverse backgrounds</p>	
Children's voice at heart of council services	Traditional	To ensure that children's voice is at the heart of everything we do. Aim to make sure that we are listening to all children and young people and their views are considered.	One "Big Voice" survey annually to capture views of children and young people. Work detailed in strategy reviewed at regular intervals.	Number of people who engage in survey – statistically significant
Power		To ensure that engagement with children and young people is not tokenistic	Expectation that there be at least one young person on panels with influence and power. That children and young people's views be taken into account in wider area	Attendance at board. Voice Chartermark
Set up new youth forums	Diversity and inclusion	To set up youth forums for residential, mental health, Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and out of county children and young people.	<p>Create a brand for the new forums</p> <p>Clear agenda</p>	Children and young people attending

			Run campaigns to raise the awareness of the forums	
Children and Young People's views about participation	All	To find out if young people feel listened to in ways that work for them, if they feel their views are shared effectively, if they know that action is taken	Consultation Method to be co-designed with young people	Based on method to be co-designed.

11. Governance

Participation Strategy - Governance



12. References

In developing this strategy, we have engaged with:

- Vision for Children, Young People and Learning
- Children First Plan
- Children We Care For and Care Leavers Strategy
- The Promise
- Local Offer

Additionally, we have taken guidance from:

- Department for Education's Government Design Principles.
- Department for Education's participation of young people in education, employment, or training.
- Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies (Gov.uk)
- Plain English Campaign
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Hart's Ladder of Participation
- The Gunning Principle's
- Lundy's Model of the Child Participation

13. Contact

If you would like to speak to us about this strategy you can contact the 'Voice and Participation Team' by emailing voice@westsussex.gov.uk or by calling 0330 222 3314.