

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	15 June 2022
Title:	Participation Strategy
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

This is a covering report to the Children and Families Branch Participation Strategy 2022-2025.

Recommendation(s)

1. To note the contents of the Participation Strategy 2022 – 2025.
2. To take particular note of the governance of the strategy, specifically, the roles and responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Board as laid out within the strategy.

Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to give members of the Corporate Parenting Board an overview of the Participation Strategy 2022-2025 which has been signed off the Children and Families branch management team in April 2022.
4. The previous strategy was in place from 2018 to 2021 and was agreed in line with the structure, functions and delivery model for participation in 2018. The branch has transformed several aspects of how we work with children and families and the most significant change has been the introduction of the Hampshire Approach¹, which is the practice approach that is used within the Children and Families branch to deliver a strength based and family focused service to our children.
5. As part of our move to the Hampshire Approach way of working, the delivery of our core social work and statutory responsibilities focused on hearing the voice of children, young people, their families and carers in relation to their individual plans. We were determined in Hampshire to get this right and

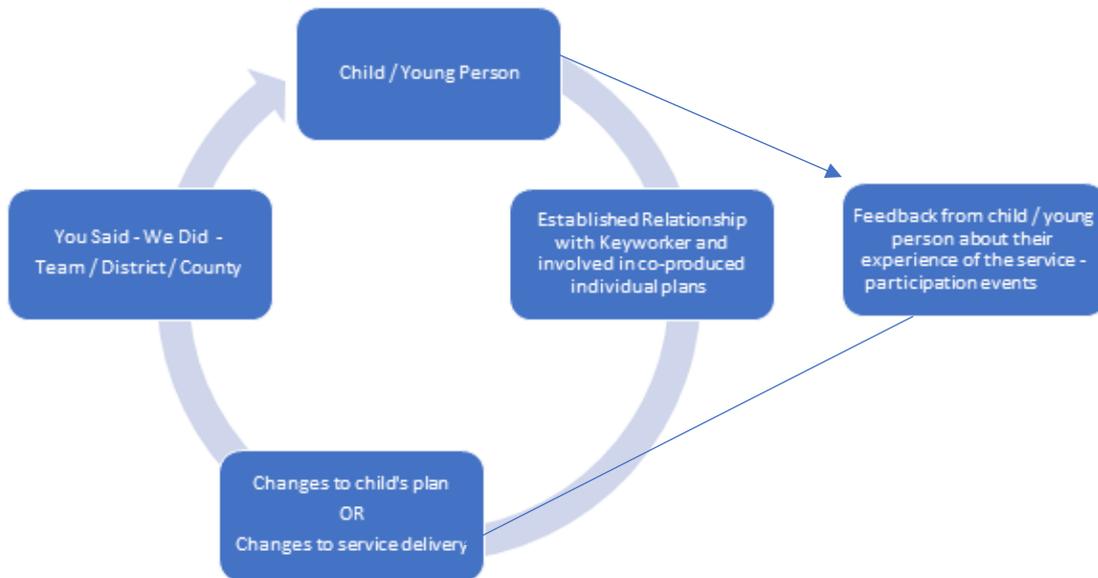
¹ See attached Hampshire Approach leaflet

consultation with children and young people has become integral to practice, processes and performance.

6. We also continued to engage with children and families, especially children we care for, and care experienced young people, through various fun and relationship building activities. These activities were prioritised when we went into lockdown in early 2020 and adapted to reflect the changes in the way we interacted and communicated with children and their families. Although the primary focus of these engagement activities was to support children and staff to build relationships and do something productive and satisfying, there were events where feedback was also gained about families' experience of receiving a service.
7. One of the main priorities in the Participation Strategy is to review our approach to the participation of the children we care for and support the set up and running of a Children in Care Council and a group for care experienced adults. We are currently consulting with our care experienced young people about the terms of reference of this group.

Contextual information

8. The Participation Strategy sets out the vision, principles, aims and benefits of participation.
9. The strategic framework clearly highlights that **all** staff in the Children and Families Branch are promoters and facilitators of participation. This is the direction in which the branch has been purposefully heading for the last 4 years and the governance arrangements make it clear that all staff, working directly or indirectly with children, understand the importance of integrating participation into their day to day work.
10. The methods of participation recognise the sea change in the way we communicate with children and families over the last 2 years, and we look to embrace technology and child friendly means of communication. The model of communication that we have adopted aligns with the advances in communication and technology, but also reflects the Hampshire Approach of shared planning and decision making.
11. The below image demonstrates the cycle of participation in both individual planning and in service improvement.



12. The governance arrangements for participation in the branch are multi-layered and reflect the business as usual model of shared responsibility and accountability. This is laid out in detail within Section 12 of the strategy. The roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services, the Children and Families Branch Management Team and the staff within the branch are clearly outlined here.
13. As part of wider governance arrangements, the Corporate Parenting Board will hold the Hampshire Children and Families branch accountable against its strategic priorities, through robust scrutiny of the delivery of these priorities for children in our care and care experienced young people. They will do this in partnership with children and young people who receive a service from the department.
14. A Participation Action Plan sits under the strategy and is reviewed every 6 months. This action plan is driven through the strategic leads for services, and they remain accountable for monitoring how well participation is embedded in their service.
15. The strategic lead for Participation will use the agreed evaluation mechanisms detailed in the strategy to understand the effectiveness and impact of our participation work. A 'you said, we did' approach will be taken with an emphasis on giving feedback to those we consult and celebrating success with staff and children and families.

Finance

16. There is an agreed central budget for Participation which is £14,000 per year. This will be used by the branch for agreed participation activity.

Performance

17. The Participation Action Plan will be tracked within the Quality Improvement plan (QUIP) which is a business as usual process for the branch. Strategic leads will be accountable for their performance measures on participation.

Consultation and Equalities

18. This will be considered within all the activities undertaken and the section on Inclusion in the Participation Strategy reflects the commitment of the department to ensuring all voices are heard and responded to.

Conclusions

19. The Participation Strategy is ambitious and requires political, strategic and operational commitment in order to ensure its successful implementation. The action plan rightly sets high expectations of leaders, managers and staff to prioritise listening to and acting on the views and wishes of children.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- (a) why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or
- (b) will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions