

CYPE Children & Young People's Participation Framework



Introduction

Framing Kent's Future and Securing Kent's Future identifies that through the development of new models of care and support, Kent County Council (KCC) will work differently to manage the demand and resource challenges facing people-based services and improve care and support for the people of Kent.

To ensure this ambition is achieved the Children, Young People and Education Directorate (CYPE) is committed to delivering the ambitions of Framing Kent's Future through ongoing and meaningful engagement with children, young people and their families. To achieve this KCC will:

- have a clear focus to understand people's needs in the design of services, with greater resident, user, staff and provider engagement, so that the full range of options available can be properly considered.
- provide children and families with consistent, inclusive and accessible services and have opportunities to be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of them.
- provide opportunities for children and young people, who are in receipt of services from Social Care, to have their views and opinions heard and acted upon within their individual care planning, helping to empower them to identify their own needs.

KCC has a legal duty¹ to provide all children and young people in Kent an opportunity to have their say. This includes children in education and those who receive a specific service provided by the Local Authority.

The purpose of this framework is to provide guidance for the Children, Young People and Education Directorate (CYPE) to engage children and young people so they are able to influence decision making in a meaningful way. This framework builds upon existing evidence-based practice and aims to improve the range, consistency and coordination of effective participation across the directorate.

Vision & Aims

In Kent, our ambition is that the voice of children and young people influence and inform what we do and how we behave as a Local Authority.

Seeking the insight of children and young people regarding the experiences of services supports us to:

- respond to young people's identified needs, through their eyes, which in turn enables us to fulfil those needs more effectively.
- design, develop, deliver and evaluate services and policies based on the actual needs of young people, rather than on assumptions.
- use resources efficiently as service solutions have impact.

¹ [Legislation and guidance hyper link](#)

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- have impact on individual children and young people; being involved in participation opportunities they become more confident and empowered, lessening the need for services in some instances.
- support future workforce development as young people understand the range of opportunities on offer in organisations.
- improve outcomes and evidence what differences listening to the child or young person has made.
- enhance personal development of children and young people through opportunities to ensure positive outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, which may include social activities, training and accreditation.
- develop children's and young people's skills and competencies e.g. problem solving, teamwork, leadership, empathy, responsibility and managing emotions.
- provide children and young people with opportunities to meet and socialise with others who may have experienced similar circumstances to them.

It is crucial for professionals to listen to children and young people, who possess unique insights into their own lives, and work with parents and carers to ensure their children's voices are heard and given due consideration. For example, the views of children aged 0 – 4 years and those who are less able to communicate their views.

Four priorities have been developed which will enable effective and consistent involvement of children and young people across CYPE.

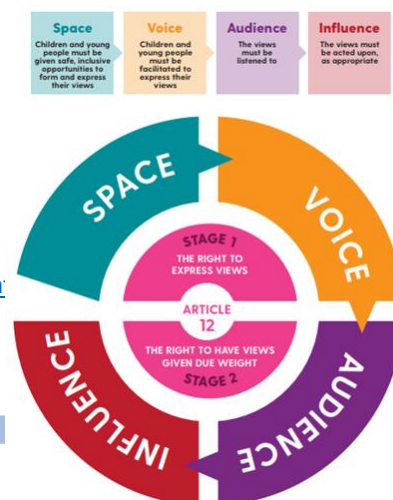
Priority 1: Develop consistency across the workforce, embedding the responsibility of all staff to ensure the voice of children, young people and their families are included in decision making processes at an individual, operational and strategic level.

Priority 2: Utilise and build upon the Lived Experience Engagement and Employment Framework² shaped by children, families and partners, and which aims to create a common understanding of the expectations we have for lived experience to inform all aspects of our strategies and services, and the language and terminology we use to describe this.

Priority 3: Embed the Lundy Model³ of Participation, a rights-based approach which provides a step-by-step pathway to ensure the implementation of Article 12, Respect for the Views of the Child, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The model provides

² Lived Experience and Employment Framework - kentandmedway.icb.nhs.uk/application/files/3017/2423/7258/Lived_Experience_Engagement_024.pdf

³ [Lundy Model of Participation, Centre for Family Hubs](#), [Lundy Model Planning & Checklists](#)



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practical tools to ensure that children and young people are included in decision making in all settings where decisions made will impact on their lives.

Priority 4: Ensure that children and young people's engagement is meaningful and that CYPE capture feedback and evidence its impact on working practices. We will recognise the importance of communicating back to children and young people, so they are informed of the difference their contribution makes.

Principles – Kent Youth Charter

Underpinning our commitment to participation is the Kent Youth Charter. 700 young people in Kent were involved in developing Kent's Youth Charter which features six principles about how young people want staff to engage and work with them.

Children and young people should expect that all staff and volunteers will:	
1. Respect you and be kind <ul style="list-style-type: none">Find out about you, from you.Be relaxed with open body language.Help you to feel welcome.	2. Include you and accept you <ul style="list-style-type: none">Accept everyone's differences and individuality.Be a place that you want to come.Find out and act upon your needs.
3. Listen, understand and act upon what you say <ul style="list-style-type: none">Make enough time for you.Give you opportunities to share your views.If we say we are going to do something, we will do it, and show you the outcomes.	4. Be honest and work to build your trust <ul style="list-style-type: none">We will be clear about our intentions.We will be honest about what we are going to do.We will work to build a trusting relationship with you.
5. Support you to grow and learn from your experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff are trained to work with young people.Staff understand the community and know where to seek help.Staff have knowledge of what opportunities are available to you.	6. Let you lead and make decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none">Give you a voice about the things that affect you.Ensure you understand your right to make choices.Help you feel valued by listening to your views and opinions to make decisions together.

Inclusion

In achieving and embedding our vision and aims, it is necessary when implementing the framework that there is a priority focus on groups of children and young people with protected characteristics and those who often have less opportunity to share their experiences.

Children and young people are unique and have different ways of thinking and communicating. Even if a child or young person is non-verbal, they still have something to tell us; it is our role to make the space accessible for them to share their story and ideas.

When planning engagement activities and programmes for participation, it is imperative that these are accessible to all relevant groups of children and young people and that consideration and support is given

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when required. Resources will focus on ensuring the voice of a diverse range of young people with lived experience.

Vulnerable groups are identified as, but not limited to:

- Children in Care and care experienced young adults, (including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people)
- Children and young people who are in receipt of services from Kent Children Services
- Children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- Children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds
- Children and young people in relative deprivation
- LGBTQ+ Young People
- Young Carers

Delivering the Framework

The successful delivery of the framework and responsibility for the participation of children and young people at an operational and strategic level will be led by a coordinated partnership consisting of the Virtual School Kent (VSK) Participation Team, i-Thrive and Participation Team and the Family Hubs Partnership and Participation Team.

Each of these teams are responsible for working together in establishing clear standards for participation across CYPE and will support staff teams in developing their levels of participation and engagement, while ensuring the voice of children and young people has an impact on decision making and challenging where this is not happening consistently.

- The VSK Participation Team are responsible for facilitating meaningful participation opportunities for children, young people and young adults who are currently or who have previously been in receipt of Social Care Services.
- The i-Thrive & Participation Team are responsible for the elected Kent Youth County Council and youth voice activities across Kent including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- The Family Hubs Partnership and Participation Team has the county oversight of the Parent Carer Panels, as well as the responsibility to ensure the voice of children, young people and their families is central to service provision and decision-making processes.

It is recognised that all professionals working with wider cohorts of children and young people have a role to play to help ensure that children and young people have their voices heard, and their views and opinions are valued and considered. Across Kent there is an established multi-agency youth voice and engagement

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network, ensuring engagement with commissioned providers, health partners and voluntary and community organisations, which enable system wide opportunities for collaboration.

Quality Assurance, Impact and Evaluation

The annual countywide participation action plan (appendix 1) will enable the implementation of this framework and will establish mechanisms for measuring the impact of participation activities on young people and the service at an individual, operational and strategic level.

To ensure the framework is embedded into practice, the CYPE participation teams work closely with the Practice Development Officers within CYPE Safeguarding, Professional Standards & Quality Assurance to ensure it is incorporated within the practice framework and processes of staff working with individual children and young people.

To share learning across CYPE and demonstrate the impact of influence by children and young people's voices service areas will be required to;

1. report on how children and young people have influenced both individual and service decisions.
2. provide feedback to those children and young people involved on how their voice was utilised at an individual, operational and strategic level.
3. promote within CYPE the impact children and young people have had on service development.

This framework sits alongside teams' own Participation Strategies/Plans and links into Service Business Plans. They will form part of an annual review to update the county plan for participation, address any staff development requirements and identify successes or barriers to delivering effective participation practice.

It is expected that insights will be gathered and shared across CYPE. This will enable the identification of themes across CYPE, avoiding duplication, as well as providing effective listening mechanisms to influence services.