



Committee and Date
Council
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Item

Public



Children's Participation and Impact Strategy

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Kirstie Hurst-Knight		

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report sets out Shropshire Council's commitment to the importance of effective participation of children and young people and co-production of the services that affect them. It proposes the adoption of the nationally recognised Lundy (2007) model to support the Local Authority to meet its statutory duties regarding participation and to ensure that children and young people have influence over the decisions that affect them.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Shropshire Plan 2022-2025 is a strategic plan which sets out how we are working towards a healthy and sustainable Shropshire. Participation across all of our services is at the heart of the agenda and key to its success. It involves communities, businesses, health partners and the public sector all working together to address challenges, propose solutions and make informed choices that drive positive change for the benefit of all.
- 2.2. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 52 standards that set out the Rights of a Child. Most countries including the United Kingdom have signed up to the convention. Many countries use the standards wholly or in part to promote children and young people's involvement. The standards of most relevance to the participation of service users are:

- Article 12: Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.
- Article 13: Children and young people have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.
- Article 17: Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information.
- Article 23: Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their community.
- Article 2: Requires all of the rights in the convention on the Rights of the Child to be implemented for every child, without discrimination.

2.3. During both the inspection in February 2022 and focused visit in July 2024, Ofsted inspectors identified that the participation of children in influencing strategic planning is not as sufficiently developed as that which leaders aspire to and that more needs to be done to ensure that young people are actively involved and engaged in attending and influencing the corporate parenting agenda.

2.4. The proposed strategy adopts the Lundy (2007) model of participation for Children and Young People. This focuses on Space, Voice, Audience and Influence and has been used and adopted by national and international organisations, agencies and governments to inform their understanding of children's participation.

- A. Space - Ensuring children have suitable physical and social environments to express their views, with consideration given to their particular needs.
- B. Voice - Enabling children to articulate their opinions and perspectives and allowing their voices to be heard on issues that are important to them.
- C. Audience - Providing an audience for children's views and making sure they are heard by the right people.
- D. Influence - Ensuring children's views have an impact on decision-making processes by taking them seriously and holding decision makers accountable for the inclusion of their feedback.

2.5. There are examples of excellent participation across children's services including the co-chairing of our corporate parenting panel by a young person, the Children in Care Council, our Education Council for Looked After Children and the activities of the Virtual School (including our newly launching Shropshire Voice Choir). Our Detached Youth Team and Town Council in Market Drayton are an excellent example in working jointly with young people to create change in our community at the Market Drayton skate park. The voices of parents and carers are also being heard through our hub advisory groups, shaping the development of our Community and Family Hubs.

2.6. Our participation officer in Early Help is working across services to create a culture change in participation and bring services together with a shared aim – to create impact. They have worked closely with children, young people, parents and carers as well as colleagues to design the proposed participation strategy.

- 2.7. We are striving for inclusivity and including the voice of children and young people with special educational needs, including their parents and carers.
- 2.8. The Participation and IMPACT Project Board, led by the Assistant Director for Services to Children will drive the implementation strategy and the creation of the Youth Parliament, until the strategy and governance arrangements are embedded.
- 2.9 We will work with partners to expand the scope of the Participation Strategy during 2025/26 to include a wider range of partners to enable a consistent system wide approach to adopting the principles outlined in the strategy. This will enable greater impact for children and young people in Shropshire, whatever support or services they are accessing.'

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. For children's scrutiny to agree the Participation and Impact Strategy for young people and note the ambitions set out in the strategy
- 3.2. Endorse the Council's commitment to ensuring that children and young people have influence over decisions and actions on services that affect them.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Without having an agreed participation strategy and evidence of a new approach to participation, Ofsted are unlikely to see any progress in future inspections.
- 4.2. That services that are not co-produced with service users and likely to be less effective.
- 4.3. Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Without having an agreed participation strategy and evidence of a new approach to participation, Ofsted are unlikely to see any progress in future inspections.	Agreement of the new participation strategy
That services that are not co-produced with service users and likely to be less effective.	Service users to be involved co-production for all service design and decision making.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 29 February 2024 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. This demonstrates that significant management action is required over the remainder of the financial year to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all Cabinet Reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. Involving service users in service design and decision making can lead to more effective services, promoting early intervention and preventing the need for more costly acute services.
- 5.3. Any costs will be contained within current budgets.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Where we are able to use Teams for meetings to reduce the impact we do.
- 6.2. The work is being developed digitally, to avoid the use of paper.

7. Background

- 7.1. The Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure that children and young people's voices are heard and inform decision making, this is part of the Ofsted inspection framework and can effect the judgement of an inspection.
- 7.2. In the most recent inspection report dated 30th August 2024, which was a 2 day focused visit on the local authority's arrangements for children in care, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children Ofsted judged –

“Children are supported to participate and engage in a range of opportunities to help improve services and support. The Corporate Parenting Board is well attended by elected members, key partners and senior leaders, and while the voices of children inform the board, more needs to be done to ensure that young people are actively involved and engaged in attending and influencing the corporate parenting agenda.”

- 7.3. The previous Ofsted inspection took place on the 7th to 11th February 2022 and was an inspection of the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection and the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers. Ofsted judged –

“While children’s voices routinely inform their own plans, the participation of children in influencing strategic planning is not as sufficiently developed as that which leaders aspire to. In response, a project is starting which will involve children in its steering group and have children’s representation at the corporate parenting board, with children actively informing future strategic plans. A care-experienced care ambassador is now employed, supporting children to attend the Care Leavers Forum and working with elected members to raise awareness in the local economy. This is leading to increased work experience opportunities for children in care and care leavers.”

- 7.4. Other statutory duties have been placed on the Virtual School in relation to participation and Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services to Improve Young People’s Well-being Impacting on Youth Provision.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. Resources for participation have been significantly reduced prior to 2017. The participation strategy will be implemented by pulling together existing resource from across Children’s Services.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. In Shropshire, we want to ensure that children have access to space to share their views, be informed about developments in Shropshire, have their views heard and make an impact on decision making.
- 9.2. We are ambitious to engage all children and young people, especially those who have special educational needs, disabilities, those who are considered vulnerable and in need of extra support.
- 9.3. This strategy sets out how we plan to listen to young people, respond to them and act on their views, ensuring they know we value their knowledge and work with them to build a better future for all children and young people in Shropshire.
- 9.4. The Children and Young People’s Participation and Impact Strategy ensures that the Council is compliant with statutory requirements.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

- Ofsted Inspection Report 30th August 2024 - <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50255790>
- Ofsted Inspection Report 7th to 11th February 2022 - <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50180006>

Local Member:

Consultation with Local Member – Please consider the Local Member Protocol (see page E60 onwards of part 5 of the Constitution) and determine whether it is necessary to consult with the local member over the proposal set out in this report. This may not always be applicable (e.g. where the proposal affects all of Shropshire) but it should always be a consideration and in some cases a necessity so as to comply with the spirit of the Protocol.

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

APPENDIX A - Draft Participation and Impact Strategy Children's Services 2025-2027 (awaiting Shropshire Council branding).