



Education & Children's Services

Service User Participation Strategy 2009-2011

1 Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to involving parents, carers, children and young people in their individual care as well as the design, delivery and evaluation of Children and Families Services.

It is important that children, young people and families are supported to express their wishes and views about the services that are provided for them. Research and experience have shown that people respond better to services and achieve better outcomes if they participate in the decision making process. (Learning to Listen, Guidance by the Children and Young People's Unit 2001). Furthermore, policy drivers across the UK, such as Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) in Scotland, are placing increasing expectations on agencies to demonstrate how they are meaningfully engaging service users. The 21st Century Review of Social Work requires us to '*ensure that people who use services and their carers have ever greater choice and involvement in decisions about their own care and the design and delivery of services, through new approaches to the co-production of service.*'

Participation is a multi-layered concept that includes:

- The interaction between adults/parents/carers, staff, young people and children
- A safe environment
- For children, a trusting relationship with an adult with whom they are familiar
- Understandable, jargon free language
- Preparation and support
- A clear purpose
- Feedback

2 Children and Families Services Vision for Participation

In Perth and Kinross all children, young people, their parents and carers will have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives. They will have access to the services which they need and the opportunity to shape how these services are planned and delivered.

3 Principles of Effective Participation

- Participation is driven by the needs of service users, including parents, children and young people.
- All service users have an equal opportunity to participate
- Support is given to ensure the involvement of groups of service users who face the greatest barriers
- Service user participation is based around a properly resourced framework, which includes an effective mechanism for feedback
- Participation brings mutual benefits for adult service users, children, young people and service providers
- Participation leads to positive outcomes, which are communicated to and agreed with service users
- All agencies working with children and young people should work together to support and promote participation.

4 National Background

This strategy can not be viewed as a 'stand alone' document, it is congruent with a series of drivers in the form of legislation, regulation and guidance in the UK including the Personalisation agenda, the principles of 'Citizen Leadership,' and the Single Outcome Agreement priorities for high quality, continually improving and efficient public services which are responsive to local people's needs.

It is recognised that agencies must provide parents and families with appropriate support to participate in decision making relating to both their day to day care and the development of services for children and families. Local Authorities must be aware of potential barriers to participation such as the use of jargon and issues of power imbalance, and address these as far as possible in participation planning. Local Authorities and agencies must develop systematic consultation processes to enable the local community to have an input in the ongoing work of the department.

5 Local Context

Perth and Kinross has an overarching Customer Care policy and service standards with a focus on access, quality, information about standards, managing dissatisfaction, fairness and equality in service delivery, which should underpin activity within Children and Families Services as well as wider Council activity.

This strategy is congruent with the principles and local targets identified within the Integrated Children's Services Plan, ECS Policy Statement for Change and Improvement (2007), and the key local priorities of the Single Outcome Agreement to improve community and service user engagement in service development and delivery. Similar strategies are being developed for the engagement of parents, carers, families and communities across services (*i.e. Community Engagement Strategy and Integrated Children's Services BMIP*).

Principles for effective communication with children and young people across all council services, are currently being developed in Perth and Kinross in partnership with local young people . These principles will underpin all participation development work and will be launched later this year with associated training events for staff, to share good practice.

6 Current Practice

A culture of encouraging participation is well established with Perth and Kinross Children and Families Services and there are a range of longstanding participation initiatives as well as more recent developments. A recent HMIE Child Protection Inspection in Perth and Kinross found that staff had supported and encouraged families well to participate in decisions about their care and took account of their views in future planning. They also noted that local services are very good at seeking the views of children and families and involving them in policy development. For example, parents have recently been involved in the development of the parenting strategy and well established youth groups and Pupil Councils had been involved in community planning. The following are current examples of good practice in service user participation in Perth and Kinross.

In order to support their involvement in decisions about their day to day care, all young people subject to Child Protection Case Conferences or 'Looked After' Review meetings are sent, and helped to complete a 'What Do You Think' form. Young people are given information when they are accommodated which raises their awareness of their right to make their views heard. They are also given the opportunity to express their views on their experience of foster care through exit interviews. Children and Young People are also being supported to have their say, or have their views represented in formal meetings by a 'Who Cares?' Independent Advocate who can either attend meetings with the child/young person or on their behalf. The recent

audit of 'Looked After' Reviews indicates that 80% of attendees felt they were helped to express their views during the meeting. The development of the new electronic Care Plan has enhanced the recording of parent and children views in their individual care planning arrangements

The Family Placement Team have developed feedback questionnaires which are sent following placement to the child/young person and Social worker to seek their views on the care provided. There are plans to develop this questionnaire to include seeking views on the quality of support offered to carers by the Family Placement Team. The Permanence team have established a carer consultation group which has representations from Carers and Teams.

The newly established Community Support Team (formerly the Residential Team), the Youth Justice Team and the Children and Families Fieldwork Teams all utilise questionnaires for children/young people and their families to seek views about their experiences of the team.

The new residence and respite provision for children with additional support needs, is being developed in consultation with children and young people and carers. The Throughcare Service has also carried out significant consultation with young people who use their service on the move to shared premises with Community Services including focus groups and one to one sessions.

The Child Health Team are currently reviewing the service they provide and planning the delivery of future services. All parents involved with the service have been contacted to let them know about the review and give them opportunity to have a say in decisions about local service planning and development.

7 Strategic Priorities

In order to achieve the vision, the following five key areas for improvement in service user participation have been identified:

7.1 A systematic approach to gaining service user feedback across the service

A range of systems are being developed to elicit the views of service users across Children and Families Services. All families who have been involved with the social work department receive a standard letter when their file is closed advising them of the ways that they can give feedback e.g. by telephone, letter, or online survey. A random sample of 'closed cases' is followed up on a three monthly basis by telephone to give them the opportunity to give specific feedback if they haven't done so already.

The results of all feedback are collated within Education and Children's Services and key themes are reported and fed back to the Child Protection Committee and the Integrated Children's Services Planning Group on a six monthly basis.

7.2 Service user feedback is addressed as a priority within Team Improvement Plans

All teams will include their processes for seeking service user feedback in their Team Plans. This will ensure that there is a systematic process for service users to participate in their individual care plans, and that this is consistent across the service and reviewed regularly. All feedback will be collated at six monthly intervals, and findings reviewed within the Framework for Improvement

7.3 Consistency of support for children and young people to participate in key meetings

All young people who are involved in a child protection conference will receive age appropriate preparation and information about the meetings. They will be supported to give their views using their preferred method. All young people will have the option to have an independent advocate from Who Cares, who can support their participation at child protection case conferences or attend on their behalf.

7.4 Ensure feedback themes inform service development

Key themes from team and service feedback will be collated within specific areas of service ,reported to the CFS Senior Management Team 6 monthly, and used to inform the Service Improvement Plans on an annual basis. In addition reports made to the Integrated Children's Services Planning Group, with recommended actions to address issues where appropriate.

8. Evaluation of Service user strategy implementation

A Progress Report to be submitted to Children and Families Senior Management Team in DEC '09 and thereafter 6 monthly.

Progress on targets identified in Team Plans to be evaluated annually as part of the improvement cycle.

An action plan outlining specific requirements is appended.

Priority	Task	Person Responsible	Timeline
7.1 There is a systematic approach to gaining service user feedback across the service	<p>Themes from team feedback are collated into a report and action plan to be presented to SMT bi-annually. Child protection related feedback reported to CPC</p> <p>Standard letter to all families where case closed encouraging feedback through a range of mechanisms, i.e. website, phone, letter, interview. Also, advising someone may contact them by telephone to seek feedback if not already provided</p>	<p>Team leaders, Improvement Officers</p> <p>SSW Planning</p>	<p>February 2010</p> <p>October 2009</p>
	Questionnaire for parents on website with 'pop up' to encourage service users to complete the questionnaire	SSW Planning and Alison Thompson/IT	Creation of Adult survey mechanism complete

Priority	Task	Person Responsible	Timeline
<p>7.2 Service user feedback is addressed as a priority within Team Improvement Plans</p> <p>7.3 Consistency of support for children and young people to participate in key meetings for all children and young people.</p>	<p>Web based questionnaire for children and young people to be developed in 'child friendly' design based on feedback from young people about use of bright colours and pictures.</p> <p>Incorporate 'Service User Feedback' as a priority within all Team Improvement Plans</p> <p>Who Cares' Independent Advocate to attend TL's meeting and team meetings to improve understanding of her role in supporting children and young people to participate in CP conferences,</p> <p>Further review and development of electronic care plan to improve recording of service user views</p>	<p>SSW Planning</p> <p>Team Leaders</p> <p>Team Leaders 'Who Cares' , Service Managers</p> <p>Improvement Officer MM</p>	<p>Children's questionnaire November 2009</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>December 2009</p> <p>December 2009</p>

Priority	Task	Person Responsible	Timeline
	Development of Integrated Assessment Framework including views of children, parents and carers.	Improvement Officer and partner agency representatives.	Initial Pilot review April 2010
	Recording of parent and children views in individual assessment and care planning arrangements in line with developing assessment and care plan arrangements	Team leaders/ Social workers	April 2010
	Parents and young people to be consulted and involved in the development of information materials for Service users.	CP Planning/schools/ Blairgowrie Team	Ongoing
7.4 Ensure feedback themes inform service development	Themes from team and service feedback to be incorporated into a report and action plan to be presented to CPC and ICSP group bi-annually	SSW Planning/ Service Manager Fieldwork services	January 2010

Priority	Task	Person Responsible	Timeline
.	Record of service user consultation included as standard in all Business Cases and proposals	Service Managers	Review April 2010
	Youth and Pupil Councils and Service User Groups to be consulted on new policies and protocols which affect them.	SSW Planning/schools	Review April 2010