

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council Children & Young People's Engagement System & Engagement & Participation Strategy – Position Statement
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 3 June 2013
WARD	None specific
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OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Wokingham Borough Council will support children and young people to become active citizens in the community and will enable this vision to become a reality. All services provided by Wokingham Borough Council that impact on children and young people's lives need to be able to demonstrate that children and young people have participated in developing proposals for change, service planning and other developments.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee

- 1) notes the work to date by the Wokingham Local Safeguarding Children's Board on listening to the voice of children and young people on safeguarding issues
- 2) considers the proposed approach to engaging with all children and young people across council services and, where appropriate, other services in Wokingham
- 3) considers how the committee might monitor the engagement of children and young people in the development and delivery of council services in the future

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides an update on establishing how children and young people have been engaged to date in seeking their views on processes and provision and sets out progress on the development of the Children and Young People's Engagement and Participation Strategy.

Appendix 1 sets out a range of recent and current evidence of outcomes of engagement and participation of children, young people & their families in the Wokingham which are helping to shape a Children & Young People's Engagement & Participation Strategy.

1. Background

Following the Ofsted Inspection in November 2012, there are a number of recommendations for improvement in relation to engaging with children, young people and their families:

“Ensure that the views of children and young people are fully elicited and reflected in all assessments and planning processes and, wherever possible, are supported in attending meetings that discuss their well-being and plans for the future”.

“Implement systems to collect the view of children and young people and their parents and carers about the services that they receive and use this to develop services”.

Currently Wokingham Borough Council does not have a Children & Young People’s Engagement Strategy. It is proposed that a strategy be devised which covers all services, not just those relating to safeguarding, which is the focus of OFSTED’s recommendation. Work is currently underway to develop and approve an Engagement Strategy to be agreed and implemented by 1st July 2013.

2. Current Picture

Work is currently underway to set out the engagement system that currently exists by identifying all existing groups and networks of children and young people in the Wokingham. This includes carrying out a gap analysis to identify any groups of children and young people who are not represented within these groups or networks. This will also include identifying those groups and networks that are working well and others that are not.

Appendix 1 sets out a range of recent and current evidence of outcomes of engagement and participation of children, young people and their families in Wokingham which are helping to shape a Children & Young People’s Engagement & Participation Strategy.

WBC Officers are currently in the process of making contact with all of the identified groups and organisations working with children, young people and their families in to:

- Identify what engagement, consultation and participation these groups are currently undertaking with children, young people and families
- Request copies of the evidence, information and data
- Collate the main key messages being heard from children, young people and families in the Wokingham Borough
- Build up a relationship with all groups to help join up the engagement system in the Wokingham Borough and to drive the Engagement Strategy forward.

This piece of work in relation to identifying the current engagement system supports the current Children’s Centres and Youth Service Review and the consultation with children, young people and families that is currently taking place in relation to the Service Review until end of June 2013.

3. Children's Services – Key Messages from Children and Young People

Appendix 1 sets out what children, young people and their families are saying and the key messages that are being heard.

4. Future picture – from 1st July 2013

Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham Children's Services are committed to embedding the vision that all key strategies and actions will be based on comprehensive, continuous and consistent feedback and involvement of children, young people and their families in reviewing services quality and in shaping future service design. The WBC Children & Young People's Engagement & Participation Strategy will set out how all services in the Wokingham Borough meet their commitment to engaging with children, young people and families to ensure that their views and contributions lie at the heart of decision making.

The Children & Young People's Engagement & Participation Strategy will set out:

- the vision
- the agreed overarching set of principles of engagement with children & young people.
- the national context and policy drivers
- A model for engagement including a range of mechanisms in relation to engaging with children, young people and their families in the Wokingham Borough and an action plan for implementation of the strategy

5. Future Development

A range of models for developing engagement and participation with children, young people and their families have been researched.

Set out below are a number of areas for consideration to ensure that engagement and participation of children and young people is embedded within all service areas and monitored on a regular basis:

5.1 Youth Forum

Discussions and ideas are currently being developed in relation to the possibility of establishing a Youth Forum for the Wokingham Borough. The Forum could be made up of a group of young people who are representative of the young people in the Wokingham Borough.

Representation could include: Looked After Children (LAC), Learning Difficulties & Disabilities (LDD), Youth MPs, Young Carers, Children In Need (CIN), Special Educational Needs (SEN), Youth Offending Service (YOS), Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT).

5.2 Engagement Champions across WBC Services to be identified

Consider the establishment of Engagement Champions for each service area and partner agency and the potential develop a Children & Young People's Engagement Forum to share good practice and resources.

5.3 Child & Young People's Celebration Event

Children and young people could be involved in the planning and production of a celebration event that enables the positive engagement and participation work taking place with children and young people to be shared and celebrated. The event will also be attended by children and young people.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services and priorities?) All services will be involved in the strategy

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

OFSTED Inspection report 21 st December 2012

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Appendix 1

Evidence of Previous & Current Engagement & Participation work with Children and Young People in the Wokingham Borough

WBC Officers are currently in the process of identifying what engagement, consultation and participation has recently or is currently being undertaken with children, young people and families in the Wokingham Borough. As part of this process we are collating copies of the evidence, information and data and identifying the main key messages being heard from children, young people & families in the Wokingham Borough.

Set out below are some examples of the Engagement & Participation work that has been or is currently being carried out with children, young people and their families in the Wokingham Borough.

Wokingham Borough Council Services:

- 1. Children in Care**
- 2. Youth Offending Service**
- 3. Bridges Respite Centre – including Case Study**
- 4. Parenting & Family Support**
- 5. Family First – including Case Study**
- 6. Early Years, Childcare & Play Service**
- 7. Youth Service & Children’s Centre Review**

WBC Partners:

- 8. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – including Case Study**
- 9. Wokingham Borough Schools**

- 1. Children in Care**

WBC Children’s Service’s Children’s Rights Officer role ensures that children and young people’s views are listened to and wherever possible acted upon. The Children in Care Council has been set up by children & young people in Care who represent all CIC in the Wokingham Borough. The CIC Council are also represented on the Corporate Parenting Panel. Examples of how WBC ensures that the voice of Children In Care is heard are:

- Advocacy and Participation:
- Three recent questionnaires sent to CIC and LAC.
- The Making Care Fair Group – annual newsletter, ideas to decorate at the Here4U building, questionnaire for Here4U to access team standards, comments on changing the Review sheets for young people, list of activities with Here4U team.

- Analysis of questionnaires on CIC and LAC views on safeguarding/staying safe
- CICC Business Plan 2012-2013
- Your second voice questionnaire
- Checking the Pledge 2012
- Reviewing the Pledge
- CIC presentation to the whole of the Council
- Annual Awards Day

What has happened as a result:

- The CIC Council have produced a new care review form for older young people which is being trialled at the moment.
- Young People's statutory process – a new paper is being written.
- Annual report being produced to evidence work of CIC Council up to March 2013.
- Care Leavers week which included CIC staffing a display stand at Shute End.
- Follow up to the Pledge,
- Producing a check list for Social Workers in relation to CIC ensuring that the little things are not forgotten

Key messages from CIC:

2. Youth Offending Service

YOS consult with all their service users and this information is used within the service planning. YOS look at risk and conflict from individual feedback and use to continuously monitor the service required throughout the year. They ask for feedback from young people after each session via a feedback form. YOS has an online feedback service called 'You can say' which is a self assessment with a holistic approach and asks for feedback about how children & young people are feeling. There is a game after each module to encourage interactivity. Young people involved with YOS are also fully involved in their assessment process at all stages. YOS had previously held open days which provided invaluable feedback. The service are to prepare a business case for an Open Day and ask Thames Valley Police if they could support this and look into the open day being an opportunity for a wider remit of consultation with children & young people.

3. Bridges Respite Centre

Bridges regularly consult with children & young people around the services they provide. The staff at Bridges look at different ways to interact with non-verbal children including notice board and visual aids making sure all children's views are taken into account. There are a variety of different methods – tailored reviews packs, visual pictures to ask if the children like something or not. Questionnaires – symbol versions are available. It is felt that further work was needed to

ensure that all children & young people's voices are captured and services need to be creative in order to do this.

Case Study 1 – Bridges Respite Centre

Here are some of the consultations Bridges have recently completed with the young people are;

'Which photo would you like on all your documents?'

- The young people were given a choice of photos, depending on their abilities, some were given a choice of two, some looked through all of the photos on the computer, the young people chose by verbally saying, pointing and eye pointing.
- Once the young people had chosen their photo, these were displayed in the dining room, then all paperwork which had a photo of the young person was changed to reflect their choice

Where would you like to go in the holidays?

- The young people had an ability group set. They then had a choice of two/three options from the things they are known to enjoy. The young people made their choices (majority won), these were then displayed.
- The young people went out on the activity and photos from this were then displayed.

We are having a 10 year birthday party at Bridges, what would you like at the party?

- The question was asked to the young people verbally, we internet searched parties to come up with ideas and had a range of photos/symbols for the young people to choose.
- The young people chose balloons, cakes, music, ice cream, Fred in the Shed. These were all completed on the day. One young person asked for Mr Blobby, which we unfortunately we were unable to get. This was explained to the young person who said 'ok'.

Would you like the bedrooms to be decorated?

- Young people we verbally asked (for the more able) and were also given a choice of two themes for the young people who found broad choices

For less formal consultations we did a consultation on a new food menu. We changed the meals for 6 weeks (on a three week rolling rota) the young people then discussed what they liked/disliked at the time, the young people who were nonverbal showed this by facial expressions. A particular dislike was vegetable cannelloni. This was then taken off the menu. A big like was the chicken and vegetable fajitas, which we kept on the menu. The young people always have a choice each meal time too.

The young people also complete a consultation for their reviews. Some young people will write what they would like to contribute. Due to the ability of the young people this is based around what they like/dislike doing at Bridges such as – one young person said they like pampering (painting nails, foot spa) but disliked playing with dolls. One young person said staff could dry their hair better. The outcomes from this is that the young people always choose what they

would like to do on their visit (they did previous to this consultation) Staff were reminded in a team meeting about drying hair with this particular young person.

Key Messages fed back from staff at Bridges are that children & young people say:

- More clubs & activities accessible & supportive of children with additional needs are required in the Wokingham Borough.

4. Parenting & Family Support

The WBC Parenting & Family Support Team listens to the Child's voice in various ways. A nationally recognised 'Strengths & Difficulties' questionnaire is used and is given to the child/ren before and after their parent/carer attends a parenting course to evidence the changes & impact. 'In My Shoes' is another test that is used by the team to see how a child is feeling and whether things have improved for them. There is also an adolescent assessment. The data gathered shows the impact on a child's wellbeing and is evidence based and shows it has made a difference. The Parenting & family Support Teams also ensure that the views of children and young people are sought through home visits, separate conversations with the child, speaking to parents and conversations with the school. Practitioners build good relationships with the child and ask them what they hope will change once their parents have completed their parenting course.

5. Family First

The Family First programme in Wokingham has been established with a strategic vision of introducing a 'restorative' way of working with families, children and young people. The primary distinction of the programme is that it seeks to work 'with' service users; it will not do 'to' or 'for' members of the community.

The restorative way of working is designed to empower young people/parents and carers to take responsibility for, and find solutions to, the difficulties they face; in partnership with professionals. This is a particularly important approach for this cohort of families, who have often been resistant to working with professionals in the past.

Some outcomes that can be evidenced through Engagement and Participation of children, young people and families as part of the Families First Project can be seen in this anonymous case study:

Case Study 2 – Families First Madison's Life

Madison's need

When Madison was first introduced to the Family First programme her attendance at school was less than 40%, she had been in trouble with the Police, had needed to change schools because of her behaviour, was regularly going missing and had been referred to Children's Social Care several times in the preceding year - the family felt as though they were at breaking point.

Developing the Plan

Professionals had tried many different approaches to support Madison and her family and nothing seemed to be helping, in fact the risks she was facing were increasing. Madison and her parents agreed to working with Family First and to a Family Group Conference (FGC). The family, with the support of professionals, devised a plan that would help Madison and her family to address the risks in her life. The plan was based on Madison's words and her desire for change; it was focussed on helping her achieve her ambitions and hopes i.e. to work with small children and it built on the things that were going well. The Family First programme worked with the Early Years team to create a unique opportunity for Madison to work with young children one morning a week, as long as her attendance at school increased. In addition, Family First co-funded with the family some specialist emotional health support for Madison to address the difficulties she was facing that were leading to her behaviours.

What difference did a restorative plan make?

Within two months of the family developing a plan Madison hadn't been missing from home once, had not been in trouble with the Police at all, was no longer being referred into Children's Social Care and her attendance at school had increased by 16%. Within four months Madison's school attendance increased to 84%, she had received a distinction in one subject at school and was 'caught up' with all but one subject. Madison is working to achieve several GCSEs and has a target to specifically achieve an A-C in English and Maths. If she can achieve this, the Early Years team in the Local Authority have offered her a scholarship to become a member of the Early Years workforce in the borough.

What has Madison and her family's experience of working restoratively with Family First been?

In Madison's words 'things are much calmer at home' and that she felt 'able to say how I feel.' In the words of her parents 'we had lost hope that things could change' and now 'things are so much better'. At Madison's most recent review her father commented that his family was 'unrecognisable' now, compared to year previously and that the restorative FGC process 'had really made a difference.'

6. Early Years Service

The WBC Early Years, Childcare & Play Service are currently launching their "Working Together Achieving More" project. As part of this project an online Parents Survey is to be sent out to parents to establish how well Early Years settings are engaging with and working with parents.

7. Youth Service & Children's Centre Review

Wokingham Borough Council are currently in the process of consulting with children, young people and their families in relation to the Children's Centre and Youth Service review and the result of the consultation will be available at the end June 2013.

WBC Partners

8. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

Berkshire CAMH Service is a member of the CAMHS Outcome Research Consortium (CORC), a world-leading collaboration of mental health specialists from over 70 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across the UK and beyond. Members collect questionnaire responses from young people and families they work with to give them insight into how far they are achieving positive outcomes and how service users experience the care they receive.

Berkshire CAMHS currently use the following three questionnaires:

- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Commission for Health Improvement- Experience of Service Questionnaire (ESQ).
- Children's Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)

CAMHS now have a named participation lead and CORC Leads working across the Service to ensure that this data is captured, processed and any required action undertaken.

In the Anxiety and Depression Pathway CAMHS are currently trialling the CYP IAPT ROMS (Routine Outcome Measures) which are tools used in session with children and young people to enable clinicians to track experience and effectiveness of treatment throughout an intervention. In addition CAMHS collect patient experience data at various times across the year using electronic tracker devices and also undertake patient participation group work in specific pathways and teams within the service at various points in the year.

Case Study 3 – CAMHS Feedback

Some of the feedback received from young people in the Wokingham Borough accessing the CAMHS service includes:

“I felt I was listened to and that my opinion was taken into consideration and not just thrown aside.”

“Everyone was really kind and listened to me. They gave me way to help me and my mum.”

“That they help me to not be worried by listening to me, and cared about me.”

CAMHS have also had feedback on the appropriateness of the waiting room environment for the different age groups – e.g. toys, asking for a TV etc. We are looking into what we can do to improve this within the constraints around infection prevention and control and the issues like noise sensitivity etc. of some of our clients - resources, displays etc. to make it more inviting. We are also improving our processes around communicating with children and families at the point of referral and while they are waiting for treatment – working to use IT solutions such as text and email to improve communication and to develop our web-based resources to provide self-help information, guide to suitable resources etc.

9. Schools

School Councils:

Initial work has begun with School Councils to collate and shape the engagement & participation that is taking place with all school pupils in the Wokingham Borough.

Youth Safe Communities Questionnaire:

The Community Safety Partnership are currently carrying out an online Youth Safe Communities questionnaire via all Secondary Schools in the Borough. The aim of the questionnaire is to establish how safe children and young people living in the Wokingham Borough feel both within school and within their local communities. The questionnaire will highlight any key messages that arise from the responses received and these will feed into the WBC Children & Young Peoples Engagement & Participation Strategy.

Conclusion & Next Steps

The information set out above evidences that there is currently a large amount of Engagement & Participation with Children, Young People and their families already taking place within the Wokingham Borough. However Wokingham Borough Council's aim is to enable there to be a joined up engagement system that WBC can support via the development of a WBC Engagement & Participation Strategy for Children & Young People.

Wokingham Borough Council and Wokingham Children's Services are committed to embedding the vision that all key strategies and actions will be based on comprehensive, continuous and consistent feedback and involvement of children, young people and their families in reviewing services quality and in shaping future service design. The WBC Children & Young People's Engagement & Participation Strategy will set out how all services in the Wokingham Borough meet their commitment to engaging with children, young people and families to ensure that their views and contributions lie at the heart of decision making.