

Participation Strategy:

Children and Young People

2016 - 2020

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1. Introduction

This is a Participation Strategy intended for everyone in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) who works with children and young people aged 0-19 years of age (up to 25 if they have a disability or are included in the Looked After cohort)

This includes those staff who work directly with children and young people or who commission or manage staff, services and organisations whose work either supports or impacts on the lives of children and young people.

In B&NES this includes staff working in:

People and Communities
Place
Resources

This strategy intends to:

Set out the B&NES vision for participation
Clarify what participation involves.
Share models of current good practice
Outline an Action Plan for participation 2016-2020

2. Vision and Values

Since 2000 B&NES has been signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 12 states that:

‘children and young people have a right to be involved in all decisions that affect their lives’

Our vision for all children, young people and their families in B&NES is to ensure that they will all have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives and to help shape some of those decisions.

Our strategic priorities for children and young people are set out in the B&NES Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) [LINK](#)

The overall vision in our plan is that:

We want all Children and Young People to enjoy childhood and be well prepared for adult life.

The Priorities in our current CYPP 2014-2017 are:

- Children and Young People are Safe
- Children and Young People are Healthy
- Children and Young People have Equal Life Chances

We will continue to focus on these priorities by working together with children, young people and their families.

3. Definition of Participation

Participation - is the process by which service users influence decision making and bring about change. It is about making sure the voice of service users is heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives. It is also a process rather than a 'one off' event and has varying degrees of involvement. If undertaken successfully, it will lead to active engagement and a positive two way process.

In B&NES, we are committed to the active participation of children, young people and their families wherever possible. However, we recognise that children, young people and their families may want to engage at different levels with services that affect them. Some may wish to be *informed*, some may wish to be *consulted* while others may wish to be actively *involved* in both decision making and service delivery.

The following model can help to identify what type of participation is appropriate at different times and in different contexts. It is a non-hierarchical and each example is not necessarily better or worse than another. It is the context, tasks, decisions and participants that determine the appropriate level.

Being Consulted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst adults make key decisions and control the information that children & young people are given, children & young people are asked for their views and these are taken account. • Adults always give feedback to children & young people about the decisions that have been made, give reasons for those decisions and respond within an agreed timescale.
Representing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & young people represent their peers and express the young people's view on an adult initiated issue. • Adults take the views into account and give feedback about decision and actions.
Decision sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & young people share responsibility for decision making with adults. • The views of children, young people and adults are given equal weight.
Implementing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & young people are given responsibility for a project and the outcomes. • Staff advise and monitor
Initiating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & young people generate project ideas and action all major decisions. • Adults are available for consultation but do not take charge.

4. Benefits of Participation

It is our ambition in B&NES to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them and their families. Participation brings many benefits and has been shown to improve outcomes.

Participation is particularly important for the children and young people who are receiving services from B&NES. Only they have the insight into their own needs.

They have the right to influence their care, the services they receive and to be given the opportunities to do so.

Staff within Childrens Services who are making decisions that will have an impact on the lives of children and young people, should have the skills, time and resources to enable them to ensure that the 'Voice of the Child' is clearly heard and is evidenced in the work they do.

Children and young people who are less able to have a voice have a right to an independent advocate to support them.

Benefits for children and young include:

Increasing their self-worth, self-esteem and confidence

Being able to take control of their lives and influence the decisions being made about their lives.

Developing skills such as negotiation, problem solving, raising awareness of their needs and the needs of others.

Making positive contributions and long-term changes.

Benefits for adults include:

Gaining an insight from children and young people so that their needs can be met

Changing our perceptions about ourselves as adults

Shared decisions making

Benefits for B&NES include:

Services becoming more responsive to the needs of all children and young people

Gaining fresh perspectives and new ideas about how services can be delivered.

Being more effective in delivering the right services.

Benefits for the community include:

Seeing children and young people as active and engaged citizens.

Where children and young people are heard they can influence what happens within their communities.

Participation in B&NES

There are a range of ways which B&NES currently involves children and young people in delivery of services they include:

- Being part of the recruitment process
- Commissioning
- Service design and review
- Monitoring and evaluation

(Although the focus of the strategy is on children and young people we also recognise that in many instances the involvement of parents and carers is also appropriate to ensure improvements to services)

5. Participation in B&NES

Participation in B&NES is commissioned out to a local provider Off the Record who works with the following groups:

Children and Young People also sit on the Anti Bullying Strategy Group

There is also a Forum for the equality focused e-teams in schools

Advocacy

The Mind of My Own app MOMO is used by young people wanting to give feedback or comment on their IRO reviews and CP plans

6 .Governance Arrangements

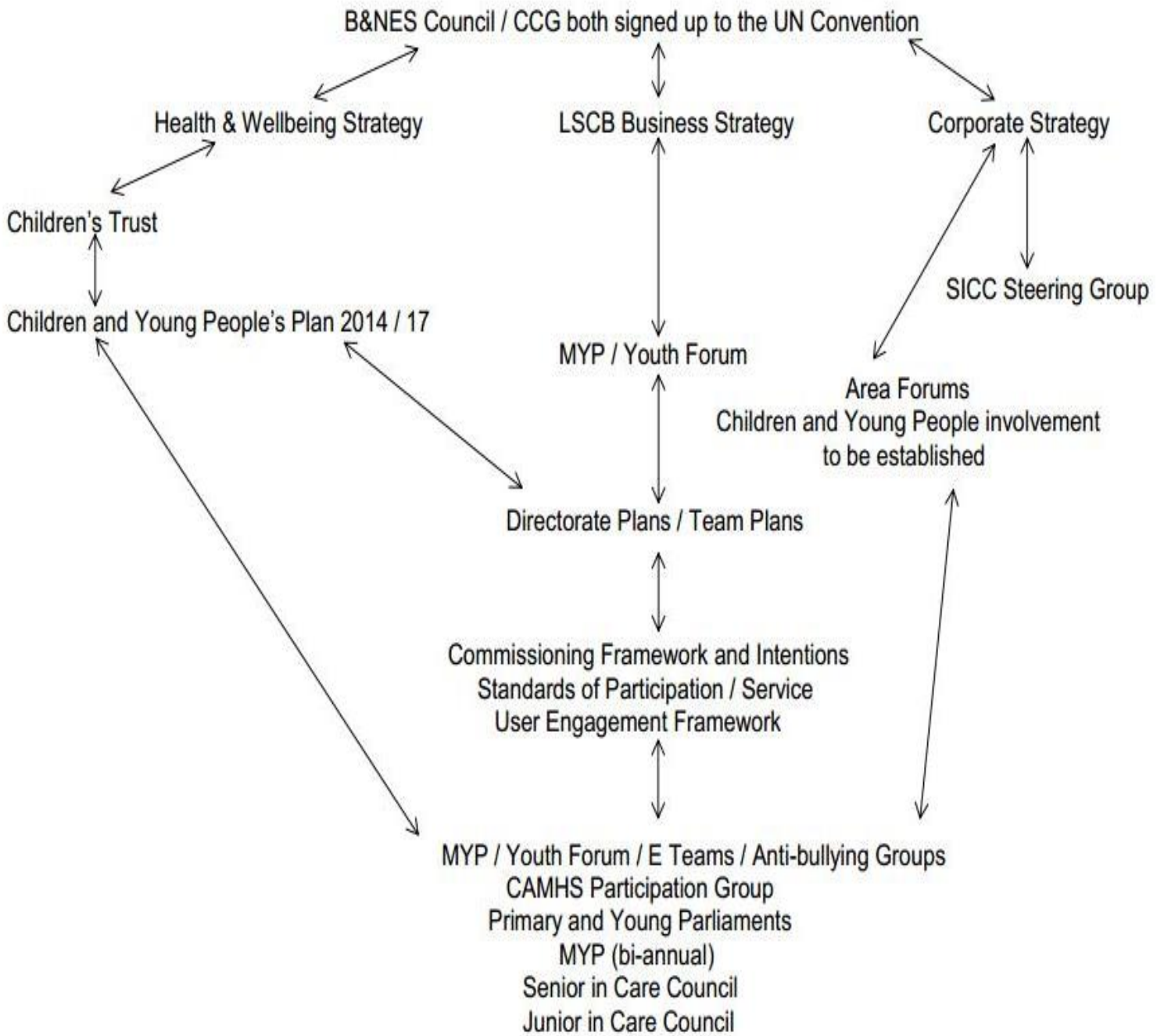
People and Communities Directorate has overall strategic responsibility for ensuring that the principles in this strategy are adhered to. This Strategy should be endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Progress on the Action Plan will then be reported on a six monthly basis to the PPPG LSCB sub group and the CYP sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Other Corporate Strategies

People and Communities Directorate – Communication Strategy

Strategic Overview of Participation



Abbreviations:

- MYP – Member of Youth Parliament
- DYMP – Deputy Member of Youth Parliament
- SICC – Senior in Care Council
- JICC – Junior in Care Council