



Voice and Influence

Dudley Children's Services' Participation Strategy

January 2021

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Section 1 Overview

In Dudley, children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. The Participation Strategy is of paramount importance in ensuring that children, young people and their families voices influence our practice and service development. As such this Strategy needs to capture the hearts and minds of all professionals across Children's Services in order to shape all of our practice. Therefore, an essential aim of the Strategy is to ensure that all Children's Service practitioners, whether frontline practitioners or strategic leads, can identify their role and contribution to bringing the vision and commitment in this Strategy to life. Ensuring participation forms a part of our day to day work requires an organisational culture where participation is embraced from the bottom up as well as from the top down and we are all leaders and champions of children, young people and their family's voices.

We strive to be an organisation where participation becomes the norm and where the responsibility for the engagement of children and young people is assumed by all rather than one named individual. We recognise that improving the voice and influence children, young people and families have will take consistent and sustained action over a long period of time. This Strategy, therefore, also seeks to outline how Dudley Children's Services will work together to ensure that we make a real impact on the lives of our children and young people.

This Strategy supports the premise that the more we practice in participatory and relational ways the more likely our response to families will be to support them to build their resilience and work "with" them to develop solutions that work for individual children, young people and families. Practitioners often tell us they do not have the time, resources or confidence to undertake direct work with children, young people and families. Therefore, manageable caseloads, restorative practice, tool kits, and training are key to building practitioners everyday approach. As such this Strategy must inform and be supported by the Workforce & Development Strategy.

We have begun work to elevate and bring together our work on participation and engagement. This has highlighted areas of good practice across Children's Services and we have pulled together one workstream where all the activity is being undertaken (see Appendix 1 and 2 for a history and current position of participation in Dudley). The focus now is upon increasing the breadth of participation and engagement with children and families across Children's Services and moving towards a dynamic model of participation where every child and family can engage with participation the way they feel most comfortable. This will ensure all children, young people and families receive high-quality services and evidence how they can shape services through co-production.

Involving children, young people and families at all levels service development will not be straightforward and requires time and resources alongside the commitment of senior managers and those who's services are being reviewed. For children, young people and family's involvement to be meaningful and transformative it requires a culture of participation across the organisation where the views, perspectives, and experiences of children, young people and families are promoted, respected and are listened to and their voices have influence at an individual and/or service level. This Strategy represents the senior leadership team's genuine commitment to all forms of

participation. Senior leaders and Elected members will ensure this Strategy is resourced appropriately and there will need robust governance in its implementation.

This Strategy outlines our ambitious vision for children, young people and their family's participation at all levels to ensure that services are shaped and delivered to the highest quality. We want the services offered to children, young people and families to be of such a high quality that families would be happy to receive again and would recommend them to a friend or others who are involved in similar situations. Acting upon children, young people and family's feedback and providing opportunities for the co-production of their assessment and plans as well as service development is essential in achieving this aim.

Section 2 About this strategy

2.1 Our vision

Dudley is a borough where in co-production with children, young people and families their rights are realised and their views shape decisions made about their lives and the services they receive.

2.2 Scope and Purpose of this Strategy

This strategy applies to all teams within Children's Services in Dudley and to the all services we commission for children, young people and their families. It also applies to Elected members and those with responsibility for scrutiny of the quality of work with children, young people and families undertaken by Council employees and by commissioned partners. It will be owned by the Departmental Leadership Team (DLT) in Children's Services and will be monitored through quarterly reporting.

The purpose of the Strategy:

- Create a shared vision for working “with” children, young people and families in participative ways
- Ensure participation forms a part of our day to day work that is guided by Dudley's Practice Standards and influences the organisation from the bottom up as well as from the top down
- Outline good practice for participation work and the types of voice and influence children, young people and families can and should have across Children's Services
- Ensure children, young people and their families are active participants in the decision-making processes about their lives and service development
- Ensure a systematic approach to participation which informs practice, training, development, design, delivery and commissioning of services
- To promote creative and adaptable approaches to participation
- To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of participation
- Reduce in-efficiency, duplication and consultation fatigue for young people and their parent/carers and staff involved in engagement activity
- To create person centred communication tools and techniques to enable children and young people who cannot verbalise, their opportunity to participate and promote their voice

- Ensure the existing Participation Team support wider services to remove barriers between organisations and parent carers, children and young people that may be preventing participation and encouraging a wider representation of views and experiences to feed into the Parent/Carer and Children & Young People's Forums

2.3 Our statutory duties

We are required by Law to involve children and young people in our work and to protect their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 states:

“All Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and have their opinions taken into account.”

Eileen Munroe in her review of Child Protection focused sharply on the need for a child-centred system to ensure better outcomes:

“The system should be child-centred: everyone involved in child protection should pursue child-centred working and recognise children and young people as individuals with rights, including their right to participation in decisions about them in line with their age and maturity”.

It is a principle of our work that every provider of services to children, young people and families, directly or indirectly, has a responsibility to ensure that their views actively sought, listened to and acted upon. This includes children and young people with disabilities and special education need (SEN), and in Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 it outlines that we must have regard to:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions

2.4 What do we mean by participation?

“Participation can be defined as an ongoing process of children's expression and active involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them. It requires information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and requires that full consideration of their views be given, taking into account the child's age and maturity” (Save the Children and Unicef, 2011).

In Dudley, we are committed to the active participation of children, young people and families wherever possible. However, we recognise that children, young people and 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. There are a number of models that help us identify different types and levels of participation and

understand which approach is most beneficial to what is trying to be achieved through participation activity.

Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation identifies eight levels of participation. The eight rungs of the ladder represent a continuum of power that ascends from non-participation to degrees of participation. It is designed to encourage those working with children to think more closely about the nature and purpose of children's participation.

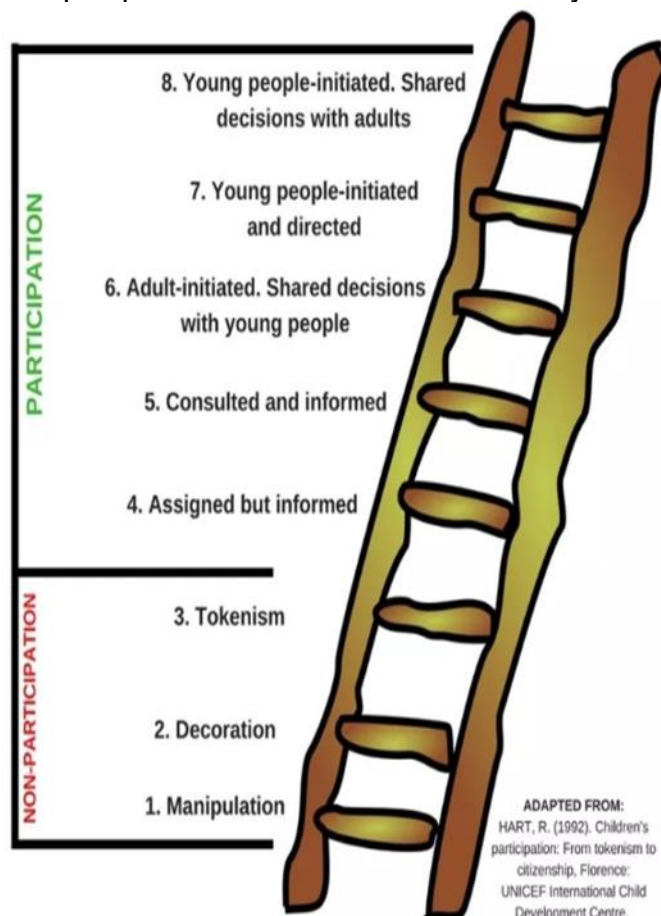
Hart's higher levels of participation are outlined below.

Consulted and informed: Adult-led activities, the child/young person is consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

Adult initiated shared decisions with youth: Adult-led activities, decision making is shared with the child/young person.

Youth initiated and directed: Child/youth-led activities with little input from the adult.

Youth initiated shared decisions with adults: Child/youth-led activities in which decision making is shared between the child/young person and adult, both working as equal partners. This is more commonly known today as "co-production".



Lundy (2007) Model of Child Participation provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participation, as laid down in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, using four elements:

Space – the child must be given a safe and inclusive opportunity to form and express their views.

Voice – the child must be supported to express their views.

Audience – the child's views must be listened to.

Influence – the child's views, where appropriate to do so, must be acted upon.



The four elements can help us to think about participation in our daily practices and approaches to engaging children, young people and families as outlined in the boxes below.

Have the child's views been actively sought?

Was there a safe space for the child to freely express themselves?

Have steps been taken to ensure all children can take part?

Does the child have the information needed to form a view?

Is the child aware they don't have to take part?

Has the child been given a range of options to express themselves?

Is there a process for communicating children's views?

Does the child know who their views are being shared with?

Does that person have the power to make decisions?

Were the child's views considered by those with power to affect change?

Are procedures in place to ensure the child's views have been taken seriously?

Has the child been given feedback regarding why a decision was made?

In Dudley we strive for a culture where children, young people and families are involved in ways that are appropriate for them rather than privileging only those who are willing and able to engage in formal processes. As such we adopt Tritter and McMallum's (2006) mosaic metaphor approach. The mosaic, a picture made up of multiple pieces, represents the complex and dynamic relationship between children,

young people and families, their communities, Children's Services staff, partner agencies and organisations such as schools, leisure clubs and the Local Authority. Building a successful participation strategy requires connecting these diverse individuals and groups, particularly for disabled children and or those with SEN where it is often difficult for their involvement to be seen or even heard.

The mosaic represents the different roles staff across Children's Services have to play and there is no assumption that any form of participation, or people involved, are more important than others. This promotes a culture where different contributions, individual and collective, can be incorporated and reflected upon in ways that lead to new solutions. This emphasises the need for small scale, everyday activities that are meaningful as well as large scale formal participation as part of our model. The three types of participation reflected in our Strategic objectives are:

Individual participation, where children, young people and families are involved in the planning and design of his or her own plan. Ensuring the individual has a say in decisions about his or her life and service provision is the bedrock of good participation practice.

Consultation in surveys, activities linked to quality assurance and improvement of services (such as audits, inspection, and involvement in recruitment), and representation on boards and committees. The focus is feedback about and developing existing services. This work has the potential to make strategic as well as operational impact, with children, young people and families providing feedback and helping shape decision making at senior level.

Co-production is where service providers work in true partnership with other services, children, young people, families and carers to co-design and deliver services that are effective and make a positive difference to people's lives. It's about individuals, communities and organisations, pooling their skills, knowledge and experiences and working together to improve the quality of life for people and communities. The focus is engaging children, young people and families in designing and developing new policies, processes and services.

2.5 Benefits of participation

A culture of participation benefits everyone!

Benefits for children, young people and families 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
- Develop their sense of their own rights and responsibilities as citizens and promote a commitment to society
- Having the right to not only express their views but have them taken seriously allows children, young people and families the opportunity to challenge situations of violence, abuse, discrimination or injustice

- Strengthens their capacity for holding services and government accountable for the quality of services delivered
- Supports Children and young people to aspire to meet their individual potential

Benefits for staff include:

- Gaining an insight from children, young people and families so that their needs can be met creatively
- Changing our perceptions about ourselves as adults and as an organisation.
- Improves shared decision making
- Creates opportunities to reinforce the positive impact professionals can have in children, young people and families lives and greater job satisfaction
- Develop new skills and confidence

Benefits for services include:

- Involving children, young people and families in planning and delivering services can lead to the creation of more innovative and responsive services
- Gaining fresh perspectives and new ideas about how services can be delivered
- Being more effective in delivering the right services
- Enhance our understanding of whether we are supporting the right children and young people, in the right way, at the right time, and whether we are making a difference to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families
- Decisions which are informed fully by a child, young person or family's own perspectives will be more relevant, effective and sustainable
- Ensuring transparent, fair and equitable services for those with complex and complicated needs

2.6 Our participation principles

When we participate with children, young people and families, we commit to the following principles:

- Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do
- Children, young people and families from diverse backgrounds and of differing needs have an equal opportunity to get involved
- Children, young people and families should be safeguarded in all involvement activities.
- Children, young people and family participation is a meaningful process and there are feedback mechanisms to evidence the outcomes and influence of those voices in the shaping of the services that we provide
- All forms of participation are valued
- Participation takes place in an organisational culture that is committed to learning and continual development

Section 3 Our Participation Objectives

3.1 How will we achieve our Participation Objectives?

We believe focusing on three core areas of participation will help us to develop meaningful participation for all children, young people and families in Dudley. This will underpin all work across the borough, for the next 12 months our initial focus will be on the following areas and we will be actively encouraging children, young people and families to become involved.

Objective 1 – Children, young people, and their families participate in and influence decision making about their lives

- We will promote and uphold our practice standards which include how we engage with children, young people and their families and enable them to participate in their assessments and plans
- Up to date information leaflets and consultation documents for children and families
- Increase the use of advocacy for children, young people and their parents
- We have a range of tools to support engagement and participation work, as well as links to resources and toolkits developed by other local authorities and national participation agencies. We will continue to encourage use of these to support staff in these activities and make available these resources online via Chatterbox and the Centre for Professional Practice website
- We will continue to build the capacity of our workforce to empower children, young people and families to have a strong voice. We will provide opportunities for training and development across the wider Children Services workforce through the Centre for Professional Practice. This includes training and supporting staff to engage those who are “hard to reach”, have experienced trauma, who may be reluctant or hostile to engage, and/or have lost faith in services and SEND Training to strengthen ways of working with children and young people with additional needs

Objective 2 – Children, young people and their families are consulted about the services they receive

- All children, young people and their families are invited to complete a standardised Feedback Form across all Children’s Services areas once every 6 months
- Annual Children In Care Survey
- Children, young people and their families are invited to engage in annual Children’s Services wide consultation events
- To involve young people in the recruitment of new staff and managers in Children’s Services
- To develop a Young Inspectors Programme where children and young people review and evaluate services

Objective 3 – Services are co-produced with children, young people and their families

- To involve young people in the commissioning of services
- To ensure that existing Forums are strong and are listened to by Corporate Parents and Elected Members. This includes developing the Youth Council and having specific consultations to improve a range of services across Children's Services, including Family Solutions and Children's Social Care, as well as develop pathways for children with SEND into existing forums so that their voice can be heard within mainstream forums
- To develop new forums to represent children with SEND, parents of children with SEND, and a forum for all parents working with Children's Services to ensure children, young people and families across the borough are engaged in co-production events
- Further develop this strategy with children, young people and their families to ensure all groups are represented and able to participate including for example children under 8 who are not represented in forum settings

3.2 Participation methods

There are a number of Forums where children, young people and their families in Dudley can contribute to decision making about the services they receive and campaign on behalf of their peers for wider change and impact. These includes the:

- Children in Care Council
- Care Leavers Form
- Dudley Youth Council
- Young Health Champions
- Parent Carer Forum (PCF)

These represent a broad cohort ensuring that they engage and consult with others in order to gain the voice of their peers. However, membership of such a group is not for all as it asks for a high level of commitment, time outside of school and work and often has a formal structure within its own organisational practice. We must recognise that not all children, young people and families want to participate to such a level and some may find it highly challenging.

Participation can occur in a range of ways, depending on the nature of the issue at hand. Our participation activity will use one or a combination of the methods and can be include but not be limited to:

- Involve children, young people and their families in the assessment and planning processes that affect their individual lives
- Ensure the EHCP section A provides the children, young people and parent/carers the opportunity tell us what they want to help us support and understand them
- Children, young people and their families should be active participants in meetings about them
- Consultation forms for children, young people and families to complete prior to their meetings dependent on ability and relevance

- Complements, complaints, evaluation forms, and ‘tell us what you think’ leaflets to help us reshape services if they are not being effective
- Family friendly leaflets to inform children, young people and families about their rights, entitlements and expectations of services offered
- Involve children, young people and their families in delivering training and presentations to staff including Foster Carers and Elected Members
- Involve SEND young people and their parent/carers in delivering training and presentations on the impact of SEN and Disability to improve better outcomes for the choices they want to choose
- Involve young people in the recruitment and induction process
- Develop and maintain focus groups that advocate on behalf of the wider service user population
- Peer to peer telephone surveys, consultation and focus groups.
- Annual consultations with different stakeholders who access children services
- Involve children, young people and families when commissioning services, especially prior to retendering
- Involve children, young people and families as part of quality assurance and when forming policies and procedures

In May 2018, an “Active Involvement Strategy” Event for young people took place. The groups preferred options for participation were surveys via email, website and social media polls with incentives to complete (see Table 1). Other methods could then be used for discussion and debate to explore the theme more and follow up identified issues in order for changes to practice to take place. This learning has been included in this Strategy. In addition, young people identified factors that would encourage people to give views:

- Some kind of incentive would need to be offered to encourage young people to give their views e.g. prize draw, or incentive scheme across all participation events
- Follow up key themes for more detailed understanding and feedback about actions taken

Table 1: Communication possibilities: What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Activity	Pro’s	Con’s
Focus group: working in small discussion group facilitated by a professional	Privacy Incentive straight away afterwards Can be around a specific theme	People might feel pressured Some may talk more than others Might not want to give details in front of others
Creative workshop: Using creative methods e.g. glass making as a tool to encourage discussion	Might appeal to those who don’t like writing Giving new experiences – can try something new	Wouldn’t suit everyone Have to pay people to run it Uncomfortable with sharing details
Text messaging	Instant and efficient	Could have wrong number

		Costs data/ uses texts from young people Not very personal Limited characters – so you can't explain things fully
App	Accessible	Wouldn't bother downloading it Might get deleted if not used a lot Too much work to use Not everyone has a phone/tablet Have to have an app store account and not everyone has one
Letters by post	Nice to receive things in the post More direct	Won't get read and filled in: people won't respond Would have to be free post to respond otherwise costs young people Someone else might fill it in
Telephone call from one of your support workers	Good to talk someone directly Good to talk to someone not in the family	The person calling might have an opinion of you already if it is someone you know calling
Face to face discussion with someone you haven't met before	Professionalism Can be more open Body language – can read more into it than someone being on the phone	Feel insecure and social anxiety so may not go or be able to talk openly Have to have an immediate idea – can't edit your response
Face to face discussion with someone you know	Body language – can read more into it than someone being on the phone	Have to have an immediate idea – can't edit your response May not want to hurt the person's feelings as you still have to work with them
Email	More professional Pretty instant Send through school emails Long answers can be given Can think about what they are going to say before responding	Feel monitored by school – trigger words Gets lost with many emails
Survey: Social Media Poll	Goes directly to the young people you want it to It's cheap Accessible for people	Have to be 13 to have social media account Might choose not to have an account or might not be allowed to

Website	Have a page on Dudley MBC website which links to other partners pages including Dudley Youth Council. Could link to survey monkey Could have previous results Where points scheme could be developed and grown Available all the time for you to go to when want to	Costs to set up and maintain Promotion to keep people using it: worker could promote through a business card with link on
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Section 4 How will we measure the success of the strategy?

Participation is an important commitment; it should be a process that feeds into every part of the work we do. It is particularly important that we are able to measure the impact of service user participation and evidence what change or improvement has happened as a result of their involvement. In Dudley, we need to agree a baseline and then gather evidence of the different modes of communication/participation tools to provide an annual report of the activities and the impact it has had.

4.1 Evaluation of our participation process

Dudley is committed to ensuring that children, young people and families receive feedback about their involvement in participation activity. This includes:

- Improving direct feedback from children, young people and families into our services and to embed a 'you said, we did' reports with feedback for formal participation activity
- Publishing the outcomes of formal co-production events, consultations and service re-designs that have taken place

We will evaluate participation activities to establish if they follow good practice and what impact they have made on decision-making. After specific participation activities we will evaluate the process to ensure that our procedures are as effective as possible. The Youth Service, in which the Participation Officer work, has a key role to play in ensuring evaluation takes place and that the findings are reported to Extended DLT.

This will involve looking at who responded to or who was involved with the participation activity and asking whether they constitute an appropriate cross section the relevant cohort of children, young people and families. This will allow us to assess the extent to which participation has empowered children, young people and families to influence practice and service development. The role of the Participation Team will ensure that as many of our children, young people and families are able to access and participate in activities that are meaningful to them.

Routine evaluation will examine our participation principles and processes as a whole.

4.2 How will this strategy be developed?

Due to the national pandemic, children, young people and families have not been consulted in the development of this Strategy. We will consult with children, young people and families in spring/summer 2021 to gather views on this version of the strategy and on their experience of participation. We will use the feedback we received to develop a revised version of the strategy that is child, young person and family friendly. The Strategy will be updated annually based on our evaluation and ongoing consultation work.

The Participation Strategy will be developed alongside work being undertaken in the Participation and Engagement Sub-Groups. The sub-groups are:

- Children and Young People's participation
- Parents/Carers participation
- Formal Forums

Dudley are also working with regional colleagues on the regional Participation Strategy.

4.3 Governance Arrangements

Children's Services has overall strategic responsibility for ensuring that the principles in this strategy are adhered to. It will be owned by the Departmental Leadership Team (DLT) in Children's Services and will be monitored through quarterly reports by the Youth Service.

This Strategy should be endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board and DSCPG. Progress on the Implementation Plan will then be reported on a quarterly basis to Extended DLT, Corporate Parenting Board, and the DSCPG by the Head of Service for Safeguarding, Quality and Practice. These arrangements will ensure there is accountability and transparency in how we engage children, young people and families and ensure that a culture of participation continues to flourish across the borough.

Approved by:	Date
Helen Ellis, Acting DCS	
Shared with:	
Elected member	
DSPP	
Review:	
To be undertaken by the Head of Service, Safeguarding, Practice and Quality Assurance	January 2022

Appendices

Appendix 1 – A brief history of participation work in Dudley

In 2016 there was a strong partnership approach to the development of children, young people and families participation across the borough. This was supported by several Boards in place in Dudley at the time who made it a priority to work together to ensure the voice of the child and young person was heard loud and clear. This included the Health and Wellbeing Board, Children's Alliance and Dudley Safeguarding Children Board. A number of "Voice of the Child" workshops took place, well attended by partner agencies in January 2016, which resulted in a borough wide Participation Strategy which can be found at: <https://dudleycypfnetwork.net/events/>. A number of recommendations were made in June 2016 to implement the Strategy:

Recommendation 1: Facilitator Network quarterly meetings

This recommendation was adopted and a number of meetings took place however they did not progress beyond 2017.

Recommendation 2: Online platform for young people

The recommendation resulted in iZONE which can be accessed by children and young people at <https://izone.org.uk/>

Recommendation 3: Repository, collection, collation and sharing function

The recommendation resulted in Chatterbox being developed. Chatterbox is a closed facilitator, virtual online platform created for staff and volunteers in Dudley developed to share best practice ideas locally regionally and nationally, encourage collaboration amongst the partnership with the aim of reducing duplication, avoiding consultation fatigue amongst children and young people and collate all participatory activity so that it can be used by agencies, organisations and strategic decision makers. This facility remains available.

Recommendation 4: Person-Centred planning Tool to support individual planning, service improvement and design for children and young people with an additional need or disability and their families

The recommendation resulted in Mind Of My Own being commissioned by Children's Services and was in place from September 2017 – November 2020. The app was only promoted and used in the Children in Care Service and did not effectively capture children and young people's voices. The number of statements received was low and a decision not to renew the contract made based on the timing of the renewal and the need for a strategic plan for participation; this may include commissioning this service and implementation on a wider scale in the future.

Recommendation 5: Care Measurement Tool to support individual planning, service improvement and design for looked after children

The recommendation was not taken forward.

The borough wide participation Strategy was being overseen by the three Boards named above. However, this governance appears to have come to an end in 2018.

The reasons for this are unclear due to the turn over of senior leaders in the borough in recent years.

In November 2017 a Children's Services "Active Involvement Strategy" was produced. In May 2018, an "Active Involvement Strategy: Event for young people to capture their views to inform Children's Services practice" took place. The output from this event was a table "Communication possibilities: What are the advantages and disadvantages?" (see Section 3.3 of this Strategy).

This Strategy draws on these activities and takes from the identified learning.

Youth Service Young Inspectors Programme:

Every youth centre or youth project receiving an assessment visit by managers also received a quality assurance visit by the Young Inspectors. Their feedback was incorporated in to both the overall feedback and informed the subsequent improvement action plan.

The action plan was monitored by the relevant line manager in order to ensure recommendations were implemented and any that received a 'requires improvement' were revisited by managers & Young Inspectors 6 months later. An annual Quality Assurance report was then produced and any work force developmental needs and the targeted allocation of resources were acted on.

Young Inspectors carried out visits 3 times per year to ensure that every Youth Service location/project was assessed at least annually. The programme ended when the Youth Service moved into Family Solutions and worked to the Family Solutions Practice Standards Framework.

The Young Inspectors Programme was considered a success:

- Young people were interested in the role with sufficient recruitment to the Programme
- It was well received by staff who were inspected as it gave them relevant feedback and ideas from their customer base.
- When young people are supporting and adding to the feedback being given by peers and managers there is more weight to the process and staff are more likely to see the value of the improvements.

In considering whether to re-introduce a Young Inspectors Programme the following needs to be considered:

- The time required to support and implement the programme can be resource intensive. Young Inspectors visits need to be carefully timetabled in order to avoid other busy periods for both the service and young people.
- Initially some staff are challenged by feedback from young people and part of the Young Inspector training covers how to feedback constructively.
- Training for staff on what is being assessed and how they would be expected to implement the recommendations and highlight impact.
- This training was delivered internally by the Youth Service, colleagues are still available to deliver the training so there is no cost to the training.
- Young people inspecting received vouchers for completing the assessments.

Appendix 2 – Where are we now?

Some of the existing participation and engagement work currently taking place across Children's Services is as follows:

Early Help

- In Early Help parents are supported to complete questionnaires, following intervention.
- The voices of children, young people and their parents/carers are included in assessments.
- Early Help staff attend community events to raise awareness of the services that they offer.
- Coffee mornings have taken place to engage with families in the community.
- The Lead for Youth and Community is a member of a West Midlands Youth Participation Network pulling together key partners including the West Midlands Teaching Partnership, West Midlands Combined Authority, OPCC, West Midlands Police and key local authority and voluntary youth sector representatives to share good practice, reduce duplication and increase the impact of young people's voice on decision making.

Children in Care Council/Care Leavers Forum and Dudley Youth Council

- Young people have been part of senior manager recruitment panels.
- Children and young people have provided comments on Dudley's Local Offer.
- Dudley Youth Service has 2 dedicated Participation Officers who work with the CIC/CL Council and Dudley Youth Council (DYC) and wider participation partners including regionally and nationally
- Work has been undertaken with young people to find out their preferred method of communication with their key worker.
- Young people have commented upon the 16/17 Homeless Protocol.
- Young people are represented at Childrens Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Board.

Safeguarding and Review

- In December 2019, the IRO Service did a questionnaire to children in care about their experience of the IRO Service. Children were asked a number of questions around their experiences of the IRO Service and their IRO. For example, children and young people were asked if they knew who their IRO was, 69% said yes. The outcomes of the surveys have been fed into the IRO Service, Service Plan. The IRO survey will be an annual event.
- An event took place with children in care, in February 2020. All young people were aged 12-17 and feedback was sought in relation to their views on

their IRO, what they thought about their Reviews and their views on co-chairing their meetings. Again, the learning from the feedback has been used in the development of the IRO Service, Service Plan.

- We are developing our parental engagement work in Children's Social Care and have begun with a questionnaire to parents whose children are subject to child protection plans. This survey was undertaken during lockdown, when our Child Protection Conferences were being undertaken virtually. The findings were helpful in understanding parents' views about virtual meetings. We were surprised to find that some parents actually enjoyed the virtual meetings and found them less intimidating. We are using these findings to develop a hybrid way of working as we move through the pandemic and beyond.

Centre for Professional Practice (CPP)

- In 2020, CPP have begun to seek the views of children and their parents/carers as part of some audits.
- Particular tools have been developed by the CPP to use with children, young people and families.
- The Principal Social Worker (PSW) and CPP are involved in the Parent Participation Project with Camden and Bexley, following the previous Head of Safeguarding, Practice and QA making links through a 'parents as partners' events earlier in 2020.
- The PSW and CPP are members of the West Midlands Teaching Partnership (WMTP) sub-group on Participation. There are plans for a WMTP Annual Event around Participation.
- Dudley are involved in the West Midlands Teaching Partnership developing of a regional participation strategy.
- CPP are in the process of creating a role for a care experienced young person.

Residential Services

- Consultation with children and young people on changes within the Home
- Weekly/Monthly House Meetings

SEND

- The SEND Team has introduced a Co- Production Meeting as part of the 20 week process for parents, school staff, other professionals involved and young people, at which the Draft ECHP is co- produced.
- There is a multi-agency communication and culture group that is developing the communication strategy and this group is co-chaired with parents.

- The SEND Team have a dedicated Local Offer and Participation Officer who works with Parent Carer Groups to co-produce the Local Offer.
- The Participation Officer is also setting up participation activities with a number of groups of young people to co-produce the Local Offer

Commissioning

- Dudley Young Commissioners are a group of young people aged 12-21 years, that focus on activities around the commissioning cycle from the initial assessment of need to the final element of review. Young people that been recruited from existing participation structures to those that have are interest in the commissioning functions. Young people have undertaken training delivered via East London University building on the best practise identified by Newham CCG, Young Commissioners Programme.
- Key areas young people have engaged in:
Influence the quality of young carers service via a quality assurance visit
Young people engaging in the development of the Annual Public Health Report
Young people engaging with the development of the young people's floating support service, now known as the Alliance
Young people taking part in field research through East London University
- Individual young people have achieved a variety of positive outcomes, with members securing employment and others developing their confidence in public speaking.

Complaints and compliments

- The Children's Services Complaints Team provide a quarterly report, identifying the nature of all reports received and provide an analysis which identifies trends about the nature of complaints.