

SEND Participation: Project Overview

- The Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practise place duties on Local Authorities and health partners to co-produce services with Children and Young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Shortland-Palmer Consultancy were commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Councils' Support and Aspiration Board, to co-produce a strategy for the '*effective and meaningful*' participation of children and young people with SEND. Kaizen Partnership facilitated the operational elements of the project.
- The project comprised of 4 phases running from April to October 2014: Research, Development, Evaluation and Validation. The project will need to move into a 5th phase of implementation.
- Key stakeholders from CBC, NHS and VCS were interviewed. Children and Young people participated in activities run in schools, an FE college and charity settings. Over 180 children and young people participated in this project, a small group of parents took part.
- CBC will need to actively evolve and develop participation across all groups engaging with Children and Young People. Further development work is needed to engage with other groups e.g. younger age groups and different ethnic groups.
- Further work is required to fully co-produce a Children and Young People version of The Local Offer.
- The project plan was adapted to accommodate a more young person-centred method of conducting training and setting-up of a steering group.
- For long-term project success commitment from CBC, NHS both financially and organisationally will be required. It is vital that this work is taken forwards and participation recognised as a vital part of day to day working when designing and delivering services.

SEND Participation: Learning

A culture change is required in the way children and young people are involved in decision making. Current structures and approaches to participation, planning services and making decisions about individuals care and support needs are inaccessible to children and young people with disabilities, especially those with special educational support or communication needs.

Children and young people are also not accustomed to being involved in decision making. Children and young people said they want to have a greater say. Currently they do not have information about their options in a format they can understand. They also need support from a trusted and known person to build confidence and enable them to express themselves.

The following Code for Participation has emerged from this consultation process and also amalgamates findings from other national consultation reports:

- Children and young people have a right to be listened to in decisions that are being made that affect them (both individually and collectively)
- Children and young people should have information about services, support and their care delivered in a way that they can understand
- Children and young people should have support from someone that they are comfortable with and trust to help them express their views and opinions
- Children and young people should be given the support and encouragement to practice and develop decision making skills at home, in school and in the community.
- Young leaders should be nurtured and where possible consultation with children and young people should be youth led or delivered in partnership with children and young people.
- Opportunities for children and young people to help shape decision making should be fun, creative and varied - giving children and young people of different ages, abilities and interests an opportunity to express their opinions and take part.

SEND Participation: Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the consultation with children, young people, parents and professionals in Central Bedfordshire. They are also informed by good practice and research developed amongst SEND reform Pathfinders.

The aim is to create a culture change so that all children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are able to have a voice in decisions that are made that affect them individually. They should also have the opportunity to get involved in shaping the services that are provided to them.

Objective 1: Information and communication

Children and young people should have access to, and be supported to understand what help and support they can get at school and home; what activities and clubs are happening and how to join them; who to talk to if they are not happy at school, home or with decisions that their doctor or social worker makes; and that they have a right to be listened to.

Objective 2: Decision making about individual care

Children and young people with SEND are listened to, and involved in, decisions made about their education, health care, the help they get and what activities they get to do in their spare time. Children and young people should be supported and encouraged to start making decisions (however small) about things at home, in school and wider service provision. Parents / carers and other adults that work with them, should help them and accept that sometimes they will make mistakes.

Objective 3: Co-production and decision making about SEND services

Services for children and young people with SEND get better because children and young people work with the people in charge to think about what is needed and what is the best way to make it happen. Children and young people get their ideas taken seriously.

SEND Legislation & Early Support Principles

Children and Families Act 2014 (S19) Principles: 'Must have regard to...'	Early Support principles
'...the views, wishes and feelings of the child and his or her parent, or the young person.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Valued Uniqueness: The uniqueness of children, young people and families is valued and provided for ▪ Ordinary Lives: Wherever possible, children, young people and their families are able to live 'ordinary lives'
'...the importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, participating as fully as possible in decisions relating to the exercise of the function concerned.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning Partnerships: An integrated assessment, planning and review process is provided in partnership with children, young people and families ▪ Participation: Children, young people and families are involved in shaping, developing and evaluating the services they use
'...the importance of the child and his or her parent, or the young person, being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informed Choices: Children, young people and families are able to make informed choices ▪ Workforce Development: Children, young people and families can be confident the people working with them have appropriate training, skills, knowledge and experience
'...the need to support the child and his or her parent, or the young person, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help him or her achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning & Development: Children and young people's learning and development is monitored and promoted ▪ Key Working: Service delivery is holistic, co-ordinated, seamless and supported by key working ▪ Working Together: Multi-agency working practices and systems are integrated ▪ Birth to Adulthood: Continuity of care is maintained through different stages of a child's life and through preparation for adulthood

SEND Participation: Structures

The structures that are recommended for the participation of children and young people with SEND in strategic decision making are different from the existing

Youth Parliament and indeed some of the other structures found in Pathfinders across the country. The proposed model is based on trying to be:

- A flexible and strong mechanism that allowed large numbers of children and young people to get involved in a way that suits them.
- something that could both work on timescales that suits children and young people as well as be able to respond to the fast paced decision making that sometimes takes place in councils
- built on the great commitment that has been shown by schools and voluntary sector to supporting this agenda through the consultation phase (and that in turn supported a culture of listening within the school community)
- a model that was able to reach children and young people in an environment where they felt comfortable and had support to help them express themselves
- flexible to using different methods for different children and young people to express themselves
- a model that developed and promoted children and young people with disabilities as young leaders, providing an important leadership function but also inspiring their peers
- where young people are providing an irreplaceable function (because of their skills / abilities and experiences) recognising this through the creation of some formal paid positions to support the outreach and planning team.

With all of this in mind and inspired by the young people who have taken part so far and initiated their own consultations with their peers through school assemblies we are proposing a central group of children and young people who would act as a ‘Planning and outreach team’. They would provide their own views and feedback on some issues but primarily they would aim to facilitate consultation with their peers within their schools or youth groups. In these settings children and young people could explore what issues they most want to change through drama, art or discussion and the planning and outreach team would feed this back into council decision making structures, using a variety of formats.

Central Bedfordshire Council engage with young people who have additional needs to have their say

Numbers and methodologies

Over
180
children and young people were consulted

Mix of methodologies:



Questionnaires



Focus groups



Depth interviews



Leadership and self expression workshops



Home visits



Music workshops

Organisations we worked in partnership with to deliver this are:



The Chiltern School



Weatherfield Academy



Harlington Upper School



Samuel Whitbread Academy



Central Bedfordshire College



MENCAP



Families United Network



Outside-iN

What did people tell us?

Children and young people are often **not involved** in decisions about their lives.



Children and young people want to be listened to more and would like to **be more involved** in decisions about their lives.



All children and young people can **communicate**, sometimes using sign-language, body-language or using pictures.



Many children and young people like to go on the computer, using a computer can be a good way to **tell people what you think**.



Ideas about how we can make it better

Children and young people can help adults make a **website and better leaflets**, to let them know activities they can do and what help they can get.



Train parents, carers and adults to learn to support children and young people with disabilities get involved in decision making.



Children and young people get **more chances to make decisions** about their lives.



Children and young people can be **young leaders** to help Central Bedfordshire Council collect ideas and decide what services the council should focus on.

