



# Voice of the Child Strategy







## Vision

Our strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring that all children and young people receiving support through our services are central to the decision-making processes affecting them. We will ensure they are actively involved in the planning, commissioning, design and delivery of services as well as shaping their own individual plan of support with their views expressed at every level. The strategy is designed to be implemented by all staff employed in Children's Services.

## Objectives

**There are two strands to our strategy:**

- We will ensure that children and young people are fairly represented and influence decisions made about them. They will access services that meet their needs and be at the heart of their individual plans of support and will have the opportunity to shape the delivery of those services.
- We will gather information about young people's experiences of services, learn lessons and use those lessons and feedback to inform our design and delivery of services.

## Aims What we want to achieve

To hear and see the child/young person's voice in all our work and the recording of that work.

“ Listen to us. The initial meeting is very important to us. Listen to what we have to say about what we want or what has happened. ”

To make sure that the child/young person does not get lost in the process.

“ When you meet me, please ask how I am feeling – every time. ”

To ensure that we ask for feedback as a matter of course about the services we provide and that we listen to that feedback from children, young people and their families and act upon it.

“ Act on what I have said and show me what you have done ”

**To develop a whole family approach by promoting and valuing the input of children, young people and families in the development of our services.**

**Encourage all providers to adopt good practice in participation throughout commissioning and contracting processes.**

**See us and talk to us.**  
Do not only talk to our parents or carers about us.



**Come and check on us.**  
Come and find us in our bedroom and talk to us.



**Don't write about us without us.**  
create records about us with us.



## Keeping Records In our record keeping we will make sure that:

It is clear what outcomes we are working towards with the child or young person and they have been involved in deciding what those outcomes are;  
The child or young person is central to all the discussions and information in their record;

“ Ask if there is anything we don't want to talk about. We understand that sometimes you need to know things so if there is something we do not want to talk about you have to then be honest and explain and ask which way would be the most comfortable to talk about this. ”

Their voice can be heard and it is obvious that we are talking to them and hearing what they say;  
We are talking to and listening to family, friends and those close to the child thereby creating positive outcomes and relationships.  
We can hear how the child or young person is being supported to make positive decisions in their life;  
There are no decisions made about any part of a child or young person's life where that child, young person or their advocate has not been involved;

“ Provide us with options where possible so we can make an informed choice. ”

The reason for our involvement with children, young people and their families will be clearly explained and whatever involvement or actions take place will be clearly communicated;  
The child, young person and family will know who all the workers are who are involved with their family, what their jobs are and what to expect from them;  
It will be clear that we are constantly checking back with the child, young person and family to make sure everyone is clear on where we are going;  
You can tell what work we have done with the child, young person and family to make sure everyone is clear on where we are going;  
It will be clear that we are open and honest in our communication even in those difficult conversations that we sometimes have to have. There should be no surprises for families.

“ If we have asked for something and you cannot make that decision there and then please tell us who you have to speak to, give us timescales and keep us updated so we know you haven't forgot about us. ”

### In our feedback/evaluation of services we will:

- Develop a range of mediums and techniques to gather information about our services.
- Listen to what people say about our services.
- Value experiences and treat all complaints and concerns seriously.
- Tell people what changes we have made because of their comments/feedback/complaint.

## What we do now

Following a review of consultation and engagement we have identified that we need to go further to evidence the inclusion and decision-making of the child and family about their situation in case records. Future work with children, young people and their families will be under-pinned by some core principles identified in the Rough Guide to Participation. We will remember the 8 C's – Consider the child, Constantly think and analyse, Be Clear, Concise, Concrete, Cut Jargon and use Common Language.



We will use whatever communication methods are necessary to ensure that we engage with all family members. These might include the use of advocates, easy read documents or other toolkits for intervention. We will check and recheck understanding.  
Offer advocacy to children and young people who are part of our service.  
Be open and honest in our dealings with the family even when we are having difficult conversations.  
Be non-judgemental and use non-judgemental language when recording information.

“ Understand that everyone has different needs and backgrounds, we are all individuals therefore you need to ask what is important to us and if there is anything we would like to talk about before you do what you have to do ”

Record what children and young people and family members tell us using their words.

“ Make sure you use appropriate language, basic and non-jargon ”





## Going forward

We will develop an action plan/programme of work that will link to the strategy. This will include the continued implementation across the workforce of the Effective Interventions Programme. This programme puts children, young people and their families at the heart of the assessment and planning process.

We will continue to consult with children and young people individually and in groups. This will include working with:

- The Children in Care Council
- Hartlepool Youth Council
- Young Inspectors and Junior Inspectors
- Looked after Children
- Leaving Care Ambassadors
- Elected Members and partners

Young people will also continue to be involved in the recruitment of staff.

## How will we know we are making a difference

We will monitor how we are doing by:

- Observations and reviews of practice
- Seeking feedback on closed cases
- Carrying out interviews with a random sample of families whose case has been closed within the previous month
- Analysing lessons learnt from complaints
- Examining feedback from serious case reviews/learning reviews
- Auditing case files
- Using data to see trends in practice
- Monitoring young people's attendance/voice at key meetings

The feedback we receive will be fed into our Continuous Improvement Plans and shared with young people and staff through our regular consultation groups



## Useful Contacts

### The Children's Hub Directory

Here you can find local and national services around things to do, places to go and people to talk to, all in one place. The site is aimed at children, young people, their families and any professionals who may be involved with them.

<http://hartlepool.fsd.org.uk>

### Children's Social Care

Our Children's Hub acts as the first point of contact for children's social care in Hartlepool. You can contact the Team by:

**Telephone:** 01429 284284

**Email:** [childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk)





## Contact Us

You can contact the Children's Hub by letter, telephone or email. If English is not your first language we can provide a translation service.

**Telephone** 01429 284284

**Email** [childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk)

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