



Participation Strategy for Young People 2022 - 2025

How Buckinghamshire Council hears the voice of young people

Contents

1. Vision and foreword	3
2. Definitions.....	4
3. Context	5
3.1 Our 9 Priorities.....	5
4. Purpose	8
4.1 Our Mission for Participation	8
4.2 Our Statement of Purpose.....	9
5. Scope	10
5.1 Embedding Participation into our Culture.....	10
5.1.1 Our 3 Rules of Engagement.....	10
5.1.2 Our Participation Principles	10
5.2 Developing Participation within our Services.....	13
5.2.1 Youth Voice Bucks.....	13
5.2.2 Youth Voice and the Youth Voice Bucks Executive Committee	14
5.2.3 ‘We Do Care’ - Buckinghamshire’s Children in Care Council.....	16
5.2.4 Shout out for SEND	18
5.2.5 Champions Programme	19

6. The Future for Participation	21
6.1 Champion’s Commitments to Participation	21
6.2 Participation Development Opportunities.....	22
6.2.1 Annual Surveys	22
6.2.2 Training	22
6.2.3 Digital Offer.....	23
6.2.4 Youth Apprenticeships.....	24
6.2.5 Mentorship Programme	24
7. Governance	25
7.1 Governance Tree	25
7.2 Governance Tree - Overview	26
8. KPIs and outcomes	27
9. Reference and Index.....	29
10. Contact.....	30
Appendix A – Champions’ Participation Research	31
Appendix B - Opportunities by Service Area	42

1. Vision and foreword

Buckinghamshire's Vision for Children and Young People

'We aim to build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire so that they realise their potential, whatever their starting point is.'

Foreword from Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet member for Children's Services

In Buckinghamshire our ambition is to provide the best services possible to support children and young people and their families to realise their potential. In doing so we strive to continually develop our services and how we deliver them, so they are relevant and appropriate to those we work with. Our children and young people have valuable contributions to make in helping us to understand what they need and how to use that knowledge to develop services. We need to provide opportunities to engage children and young people to have their voices heard, responded to and acted upon.

Supporting active participation is key to us improving services which are truly effective and make a positive difference to those who experience them first-hand. This strategy provides a clear framework for all of us who work with and within Children's Services to use in an inclusive manner, actively listening, acting and responding to the issues which children and young people tell us are important to them, and involving them in identifying and providing creative solutions. It is our aspiration that everyone within Children's Services embrace participation as it is described within this strategy, to involve children and young people from across the county to affect positive change in shaping our services and delivery, by using a wide range of opportunities and innovation to enable them to be involved.



2. Definitions

What the dictionary says and what it means to us:

Consultation

- *The action or process of formally consulting or discussing.*

Seeking the views of children and young people in creative ways on how we are supporting them and how they think services should be delivered, and taking actions in response to what they have said.

Participation

- *The action of taking part in something.*

Young people taking an active part in a range of activities including forums, consultations, interview panels and training.

Engagement

- *participate or become involved in.*
- *occupy or attract (someone's interest or attention).*
- *involve someone in (a conversation or discussion).*
- *establish a meaningful contact or connection with.*

Building positive relationships with young people by offering opportunities to interact with us in ways that are meaningful and interesting and gives them an appropriate degree of ownership and control.

Diversity

- *showing a great deal of variety; very different*
- *including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, etc.*

Offering a wide range of activities that are delivered and promoted in different ways to reach young people from different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations and abilities. Getting feedback to ensure these activities meet their needs, interests and passions and making changes based on what they tell us.

3. Context

This participation strategy has been developed to ensure we capture the views of all young people in Buckinghamshire so that their experiences influence service development at an individual, operational and strategic level. We have worked alongside a wide range of stakeholders to create a strategy that is effective, maximises ownership and has Buckinghamshire's strategic aims and the profile of need of young people at its heart.

The Council has a statutory duty, set out in The Children Act 1989, to consider the wishes and feelings of children when decisions are made about them. How well the Council listens to and acts upon the views and experiences of children and young people is part of Ofsted's inspection framework.

Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2019 to 2024 states, *'The experiences and chances that Buckinghamshire children and young people have will shape their lives. Listening to what our children and young people have to say is central to the planning and delivery of services in Buckinghamshire.'*

3.1 Our 9 Priorities

We have 9 challenges that we are working to meet, to ensure we are improving the participation of our young people. These challenges have been developed based on research and what young people and adults have told us are important issues to overcome, to ensure authentic and meaningful participation.

Our 9 challenges and how we plan to address them:



1. Updating young people's contact details

Facilitate an internal campaign to ensure young people's details are updated, including those residing outside of Buckinghamshire, so that we can be proactive in making contact and offering opportunities to all.

2. Ensuring young people are not consulted on things that they don't own and are not relevant to them

Devolve power to young people to enable them to develop their own consultations about issues they 'own', because these are their challenges, they matter to them and they may own the solutions.

3. Strengthening our relationship between Youth Voice Buckinghamshire, service areas and partners

Develop and manage a Champions Programme to help champions develop creative ways to engage with all young people from across children's services. Maximise resources to ensure we effectively coordinate our action plan, monitor and report our progress and impact to the widest audience.

4. Engaging with young people who have protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (Disability, Race, Sexual Orientation, Gender Reassignment), those with Special Educational Needs and those from under-represented or marginalised communities

Work with young people, particularly those with the highest needs, and the services that support them to understand what engagement should look like. Understand and respond innovatively to barriers to engagement to be inclusive and accessible to all, with a conscious focus on increasing engagement and participation amongst young people with SEND, those from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ community.

5. Addressing the isolation of young people caused by COVID-19

Host a series of activities to bring young people together, experience new things and have fun whilst getting their voices heard.

6. Engaging with young people from rural areas of Buckinghamshire

Support and enable young people to attend activities in person e.g. providing transport and provide online events so young people can engage online.

7. Ensuring the information we provide for young people is appealing and engaging

Rebrand our participation service so that it is appealing to young people and uses straightforward, jargon-free language that is easy for everyone to understand.

8. Engaging with young people through digital means

Develop a new online brochure that will share important information, events, consultations, opportunities and contact information, so the council can ensure it is easy for young people to get involved.

9. Making participation count by acting on it

Develop clear parameters for consultations and lines of communication and accountability to ensure that when young people are consulted, they know how much power their views will have, who will make the final decision and how they can communicate with decision-makers.

4. Purpose

4.1 Our Mission for Participation

To listen, act and respond to the views of young people in Buckinghamshire.

- **Listen** - listen to the views of young people in Buckinghamshire, ensuring we do so in ways that engage the widest possible audience while respecting their needs and capturing their ideas.
- **Act** - work with young people to build opportunities, services and a better future which meet young people's needs.
- **Respond** - respond to the needs, interests and aspirations of young people in a timely and transparent manner, so that their ownership and engagement are maximised.
- **Repeat** – participation will be a process: we listen, act and respond and then we continue to review and develop by listening, acting and responding.



4.2 Our Statement of Purpose

In Buckinghamshire we want to promote and simplify pathways for young people to participate in services by developing opportunities for young people to have a say about things that are meaningful to them. We know it's important for young people to have ownership of the things they speak about and what happens as a result, and that we have a duty to build a system that can enable this.

We recognise that to ensure young people receive the very best services we need to engage them in conversations that help us understand their views, opinions and ideas about what we can do. We know that without young people's views, we will not know what they need, how best to support them or how our services should be developed.

Furthermore, we recognise that we do not always need to suggest what young people should consult on; our focus must be to create opportunities for young people to talk about what matters to them. We hold the belief that if we do this honestly, maximising ownership, being clear about the power young people have and providing transparent feedback, we can better meet the needs of young people in Buckinghamshire.

We are ambitious to ensure we engage with all young people, especially those who have special educational needs, disabilities, those who are considered vulnerable and in need of extra support. We believe that by listening to young people and acting on their views we can ensure every young person can be empowered to realise their potential, whatever their starting point is.

This strategy sets out how we plan to listen to young people, respond to them and act on their views, ensuring they know we value their knowledge and work with them to build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire.

5. Scope

5.1 Embedding Participation into our Culture

5.1.1 Our 3 Rules of Engagement

We have developed 3 rules to ensure that whenever we engage with young people, we do so ethically and authentically.

Rule 1: We don't ask young people to do something we would not do ourselves.

Rule 2: Whenever we engage young people in service development, we provide them with development opportunities to ensure they have the skills to do so meaningfully.

Rule 3: We only engage with young people if we have a clear strategy about how we will listen, respond and act in a timely, transparent manner that maximises young people's ownership.

These rules have also considered and responded to the priority, '**providing opportunities for children and young people to meet their full potential**' within the Children and Young People's 2019 – 2024 partnership plan.

5.1.2 Our Participation Principles

'Listen, Act, Respond and Repeat' sums up our transparent operational approach and acts as a memorable mantra that everyone within Buckinghamshire should know.

To understand how everyone can 'Listen, Act, Respond and Repeat' we explain how this is relevant to individuals, services, and decision-makers.



	Individuals	Services	Decision-Makers
Listen	<p><i>Individuals listen to young people with the intention to learn.</i></p> <p>We engage with young people with the intention to listen, learn and encourage them to take ownership by being active participants within our service.</p>	<p><i>Services to use creative methods to listen to young people.</i></p> <p>Each service works with young people from different backgrounds and levels of need. Our expectation is that all service areas develop creative methods to ensure they engage effectively and listen to their young people. These methods will include more than surveys and focus groups and will be developed based on the needs of their young people.</p>	<p><i>Decision-makers invite young people to meetings that make decisions.</i></p> <p>Decision-makers will role model youth participation by ensuring they create space for and support young people to have presence in spaces where decisions are being made. These include but are not exclusive to corporate parenting panels, sub-groups and senior leadership meetings.</p>
Act	<p><i>Individuals to co-create agreements to act with young people.</i></p> <p>We focus on doing things with young people and do this by creating a clear plan and a timeline that explains how we will act based on what we have learnt from them. This is to ensure the young person and individual can take ownership and hold each other accountable to an agreement.</p>	<p><i>Services to develop opportunities with and for young people.</i></p> <p>We have a duty to listen to young people and provide opportunities for them to develop themselves and the services they receive. Where young people are not initially present at discussions that may affect their services, or where their input is needed and could enhance the offer, we will develop creative methods to gain their views. We must be clear about the developmental process: sometimes we will co-design, sometimes we will make an offer first; we will always be open to feedback.</p>	<p><i>Decision-makers to devolve power to young people.</i></p> <p>Decision makers commit to a bottom-up approach and devolve power to young people to enable them to take ownership of the things that are important to them. Devolution will include but is not exclusive to having shared power in recruitment panels, vote on relevant boards, own their agenda in forums, choose to consult on issues that matter to them and can say no to consultations from others.</p>

	Individuals	Services	Decision-Makers
Respond	<p><i>Individuals to always respond to young people with no exceptions.</i></p> <p>We recognise the ethical and moral duty to always let young people know what we are planning to do with their views, within a reasonable timeframe, even if we haven't been able to do what we originally agreed. There should be no exception to this.</p>	<p><i>Services to be honest with young people about what we can and can't do.</i></p> <p>Services will ensure they communicate clearly to young people how their views have shaped service development. We recognise that on occasions services may not be able to act, this must also be communicated with a clear explanation why.</p>	<p><i>Decision-makers commit to communicating directly with young people.</i></p> <p>Our expectation is that if young people are to attend decision-making meetings to share views, young people should expect decision-makers to attend youth forums to share updates. These should form part of a decision-makers routine and be scheduled with the same importance as any other meeting.</p>
Repeat	<p><i>Individuals recognise that participation is everyone's responsibility.</i></p> <p>We recognise that engagement and participation is everyone's responsibility and that it is not the sole responsibility of a participation team. To ensure participation is diverse, effective and impactful it needs support from everybody from the front-line who can support access to young people, to the decision-makers who can build systems for authentic engagement.</p>	<p><i>Services to develop new opportunities to engage with young people annually.</i></p> <p>Services recognise that young people have varying needs and that needs change, they will review their offers at least annually for young people and adapt dependant on the needs at that time. Services will pay particular focus on young people with special educational needs, disabilities, those who are considered vulnerable and in need of extra support.</p>	<p><i>Decision-makers to offer a permanent invitation for young people in decision making spaces.</i></p> <p>Decision makers will ensure that young people have a permanent invitation to all appropriate decision-making spaces and that they are supported to attend.</p>

5.2 Developing Participation within our Services

How we plan to engage with young people in the future

We know that youth participation should be embedded in all our service areas and that everyone should take an active role in ensuring young people have opportunities to engage in service development whilst developing themselves.

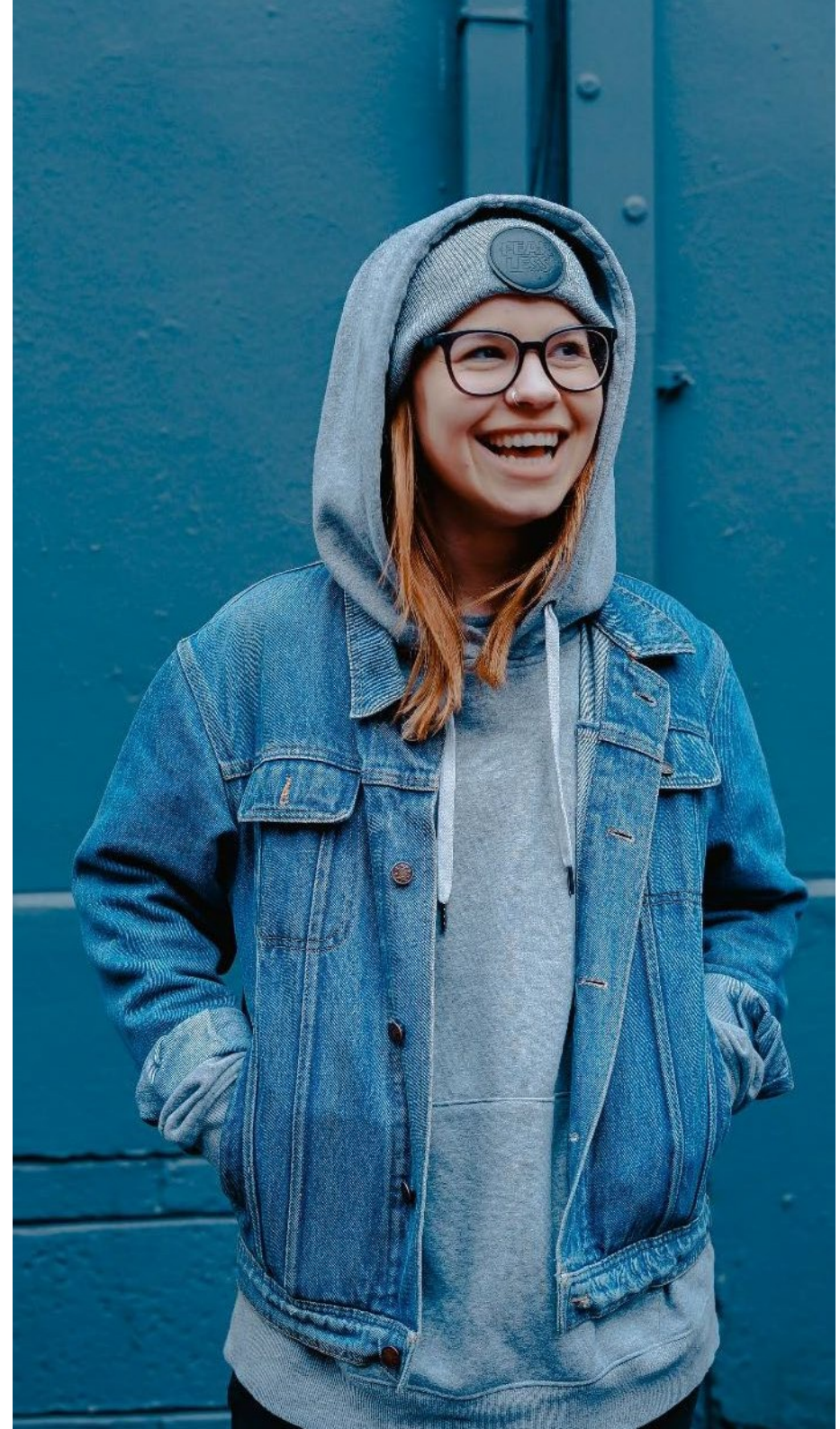
This section of the strategy explains what we are currently doing and how we plan to develop our youth participation offer.

5.2.1 Youth Voice Bucks

Context

Youth Voice Bucks is the new brand that will bring together all the participation activity across the local authority. Youth Voice Bucks is focused on listening to young people, acting on their views and responding to them to let them know what impact they have had. Its work will encompass the Specialist Participation Team, individuals responsible for youth engagement within the Family Support Service and wider Children's Services teams.

The concept of Youth Voice Bucks was developed to ensure we have one clear participation brand for all young people, displaying a clear and consistent message and have an up to date, engaging and youth focused design. From feedback we recognised the term 'specialist participation team' was difficult to explain and labels particular groups of young people as different, which is contrary the work of the 'We Do Care' and their 'Language that Cares' campaign. Therefore, children and young



people who are looked after or have special educational needs will share their voice through tailored opportunities which contribute to Youth Voice Bucks.

We have developed 4 service areas that focus on engaging young people in a diverse, effective and meaningful way, while actively involving individuals, services and decision-makers.

Our 4 service areas/offers:

1. Champions Programme

A forum of individuals from children's services focused on developing opportunities for young people to develop themselves and the services they and others receive.

2. Activities

Bringing young people together to experience new things and have fun whilst getting their voices heard.

3. Forums

Forums that engage young people in conversations about the services they receive, sharing their views, opinions and ideas about how to develop them.

4. Training

Providing training for service areas that support them to engage with their young people.

5.2.2 Youth Voice and the Youth Voice Bucks Executive Committee

Engaging with young people from all 16 localities across Buckinghamshire.

We want our young people to be proud of living in Buckinghamshire and have ambitions for themselves and their peers. Our proposed partnership between Youth Voice and The Executive Committee enables a collaborative and trusting working relationship that gives young people an active role to strengthen our community, supporting Buckinghamshire's key priority to make it the best place to live for all young people.

Youth Voice is a place where young people can have their voices heard to benefit and strengthen our community, raise the issues that they are most passionate about and take an active role in making Buckinghamshire the best place to live for all young people. Youth Voice is open to 11- to 19-year-olds (or up to 25 years old for young people with a disability or learning disability) from Buckinghamshire.

Young people's governance of Youth Voice Bucks is managed through a new Youth Voice Bucks Executive Committee. The Committee will have representation from each locality within the county and, over time, from other youth forums including 'We Do Care' and 'Shout Out for SEND'. The committee will be chaired and managed by young people and will be able to call on officers for consultation and support.

The Executive Committee informs senior leaders from the council about youth issues and undertakes programmes of work to improve local services. There is also the opportunity to represent the county at national events too. Youth Voice is coordinated by the Community Youth Team based within the Family Support Service.

With the Community Boards now established across the county and the existing Youth Voice Executive Committee in place there is a real opportunity to link them together to the benefit of both, ensuring that Youth Participation is embedded as part of this key new process in Buckinghamshire.

There is an opportunity for young people to get involved in the following ways:

- Attend Community Board meetings as official members ensuring their voice is heard and consulted.
- Be given budget responsibility as a Youth Voice Executive Committee to drive forward identified change.
- Consult on key Local Authority Priorities.
- Assess relevant applications to the board and offer input, particularly those with a youth focus.
- Support with recruitment of young people to those boards in need.

Proposed Model

Our ambition is to have 2 Ambassadors from each Community Board area identified to join the Youth Voice Bucks Executive Committee. They will represent their board at meetings and feedback relevant information/opportunities to their Community Board for further discussion and actions. This may then lead to discussions at Youth Voice where key trends are identified to be taken forward by the Youth Voice group as countywide or area-specific actions and opportunities.

This will make the Youth Voice Executive Committee stronger with wider representation, while ensuring that Community Boards are inclusive to young people.

Training

We will provide training to both Community Board members and Community Board Coordinators as part of an induction process. This training will focus on three main areas:

1. Engagement with young people
2. Introducing the model and ensuring this process is understood and being used as a standard approach across each of the boards.
3. Highlighting the role of Ambassadors.

5.2.3 'We Do Care' - Buckinghamshire's Children in Care Council

Engaging with our care experienced young people.

'We Do Care' gives children and young people with experience of care a chance to have their say on issues that matter to them, to make sure that they are listened to by social workers, managers and decision-makers in the council, and to make a difference to the lives of children and young people in care and care leavers.

The Children in Care Council is a group of children and young people who are either in care or a Care Leaver. Their ages range from 5-12 ('We Do Care' Juniors), 12 plus ('We Do Care' Seniors) and 18 plus (Care Leavers).

What we do:

- Talk to decision makers about being in care in Buckinghamshire
- Share ideas about how to improve services for children and young people in care and Care Leavers

- Help interview people who want to work with children and young people
- Organise events like fun days and an award event to celebrate the success of children in care and Care Leavers

Examples of 'We do Care' projects

- **Using Language that Cares**

Our young people developed a video that explained what it means to be in care and what language we need to be using when speaking about young people. The video can be viewed [here](#)

- **'Things to know about care' booklets**

We Do Care Supported the development of booklets that explain what it means to be in care. These can be viewed [here](#)

Online Brochure

We are developing our digital presence to ensure we have an online brochure that can share the opportunities available for young people to participate, we also recognise we have some improvements to make to ensure some of our most vulnerable young people know where to go to access information such as care leavers accessing their rights and entitlements.

Message from young people: 'Being a good Corporate Parent means that you listen to us and that you do not dominate. Whilst not replacing the parenting role, being a good corporate parent means having clear boundaries, helping us settle into new homes and getting the most out of these new routines, ensuring that we feel safe, can sleep and eat well and that there is always someone there for us to talk to and to develop our interests. A Corporate Parent builds our confidence and helps us work through our feelings.'

5.2.4 Shout out for SEND

Shout out for SEND (SOFS) gives children and young people with SEND a chance to have their say on issues that matter to them, to make sure that they are listened to by workers, managers and decision makers in the council, and to make a difference to the lives of children and young people receiving SEND services.

There are a number of ways in which young people can participate. These include:

- Shout Out Reps – where representatives speak for their school, college, friends and community. Reps meet virtually once a month to share the views of young people with SEND in Buckinghamshire.
- SEND Young Inspectors - young people (Inspectors) visit local activities and clubs to check they can meet the needs of young people with SEND. Their reports aid others in finding what a club or activity is like before they go.
- Annual conference for young people - a day of creative and fun activities, for young people with SEND with the opportunity to talk to senior people at Buckinghamshire Council.
- Young people's group - meet every month during school term time, providing the opportunity to develop confidence, self-esteem, improve teamwork skills and share views and help other young people with SEND.
- Activity days - young people with SEND take part in new and fun activities, usually during the school holidays, which also provides opportunities to give their views to influence the support and services provided for SEND children and young people.

SEND Co-Production Pledge

Our SEND Co-production Pledge puts the needs of the individual at the heart of all decision-making processes and the support services that are provided.

Our SEND Co-production Pledge principles:

- Everyone is welcome and treated with care and respect
- Everyone's opinion is not only listened to, but is equally valued and included
- Everyone is communicated with respectfully and in a timely fashion

- Everyone works together to achieve the best outcomes, offering compromise where necessary
- Everyone acts with trust and transparency

The pledge is aimed at all levels of the organisation which include;

- Individually – where an individual can influence the support and services they need. Their voice is heard, they feel empowered about the decisions being made about their future.
- Collectively – where two or more people influence the way services are designed, commissioned and delivered.
- Strategically – where co-production is an embedded culture of inclusion. Individuals, families, groups and organisations can influence equally services, commissioning, monitoring and new projects.

5.2.5 Champions Programme

A staff forum of colleagues focused on developing opportunities for young people, self-development and the services they receive.

While the perception of previous participation efforts is that the focus has been on providing consultation opportunities for young people, we believe participation is so much more.

Our Champions Programme brings together individuals from across children's services and the partnership to develop creative ways to engage with young people [see section 6. Service commitments to young people].

Based on our participation principles, the champions have 4 clear aims:

- 1. Listen:** Services to use creative methods to listen to young people.
- 2. Act:** Services to develop opportunities with and for young people.
- 3. Respond:** Services to honest with young people about what we can and can't do.
- 4. Repeat:** Services to develop new opportunities to engage with young people annually.

Champions are volunteers from across Children's Services who work together to ensure that youth participation activities are integral to service development and delivery. Every service area commits to providing a champion, who will support for as long as their role allows.

Champions are provided with training to learn about how to create opportunities for young people to develop both themselves and the services they receive.

Champions have 4 meetings a year where they discuss the opportunities that they have identified and developed for young people. They also work with Youth Voice Bucks and decision-makers to remove barriers that might prevent young people from engaging, and will nominate adults and young people for 'recognition awards' to celebrate good practice.

Upon ending involvement, the outgoing Champion will discuss the opportunity with colleagues, nominate and appoint someone else from the represented service area to become the service participation Champion. The services represented are listed in Appendix A.

Once embedded within Children's Services, the Champion model will be expanded into the wider council and partner agencies.

6. The Future for Participation

How we are developing opportunities for youth participation

6.1 Champion's Commitments to Participation

Our Champions are developing opportunities for young people to engage in their service area. They recognise that for participation to be great a joined up approach should be developed to ensure Buckinghamshire offer a robust and meaningful youth participation offer.

As part of the initial Champions Programme, attendees were asked to research and identify:

- Current participation activities in their service
- Their vision for participation
- The barriers that are preventing them from achieving their vision
- The impact of achieving their vision

From these responses, we can create a 'whole system' view of participation, giving us vital information that enables Champions to think creatively about solutions to providing meaningful engagement opportunities for young people. These commitments will be reviewed and developed through the Champions Group and will form part of the impact



monitoring activity. See Appendix A for the Champion's Participation Research and Appendix B for the Opportunities by Service Area. Once established, the intention is for the wider Council and then partner agencies to adopt the Champions approach.

6.2 Participation Development Opportunities

Our ambitious plan to develop youth participation in Buckinghamshire

This section explains our ideas around engaging with young people across Buckinghamshire. These opportunities have been developed through engagement with our Champions, Specialist Participation Team and Family Support Service, and have been informed by feedback from our Corporate Parenting Panel.

6.2.1 Annual Surveys

Champions to develop annual surveys to consult with young people

We recognise that capturing of the views of young people is key to ensuring that our services can be developed to best support them. We also understand that service areas request consultations at different times throughout the year, many surveys ask similar questions and can lead to 'over consultation' with young people.

Through the Champions we will agree annual surveys to hear the views of young people. These surveys will be designed to ensure we ask young people relevant questions, so that all service areas can benefit from young people's feedback. We will also ensure that surveys will be scheduled mindfully throughout the year so that young people are not 'over consulted'.

6.2.2 Training

For young people, staff and leaders

It is important to develop the relevant skills to understand how to engage with young people. Providing development opportunities to staff, young people and leaders will help us build a culture of outstanding participation across Buckinghamshire. We plan to explore development opportunities for young people to learn skills in facilitation, presentation and leadership so they can effectively engage with our service.

For staff, we aim to offer training that develops their skills in engaging with young people, with a particular focus on engagement with SEND young people. Finally, training for leaders will be based on our new approach to participation ensuring we have buy-in at every level of Buckinghamshire. We will be providing training that will support our community board members, lead members and participation champions to understand how to engage with young people and understand their corporate parenting responsibility. This training will include learning to enable adults to understand the new participation strategy and to recognise the lived experiences of young people in Buckinghamshire. This training will be provided by lived experience leaders who have personal and professional experience of children's services and our partner services.

6.2.3 Digital Offer

Communications and Web Content

We know that most young people now access and engage with information digitally. Our aim is to develop our digital offer to reflect the participation opportunities. Developing our digital offer will focus on two areas; firstly, to share online the opportunities for young people to engage through forums, activities and conversations; secondly, to provide information about rights, entitlements, events and other useful content.

We have 'rebranded' participation as 'Youth Voice Bucks' which will bring together all the participation activity across the local authority. This branding will enhance our ability to engage digitally with young people through visually appealing content.



6.2.4 Youth Apprenticeships

Supporting young people into employment

From our work with Champions we have identified existing opportunities for young people to engage with services (See 6.1.1). These opportunities range from interviewing potential staff, supporting training, developing resources, engaging in decision-making spaces and more. Usually, individual service areas would reach out and ask young people to volunteer their time to support with these requests, often asking the same young people to be involved. Our focus here is to identify opportunities from all service areas and create a coordinated set of activities that could be suitable for an apprentice.

6.2.5 Mentorship Programme

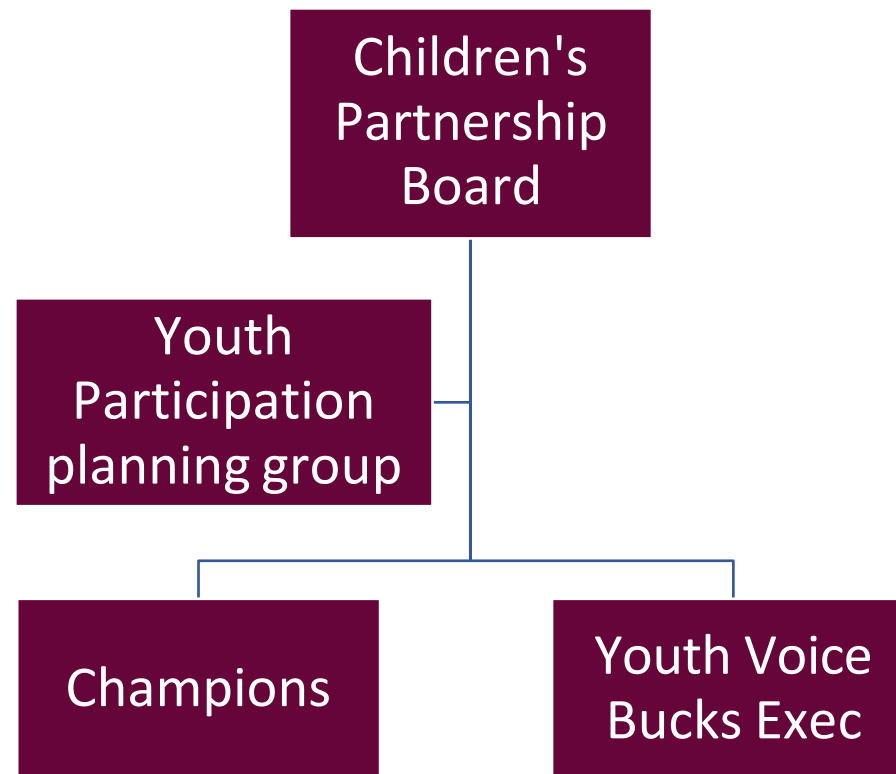
Providing young people with a mentor to learn skills and develop interests

Our mentor programme will provide mentors who are able support young people to develop their skills, interests and hobbies. Mentors will be volunteers from the employee pool within local authority. Recognising that we have various sectors within our organisation we have the potential to access individuals with a wide range of expertise from law, health, social care, finance and more. We are also asking volunteers who have a skill or hobby that they can share to become a mentor, enabling us to offer mentorship based on people's interests which could include playing an instrument, sport, music, art and more.

7. Governance

The governance for Youth Voice Buckinghamshire will mirror existing governance processes and reporting but with the addition of the Youth Voice Bucks Executive Committee, which will receive and write reports and be able to call on the support of officers and members to fully understand and respond to strategic and operational development outlined in this strategy or in other developmental areas.

7.1 Governance Tree



7.2 Governance Tree - Overview

To ensure we have the most senior buy-in and can hand over appropriate power, our Children's Partnership Board will oversee the participation strategy.

Our Youth Participation Planning group is made up of Youth Voice representatives, the Participation Coordinator, Specialist Participation Team Manager, Community Youth Service Development Manager, Participation Champion Representative and Heads of Service for Early Help and Social Care (or delegate) whose responsibility is to create an action plan to ensure we implement our participation strategy, monitor KPIs and maintain senior oversight.

The Champions are individuals from the services areas outlined in section 5.2.5 of this strategy whose primary focus will be supporting Youth Voice Bucks by providing and evidencing participation opportunities for young people.

Increasing engagement and participation will bring benefits to Buckinghamshire's young people, and the whole council. As such, the ambitions in this strategy should be widely known and understood so everybody contributes to maximising the impact the new strategy and approach can bring. Youth Voice Bucks is the service dedicated to enhancing participation activity across Buckinghamshire Council but it cannot achieve our strategic goals without the full support of children's service staff, council officers, Members and partner agencies.

8. KPIs and outcomes

Youth Voice Bucks Executive Committee to receive quarterly report from each service area covering:

Listen, Act, Respond and Repeat

Increased effectiveness and engagement of young people's consultation:

- Number of participation/consultation events and opportunities
- Number and diversity of young people engaged
- Outcomes from proposals made by young people: response given, action taken and impact

When consultation with young people has happened, individuals/services can produce a clear agreement that states what actions were committed to, the impact it had and what response was given to the young person.

Youth Participation Planning Group

This subgroup will be responsible for overseeing the progress of the strategy and impact on youth participation. Once the participation planning group is established and the action plan for implementation of the strategy agreed, the group will also confirm KPI targets for the forthcoming year, April 2022 – March 2023, which will include:

- Levels of engagement and participation (e.g. the number of opportunities and attendance)
- Training engagement and impact
- Feedback from young people
- Examples of positive change



The planning group will monitor performance and progress on a quarterly basis and provide an annual report to the Children's Partnership Board to demonstrate the progress towards the aspirations of the strategy. The group will also be responsible for the review and setting of new KPI targets each year.

Baseline Data

We recognise that baseline data has not been previously captured. Therefore our commitment is to capture data that can be used to hold us to account to ensure we provide effective youth participation and so that we can understand the impact we are making. As a starting point, baseline data will be captured through participation work across Children's Service, through the Champions network. We will clearly evidence where young people have authentic power in decision making, and will demonstrate progression towards solving our 9 challenges of participation through case studies and examples of change.

Outcomes

The action plan and KPIs will ensure that the strategy delivers on its aims and make a demonstrable difference. The outcomes that we expect to see include:

- Increased number of diverse participation opportunities.
- More young people attending participation activities and groups.
Wider representation of young people attending participation activities, including those with SEND, those from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and the LGBTQ+ community.
- Clear evidence through case studies of actions taken as a direct result of listening to young people's voices.
- A well-attended and active champion network in place for Children's Services, with members from the wider council and partner agencies, who can provide clear evidence of the opportunities made available to young people and the changes made as a result.
- Young people report that they feel listened to, know that action will be taken and can see the difference they are making.

9. Reference and Index

In developing this strategy, we have engaged with:

- The Unitary Council's Community Boards and their development with the Youth Voice Executive Committee.
- The Specialist Participation Team and their engagement with young people considered 'vulnerable', particularly those who have care experience.
- Representatives from service areas across children's services and the partnerships working with young people including those with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Senior leadership and their vision for participation and engagement.

We have also referenced and considered local documents including:

- Buckinghamshire's Children & Young People's Partnership Plan 2019 – 2024.
- Children's Service Plan.
- Corporate Plan 2020 – 2023.
- Corporate Values Proud, Ambitious, Collaborative, Trustworthy (PACT).
- Buckinghamshire Partnership Early Help Strategy 2019 - 2022.
- Buckinghamshire's Equality Objectives.
- Buckinghamshire's Equality Policy 2020 –2023.
- SEND Co-Production Pledge 2021.
- OFSTED services inspection 2018 and 5 monitoring visits between 03 July 2018 – 24th February 2021.
- Buckinghamshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Additionally, we have taken guidance from:

- Department for Education's Government Design Principles.
- Department for Education's Participation of young people in education, employment or training.

- Understanding accessibility requirements for public sector bodies (Gov.uk)
- Plain English Campaign
- UN Conventions for the Rights of the Child

10. Contact

If you would like to speak to us about this strategy you can contact us by emailing youthvoicebucks@buckinghamshire.gov.uk or by calling 01296 382583.



Appendix A – Champions’ Participation Research

	Current Youth Participation Activities	Vision for Youth Participation	Barriers to Overcome to Achieve Vision	Impact of the Vision	Opportunities
Youth Offending Service	Young people are consulted on their individual intervention plans as part of the assessment process. They complete a self-assessment that gives feedback on various elements of their life which is then triangulated with information gathered from other sources. We have involved young people in recruitment processes in the past and gather feedback from every young person at the end of their intervention, asking them about each stage of the criminal justice	<p>We gather feedback but I want to see us do something more meaningful with this and make positive, tangible change. I would love for a young person to attend our Partnership Board so strategic partners can hear their experiences first-hand and I would love to see the collective voice of young people within strategic decision-making processes. – Becky</p> <p>Have young people involved in the decision making and shaping of the YOS, including on a strategic level. Not only doing interviews but being transparent and honouring the weighting the YP panel have in interviews. Forming a pathway of opportunities including potential employment within the Council. - Lisa</p>	<p>Resources. Partnership buy in. Ensuring young people feel safe to share, both with professionals and other young people.</p> <p>Clear planning and process for staff including partners, supporting and training young people with a variety of forums to engage.</p> <p>Resources available in the community, resources available to the Youth Offending Service, having a digital platform would be helpful for young people to access as there is so much information and</p>	<p>Services are more effective and young people feel valued.</p> <p>Increased confidence, voice, transferable skills into their education/employment/family settings. Making a positive difference to make change to future services.</p> <p>Young people feeling more involved, young people feeling hopeful about the future, creating positive outcomes that can continue to benefit young people long after they've finished their contact with the YOS.</p>	<p>Young person to attend our Partnership Board</p> <p>Honouring the weighting the YP panel have in interviews</p> <p>Supporting and training young people with a variety of forums</p> <p>Access to opportunities and resources to help them develop the skills to avoid further contact with the system</p> <p>Training for senior leaders about youth engagement</p>

	<p>programme and supporting them to consider how they felt about each of these.</p> <p>Forming and sequencing action plans, feedback form at end of interventions, supporting with young people interview panels.</p> <p>Young people coming to the YOS are involved in their sentence planning, they give feedback on interventions, they are encouraged to make suggestions of how sessions will work best for them (e.g. appointments taking place in the community instead of the office, shorter sessions etc) and we try to accommodate this where possible.</p>	<p>For young people to be supported through their contact with the Criminal Justice System and be provided with access to opportunities and resources to help them develop the skills to avoid further contact with the system. – Melissa</p> <p>Resources. Partnership buy in. Ensuring young people feel safe to share, both with professionals and other young people.</p>	<p>jargon associated with the Criminal Justice System so an easy way for them to get local information about Court processes, opportunities (such as ETE) etc would be great</p>		<p>Develop copy/inset with young people to add to Youth Voice Buckinghamshire brochure site that explains the criminal justice system.</p>
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Family Support Service/ Children's Services Education	Youth Executive Voice group, SEND and Child Looked After Youth Voice Groups - the SEND and CLA youth voice groups are currently a little more developed than the executive group, with paid staff assigned to the running of the former as their main jobs. All 3 these groups include consultation, engagement activities and training	We would like to see participation embedded in strategic thinking and policymaking of services that affect them as well as the county. This includes a coherent strategy for making this work, including appropriate resourcing for youth participation	Staff resourcing, local authority processes including management buy-in and support, communication rules and policymaking	A county where young people and their communities feel safe, supported and empowered to contribute and live fulfilled lives.	<p>Decision-makers to offer a permanent invitation for young people in decision making spaces.</p> <p>Young people participate in recruitment of staff, particularly Youth Family Support Workers.</p> <p>Young people participate in further development the FSS Service provision, delivery and Family Centre spaces.</p> <p>Youth representative(s) attend and are active members of the EH Strategy governance group.</p>
Children in Care Team	From the Children in Care Team this includes: Direct work with children and young people by social workers to	We want the Children in Care Team to be a place where we are not just 'corporate parents' who do things for children and young people, but also do things with them. I want children and young	The Children in Care Team is just beginning to find stability after a time of overwhelming caseloads and changes of social workers. We	To have a service that keeps children and young people at the heart of all we do, to have better relationships for children and young people with their social workers,	<p>Disseminate Language that cares more widely</p> <p>Children and young people to come to</p>

	gather their views about their care plan. Inviting children and young people to attend CLA Reviews and PEP meetings.	people to be actively involved in saying what they want for their care plans (and for this to be reflected in the language we use in assessments and care plans), but also what they want from the service as whole. For example, to have direct feedback from children and young people about social work practice; to give them a voice that we listen to and make changes as a result. The expert in knowing what a social worker needs should do and be like, are the children and young people who we work with. I'd like children and young people to come to training sessions/team meetings to help my team to make sure they are always thinking about what work they do and why. Often as adults we can overcomplicate and create jargon filled processes. I want there to be simple, fun, and easy ways to provide feedback and to be involved.	are still concentrating on getting the basics right and there is a lot of work to do - so it's about what to focus on first. I think people can be stuck in their habits of how they practice social work - and to think about change can be difficult. People have caseloads that are too high so to add in any other work can feel/be overwhelming. A small proportion of children in care go to the participation group, so we're only getting feedback from a relatively small group compared to the number of children/young people in care.	where they feel listened to and their views are valued, and to know they are cared for. The journey into care is never going to be an easy one; it's related to trauma and loss. However, once children are in care, I want to make that experience as supportive and positive as we can.	training sessions/team meetings
Children and Young Adults Disability Service	Very limited for children and young people with additional needs in my service. There has recently been a	That children and young people with additional learning physical and medical needs are enabled to have their views and voices heard. If there were to be a participation job role that person	TIME, resources, accessibility. For our team engagement with other services education health etc is great but it would	They children and young people will feel empowered and heard.	Provide training about how to engage with young people who have additional or complex needs

	consultation for the 0 to 25 CYA disability service and an agency we used to gather views with the young people but these were not with the young people with the most complex needs who our team support so I don't not feel it was a true reflection for our team. There are significant challenges to obtaining Children and young adults views. We have resource to obtain views within our team and we try to establish their views as best we can.	would need to have a good knowledge of children and young people with additional and complex needs.	need us all to work together to enable young people with complex additional needs to be heard.		
Virtual School	The young person is invited to every PEP and they can contribute verbally. They also complete a section of the ePEP with a trusted person in the education setting to help	To have a clearer view of the voice of young people, active engagement with young people through listening to their needs and trying to implement them where possible and if appropriate. – Trudi More ways for the young people to communicate with us, more	YP need to be able to access an online forum where they can get answers to queries and access help without going through a third party To be able to provide a way of getting	that YP feel validated through being heard. PEP will be relevant to the young person and reflect their plans for the future and the actions and support needed. It won't be just a process.	Develop an online forum for young people to ask questions about education Develop inset for Virtual School on the Youth Voice

	prepare for the PEP meeting	input from them on what makes a good PEP meeting, more focus on their voice, wishes and ideas. - Sara	information to our young people more quickly, in a way they can interact with rather than keep going through the social worker and carers/key workers. To be more open to having leaving care ambassadors rather than always being risk averse to everything.		Buckinghamshire Website Create care leaver ambassador role within the virtual school
Children's Social Care (Court Team)	For my team it is completed through wishes and feelings/direct work, this can be useful but can also sometimes feel like a tick box exercise as often it doesn't end with a resolution.	I would like the voice of the child/YP to actually be heard. One of the missions was for the journey of the child to be clear throughout their SC involvement and to show the journey they had made etc. and it is shown but often through work completed by professionals e.g. LAC reviews but there doesn't seem to be an area that really shows the child participated to give their voice.	The team I work in is time limited and then moves over to another team, there are also staffing issues and the case load numbers are very high for the number of staff in the team, there just doesn't feel like there is enough time to cover everything.	It will hopefully get them the right services, it will enable them towards the future to know that they can speak up, it will give them a little bit of power (not sure that is the right word) in what happens in their future. It will enable them to work with professionals rather than against them.	Create a visual journey (infographic) to explain the journey into care
Education Psychology, Children's Services Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part of our role as educational psychologists is to elicit and promote the voice of the CYP we are involved with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CYP will feel that they are able to participate meaningfully in decisions about them. All CYP will feel that their views are both heard and understood by adults working with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring all partners understand the needs and challenges to participation CYP face at an individual level across the county. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each CYP would feel meaningfully included in the various systems around them. Longer term, there would be a stronger sense of 	Education Psychology to offer training to the wider council Staff to be Makaton trained

	<p>in statutory processes such as an EHC needs assessment or Annual Review for an EHCP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In promoting CYP's views we use a range of tools and techniques to promote active participation, including consultation skills, solution focussed questioning, visual cues such as strength cards. • As well as trying to elicit their views we look to draft outcomes and targets based on the aspirations and interests centred around what the CYP has told us, in order to promote a sense of agency and ownership for the CYP over decisions being made for and about them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All CYP will know what happens to the information/views they share when we ask them to participate with county wide policy development. • All staff working with CYP in the county would be Makaton trained. • All staff working with CYP in the county would feel comfortable with and be using visual prompts and cues to aid communication with CYP. • All staff working with CYP in the county would have sound knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues and be sensitive to them when working with CYP. • CYP would rate all staff they encounter in the local authority as accessible if they were to rate us on a scale 1-10. • CYP would communicate having confidence in the adults they work with and feel they could share in an open and safe way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that we are ethical in how we seek participation of CYP and what we do with the information we gather. • Ensure funding and time is available for appropriate training. • Consistent buy in and valued placed on participation strategies from senior leaders at the council. 	<p>community value and spirit amongst CYP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff would feel more equipped and confident in their skills and this in turn would have a positive effect of the relationships built with CYP. • The Local Authority would be identified as a leading advocate of inclusion and CYP engagement. 	<p>Campaign to get young people to 'rate their worker'</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We also seek consent/assent from each CYP we work with. 				
Missing and Exploitation Hub	Using advocates, strength and difficulty questionnaires, direct relationship-based work.	We need better face to face consultation with our children and young people to support our understanding of what is important for them, how they want us work with them etc, this needs to be acted upon not just given lip service. For instance, having an advocate to voice the child's voice at conference, this needs to formulate part of the child's plan, even if what they are saying is not safe, it needs to be acknowledged in the plan and feedback to the child so that they know they have been heard and have some power over their own destiny. In addition, these plans need to be child/young person friendly, so that a child can truly be part of it. This needs to go further, children need to be part of formulating this and helping to create a process that can empower them. In my service, I would like to get to a point where we not only ask children to support our understanding but	Concerns about risk to the LA. For instance, asking young people to be champions/experts to support other young people, could be emotionally triggering for them, the LA would be concerned with regards to this risk. Although a young person is the expert in their own experience, there would also be concern that their experience may have created different norms and values which could be unsafe for to share with other children, all of this risk could be mitigated with good supervision and management	I would like children that have been victim of exploitation to help professionals understand what they found beneficial in the multi-agency response and what they found harmful/unhelpful, I would then like to create a program for these children to support other young people who are still being exploited, in terms of impact, I feel that this would empower victims too become mentors, improve trust with professionals and will also improve the response to children still being exploited, as they are more likely to talk to a peer and we are more likely to gain an understanding of what is actually important for the child rather than what we think is important to the child.	Care Leavers/Teenage ambassadors 'Peer to Peer' support programme

		get to a place where these young people are empowered enough to then support other children with similar circumstances.			
Help and Protection Team	In the Help & Protection Team direct work is completed with children and young people to determine their views and wishes. Before CIN or CP reviews children are invited to come along and share their views. Most children and YP choose to not attend but pass on their views to SW in consolation prior to meetings.	What I have found powerful in my role is when you receive service user feedback - for example from care leavers talking about their experiences and what they found supportive and what they didn't like such as how upsetting every day professional language like LAC can impact on young people and how this makes them feel. This makes you reflect and consider the language you use and record.	In the HAP team we support babies - 18 yr olds so this is a very varied age range to tailor a vision for. It's difficult as our goal is to not work long term with families its short interventions to then close or step down, so I am unsure how participation long term could look. It's also difficult with time constraints. Not everybody has the same training and approach.	If they look back at their case file in years to come, it needs to show their journey in a respectful and clear way that doesn't involve using professional jargon that can cause offence and make them feel unimportant.	Life story work Training for staff
Leaving Care	We do not have enough care leavers engaging in participation within the leaving care service, the youth/ participation team should work more collaboratively with	Care leaver can participate in reviewing our policies, procedures and standard documents & get involved in staff recruitment A video to send to our new care leavers to inform them what to expect from the leaving care	Motivating care leavers to participate Location and access Young people don't want to engage when they don't know anyone	The service will be tailored to meet the needs of our care leavers identifying what works and what doesn't work	Care leaver to be involved in reviewing policies, OFSTED inspections, attendance to national and local events and staff recruitment

	care leaver, this needs to improve	<p>team and transitioning into adulthood including Adult social care, CHC, Probation.</p> <p>A video to send to our care leavers re: 21-25 service</p> <p>Care leaver to be a “mentor” or care leaver champion with support and guidance from one of our PA’s</p> <p>Involvement with Ofsted inspections</p> <p>Involvement to organise events and forums e.g. LGBTQ+ care leaver forum and Diversity forum and national care leaver week.</p> <p>WhatsApp group for care leavers</p> <p>A care leavers group represents the views of care leavers aged 18 onwards. Perhaps meet once a month/ bi-monthly and discuss issues to do with leaving care and everything related to transitioning into adulthood and other Adult services, Adult social care, AMHT.</p>	<p>Young Parents - what activities can they do? Childcare?</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Out of county Care leavers</p> <p>Age-appropriate activities such as over 18 groups</p> <p>Risk assessing</p> <p>Being with other care leavers, conflict</p> <p>Having a label being a “care leaver” Care experience or former looked after – changing the language we use</p>		<p>Care leavers to develop media for other care leavers</p> <p>Care leaver as a mentor</p> <p>Organising events for other care leavers</p> <p>Development of a care leavers forum</p>
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		<p>Employment guarantee for care leavers - Employment Guarantee is an opportunity for care leavers to get extra support and experiences of work to help them get into employment. Work with ETE providers and DWP/ Bucks HR, work coaches, find local work experience places for care leavers</p> <p>Buckinghamshire to engage UK Artist (music, music management) www.apprenticenation.co.uk ETE opportunities</p> <p>Accessible venue - in a safe and comfortable environment</p> <p>Not using labels such as; “care leaver” Care experience or former looked after – but look at changing at the language we use</p> <p>Care leaver to participate in national Bench Catch 22 – forum</p> <p>AQA awards to be implemented to our care leaver</p>			
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Appendix B - Opportunities by Service Area

This table highlights the opportunities for young people to engage in service areas identified from the Champion's Programme.

Opportunity	Service Area
Young person to attend our Partnership Board Honouring the weighting the YP panel have in interviews Supporting and training young people with a variety of forums Access to opportunities and resources to help them develop the skills to avoid further contact with the system Training for senior leaders about youth engagement Develop copy/inset with young people to add to Youth Voice Buckinghamshire brochure site that explains the criminal justice system.	Youth Offending Service
Decision-makers to offer a permanent invitation for young people in decision making spaces. Young people participate in recruitment of staff, particularly Youth Family Support Workers. Young people participate in further development the FSS Service provision, delivery and Family Centre spaces. Youth representative(s) attend and are active members of the EH Strategy governance group.	Family Support Service, Children's Services Education
Disseminate Language that cares more widely Children and young people to come to training sessions/team meetings	Children in Care Team
Provide training about how to engage with young people who have additional or complex needs	Children and Young Adults Disability Service
Develop an online forum for young people to ask questions about education Develop inset for Virtual School on the Youth Voice Buckinghamshire Website Create care leaver ambassador role within the virtual school	Virtual School
Create a visual journey (infographic) to explain the journey into care	Children's Social Care (Court Team)
Education Psychology to offer training to the wider council Staff to be Makaton trained Campaign to get young people to 'rate their worker'	Education Psychology, Children's Services Education
Care Leavers/Teenage ambassadors 'Peer to Peer' support programme	Missing and Exploitation Hub

Life story work Training for staff	Help and Protection Team
Care leaver to be involved in reviewing policies, OFSTED inspections, attendance to national and local events and staff recruitment Care leavers to develop media for other care leavers Care leaver as a mentor Organising events for other care leavers Development of a care leavers forum	Leaving Care