



Report to Children's & Education Select Committee

Date:	Thursday 8 September 2022
Reference number:	NA
Title:	Participation Strategy for Young People - Implementation & Progress
Relevant councillor(s):	Cllr Anita Cranmer (Cabinet Member Education & Children's Services)
Author and/or contact officer:	Krissie Hutton (Youth Participation Coordinator) Gareth Morgan (Head of Early Help)
Ward(s) affected:	none specific

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to acknowledge the publication and launch of the first Buckinghamshire Participation Strategy for Young People.

The committee is asked to recognise the importance of this Strategy as a mechanism to improve the effectiveness of engagement with young people by the Council, across the County.

The committee is asked to note the timelines and progress milestones detailed within the report.

Executive summary

This report details the background, examples of impact achieved in Children's Services, upcoming activity and monitoring arrangements for Buckinghamshire Council's Youth Participation Strategy 2022-2025, following its launch, in May 2022.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. On Thursday 19 May 2022, Buckinghamshire Council launched its first Youth Participation Strategy, at an event attended by dozens of colleagues and partners, as well as several councillors. The strategy is attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The Youth Participation Strategy was developed over two years by the Family Support Service and a consultancy called The Care Leaders. The Care Leaders are a social enterprise with care-experienced young adults who use their experience, knowledge, and skills to promote high-quality participation work and professional practice within local authority and other public sector settings.
- 1.3. A Strategy launch event for young people will take place in Autumn 2022 and a young person's version of the strategy has been developed and is available in Appendix 2.
- 1.4. The Youth Participation Strategy commits us to embed high-quality youth participation work across Buckinghamshire Council's Children's Services, so that young people's voices help to improve the services and resources that they access. It also endeavours to promote and support youth participation work in the wider Council, our partner organisations, and the County as a whole.
- 1.5. To drive forward the work, a Youth Participation Coordinator has been appointed. The Youth Participation Coordinator started on Monday 11 July and sits alongside the Specialist Participation Team Manager within the Family Support Service.
- 1.6. The core of the Youth Participation Strategy is a set of engagement principles that provide a framework for participation:
 - 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 when we have a clear strategy about how we will listen, act, and respond in a timely, transparent manner that maximises young people's ownership.
- 1.7. The Youth Participation Strategy responds to the following priorities:
 - 1.7.1. 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.
 - 1.7.2. 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.’

- 1.7.3. 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. The outcome report of the Ofsted Inspection of Buckinghamshire Council’s Children’s Services (December 2021) states within its list of points that need to improve, “The engagement and participation of children in care in the corporate parenting work of the council”.

1.8. The Youth Participation Strategy is also built on the following principles:

- 1.8.1. Young people are experts in their own lives, and their views, opinions and ideas are essential to improving services to best support their needs.
- 1.8.2. Listening to young people and acting on their views empowers young people to realise their potential and fosters social responsibility.
- 1.8.3. Carrying out high-quality participation work with young people with special educational needs and disabilities, specific protected characteristics, and/or those young people that are considered vulnerable, enables services to become truly inclusive.

A new website and brand have been developed to accompany the Youth Participation Strategy. More detail on the website is given below in 3.1.

2. Recent examples of increased influence and impact of young people

- 2.1 The Leaving Care Team are focusing on increasing care leaver’s engagement with the service, making them front and central to all new developments in the team, giving feedback and helping to steer and shape the service. Engagement is being gained via activity days, the most recent being a picnic held on 5th August and an awards ceremony being planned jointly with the participation team. Special interest groups are also being set up for care leavers open to the service with a book group, fitness group and university group all in development.

The team are promoting engagement with increased social media presence with care leaver specific Facebook and TikTok accounts where young people can engage with the service and provide their views on various subject areas.

- 2.2 The Leaving Care Team are also organising a Care Leavers Christmas lunch for Christmas day this year. The team plan to ask a care leaver to participate on the steering group to help organise this – one of our care leavers is currently on an events management course so we will be approaching her initially as this would provide great experience in her chosen area.

2.3 In terms of active participation of care leavers the following is in place:

- Care leavers have been invited and participated on the interview panels for PA and Senior PA roles.
- They have given their views on health summaries which led to a change in the health summary format for children in care.
- They gave views on housing which led to a “you said, we did” set of actions which have already started to improve housing option for care leavers and is kept updated to evidence change.
- Care leavers in custody have given feedback on improving services for them both whilst in custody and on release and we obtained direct feedback from them on the publicity we are providing which has been updated in accordance with their input.
- Care leavers participated in updating the care leaver local offer.
- We have a care leaver who attends the corporate parenting panel who will be joining the education sub-group as he is passionate about improving educational outcomes for children in care and providing input into how this can be improved.

Feedback to the young people is provided throughout all of these forums in line with the strategy principles, so they are aware of the impact they are making on shaping the service.


2.4 In addition:

- Two of our children who live in our children’s homes sat on the recruitment interview panel for our new looked after nurses.
- One of our children who lives in our children’s home took part in the selection interview process for Buckinghamshire’s new Corporate Director of Children’s Services
- A group of children from our children’s home are involved in writing and delivering training to social workers and carers on caring for teenagers, this covers social media, friendship challenges and teenage relationships.
- We have a group of four children in care who have been undertaking visits to our semi-independent placement providers to assess whether they would be appropriate placements – they provide verbal feedback which includes suggestions for improvements.


3. Key participation activities over the next 12 months

3.1. Launch of the Youth Voice Bucks website – August 2022



- 3.1.1. www.YouthVoiceBucks.co.uk will act as a hub of participation work for young people and practitioners. It will present numerous participation opportunities for young people available from the Council and partners, as well as best practice case studies and blogs.
 - 3.2. Launch of the Youth Voice Champions Programme – September 2022
 - 3.2.1. Youth Voice Champions are colleagues who promote and develop participation opportunities for young people within their respective services. They meet quarterly to share ideas, solve barriers, and monitor an action plan. 15 colleagues from 12 services have so far expressed an interest, and the quarterly meetings will commence in September 2022.
 - 3.3. Young People’s Launch of the Youth Participation Strategy – Autumn 2022
 - 3.3.1. Once the website is live and the participation offer to young people has been mapped and enhanced, a launch of the Youth Participation Strategy for young people will be held. The event will celebrate youth voice and promote participation opportunities. The event will be co-created with young people engaged with the Council’s existing participation work.
 - 3.4. Launch of a Councillor Mentoring Scheme (subject to resource) – October 2022
 - 3.4.1. The feasibility of launching a councillor mentoring scheme is currently being explored. This scheme would invite ambitious young people with an interest in politics to shadow local councillors for 3 or 6 months. It would be led by the Democratic Services team.
 - 3.5. Training by The Care Leaders – monthly until December 2022
 - 3.5.1. Care-experienced facilitators are delivering monthly training sessions for practitioners and Members in Buckinghamshire that work with young people, focused on themes such as connection, belonging and wellbeing. They are grounded in facilitators’ personal experience, plus evidence, legislation, and national trends. More information is available in Appendix 4.
 - 3.6. Agreeing a consistent approach to youth interview panels – by December 2022
 - 3.6.1. Youth interview panels are often used in Children’s Services to recruit to roles that involve direct work with children and young people or management of services for children and young people. It is an effective way of engaging young people in decision-making.
 - 3.6.2. While there are many examples of good practice, there is currently no approach agreed across the department for the process. This will be addressed within the remit of the Youth Participation Strategy.
 - 3.7. Launch of a Community Board Youth Ambassador programme – April 2023
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- 3.7.1. To embed youth voice in the Council's 16 community boards, a Community Board (CB) Youth Ambassador programme will be developed. The programme will provide a high-quality leadership opportunity for community-motivated young people.
 - 3.7.2. The young participants will be educated on the structure, functions, and processes of the boards, and provided with opportunities to develop skills such as public speaking, analysis, and budget management.
 - 3.7.3. The CB Youth Ambassadors will take on various functions that align with the character and workstreams of the boards and the young person's strengths and interests. The scheme will pilot in a few of the Community Boards and adjusted and expanded for other boards as appropriate.
 - 3.7.3.1. E.g. CB Youth Ambassadors for one area might lead on a consultation with peers to explore the concept of a new youth café / hub, and present their findings and recommendations to the Community Board for a decision.
 - 3.7.4. The CB Youth Ambassadors will be invited to join the Youth Voice Executive Committee (see 2.9 below).
- 3.8. Development of a Voice Apprenticeship/Internship – by April 2023
- 3.8.1. A Youth Voice Apprenticeship/Internship will bring together what are currently ad-hoc opportunities for young people to contribute to Council participation projects in various services, such as:
 - Sitting on a youth interview panel
 - Helping to plan events for young people
 - Developing resources, surveys etc. for young people / for use with young people
 - Testing website suitability for young people
 - 3.8.2. This position will provide the young people working with us with a more joined-up and coordinated approach and will appropriately reward them for their contributions through an apprentice salary/stipend.
- 3.9. Growth of Youth Voice Bucks forum and the Youth Voice Exec Committee – ongoing
- 3.9.1. Youth Voice Bucks is a forum for young people to have their voices heard, raise the issues that they are most passionate about, and take an active role in making Buckinghamshire the best place to live.
 - 3.9.2. Youth Voice Bucks is open to all young people aged 11-19 (or up to 25 where a young person has a special educational need or disability), who live in Buckinghamshire or go to school in Buckinghamshire.

- 3.9.3. 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.
 - 3.9.4. While various iterations of the Youth Voice forum and Youth Voice Exec Committee have existed over previous years, membership and meetings lost momentum over the pandemic. Growing the forum will therefore be a key ongoing workstream for participation.
 - 3.9.5. Youth Voice Bucks and the Youth Voice Exec Committee will also be developed through increased involvement with UK Youth Movement opportunities, such as national events.
- 3.10. Specialist Participation Opportunities to continue and grow
- 3.10.1. We Do Care
 - 3.10.1.1. The We Do Care forum gives children and young people 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 other decision-makers.
 - 3.10.1.2. A new Care Ambassadors programme will provide care-experienced young people with a leadership role to share their voice and amplify the voices of young people with similar experiences to them.
 - 3.10.1.3. A Care Leavers Celebration Event will take place by the end of 2022
 - 3.10.1.4. As mentioned in 1.7.3 above, the outcome report of the Ofsted’s latest Inspection of Buckinghamshire Council’s Children’s Services states within its list of points that need to improve, “The engagement and participation of children in care in the corporate parenting work of the council”. An options paper has been submitted to Children’s Services Senior Management Team to agree how the voice of care-experienced children and young people is routinely captured in order to influence service improvement, and new workstreams will be developed as agreed.
 - 3.10.1.5. New To Bucks is a new voice programme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and young refugees.
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3.10.2. Shout Out for SEND

- 3.10.2.1. Shout Out for SEND reps are young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities that share their voices and experiences to improve local activities and services for young people with SEND.
- 3.10.2.2. SEND young inspectors visit local activities and clubs to help make them suitable for people with SEND.
- 3.10.2.3. Young people with SEND are also listened to via an annual conference, activity days, a young people's group, and specific projects.

4. Measuring success in participation

- 4.1. A set of KPIs, target outcomes and a reporting system is in development to accompany the Youth Participation Strategy. Success will be measured by a both quantitative and qualitative measures.
- 4.2. Quantitative measures will include KPIs such as (but not limited to) the following:
 - The number of young people who have engaged with participation projects – and the demographics of participation project attendees, including ages, protected characteristics, and service experience
 - The number of participation projects being undertaken, the diversity in delivery leads, the areas of the County covered, online vs in-person ratio
 - Quantifiable responses from feedback forms, such as average score given by young people in response to questions like “on a scale of 1-5, do you feel you either had, or were provided with, the skills, experience and knowledge to undertake this project to your best ability?”
- 4.3. Qualitative data will include case studies, blogs and quotes, co-created with young-people, youth voice champions, partners, and other relevant stakeholders. These case studies will evidence the longer-term impact of participation projects for the participants, the services, and future service-users.
- 4.4. Each participation opportunity will have a listing on the Youth Voice Bucks website. The listings will be diverse in terms of delivery lead, length of project, whether they are available to all young people or targeted towards young people with specific experiences. They will each be labelled as “recruiting”, “ongoing” or “complete”.
- 4.5. For quality-assurance, each listing will include a table detailing how the Listen / Act / Respond rule detailed in 1.6 above is being adhered to – i.e.
 - how participants will be/were listened to

- what action will be, or has been, taken in response to their contribution
 - when and how the young people will, or did, hear back about the action that was taken in response to their contributions.
- 4.6. A quarterly highlight report will showcase key KPIs, projects details and feedback. This will be shared with the Youth Voice Executive Committee, Children’s Partnership Board, Corporate Parenting Panel, and other platforms as appropriate.
- 4.7. The first of these highlight reports will showcase the baseline of participation work from which the activities listed in section 2 will grow. Significant mapping work is currently underway to develop a clear picture of participation efforts and opportunities within and beyond the council to date.
- 4.8. All performance measures and reports will be “youth-friendly” and available to young people via YouthVoiceBucks.co.uk to ensure transparency.

5. **Legal and financial implications**

- 5.1. All activity detailed in this report is funded through the Family Support Service core budget, with the exception of the Councillor mentoring scheme, which is being led by Democratic Services. There is no additional financial implication for the Council.

6. **Corporate implications**

- 6.1. This report highlights the new Buckinghamshire Participation Strategy for Young People and the positive opportunities for young people in our communities, together with the areas where increased and more meaningful engagement with young people can realise benefits to the organisation. It is hoped that during the lifespan of the Strategy, these benefits will become increasingly embedded with key areas of council business, so that young people’s views, input and creativity can support the council’s policy, practice and professional development.

Appendix 1. Buckinghamshire’s Participation Strategy for Young People 2022-25



BC Participation
Strategy 2022-25.pdf

Appendix 2. Young People’s version of the Participation Strategy 2022-25



Participation
Strategy for Young Pe

Appendix 3. Care Experienced Leaders - Training offer / programme



Youth Voice Bucks
training.pdf

