**Version 6 24.01.2019**

**Children & Family Services**

**CAFES - Children and Family Engagement Strategy**

**Our Vision**

We want to work with our children, young people and families in West Sussex and create an environment where they are listened to and involved in decisions affecting their lives; and also for them to have a voice and significant impact on services they use at an individual, community and strategic level.

**Introduction to our strategy**

Asking questions, listening to and involving children, young people and families, helps us understand what services we need and why.

This Strategy sets out ‘where we are at now’ and ‘where we want to go;’ working closely with children, young people and their families, to recognise, understand and act upon their voice.

**Who are we?**

The Steering Group for this Strategy includes young people from the West Sussex Children Care Council (CiCC), Youth Cabinet and Youth MPs, Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Ambassadors along with staff from services in WSCC Children and Families Directorate.

**Who’s the Strategy for?**

This Strategy is for all children, young people and families, so that engagement is high quality, consistent and meaningful. It is for everyone within the local authority who needs to involve the views of children, young people and families in planning, design and delivery of services.

**Where are we now?**

**The good stuff (Strengths)**

Children, young people and families are already involved in service design and improvement. Examples include SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) Forums, West Sussex Youth Cabinet, Parent Carer Forum and Children in Care Council.

Some partnerships are working well, for instance, team approaches in EPIC (Exceptional People in Care) Awards, Care Leavers Executive, MOMO (‘Mind of My Own’), and Listening Events.

Young people on the Steering Group said they feel that WSCC councillors, staff and partners are listening to their voices, with regular opportunities to get involved, share views and effect change.

**What’s not working so well (Threats and Weaknesses)**

There is inconsistency in the quality of outcomes and being able to evidence that real difference is being made.

The increase in the levels of demand for our services is also a challenge for us and partner organisations.

Young people from the Steering Group have commented that some adults ‘put words into young peoples’ mouths’ or misinterpret what is being said. Revisiting proposals after consultation with groups doesn’t always happen, sometimes with a perceived failure to take action after receiving feedback.

Young people also thought that some processes, eg working across different systems can be difficult, slow and that there can be barriers to getting things changed, including decisions about funding.

**What are we going to do about it? (Opportunities)**

1. Make sure the engagement work we do corresponds with our standards under the Children and Family Services Quality Assurance framework. This will enable us better to monitor outcomes and make sure we are delivering positive change.
2. Encourage more collaboration: working across teams and with partners, to join our knowledge and skills to improve services.
3. Sharing a design process to help us work with children, young people and families to fully understand ‘problems’ and explore issues together. This means explaining clearly in advance to children, young people and families what they can expect from the process, so they feel totally secure about participating fully and frankly; and then delivering on these principles.

From the Steering Group, we know that young people welcome a summary of their involvement in the service design process, so that their role is absolutely clear. They would also like updates on progress about what has happened as a result of their involvement.

**Why are we going there?**

To make sure our methods are co-ordinated, to arrive at solutions, demonstrate impact and close the impact loop – that is, to show that we actually delivered what was agreed and intended. We recognise that to achieve our aims within a context of limited resources, we need to work smarter together.

**How are we making changes to get us there?**

We will write our Strategy Action Plan as a Steering Group and agree progress measures together.

We propose to use ‘Hear by Right,’ an organisational development tool built on a framework of seven standards. This holds indicators that describe best practice, supporting organisations to plan, develop and evaluate their participation practices and provision. This will ensure we are using the best available practice.

**How we will measure progress**

Hear by Right standards are based on the familiar ‘Seven S’ model for organisations.

These are: **s**hared values, **s**trategies, **s**tructures, **s**ystems, **s**taff, **s**kills and knowledge and **s**tyle of leadership.

These standards focus on improving participation in the organisation, which in turn will improve the services that will help them to improve their customers’ lives.

**Key milestones** – **activities and dates to show we’re moving forward**

**1. Steering group enacts the National Youth Agency Participation Pledge**

Young people from the steering group to share the *Hear by Right Participation Pledge* visual as the first step in WSCC ‘Hear by Right’ journey - on social media, with a selfie, and on YourSpace. Once this is complete, WSCC becomes one of the official ‘Hear by Right’ supporters. Complete – 8 January 2019 (PE)

**2. Create the Action Plan, based on Hear by Right Framework Indicators**

Stakeholder co-production events in place to populate the Action Plan below- across Jan-Feb 2019 (PE)

**3. Steering Group meet** to review, analyse and develop the final Action Plan **-** 19 Feb 2019 (ALL)

**4. Children and Families Engagement Strategy Action Plan** Final internal sign-off **-**28 Feb 2019 (PE/MF/SK /JB)

**5. Quality Assurance** Develop and agree process and framework for delivery of Strategy **-**28 Feb 2019 (PE/MF/SK)

**6. Communications Plan** Develop for launch of Strategy **-**28 Feb 2019 (PE)

**7. Launch Strategy and Action Plan -**31 March 2019 (Steering Group, PE/MF/SK)

**8. Implement Quality Assurance process and framework** to ensure high quality delivery and outputs of the Strategy **-**31 March 2019 (PE/MF/SK)

**9. Ongoing Governance** – regular Steering Group meetings to oversee and challenge progress

**Acronyms**

CiCC – Children in care Council

SEND – Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

EPIC – Exceptional People in Care

MOMO – Mind of My Own

PE – Pandora Ellis, Voice & Participation Manager

JB – Jonathan Brydon, Head of Safeguarding

MF – Marie Foley, Service Leader - Quality Assurance Practice Improvement & Performance

SK – Sonia Knight, Relationship and Partnership Development Leader

**Appendix 1 Strategy Action Plan Draft**

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| **Standards**  What do these mean to you? | **Actions - examples**  How can WSCC take these forward | **Measures of success**  How do we know it’s happened? |
| 1. Shared Values | WSCC Living our Values Every Day  Co-Production |  |
| 1. Strategies | List which link with our strategy?  Eg Quality Assurance Framework  Bright Spots Survey - Action Plan |  |
| 1. Structures | Map of opportunities for voice;   * Individual * Strategic * Community |  |
| 1. Systems | Safe, monitored, easier  Rewards/recognition  Quality, ethical |  |
| 1. Staff | Collaborative working and joined up teams |  |
| 1. Skills and knowledge | Staff, partners, communities, individuals: knowledge and skills to get results |  |
| 1. Styles of leadership | Commitment to voice – what does it look like?  Pledge/meeting/shared budget? |  |