



Children & Young People's Participation & Engagement Strategy

**Listening and Acting on the Voice of
Children and Young People**

2018 - 2021

| CONTROL DOCUMENT | |
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FOREWORD

Child participation is one of the core principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which asserts the following:

ARTICLE 12 (respect for the views of the child)

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example, during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

ARTICLE 13 (freedom of expression)

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

1. Introduction

This Children and Young People’s Participation and Engagement Strategy has been developed to set out the strategic aim and objectives to our approach in engaging children and young people in Darlington to ensure their views influence service delivery.

As a statutory body, we have an obligation to ensure that we engage with, and listen to, the views of children and young people in Darlington.

This strategy is intended for everyone working with children and young people aged 0 -18 years, or up to 25 years if they have a disability or are a Care Leaver.

This strategy applies to everyone who works directly with children and young people.

2. Strategic aim and objectives

Our strategic aim is to give children and young people a voice by ensuring they are enabled to participate and engage in the key decisions which affect their lives, and ensure young people’s views are central to decision making processes and service delivery.

There are four strategic objectives which underpin our approach:



Objective One

The voice of all children and young people will be heard including the voices of those children and young people in marginalised groups.

Objective Two

Service providers will actively seek and create opportunities to listen to children and young people.

Objective Three

Children and young people will have the opportunity to participate in evaluating service delivery in order to help influence and shape service design.

Objective Four

Clear routes will be available to children and young people to enable them to contribute to debate and project development.

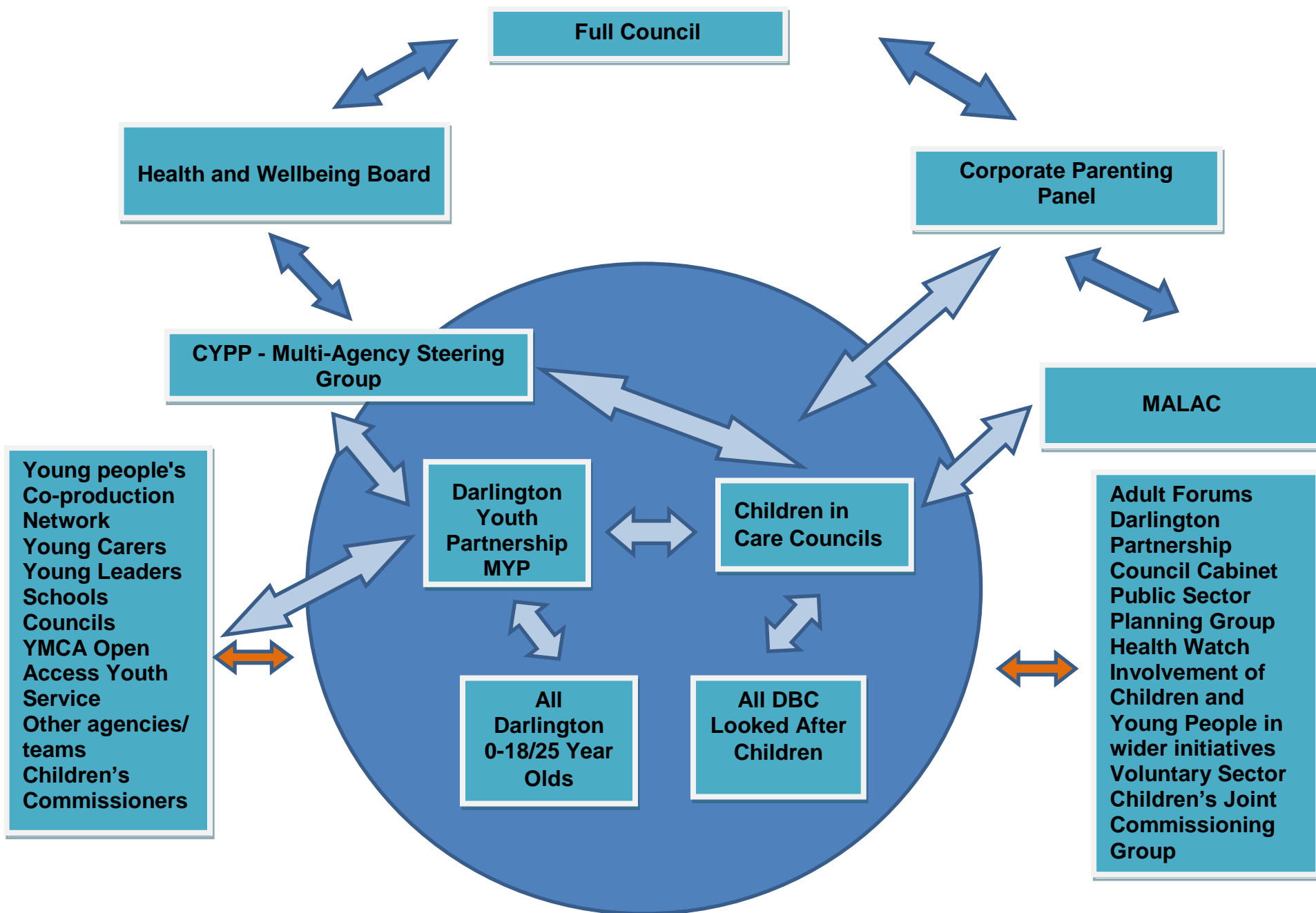
**3. Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy
Action Plan**

Our strategic aims and objectives will be achieved by the following children and young people's participation and engagement action plan.

Please also refer to **appendix one** for a diagram of the current arrangements in place for participation and engagement for children and young people in Darlington.

Appendix one reflects the governance arrangements in place regarding this strategy. However, the Children and Adults Directorate Leadership Team will provide overall governance and challenge regarding progress of the Participation and Engagement strategic action plan.

APPENDIX ONE - Children and Young People's Participation Diagram



Children and Young People’s Participation and Engagement Strategy Action Plan

| OBJECTIVE ONE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S VOICE TO BE HEARD | | | | |
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| The voice of all children and young people will be heard including the voices of those children and young people in marginalised groups. | | | | |
| ACTION | WHO | WHEN | PROGRESS | RAG |
| A democratic election to be held every two years for a young person (aged 11 – 19 or up to 25 if the young person has a disability) who either lives in Darlington or attends school in Darlington. This person to be elected as Darlington’s Youth Member of Parliament. This person will have a mandate of actions established from the views of the young people of Darlington. | Darlington Youth Partnership / Darlington’s Participation Officers / the current member of youth parliament. | Rolling election every two years. Last held March 2018 next due March 2020. | | |
| The voice of students attending schools and colleges across Darlington to be heard. | Student Councils | As scheduled in each Council’s constitution. | | |
| The voice of children with disabilities to be heard who do not have a Darlington social worker. | DAD Young Leader (Darlington Association on Disabilities) which provides Inclusion, Participation and Leadership opportunities for disabled young people | Regular meetings held throughout the year. | | |

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| | aged between 12-25 years through its Young Leaders Project. | | | |
| The voice of children with disabilities to be heard and consulted with about the services they receive who are allocated a worker or receive a service from Darlington Borough Council. | Darlington's Participation Officers. | April 2019 and thereafter annually. | | |
| The voice of children and young people (aged 11 – 18) experiencing mental health difficulties in Darlington to be heard. | MIND Darlington – the Young People's Self-Harm Prevention project. | Meetings of the project. | | |
| The voice of young carers up to the age of 25 to be heard. | Darlington Young Carers' Service | During activity based sessions throughout the year. | | |
| The voice of children in care to be heard through various forums in Darlington Borough Council. | Darlington's Participation Officers. to facilitate meeting with children who are looked after by the council. These include "Darlo Care Crew" ages 11-16 and the "Junior Care Crew" ages 5-10. | Meetings of the "Junior Care Crew" up to three times a year during school holidays. Monthly meeting of the "Darlo Care Crew" including "agenda days" where young people are consulted on issues and feedback is provided to Corporate Parents. | | |
| The voice of Darlington Borough Councils' young | Leaving Care Team Manager/Personal | Monthly meetings of the Care Leavers' | | |

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| people who are preparing to leave care or have left care to be heard. | Advisors. | Forum Attendance at the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum every quarter. | | |
| The voice of young mothers in Darlington to be heard in order that services can reflect the need of this group. | Bump Baby and Beyond Young parents group. | This group runs alongside the young parents pre-natal appointments with the midwife team. | | |
| OBJECTIVE TWO: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES | | | | |
| Service providers will actively seek and create opportunities to listen to children and young people. | | | | |
| ACTION | WHO | WHEN | PROGRESS | RAG |
| To embed a culture of involving young people in the recruitment of Officers to the Council at all levels. | Executive Management Team / Darlington's Participation Officers. | September 2019 | | |
| To embed a culture of involving young people in projects, decision-making meetings, Board meetings and the development of policies and strategies across the Council wherever possible to ensure their views are taken into account at the outset of any project or strategic decision-making. | Executive Management Team / Darlington's Participation Officers. | September 2019 | | |

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| <p>To engage children and young people to develop a consultation and feedback process whereby they can provide their views on the services they engage in within Darlington. Feedback to be used to improve services for children and young people.</p> | <p>Darlington's Participation Officers.</p> | <p>September 2019</p> | | |
| <p>OBJECTIVE THREE: INFLUENCE AND SHAPE SERVICE DELIVERY</p> | | | | |
| <p>Children and young people will have the opportunity to participate in evaluating service delivery in order to help influence and shape service design.</p> | | | | |
| <p>ACTION</p> | <p>WHO</p> | <p>WHEN</p> | <p>PROGRESS</p> | <p>RAG</p> |
| <p>To develop and embed a process whereby young people are included in visiting relevant service providers at the time of procurement to share their views on the provision, and also to review contracts with external providers.</p> | <p>Children's Commissioning Team / Children's Contract Team / Darlington's Participation Officers.</p> | <p>September 2019</p> | | |

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| <p>A selection of schools, colleges and services in Darlington to be visited by the Youth Member of Parliament to gather views from children and young people in receipt of these services on how they could be strengthened or improved.</p> | <p>Youth Member of Parliament / Darlington's Participation Officers.</p> | <p>To be completed within the duration of the term of office – March 2020.</p> | | |
| <p>To include young people's views on the evaluation of the Youth Offending Service using surveys such as: Evaluation Wheels, 'What do you think' questionnaires, survey monkey and voice recordings.</p> | <p>Youth Offending Service</p> | <p>September 2019</p> | | |
| <p>To develop a process whereby all relevant policies and strategies that will impact or concern children and young people have evidence of children and young people's endorsement.</p> | <p>Executive Management Team / Children's Directorate</p> | <p>September 2019</p> | | |
| <p>To undertake exit interviews for all Care Leavers in order to develop the service further in line with their experiences, views and suggestions.</p> | <p>Personal Advisors / Darlington's Participation Officers.</p> | <p>September 2019.</p> | | |

| OBJECTIVE FOUR: CLEAR ROUTE TO CONTRIBUTE | | | | |
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| Clear routes will be available to children and young people to enable them to contribute to debate and project development. | | | | |
| ACTION | WHO | WHEN | PROGRESS | RAG |
| To ensure participation in the Darlington Youth Partnership to access links with the regional and national participation groups such as the UK Youth Parliament and the British Youth Council. | Darlington Participation Officers. | September 2019 | | |
| To develop processes whereby a representative sample of young people can be accessed to seek their input when projects are in the process of being set up if the project will directly impact upon children and young people. | Darlington Participation Officers. | September 2019 | | |
| To ensure a representative group of children in care and Care Leavers actively participate in Corporate Parenting Panels to enable their views to be heard and for them to contribute to discussion. | Darlington Participation Officers. | September 2019 | | |

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| <p>To facilitate a cohort of Darlington's Care Leaver's attending the National Care Leavers' Benchmarking Forums to ensure their views are heard on a national level to influence the approach to Leaving Care services.</p> | <p>Leaving Care Team Manager/Personal Advisors.</p> | <p>Attendance at the National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum every quarter.</p> | | |
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