



# Engagement strategy 2022/23

**Enabling decision makers to understand children, young people and families' lived experience of our services.**



**SURREY**

# Engagement strategy – 2022/23

## Context

Surrey is home to approximately 285,000 children and young people aged 19 and below.<sup>1</sup> Of those, around 6000 are defined as in need, and around 28,000 live in poverty. Surrey County Council cares for 928 looked after children in our residential homes and foster placements. Following from the COVID-19 pandemic our strategy has shifted to embrace online groups and our plan is to continue these alongside face to face meetings.

A child or young person's right to be heard is well established within international law. Articles 3 and 13 of the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child state that children and young people have the right to express their views and have them taken into account, and that any decisions taken regarding them must be in their best interests.<sup>2</sup>

Enabling children, young people, families, and staff to share their experiences and capturing and using those views is key to understanding how we need to improve our services. Opportunities that allow these groups to share their views need to be agreed as a systematic, whole service approach. To develop our services, we need to make sure that senior leaders and managers engage with staff, partners, children, and families on how to secure improved Services. Enabling these groups to share their lived experience and capturing these views is key to understanding how we can improve the services we deliver and improve the climate, working environment, systems, and processes for staff.

## Purpose

The strategy aims to enable decision makers to understand children, young people, and families' lived experience of our services. We hear feedback from these groups every day and as a result we need a robust method of hearing, recording, and acting on this feedback. This will help us to have a real understanding of our services, outcomes for children, young people, and families to help to inform our decisions about delivery of services.

## Vision

Our vision is to ensure every child and young person will be safe, healthy and have the personal confidence, skills, and opportunities to contribute and achieve more than thought possible. To achieve this, we need to ensure we are listening to and learning from the experience of children, young people, parents, carers, and staff to enable us to fully understand how we need to improve our services.

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<sup>1</sup> Dataset: Population estimates by 5 year age groups and gender, Surrey-i

<sup>2</sup> *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UN, ratified 1990

We have a collective responsibility as an organisation to hear what all children, young people and families are telling us and to use this information to support the assessment of the quality of our practice. We also want to work with children, young people, and families to ensure services are co-produced.

We aim to understand what it is like to live and work in Surrey, by understanding the views and needs of those who use our services and those who may never come into contact with our services we can have a full understanding of the residents of Surrey and support resilient communities who work together to support one another.

## Plan

To ensure the strategy is embedded across the structure we will create an engagement steering group to deliver the strategy. This will be a multi-agency group and will be hosted via an online Jive site. This is a place to share best practice, information and ensure that activity is not duplicated across services. This will be held and promoted by the Surrey Safeguarding Board. The User Feedback and Participation team will also offer lunchtime engagement support sessions across the quadrants, this will be a place for staff to come to get advice about engagement and participation and to share ideas of best practice.

Surrey currently has some good practice; however, this is not across all services and has not previously been done in a systematic way.

The strategy has been developed using the nationally used and well recognised 7S model, which is used to embed participation and engagement within organisational structures.



The framework is made up of seven standards, these are the building blocks for the active involvement of children, young people, and families. They all rely on each other to ensure and evidence active participation and engagement. Below is a breakdown of the key standards of the engagement strategy.

## Structure

Offer opportunities to participate to all children, young people, and families. These will be accessible to all.

- Children, young people, and families are joint partners in decision making.
- Information from children, young people and families is shared and influences service delivery.
- We can evidence the voices of children, young people, and families in our decision-making records.
- Children, young people, and families know how to get involved in helping to shape decisions.
- We will ensure we have the right technology to enable young people to participate fully.

## Systems

Our systems will make it easy to engage in and record engagement work.

- Systems will be in place to ensure safe engagement and participation and research governance is known and understood across the authority.
- Our processes encourage and record engagement and participation work and this is business as usual.
- Involvement of children, young people and families will lead to better outcomes for communities and individuals.

## Staff

All staff will play an active role in the involvement of children, young people and families in decision making.

- Children, young people, and families will be actively involved in the recruitment process.
- We will develop a participation and engagement network for all staff to access and use.
- Staff will know the difference the involvement of children, young people and families has on decisions.

## Skills

Offer training and support for all to develop skills and confidence to participate fully and ensure that all voices are heard and acted upon.

- Develop and promote training for staff and members using service users to promote participation and engagement work.
- Encourage and develop the skills of children, young people, and families to know their right to have their voice heard and to exercise this right.
- Staff are continually developing their skills and they have access to the tools required to encourage participation.
- Participation will be everybody's responsibility.

## Style

Senior managers, leaders and members will recognise and support engagement and participation.

- The involvement of children, young people and families will be welcomed and encouraged by all levels in the organisation.
- Children, young people, and families will be welcomed to hold us to account and have a key role in the scrutiny process.
- High profile champions will be identified to influence change.

## Values

We will all value and take responsibility for engaging children, young people, and families in how we are delivering our services and ensure they are an active part of the commissioning cycle.

- We will listen to children, young people and families and involve them fully in decision making.
- We will engage with children, young people, and families responsibly and ensure they are fully informed.
- Building trust in our young people and our staff.
- We will respect the needs and wishes of our children, young people, and families.

This strategy covers the high-level strategic areas for development. Below describes in more detail how we will achieve this in line with our Promise to children and young people.

As part of our promise to children and young people, we promise to listen to them and involve them fully when making decisions about their lives. Below explains how we will do this in practice.



The key principles of the strategy are outlined below.

### Strategic

- The ways in which children and young people are able to have their views heard to influence strategic decision making such as budgets and service planning.

### Operational

- The ways in which children and young people are asked about and able to voice their view on a topic, service or tell us what they would like to stop, start or change.

### Individual

- The ways in which children and young people are asked about and able to voice their views about services and processes about their needs and experiences.

Participation and engagement work in Surrey are focused on four key areas.

1. All young people living and working in Surrey.
2. Young people with care experience.
3. Young people with experience of our mental health services.
4. Young people with experience of our additional needs and disabilities services.

#### **1. The views of all children and young people living and working in Surrey.**

By understanding the views and listening to the experiences of children and young people living and working in Surrey we can better understand the needs and priorities of this group and build resilient communities around them. We will use our Youth Cabinet group and work with schools to understand what it is like to grow up in Surrey. The Youth Cabinet group links with Surrey Cabinet with each member having a portfolio that matches that of a Cabinet member. This ensures that there is a mechanism for young people to influence decisions made at Cabinet level.

#### **2. Young people with care experience.**

This group includes children and young people with experience of the care system and includes looked after children, care leavers, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, young people returned home from care, adopted and those under a special guardian arrangement.

The table below explains the ways in which their views will be heard and used to influence decision making.

<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Individual</b>
Corporate Parenting Board	Corporate Parenting Operational Group	Child protection conferences
C&YP reps at Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP)	Care Council	Looked after reviews
C&YP panel at Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)	Care Leavers Forum	Return home interviews
Action Cards	Care Council Juniors	Professional reports
	Practice Challenge meetings	Health Assessments
	Complaint feedback	Advocacy feedback

### 3. Young people accessing mental health services.

This group includes children and young people with experience of mental health services in Surrey.

<b>Strategic</b>	<b>Operational</b>	<b>Individual</b>
CAMHS Transformation Board	Our Voice Matters	Mindworks feedback
Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership	CYA Epsom & Staines	Haven meetings
EWMH Commissioning Forum	Haven groups	Consultation sign up
Action Cards	Our Perspective training	Targeted groups
Mindworks Quality Board	Complaints feedback	

#### 4. Young people accessing additional needs and disabilities services.

This group includes children and young people with experience of services for young people with additional needs and disabilities, including young people with an EHCP plan.

Strategic	Operational	Individual
SEND Partnership Board	Our Voice Matters	EHCPs
Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership	ATLAS	Annual Reviews
All Age Autism Board	ATLAS looked after	Links with schools
Action Cards	ATLAS Juniors	Individual consultations
Education cell	Complaints feedback	
	Service specific consultations	

#### Current strengths

In Surrey we currently have:

A well-established apprenticeship scheme which allows service users to be our in-house experts and directly influence decisions made at a strategic level.

A well embedded Action Card system which raised concerns directly with Corporate Parenting Board and the SEND Partnership Board.

Recruit Crew - Young people are part of the recruitment process for staff working directly with or responsible for making decisions about children and young people

Total Respect & Our Perspective training is well established and all mandatory for all social care staff. A wider offer is available for the partnership.

The commitment of senior managers and members to ensure the views of children and young people are heard and acted upon.

#### Next steps

To continue to successfully have the views of children and young people heard at strategic decision-making boards.

To see a greater impact of the child's voice to improve practice and to be able to evidence this.



To improve learning from experience and influence quality assurance using feedback from children and young people.

To improve our online presence and embrace virtual feedback mechanisms.

To enable services to embrace participation and have this as business as usual.

Jo Lang

Head of Customer Engagement

March 2022

○ ✕ ◀ ⚡ **Our promise to you** ⚡ ▶ ✕ ○



**Listening**  
We will listen to you and involve you fully in making plans about your life.



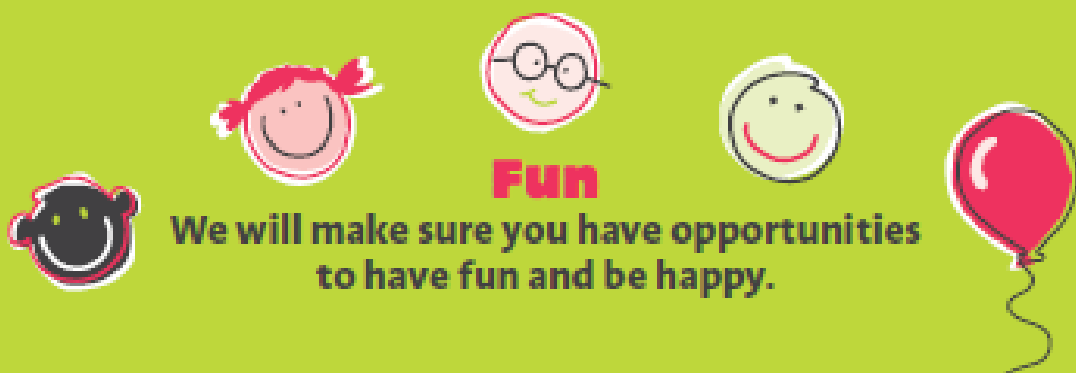
**Home**  
We will do the best we can to make sure where you live is right for you and you feel safe.



**Relationships**  
We will help you keep in touch with family and friends in your life.



**Skills for life**  
We will help you to develop skills that will support you throughout your life.



**Fun**  
We will make sure you have opportunities to have fun and be happy.