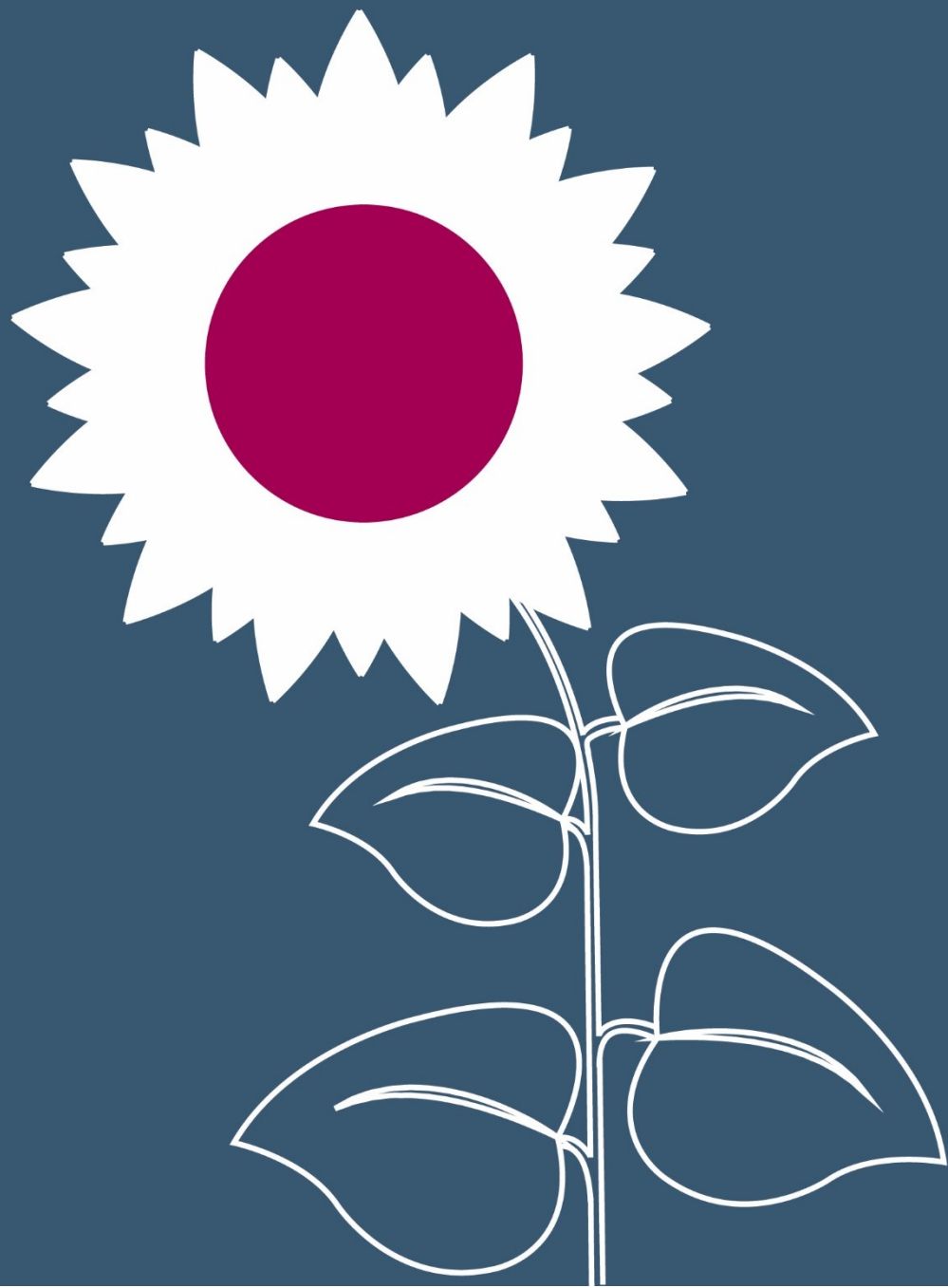


# Participation in Statutory Review Process

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## Introduction

The importance of a child or young persons participation in the decision-making processes of their lives is now well accepted and embedded in legislation and government regulation and guidance. These include, the Human Rights Act, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC), the Children Act 2004 and the Disability Discrimination Act.

Participation is a process and not a single action. It requires a culture of inclusion right across all services and management to promote ongoing involvement and empowerment.

It involves, not just the opportunity to contribute a view but also:

- Preparation
- Provision of information
- Consultation, discussion and negotiation
- Explanation and feedback
- In all formats easily understood by children and /or their parents

# 1 What do we mean by participation?

## 1.1 Participation is:

- The involvement of children and young people in decisions on issues that affect their lives
- It is underpinned by current legislation, regulations and guidelines.

## 1.2 Stoke on Trent Children and Families Services has agreed this participation policy for children that are Looked After to promote the active involvement in the design, delivery and ongoing review of their planning.

## 1.3 Children and young people are at the heart of our city. To achieve this, we must listen to our young people, hear their voice and put the thoughts, feelings and experiences of young people at the core of how we deliver our service.

## 1.4 Young people need to know that their views are valued and respected, even if sometimes they may not get what they want. Feedback and explanation for decisions taken are essential to achieving this.

## 1.5 Meaningful participation in looked after Childrens reviews looks like:

- Working alongside and with young people and their families;
- Sitting down with a young person to understand what is important to them, using their own words;
- Helping children and families to lead or co-chair their own meetings and be actively involved in decision making about their plans.

## 1.6 There are lots of different ways that we can help children and young people to engage in the Looked After Review. Main methods of participation for children and young people can include:

- In person participation
- Advocates
- Video
- Voice Recording
- Mind of My Own App
- Artwork or creative involvement
- Emotional responses

## 2 Guiding Principles for Young People's Involvement in Reviews

- 2.1 A Looked After Review must take place at required intervals but also before any significant change is made to the child's Care Plan, unless that is not reasonably practicable, including a decision to cease looking after a child.
- 2.2 Care-experienced children and young people as well as their families have unique perspectives on the care system and incorporating their views into decision-making has a range of wider benefits for the service.
- 2.4 The guiding principles are:
- The child and young person is at the heart of the planning for their future, they should be consulted on where and when the meeting takes place and who should be there.
  - Young people should be consulted before a review on what they feel is important and what they want to say.
  - The purpose of the review must be understood by the young person, notably that their views are of equal importance.
  - Literacy level to be considered and methods adopted to enable the young person to access the understanding of consultation documents. Likewise, obtaining the reciprocated views is essential.
  - The young person has a right to request that an advocate attend and must ensure that the young person understands what an advocate does.
  - The young person should be able to choose how and to whom they communicate their views.
  - Ensure that the young person has a clear and realistic understanding of the decisions that they can influence.
  - Prior consultation with the young person to advise when and where their review will be and who will have access to the information afterwards.
  - The meeting to be child or young person focussed. They must have the opportunity to contribute to the review agenda.
  - Review outcomes to be communicated to the young person in a timely, clear and meaningful way.
  - Review decisions to be carried out as agreed in the review record and changes or delays explained to the young person.
  - The young person helped to express any dissatisfaction within their review concerning decisions made.

## 3 Before the Statutory Review

### 3.1 Social Workers will:

- Discuss with the child at least 20 working days before the meeting about who the child would like to attend the meeting and where the meeting will be held.
- Meet with a young person prior to their review meeting, agree what the young person wishes to be discussed and explain the agenda items.
- Social worker will ascertain how the young person will express their views and if they wish anyone to help them express their views.
  - This could include the use of voice advocacy cards in Makaton/Widget form.
- Confirm who the young person wishes to attend and a preference for the venue. If there are key people who the young person wishes to not be there; their IRO to obtain the views of these key people beforehand.
- Ensure arrangements are made to fulfil the young persons wishes in their review, in the event that this cannot happen explain the reason and facilitate.
- The social worker will inform the IRO of arrangements for consultation.
- The social worker must ensure the child's records and plan is up to date, for example, that they include records of the placement visits and the last date when the child's sleeping accommodation was seen. Any changes in the household membership need to be clearly recorded.
- Have the overall responsibility that the review is carried out within agreed timescales, with the young persons agreement for any changes to roles within the meeting.

### 3.2 Independent Reviewing Officer's will:

- Ensure that the front screen of the Review pathway on Liquid Logic has the correct date for the child's review.
- Team Support will send the child an invite to their review with details of their IRO and how to contact them, date, time and venue of the child's review and contact details of the Advocacy service and Independent Visitor service.
- The letter will also include details of how the child can access Mind of My Own so they can provide the IRO with a Statement for their review outlining their wishes and feelings and what they might want to discuss as part of the agenda for their review.

- Team support will send an electronic invite (a letter if there is no email address recorded on the personal details of Liquid Logic) to the parents and carers with details of the Child's review and with details of a link to access a consultation document and provide feedback after the review has taken place.
- Will meet with the young person between each review to build a trusting relationship, speak to them independently and to ascertain their views and understanding of their plan.
- Will meet with the young person before the review to ensure young people have a clear understanding of the forthcoming meeting and are fully prepared.
- Explain to the young person that their views can influence decisions and these decisions can be challenged by the young person through the advocacy system.
- Ensure that the young person has agreed with all review arrangements arranged by the social worker.
- A child or young person may also express their views or concerns to the IRO at any other time and does not have to wait until the date of a statutory review. All children and young people will be given information with their IROs name and contact details when they become looked after and at regular intervals afterwards.

## 4 During the Review

- 4.1 The child or young person who is looked after should be the first into the room to make them feel like it is their space.
- 4.2 The agenda should include areas raised by the child/young person for discussion if appropriate for the statutory review, preferably at or near to beginning of the review meeting.
- 4.3 The young person may chair their meeting if they have discussed and agreed with their IRO.
- 4.4 There will be no surprises for the young person and he/she will have a full understanding of what will be discussed.
- 4.5 Conversation or communication about the child or young person looked after should be addressed directly to the young person.
- 4.6 Jargon or words unlikely to be understood are not to be used. The language used by all professional workers to be accessible for children and young people. If interpretation is requested this must be an objective interpretation by a recommended interpreter.

- 4.7 The review must be child/young person focused and to meet the wishes expressed by young person where possible
- 4.8 The young person's views captured for the subsequent reviews with regards to venue/date/attendees. Their views should then inform the plan.
- 4.9 Young person's preference noted for next review regarding consultation/participation.

## **5 After the Review**

- 5.1 After the review, the social worker is responsible for updating the Care Plan within 10 working days, in relation to any changes to the Care Plan agreed at the review.
- 5.2 The young person to receive a copy of their review document/record with decisions to be explained to the young person by their social worker.
- 5.3 The review record to be easily understandable for each young person's needs.