

SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

Report of the Director of Children's Services

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report outlines the proposed scope and brief for reviewing Children & Young People's Participation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Stockport has a population of 66,583 aged under 18 and the SEND JSNA (2019) highlights a population of 7,714 aged 0-25 who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). In January 2020 the school age population entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) was 6,192, however since March 2020 this has risen to approximately 7,762. Based on Carers Trust data (taken from the last census) it is estimated 1 in 12 pupils could be a young carer. In Stockport it is estimated there could be over 3000 young carers aged 6 – 18 years.

3. PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.1 A number of formal mechanisms exist to support participation and engagement of young people, including but not limited to:
- [Stockport Youth Council \(SYC\)](#): 11-21 year olds (up to 25 for SEND), meets weekly online (since Covid-19 restrictions) and aims to represent the voice of young people in Stockport as well as scrutinise the work of the Council;
 - [Children in Care Council \(CiCC\)](#): a statutory group for young people in care from, or living, in Stockport, meets weekly online to discuss ways to improve services, undertake campaigns and social activities;
 - [Care Leavers Forum](#): meet to help shape changes to services for care leavers;
 - Stockport Safeguarding Partnership: young people's views are sought on child protection processes to shape delivery;
 - Stockport Youth Offending Service: Coram Voice provide 15 hours per week of specialised participatory work to inform and shape delivery;
 - [Stockport Action Youth Speakers \(SAYS\)](#): 13-25 year olds with SEND, meets fortnightly to feed lived experiences into the design and delivery of services;
 - Young Inspectors: a pilot group of young people have been trained to undertake inspections of services from young people's perspectives with the programme expected to commence in the Spring of 2021;

- Autism Ambassadors: a newly established small group of young people with autism have met to explore how they can shape services;
- R Time is a partnership arrangement which focuses on activities to reduce holiday hunger, increase social interaction and create positive behaviour change for young people in the borough;
- Signpost Stockport Young Carers is a registered Charity that works with children and young people from the ages of 6 to 25 years who provide care to another family member who has an illness or disability. Young carers views are sought on a regular basis to help shape the delivery of the service and to raise awareness of their needs across Children and Adult Services.

3.2 Appendix 1 provides a more detailed list of participation opportunities for young people as part of the Council's activities and partnership or commissioned arrangements.

3.3 Participation activity is supported by 1.6 full time equivalent (fte) Children & Young People's Participation Workers within Stockport Family: 0.6fte specific to Child Protection and 1fte supporting SYC, CiCC, Young Inspectors and Autism Ambassadors as well as GM, NW and National initiatives.

3.4 Additional service specific capacity is provided externally by organisations such as Coram Voice, who support the voice of young people in the Youth Offending Service and Pure Insight who support Care Leavers. The SAYS Group is supported by the parent/carer forum and two part-time participation workers from the Seashell Trust.

3.5 There are also a range of young people's activities provided by voluntary and community groups and partnerships (see Appendix 2) which attend to differing needs and demographics across the Borough. A partnership was established in March 2020 to ensure provision is in place for holiday food and activities and this group will provide operational input for delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) 2021. The HAF programme is likely to enable further development of capacity across Stockport to support the participation and engagement of young people in a wider range of activities.

4. IMPACT OF COVID-19

4.1 Covid-19 has changed the pattern of young people's participation. SYC has successfully recruited additional numbers since meeting virtually, whereas the CiCC has had lower numbers due to some members not wishing to engage online. More recently however additional members have joined.

4.2 Whilst there has been a shift in participation during Covid-19, there have been a number of successful initiatives where young people have been engaged on a broader basis. Appendix 3 sets out examples of participation projects undertaken by SYC, CiCC and Young Inspectors.

4.3 The SAYS Group has been impacted significantly due to the impact on wellbeing and a reluctance for online engagement during this period. In the early stages of Covid-19, Signpost Young Carers saw a drop in referrals, however, since September 2020, they have increased to normal levels (see Appendix 4 for more details about impact and activities for young carers).

5. WHAT MATTERS TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- 5.1 Participation activities as a matter of course include regular meetings of the groups and involvement in initiatives such as Make Your Mark, International Women's Day, UK Parliament Week as well as Greater Manchester Youth Council and Youth Focus North West.
- 5.2 Over 1,000 children and young people have contributed to shaping the Borough Plan Stockport Youth Council and a wide number of young people across the Borough have helped to shape the Borough Plan. Issues raised by young people through this process highlight climate change and environmental considerations, job opportunities and homelessness.
- 5.3 Make Your Mark (MYM), is a locally co-ordinated national survey to establish the biggest issues facing young people aged 11-18. In 2020 771 young people voted on local topics. This compares with 7,662 young people voting in 2019. The top issues highlighted in 2020 for young people in Stockport were support for mental health services, free university education and climate issues. Homelessness and domestic abuse were also highlighted.
- 5.4 The CiCC have been involved in an online arts project as well as work to help shape
- 5.5 Young people with SEND also reflected on priorities through the SAYS Group who feel that early help for mental health and emotional wellbeing is the top priority, along with listening and acting upon young people's voices.
- 5.6 Following the outcomes of the Joint Local Area Inspection of SEND, the need to improve co-production was identified and young people developed a reference group to inform the work of the SEND Board ([see video link](#)). Subsequent work has led to development of a set of I Statements (see Fig 1 below) to inform future work and commissioning for children and families' services.

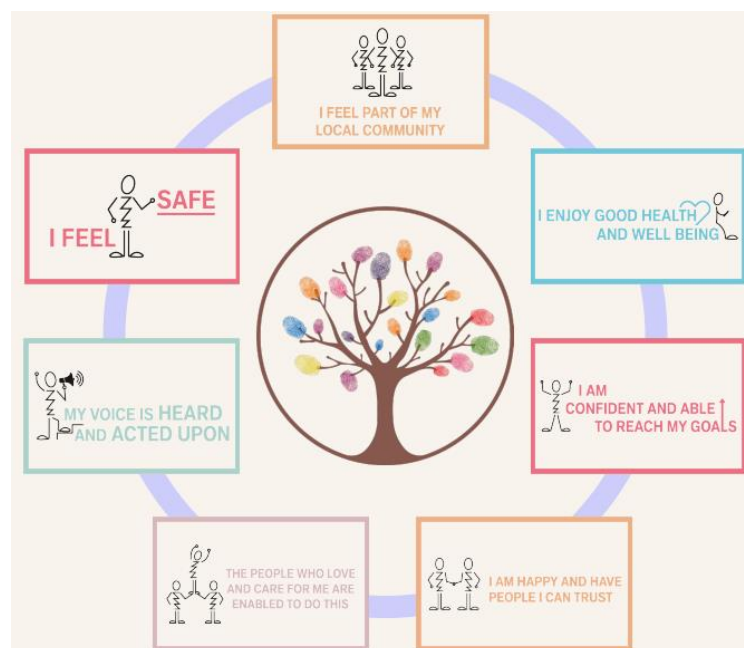


Figure 1: Outcomes Framework

5.7 Young people strongly influenced the statements through co-design sessions with health and council officers and the statements now form the core of our joint commissioning and contracting arrangements, SEND Strategy, Children's Plan and Early Help Strategy. In addition they provide the clear focus in terms of reference for groups working to support children & families.

5.8 Young people have also co-designed, with professionals and parent carer representatives, the job descriptions for the Strategic Lead for SEND and a Local Offer Co-ordinator role ([see video](#)) as well as being directly involved in interview processes. Guidance based on the success of these activities is being developed for participation across wider service areas. Students at Aquinas College have also been involved in reviewing the Local Offer website and services to help improve the support available.

5.9 As part of the DSG review, a survey for children and young people was undertaken in relation to the 11 Statements set out in the Outcomes Framework. Over 250 pupils responded and whilst the majority feel largely positive about each of the statements, concerns reflected again the need for early help for mental health and emotional wellbeing.

6. SCOPE OF REVIEW

6.1 There are many areas of existing and developing good practice across a number of services which recognise the voice of the child in developing service areas and it would be beneficial to create stronger links across the range of children's services with the formal, democratic processes.

6.2 This could include a range of activities such as Scrutiny Panel 'take-overs' or young people scrutiny reviews of member activity as well as potential visits by elected members to directly engage with young people. This would increase the strength of the voice of young people in shaping the Stockport of the future.

6.3 The objectives of the review would be to:

- Understand and comment on the current arrangements around the participation of children and young people;
- Work with young people to explore opportunities to further develop this work;
- Make recommendations on how young people, including those with SEND, can be more involved in the democratic process, link to elected members and influence decision making.

7. PROPOSED AGENDA

1. Review of scope.
2. Consider the current arrangements for children and young people's participation with contributions from various groups, including young people.
3. Explore opportunities for development.
4. Recommendations.

8. MEETING DATE

8.1 Wednesday 24th March 2021 4-6pm.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Formal Participation Opportunities

Appendix 2: Stockport Youth Groups

Appendix 3: Activities Overview for SYC, CiCC, Care Leavers

Appendix 4: Care Leavers Overview

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Michelle Bellis on telephone number Tel: 07866 185 866 or alternatively email michelle.bellis@stockport.gov.uk