

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18 September 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People & Families

SUBJECT: Halton Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2014 -17

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides an overview on the new Halton Children & Young People's Participation Strategy 2014-17.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board

- 1) Notes the contents of the report;**
- 2) Endorses the Participation Strategy 2014-17; and**
- 3) Supports the roll out of the new Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, in order to embed active participation in the culture of Halton Children's Trust and the wider Halton partnership.**

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 In late 2013 a research study into the strategic participation of young people at a local children's trust, was conducted in Halton. This study focused on Halton's Children's Trust, exploring how youth participation is viewed by children's trust members, the extent that young people participate in strategic decision-making and the potential barriers of youth participation in this strategic setting. Recommendations from this research were:

- Development and implementation of a new, updated participation strategy, through young people and professionals working together.
 - For a participation sub group be implemented, including all participation lead workers in the borough.
 - For this group to act as a critical friend to Halton's Children's Trust on participation.
- 3.2
- The group should explore ways to develop structure and coordination of participation of stakeholders.

Halton Children's Trust previously had a participation strategy that was

3.3 devised in 2006 and due for review and renewal in 2009; this strategy was extended until 2011. Unfortunately since 2011 the development of a participation strategy has lapsed.

3.4 In November 2013 the INVOLVE group came together to promote and improve participation of children, young people and their families. The INVOLVE group were tasked to develop a new Children's Trust Participation Strategy. Work on this started in January 2014.

3.5 Participation is used in many contexts. However, within this strategy participation is more than simply taking part in an activity; it refers specifically to the involvement in the process of identifying needs, exploring solutions, making decisions and planning action.

3.6 Meaningful participation, not only means listening and consulting young people but also to create opportunity for them to participate in decision making, enabling young people to be involved. Effective participation should enable and actively encourage children and adults to collaborate as equal stakeholders in the process from the planning stage through to evaluation.

A vast amount of research suggests that the involvement of children and young people leads to a better understanding and better provision (Kellet, 2010). More recently the idea of stakeholder participation has found that people with internal knowledge or experience of a system or service can help provide effective answers and sustainability (Bell, Morse and Shah, 2012). Adults working collaboratively with children and young people on decisions, suggests services will be more relevant, more effective and more sustainable (Lansdown, 2011).

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The strategy comes at a time of change when difficult decisions will need to be made around children, young people and families' services. Therefore, it is more important to involve those most affected by these decisions. INVOLVE believe that by partnership working between professionals and children, young people and parents brings together different viewpoints and develops new and creative ways of working.

4.2 INVOLVE met every three weeks to plan how the strategy was to be developed. Many Children's Trust partners were involved in the development. Some of the development work for the strategy informed the participation element of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). There was a number of approaches used to develop this strategy. These include:

- Wide research into participation with children, young people and parents.
- Exploration of other participation strategy's from other areas.
- Focus group as to what the children, young people and parents of Halton wanted from participation.
- Involvement of the wider child, youth and parent population in

Halton through a network of organisations and partners.

4.3 The strategy will sit under the Children and Young People's Plan and is intended as a practical and useful document, not to be left on a shelf. The strategy includes:

- An explanation of participation
- Reasons for participation, including legal obligations
- Possible barriers to participation
- Current participation in Halton
- what we want to achieve
- What will participation in Halton look like after the strategy is in place

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The Children and Young People's Participation strategy is a key document for Halton Children's Trust partners. It outlines the expectations on involvement and participation of children, young people and families within decision making and development of services and provision. This in turn helps to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families in Halton.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

One of the key reasons for participation is to improve the personal development of children, young people and parents. Participation and involvement in communities, projects and decision making can increase skills and confidence, otherwise known as transferable skills.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Through involving children, young people and their families in the development of services and provision that support healthy lifestyles a greater public awareness and take up of services can be achieved.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Through involving children, young people and their families in the development of services and provision that support a safer Halton a greater public awareness and take up of services can be achieved.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Through involving children, young people and their families in the

development of Halton as a borough greater ownership within communities can be achieved.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 8.1 It is vital that both the Council and Children's Trust continue to be clear about priorities for service delivery and ensuring all stakeholders can participate wherever possible at all stages and in any way in projects that affect them.
- 8.2 These risks can be mitigated by the adoption of this Strategy and its implementation, monitoring and ultimate delivery.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 9.1 A Community Impact & Review Assessment will be undertaken on the Strategy prior to its formal launch. This is expected to reinforce the value of this Strategy as it facilitates positive action for children and young people overall in Halton and for particular groups of children and young people as appropriate.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Children Act 2004	2 nd Floor, Rutland House, Runcorn	Mark Grady
Halton Children & Young People's Plan 2014-17	2 nd Floor, Rutland House, Runcorn	Mark Grady
A case study on the strategic participation of young people within a local children's trust. (2013)	2 nd Floor, Rutland House, Runcorn	Michelle Forder