

# Hull Children and Young People's Voice and Influence Strategy

"It's everyone's business"



Hull  
City Council

# Voice and Influence Strategy for Children and Young People.

**“Everybody’s business, Everybody’s Responsibility”.**

## Vision

Hull’s Voice and Influence strategy sets out the vision and aspirations that:

**“Effective systems are in place to ensure all children, young people and their families can actively participate and engage in issues, services and decisions that affect them. Engaging with children and young people and enabling them to have their voices heard is everyone’s business to ensure their feedback is acted upon to deliver continuous improvement”.**

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a coordinated and consistent approach to understanding the needs of the community and emerging issues by promoting genuine and meaningful involvement of children, young people and their families in Hull.

All children and young people should have access to effective information, advice and guidance to enable them to make informed decisions about their daily lives and achieve the best outcomes for their futures. Only through our collective commitment to working together can we build on existing local good practice to ensure effective systems are in place across the partnership. This will ensure we achieve a true culture and understanding of effective participation, engagement and coproduction in which children, young people, their families and carers have the opportunity to ‘have their voice heard’ at a time and in a way that is right for them. This will enable them to be empowered to be a true partner in influencing change through shaping and improving services and raising awareness of issues which impact on their lives.

Hull’s Voice and Influence Strategy evidences our commitment to putting children and young people at the heart of all of our activities through involving them and their families in the co-production of services that affect their lives. This includes decision-making, planning, commissioning, service design, development, recruitment of staff, delivery, and evaluation and the development and involvement of campaigns. The strategy applies to all Children and Young People at each level of the Hull Threshold of Need (Universal/Additional/Targeted/Safeguarding). The objectives of our strategy will be achieved through all partners signing-up to:

- A shared vision and understanding of voice and influence in principle and in practice.
- Working within a framework of shared values, principles and standards underpinned by the National Hear by Right framework.
- Consistent use of tools to capture the views and voices of children and young people and then responding and acting upon their views.
- Develop the skills and knowledge of the workforce to ensure genuine voice and influence is a tangible element of all practice developments.
- Knowing that children and young people’s voices can and do make a difference and making sure we can all evidence how this is working and how we can maximise impact.
- Celebrating and sharing existing good practice so others can learn from this.

## Childrens' Rights and Responsibilities

Children's right to participate is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Every young person 17 and under has the right to express their views and have their views given due weight in all matters affecting them (Article 12).

Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information. Understanding the child or young person's diversity and cultural needs is a key element of the strategy to remove barriers to participation. Every child has the right to freedom of expression, so long as they respect the rights of others (Article 13).

Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their communities (Article 23). All rights under the UNCRC are required to be implemented for every child without discrimination.

## The Importance of Voice and Influence

Children and young people are the experts in their lives and therefore their views should be at the heart of all we do. Genuine involvement is crucial to improving outcomes for them and those around them and making sure they have a say in what those services are and what they look like so they can access the right support at the right time in the right place.

Participation and involvement is not just "taking part" or "being present" but about having power and influence over decisions and actions with clear structures for this to be achieved and evidenced. To enable effective Voice and Influence to happen, there needs to be an ongoing dialogue with children and young people at all levels. Enabling children and young people to truly influence the range of decisions that impact upon their lives is a challenge and, in some cases, means sharing with or giving power to children and young people.

Children and young people should be involved in the whole process of deciding the best services for all. Working with children and young people includes:

- Children and young people having a say in decisions about their lives.
- Services developed and improved, based on information and feedback from children and young people
- Children and young people feeling valued and that they matter and are not having things done to but rather with.
- Feedback to children and young people on the impact of their feedback and the changes/improvements made as a result of this.

By listening and taking action on what children and young people tell us we can learn and develop services that are better in the future and reflect needs of the children and young people we work with.

The Hull Safeguarding arrangements as agreed by key partners determine how partner agencies co-operate to protect children in Hull, and enable local agencies/services to work together in a system where children are safeguarded, and their welfare promoted

All services working with children, young people and families (universal, early help and specialist) need to be assured through the Voice and Influence Strategy (and associated action plan) that services have a process for hearing the voice of children and young people that demonstrates they are listening and improvements are made to service delivery and practice as a result.

Hull's Partnership vision for children and young people includes facilitating their participation in decision-making that affects their lives. This includes ensuring:

- Children and young people have an independent voice
- Children, young people and parents are active participants in service planning and review and routinely inform service improvement
- Services are sensitive to diverse needs and remove barriers to participation

The Partnership wants to ensure that every service can demonstrate policy change or service improvement as a result of feedback from children, young people and families.

## Hear by Right

Hear by Right standards cover all aspects of children and young people's participation. They provide a helpful common ground and shared language on participation. Hear by Right has seven standards based on the 'Seven S' model for organisations. The standards are: *shared values, strategies, structures, systems, staff, skills and knowledge and style of leadership*. The seven Hear by Right standards focus on improving young people's participation in organisations, which in turn will improve the services that will help them to improve their lives. This strategy is based on these seven standards which will shape the implementation of the strategy through training, development and shared learning opportunities.

## Shared Values

Children and young people hold us to account on our shared values, they are part of the review, update and implementation of the values that we use when working with children and young people for Voice and Influence in Hull. These are:

- Children and Young People are at the centre of all we do – voice and influence is valued and driven by the needs of children and young people.
- Understanding – We take time to understand each other. Involving children and young people is good both for them and also the adults working with them.
- Honesty and Building Trust – Being honest and communicating when we can make changes and explain why if we can't make all ideas a reality.
- Good Communication – Listening to each other, understanding and agreeing what can happen together will lead to positive change.
- Valuing People - Valuing all of the views, ideas and contributions that children and young people can bring to making what we do better.
- Making it Happen – Making sure that working with children, young people and families is an 'inclusive process' and all children and young people can get involved how they want to and when they feel ready.
- Working Together - Hull will be a place where children and young people can express easily what works well, what can be improved, can be involved in making improvements and are regularly kept informed about what has gone well to understand their role in this success.

## Strategies

Voice and Influence is everybody's business and should be embedded in all strategies and policies which may impact on the lives of children and young people. Where we are able to demonstrate genuine success in the development of services in Hull, it is invariably the case that we have also engaged effectively and involved children and young people as true partners in this work. Voice and Influence is more than a discrete strategy and service but must be embedded into everything that we do – an approach, a culture and built into service design and development as well as in our day to day core business. Engagement with children and young people is everyone's responsibility, everyone's business.

This strategy is for:

- Every child and young person living in and being cared for in Hull
- Parents, carers, family members particularly those involved in statutory services
- All organisations working with or providing services for children, young people and families in Hull

## Structures

There are a number of existing voice and influence structures in place in Hull and this strategy aims to build on existing good practice and structures to enhance and broaden these. The structures this strategy will develop will operate across rungs 4-9 of Harts ladder of participation. The strategy also aims to prevent children and young people only being involved at run 1-3 which are not effective methods of voice and influence.

### Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making

Rung 7: Young people lead and initiate action

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed

Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed

Rung 3: Young people are tokenised\*

Rung 2: Young people are decoration\*

Rung 1: Young people are manipulated\*

\*Note: Hart explains that the last three rungs are non-participation (see appendix 2 for more details)

Children and young people must have choices as to how they wish to participate, we recognise that not all will want to contribute or be involved in the same way. To ensure that all children and young people can participate if they choose to, a range of age appropriate tools and activities are available with more being developed. Because we are all working towards the same goal of ensuring children and young people's voices are heard and acted upon, no matter which method of engagement is chosen the voice will reach the people who need to hear.

Existing structures for Voice and Influence in Hull currently include:

- Hull Young People's Parliament (including reps to UK Youth Parliament)

- Headstart Hull including Headstart Volunteers (HeadStarters), Young Evaluators in the whole organisational Mark of Excellence process etc.
- Children in Care Council (known locally as YVIC – Young Voices influencing care)
- Room 42 (Care leavers)
- Momo app (for children and young people with social care involvement)
- Brightspots
- Send Champions
- Hull's Young Mayor
- HCC CYP complaints team
- Open access youth provision (HCC and Commissioned partners in the VCS)

The strategy will also support the development of additional structures e.g. Young Advisors to maximise opportunities for engagement.

## Systems

The strategy aims to provide support to improve systems to support embedding voice and influence across a range of areas including:

- Improved policies e.g. embedding children and young people's participation in HR policies such as recruitment and selection, supervision and annual appraisal processes, job description development processes etc.
- Improved financial planning to ensure realistic budgets to enable voice and influence are in place
- Improved processes e.g. voice and influence embedded in commissioning processes
- Development of staff training and resources by the HCC Voice and Influence team for use in induction and also as part of continuing professional development to improve staff knowledge and skills
- Development of a performance framework for Voice and Influence to evidence of levels of engagement as well as outcomes and impact.
- Development of a communication plan to promote the strategy, share good practice, celebrate achievements and reach out to children and young people so they know how they can get involved. This will include an ongoing consideration of innovative platforms and methods of communication being adopted and utilised by young people. Young people are proven earlier adopters of new social media platforms and their preferences change regularly. There will be a commitment to continually assess which are the most effective in reaching children and young people, promoting services etc. and barriers removed to ensure staff have access and can use these effectively.
- Regular report to strategic boards on the improvements made by effective voice and Influence work e.g., Better Together Partnership (formerly the Children and Families Board), Hull Safeguarding Childrens Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, Cabinet, Scrutiny, Corporate Parenting board etc.
- Annual equality impact assessment on involvement of children and young people in voice and influence to ensure those involved are representative of Hull's communities with protected characteristics e.g. BAME, LGBT, disabilities, age etc.

## **Staff**

All staff working with children and young people and families are key to facilitating the voice and influence including the relationship they have with the child or young person, the opportunity or the desire to hear children and young people's voices and take action to meet their needs. This will ensure that children and young people are at the heart of all that we do in the city. We have made a commitment to:

- Include skills and commitment to voice and influence in all staff job descriptions
- Ensure that children and young people participate fully in the recruitment and selection of staff working with or impacting on children and young people.
- Ensure that supervision and appraisals of staff include progress on participation and coproduction
- Provide training as part of induction and continuing professional development

## **Skills and knowledge**

We recognise that not everyone will feel confident or skilled at undertaking voice and influence work with children and young people or in recognising the value of their contribution or see them as experts in their lives. To support the journey to ensuring all those working with children and young people are in a position to facilitate children and young people's engagement and participation, the HCC Voice and Influence team will provide a range of training and development opportunities across services and partner organisations to put children and young people at the centre of all we do.

Our training will include participation training for young people, staff from across the partnership and other stakeholders as well as support young people in delivering training and presentations on issues that are most important to them. The HCC Voice and Influence team will also provide a consultancy service to other teams across the local authority and partnership organisations on ways to improve voice and influence work.

We will expect that children and young people will have enough information from services on how to participate fully in their lives, their communities and society.

## **Leadership**

Senior managers and leaders are champions for voice and influence and will promote and support participation of children and young people across their services. Innovation will be key to ensuring that through changing and challenging times, children and young people's voice and influence remains constant and central in all we do. Senior managers and leaders will not only support but they will ensure that staff have time and opportunity to attend training and to build relationships with children and young people that are influencing their services. They will set time aside to be an active audience and hear and act upon what is being said or asked for. They will also ensure that budgets are available to cover any costs to remove barriers to children and young people engaging in voice and influence activities e.g. travel costs, refreshments etc. Senior managers and leaders will also ensure their organisational or team policies ensure that effective voice and influence is delivered in practice.

There will be an internal Hull City Council working group focusing on improvements needed internally to address and improve areas identified through internal plans and also to meet the requirements of Ofsted. This will report into a wider partnership working group (Hull's Voice and Influence Improvement Partnership Group) which will facilitate the role out of the strategy across the city and the sign up of all partners to delivery of the strategy. This group in turn will report to the Better Together Partnership (see governance structure in appendix).

Following the launch of the strategy there will be regular report to relevant strategic boards on the improvements made by voice and Influence e.g., Better Together Partnership (formerly the Children and Families Board), Hull Safeguarding Childrens Board, Health and Wellbeing Board, Cabinet, Scrutiny, Corporate Parenting board etc. so key leaders in the city can support in celebrating successes and removing barriers to successful implementation.

## Better Together

Hull's Voice and Influence Improvement Partnership Group will be responsible for the development, implementation, monitoring, and effectiveness reporting on the impact of the Voice and Influence strategy and implementation plan.

Members of this group will be responsible for:

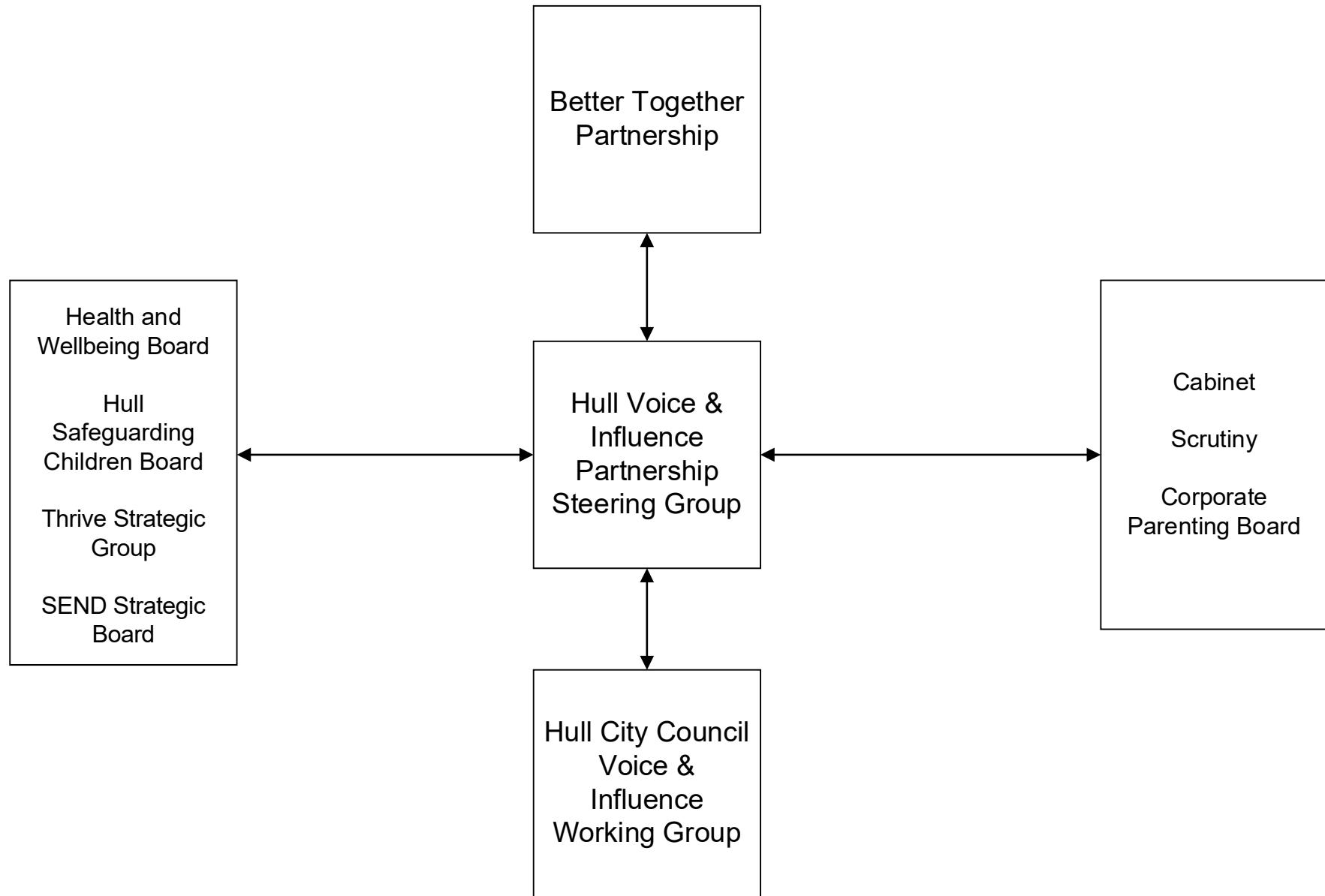
- Take a lead in driving forward Hull's commitment to the voice and influence of young people and achieving excellent outcomes for children and young people, in particular vulnerable young people.
- Co-ordinate a range of resources and partnerships (with internal and external partners) that enable the effective Voice & Influence of young people, and maximise opportunities for engagement.
- Support the development and co-ordinate the delivery of voice and influence services to support vulnerable young people.
- Work with wider partners to deliver on the strategic vision to enable children and young people to maximise their voice and influence across the city and beyond through the development of an implementation plan to deliver on the strategic vision
- Promote and where appropriate lead the development of the involvement of children and young people in the design/co-production, delivery and evaluation of services, and active citizenship.
- Identify, develop and promote best practice with regards to children and young people's participation, engagement and voice and influence.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of Hear by Right and the local strategy across city to identify:
  - Areas of good practice
  - Areas in need of development
  - Additional training needs
  - Themes and messages emerging for children and young people
  - Outcomes as a result of children and young people's involvement

An implementation plan will accompany this strategy along with an annual audit/review of voice and influence across the city to evidence impact of the strategy.

## Timeline for Implementation

The strategy will initially focus on implementation within HCC from April 2021 with a view to rolling out the implementation across the city from the autumn of 2021. An annual review of progress will take place in April 2022 and each year thereafter to inform the forward action plan to ensure a cycle of continuous improvement.

## Appendix 1: Governance Structure



## Appendix 2: Roger Hart's Ladder of Young Peoples Participation

