

2014 - 2017

# YorOK Voice and Involvement Strategy

**VISION:** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR STRATEGIC ARRANGEMENTS. THE YOROK VOICE AND INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY SETS OUT OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE A VOICE AND ARE INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING, PLANNING, COMMISSIONING, DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES.

**WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS THROUGH:**

- OUR SHARED VALUES AND COMMITMENT TO VOICE AND INVOLVEMENT
- PLACING THE VOICE OF THE CHILD AND THEIR JOURNEY AT THE HEART OF OUR STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS
- SUPPORTING INVOLVEMENT WORK TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGE WHERE IT DOESN'T
- DEVELOPING THE SKILLS OF OUR WORKFORCE TO DELIVER THIS STRATEGY
- KNOWING THAT CHILDREN'S VOICE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

This strategy sets out the vision and aspirations across YorOK (York's Children's Trust) for **all** children, young people and their families to participate and engage in all services that affect them.

Thank you to the children and young people at Show Me That I Matter and Young Inspectors for helping us develop to this strategy.

The strategy is a key priority of the YorOK Board, the City of York Safeguarding Children's Board (CYSCB) and has been approved by these bodies.

### ABOUT YOROK – YORK'S CHILDREN'S TRUST

'YorOK' is the local name for York's Children's Trust arrangements. A Children's Trust is a partnership of organisations responsible for delivering or commissioning services to children, young people and families. The YorOK Board is made up of representatives from these organisations and is responsible for producing the Children and Young People's Plan, monitoring its implementation and ensuring that all partners really are working together in the best interests of children and families. When we say 'we' in this strategy, we are referring to all of the organisations which are represented on the YorOK Board.

In this strategy **"involvement"** includes all work that encourages engagement, participation and consultation as well as active involvement in service planning, delivery and design.

Where the term **"our"** or **"we"** is used this is in reference to the children and young people's workforce.

#### Why should people listen to children and young people?

*"We are the next generation. We live here too. We are the people that will be working and paying taxes."*

A Young Inspector

### ABOUT CYSCB – CITY OF YORK'S SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The City of York's Safeguarding Children Board (CYSCB) is a statutory inter-agency forum for agreeing how different services co-operate to protect children in York. We seek to ensure that the children of York are protected from all forms of abuse and neglect by ensuring that everybody working with children works effectively together.

The CYSCB is committed to challenging itself and partners to ensure good quality opportunities for children and young people to have a voice and be involved in decisions and services that affect them. Hearing, understanding and acting on messages from children and young people is a key function of the CYSCB.

## YOROK VOICE AND INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY (2014 -2017)

The YorOK Children’s Trust and City of York Safeguarding Children’s Board places the Involvement and Participation of children, young people and families at the core of its work, and adopts the following vision statement:

*Children and young people are at the heart of our strategic arrangements. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people have a voice in decision-making, planning, commissioning, design and delivery of services.*

We will achieve this vision through:

- Our shared values and commitment to involvement.
- Placing the voice of children and young people at the heart of our structures and systems.
- Supporting involvement work to improve outcomes and challenge where it doesn’t.
- Ensure the YorOK workforce has the skills and knowledge required.
- Knowing that the voices of children and young people make a difference.

More specifically we will know we are delivering this strategy by implementing:

### OUR SHARED VALUES AND COMMITMENT TO INVOLVEMENT

We will achieve this by:

- Further developing our quality standards and ethical framework for involvement and participation work across the City and promote and develop good practice.
- Ensuring that children, young people and families’ have direct access to decision makers including elected members.
- Ensuring that the YorOK Voice and Involvement Group and Safeguarding Children Involvement Group co-ordinate and develops involvement work across partners, models different approaches to involvement and facilitates the sharing of policies and good practice.

#### **What does having a voice mean to you?**

*“I enjoy contributing to the decision-making process because I feel like I can make a difference to policy through personally talking to councillors and decision-makers”*

A member of York Youth Council

### PLACING THE VOICE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF OUR STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring systems are in place to use involvement to evaluate, inspect and quality mark our services and work.
- Ensure the YorOK workforce is aware of messages from children and young people, from senior managers through to front line workers.
- Coordinating involvement and participation work undertaken, ensuring groups aren’t under or over consulted, and drawing together conclusions to inform service development and delivery.

- Working collectively to maximise use of existing resources, improve access to other sources of funding and ensure children, young people and families' are involved in commissioning arrangements.

#### SUPPORTING INVOLVEMENT WORK TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGE WHERE IT DOESN'T

We will achieve this by:

- Raising the profile of involvement and participation work across the City, highlighting issues as well as celebrating the contribution that children, young people and families make to developing high quality services.
- Ensuring that children, young people and families' are aware of their rights to be involved and know how to engage effectively. Providing clear and swift feedback about the impact of their involvement.
- Celebrating children and young people's active participation and achievements.
- Challenging where children and young people's voice is absent or in need of development.

#### ENSURE THE YOROK WORKFORCE HAS THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring the YorOK workforce have the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively involve children, young people and families.
- Working to develop resources and materials, promoting forums for sharing good practice and experiences and providing training in order to develop skills around involvement and participation work.

#### KNOWING THAT THE VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We will achieve this by:

- Case studies highlighting the impact of children and young people's voice.
- Our outcome frameworks supporting the Children and Young People's Plan and the City of York Safeguarding Children's Board.

## Children and Young People developing the YorOK Voice and Involvement Strategy

The development of this strategy involved talking directly to children and young people.

Different parts of voice and involvement were explored as part of the session.

- Why should people listen to you?
- When people listen...
  - What is good?
  - What is bad?

Through talking to the young people the following statements were developed. These are written in the form of a promise to children and young people.

- **Anyone working with you, promise to hear your voice, your ideas and make it easier for them to change and influence things.**
- **Making sure we learn lessons from your lives to make things better for other young people.**
- **Challenge and support where you don't have a voice.**
- **Train our staff so they understand how to listen to you and how to work with you.**
- **Going back and checking your thoughts and ideas have made a difference.**

These five statements translate directly into the five ways through which the YorOK partnership will deliver this strategy.

Thank you to young people from the following groups for helping in the development of this strategy.

- Show Me That I Matter
- Young Inspectors
- York Youth Council

Underpinning this strategy are the following key principles and values:

- **Involvement and participation of children, young people and families remains the responsibility of all organisations and practitioners working with children or young people. Organisations should ensure that children, young people and families' involvement is included in strategic and operational development and delivery.**
- We will champion the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which establishes a fundamental set of rights for children and young people. Article 12 sets out children and young people's right to express their views and opinions about decisions that affect them and for those views to be taken into account.
- Involvement should be high quality and ethical in its approach. Involvement should move beyond just consultation and move to higher levels of participation and involvement. Through activities such as participating in governance, mentoring, volunteering, delivering training or undertaking research and ensuring that these approaches are well considered and supported to enable real participation.
- We will act as a leader in the field of children, young people and families involvement in York and will promote and co-ordinate good and inclusive practice across its constituent organisations.
- We will seek to develop and promote excellent practice across YorOK in involvement, participation and engagement work and will work to model approaches which empower all children, young people and families to take the lead.
- Any involvement work undertaken should be carried out in the most appropriate ways for those children, young people and families most affected by it and be realistic in terms of what it sets out to achieve. Feedback should be given about results and changes that have taken place because of people's involvement.
- We recognise that the involvement and participation of children, young people and families needs to be adequately resourced in terms of expertise, time, money, organisational systems and structures and supported by a culture of openness, mutual respect and listening in order to achieve these high standards.
- Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. Through this strategy we are working to ensure children, young people and families and those looking to involve them fully understand safeguarding implications to involvement work and what to do if they have any form of concern.
- We recognise the critical role of our children and young people's workforce in achieving our vision for involvement. We will work to ensure the workforce have the skills and information required.

### **What does having a voice mean to you?**

*"York Youth Council has given me a wide range of attributes, empowering me to strive for change and in turn sparking a passion for the future."*

A member of York Youth Council

## HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

To support the delivery of the YorOK Voice and Involvement Strategy we have two groups that drive this work. These groups work very closely together and are chaired and coordinated through the Children's Trust Unit.

### YOROK VOICE AND INVOLVEMENT GROUP (VIG)

The YorOK Voice and Involvement Group (VIG) is responsible for the development, review and implementation of this strategy and will routinely monitor progress against the YorOK Voice and Involvement Group Action Plan.

This group will facilitate links with key positions and groups within the YorOK partnership associated with involvement and participation work. The YorOK Voice and Involvement Group will act as a catalyst to promote the aims and objectives of the Involvement Strategy across these groups that will in turn facilitate movement and change across YorOK.

The YorOK Voice and Involvement Group will report to the YorOK Board and ensure the board is aware of:

- Areas of good practice
- Areas in need of development
- Themes and messages from children and young people
- Outcomes as a result of children and young peoples involvement.

### SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN INVOLVEMENT GROUP (SCIG)

The purpose of the Safeguarding Involvement Group (SIG) is to bring together key partners responsible for developing involvement children and young people in need of help and support. This allows for a sharper focus to be taken on this area of work.

The Safeguarding Children Involvement Group will report to the CYSCB and ensure the board is aware of:

- Areas of good practice
- Areas in need of development
- Themes and messages from children and young people
- Outcomes as a result of children and young peoples involvement.

## WHY DOES INVOLVEMENT MATTER?

Children and young people are at the heart of what we do. They are at the heart of our Children and Young People's Plan, our Early Help Strategy and at the heart of our safeguarding arrangements.

Involving children and young people and giving them a voice in their own journey and services that affect them is a key ingredient in improving outcomes for children and young people.

*"It makes me really angry and lash out when people don't listen to me"*

A Young Inspector

## UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes a fundamental set of rights for children and young people. Article 12 sets out children and young people's right to express their views and opinions about decisions that affect them and for those views to be taken into account.

## THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN AND INVOLVEMENT

The YorOK Board is responsible for improving the lives of children and young people in York and its vision and priorities are set out in "Dream Again" – York's Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2016. The importance of voice and involvement is reflected in the eight ways YorOK works to help all children, young people and their families live their dreams.

- Striving for the highest standards;
- Upholding truly equal opportunities;
- Helping children and young people to always feel safe;
- Intervening early and effectively;
- Working together creatively;
- Working in genuine collaboration with children and families: mutual respect and celebration;
- Connecting with communities, within which our children live, and to the rich culture of our great city;
- Remembering that laughter and happiness are also important!

## EARLY HELP STRATEGY AND INVOLVEMENT

In 2013 York published its Early Help Strategy which brings the priorities of Dream Again into sharper focus for how York supports those who needs extra help at the earliest opportunity. One of the underpinning principals of this strategy is:

*"...Listening in particular to children, young people, families and carers, to ensure that children's experience of, and journey through, our early help arrangements makes a real difference to their lives."*

## WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) sets out what professionals need to do, and what they can expect of one another, to safeguard children. It focuses on core legal requirements and it makes clear what individuals and organisations should do to keep children safe.



Working Together makes clear that effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area should be underpinned by two key principles:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

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## THE CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING PERFORMANCE INFORMATION FRAMEWORK

The Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework describes the key nationally collected data that can help those involved in child protection at both the local and national levels understand the health of the child protection system. National level performance information can only provide part of the picture.

Questions about quality and experiences of those who are part of the system need to be asked at the local level, and different ways of doing that will be appropriate to different areas. This framework includes the questions agreed with the sector that local agencies need to ask service users and providers so that their experiences can help drive local improvement. These questions are consistent with those being asked in inspection and peer review and challenge.

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## HEALTH

The way health services are commissioned has undergone considerable change over recent years. The responsibility for commissioning health services for children, young people and their families now rests with a number of different organisations. Given the complex nature of commissioning services for children and young people, it is now imperative that commissioning organisations work in partnership to ensure that the voice of children, young people and their families is reflected in the services we commission.

The Government expects to see rapid progress in measuring and understanding how people really feel about the care they receive. The NHS England Business Plan 2013/14 - 2015/16 makes a clear commitment to participation and involvement.

*"we will enable patient & public voice and insight to be routinely used in the planning and delivery of services"*

NHS England Business Plan 2013/14 - 2015/16

## THE STORY SO FAR

York is able to demonstrate many examples of high quality involvement work over recent years. These have been supported by previous versions of the YorOK Involvement Strategy and would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of all involved.

**Recruitment of the Director of Children's Services** – Five young people including to Looked After Children and a care leaver formed an interview panel to support the recruitment of the new Director of Children's Services in 2013.

**Young People's Mental Health** – In 2012 the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) set up a review and task group to look at Community Mental Health Services in Care of Adolescents. The aim being to raise awareness of emotional and mental health issues for young people, and the services and interventions available, with a view to ensuring that the wider children's workforce are well informed and equipped to identify and respond to children and young people with emotional problems and/or emerging mental health issues.

Through research with young people and other partners a set of resources have been developed alongside recommendations for further work.

**Show Me That I Matter (York's Children in Care Council)** – This well established group has worked for a number of years to provide a platform for Looked After Children to have a voice directly with workers, senior managers and strategic leaders. In 2014 an annual report has been introduced that brings together the themes and messages from young people and responses from practitioners.

**UMatter** - The Government states that every council should make a set of promises to all its children and young people in care; this is called a Pledge. In York, children and young people were asked what they thought were the kind of promises that should be made to children and young people in care, and the Pledge is based on the feedback from these children and young people.

This pledge was reviewed with young people throughout 2013 informing the development of a new pledge and to inform service design.

**Stand Up For Us** - The Stand Up for Us survey has been running since 2011 and aims to monitor the prevalence and nature of bullying behaviour in primary and secondary schools in the City of York. In 2013, the survey was developed further to explore in more detail, aspects of physical health and emotional wellbeing. In 2013, 1,559 Year 8 and 2,540 Year 4,5 and 6 pupils completed the surveys.

Overall, responses from both primary and secondary school pupils indicated a decrease in experiencing bullying.

**LAC Support Service** - Every Local Authority has a statutory duty to facilitate contact between Looked after Children and their parents. As part of new arrangements within Children's Social Care, The Looked After Children Support Service was established in December 2012. The Looked After Children Support Service team work with children and families identified through the court or statutory review that are in need of, assessment, life story work, contact, support and guidance for all Looked After Children and those post adoption. The Looked After Children's Support Service recognise the need to remain child focussed with the provision of positive contact and services, yet have the ability to offer flexibility in plans and services amid competing needs and evolving expectations both locally and nationally.

The LAC Support Team see involvement as fundamental to their work and they consult directly with children and young people and all partner agencies, including the Independent Reviewing Officers, Child and

Adolescent Mental Health Services, Adoption and Fostering teams and Foster carers directly. All of which serves to ensure the LAC Support Team are targeting services where they are most needed and to increase the quality of that provision for all involved.

**Providing job opportunities through City of York Council's Apprenticeship Programme for Young People -**

City of York Council's Workforce profile does not mirror York's community profile. Within the workforce the biggest mismatch compared with the population of York is in the employment of people under 25 years of age. To address this imbalance we have created opportunities for younger people to join the workforce through pre apprenticeship Work placements, apprenticeship and other programmes such as internships.

City of York Council has introduced a 'Living Wage' for apprentices from 1st April 2013 for all apprentices from the National Apprenticeship Minimum Wage of £2.65ph up to £4.98ph.

- Up to the 31 March 2014 69 apprenticeships have been offered across the authority.
- 11 apprentices over the past 2 cohorts have been retained for a further year by their departments to continue onto a higher level apprenticeship either at Level 3 (Advanced) or Level 4 (foundation degree) and conversations continue throughout the apprenticeships to evaluate progress and the potential to be retained and move onto a higher level.
- 3 apprentices have secured permanent employment within the council following completion of their apprenticeship.

Following the huge success of the 100 in 100 days York Apprenticeship Challenge across the City in 2011, CYC has continued to develop our apprenticeship programme to create conditions that facilitate young peoples' transition from education to working life.

**We Talk Too (Looked After Children Focus Group for 10-14 year olds)** – Linked to the LAC Support Service this group was set up for young people in care in July 2013. The initial aim was to provide a forum for young people in care to contribute their own ideas and experiences of contact with their families whilst they are in care. Looking at the venue, transport, how the contact is carried out and how they can work with their contact worker both in and out of contact. This feedback was to provide information to the newly established LAC Support Team that would help shape the service in two ways. The first being the physical make up of the new building, including colour schemes, room lay out and what activities and toys were available to use in contact sessions. The second was to look at our practice as we moved into the new venue, looking at what work we do with looked after children, how we get them to contacts, how we manage those contacts and what additional work should be happening with them that they feel would benefit. After this initial aim the group has a long term aim to develop into a forum for looked after children. It merged with existing I Matter 2 group in November 2013 in order to establish this forum and avoid duplication.

**Viewpoint** - The Youth Offending Team is the first team in the council to begin making use of the Viewpoint system to gather feedback from children and young people. Viewpoint is a consultation tool that makes use of graphics, speech, interactivity, short games and animated assistants to engage children and young people.

The initial focus of making use of Viewpoint has been to move existing paper based consultations online. The "What do you think" self assessment is a national set of questions that asks users how much they feel statements relate to them and the way they act. For example:

- I have a secure and stable place to live
- I have been bullied at school, college or work

Workers support young people to complete the consultations online in their homes or in the office.

The responses to these questions are then used to inform individual plans for those young people. Quarterly reports aggregate results to identify themes to inform service delivery and strategic planning.

**Foster Carers Group** - Foster carers are invited to a coffee morning once a quarter with the relevant assistant director in children's services. This is to provide an opportunity to gather feedback that can drive change in practice and policy.

**Listen to me** - The "Listen to Me" series of booklets was developed to support adults: parents, carers and professionals who are working with children and young people to:

- listen to children and young people
- help children and young people to say what they want
- help children and young people to make decisions

The resources include practical and innovative examples of how children can express their views. Their opinions are really important and have definitely shaped priorities for services in the City of York. Clearly some children and young people require more support to be involved and we know that parents and practitioners are eager to help them do this.

**Personal Education Plans** - The CYC PEP guidance (All About Personal Education Plans) emphasises that schools should encourage pupil contribution/participation in the PEP. The PEP guidance and PEP forms were updated Spring 2013 and shared with all CYC schools, early years settings and social workers. For the future PEP forms/procedures/guidance need to be reviewed to reflect the new Education Health Care Plans, which replace statements of SEN from September 2014.

Currently PEP's are very focussed on individual experience but options over how themes from PEPs could be aggregated and understood could be explored.

Termly training on PEP's is provided jointly for schools, social workers and foster carers to promote a shared understanding of the need for PEP's, what a PEP is, their respective roles and how they can work together to complete a PEP. The importance of pupil participation / contribution to the PEP is covered in the training. Trainers provide an insight into LAC views on their education and PEP's (e.g. What helps? What doesn't help?). These views are taken from small local studies and national studies, which have been completed over the last 10 years. Although numbers attending each training session is relatively small, evaluations of the training are consistently high.

## FURTHER RESOURCES

By visiting [www.yor-ok.org.uk/voice](http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/voice) you can find up to date information relating to this strategy including:

- Case studies demonstrating examples of good quality involvement work impact
- Reports relating to children and young people's voice
- YorOK Quality Standards for Voice and Involvement