Engagement and Participation Strategy for Services working with Children and Young People with Additional Needs and their Parents and Carers

2019 - 2021
Hi, my name is Sam and this is my bus.
Come aboard and meet all the people who help keep the wheels going round and round.

These are my parents and carers. They are really important because they help me to keep safe and learn what I will need to drive the bus on my own, one day. You could say they are my driving instructors.

These are my Teachers and people at school. They help me learn new things and help me plan for the future. They are like my route finder so I can get on the right road and don’t get lost.

These are my G.P., Health Visitor, Dentist and School Nurse. They help to keep me well and to notice when I might need extra help. They are like my maintenance crew.

My bus can breakdown sometimes. This is when I need other people to help me. These people include Social workers, Police, Paramedics and Doctors. They hop onto the bus to help it get going again. They are like my breakdown service.

These are my friends and family. They help me to try new things, go to different places and learn about myself. I like them because they help me to have fun. They are like my onboard entertainment.

Sometimes there can be bumps along the road when I need extra help. There are lots of people that can help me depending on what I need. People like SENDCos, Advisory Teachers, Portage workers, Family support workers, Psychologists, Therapists, Caseworkers, Lead Professionals, Doctors and Nurses help and get other people on board. They are like specialists in a garage checking to see what will help me get over the bumps as smoothly as possible.

Whether you are on the bus every day or someone who pops on and off when needed; you are all important to me... So please work together. Thank you :-)

Drawings by Bethany aged 12
Foreword

In Gloucestershire we are committed to providing the best opportunities for our children and young people. We have a range of skilled and knowledgeable professionals in the county who are dedicated to supporting children and young people. But we know that it is the children and young people themselves, and their parents or carers, who are the real experts in what they need.

Sam’s bus shows us the people and services that may be involved with a child during his or her life and why we must work together with the child at the center of all we do.

It is so important we all pull together to develop services which work for everyone and that is equally important whether we are looking at individual children and young people, a particular community or a countywide approach.

We are therefore delighted to have developed this strategy with children and young people and parent carers to set out how we will hold participation and engagement at the core of all we do across education, health and care services.

Chris Spencer
Director of Children’s Services

Mary Hutton
ICS Lead/Accountable Officer
Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
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Our Vision

Everyone’s voice is listened to and by working together, every child can thrive and maximise their potential.

This is a joint agreement between the Local Authority Children’s Services and Education and Disability Services, NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and commissioned services for children and families. This agreement is part of our

**Joint Strategy for Children and Young People with Additional Needs 2018-2021**

Links between services, children and young people, parents and carers
Working together we aim to deliver the following priorities:

✔ Children, young people and parents will be encouraged to be equal partners in developing plans and agreeing outcomes to be achieved. Every effort will be made to seek their views, reflecting on the vital role parents/family play in supporting their child’s development.

✔ Children, young people and parents will play a key role in co-producing and developing services across health, education and social care – particularly those specifically for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities;

Engagement and participation are vital to ensuring the services we provide meet the needs of the people who use them.

Listening to children, young people, parents and carers and working together helps services to know what works and where changes and improvements are needed.

Effective engagement and participation in the services people use ensures their services are as effective as possible.
Our Joint Aspirations - Where we want to be

Our joint aspiration is that this strategy and action plan will enable commissioners, service providers and families to work together more effectively so that we get better experiences and outcomes for everyone involved.

Working together we can:

- Improve engagement with people who use our services across Education, Health and Care
- Encourage and enable full participation at individual, organisational and strategic levels of work.
- Develop real opportunities for co-production and co-evaluation of services leading to service improvement
- Ensure we identify gaps in service provision
- Ensure that our Local Offer of services in Gloucestershire is continually improving and meeting the needs of the people who use them.
What is Engagement and Participation?

Engagement and participation happens when services providers encourage and develop effective working relationships with the people who use their services. Good communication and services providing helpful information is an important part of building this relationship and helps people who use those services to feel and be part of what happens and the decisions that are made that affect their lives.

What is Co-production and Co-evaluation?

Effective engagement and participation leads to genuine working together or co-production. Co-production is where commissioners (those who plan and pay for services on behalf of the public) and service providers work in true partnership with other services, children, young people, families and carers to deliver services that are effective and make a positive difference to people's lives.

Co-evaluation happens when everyone involved with commissioning, delivering and receiving services contributes to understanding what is working or not working with particular services and the improvements that may be needed to make a service the best it can be.

Getting the best from our Local Offer of public services in Gloucestershire

It is in all of our interests to get the very best outcomes and value from our public services. Working together with a shared sense of accountability, fairness and guided by principles that value and respect the experiences of people, is the right thing to do. Key areas of legislation that support this approach are:

- Children and Families Act (2014) – Section 19
- NHS Health and Social Care Act (2012)
- The NHS Constitution (revised 2019)
What is feedback telling us now?

Children’s Services

Children’s Services use the Bright Spots survey to help us better understand the well-being of our children in care and care leavers. The annual survey last carried out in March 2018 heard the views from 189 children in care and 89 care leavers.

Several young people wrote about their workers describing them as non-judgemental, respectful and good at listening. Some describing them as going beyond expectations. Less positive comments focussed on lack of communication, promises not being kept and sometimes finding it hard to get in touch with their worker.

What is happening as a result of this feedback?

Social workers and other professionals have created a one page profile about themselves to share with children and young people so they know how to contact their worker and to build the relationship.

Quotes from children and young people

‘It would be better to have all my toys and special things’. 4-7 year old
‘I would like to see my mum more’. 8-11 year old
‘Thank you, I have the world’s best foster carer’. 8-11 year old
‘I wish my social worker was more available’. 11-16 year old
‘My Leaving Care Worker has helped me so much with my confidence and I trust her a lot’ Care leaver. 18-25 year old
‘Brilliant, it would take me all night to say how good they are’. Care leaver 18-25 year old
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**Education, Health & Care Plan Service**

From January 2018 – March 2019, the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Team received 77 customer feedback responses. These are responses to the questionnaire sent to families following the final draft of an EHCP. 4 of these responses were from young people.

68% of responses from young people and 76% of responses from parents rated the service they had received as good or very good / helpful or very helpful.

20% responses from young people and 12% of responses from parents rated the service they received as very poor / poor or very unhelpful / unhelpful

12% of young people and parents rated the service they received as OK.

36% indicated that they would be happy to be contacted for a further conversation and / or to become part of a focus group.

Feedback comments provided a range of responses from extremely positive about the communication and hard work of the EHCP Team to negative experiences of communication and the complexity of the statutory processes.

Communication and explaining / simplifying processes were the main areas highlighted for improvement.

**What is happening as a result of this feedback?**

The EHCP Team are exploring ways of making their communication and service more effective. One approach they are taking is to make short films where they explain the legal and statutory processes they follow. These will be made available to everyone who uses their service.
How engagement and participation work

Everyone deserves to have a voice. Without a voice we can’t put all the pieces together’.
(Young Person during co-production meeting, December 2018)

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Co-production
Quality services that make a positive difference to those who use them!
How can Families and Services work together?

There are 3 levels of participation:

1. **Individual level** is when you are actively encouraged to be involved with the services that are working with you so you get the best outcome.

This has a positive impact on services understanding and responding to your needs.

For a child or young person, this would include being informed about consent and being part of any assessment, planning and support in your education setting and with other services that support your education, health and care. It would also include receiving support and information to make choices about what is important to you and for you.

For a parent and carer, this includes being enabled to take part fully in what is happening to support your child’s learning, health and development.

**Parents, carers, children and young people identify the following as important elements to help them feel involved and able to participate.**

- First impressions count! Services need to be friendly and approachable
- Communication – help me to share my views. Don’t assume you know it all
- Listening – make a note or record my story so I don’t have to repeat myself or relive the whole experience
- Language – no acronyms, use language that we can understand
- Services are contacted for help – be honest and clear about what can happen and what can’t happen
- Young people are encouraged to give their views and are listened to
- Feeling respected as a parent with knowledge of your child
- Don’t make assumptions – ask questions
- Time management – take time, don’t rush. I am not just a statutory visit or an appointment
- Work with me, not do to me
- Be consistent with your approach and way of working
- Be fair – treat everyone fairly
- Provide solutions not problems e.g. signpost to other sources of help
- Remove barriers to participation
2. Organisational level is when your feedback of services helps to shape them for the future.

Your experience and knowledge can help service providers know where things are working well and where improvements can be made.

This has a positive impact on the people who provide services and for those who use services.

**Parents, carers, children and young people identify the following as important elements to help them provide constructive feedback.**

- Be clear why you want feedback and what you will do with it e.g. “you said, we did”
- Have a range of ways to contribute your voice – get creative – direct- face to face or focus group; email; feedback cards (‘what went well?’ ‘Even better if.’); text; social media; videos
- Be consistent on the feedback questions across the system
- Create a way to contact those who are willing to help co-produce service improvement and change
- Communicate what difference a service is actually making
- Issues are followed up – “do you want to be contacted regarding this?”
- Make it part of the process of working together
- Keep it simple – website, easy to access, easy to find
- Use basic questions and not too many
- Expect to be asked for feedback
- Customer care policy – is everyone aware?
3. **Strategic level** is when your experience and views are used collectively (the collective voice) to inform collaborative working together with our strategic partners.

This has a positive impact on how our public services are co-produced, ensuring good outcomes and value for our public funds.

**Parents, carers, children and young people identify that there needs to be defined structures where people can input their collective views.**

- Be clear about the strategic groups that exist, their aims and areas of focus so that people know what they are being asked to contribute to and which groups they can make a contribution to.
- Young people need to have a way of being heard as a collective.
- Engagement needs to be as collaborative as possible to avoid duplication and engagement fatigue.

Ways of achieving this include:

- Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum supporting and coordinating engagement from all interested parent carer groups and networks across the county and inviting representation from across communities.
- Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children acting as a Children and Young People’s Forum and reaching out to hear the collective voice of children and young people so their views and experiences can be represented.
Examples of current participation and co-production

Ambassadors for Vulnerable Children and Young People are employed by Gloucestershire County Council to help us to keep young people and child focused; they challenge us, work with us and often identify areas of our work that can be neglected. They are creative, social media savvy and help us communicate effectively with children and young people. They have impacted on our attitudes, understanding and awareness of the issues that are important to them. The team of 15 Ambassadors have all received the support of Children’s Social Care and are aged 16-25.

Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum is a group of parents and carers of children with additional needs and disabilities. Their aim is to make sure the services in Gloucestershire meet the needs children with additional needs and disabilities and their families. They do this by gathering the views of local families and then working in partnership with the local authority, education settings, health providers and other providers to highlight where local services, processes and commissioners are working well, or challenge when changes or improvements need to be made.

A steering group of parents lead this work and listen to the views of other parents and groups of parents in the local area to make sure they know what is important to them. The Forum is keen to hear from as many parent carers as possible. Who can join a parent carer forum? Parents or carers of a child with any type of additional need or disability are welcome to join. Joining Gloucestershire Parent Carer Forum does not mean you have to commit lots of time. You can join and receive information, and then decide if you want to get more involved at your own pace.

Mind Of My Own self advocacy app helps children and young people express their views, wishes and feelings in a fun digital way that’s easy for workers to understand and act on what they are saying.

Online Pupil Survey has been developed to find out what children and young people really think about a range of health-related issues. The innovative survey has been administered throughout Gloucestershire every 2 years since 2006. The findings from over 70,000 children and young people in Gloucestershire aged 8 to 18 years old are providing essential information addressing children and young people’s needs. Longitudinal data has been used to track if there are improvements in health and well-being related outcomes and the data is key in planning, developing and improving the services provided.

PALS – (Patient advice and liaison service) provide confidential advice and support to patients, families and their carers, and can provide information on the NHS and health related matters.

SENDIASS Gloucestershire provides free, confidential, impartial advice and support on matters relating to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. SENDIASS has a steering group which meets 3-4 times a year where the collective experiences of the families it works with are shared with service providers so that improvements can be made.
Engagement and Participation Strategy for Services working with Children and Young People with Additional Needs and their Parents and Carers

To achieve positive outcomes, we value parents, carers, children and young people engaging with our services and working with us.

It is understandable that parents, carers, children and young people may get angry and frustrated at times but no-one likes to be shouted at so please be respectful – we want to do our best.

Parents, carers, children and young people may not be happy or agree with decisions that are made. Please talk to us when this happens so that we can explain what is happening.

Parents, carers, children and young people may feel that they have not received a good service. Please talk to us in the first instance and if needed, please follow the particular service’s complaints procedure.

Parents, carers, children and young people may feel very happy with the services they receive. Please don’t forget to tell us so we do more of what helps.

What does all this mean for me?

For Parents, carers, children & young people (in the following sections you/your refers to parents, children and young people)

Services in Education, Health and Care will seek your views and ideas and work with you to understand and provide the right help in the right place and at the right time.

Services you are working with will help you to take part in decisions that affect your life.

Services will work with you to prepare and plan for your / your child’s adulthood.

Your experience of services to support you as a child or you as a parent or carer are important to the providers of those services and will help to shape future development of services.

For Services

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Our Charter to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers

“...

No decision about me, without me”

(Young Person during co-production meeting, December 2018)

As professionals working with families we will:

✓ Introduce ourselves, explain our role and provide you with our contact details
✓ Listen to you so we can understand better what you need
✓ Seek your views and if they are not the same as your child or parent, work with you to find appropriate support
✓ Work with you to build on what is working well
✓ Be ambitious for you / your child
✓ Do what we say we will do
✓ Provide you with helpful information, advice and guidance
✓ Provide clear and easy to understand information so you can take part fully in decisions that affect your life
✓ Work together with other professionals that are working with you
✓ Work with you to get the right help, in the right place and at the right time

“...

No decision about me, without me”

(Young Person during co-production meeting, December 2018)
Engagement and Participation Strategy for Services working with Children and Young People with Additional Needs and their Parents and Carers

To ensure that children, young people and parents are equal partners in co-producing and developing services and planning activity to meet agreed outcomes, services across health, education and social care will make every effort to continuously and consistently seek their input and views and act upon their feedback. This level of co-production and engagement will be at the core of all activity across the commissioning and delivery of services.

However, to enable this to happen effectively we recognise that we first need to help create the right building blocks. To achieve this over the next year we will:

1. Build our strategic partnership with the newly created Parent Carer Forum so we can best respond to the experience of parents and families

2. Develop a countywide Children & Young People’s Forum to enable new and existing groups to have a route to strategically sharing the children and young people’s voice in Gloucestershire

3. Support the Ambassadors Reference Group to gather the wider voice of children and share experiences to influence service design and development

4. Appoint an Engagement Officer to remove barriers between organisations and parent carers, children and young people – encouraging a wider representation of views and experiences to feed into the Parent Carer and Children & Young People’s Forum’s
We believe that this will help us to develop meaningful co-production at all levels. Whilst this will underpin all work across the county, for the next 12 months our initial focus will be on the following areas and we will be actively encouraging parent carers, children and young people to become involved:

1. Creating a comprehensive multi-agency transitions approach to support young people moving from children’s services into adults services

2. Designing resources that support young people to get the information they need to make choices about their lives through Gloucestershire’s Future Me preparation for adulthood programme (including monitoring and continued development)

3. Shaping and implementing Mental Health support in targeted schools through the Mental Health Trailblazer (including branding, pathways, evaluation)

4. Reviewing access to support for children and young people with communication needs through the countywide Speech and Language offer (including feedback and design)

5. Revisiting training for social workers to reflect children’s lived experience (through a focus on communication and reflecting their voice clearly in assessments and plans) through the new Children’s Social Work Academy

6. Understanding parent, carers, children and young people’s experiences of education through direct dialogue on what inclusion looks like in Gloucestershire – to inform any future activity

7. Improving direct feedback from parent, carers, children and young people into our services and to publish ‘you said, we did’ reports with feedback on past and future activity promoted through an annual refresh of this engagement strategy