

**LEICESTER CITY
CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE'S STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP**

PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

February 2008

This Participation Strategy is important to children and young people across the City of Leicester. It sets out how services and organisations that support us will make sure we have a say in how they develop and how they provide services to us.

This strategy is everyone's business, every adult who works with children and young people should read it and work to its principles. Every senior officer and manager should make sure they and their workers know about it, understand it and use it every day.

This strategy and the Young People's Charter will make services for the children, young people and families' user friendly only if everyone uses them.

Children and Young People across the City have high expectations of services because these words have been written lets make these words actions. This document is welcomed by the Youth MP's.

Leicester City Youth MP's

Jess Evans

Edward Gannon

Children and young people's involvement in decision making is fundamental to the effectiveness of our services. In the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 we have identified Participation as a key priority and are committed to making it happen.

We know that active involvement of children and young people works best when:

- Children and young people's commitment is a visible commitment and is resourced
- Children and young people's involvement is valued
- Children and young people have equal opportunity to get involved
- Policies and standards for participation are in place
- Change happens as a result

Leicester is a City to be proud of and is truly changing the way services are delivered to our children, young people and their families. This strategy will enable all of us to make sure we continue the work we have begun.

Sheila Lock

Vi Dempster

Our Statement of Intent

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is committed to involving and consulting as many children, young people and their families as possible in a variety of ways. Involving users in improving services is important to us; our aim is to enable children, young people and families to comment on and be involved in decision making, service review and delivery as well as influencing policies and decisions that affect them. We will include children, young people and families from BME communities, disabled children, young people and their families, looked after children and young people, young carers as well as children and young people from traveller communities.

We firmly believe that children and young people themselves should influence the strategic direction and priorities of the Partnership and be fully involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services that form the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Children and young people have valuable opinions and by involving them in the political and democratic processes of the city they can improve the services delivered and invigorate local democracy

Why We Need This Strategy

Whilst we recognise that there is already a strong commitment in Leicester to the active participation of children and young people, we want to encourage participative practice that is of good quality and uses consistent standards to build sustainable participation at both local community level and city wide level. The strategy will seek to connect and extend existing participation networks and activity to build a city wide reference mechanism whilst maximising the City's resources and minimising duplication. The strategy will enable services and partner organisations to plan more effectively by working more closely with service users and each other to meet the needs of the Children and Young People of Leicester.

Who is this Participation Strategy For?

ALL children and young people aged 0-19 plus those between 19 and 25 receiving leaving care services, with disabilities or learning difficulties and those who work with them in Leicester City.

We recognise that formal structures of governance do not always appeal or are appropriate to children and young people.

Therefore it is important to offer a wide range of opportunities appropriate to their needs. Children and young people who are vulnerable or hard to reach should be given additional consideration and support. These will include:

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) children and young people
- Children and Young People Looked After
- Refugee, Asylum Seeker and new settler children
- Children and young people from Traveller communities
- Children and young people with learning difficulties
- Disabled children and young people

What we mean by Participation

Consultation

A process which requires the commitment to take on board service users' views and to feedback what has changed as a result

- Survey
- One off focus group
- Views sought through questionnaires

Participation

The process of being involved in making decisions which affect ones life

- Support given to service users to understand the structures and processes of services
- Service users given information to form their own views and opinions on a service area or project
- Service users are able to give detailed feedback
- Service users see the benefits of becoming actively involved

Active Involvement

- Service users challenge views and have informed ideas of change required
- Service users are involved in a range of activity i.e. involvement in recruitment, sitting on grants panels, undertaking audits
- Service users become researchers & auditors
- Service users are involved at all levels of services and organisations
- Service users undertake consultations with other service users to inform planning, evaluation and decision making

How we will promote the active involvement of children, young people and families

We will ensure that:

- Consultation and participation takes place which is appropriate to children, young people and families. This may take a variety of forms and each partner organisation will use the most appropriate methods, taking into account the age and ability of the children or young people as well as the skills and knowledge of staff.
- Organisations with children, young people and families at the core of their business will be expected to undertake activity that ensures their active participation in design, delivery and evaluation of services. Those organisations that do not solely provide for children and young people will be expected to undertake consultation and participation activity for particular projects or services related to children and young people; working with them to shape service design and delivery as well as monitoring progress
- Toolkits and training are available for representatives of all organisations within Partnership, thereby ensuring all partners are afforded the best opportunity to develop the skills of their staff within a multi agency context
- We co-ordinate monitor and evaluate participation activities providing a single point of reference for all partners of the Strategic Partnership through the Every Child Matters Positive Contribution Theme group and a range of Participation Networks

How we will monitor and evaluate participation activity

To ensure consistent standards are maintained across the City and that as many different children, young people and families are involved as possible we will:

- Provide training to representatives of partner organisations in the use of the evaluation toolkit *Hear by Right*
- Annually collate and monitor *Hear by Right* data to gain an overview of the outcomes achieved as a result of participation activity and to assess how we are progressing across the Partnership
- Co-ordinate an annual conference on participation showcasing highlighted practice thereby offering partner organisations opportunities to share practice and develop skills
- Grade our progress using the *Hear by Right* framework to assess Emerging, Established and Advanced levels of participation and the outcomes achieved for children and young people
- Develop and deliver an action plan for the participation of young people through the Every Child Matters Positive Contribution Theme Group the action plan will be delivered through the Participation Networks and the outcomes for children and young people will be monitored.

Benefits for Children and Young People and their parents and carers

- Learn about themselves, about taking responsibility, about working with others and about how democracy and public services work
- Development of new skills and support in applying them to new situations
- Increased confidence and self esteem, as a result of developing new skills and being listened to
- Increased ability to influence the way in which democracy, services and different agencies work
- Attractive high quality services, which are responsive to their needs and those of their peers
- An empowering experience, which raises aspirations
- Parents of young children are able to have a 'voice' in planning, delivery of services and are able to influence the way in which Children Centres and children's services are developed in a culturally sensitive way
- Empowering individual parents and children can result in less isolation and children feeling more valued within the services they receive, particularly families with English as an additional language
- Providing a supportive network where parents and children can express what would help within their communities and empower and inspire confidence in other families who feel less able to contribute their 'voice' to the planning of service delivery

Benefits for the Community

- A more vibrant and active community which prepares children and young people – in terms of skills and attitudes- for learning employment and community involvement providing positive experiences of involvement in local democracy helping to break down negative attitudes.

- The active involvement of children and young people in their schools creating a positive school environment
- Improved community involvement in local democratic processes e.g. Ward Committees
- Increasing the capacity of communities to engage in decisions that affect them
- More cohesive communities in particular between the young and old as well as different cultures

Benefits for Services

- Services increase their credibility with children and young people
- Reliable information from children and young people about the quality of the services they provide
- The views of children and young people are sought on the barriers to accessing services
- Increased use of services by children and young people
- Better quality services
- Services that are designed, delivered and evaluated on the basis of identified rather than presumed needs and interests of children and young people
- Innovative services where children and young people are offering a fresh perspective on how services of the future should be delivered

Key Drivers for Participation

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

This convention contains 52 standards that set out the Rights of a Child. A number of countries including the United Kingdom have signed up to the convention. The standards of most relevance to the participation of service users are:

Article 2: Requires all of the rights in the convention on the Rights of the Child to be implemented for every child, without discrimination.

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.

Article 17: Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information.

Article 23: Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their community.

Statutory Guidance on interagency co-operation to improve the wellbeing of children: children's trusts

Local partners should ensure a culture of openness across the Children and Young People's Partnership arrangements, so that listening and responding to children and young people becomes an integral part of everyday practice. They should see to it that children and young people are involved in decision making about their lives and in designing and developing services. A "one size fits all" approach will not work; partners should develop innovative and creative methods for involving children and young people, drawing on national and local toolkits

Every Child Matters- Change for Children

Every Child Matters: Change for Children is a guidance document that endeavours to support children aged 0-19 years. Five outcomes for measuring achievement have been established which all children services will be inspected on. These are:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

This means that all children and young people's services including the voluntary sector are required to work together to achieve these five outcomes for all children and young people. Services will be inspected through Joint Area Reviews and Annual Performance Assessments. As part of the inspection process, services will be expected to gather evidence that children and young people's views have been taken into account in the development and delivery of their service. In addition, the inspection process will request that a mechanism is in place so that when the inspection takes place, the inspectors have the opportunity to speak to users of the service. These inspection frameworks mean that children, young people and families will have far more say and be actively consulted on issues and decisions that affect them

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on local authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons

- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The general duty also requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to encourage participation by disabled people in public life. Those authorities that succeed in promoting the participation of disabled people are also likely to find that this assists them in becoming a disability aware organisation. "Public life" is a very broad term. It incorporates citizens' panels; public bodies' market research focus groups; school councils; user groups for a service provided by a public authority.

The Children's Act 1989 and 2004

The Children Act emerged from the Every Child Matters document and provides a legislative spine for improving children's lives. The overall aim of the Act is to encourage and promote joint working and commissioning of services. A key theme throughout is the promotion of participation and consultation with children and young people to understand and tackle their needs.

The Children Act 1989 specified that children and young people who are cared for/receive services by the Local Authority will have the right to have their views listened to in relation to for example their care, their treatment, their care plan, contact with family/siblings.

Ofsted Inspection of Schools

The current Section 5 Inspection Framework requires schools to demonstrate understanding of their strengths and areas for development through completion of a self-evaluation form. Section 2 covers views of learners, parents/carers and other stakeholders. Schools are expected to identify how they gather the views of learners, how often they do this, and how they ensure the impartiality of the information. The form asks schools to identify what the views of learners tell them about standards, personal development and well-

being and the quality of provision, and then provide examples of action taken and the effectiveness of those actions

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Since September 2005, Ofsted have introduced a new framework for inspecting schools. This requires schools to provide evidence of how they are supporting children and young people to achieve the five outcomes of "Every Child Matters", and also how they are listening to and acting on the views of learners and parents/carers

Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)

The QCA is currently consulting on a new skills framework for use in schools. One area of skill within the framework is "Effective Participators" where the focus would be "Young people actively engage with issues that affect them and those around them. They play a full part in the life of their school, college, workplace or wider community by taking responsible action to bring improvements for others as well as themselves." It is anticipated that young people would be given opportunities to learn and demonstrate these skills and receive accreditation for them

Pupil participation in schools

In April 2004 the Department for Education and Skills issued statutory guidance to schools on pupil participation ('Working Together', Ref DCSFS/0134/2004). The guidance offers advice on how schools might: organise and offer children and young people opportunities to develop their skills as active citizens; and organise a variety of approaches to involve children and young people.

The guidance is a brief document set out in six sections:

1. What do we mean by pupil participation?
2. What are the benefits?
3. Principles of children's and young people's participation
4. Principles into practice

5. Role of the governing body
6. Effective participation – a checklist

The guidance supports personalised learning through opportunities that already exist in Citizenship Education, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and in other wider school activities, for example Healthy Schools and the Connexions service. Ofsted also now gives pupils opportunities to give views about their education as part of the inspection process.

The DCSF guidance is supplemented by a National Healthy School Programme (NHSP) briefing 'Promoting children and young people's participation'. The NHSP encourages and supports schools to take a whole school approach to promoting physical and emotional health. One of the key criteria against which schools are assessed for healthy school status is the way in which they are 'giving pupils a voice'. This places pupil participation at the heart of the NHSP and the briefing provides practical suggestions for facilitating it.

Youth Opportunities and Capital Fund

In 2005 the Government Green Paper *Youth Matters* proposed a discrete amount of resources for young people to control and to decide how this should be spent in their area – the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and Youth Capital Fund (YCF).

Local authorities were asked to act as local leaders for the development and delivery of youth policy, working with the voluntary, community and private sectors, as well as with young people.

The main purpose of the funds is to:

- give a voice and influence to young people, particularly disadvantaged or hard to reach young people, in relation to improving things to do and places to go and community cohesion

- change the way local authorities and their partners provide activities and facilities for young people, especially in deprived neighbourhoods in line with what young people want in their neighbourhood;
- provide opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities and gain recognition and/or accreditation for them (ECM)
- increase young people's engagement with services and with the democratic process at local level

Publicising Positive Activities for Young People

The Education & Inspections Act 2006 gives a responsibility to Local Authorities to make sure that young people have, and are well informed about, a wide range of positive things to do in their spare time, as promised in the Youth Matters Green Paper 2006. It is expected that this will provide for an "annual activities handbook" to include all relevant public, private and voluntary and community sector activities and facilities.

It is expected that young people will be involved in the production and design of the information, identifying appropriate content, communications media and ensuring the relevance, appeal and accessibility of the information provided and should be able to challenge and report where they feel information is inaccurate.

The guidance also includes reference to the establishment of National Standards for young people's participation in positive activities which include constructive activities in youth clubs & groups and classes, sporting and outdoor activities as well as opportunities to make a positive contribution to their community through volunteering, leading action, campaigning and fundraising

Children Rights Director/Children's Commissioner for England

There are two key posts nationally that have a duty to act on or seek the views of all children and young people and inform the government of matters of good practice or where standards/services/legislation are not meeting the interests of children and young people.

The office of the Children's Commissioner consult children, young people, families, carers widely on themed topics requested by Ofsted or other government bodies with a duty to publicise findings, and in an accessible form to young people with the aim of changing services for the better. This relates to children and young people in care or who are receiving services from their Local Authority as they require protection from abuse or neglect.

The Children's Commissioner for England was established under the Children Act 2004 to be the independent voice of all children and young people in England – championing their interests and bringing their concerns and views into the national arena and has a duty to report findings to Government and ensure the views of children, young people are taken seriously

Hear By Right

The Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership has adopted the audit toolkit *Hear by Right*. This offers a tried and tested standards framework for organisations and young people to assess and improve policy and practice on the active involvement of children and young people. Developed by the National Youth Agency and the Local Government Association in conjunction with local authorities and partner organisations, *Hear By Right* is widely used by councils, other public bodies and the voluntary and community sector. Training will be provided to partner organisations including schools to ensure that there is consistency in the mapping, planning and development of participation

Building Structures for Participation

We recognise the need to ensure that participative practices are a part of its own practice and culture as well as those of partner organisations. In order to facilitate this, we will engage with existing structures of participation within Leicester to ensure the Partnership engages a diverse range of children, young people and families.

Engaging with Children and Families

The Networks of SureStart Children's Centres is the focus of engagement of activity with young children and families.

SureStart through existing practice provides services for children and their families within local community networks. Parents are recognised as a child's first educator and carer, therefore SureStart recognises that it is important that parents are empowered to participate, particularly as young children are not always able to express their opinions about the services they receive.

Following SureStart Principles, SureStart Children Centres we will ensure

- **Services are for everyone.** But not the same service for every one.
- **Flexible at the point of delivery.** All services should be designed to encourage access
- **Respectful and transparent.** Services should be customer driven, whether or not the service is free.
- **Outcome driven.** All services for children and parents need to have improving children's life chances, such as educational achievement, health and employment, as their core purpose.
- **Working with parents and children.** Every family should get access to a range of services which will deliver better life chances for both children and parents.

- **Starting very early.** Services for young children should start at the first ante-natal visit.
- **Community driven and professionally co-ordinated.** All professionals with an interest in young children and families should be sharing expertise, listening and acting upon service priority identified by local people.

By applying basic principles of engagement for SureStart Children's Centres;

- Parents and members of the community are fully involved in SureStart Children's Centre programmes
- Parents exercise a real voice over what SureStart Children's Centres provide
- Parent's own skills are built upon by being involved and thus enabling children to be involved
- Opportunities for parental and community involvement is maintained and sustainable.
- Parent and communities feel real ownership of SureStart Children's Centre programmes.

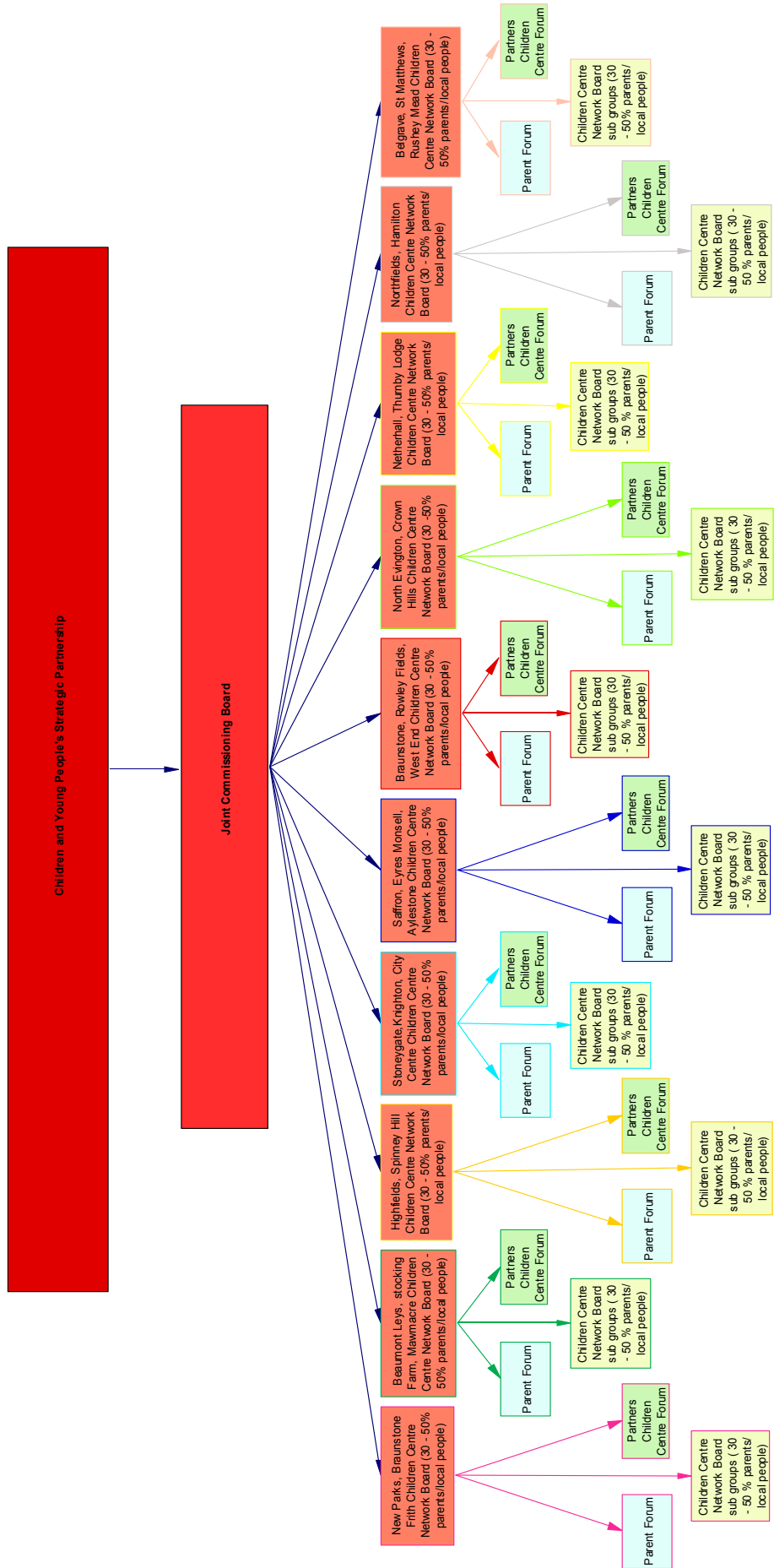
Leicester Integrated Service Trial (LIST) is developing a model of multi agency and integrated working within a defined neighbourhood/network area. By bringing together agencies this neighbourhood/network model aims to deliver improved, user friendly services for children, young people and families. Extensive consultation took place on the proposed neighbourhood/network areas. The trial will enable the Leicester Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (LCYPSP) to do two things:

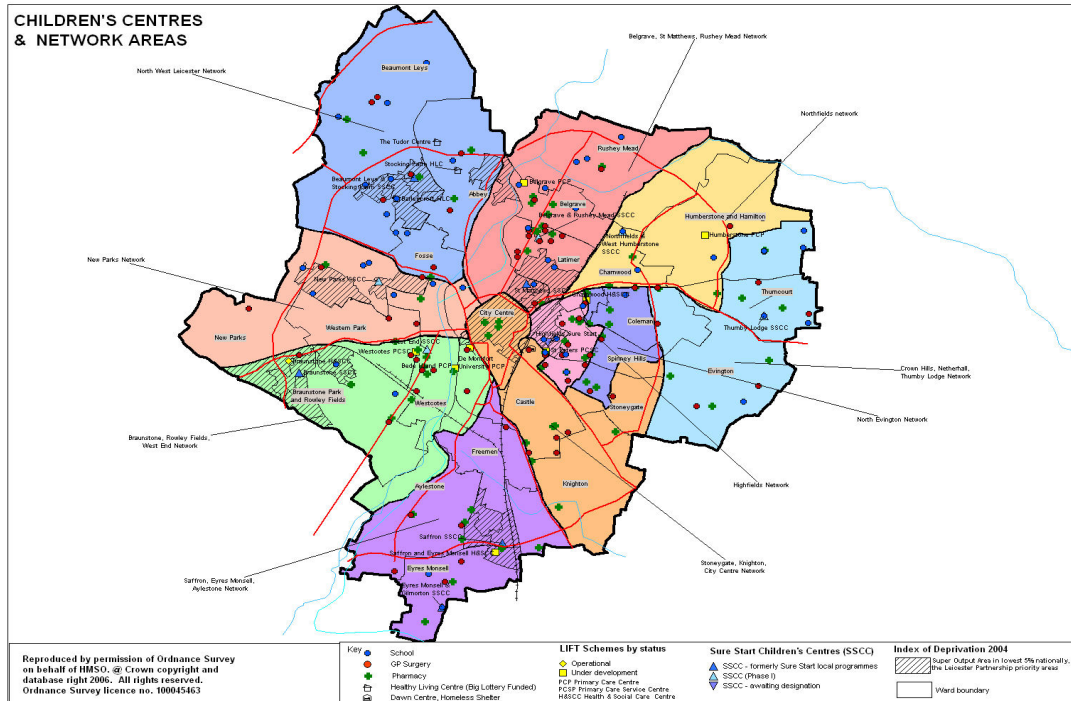
- To develop a neighbourhood model for integrated services to improve outcomes.
- To develop a process for service development which is built upon the views of local stakeholders (citizens and staff across all relevant

agencies) and leads to a set of *local* service delivery solutions for *local* problems.

- The learning from this pathfinder will be important for the future development of children's services in the city as it will enable CYPS to develop plans to deliver on the strategic priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan, the Local Area Agreement and the Community Strategy.

Parental involvement in the SureStart Children Centre Networks:





The Network of Children's Centres and Primary Schools will be the focus of engagement activity with children and families. The Children's Centres, through their existing practice engage the voluntary sector providing services for children and families and are based within local communities.

Through the ongoing development of children's centres The C&YPSP will seek to engage with older children involving the adventure play provision across the city in the active involvement of older children.

Engaging with Young People

The primary focus for participation with young people within the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will be through the Leicester City Young People's Council and the Area Young People's Forums.

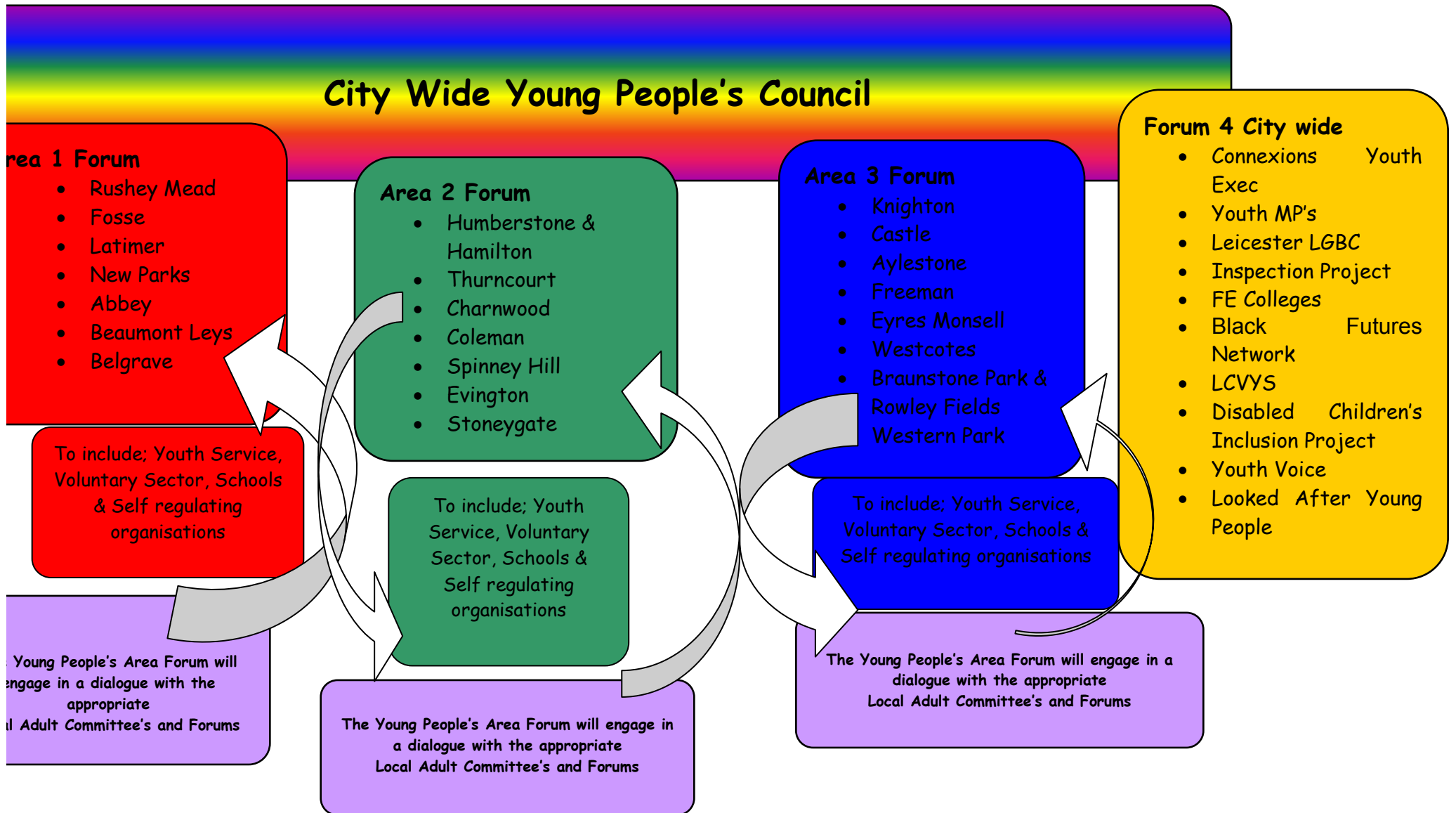
The structure of the Young People's Council consists of 3 Area Young People's Forums which are co-terminus with the Area Committees thereby enabling linkage between the adult committee and the young people's forum. There is a fourth forum which encompasses citywide groups of young people and will enable fuller representation of young people across the city. Each forum will nominate candidates for election on the Young People's Council; this ensures accountability of young people to their peers, diverse representation on the City Young Peoples Council and the ability of the Young Peoples Council to seek views of young people across the whole City.

The Young People's Council will form focus groups, special interest groups and task groups and reference groups as appropriate; as well as an executive committee.

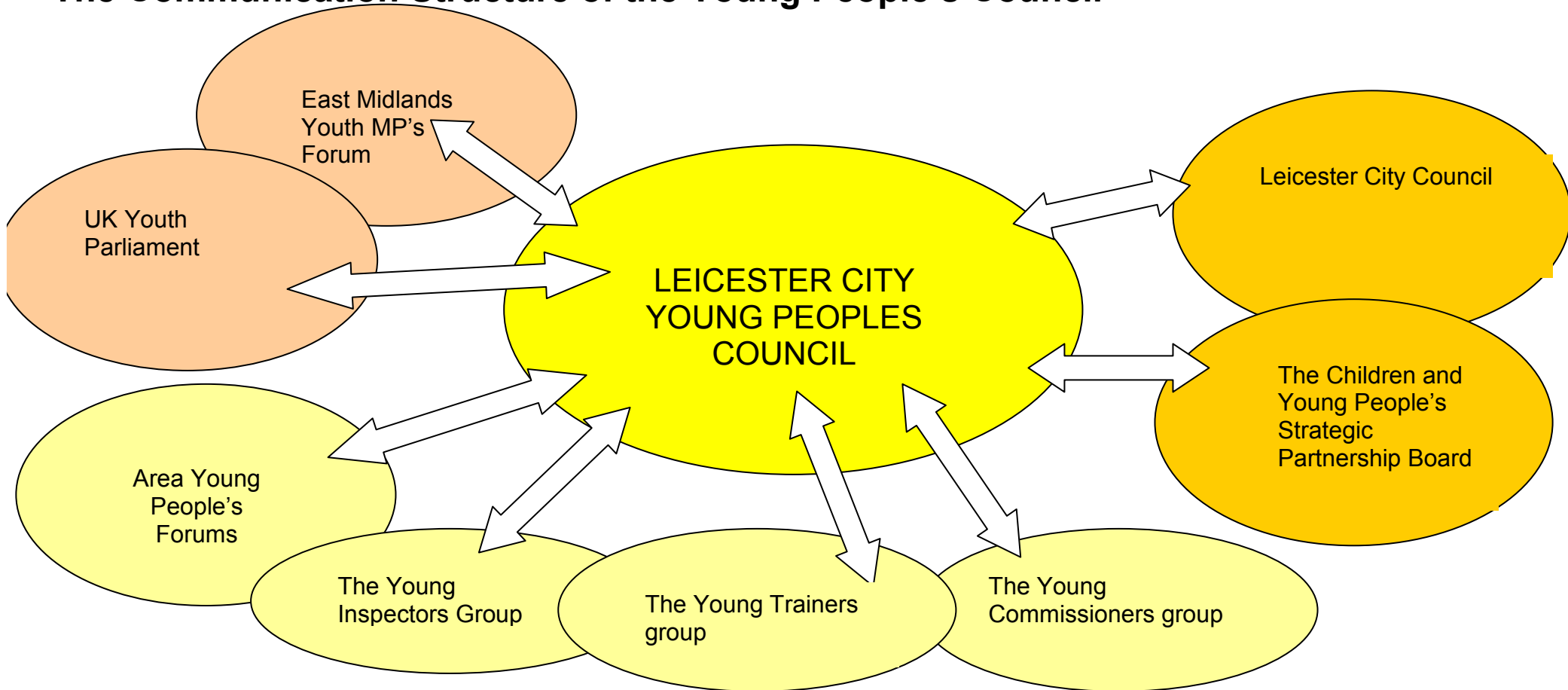
The Young People's Council will hold meetings with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board; send representatives to appropriate committees and meetings of the City Council and seek to raise the impact of children and young people's views on decisions that affect them and made by elected members, officers and key partners.

Through a multi- agency approach the Youth Service will co-ordinate the Young People's Council and associated Area Young People's Forums, ensuring elections are held and that the Forums and the Council is representative of the young people of the City. The Youth Service will also broker meetings with the appropriate Officers on behalf of the Young Peoples Council and Area Forums.

The Structure of the Young People's Council



The Communication Structure of the Young People's Council



- The Service Director for Children & Young Peoples Services will attend Youth Council meetings a minimum of twice per year, ensuring open communication channels and recognition of the work of the Young People's Council

Co-ordinating and Developing Participation Activity

The co-ordination of the participation activity will be undertaken by the Children and Young People's Service who will:

- Ensure regular meetings of representatives of key partners to develop a joined up approach to participation and transition for children and young people between participation activity
- Monitor and develop participation activity on behalf of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
- Ensure training is available for key partners, children and young people in relation to various participation toolkits
- Co-ordinate supplementary participation events or activity on behalf of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
- Ensure good practice is shared
- Continue the development of Children and Young People's Participation

Safeguarding children young people and families within participation and engagement events/activities

Participation and engagement of children and young people can be both dynamic and spontaneous. However all services/individuals who undertake participation events for children and young people must ensure that they have written policies to consider a range of safeguarding issues from the planning and preparation stages through to implementation and evaluation.

Putting safeguard measures in place will not only ensure the activity has a greater chance of success but will also give confidence to those who have responsibility for the event/those taking part/and those parents/carers who are entrusting adults with their children/young people.

This strategy cannot be prescriptive in relation to the range of safeguards to put in place – individual services should develop their own checklist/risk assessments. However, key issues such as those noted below should be considered:-

- adults working directly with children/young people have been appropriately recruited, vetted and checked
- there are ways in which adults providing the activity can assess the risks to and from children/young people taking part
- there is information made available for children/young people/families who express concern about any individual(s) or where their safety is felt to be a concern where to take their concerns, and that their concerns are listened to and followed up
- where children and young people use the internet for participation activity safeguarding measures will be in place
- buildings and environments both in door and outdoor have been considered as safe places, with control measures being put in place where there are considered risks

BUILDING ON EXISTING SUCCESS

There are already a wide range of initiatives being undertaken within The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership both in local communities and across the city aimed at promoting the involvement of children, young people and families in local democracy and local services. This section sets out some of the activity occurring and gives an indication of how some services and organisations are planning for participation activities.

Children's Centres

Sure Starts in Leicester, widely consult with parents and children, with the expectation that parents have a 30% representation on advisory boards along with representatives from the voluntary, statutory and private sector.

Children's Centres have developed Steering Groups which fulfil the same purpose.

Therefore, the Sure Start Children's Centres model will be crucial in establishing participation for young children and their families.

In Children's Centres, it is recognised that young children can participate and contribute to the planning and delivery of services from a very early age.

Initially parents, who understand and know their children best, will act as a vehicle to enable children's views to be heard. As children develop, they are more able to express their opinions and needs. It is hoped that by raising this aspiration in families, that there will be an expectation that children's voices will be heard and acted upon.

Following the Sure Start philosophy of integrated working, Children's Centres working in partnership, actively seek the participation of children.

The Pre-school Learning Alliance working with Children's Centres have provided a number of consultation events, where parents and children have engaged in activities, playing together and sharing their views and ideas that have shaped the design of buildings and services in their community.

Future Sure Start planning includes the development of a city-wide evaluation model which will be embedded in service delivery. A key part of this strategy will be to ensure that the views and the participation of young children will be an integral part of the design of services.

Connexions

Involving young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of the service is central to the Connexions vision. Taking account of the views of young people is one of the eight Connexions principles, which underpin and inform the work, and the culture of active involvement runs right through the company from Senior Management to delivery staff. This whole company commitment and vision is demonstrated in a variety of ways. This includes two fulltime posts, supported by a team of young volunteers, with the responsibility for ensuring that youth involvement is an integral part of the service. Within Connexions, there is also a team of Involving Young People Champions, representing all operational and support teams. The champions create a formal link with the teams and are a concrete way of keeping youth involvement on the agenda and ensuring it is an integral part of everyone's job.

There are a variety of ways that young people get involved in shaping the Connexions service in Leicester and Leicestershire. These include sitting on interview panels for all prospective new staff and being part of the Connexions Grants Panel. This group is responsible for assessing bids from Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and deciding who is allocated funding. Connexions has also been commissioned to run Peer Research projects on various topics including, barriers to young people's volunteering, and young people's experiences of supported housing and also drug and alcohol services. These projects have great value, both for the young people involved in terms of their own development and also in getting the views of a wide range of young people, who wouldn't normally get involved in surveys or

questionnaires but who are encouraged by the peer led approach. Connexions also works in partnership with the Youth Service on the Young Inspectors project, where young people are trained to inspect services (Connexions centres, Youth Clubs and Projects) and give feedback on the service they receive.

The centre of Youth Involvement in Connexions is the Youth Executive, which acts as a management board that represents the voice of young people in Leicester and Leicestershire and guides the work of the Youth Involvement team. It is made up of representatives from all the Youth Involvement projects within the company, which ensures diversity and wide representation. They have a budget and the autonomy to plan their own work and projects that contribute to making Connexions an even better service. They are encouraged to come up with creative and innovative ideas and these have included setting up an event for other groups of young people, who are actively involved in services (which could be Connexions or other groups), in order to share good practice.

There is a formal link from the Youth Executive to the Partnership Board through two young people, who are voting members. This ensures a genuine two-way communication channel, enabling young people to speak directly to Partners about the issues affecting them and to receive a direct response. These young people meet with the Chief Executive before each meeting to go through the papers and to check understanding.

Young people from the Connexions Youth Involvement Projects are actively involved in the Area 4 Forum and will have the opportunity to sit on the Young People's Council.

Children's Fund

Participation is a key theme at the Children's Fund, which funds and supports preventative services for 5-13 year olds at risk of social exclusion. Children,

young people and families are involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of all Children's Fund services and the programme itself.

Leicester Children's Fund supports a Participation Project, which develops and promotes systems to actively listen to and involve children and young people in the continuous improvement of service planning and delivery. This support is directed towards Children's Fund Services, the Children's Fund programme, and also children's services more broadly across the city (having secured and facilitated the participation of children and young people in central processes including commissioning, the appointment of the Director of Children's Services and the development of the local preventative strategy).

The Participation Project has developed substantial experience and nationally recognised expertise in the area of participation and has delivered participation training to both voluntary and statutory sector organisations. The success of its creative and service-user centred approach to participation is well evidenced and the project has a great track record of turning the principles of participation into practice. Examples of recent work include the development of protocols for involving children and young people in interviews, successfully piloting a model to enable children and young people to evaluate Service-Level outcomes, working in partnership to consult children about mechanisms for engaging with the City Council, and advising on the incorporation of participation in the Extended Services strategy.

Leicester Children's Fund is a well established and respected player in the participation arena and has made a considerable contribution towards raising the participation agenda throughout Leicester, particularly for the 5-13 age groups.

Children and Young People who are Looked After or In Need of Protection

Children and young people who are looked after by the Local Authority, and those who are in need of protection while living at home, have a unique contribution to make to the participation agenda, and the strategic partnership.

As two of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people in city, the Local Authority recognises its responsibility to fulfil its “Corporate parenting” role by listening to, and including children and young people in developing and evaluating the care and services they receive. This is both on an individual basis, service wide and departmentally.

The Social Care and Safeguarding Service within Children and Young People’s Services has a lead role in the provision of children and young people’s rights and participation to the above groups of children and young people. Additionally, engagement with families and carers is essential in service delivery and development, including under 5’s services within our family centres.

In all Social Care and Safeguarding Services our aim is to engage with children and young people in a variety of ways across its service provision, up to and including the Directorate and Elected Member engagement. Additionally it is paramount that we work with key partners to ensure that looked after children and young people are included and involved in participation activities and opportunities that are accessible to all other children and young people of the City.

There is direct access to the Children’s and Young People’s Rights and Participation Officers for children and young people who are looked after or in Need of Protection. The Stand Up Speak Out group (SUSO) is a well

established participation group for Looked after and former Looked After young people which has gained a local and national recognition for its valuable work. There is also a “Young Reporters” group, where young people champion children’s issues and have a presence in strategic thinking locally and nationally. The Leaving Care group is made up of young people leaving care who develop skills through a range of activities and training opportunities. One of our recent key developments has been to ensure that the views and ideas of children and young people in need of protection are taken into consideration by the Leicestershire Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

Schools

Many of Leicester’s schools have developed Student or School Councils. The school councils are placed within the Area Forums of the Leicester Young Peoples Council structure (see chart on page?). The school council will have representation on local young people’s forums thereby ensuring a local community link. Through local representation school council members can then represent the local young people’s forum at the City Young Peoples Council.

Student /school councils are independent of one another and have not yet been afforded the opportunity to share experiences and learn from one another, through the strategic framework and a joined up approach to participation schools and school councils will be encouraged and enabled to use the Hear by Right toolkit as a tool to measure participation. Consideration is being given to developing appropriate ways of bringing school councils together on an annual basis, highlighting school council achievements and generating conversations between school councils and school governing bodies.

Youth Services

Youth Services have long been in the forefront of developments involving young people in decision making and democracy. The Youth Service is contributing to the development of the wider participation agenda in a range of areas.

Practical examples include structures within particular Youth Centres and projects, consultation mechanisms, one off events, use of the arts/media and other devices designed to enable young people to engage in issues and express their ideas in ways that do not rely on speaking up in large groups or formal settings.

Youth workers are able to offer expertise and experience in working alongside young people in this way and are also able to offer training to others. The Youth Service, in partnership with voluntary organisations and other community based initiatives have already grappled with how to translate the principles of participation and empowerment into practical action.

However, young people themselves have the potential to bring the greatest resource to any initiative designed to widen participation. Peer (s) perspectives – from both positive and negative experiences, when harnessed creatively are a potent force for inspiration and change. Young people already included through the existing Youth Service/ partner activity will be a powerful advocate in driving forward new initiatives.

Youth Offending Services

The Youth Offending Services main aim is to prevent and reduce youth offending for children and young people aged 10-17 years. The service provides co-ordinated youth justice services to young people and their families/carers. The service endorses and welcomes the high priority and

importance of young people, families and carers participating in the service. The service welcomes the opportunity to be involved in the development of The Leicester City Participation Strategy. The YOS is also keen to share practices with key partners to develop creative and innovative ways to improve participation for children, young people and their families.

The Leicester Youth Offending Service has been developing systems to actively listen to and involve young people in the continuous improvement of service planning and delivery. It is regarded as a key area of development and is a standard agenda item on management meetings. Young people have been trained and supported to help recruit staff within the service and this has been developing over the past two years. The service also gathers questionnaires and feedback from young people when their orders come to an end as well as young people and their families/carers being actively involved in their intervention plans. Additional areas have also included helping to write newsletters, peer education programmes, presentations by young people to partners and national conferences, sentencers and feedback from group work programmes attended. The prevention agenda is also actively engaging and developing participation with young people. The Youth Offending Service has a large group of volunteers delivering programmes throughout the service and the YOS is keen to involve young people as peer educators and volunteers and welcomes the high priority and importance through Youth Matters and The Russell Commission.

Participation is an emerging area within the Youth Offending Service with a Team manager having this as an area for development. The Service is keen to ensure that young people and their families/carers are involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the service. A number of key focus days are being developed to ensure that participation is co-ordinated and planned with the lead up to a YOS Inspection. The YOS welcomes the opportunity to work in collaboration with other agencies and also help agencies to increase participation with hard to reach young people and their families.

Voluntary and Community Groups

For many years the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) has been a provider of services for children and young people in the education and health & social care markets, with an expansion in both scale and scope during the last ten years. Every Child Matters: Next Steps and Youth Matters: Next Steps makes clear the strength of the government's commitment to the full involvement of the VCS in this process of the reform of Children and Young Peoples services, as well as the removal of barriers to their participation in service delivery and planning.

Within Leicester the Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Group (VCSEG) which coordinates the collective voice of the VCS working in the field of Children and Young Peoples services is actively supporting the participation of children and young people, through being involved in the work of the recently formed Strategic Children and Young Peoples Participation Working Group, the City Young People's Council Development Group and Children's Council developments, which together will be a major part of the overarching strategy for involving Children and Young People in a coordinated way.

There are numerous examples of participation work currently happening within VCS organizations across the city that will be a valuable resource to the developing participation structures and will provide greater opportunities for Children and Young People from within communities to become engaged.

LeicesterShire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (LCVYS) is currently supporting the VCS strategically through working in partnership to create a more coordinated and joined up approach to the development of policy, delivery and practice within participation. This will include the provision of information to Children, Young People and their workers from within the VCS on opportunities to be engaged locally, area wide and city wide in the Young

Peoples Council, the developing Children's Council and other participation events, facilitating training opportunities for Children, Young People and their workers on Participation sharing local examples of best practice and the provision of an operational budget to support the active involvement of Children, Young People and their workers.

Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Fund

The Youth Opportunities Fund and the Youth Capital Fund are a national initiative targeted at young people aged 13 to 19. Funding is available to support the development of a range of activities and capital projects developed by young people for young people. Decision making on the allocation of funds is made by a young people's panel supported by Youth Workers, using the 'Youthbank' approach. The fund has been confirmed for two years – 2006/07 and 2007/08 and is led by a local authority and supported by a voluntary/statutory Project Board.

This strategy was developed between September 2006 and October 2007 by representatives from the following services and organisations:

SureStart Children's Centres
The Pre-school Learning Alliance
Leicester Children's Fund

Voluntary Action Leicester
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
Connexions
Youth Services
Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (LYCVS)
Youth Offending Services (YOS)
Looked after Children and Young People's Services
Youth MP's

Learning Services Division
VESA
Over 100 children and young people

Further reading and information on Participation with children and young people can be found at the following web sites:

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation/buildingaculture

www.crae.org.uk/cms

www.participationworks.org.uk

www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright

www.schoolscouncils.org

www.surestart.gov.uk/magazine/issue13/listening

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/parents/participationmultiagencyworking