

# ***Engagement and Participation Strategy for Children, Young People, Parents and Carers***

***Integrating the Local Area SEND System***

**2020 – 2022**



**BARNSELY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

*First Edition*



# *Engagement & Participation Strategy*

2021-2022

*First Edition*



# Foreword

As the Executive Director for Children's Services for Barnsley Council I am proud to introduce our Engagement & Participation Strategy, which sets out our values, commitment and aspiration for how we will work in direct partnership with children, young people, parents and carers.

Professionals from across the children and young people's system offer a range of expertise, skills and knowledge that support children and young people achieving the best possible outcomes, but parents know their children above everyone else and have their children's best interest at heart. Our ambition is to work with parents, valuing them as equal partners, working with and not 'doing to'.

Children and young people's voices, their experiences, wishes and needs are at the centre of everything that we do. Getting the best outcomes for children, where they feel listened to and heard, is achieved through co-production, meaningful consultation and engagement at all levels, with mutual respect and regard for the voices and experiences of children, young people, parents and carers.

Delivering inclusion, where children and young people can have their needs met by local services, in our local communities in which they can develop and flourish, requires collaboration, accountability, transparency and openness, working with and not against one another, with a shared and relentless focus on the child.

Every child and young person is an individual and they and their families will have diverse needs. Our approach to engagement and participation is through building an alliance, ensuring that we reach as many children, young people and parent carers as possible. It is value and outcome led; where our shared and common purpose, achieving the best for children and young people in the borough, is what drives and unites us as a partnership.

**Mel John-Ross**, *Executive Director Children's Services BMBC*



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## This strategy is written in consideration of:

- *Children & Families Act, 2014*
- *SEND Code of Practice, 2015*
- *Children and Social Work Act, 2017*
- *Health and Social Care Act, 2012*





It is important to bring everyone together so that the positive work that takes place is recognised and built upon because, as a local area, we are committed to creating a fully inclusive system, where children and young people with SEND will have all their identified needs met. This can be achieved when we develop and embed true co-production with children, young people and their parent/carers.



# Introduction

## Our message to you...

There are around **6,000 individual children and young people** with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) in Barnsley, including those with education, health and care plans (EHCP) and those at SEN support level (receiving support without an EHCP). This includes children and young people from birth -25 years of age and all the different aspects of SEND categorised in the SEND Code of Practice.

The SEND Youth Forum was established to ensure that children and young people voices influenced change, through participation, engagement and co-production. The forum is actively involved in the co-production of key strategies and developments, including leading an anti-bullying charter for the Barnsley Children's Trust and Safeguarding Partnership and the Children and Young People's Plan 2020-2022, where their voice is strong.

There are estimated to be a minimum of **10,000 individual parent/carers** of children and young people with SEND in Barnsley, including those with education, health and care plans and those at SEN support level. This also spans the 0-25 age range and the different aspects of SEND categorised in the SEND Code of Practice.

Opportunities for parent and carer engagement, participation and co-production in Barnsley have been explored continually since the SEND reforms in 2015, with varying success.

Parents and carers in Barnsley need to be given a stronger voice. Our approach to engagement and participation will be through building an alliance, where we engage broadly and support all parent carers to participate at all levels and across the local area SEND system.

## This strategy is built on our values:

All children, young people and parents/carers have the right to be heard, be truly listened to and have their views valued and acted upon to affect improvement. This is achieved through our values of communicating openly, honestly and with mutual respect.

The local authority and the clinical commissioning group undertake to involve children, young people and parents/ carers at all levels, in contributing and shaping the local area special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) system, to enhance the range and quality of services.

Children, young people and parents/ carers are treated as equal partners; their contribution is supported, valued and respected.

Trust and co-operation will be built through timely and honest communication, where we listen, do our best and act on our word, ensuring regular feedback is taken and given from children, young people and parents/carers on the quality of services and support delivered.

Services are honest and clear about what can be delivered and what can't and why.

We will be fair and treat everyone fairly.

We will work together with children, young people and parents/carers to find solutions, not problems.

True co-production!

8 Young people initiated, shared decisions with adults

7 Young people initiated and directed

6 Adult initiated, shared decisions with young people

5 Consulted and informed

4 Assigned but informed

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

3 Tokenism

2 Decoration

1 Manipulation

Ladder of Participation!

# Engagement, Participation and Co-production

## What do we mean?

Good quality engagement, participation and co-production is required by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice. It is based on the principles of inclusion, which is a universal human right that embraces all people, irrespective of race, gender, disability or other attribute which can be perceived as different.

### Engagement

Engagement relies on the principles of trust and collaboration and should be embedded in good conversations and demonstrated bonds. Effective engagement leads to genuine working together and co-production.

### Participation

The term 'participation' is used in to refer generally to the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. UNICEF.

At all levels, good quality participation should be well planned and have a clear purpose, desired outcomes and a mechanism for evaluation so that we can see how it has contributed to improvements.

By using a defined participation cycle, we can ensure that engagement with children and young people is meaningful, has impact.

The diagram shows the ladder of participation for children and young people. In Barnsley, we are aspiring to the top rungs of this so that decisions are made through listening to children and young people and sharing the decision-making processes.

### Co-production

Co-production is an equal and reciprocal relationship where everyone's knowledge and skills are used to create better outcomes and it is a way of sharing influence and decision making.

It is achieved when all partners play an integral and equal part in the decision-making process and are fully engaged in shaping, developing, implementing and evaluating services and systems.

Co-production is a solution-focused way of working to find the best possible outcomes and solutions for local children, young people and parents/carers, using the available resources to best effect.

Co-production is when we come together to shape services, starting at the very first stage. This includes people who commission services, service providers and, in relation to SEND, the children, young people and parents/carers who use the services.



# The Code of Practice

## Principles and Requirements...

The Children and Families Act 2014, and SEND Code of Practice 2015, set out how schools must deliver an inclusive environment for children and young people. They MUST:

- Enable the full participation of children, young people and their families in the construction of EHC plans, placing their views, wishes and feelings at the centre of the process.
- Provide the information and support that children, young people and their families may need in order to participate in such processes.
- Work with families to secure the best possible outcomes in health, education, wellbeing, employment and independent living with a clear focus on outcomes that are appropriate and measurable.
- Design systems and strategies that enable communication and collaboration with the broadest possible range of stakeholders so that cohesive, effective and personalised provision can be designed and implemented.

Communication between parents, children/young people, schools and other relevant bodies is essential. Families and other service users should have a named EHC co-ordinator so that they do not have to repeat information. Families and children/young people should experience the process as being timely, participative, streamlined and positive in terms of the focus on future aspirational goals.



I think having SEND is good because we are special and I feel our voices are getting heard because things we say are getting done.

The SEND forum means to me that everybody has a voice and works together as a team.

The SEND Youth Forum gives people with disabilities the opportunity to voice opinions and make changes and decisions to help their communities.

Children and young people voice, through the SEND Youth Forum is strong and they continue to inform working practice and strategic developments.

There are plans for continual engagement, participation and co-production with the widest range of parents and carers. This will ensure all groups and individuals will have their voices heard to achieve collective outcomes.

Coming soon!!!

# Positives

Our journey so far...

## A Brighter Future and a Better Barnsley ...

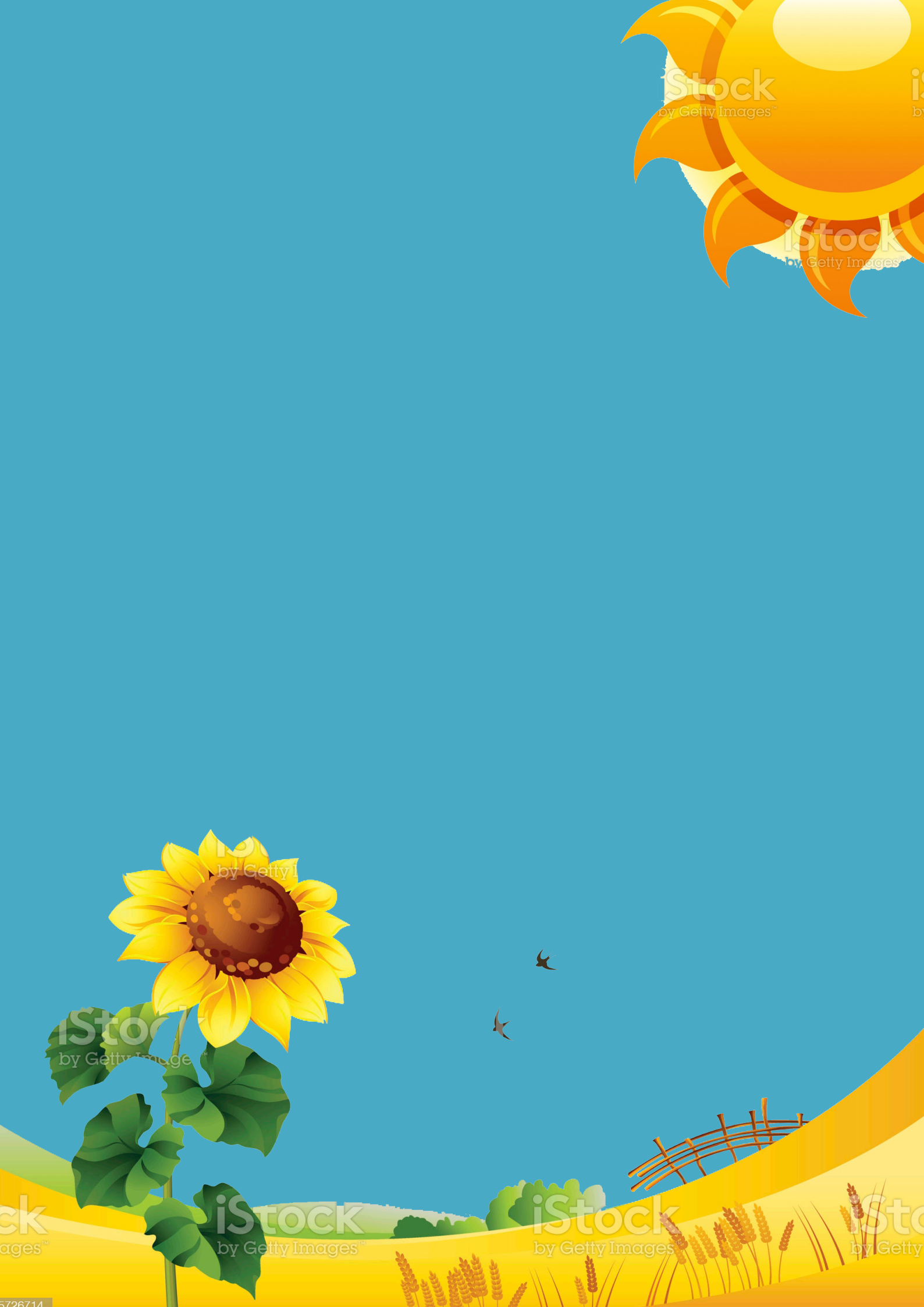
Our approach to engagement and participation will be through building an alliance, where we engage broadly and support all parent carers to participate at all levels and across the local area SEND system. Our ambition is that together we can deliver the best possible outcomes for our children and young people.

There is a wealth of knowledge and a strong culture of working practices in the local area, balanced with a strong commitment from the SEND Youth forum and SEND parents and carers. This supports and enhances the ongoing improvements made across education, health and social care. Co-production with, children, young people and parent carers is continuing to improve at pace.

Our values and commitment provide a strong foundation for change towards the delivery of positive outcomes, supported by high quality services. It is important that as a local area, we have a shared culture which supports and embraces engagement and participation with children, young people and parents/carers.








# Co-production with Children and Young People

Some of the things the SEND youth forum are keen to co-produce with us include;

- A Preparation for Adulthood (PFA) strategy.
- An inclusion framework that brings together key strategies and guidance.
- Contribution and attendance at strategic meetings to present their views on specific aspects of work.
- Planning and implementation of an annual voice and participation forum for children and young people with SEND including a summit and conference.
- Keeping provision under review: exploring what's available within the borough and what children and young people think of the placements and services they access.
- Capturing children and young people's views about permanent and fixed term exclusion and alternative provision.
- The expansion of recruitment and membership to the SEND Youth Forum through the availability of mainstream, school-based opportunities for young people with SEND and the Targeted Youth Support infrastructure.
- Training for special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) including annual reviews and capturing the voice of the child and young person in line with our values of listening and mutual respect.
- Co-production of guidance specifically developed for children and young people for statutory processes, for example, through the EHCP Hub
- Secondary SEND focus sessions for children and young people, including those at SEN support and EHCP level.

Mechanisms for supporting children and young people's engagement and participation:

- Improve attendance of a diverse range of young people at open access SEND youth voice events that give opportunities for none SEND Youth Forum members to input into key areas of work.
- Widen the membership of the SEND Youth Forum to include specific mainstream school representatives.
- Creating, publishing and distributing a SEND Youth Forum Newsletter to better showcase work that is being done and engagement opportunities.



Would like to be given the opportunity to be listened to.

Different engagement methods need to be used.

As a SEND parent, I feel very much at the heart of engagement and participation.

Would like to feel a part of any developments around SEND family support locally.

More opportunities to meet and discuss issues

We want a parent carer forum.

I'm not yet sure about the local provision but am keen to find out more and support.

There needs to be acknowledgement that all voices need to be captured not just those who shout loudest.

Surveys that ask for input

The LA need to communicate better with parents from the start before collaboration can work

Parents want to help change Barnsley we need to be listened to.


Who is better placed to determine what is working and what is not than those experiencing it first-hand?

Improve interactions between send worker and parent as not everyone is comfortable participating in forms and group discussions

Being completely honest and open, sharing ideas and caring.

Being asked to be more involved with my son's EHCP and ongoing involvement is music to my ears!

Mechanisms for supporting children's and young people's engagement and participation: parents/carers tell us:



# Co-production with Parents and Carers

Parent carers have told us that they want to co-produce with us;

- Provision mapping: exploring what's available within the borough and what we need to develop so that we can build on the current sufficiency strategy.
- Co-delivery of parent programmes with parents and carers. This is especially positive when delivering programmes targeted at specific areas of need, e.g. autism, sensory needs, etc. Parents and carers tell us that they value listening to others who have had similar experiences to them.
- Parent and carer involvement in the induction and ongoing professional development of the EHC Team. This would be invaluable in creating an understanding of our work with the families that we support.
- Extend co-production in schools and the voice of parents/carers for children and young people at the SEN support level. This group forms most children and young people with SEND in the borough.
- Delivering the Quality Assurance Framework: We are aiming to introduce more school-based quality assurance processes, particularly for schools and settings where there is a specialist provision. The involvement of parents/carers in this is imperative.
- Contributing to the quality assurance of SEND processes around managing statutory assessment and annual reviews.
- Building on the relationship, interaction and co-production activity between the SEND youth forum and parent/carer participation to form a joined-up identity.
- Strengthening parent/carer input into the co-production and participation of the local offer.



We are all cogs in the system. All cogs need to work in unison!

# Strategic Planning

Barnsley should be a place where everyone has their voice heard and this is valued by services. To do this, we need to enable and support children, young people, parents/carers and professionals to work together as part of the local area SEND system.

There is a need to develop the following in collaboration with children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers, including the strengthening of participation at three levels of engagement:

- **Individual level** - children, young people and parents/carers are actively involved with the services that are working with them, and in any formal processes about them, so they get the best outcome that is based on their own wishes and aspirations.
- **Service level** - children, young people and parents/carers participate and feedback to services to help them to become user focused and to shape them for the future.
- **Strategic level** - children, young people's and parents/carers experiences and views are used collectively to identify and inform local area strategic developments in true co-production with the local area SEND system.

## Strategic Aims and Key Principles

The Barnsley SEND Engagement & Participation Strategy sets out our priorities and the key development towards creating an effective and inclusive local area SEND system.

To achieve our commitment and in line with our values, we will ensure that there is:

- Partnership working and co-production with children, young people and parents/carers.
- An ongoing system to support co-production of all relevant strategies, including all stakeholders and partners in their development.
- Achieve a high level of confidence in the system.
- Complete clarity and transparency about services, protocols and processes as part of the local offer.



We're all on the journey together!





# Co-production and Participation with Children, Young People and Parents and Carers

Providing the right services and support for children, young people and their families is hugely important. We recognise, value and will learn from the feedback that we receive from children, young people and parents/carers and the important contribution that they can offer, enabling us to gain better understanding of how we can make improvements in ways that are important to us all. Therefore, co-production must be at the heart of our local area SEND system.

As the system includes services and provision from education, health and care across the age range of 0-25, this means that many families will experience multiple agencies, services and organisations. Getting the most effective support can only be done through a joined-up system that is designed and regularly reviewed with children, young people and families.

For true co-production to take place, it must be meaningful and should start at the earliest possible stage in any process by engaging openly and enabling children, young people and parents/carers to generate and contribute their ideas to help shape solutions.

Participation should empower and enable local groups of children, young people and parents/carers to play a strategic role within the local area SEND system. It is vital that specific opportunities for children, young people and parents/carers to influence decision making at a strategic level are identified and acted upon. It is also important to build the capacity of local groups and networks to support them to fulfil this role. In relation to this, we recognise that broadening engagement and participation by reaching an ever-wider range of children, young people and families can only enable the system to improve.



# Barnsley SEND Strategy 2020 - 2022

We will create more opportunities for children, young people, parents and carers to contribute to, influence, and co-produce strategies and planning for SEND Local Area arrangements alongside daily opportunities to participate in service planning at an individual level

Further develop local Children and Young People's Trust arrangements to enable greater and wider participation and co-production with parents and carers.

Develop and publish a calendar of key consultations across the Children and Young People's Trust to support areas for development highlighted within the SEND Strategies, SEND Improvement Plan, Key organisational change, or as a result of parental and children and young people feedback.

Develop a broad range of engagement opportunities to reach the widest number of parents and carers to ensure a representative parental voice to evaluate service delivery and activity across the Trust and provide opportunities for key issues to be raised outside of daily contact with services.

Continue to deliver and develop opportunities for and with SEND children and young people to enable them to participate, influence service policy, and drive improvements highlighted within the SEND children and young people plan via established youth participation processes.

# Our Priorities

What is important?



Our priorities for engagement, participation and co-production are already embedded in our five priorities, as set out in the Barnsley SEND Strategy 2020 – 2022 and the underpinning SEND Improvement Plan:

1. Early identification and support.
2. Quality and efficiency of EHC processes.
3. Participation and co-production.
4. Access to specialist provision, including specialist school places.
5. Planning for pathways to adulthood.

Progress on these priorities continues at pace, including the specific actions highlighted opposite.





Everyone coming together  
to improve outcomes...

# Our Commitments

## What *must* happen...

Fostering pride in our engagement and participation work and making sure that more children, young people and parents/carers know about this and can co-produce with us.

Fully understand the impact and value that our participation and engagement work is having on the local area, for children, young people and for parents/carers, identifying gaps and opportunities.

Build effective relationships regarding participation with, and between all internal and external services; early years settings, schools, colleges, health services, children, young people and parents/carers.

Making sure that all children and young people have opportunities to get their voices heard regardless of their setting, age or communication methods and that their voice influences decision making.

Holding local authority and clinical commissioning group services to account for how they have reflected the views of children, young people and parents/carers and fed back to them about the difference this has made.

Giving children, young people and parents/carers better feedback so they know how we have used their views to inform decisions.

Ensuring that the local offer is a useful tool that enables children, young people and parents/carers to understand what is available, which services are best placed to support them, and how to access and influence those services.

Keeping the local offer under continuous review, including linking development of the local offer website closely to the feedback we receive from children, young people and parents/carers.

Maintaining a dedicated officer, with responsibility for ensuring that all SEND related agencies, within the local area, are engaging with a wide range of individuals and groups to ensure the local offer is fit for purpose.

In-depth engagement by children, young people and parent/carers in the development of new provision, leading to increased confidence in the local area SEND system.



# What We Will Do

## Our promise...

Appoint a SEND Participation Officer to promote collaboration between organisations, children, young people and parents/carers, ensuring wide range of views to shape local area provision.

Create a local offer steering group including children, young people and parents/carers which can identify problems and initiate solutions.

Plan and deliver online sessions for parents/carers with system leaders across education, health and care.

Invite and respond to feedback, involving children, young people and parents/carers in quality assurance activities to learn from their direct experiences of services.

Engage with a broad range of parents/carers through active engagement and participation.

Implement a 'you said, we did' system for publication within the Local Offer.

Support the delivery of parent/carer programmes to support their contribution and learning.

Publish strategies and plans so that there is a culture of transparency.

Support children, young people and parent/carer to contribute to professional development opportunities for and with staff who work in specialist services.

## Key actions that will support the participation of children and young people and parent/carers further are continually being explored.

*The purpose of effective engagement and participation is to build a bridge between services, children, young people and families and to represent a collective voice for all. When done right, this will lead to strong and sustainable links between the local authority and the clinical commissioning group and, through this, all partners and stakeholders to:*

- *Improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.*
- *Embed co-production as a natural part of the development of services.*
- *Result in an open, transparent and accountable local area SEND system.*





**With thanks to...**

**Barnsley SEND Youth Forum, for your suggestions and comments  
as to how we can, together, make a better Barnsley**

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