

partners in creating change

Newcastle's Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, 2009-12

V 1.6 final



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FOREWORD

Children and Young People's involvement is crucial to the way we do business in Newcastle. As citizens and service users in the city, children and young people have the right to a say over how services are provided. Our experience is that they have a vital contribution to make. With the right support and resources children and young people can contribute in many different ways and in response to a variety of different issues.

We demonstrated our commitment to participation by establishing a participation strategy in 2004, becoming partners with Investing in Children and investing resources in developing the capacity of children and young people and services for dialogue.

This strategy lays out how we will continue to deliver opportunities for involvement to children and young people, and how we will ensure that services account for and evidence that it has led to changes.

As we reshape and improve services to children and young people, and continue to strive for better outcomes, we need to ensure we continue to listen to what they have to say and ensure they are central to our plans.

Signed

[John Collings - Acting Executive Director of Children's Services]



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What participation means to children and young people

Children and young people have told us they want a range of ways of getting involved, and for these to make a real difference.

“ask young people what they want - don't tell them”

“It's good for young people to have a say on what adults have thought up”
Steering group member – U Decide

“The youth panel is a good idea, as it gives the young people the chance to have their say and feel valued in the community. “
(Young people's interview panel member, Social Care service)

“The council should explain to young people what they spend their money on and also what plans they have to do to improve the run down areas – there should be a way of creating dialogue between young people and the adults from the service providers.”

“People say, ‘when I was your age’, but you think, this is *now*, not then. And we are experts on the now. When we go to Youth Voice we get listened to.”

“give young people opportunities to have a say eg Investing in Children, gr8 event, school councils”

“Adults should ask young people what they want to do and not just assume.”

What we are offering children and young people

We will provide a range of ways that children and young people can give their views about their lives in Newcastle. However a child or young person comes forward they have the right to be heard and make a difference, to be treated with respect and be kept informed. This will take place in a range of forums and at a variety of levels – individual, neighbourhood, ward, service, community, city or national.

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We will produce information for young people about the pathways available to them to get involved, and make sure that these are all as influential as possible.

We will ensure that there is accountability to children and young people about what has happened when they get involved – including feedback about what changes have been made, and how their views have influenced the end result.

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INTRODUCTION: THIS IS HOW WE DO THINGS HERE

The active involvement of children and young people is essential to improving outcomes and to delivering the high quality services and opportunities that children and young people want and deserve.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) guarantees children and young people the right to have their say in any matter or procedure they are affected by. The UNCRC also places a duty on local authorities and governments to ensure children and young people's views are acted upon.

“...that luminous living document that enshrines the rights of every child without exception to a life of dignity and self-fulfilment.” Nelson Mandela (2000) describing the UNCRC.

We give a priority to listening and responding to the views of children and young people; we have a proud history of supporting and encouraging dialogue between children, young people and decision makers. Our original Participation Strategy was launched in 2005 followed by our Engagement Strategy in 2006. In 2008 we then went on to launch our [Listening to Young Children Strategy](#). These have led to some significant opportunities for dialogue and change – examples of which are included in this document.

Through the 'What Matters to Us' report we highlighted children and young people's agenda for change in the city. This has raised the profile of the twelve priority issues and led to a range of opportunities to bring about change.

This new Children and Young People's Participation Strategy is our plan for embedding participation in the City. It explains how we will take the next steps in encouraging all services children and young people use to work with them as partners to create change. This in turn will make Newcastle a better place for children and young people to live, study, play and get involved.

To help us deliver, in late 2008 we brought together resources that support and lead on participation to form a new Participation Unit within the Children's Services Directorate. The role and function of the unit is to advocate for the participation rights of children and young people and to support dialogue that leads to tangible change that children and young people recognise as having made a difference.

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BASIC PRINCIPLES: THIS IS WHAT WE MEAN BY PARTICIPATION

We mean human rights

The UNCRC provides the legal framework for children and young people's participation. It was ratified by the UK Government in 1991 and is the world's most widely ratified human rights instrument in history; placing a series of obligations on Governments – including guaranteeing children and young people a range of 'participation rights'.

Participation is a means through which the human rights of children and young people will be promoted and realised. 'Participation' means the ability and opportunity to have a say in the decisions that affect you. This means engaging in dialogue with decision makers and working for change. 'Human rights' means, in particular, the right within a democracy to be acknowledged as a full and equal citizen.

We mean change

Participation is not just about asking questions and it is certainly not about ticking boxes – it is about embedded and systematic **dialogue** between children, young people and decision makers; it is about a culture of **respect**, **involvement**; and **change**.

"The active participation of children and young people should lead to change. This can be done by ensuring more involvement and opportunities for them to have a real say in decision-making. It also creates benefits to organisations, the young and to the community." **Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008).**

We mean everyone

All services

Involving children and young people in decisions making is not just about the Children's Trust - it's about everyone who's work has an impact, either direct or indirect on children and young people's lives. This means all sectors – voluntary, statutory, private and community.

All children and young people

We will seek to work around the lived lives of children and young people whatever their background, circumstances and abilities. The Children's Trust recognises that all children and young people are experts in their own lives, and have a contribution to make.

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THE VISION

Our vision, first adopted in 2005, is :

For all children and young people who live here to see Newcastle as a city where they are encouraged to play a part in decision making, and their views are listened to and acted upon.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- We want services across all sectors to see participation and involvement of children and young people as their own responsibility; and for participation to be a systematic, embedded process that is celebrated and encouraged.
- We want Newcastle to be a City where children and young people know they are able to play an active role in the decision making processes that affect them; and for them to recognise the opportunities open to them to have their say.
- We want children and young people to see changes made as a result of what they say; and for them to be the people who tell us whether this strategy is working.
- We want to focus our resources where there is most opportunity to make a difference

This strategy is championed by the Children's Trust Board and the Local Strategic Partnership. It gives a high level commitment to the principles outlined above and it is to be used as a tool to take forward participation in the City.

There is an expectation that all services in Newcastle, whether provided by the statutory, voluntary, community or private sector, will ensure that they are taking account of the views of children and young people, particularly in planning processes and evaluation of services. Services will be held accountable through the integration of participation into performance management and commissioning frameworks.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DRIVERS

Over recent years the participation and involvement of children and young people has become ever more important, not least because a series of national policy and legislative drivers require us to ensure children and young people are able to influence key decision making processes. It is now commonplace for government inspectors, through the Annual Performance

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Assessment and other inspection processes, to seek the views of children and young people as part of its evidence to support judgements about the effectiveness and quality of services. Some of the drivers are outlined in the box 1.



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Box 1: A snapshot of the legislation:

- The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, under Article 12, states children and young people should be involved in any decision they are affected by in accordance with their age and maturity
- The **Childcare Act (2006)** placed a legal duty on Local Authorities to ‘have regard to the views of young children in the design, development and delivery of early childhood services’ – this means that we have to consider how young children’s voices can help shape and evaluate services. Newcastle has been at the forefront of developing Listening to Young Children work in recent years.
- The **Childcare Act (2006)** also places a duty on school governing bodies in England and Wales to involve children in the development of school behaviour policies
- Children’s Services Authorities are required to consult with children and young people when developing the **Children and Young People’s Plan** (Children Act 2006)
- Young people should be active participants in the commissioning, design and delivery of services (**Public Service Agreement: PSA 14**)
- **The Children’s Plan “Building Brighter Futures” (DCSF 2008)** refers to “allowing young people to hold government and local services to account “ (section 6.24, page 129)
- When preparing a local development plan the authority should obtain the views of local people, including young people (**Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**)
- The local authority must, so far as is possible, ascertain the child’s wishes in child protection **proceedings (Children Act 2004, S 53)**
- The local authority must, so far as is possible, ascertain the views of children in its care before making any decision affecting that child and give the views due consideration (**Children Act 1989**)
- Director’s of Children Services and Lead Members have a responsibility to ensure they consider the views of children and young people in discharging their duties (**DSCF, 2005**)
- In the **Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People** we committed to ensure that: *“Our strategies and arrangements will be based on the participation of children and young people, parents and carers as well as those who provide services”.*



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BUILDING PARTICIPATION INTO PLANNING AND COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS

The Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People, a statutory plan required as a result of the Children Act 2004, and which is owned by the Children's Trust, provides a vehicle to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard at the highest level in planning and decision-making. The 12 "What Matters to Us" priorities identified by Children and Young People in 2005-06, and which were included in the 2006 – 2009 Plan, provided an important message for services across the City, although they stood separate from those business priorities determined as a result of management information and business planning.

Future planning for the 2010 – 2013 plan will address this through a set of priorities that are shared by services and children, young people. Our aspiration is that children, young people will be equal partners in service planning and delivery that will improve outcomes for all children and young people in the City.

The plan will also be a critical vehicle to promote the establishment of children and young people's champions within services and in the adoption and implementation of a self assessment tool that will support the embedding of participation and engagement.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a Health/Local Authority led process that seeks to ensure that good decisions are made about the delivery of services and deployment of resources to provide better outcomes for Citizens in terms of health and wellbeing. The JSNA draws heavily on the views of the local community in decision-making and commissioning, and it will be critical to ensure that the views of children and young people and their families feature prominently. The assessment will examine a wide range of issues including employment, education, housing, environmental factors and any other local information that may be relevant.

We will continue to work to develop a dynamic process that will ensure that children and young people influence decisions at all levels, and which result in real positive change that is recognised as such by children, young people, and consider the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment as critical tools in helping to achieve this at a strategic level.

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What Matters to Us

In 2005, following an exhaustive piece of collaborative working, the following areas were agreed by consensus as the priorities to improve children and young people's lives in Newcastle. They are in no particular order.

- Respect for children and young people from adults
 - respect between different groups of children and young people
 - fair treatment from organisations
- Space and opportunities to spend time with friends
- Outdoor play spaces
- Accessible sports and leisure provision – cheap, or free
- Road safety
- Discrimination including bullying, racism and homophobia
- Policing, crime and anti-social behaviour
- Decent neighbourhoods to grow up and live in
- Public transport
- Healthy lifestyle issues (around food, exercise, drugs and alcohol)
- Involvement in decision making
- More interesting lessons and fairer treatment in schools

The 'What Matters to Us' priority issues have been the basis of taking forward children and young people's agenda for change in the city for the last four years. Having such a list has helped take discussions forward without always having to start from square one with young people. What Matters to Us has helped They have raised the profile of issues children and young people are concerned about and were included in the first Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People 2006-9.

The Participation Unit will work with young people to keep these issues under review, and ensure that children and young people's priorities are reflected in the new Newcastle Plan for children and young people.

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Where are we now

Inspection reports about children's service in Newcastle have highlighted both strengths and areas for improvement around participation.

Many of the strengths lie in face to face practice, and there is a great deal of good practice in the city. This can be demonstrated by the level of Investing in Children (IiC) memberships; the high level of involvement of young people in citywide initiatives, the U Decide process involving children and young people in commissioning services; the positive evaluation of IiC Newcastle. There is a strong commitment among elected members and officers to children and young people's participation in decision making, reflected in their involvement in events with young people.

There has been progress in the involvement of looked after children, children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and in the democratic involvement of children and young people. Some of our work around listening to young children is outstanding and is being included in the Coram Family Listening to Children training as best practice examples.

However children and young people are still raising some of the same issues that were highlighted in What Matters to Us in 2005. For every example of progress there are other examples where things have not changed, and children and young people are frustrated at times by the pace of change. Improvements are still needed in the level of involvement within services, and information gathered centrally about it which remain inconsistent. Communication about children and young people's involvement and its impact needs further improvement. There is a need to establish a strong citywide voice for children and young people – which young people are addressing through the creation of an independent youth council.

The opportunity

This is a time of unprecedented change in services for children and young people. The national and local policy agendas place children and young people and their families at the heart of services, designed around their needs. Transformation within the Children's Trust is creating opportunities to support change within services across the city. The new way services are planning to work, the development of new facilities in local areas and the city centre, new service models, the workforce reform agenda and more broadly the commitment to more voice for communities in local decision making are all chances to create change with children and young people. We know children and young people are willing to take part, and this strategy will provide the means to ensure change is happening. There is a once in a generation opportunity to work with children and young people as partners in creating change.

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OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

So, how are we going to get to the vision?

This new strategy lays out how we will ensure that children and young people are able to direct the work of services within the Children's Trust, over the next three years.

Roles and responsibilities

The work that needs to be done falls into two categories: that which can be done through dedicated resources and a specialist team; and that which can only be achieved through everyone working with children and young people taking responsibility for involving them in decision making. The resources available in the Participation Unit will be used to deliver the former and support the latter. In agreeing this strategy all services are committing themselves to act upon their responsibilities to children and young people, and report to the Children's Trust Board through the PU on progress they are making.

The Participation Unit

This has been established to support the participation of children and young people in decision making in the city. The resources of the unit will support the delivery of this strategy, working in partnership wherever we can to promote access to decision making for children and young people, or to help services develop their own approaches.

The Unit comprises the combined resources of Investing in Children Newcastle, the Children and Young People's Engagement Strategy Team, and the Listening to Young Children strategy.

Areas of activity

Offering quality routes to involvement

We will develop meaningful, interesting and effective 'routes' for children and young people's participation within the city. Many of these are already in place, some will be developed through the Participation Unit or by partner services. There should be no wrong door for children and young people who want to get involved. We will seek to do more 'joining up' between different initiatives so that children and young people can

We will continue to work in partnership with all organisations within the Children's Trust to ensure children and young people they work with can be influential and powerful.

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The Participation Unit will target work where we identify that young people are not getting involved or at risk of exclusion from decisions making.

Through the work of the Listening to Young Children strategy we will ensure that the youngest children are able to influence decision making.

We will identify issues and groups of children and young people where we can make the most difference and target the support of the Participation Unit to support them. We will also make sure that strategic priorities such as reducing child poverty are central to the work of the unit so that children and young people can contribute to their development.



Supporting services

Through the Participation Unit we will offer support to services in developing their own participation work – while leaving responsibility and accountability with the service. Every service should be able to evidence that it is involving children and young people in meaningful dialogue that leads to change.

Each service will be asked to identify a participation champion, and this network will play a key role in delivering the strategy. The Unit will work with champions to improve communications and support the development of experience and expertise within and across services.

We will continue to support and expand the Investing in Children membership programme in Newcastle.

We will develop a self assessment process for all services to identify their strengths, good practice and areas for development.

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Embed the culture of participation

Partners will be accountable to the Children's Trust Board for providing evidence of involvement of children and young people. The PU will support partners through training and consultancy to develop their own plans but these need to be backed up by resources and changes within the service to ensure children and young people can influence change.

The Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People 2010-13 will include priorities established by children and young people, and involve children and young people in developing actions to meet all priorities.

Children and Young People will be given access to the agenda of the Children's Trust Board on a regular basis to raise issues that the partnership could address, and regular dialogue sessions will be built into the Board's forward planning.

Improving Outcome Plans for the Children's Trust will include credible and realistic actions around involving children and young people in decision making and the Participation Unit will be mandated to scrutinise plans.

The Participation Unit will provide training for staff and support the workforce reform agenda, including the involvement of children and young people in recruitment, selection induction and training of staff.

We will continue to identify and promote best practice within the city, and celebrate the achievements of children and young people in helping shape services and opportunities in the city.

Change in the Community

Local Democracy

We will expand the engagement of elected members with children and young people through the ward engagement strategy. The Participation Unit project team will work in wards to make contacts between local members and young people who have issues to raise, and encourage innovative methods of dialogue between members and children.

We will continue to use Local Democracy Week as a focus for political engagement of children and young people with a range of events and local activities.

We will continue to support our Members of the UKYP (MYPs) in their activities locally and nationally.

Ward engagement work

The new approach to ward engagement has been piloted in Fawdon ward. Activities have included a 'Walking with Children' session organised through the local Sure Start Children's Centre. This will ensure that the under 5s are able to influence local members, and has highlighted local environmental improvements as a key issue.

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We will establish a Youth Council for children and young people in Newcastle to influence the political agenda. Proposals are being developed by an advisory group of young people working with the Newcastle MYPs. Funding for a youth council has been identified by Children's Services and it is hoped to launch the council in January 2010.

We will support the development of best practice in Student Voice within schools and help children and young people involved in school councils and other forums in schools to be influential across the city as well as in their school and community.

The Participation Unit will ensure that there is no wrong door for children and young people, and however they choose to get involved we will ensure that they are supported to make the maximum impact with their work.

Local Democracy Week

Local democracy week has become a focus for activities to involve young people in the political life of the city. At the 2008 event, 175 young people, in delegations from secondary schools across the city, attended an event at the civic centre where they took part in discussions about the future of the city, gave feedback on the Newcastle Plan for Children and Young People. The day was organised and hosted by the Newcastle MYPs. We will continue this tradition and use local democracy week events to contribute to the participation agenda.

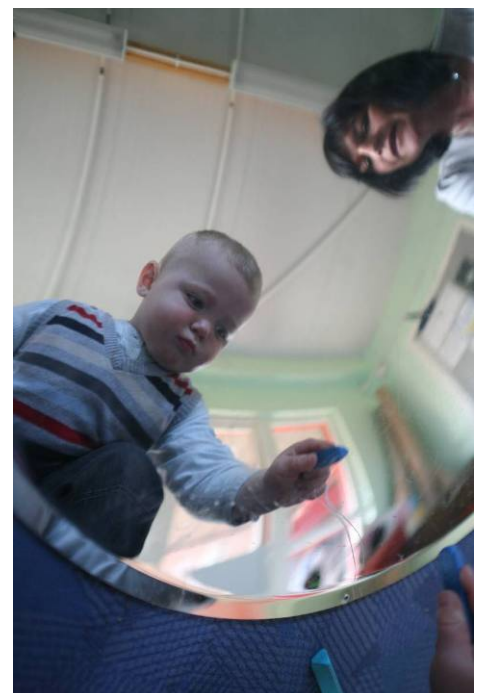
Measuring Impact

The Participation Unit will provide service performance information to the Children's Trust. This information will inform the Trust about the number of young people that the Unit is in touch with, how much activity is being carried out and how effective it is.

For the Trust as a whole, the question of performance in delivering change will also be monitored through key outcome data (See section on performance indicators page 26.)

Through a standard, light touch, self assessment process we will establish clearly what progress is being made year on year. A draft is included in appendix two. This has been developed from the You're Welcome self assessment pack.

We will use performance and outcome accountability to ensure that information is used to



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develop improvements in the service the PU provides and the way the Children's Trust is approaching participation.

Governance and accountability

The Participation and Change group will act as the steering group for participation and engagement activities. It will be established as a Children's Trust task group to oversee the implementation of this strategy, challenge the activities of the Trust, and receive reports on the progress of the Participation Unit. The group's membership will be drawn from and representative of the Children's Trust as a whole.

We will develop a group of children and young people within the Participation Unit to help guide our work and comment on wider progress.

We will make sure there is clear communication with children and young people about where they have made a difference in the city.

The Participation Unit will support children and young people to organise at least two sessions annually where the Children's Trust Board work with children and young people on issues identified by them to create change. This will involve direct dialogue between board members and young people, and seeking to identify and make changes.

The Children's Trust Board will receive a six monthly report on participation of children and young people. This will include information from the self assessment process, an agreement of priorities for the next 6 months, and a review of actions over the previous period including previously agreed priorities.

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THE PARTICIPATION UNIT

Late in 2008 our resources supporting children and young people's participation came together to form a new Participation Unit. This unit has been established to lead the process of developing capacity around participation and to support the sustaining and embedding of this culture across the Children's Trust

The Participation Unit will be the key contact point for children and young people – so they know where to go if they want to have their say or be involved in taking forward change. One important task is to identify a good name and brand for the unit, and we are working with young people to consider options for this.

The Unit will undertake a number of key functions:

Consultancy

Striving to be a centre of excellence, the Participation Unit and its staff will act as consultants to services, agencies and departments to ensure they have the necessary skills and resources to involve children and young people, respond to the issues raised, and make appropriate changes that children and young people want to see.

The Participation Unit will act as a resource centre cataloguing resources to support participation and it will establish a bank of information about the views of children and young people on a range of subjects. We will also assist in inspection preparation and support services in developing their own systems to provide evidence of participation and change

Training

The Participation Unit will develop a training programme open to all those who either work with children and young people or whose role has an impact on children and young people or the services they access. The high-quality training will provide the necessary tools aimed at embedding participation in practice and services. We will involve children and young people in this as a matter of course.

The Unit has recently launched a programme of training opportunities for anyone working with the 0 to 5 age range.

The objectives of this training are to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of listening to young children; to encourage the development of a listening culture; to promote opportunities for young children to express their views and feelings; to provide practitioners with the tools and resources to embed a listening to young children culture within their setting and provide practitioners with the knowledge and understanding of how they can act on what children are telling them to achieve real and positive change.

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Development & Support

For services working directly with children and young people the Participation Unit will be able to support managers and practitioners to develop their systems internally to ensure the views of children and young people are taken into account in service design, delivery and evaluation.

Advocacy

To avoid consultation fatigue amongst children and young people a key function of the Unit will be to advocate for and with children and young people. The Unit holds a huge amount of information about the views of children and young people in Newcastle covering a range of issues. We will undertake to ensure this information underpins decision making processes in the future; where there is a lack of information about a given area the Unit can support specific work with children and young people.

Standards

We will identify and celebrate best practice around participation through the unit. Investing in Children membership is available to services that can demonstrate good practice.

To enable services to develop their own culture of participation the Children's Trust will adopt a self assessment covering children and young people's participation in decision making.

[NB - at this stage Hear by Right and You're Welcome are under consideration to complement Investing in Children membership]

Investing in Children

Children's Services in Newcastle is part of the Investing in Children Development Agency. We subscribe to the Investing in Children Statement of Intent (see appendix 1) and worked closely with the organisation to develop the participation strategy. Investing in Children membership celebrates good practice in services in the city. Through Investing in Children (IiC) Newcastle the Participation Unit supports a range of agenda days and research groups.

IiC Newcastle was externally evaluated by Edinburgh University in 2007-8. The evaluation identifies that IiC is valued by services and young people and makes a strong contribution to promoting involvement in decisions making.

“Investing in Children Newcastle enables a diverse range of children and young people to be engaged in participatory processes, it responds well to issues of Inclusion and Diversity and acts as a stimulus for other organisations to develop inclusive approaches.”

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“IiCN enables children and young people to transform their life experiences, change local services and put forward their own agenda. However, children and young people can sometimes be frustrated by the slow nature of such change.”

“Children and young people are particularly complementary about IiC staff. Children and young people perceived Investing in Children and its staff to be extremely supportive and effective.”

(IiC Newcastle evaluation report – University of Edinburgh, March 2008)

As a partner to the Development Agency, staff and young people make a contribution to the development of IiC regionally and nationally, taking part in debates on policy and practice, networking and sharing our experience.

All service areas will be expected to identify elements of their service to gain IIC membership over the next 3 years, and the Children's Trust will set challenging targets for the number of service units with membership. We will also encourage colleagues across the LSP to consider a commitment to gain IIC membership in relevant parts of their service.

Participation Champions

Services areas will be asked to identify a participation champion to act as a lead contact internally and externally around young people's involvement. The participation champion will be the key contact between the service and the Participation Unit, and be asked to actively promote children and young people's participation within the service – including completion of the self assessment. The Participation Unit will support this role with training and consultancy advice.

Recording and Monitoring

The Participation Unit will maintain an overview and record of work done with children and young people around decision making, and record evidence from children and young people about the changes they have seen in services. This will form an essential part of our evidence trail in the future, and colleagues have a responsibility to ensure they share the relevant information with the Participation Unit through participation champions in services. We will consider options for this recording system including the possibility of an online recording system.

Listening to Young Children

The Listening to Young Children strategy builds on the skills and experience of early years staff in the city. The Sure Start grant is supporting the development of young children's participation to ensure the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 relating to young children's voice are met.. The existing strategy has three strategic aims: developing capacity; supporting

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best practice and networking. The actions from this strategy will be reflected in the action plan for this document.

The strategy supports early years professionals to enable young children to participate routinely in the services they receive. The training helps practitioners see the world through the eyes of young children and ensures that children can make a positive contribution to their learning, social care and health care. Through a process of genuine participation, children's perspectives are being heard and are being included in decision-making processes.

We will ensure that we consider the opportunities to involve the youngest children in our citywide and local initiatives wherever possible.



DIRECT WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people are experts on their own lives and they are the best people to speak about their life experiences. The Participation Unit will support children and young people to be involved in decision making processes and ensure that they are provided with a range of opportunities to have their say.

Democratic Engagement

The Participation Unit recognises its role in supporting Elected Members to engage with their young constituents; we also recognise the important role we play in raising young people's aspirations and awareness of the political process.

Ward Engagement

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The Engagement Strategy made a commitment to establishing mechanisms at a Ward / Locality level to ensure the views of children and young people are being heard by local Councillors and Ward Committees.

We know children and young people are passionate about issues in their local areas but that they often do not know how to either raise concerns or get involved.

The Participation Unit is working closely with the Council's Ward Coordination Team to ensure that local Elected Members are supported to engage with young people who live in their area using exciting and innovative methods. These include 'walking with children' to involve under 5s, creative work with children within and the application of U Decide to ward budgets. A team of project workers will work directly with children and young people to support their involvement at Ward / Locality level, working alongside ward coordination colleagues.

UK Youth Parliament in Newcastle

In May 2007 Newcastle ran its first election process to appoint Members of the Youth Parliament for Newcastle, the young representatives worked tirelessly through 2007-8 to raise the profile of UKYP and the issues that matter the most to the young people of Newcastle.

The City's first MYPs successfully raised the profile of young people in the City through organising a number of high profile events and generating positive media coverage. They also established effective links with senior politicians and officers at the Council.



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The latest representatives to the UKYP for Newcastle were appointed in January 2009 after more than 6000 of the City's young people voted for their choice out of 42 nominees; a well publicised campaign, in partnership with schools, to encourage young people to stand for election and then their peers to vote resulted in the impressive turn out.

A major priority for the current representatives is further raising the positive profile of young people in the City and challenging the often negative portrayal of them in the media, locally, regionally and nationally. Other priorities are things to do and places to go and helping establish a youth council.

Work with schools

We will continue to promote the opportunity for young people through schools to observe full meetings of Council to raise awareness of the political process.

In addition, the Participation Unit is currently developing an action plan to support and develop best practice around student voice in Newcastle, and aims to engage student councils more with issues affecting young people outside their own school.

Local Democracy Week

The Participation Unit will take lead responsibility for arrangements during Local Democracy Week working closely with other Council departments. A steering group will be established to involve Councillors and key officers from the Council to ensure well-planned, meaningful activities during the week.

Children and young people signing up

The Participation Unit will expand its existing membership programmes to offer children and young people the opportunity to sign up as young activists with the Unit. This will ensure children and young people receive information about opportunities to be involved at a level they choose – we will expand our newsletters to ensure members receive regular information and updates.

Participatory Budgeting –‘U Decide’

Newcastle is seen as the leading authority in the country on involving young people in participatory budgeting. This innovative and creative work has gained national and international recognition.

Through U Decide we have developed the capacity and technology to give large numbers of young people the chance to decide how resources should be allocated. We have learned how to prepare young people to take part, how to present ideas to young people and how to keep events engaging whilst still getting good quality information from young people. U Decide has been an impressive process involving children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and identities.

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Children and young people have influenced decision about £1.1 million in Big Lottery Fund monies for play, and the £2.2 million Children's Fund programme, as well as over £125,000 in pilot project funding directly allocated through U Decide events.

We hope to extend U Decide to more mainstream resources over the next few years, and share our learning and expertise with internal and external partners in Newcastle and beyond.

Investing in Children Membership Programme

liC membership is a celebration of good practice by services around involving young people in decision making. Children and young people themselves provide evidence that they are listened to within the service and that things have changed for them. As an independently moderated standard, it provides valuable evidence for self assessments. It is also an opportunity for staff to be recognised for their commitment to young people's right to be involved. Evaluation is a supportive process and the PU team will support services where necessary to gather evidence and develop work as needed.

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PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

There are two sets of PIs to consider – those for the activities of the unit; and those for the Children's Trust as a whole.

For the Participation Unit

We plan to develop an exit survey for all children and young people we work with to assess the impact on them, their personal development gains and any change they feel they achieved through being involved.

How much do we do?

- how many services involved
- how many young people involved and at what level
- how many individuals trained

How well do we do it?

- Do young people come back to us?
- What's the evaluation and impact of the training?
- What does external scrutiny tell us?
- Do young people feel they gained from their involvement with us?
- Number of Investing in Children memberships

Is anyone better off?

- Did children and young people feel they got anything changed?
- Did services do anything differently?
- What was the impact on young people?

We will break down figures by ethnicity gender and geography to ensure we are reflecting the diversity of the city and narrowing the gap.

For the Children's Trust

Did our "tell us" indicators improve?

Did our Ofsted school survey indicators improve?

How many Investing in Children members are there?

How many children's champions are there?

How many commissioning processes involved children and young people?

How much spending was influenced by participatory budgeting?

What proportion of service plans are influenced by children and young people's involvement?

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What proportion of staff recruited had children and young people directly involved in the process?

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Appendix One Investing in Children Statement of Intent

Principles

- Children and young people are **citizens now**;
- As citizens, they have the **right** to participate in decisions that effect them;
- This places a **responsibility** on agencies to open up their processes and engage children and young people in dialogue;
- **Dialogue** is different from consultation;
- Children and young people know about what is happening around them (what they have referred to as their '**lived lives**').
- Dialogue should be aimed at bringing about **improvements** in their lived lives.
- The means of engaging children and young people must be **inclusive** and respect the **democratic rights** of all.

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Participation and Change self assessment

Newcastle Children's Trust

Criteria 1

Involvement of children and young people in planning and decision making

- Young people are formally consulted in relation to current services and new developments, and are able to give their feedback on services they use. Arrangements are in place for young people to take part in planning and development work and participate in decision making.
- Processes are in place to ensure that information gathered from young people is considered in service development plans
- Evidence is gathered about the impact of children and young people's involvement

Examples of evidence:

Reports from meetings or events, action plans, notes from meetings, reference to children and young people's views in reports, quotes and evidence from children and young people, liC membership

Red (1)	Amber (2)	Green (3)	score	Action points
<i>The service does little or no consulting with young people about service provision</i>	<i>Regular consultation about the service and new developments Information collected from young people is taken in to account in developing service plans No systems in place to feedback to young people and obtain participation in developments</i>	<i>Consultation is systematic. Processes in place to ensure information collected from young people (eg from participation work by other services) is included in survey results and considered in development plans Young people get feedback about the end</i>		

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		<i>result of processes they take part in. Evidence of change resulting from children and young people's involvement</i>		
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Criteria 2

Service user feedback

The service invites all users to give their opinions about the service offered and whether it meets their needs and these are reviewed and acted on as appropriate

Examples:

Policy on collection of feedback, complaints procedure, examples of responses where service changed or amended

Red (1)	Amber (2)	Green (3)	score	Action points
<i>The service does not have any mechanisms in place to allow clients to give their opinions on the service offered and whether it meets their needs.</i>	<i>The service has some mechanisms in place to allow clients to give their opinions of the service offered and whether it meets their needs (e.g. suggestion box). Comments are not regularly reviewed or acted upon</i>	<i>The service has systematic arrangements for clients – and prospective clients – to give their opinions of the service offered and whether it meets their needs (e.g. suggestion box, online feedback). Comments are regularly</i>		

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	<i>where appropriate.</i>	<i>reviewed and acted upon as appropriate. Examples of change resulting from this process are recorded</i>		
Narrative information recorded here (limited wording)				

The above is based on section 7 of You're Welcome.

The rationale for this is:

- it's straightforward to complete and would give the ability to gain information from a number of services without placing great demands on scarce capacity;
- there is a word limit on the evidence that can be provided, which will make collation more manageable;
- services involved in you're welcome would be able to use the self assessment towards YW accreditation;
- the alternative of creating a tool from scratch would make comparisons with other areas more difficult to achieve.

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