

**Report to the Cabinet**

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 2 February 2023

**Report of the Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health**

**Part I**

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

**Corporate Priorities:**  
Delivering better services;

**Children and Young People's Participation Strategy**

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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**Brief Summary**

This report outlines the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, which has been produced to support the work of services working with children and young people in Lancashire, both within the local authority and across the county council's partnership arrangements.

**Recommendation**

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- (i) The Lancashire Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, set out at Appendix 'A'.
- (ii) That the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, to review and refine the Strategy, through ongoing engagement and participation with children and young people and, where there are areas for partnership action, with relevant partner organisations.

## Detail

In September 2020, Cabinet approved the Lancashire Youth Policy which provides a guiding framework for partners and stakeholders, including underpinning principles and areas for action, to help ensure that children and young people:

- are at the heart of and part of our policy making;
- are better supported to achieve their full potential; and
- ensure that our engagement is best in class.

Participation is the process by which children and young people take part and express themselves in decisions that affect them. They should be listened to, understood, and their views taken into account. This right is supported by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, which recognises the entitlement and ability of children and young people to influence actions and decisions that affect them.

A Youth Policy lead came into post in February 2022, and has since supported the development of a Strategic Participation Group which is made up of representatives from across Education and Children's Services. One action from that group was to develop a coherent, consistent understanding of what Participation means, and how the county council should be conducting this with children and young people, in order to achieve meaningful outcomes.

The Lancashire Children and Young People's Strategy therefore outlines the county council's legal obligations and commitments, how Participation aligns with the council's core corporate values, clarifies key language and definitions, outlines the benefits of participation, and explains how the county council's formal participation structures (including Lancashire Youth Council, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities forum, POWAR - Participate, Opportunity, Win, Achieve Respect, and the Children in Care Council LINX and the Care Leaver Forum) operate. It also acknowledges the breadth and variety of different participation opportunities that exist within the local authority and those delivered by partners.

The Strategy also advocates for the adoption of a model of Participation devised by Professor Laura Lundy, a children's rights professor from Queen's University, Belfast as a simple, flexible way to explain how Participation and Article 12 can be understood.

The Strategic Participation Group and Lancashire Participation Network, as a multi-agency forum, will be responsible for embedding the strategy and delivering the actions outlined. Reports are made bi-annually to the Education and Children's Services Senior Management Team and annually to the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board.

## Consultations

Colleagues from across Education and Children's Services and approximately 30 young people from the county council's formal participation groups were involved in the writing of the Strategy, agreeing the tone, language, participation model and imagery.



## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

The risk of not agreeing the Lancashire Children and Young People's Strategy would be a potential uncoordinated response to Participation. The local authority would not be able to evidence its commitment to the legal right of children and young people to participate in issues and decisions that affect their lives. Services would have limited knowledge and insight into their practice from a child or young person's perspective, and would be less likely to develop in ways that meet their needs.

### **Financial**

There are no financial implications at this time as any associated costs are met from existing budgets.

### **Legal**

There are no legal implications at this time. The Strategy is informed by the international legislation below.

### **Equality and Cohesion/Equality Analysis**

The Lancashire Children and Young People's Participation Strategy, if approved, will contribute positively towards the county council meeting its responsibilities under the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty, and will be particularly valuable in demonstrating the county council's commitment to advancing equality of opportunity for children and young people (age protected characteristic) and improving their participation in public life. Whilst an Equality Analysis is not considered necessary for this report, colleagues from the Equality and Cohesion Team have been included amongst those who have commented on the Strategy during its development.

### **Human Rights**

As stated, the right to Participation is outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, Article 12.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		

