

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2019-23



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OUR COMMITMENT:

“WE WILL DO OUR BEST.”

Warwickshire County Council workers ask children and young people what they think about the services we provide for them:

- What is the best way to listen to children and young people and get their ideas across to adults who make decisions about council services?
- What works?
- What doesn't?
- What could we do better?
- What changes do we need to make?

We make a commitment to young people taking part in a meaningful way in decisions which impact on their lives.

Most decisions about what we provide for children and young people in Warwickshire are made by adults.

Decisions made by these adults have a big effect on the lives of children and young people now and in the future.

This is why it is very important to make sure we listen and take action on what children and young people say about what we are doing for them.

The whole of Warwickshire County Council will do its best to make sure that children and young people's voices are heard.

We will do our best to include children and young people's views and ideas into our everyday work, especially when we make changes to the services we provide.

Councillor Jeff Morgan

Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Nigel Minns

Strategic Director, People Directorate

Paul Senior

Assistant Director, Education Services

John Coleman

Assistant Director, Children and Families

Children In Care Council

Care Leavers Forum

Warwickshire Youth Council

Members of Youth Parliament

WHAT IS PARTICIPATION AND WHY SHOULD WE DO IT?

There are many explanations of what we mean by 'children and young people's participation'.

"The involvement of children and young people in decision making on issues which affect their lives"

Survey supported by

- the Children's Right Alliance for England
- the National Children's Bureau
- Participation Works and
- the Children's Commissioner

**Children's Participation in Decision-making - survey of Participation Workers. Written by Dr Ciara Davey, Jo Lea, Catherine Shaw and Tom Burke*

Children and young people in Warwickshire describe participation as,

"To join and work together [with adults] to make things happen that we [children and young people] want"

It is important to understand that:

Children and young people aged under 18 make up

1 in 5

of the population in the United Kingdom



Children and young people are one of the largest groups of people who use council services.

For this reason we believe there are some simple **standards** that adults must follow when working with children and young people.

Standards to follow:

Respect

Children and young people should be given the time and space to say what they think

Fairness

Children and young people should have a bigger say in decisions that affect their future

Honesty

Children and young people should be told the truth, even if it's bad news

Value

Children and young people's input should be given importance, regardless of their age, or your age

Working Together

Children and young people can save time and money if you provide them with what they want

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL SITUATION?

There are clear laws and rules which mean children and young people's opinions and views must be taken into account when adults make decisions which affect children and young people, for example:

The United Nations explains in the *Declaration of Human Rights Article 12*, children's rights on education, good nutrition, health care, protection and shelter

The British government makes laws to protect children's rights. For example, the Children Act

The Office of the Children's Commissioner supports the rights, views and interests of children and young people

As well as laws and rules there are charters, offers and pledges that make promises to listen to children and young people. For example: 1. The Warwickshire Pledge // 2. Care Leaver's Charter // 3. Care Leaver's Offer // 4. SEND Code of Practice



Warwickshire has a long history of workers listening to children and young people.

The Warwickshire Children and Families Service's motto is "Putting children at the heart of all we do". This includes planning and designing council services.

The Senior Leadership Team for this service is expected to show how they listen to the views of children and young people as part of their work and planning.

The Warwickshire Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee expects workers who provide council services to listen to the views of children and young people.

We can't always provide what children and young people want, but need to give explanations when we can't.

These youth groups are chosen by children and young people. They educate adults about issues important to children and young people:

- Children in Care Council
- Care Leavers Forum
- Warwickshire Youth Council
- Warwickshire Members of the Youth Parliament

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRIORITIES

Children and young people across Warwickshire have helped put together a list of things that are important to them (Priorities) in the table overleaf.

These priorities will be changed into an 'Action Plan' (a list of things to change).

This Action Plan will support Warwickshire to make council services better for children and young people.

The Children and Young People's Priorities are grouped into **themes**:

1. **Keep Healthy** – make healthier choices for yourself
2. **Be Safe** – know how to keep yourself safe
3. **Have Fun and Do Well** – take part in things and do well in things that interest you
4. **Take Part** – do useful things to help others
5. **Think About Your Future** – earn money so that you can manage comfortably

The Children and Young People's Priorities have been put together by connecting issues that children and young people voted for through Children in Care Council elections, Warwickshire Youth Council and Members of Youth Parliament.

Their number 1 priority is mental health

Outcomes	Themes	Children & Young People's Priorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health Emotional Support Someone To Talk To And Listen To You 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We should learn about mental health issues and work to address stereotypes and improve services We need better information on what is available for us We need better support and access for us to mental health services
	Time With Family Friends And Relatives	We should have a regular way of communication with people that are important to us.
	Young Carers	Increase funding and support for young carers
	Bullying/Peer Pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want to feel safe (especially online) and in schools We want to be supported by someone we trust We want support to deal with difficult situations
	Education And Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need more support into employment that moves us into long term worthwhile jobs We need more support into further education. For example: for children & young people with disabilities: help finding new schools after exclusion or moving, sixth form, colleges and universities We need more information about alternative routes into jobs, rather than the usual ones like college and university
	Wider Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need a wide ranging curriculum that teaches us important life skills so that we can be as independent as an adult. For example: sustainable living, taxes, political education, education on laws, sex education and health
	Life Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to be better prepared for adulthood and adult life We need to be shown and trained how to cook, clean, wash, shop, manage money, etc.
	Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need to raise awareness of equality issues We need to be treated more respectfully and seen as valuable members of society with something unique to bring to the discussion We need you to listen, and make young people feel that their opinion is valued We need more positive stories about young people
	Voting	Give 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote in all elections and referendums (one off vote)
	Better Access To Work Experience/ Hard To Find /Better Advertisement	We should have the support to do at least a week's placement at a place of our choice
	Living Wage	No one should be paid less than the Living Wage
	Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make public transport cheaper better and accessible for all Provide better information about travel passes and discounts

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

There is some good work going on in Warwickshire where the 'voice of the child' is listened to and directly changes how council services are provided to children and young people.

There are a number of groups that meet regularly with workers, such as:

Children in Care Council: is there for children who are 'looked after' or are 'care leavers'. Warwickshire has worked with the Children in Care Council to develop a Warwickshire Pledge, these are promises Warwickshire has made to children and young people.

Care Leavers: have something called a 'Local Offer' which explains their rights and also includes in it young people's right to take part in participation activities that interest them.

Warwickshire Youth Council: act as a voice for young people from all over Warwickshire.

Members of Youth Parliament: are young people voted for through elections in Warwickshire to represent their local area in the Youth Parliament.

The council also engages with children and young people with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN) on a project basis through special school councils and short break groups.

But, there are also situations where work has not been co-ordinated properly, which has meant that some important messages from children and young people have been missed, and not shared or acted on, by council staff.

Often children and young people are only asked what they think about council services. This approach does not always provide an opportunity for children and young people to work alongside adults to design council services.

This is a lost opportunity for Warwickshire.

There are a number of changes needed to get children and young people more closely involved with workers to shape future council services.

We believe there are 9 work areas that need improvement:

	Work Area	Where are we now?	Where are we going?
1	Recruitment: having a say in who gets the job	Young people are on some recruitment panels	Young people should be on recruitment panels where the job has contact with, or makes direct decisions about, young people
2	Training: helping adults to understand how to communicate with children and young people	Some young people have an input into some training	Young people should create, present, and assess training for people who work face to face, or make decisions about, young people
3	Communication: having a clear conversation	How information is shared with young people varies. Young people need to know how to share information with us	Define more clearly how information should be shared and fed back. Better planning and use of social media
4	Commissioning: companies who are paid to deliver services for young people	Young people are giving their views in parts of the commissioning process	Young people should be involved appropriately in the whole process where services are used by them
5	Quality Assurance/Mystery Shopping: testing how good services are	Some services are quality assured by young people	Young people should work with adult quality assurers to assess services that have been set up for young people
6	Recruiting/Rewarding/Incentives for young people: supporting young people to make things happen	Recruiting or rewarding young people is not consistent	Opportunities for young people into full time employment should be clearly identified and promoted, such as apprenticeships. Clearer rewards policy
7	Having a say in what we do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Design • Delivery • Feedback Work together with young people	The voice of young people is not consistently collected and used	Young people should always be involved in 'Planning - Doing - Reviewing' with senior Leaders. Leaders should evidence what we do differently as a result
8	Regional, national and annual events: Learning from others	Young people attend the same events	Support young people to attend a wider range of events with adults. Use young people's feedback to make decisions
9	Campaigns: introduce a change in attitudes in the workplace	Young people need stronger working relationship with leaders	Senior leaders to champion and resource young people's priorities

MAKING THIS HAPPEN -

HOW WILL WE GET THERE AND WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Warwickshire has made a commitment to **“putting children and young people at the heart of everything we do”**.

To make sure everyone who works for Warwickshire does this, we will remind staff to think about the following questions when planning their work.

“How do you listen and collect feedback from children and young people who use your service?”

We must ask children and young people about the best way for them to tell us about council services we provide them.

“What do you do with the information they tell you?”

We must understand and act on the information that children and young people share with us.

“What does this tell you about the service you provide to children and young people?”

We must build up a picture of what children and young people are saying about what we do and how well we do it.

“How have you changed (or will you change) what you do as a result?”

We must find better ways of doing things and take the advice of children and young people on what those changes should look like.

“How do you make sure that the way you change services is fed back to children and young people?”

We must tell children and young people what has changed, when, how and why. We should check how well the new changes are working.

These questions will help people who work for us plan alongside children and young people.

It will assist them in changing council services according to the views and opinions of children and young people.

The voices of children and young people should be listened to all the time, not just when big changes are planned.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This Participation and Engagement strategy will need an **Action Plan** to make the changes children and young people have asked for.

The Action Plan will be put together by managers, workers and young people.

The work area is something they believe is worth changing based on feedback from children and young people (children and young people say they are dissatisfied with how things are now).

The solutions are better options and easy to understand (they are clear on how to solve the problem).

The actions are realistic (they believe that they can be done)

Managers, workers and young people will need to make sure that:

How do we know we have made a difference?

- Children and young people say they feel more listened to than before the strategy began
- Managers and workers can provide evidence that children and young people's views have been listened to and acted on
- Children and young people say services are now better than they were before the the strategy began

Action Planning

Young people should be aware of the Action Plan so they are able to monitor whether the changes are really taking place and are able to feedback where there are still improvements to be made.

Where improvements are made Warwickshire will celebrate its achievements.

