

London Borough of Barnet

The Voice of the Child Strategy Action Plan

2015-17

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1. Foreword

Within Barnet we have for a number of years delivered a wide range of participation forums that our children and young people can engage with in order to improve their lives and the local communities in which they live.

This updated strategy outlines our vision for participation within Barnet, its context and, crucially, what our aims and objectives are and how we seek to achieve them.

International and national legislation enshrines the rights of children and young people to participate in decisions about their own lives. Research shows supporting children and young people to make informed decisions about their own lives improves outcomes in terms of self confidence, social skills and positive life choices. For children and young people who experience the child protection system, participation is of particular importance. Feedback evidences they continue to demand more involvement in the care that they receive.

To this end this strategy shows our commitment to hearing the voices of all children and young people in Barnet. It brings together in a single approach how organisations will work together as a partnership to plan, deliver and improve the participation of children and young people in the services that matter to them.

We look forward to seeing change that makes a positive difference - led by the children and young people of Barnet.

Cllr Reuben Thompson

Chairman, Children, Education, Libraries & Safeguarding Committee

2. Introduction

This document sets out a participation strategy that is intended for everyone in Barnet working with children and young people. For the purposes of this strategy children and young people are those aged 0 to 19 years, or up to the age of 25, if they have a disability or are included within the Children and Young People Looked After cohort (CLA). This strategy is also for people working directly with children and young people as well as those who commission or manage staff, services or organisations that support children and young people and for organisations and partnerships whose work impacts upon children and young people, for example public health, housing services and transport services. It is intended that all services can access this strategy and work towards its strategic aims.

The strategy is primarily focused on the participation of children and young people, promoting a rights-based approach linked to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also recognise that in many instances the involvement of parents and carers in participation activity is appropriate for service improvement.

This strategy intends to:

- Set out our vision for participation in Barnet
- Clarify what participation involves, and how consultation is used to support this.
- Outline the legislative framework and benefits of participation.
- Identify the good work already in place.
- Outline areas for further development and steps to achieve them by way of outlining an action plan.

3. Our Vision

Our vision is that in Barnet all children, young people and families will have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives. We envisage that they will have transparent access to the services that make decisions affecting their lives and have the opportunity to review these services and shape how these services are planned and delivered. Our vision goes further and expects that all staff and practitioners take in to account the voice of the child as a first thought, rather than an afterthought, and that the journey of the child is thoroughly

and accurately mapped out at all stages.

This vision builds upon Barnet Children's Service '*Children and Young People's Plan 2013 – 16*' which sets out our ambition to actively engage with children, young people and their families in developing and implementing solutions to meet their needs.

4. What we mean by participation.

When we refer to 'participation' we mean talking to, listening to and hearing from children and young people whilst encouraging and supporting them to contribute, participate in discussions and have their voices heard. We then have to ensure that we act on the views and ideas presented and at the same time be open, honest and realistic with children and young people on the levels of involvement that they can have.

There is sometimes confusion about what we mean when we talk about participation and it is often confused with consultation. Consultation is the process by which children and young

people are asked their opinions. This includes asking their opinions on various suggested options or retrospective satisfaction surveys and evaluation exercises. Consultation may support participation, but it does not replace it.

Participation is the process by which individuals can proactively influence decision making and bring about change. This may mean individuals influencing decisions about their own lives, for example children who are supported by social care or children becoming heavily involved in planning their educational pathways. Or, it could mean young people influence the development and implementation of service delivery. There are a number of examples of participation – the following is not exhaustive;

- **Recruiting and selecting staff**
- **Peer mentoring**
- **Undertaking 'mystery shopper' exercises to, for example, audit the quality of care provision CLA receive.**
- **Deciding how money should be spent**
- **Planning, running and evaluating events**

- **Being on forums or councils that lead to change**
- **Lobbying elected members**
- **Making positive changes within the community**
- **Involvement in commissioning services (identifying needs, drawing up service specifications, assessing tenders, inspecting services).**

5. The legislative framework

This strategy recognises the need to make participation a core principle across all services and seeks to engage all children and young people, including those who are vulnerable and/or hard to reach. To that end it takes into account current legislation including:

- Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Children and Families Bill 2013
- Review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner (England) 2014 – to include giving the commissioner a statutory remit to promote and protect children's rights
- Children Act 2004 section 7 (1)
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Health and Social Care Act 2001

- National Standards for Children's Advocacy – Department of Health 2002
- Education and Inspection Act 2006 section 6 (9) (a) and (b)
- Learning to Listen Core Principles (CYPU, 2001).

Local authorities must take steps to ascertain the views of young people and to take them in to account in making decisions about services and activities for them, in line with Article 12 on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They should establish and maintain structured arrangements for doing so. To inform continuous improvement these arrangements should enable young people to inspect, audit and report on, at least annually, the quality and accessibility of provision. As appropriate they should also actively be involved in service design, delivery and governance. Young people should receive the support they need to participate, ensuring representation of the full diversity of local young people and those who may not otherwise have a voice.

6. The local context

The Voice of the Child Strategy Action Plan has been produced under the guidance and support of the Voice of the Child Strategy Group – a partnership of members from the Voluntary Sector, NHS Barnet, Police and Barnet Council. It supports our key partnership document, the Barnet Children and Young People Plan 2013 – 2016 and further underpins the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2013 – 16 in respect of Barnet's Looked After Children and the Early Intervention & Prevention Strategy in order to improve outcomes for Barnet's children and young people.

The Voice of the Child Strategy Action Plan will support the monitoring of participation in practice across Barnet and will be reflected in service plans, workforce development and other activities. It supports current Barnet practice including the participation of children and young people with a disability and children and young people in care in taking in to consideration their voices and opinions. The progress of the Action Plan will be reviewed quarterly by the Voice of the Child Strategy Group (see accompanying governance flow chart), with oversight from the quality

assurance team embedded within Family Services. Further progress will be reported to Barnet's Safeguarding Children's Board annually and at the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel in respect of the work of the Role Model Army.

Within Barnet there are a number of participation forums for children and young people to engage with and they are outlined below;

Barnet Youth Board	<p>A representative panel of young people aged 13- 24 years acting as a voice for the wider youth community of Barnet. They are supported by Children's Services and have specific targets to achieve related to the Children and Young People's Plan 2013 – 16. The group meets regularly to discuss issues affecting young people in Barnet, providing advice and guidance to Barnet council and partners through consultation and debate on a variety of issues. Barnet Youth Board also acts as a link between school councils and other youth groups to disseminate information about issues.</p>
UK Youth Parliament	<p>The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) was established in 1999 and is run by young people for young people, giving them the opportunity to share their opinions on issues ranging from the cost of university education to job opportunities to mental health. Its views and recommendations are listened to by local and national Government and providers of services and other agencies who have an interest in the views and needs of young people. There are 4 members of Youth Parliament in Barnet and they meet fortnightly to undertake local and national campaigns and projects such as improving the quality of mental health services for young people and providing good quality work experience guides for school aged pupils.</p>
The Role Model Army (RMA)	<p>Our Role Model Army is Barnet's Children in Care Council . This piece of work started as a participation project called 'Barnet's Care' in the summer of 2009 and resulted in a group of young people in and leaving care producing a DVD for social workers, councilors and senior staff on what they think of Barnet's care. The group moved to establish the Role Model Army name and brand in October 2009 and now meet every two weeks to discuss issues with Barnet's care system, take part in consultations and participate with managers to make changes and improvements in the care they and those they represent</p>

	<p>receive. A young Junior Role Model Army was established in summer 2012 to represent the voice of Barnet's younger children in care. The RMA annually plan the Achievements Day for CLA, a day to celebrate the achievements of our CLA and Speak Out Day, a day in which our CLA are provided a platform to express their views on their care.</p>
Junior Children's Safeguarding Board (Youth Shield)	<p>Barnet's Youth Safeguarding Panel for young people aged 14-25 years run by CommUNITY Barnet on behalf of Barnet Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB). Panel members plan, develop and deliver a programme of work that focuses specifically on all safeguarding issues for children and young people. The Youth Shield panel consists of young members who represent a range of groups and panels for young people across the borough and therefore act as a collective voice for Barnet's young people on safeguarding issues. Project work has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough-wide consultation work with other young people about aspects of safeguarding • Interviewing lay members for Barnet's Safeguarding Children Board • The development of an Allegations leaflet • Peer-to-Peer Healthy Relationships Training <p>The panel meets every month and they present quarterly reports at Barnet Safeguarding Children Board meetings. The purpose of the panel is to enable young people to have a platform where they can raise issues and concerns around safeguarding in a way that enables them to have a direct link to the adult board. It also enables the adult board to have direct contact with young people so they can explore the key areas of concerns for young people.</p>

Barnet Youth Board, Role Model Army, Barnet Members of Youth Parliament and Youth Shield have worked alongside wider community partners such as Barnet Young Carers and Siblings, children and young people with disabilities and young people affected by homelessness, to participate in the planning, design and commissioning of multi-agency services including health, police, council and community services. Events and activities championing the voice of the child include; Barnet Takeover Day, Speak out Day, Achievements Day, UK Youth Parliament elections, Care Monitor, annual national survey of Children in Care and Care Leavers and Total Respect Training.

Consultations across a range of thematic areas have been undertaken with our young people including; health and well-being, community safety, council tax, safer transport, council budget proposals and Barnet Police Stop and Search processes, young people's attitudes towards the Police, self-harm and the delivery of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Further still, our young people have created engaging films and

training around healthy relationships, the 'Our Voices' film which used social care training, production of Role Model Army website and the design of a welcome guide for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in Barnet. All of this literature and media sits alongside 'The Barnet Pledge' – a document outlining Barnet's Corporate Parenting responsibilities to all our children and young people in care and holds us to account.

The recruitment and selection of staff continues to include our young people and their participation in the recruitment of senior Directors, managers and practitioners continues alongside interviewing and training foster carers.

Future opportunities:

Given the ambitious nature of the participation work the Voice of the Child Team is seeking to deliver, it is anticipated that future areas of development and exploration will include;

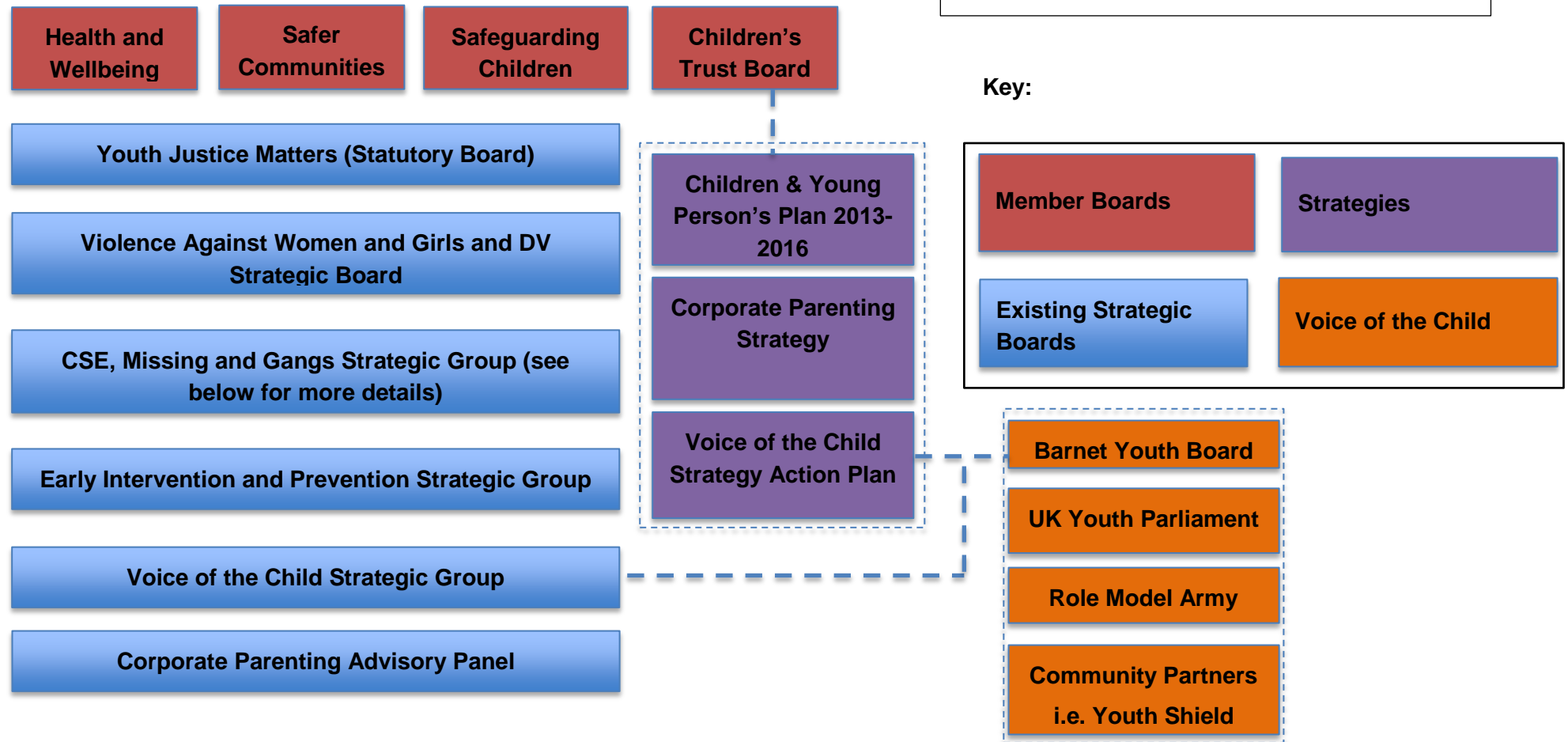
- Delivering participation training externally to voluntary,

community, faith, statutory or private organisations that support embedding children's rights within their work.

- Developing and delivering youth led projects including inspections and grant awarding.
- Developing and delivering peer led educational programmes to inform fellow young people about topical issues and emerging hazards that affect their lives.
- Develop and deliver income generating consultative work for organisations that seeks to discover the views of children and young people that they wish to deliver services for.

7. Governance

High level multi-agency partnership structures



8. Our strategic aims

In order to achieve our vision for children and young people's participation across Barnet Family Services and partner agencies we will;

Develop	Support managers and practitioners to further <u>develop</u> the participation of children and young people within their service, whilst seeking to ensure that their services are responsive to issues affecting children and young people.
Include	Seek to <u>include</u> a wide and diverse representation of children and young people within our participation forums and services.
Multi-agency	Seek to integrate a joined up <u>multi –agency</u> approach towards participation between partner organisations and embed participation best practice into team plans.
Evaluate	Develop and embed a simple framework for monitoring and <u>evaluating</u> the participation of children and young people.

Key Performance Indicators will be identified to measure outcomes against our strategic aims and the Voice of the Child Strategy Group will meet regularly to review progress and intervene where necessary.

9. What are our young people saying about participation in Barnet?

Barnet youth board is so important because it's a forum where young people's voices are heard and they are taken very seriously

It is really motivating when our voices are heard and our opinions are used

I believe that the Barnet Youth Board is important because it enables the youth in society to voice their opinions on the world around them and lets them make decisions in which they wouldn't have been able to make anywhere else.

I have enjoyed the most being able to make decisions within my local borough and seeing the decisions made being turned into a reality. We also have amazing opportunities to volunteer for our community.

10. Action Plan

DEVELOP

WE WILL: Support managers and practitioners to further develop the participation of children and young people within their service, whilst seeking to ensure that their services are responsive to issues affecting children and young people.

	Strategic Approach and KPI		How we will do it	Lead	Evidence of improvement in performance and expected outcomes	Timescale	RAG
1	KPI 1 “Increase the number of practitioners and young people participating in training and consultation with the VOTC team which seeks to improve inter-personal skills and relationships between practitioner’s and young people and between young people themselves” (linked to key priority F & I of LAC & care Leaver Strategy)	1.1	Continue and expand the roll out of Total Respect training (TRT).	Tony Lewis / Anthony Uzoka / Workforce Development	Year 1 (2015/16) : A 25% increased attendance of staff at TRT and with staff self-evaluations afterwards recognising improvements to knowledge and practice. Year 2 (2016/17): A 50% increased attendance of staff at training events with staff self-evaluations afterwards recognising improvements to knowledge and practice.	April 2015 – April 2017	
		1.2	Develop a ‘Participation Training’ programme of half day training to train staff on the benefits and importance of wider participation of children and young people in decision making.	Tony Lewis / Workforce Development	Year 1 (2015/16) Establishment of ‘Participation Training’ Year 2 (2016/17) Participation Training delivered to 20 members of staff	April 2015 – April 2017	

		1.3	Evaluate training and impact on outcomes	Tony Lewis/Anthony Uzoka	Year 1 & 2 (2015 – 2017) Six month follow up survey to staff asking for further self-evaluation of impact	April 2015 – April 2017	
2	<p>(KPI 2) “Increase the frequency of occurrences whereby children and young people are engaged and involved in the design, planning and review of services and commissioning processes.”</p> <p>(linked to key priority I of LAC & Care Leaver Strategy and key priority B of the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy)</p>	2.1	<p>Using Barnet Youth Board, UK Youth Parliament, Role Model Army and wider community youth voice forums we will actively promote their availability for services to consult and engage with them. We will further support these youth voice forums to research and feedback the views of children and young people on thematic areas such as Community Safety, Child Sexual Exploitation , E-Safety, Domestic Violence and health and well-being, amongst others, in order to ensure that services and interventions are targeted and effective. Using online surveys, focus groups, 1:1 interviews and social media research our forums will be reflective of current and emerging issues affecting children and young people. Our forums will be given opportunities to meet with senior leaders within the local authority and the wider children’s partnership in order to voice their views – this could come by way of meeting with local MP’s, Councillors and increased youth attendance at Town Hall. Further opportunities will support children and young people to become involved in local, national and international youth campaigns.</p>	Tony Lewis / Anthony Uzoka	<p>Year 1 (2015/16) : The VOTC team will seek to increase the number of occurrences whereby children and young people meet with senior leaders and elected representatives at a local and national level by aiming to ensure that at least 6 times per year there is an opportunity for them to meet.</p> <p>Year 2: (2015 / 16) :The VOTC team will seek to increase the number of occurrences whereby children and young people meet with senior leaders and elected representatives at a local and national level by aiming to ensure that at least 10 times per year there is an opportunity for them to meet.</p>	April 2015 – April 2017	

		2.2	Ensure that the work of the VOTC team is utilising communication channels as effectively as possible. Staff newsletters, circulars, Council social media, press releases, Chief Executive communications are examples to be used in order to make the work of the VOTC team as 'forward facing' as possible. All communications in respect of our participation forums both internally and externally will go through corporate communications to ensure continuity.	Tony Lewis / Anthony Uzoka	Year 1 & 2 - minimum of 1 communication externally and internally per quarter highlighting the good work of the VOTC team.		
		2.3	<p>The Participation Officer will, alongside the Role Model Army, undertake auditing and systematic dip sampling by way of 'mystery shopper' exercises to review the quality of care provision and information provided to CLA and those Leaving Care - set against a standardised framework of best practice by the VOTC team. Once a CLA has been in care for 6 months between the 6 to 9 month mark the CLA will be subject to a 'mystery shopper exercise' and they will be contacted to evaluate the level of provision and quality of care afforded to them. Each return will be reviewed at month 12 to monitor progress made for that CLA.</p> <p>For CLA that have been in care for more than 6 to 12 months a targeted approach to evaluating their care provision will be incorporated e.g. randomly generating an age cohort to audit, targeting those CLA who are NEET or residing in care home placements.</p>	Anthony Uzoka	<p>Year 1 (2015/16) One mystery shopper exercise per quarter with subsequent monitoring of progress for those CLA returning information.</p> <p>Year 2 (2016/17) A 75% increase on returns generated from Year 1 from those CLA and those Leaving Care receiving and self-reporting an improved consideration of their care provision over a 2 year period will evidence impact.</p>	April 2015 – April 2017	

		2.4	Voice of the Child work will seek to evaluate the effectiveness of CP Conferences and work with a small cohort of children and young people subject to CP plans.	Tony Lewis / Anthony Uzoka	Year 1 & 2 (2015/17) Consultation work with children and young people subject to CP plans to occur before April 2016.	April 2015 – April 2017	
		2.5	The involvement of children and young people within commissioning processes by working alongside FS Commissioning and the CCG to embed participation best practice.	Tony Lewis	Year 1 & 2 (2015/17) Children and young people to be involved in a minimum of 2 commissioning processes per year	April 2015 – April 2017	
		2.6	Seek to ensure that young person's interview panels are routinely used to appoint senior leaders.	Tony Lewis / Anthony Uzoka	Year 1 & 2 (2015/17) Children and Young People to be involved in a minimum of 4 interview panels per year across the Local Authority and Partner Organisations.	April 2015 – April 2017	
		2.7	Embed youth led inspections and reviews of services to gauge if services that are currently delivered, and/or are planned to be, are child friendly and meeting the needs of children and young people as defined by children and young people themselves.	Tony Lewis	Year 1 & 2 (2015/17) To be involved in any planned major service reviews e.g. CAMHS / Public Health /SEN and LDD provision (0-25 provision)	April 2015 – April 2017	

INCLUDE

WE WILL: Seek to include a wide and diverse representation of children and young people within our participation forums and services

	Strategic Approach and KPI		How we will do it	Lead	Evidence of improvement in performance and expected outcomes	Timescale	RAG
3	(KPI 3)“Increase representation of ‘hard to reach’ and marginalized young people upon the youth participation forums” (Linked to key priority B, F & I of the LAC & Care Leaver Strategy)	3.1	<p>The VOTC team will seek to extend the reach of its participation forums to children and young people who would not ordinarily have to the opportunity to participate. By working alongside multi faith groups, the Youth Offending Team, Pupil Referral Units, training providers, organisations that support those with SEN and disability, supported accommodation providers and other community partners engaging with children and young people who are marginalized and disaffected, we will seek to empower young people to engage with participation forums by showing them the value, worth and need for their input. By tracking the throughput of young people engaging, by for example monitoring the post codes of the young people, the VOTC team will be able to target areas of Barnet which are under-represented and seek to improve engagement levels.</p> <p><u>There is no data currently available therefore Year 1 data returns will indicate a baseline</u></p>	Tony Lewis	<p>(Year 1) Increase in membership from young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Membership monitoring will track young people participating alongside start and exit interviews in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data upon participation membership.</p> <p>(Year 2) 25% Increase in membership from young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Membership monitoring</p>	April 2015 – April 2017	

			<u>figure for improving upon in Year 2.</u>		will track young people participating alongside start and exit interviews in order to gather quantitative and qualitative data upon participation membership.		
		3.2	In respect of CLA the Role Model Army will seek to engage with a wider cohort of CLA and those leaving care than those that have historically engaged. Using communication tools such as Skype, where appropriate, online surveys, meetings with IRO's, Banarado's advocacy, gathering views from Health visits, invitation to Achievements Days and individual events which encourage our CLA to discuss the quality of their care provision we will seek to gather as wide range of views as possible. The 'journey of the child' will be more effectively recorded providing a broader 'snapshot' of the experiences Barnet's CLA and those Leaving Care receive. As of April 2015 approx 190 CLA were placed out of borough.	Corporate Parenting / Anthony Uzoka	<p>Year 1) (1)The Role Model Army to engage with 15% of CLA placed out of borough through the forums identified.</p> <p>(Year 2) (1) The Role Model Army to engage with 25% of CLA placed out of borough through the forums identified.</p>		

		3.3	A more flexible approach to ascertaining the views of CLA by IRO's. Consideration to be given to engaging with CLA outside of review meetings - either by way of meeting prior to reviews in neutral venues or setting time aside in advance to meet with the child or young person.	Safeguarding / Tony Lewis	<p>(Year 1) (2) IRO's to provide qualitative evidence of improved CLA engagement within the assessment, planning and review of their care.</p> <p>(Year 2) (2) IRO's to provide further qualitative evidence of improved CLA within the assessment, planning and review of their care.</p>		
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MULTI-AGENCY

WE WILL Seek to integrate a joined up multi-agency approach between partner organisations and embed participation best practice in to team plans.

	Strategic Approach and KPI What we will do		How we will do it	Lead	Evidence of improvement in performance and expected outcomes	Time scale	RAG
4	KPI 4 "The VOTC team to work in tandem with partner organisations to establish up to 3 further participation forums and/or services that provide a voice to children and young people" (Linked to key priority B, F & I of the LAC & Care Leaver Strategy)	4.1	The Voice of the Child Strategy Group will comprise of a broad cross section of agencies from the children's partnership local authority and including third sector partners. . Working towards a clear Terms of Reference it will strategically plan and review progress against the KPI's and offer additional support. It will be the central forum for support to be offered to other services in achieving positive progress against the KPI's.	Tony Lewis	(Year 1 & 2 on-going) Evidence of the VOTC Strategy Group acting as the 'critical friend' within official minutes and providing support to achieve targets.	April 2015 – April 2017	

		4.2	Development of a further forum or service for children and young people to express their voices. For example; a peer led review of the 0-25 provision for LDD and SEN, young commissioners, the establishment of a new youth voice forum that supports disadvantaged young people, a corporate parenting mentoring scheme to include elected members mentoring CLA.	Tony Lewis	<p>Year 1 (2015/16)- Evidence of the VOTC team working in tandem with partner organisations to establish and deliver 1 additional service that advocates for the views of children and young people. Partner organisations that evidence to the VOTC service re-design, which includes children and young people, based upon self-assessment will evidence an improved impact.</p> <p>Year 2 (2016/17): Evidence of the VOTC team working in tandem with partner organisations to establish and deliver 2 additional services that advocates for the views of children and young people . Partner services that evidence to the VOTC service re-design, which includes children and young people, based upon self-assessment will evidence an improved impact.</p>		
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5	KPI 5 “ An increase in % of children and young people attending CTB BSCB and Council meetings” (Linked to key priority B, F & I of the LAC & Care Leaver Strategy)	5.1	By using our current participation forums we will seek to embed attendance at CTB , Council Meetings and BSCB as part of the requirements of membership. This will serve to increase the level and the profile of dialogue between children and young people and senior officials.	Tony Lewis	Year 1 & 2 on-going: attendance by children and young people at x3 Council Meetings at Town Hall per year and consistent attendance at CTB and BSCB.		
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EVALUATE

WE WILL: Develop and embed a simple framework of monitoring and evaluating the participation of children and young people

	Strategic Approach and KPI		How we will do it	Lead	Evidence of improvement in performance and expected outcomes	Timescale	RAG
6	KPI 6: “Effectively monitor the demographics of the children and young people engaging with the youth forums producing quarterly reports on engagement levels. “ (Linked to key priority B, F & I of the LAC & Care Leaver Strategy)	6.1	Develop a framework for the monitoring of children and young people engaging with our participation forums to evidence impact and to ensure that there is equality of opportunity and an accurate reflection of the borough’s diversity. Recording, monitoring and evaluating attendance and level of service received will be undertaken in order to achieve this. A ‘you said, we did’ report will be produced yearly to feedback to service users how the VOTC service has sought to improve. There are currently no baseline data sets available so Year 1 returns will set baseline figures moving forward into Year 2	Tony Lewis/ Anthony Uzoka / Corporate Parenting	Year 1 (2015/16) Produce end of year data returns and report reviewing impact, level of engagement and diversity factors. Year 2 (2016/17) : Evidence of greater impact i.e. service re-design the VOTC have assisted in, projects and campaigns established by young people have successfully applied for funding, young people's interview panels more	April 2015 – April 2017	

					broadly used and more CLA voicing an improved level of care and information provided.		
		6.2	Produce a toolkit alongside this strategy which seeks to monitor and evaluate the extent to which services listen to the voices of children and young people.	Tony Lewis	Year 1 & 2 (2015/17) Increase in partner services self-evaluating their participation effectiveness/ expected outcome is 2 services per year to undertake self-evaluation using prescribed toolkit.		