

# South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee



## Children and Young People's Engagement and Participation Strategy (2021-2024)

*Working together to keep our children safe*

Revised December 2020

## Message from the Independent Chair of the South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee

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*“Guard your light and protect it. Move it forward into the world and be fully confident that if we connect light to light to light, and join the lights together of the one billion young people in our world today, we will be enough to set our whole planet aglow,”*

Hafsat Abiola. Nigerian Human Rights Activist.

The abuse and neglect of children and young people has been shown to affect their physical, emotional and social development with potential long-term consequences on health, educational attainment, employment and social adjustment. South Lanarkshire’s multi-agency Child Protection Committee is committed to working together to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in the area so that they live with dignity, as articulated in its’ shared vision;

*“All children and young people in South Lanarkshire have the right to be cared for and be protected from abuse and harm in a safe environment where their rights are respected.”*

(SLCPC Annual Report & Business Plan)

Children and young people, however, are not just beneficiaries of the child protection services but, in South Lanarkshire, are active contributors to its development, leading to better, more informed and sustainable systems. We will continue to promote the meaningful engagement and participation of children and young people at all stages in the child protection process.

This strategy aims to progress, even further, a paradigm shift in South Lanarkshire’s approach to child protection which began some years ago. We are moving more and more towards strength-based approaches, supporting children and young people to claim their rights to protection and helping us to understand more and act early to prevent harm for occurring, or recurring.

We aim to encourage participation at different levels- in individual child protection plans, amongst groups of children and young people with similar agendas so that services are shaped by their knowledge, and at a community level so that wider environments support children and young people to live safely and achieve their potential.

This strategy for engagement and participation will help establish a common agenda across the partnership which;

- Sets the overall direction of the engagement and participation work
- Improves the consistency and quality of this work and
- Identifies specific areas where expertise should be built.

We aim to bridge the gap between the 'lived actuality' of the children and young people we work with, and the local policy and practice we develop to support them. This strategy lays out a framework for the next stage in our work to ensure that their participation is genuine and integrated widely into planning. The agenda will require the widest possible ownership to ensure its' success.

I invite you to join us in the work to achieve our ambitions.

**Safaa Baxter**

**Independent Chair of South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee**



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## 1. Introduction

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**1.1** Children and young people are not always in a position to represent their own interests in the same way that many adults are. Decisions may be made about them without their full involvement. When families are socially excluded, the potential for their needs to be overlooked is even greater.

**1.2** South Lanarkshire's Child Protection Committee is the local strategic partnership responsible for developing and implementing child protection policy and strategy across and between agencies. A core function is promoting the safety of children and young people through collaboration across the partnership. This involves ensuring continuous improvement in child protection work, best strategic planning, effective public information and communication. Children and young people should be fully involved to ensure the child's experiences and perspectives are properly reflected.

**1.3** South Lanarkshire's Child Protection Committee is committed to achieving best outcomes through the use of evidence-based approaches. This strategy, therefore, is based on the findings from the Children in Scotland/ Scottish Government's research report [The Impact of Children and Young People's Participation on Policy Making \(2018\)](#) which identifies key elements of successful engagement programmes with children and young people.

**1.4** At a local level, and consistent with the ambition to have the engagement and participation of children and young people as active contributors in all policy, this strategy is informed by the ambitions and actions contained in South Lanarkshire's Integrated Children Service Plan, 2019-2020, the [South Lanarkshire Child Protection Committee - Annual Report and Business Plan \(2020-2021\)](#) and the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Commissioning Plan, 2016-19.

## 2. Vision

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**2.1** Across South Lanarkshire all children and young people will equally be respected and supported, across the partnership, to contribute, as living architects, to the design of best child protection support and services, directly shaping safer practices and environments where each child and young person can flourish.

### 3. What is engagement and participation?

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**3.1** Engagement is often viewed as synonymous with involvement, but real engagement goes beyond involvement. Engagement involves motivating and empowering individuals to recognize their own needs, strengths and resources and to take an active role in changing things for the better. Engagement in a child protection context should be-

#### **3.2** Child/ young person-centred

Strengths-based, where children and young people are more than their 'problems' and their "*capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values and hopes need to be identified and utilised*" (Saleebey, 1996).

Participatory, with every opportunity provided for the child, young person and their family to be involved and contribute

Based on clear, open and appropriate communication with exchange of information

- Inclusive, non-discriminatory and considerate of relevant aspects of culture
- Collaborative with support services

[Harry Shier \(2001\) - Building Pathways](#) outlines five different levels of engagement:

1. Children are listened to
2. Children are supported in expressing their views
3. Children's views are taken into account
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision making.

**3.3** Participation is an essential aspect of the engagement process. It is the meaningful involvement by an individual in the decision-making processes which affect their lives. The three types of participation covered by this strategy are:

**Individual** - where a child has a say in decisions about his or her life which may include planning and designing their own support and service provision. This is the bedrock of good participation practice.

**Public participation** - the engagement of children and young people in designing and planning wider child protection services and practices can lead to a strategic and operational impact.

**Family participation** - in addition, the child or young person does not exist in a 'vacuum' and it is important, whenever possible, to work with the key people in their lives. Research shows that, even in cases of child abuse, this often leads to better outcomes for the child or young person (Thorpe, 2008). Family work can also support the child or young person to have a voice within the family.

**3.4** Our strategy aims to ensure children and young people have opportunities for meaningful participation across all three contexts, depending on the needs and aspirations of the individual.

## **4. Legislation and policy**

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**4.1** Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children and young people have a basic right to have a say and be taken seriously in all matters which affect them and requires government organisations to actively engage them in decision making. This right should extend to all aspects of their lives, from family settings, schools and communities to society as a whole.

**4.2** The 'right to protection' is defined in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - "from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence". It requires a different set of interventions than does 'children's rights'.

**4.3** The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 introduces provision to take account of the views of children in decisions that affect them and has resulted in the introduction of the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) (1). The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) National Practice Model recognises the fundamental right of children, young people and families to be involved in decisions which affect them.

**4.4** The 'Together' report on the State of Children's Rights in Scotland (2016) (2) recognises that activities to engage children and young people is not adequately embedded across organisations that work with them and often excludes younger children and children with additional support needs, who can be more difficult to engage with. In addition, the impact of their involvement can be unclear to the participants and to others.

**4.5** In addition to upholding the rights of children and young people, their effective engagement and participation has been shown to lead to improved policy development, an increase in understanding of their civic rights across both parties and an increase in confidence amongst the young people involved (Hudson ;2012).

**4.6** The Care Inspectorate makes explicit the responsibility of Partnerships to empower, listen to and act on the voice of the child receiving support and services. This is particularly important for children and young people who are in the child protection system or are at risk of harm and those who are looked after at home or away from home or are care leavers.

**4.7** The SLPC's commitment to leading improvements in the engagement and participation of children and young people is part of a wider systems- strengthening approach to child protection work which recognises the inter-connectedness between children and young people's rights and the causes of harm and neglect. At a wider level, the work aims to contribute to lasting social outcomes, strengthening

the environment for children and families, tackling exclusion and inequality, enhancing the role of children and young people in civic society.

1. [Scottish Government - Children's Rights, Wellbeing and Impact Assessment Guidance](#)
2. [Together \(2016\) State of Children's Rights in Scotland. Edinburgh: Together](#)

## 5. Strategy

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### 5.1 Principle- Relevance

Engagement and participation work will not be tokenistic; it will give children and young people the opportunity to plan, shape, lead, review and change policy and practice.

How will this be achieved?

- › Opportunities will be provided on issues of real relevance to their lives to initiate ideas and activities.
- › We will be clear about what is open to influence and change.
- › We will be clear about how the views of children and young people have informed changes in child protection policy and practice, and be willing to share this with them, feeding back in an appropriate and timely way.
- › Our engagement and participation work will focus on long-term integrated approaches rather than just 'one-off' events.
- › We will continue to develop systems that accurately capture and record the voice of the child and make sure these are easily accessible to services.
- › We will identify ways in which the views, experiences and ideas for change of children and young people receiving child protection services can be aggregated and inform plans for improvement.
- › We will link policies and procedures to engagement and participation work
- › We will ensure that engagement work is not just heavily weighted towards the 'data collection' stage and more emphasis is placed earlier in the process on planning, and later on evaluation and feedback.
- › The partnership will be accountable and give a commitment to feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes and monitoring and evaluation of participation will be undertaken, wherever possible with children and young people themselves.



## 5.2 Principle – Communication

Communication with children and young people about their right to participate and influence, and during the process of their engagement must be clear, appropriate and respectful.

How will this be achieved?

- › Communication is relevant and jargon free, we will be clear on what areas are open to change.
- › Information on how to participate is accessible, detailed, age-appropriate, diversity-sensitive and welcoming.
- › A support person or advocate, signers and interpreters, as well as appropriate aids to facilitate effective communication will be available as necessary; and ensuring transport is available or that meetings are arranged in accessible locations.
- › We will research and develop innovative ways of listening to children

## 5.3 Principle – Inclusion & Respect

Engagement and participation will be inclusive, avoid existing patterns of discrimination, be culturally sensitive to children and young people from all communities, and encourage marginalised children and young people to be involved.

How will this be achieved?

- › We will engage a broad spectrum of children and young people
- › Views will be listened to and treated with respect
- › Children and young people will never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes and they will be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.
- › We will support the participation of vulnerable groups, including those with additional support needs and younger children which may include the use of 'specialist' and creative methodologies.
- › We will be aware of the power of the child protection system in relation to the power of the child, young person and parent/ carer.

- › Friendly environments and working methods will ensure that adequate time and resources are available to adequately prepare children and young people to have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views.
- › Children and young people will be given the opportunity to influence the methods of their engagement.

## **5.4 Principle – Workforce**

The workforce requires to be committed and skilled in engagement and participation work with children and young people

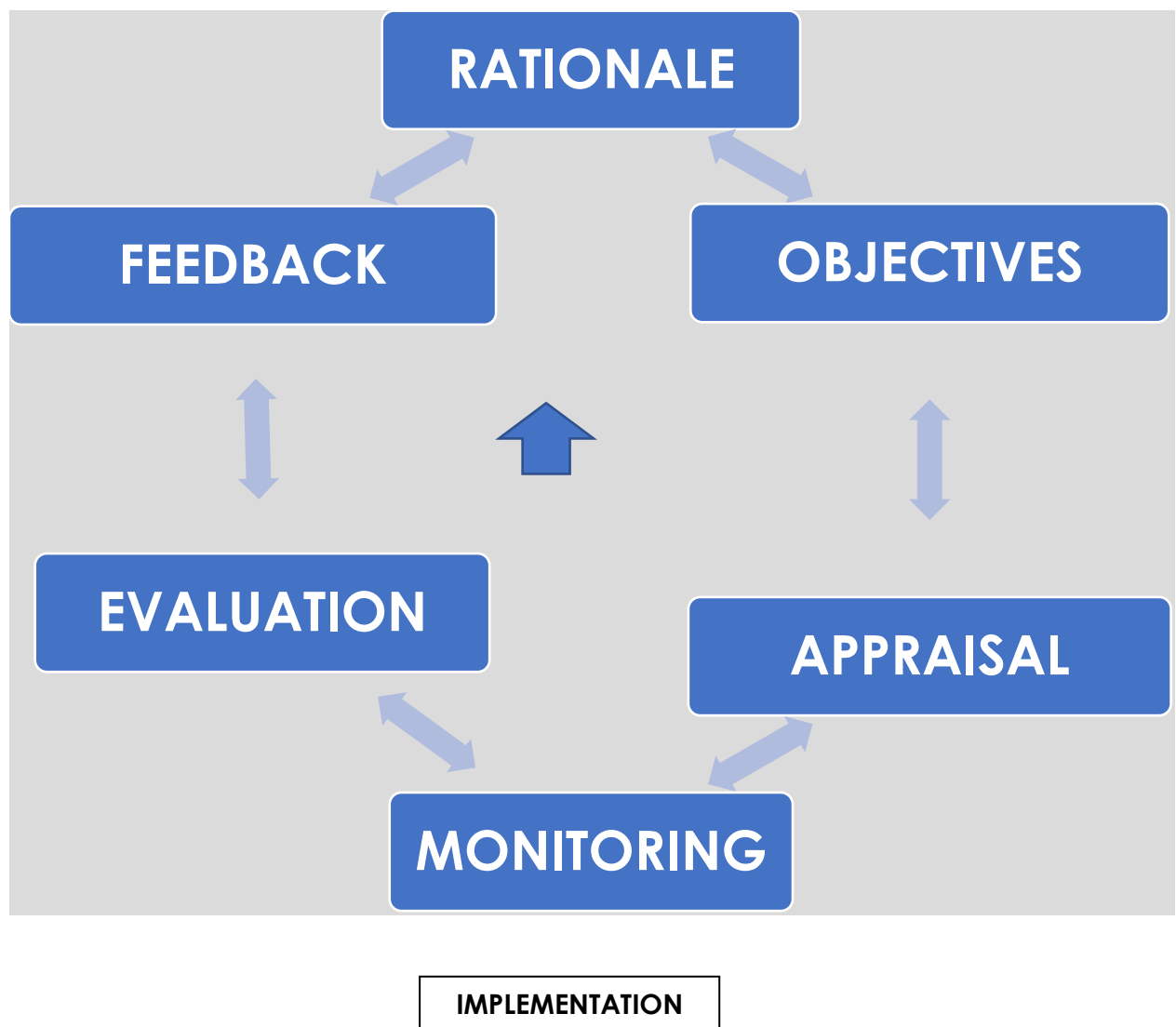
How will this be achieved?

- › Staff will be aware of their responsibilities under the UNCRC and their role in enabling children and young people to have their rights upheld.
- › The wider Children and Families workforce will have opportunities for training and development to ensure they have the necessary skills to facilitate engagement and participation effectively and that they will be supported in this work by senior staff.
- › We will have a range of tools to support engagement and participation work, as well as links to resources and toolkits developed by other local authorities and national participation agencies. We will continue to encourage use of these to support workforce-led and peer-led activities and make available these resources online.
- › We will promote and support a culture of engagement and participation across the partnership, ensuring that our services listen to and respond positively to children and young people's views, using their experiences to make improvements.
- › We will seek out partnerships with organisations who can support them to work meaningfully with children and young people.
- › We will use research to build local knowledge and underpin our efforts.
- › Using quality assurance processes, we will systematically and continually collect and analyse data; develop a clear monitoring and evaluation framework; monitoring the level and quality of participation of children and young people including audits within the Child Protection system.

## 6 Summary of methodology

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### 6.1 Diagram



**6.2** Wherever possible children and young people should be engaged throughout the whole policy-making process: setting the agenda; developing the policy; and involved in its implementation and evaluation. The ROAMEF7 cycle above (adapted to include multi directional flow of information) outlines the policy process.

## PARTNERSHIP ACTION PLAN

Extract from; [Care Inspectorate - A Quality Framework for Children and Young People in Need of Care and Protection \(2019\) - Revised.pdf](#)

Objective	Strategy	Outcome	Timescale and Lead Officer	Details
Reach the most vulnerable and excluded young people  <b>(QI 6.3; 6.5)</b>	Outreach initiatives	Policy & practice is influenced by the most vulnerable young people	Local Authority	<b>COMPLETED</b>  The commissioning of Children First to undertake outreach work with Young People
Extend methods of engagement/ participation beyond physical community  <b>(QI 6.5; 5.4)</b>	Creative use of multi-media/ digital platforms	Increase in numbers & groups involved (E.g. rural); self-evaluation reports of increased control by young people over how views are shared	Child Protection Committee  Lead Officer (SWR)	<b>COMPLETED</b>  Mind of My Own (MOMO) App. introduced after period of consultation.  Work planned with younger children / children with disabilities
Amplify the voice of children and young people & harness their ideas for change (QI 6.5; 6.3)	Involve children & young people in monitoring quality of services	Protection services are shaped by lived experience	Lead Officer SLPC  SWR Manager (Child Protection)	<b>In Progress</b>  Create a feedback loop during and after protection measures took place with children and young People
Increase expertise / creative ideas for engaging	Strengthen capacity of third sector organisations	Children and young people voice is heard and their	SLPC  SWR Manager	<b>In Progress</b>  'Who Cares?' Scotland

children and young people <b>(QI 3.1;7.2)</b>	and residential, fostering services that support young people to have a voice	human rights protected	(Child Protection)	commissioned to provide independent advocacy services for children and young people looked after away from home.
Make 'Engagement and participation' systemic not tokenistic <b>(QI 3.1)</b>	Engage multi-agency co-operation to review policies & practices, identifying areas for improvement & reporting on change	Children and young people report increased sense of influence	Third sector organisations / partners	<b>COMPLETED</b> The champion board has been established
Increase participation and engagement of vulnerable children & young people <b>(QI 7.2)</b>	Routinely audit CP Plans following a CP event to ensure children and young people's views collated	Children and young people feel more involved in matters that affect them.	SLCPC partners	<b>COMPLETED</b> Rolling programme across the partnership
As above	Revise CP paperwork/ Plans to emphasise children and young people's view are included	Staff recognise and respond promptly to concerns about a child or young person. Children and families get the information they need to take part.	Lead Officer Child Protection SLCPC	<b>COMPLETED</b> Full review undertaken
Increase participation/ engagement with the most difficult to	Revise CP paperwork to ensure children and young people with	Individual plans & wider service development are informed	Lead Officer Child Protection SLCPC	<b>COMPLETED</b> For babies and young children

reach children and young people <b>(QI 2.1; 6.3; 7.2)</b>	communication issues (babies/ disabilities etc) have a 'voice'	by the views of difficult to engage children & young people		
Informed planning <b>(QI 5.4; 2.1; 7.2))</b>	Collaborate with young people on chronologies/ assessments/ contingency plans so they are centred on the young people's needs and wishes	Increase in involvement of young people in this area; increase in the assessments/ chronologies/ plans that are fit for purpose each audit.	Lead Officer Child Protection  SLCPC	<b>COMPLETED</b>
Reduce gap between lived experience and service planning <b>(QI 5.4)</b>	Survey young people about safety issues & their experiences of engagement in decision making	Planning informed by young people's views	Children's Services	<b>COMPLETED</b>  Youth Strategy Survey; 2017-20
High level of stakeholder participation in the design and delivery of services <b>(QI 4.1; 2.2)</b>	3 large multi-agency stakeholder consultation events held	The views of communities are reflected in our policies and processes.	Children's Services Strategy Group  SLCPC Sub Group	<b>COMPLETED</b>
Ensure young people feel listened to , understood & respected <b>(QI 2.1; 5.4)</b>	Review MOMO App	Children are more engaged with their plans and have their needs met	Social Work Resources	<b>COMPLETED</b>
Ensure young people feel listened to, understood and respected.	Series of public information events for young people on mental health, on line	Young people are more informed and able to share issues of	Lead Officer Child Protection  SLCPC	<b>COMPLETED</b>  A number of leaflets / information has been provided

<b>(QI 2.1; 5.4)</b>	safety, CSE and bullying	concerns with trusted adults		covering MH, Bullying and CSE
Increase workforce skills to support engagement and participation	SCR local practitioner forums	Increased awareness of importance of hearing the child's voice in complex cases.	SLCPC / Children's Services  CPC Development Worker	<b>In progress</b>  Forums held. CP Learning and Development amending courses to ensure inclusion.

**Extract:** A Quality Framework for Children in Need of Care and Protection (Care Inspectorate) 2019. You can view full guidance [here](#).

## 2. The quality indicators

What key outcomes have we achieved?	How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?	How good is our delivery of services for children, young people and families?	How good is our operational management?	How good is our leadership?
<b>1. Key performance outcomes</b>	<b>2. Impact on children, young people and families</b>	<b>5. Delivery of key processes</b>	<b>6. Policy, service development and legal measures</b>	<b>9. Leadership and direction</b>
<b>1.1</b> Improvements in the safety, wellbeing and life chances of vulnerable children and young people.	<b>2.1</b> Impact on children and young people.	<b>5.1</b> Recognition and response to initial concerns. <b>5.2</b> Assessing risk and need. <b>5.3</b> Care planning, managing risk and effective intervention. <b>5.4</b> Involving individual children, young people and families.	<b>6.1</b> Policies, procedures and legal measures. <b>6.2</b> Planning and improving services. <b>6.3</b> Participation of children, young people, families and other stakeholders. <b>6.4</b> Performance management and quality assurance. <b>6.5</b> Securing improvement through self-evaluation.	<b>9.1</b> Vision, values and aims. <b>9.2</b> Leadership of strategy and direction. <b>9.3</b> Leadership of people and partnerships. <b>9.4</b> Leadership of improvement and change.
	<b>2.2</b> Impact on families.			
	<b>3. Impact on staff</b>			
	<b>3.1</b> Impact on staff			
	<b>4. Impact on the community</b>		<b>7. Management and support to staff</b>	
	<b>4.1</b> Impact on the community		<b>7.1</b> Recruitment, deployment and joint working. <b>7.2</b> Workforce development and support.	
			<b>8. Resources and capacity building</b>	
			<b>8.1</b> Management of resources. <b>8.2</b> Commissioning arrangements.	
<b>10: What is our capacity for improvement?</b>				
Global judgement based on an evaluation of the framework of quality indicators				