

VOICE OF THE CHILD OVERVIEW PANEL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

It is the strategic priority of Tameside Children's Services to place the voice and influence of children and young people at the heart of services. The lived experience and wishes of children and young must be an active driver of decision-making at all points of contact with the authority and they must be actively involved in driving service development. To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure that there are sufficient and adequate mechanisms to encourage children to speak about their experiences of the service. This must be well-evidenced and this must be translated into tangible actions and outcomes.

The Voice of the Child Overview Panel will support these aims by providing a constructive and supportive check and balance to existing activity including policies, procedures and partnership working. To do this the Panel will meet with stakeholders, review existing documentation and assess a range of information and evidence. The Panel does not make decisions about service provision but it will make recommendations to support the service in ensuring the voice and lived experience is at the heart of their work.

SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

The scope and objectives of the Voice of the Child Overview Panel are:

- Seek to hear and enhance the input of children and young people into service delivery and planning by providing appropriate forums for children and translating their views into meaningful action
- Ensure that children and young people are kept aware of the decisions being made about their lives
- Ensure that children and young people feel safe and able to voice any concerns they have about their care
- Ensure that there are a variety of methods available for children of all ages and abilities to be able to communicate their views, including conversations, play and drawings.
- Ensure that Children's Services continues to use the findings from participation and engagement in strategic and operation improvement, as well as in individual case decisions
- Promote challenge to the improvement process to ensure that real opportunities are created to facilitate gathering and reporting of the voice of the child.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

As part of the Children Act 1989 it is the duty of the authority in its care of children and young people, to listen to and base improvements on the wishes and feelings of children and young people on matters that affect them.

PANEL ACTIVITY

The Voice of the Child Overview Panel will undertake the following activity:

- Ensure that designated groups and networks for children and young people are being listened to and adequately support to have their voice heard on a **strategic** level. This includes testing whether these groups are being listened to by key strategic bodies responsible for implementing change.
- Ensure that the voice and lived experience of children and young people are being listened to and acted upon on an **individual** level. This includes examining how this is being evidenced in case files, in decision-making and whether this is visible in audits.
- To use empirical evidence to understand the lived experience of children, and ensure learning from this is being implemented. This will include evidence from external challenge mechanisms/regulators, for example complaints; whistleblowing; Serious Case Reviews; examples of respectful challenge and judicial reviews.

- To benchmark new and innovative ideas for gathering the child's voice and lived experience at strategic and operational levels. This will be done by obtaining examples of best practice from other local authorities with strong record of capturing children and young people's wishes.
- Review the Corporate Parenting offer to ensure it is aligned with and acts upon the needs of children in care. To investigate whether it is fit for the purpose of listening to and using children's experiences to inform services, whether it matches what young people need and how the Council can play a role in developing this offer.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the group is cross-party and is as follows:

- Cllr Teresa Smith (Chair)
- Cllr Jackie Lane
- Cllr Adrian Pearce
- Cllr Gillian Peet
- Cllr Margaret Sidebottom
- Cllr Mike Smith
- Cllr Ruth Welsh

MEETINGS

The Panel will meet on the following dates during the 2017/18 municipal year:

- Wednesday 13 September 2017 – 6.00pm
- Wednesday 1 November 2017 – 6.00pm
- Wednesday 13 December 2017 – 6.00pm
- Wednesday 14 February 2018 – 6.00pm
- Wednesday 11 April 2018 – 6.00pm

The Panel will meet in private.

Meetings will be held in Lesser Hall 2 at Dukinfield Town Hall unless notified differently.

Meetings will last no longer than 2 hours.

REPORTING

The Panel will engage directly with the Tameside Safeguarding Children Board (TSCB) and appropriate sub-groups. The Panel will establish a strong working relationship with the Children in Care Council (2BeUs) and the Practitioners Improvement Group.

The Panel will report quarterly to the Executive Board of Tameside Council, and the multi-agency Tameside Children's Services Improvement Board.