



HILLINGDON
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Participation Strategy
Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs
and/or Disabilities
(SEND)



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Introduction

Engagement and participation is a core principle that is highly valued by Hillingdon Council as a means of understanding and responding to residents', service-users' and stakeholders' views, experiences and needs to enable the provision of excellent and effective services.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEN Code of Practice requires a particular focus on children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and their families, to be actively encouraged to be engaged and participate in local decision-making. The code states that every local authority must ensure that children, their parents and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision.

The participation of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and their families, is a guiding principle of the Disabilities Service in Hillingdon. This participation strategy presents Hillingdon Council's vision for SEND participation and how it will be achieved.

Our vision

Hillingdon's vision for participation is for all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to be at the heart of, and participate in, the decisions and services that affect them.

What is participation?

Participation is a process that will ensure children and young people's voices are at the heart of decision-making. Participation can take place with children and young people at different levels:

- **Individual:** Working with children and young people to involve them in the planning of support and services to meet their needs. For example, this could be in the development and review of their Education, Health and Care Plans or their daily programme of activities.
- **Operational:** Encouraging children and young people to give their views about the services they receive. For example, this could mean them taking part in satisfaction surveys for specific services they receive or acting as a representative for a school council.
- **Strategic:** Working in partnership with children and young people to co-produce policy and strategy. For example, by involving them in the development a short breaks policy or taking part in the commissioning of services.

It's important not to consider these levels as hierarchical and to recognise that participation at any level is highly valued and of equal importance.

Why should children and young people participate in decision-making?

There are many reasons why the local authority and its partners should engage with and involve children and young people in decision-making.

- To meet the statutory requirement under the Children and Families Act 2014.
- To meet objectives in achieving excellent services that respond to the needs and aspirations of children and young people with SEND.
- To enable the local authority and its partners to be efficient and target limited resources to priority areas of need.
- To build better relationships with children and young people, and their families, which enables more efficient service delivery.
- To increase satisfaction with services.

There are also great benefits for children, young people and their families to be involved and participate in decision-making.

- They have opportunities to tell providers what is and isn't working well for them.
- They can voice their aspirations for their lives, and be listened to.
- They are empowered to shape the services and activities that will support them to realise their life goals.
- It helps them to build their life-skills particularly in terms of confidence and communication.
- They will gain knowledge of the services and support available to help them.
- It enables children, young people and their families to hold the decision-makers to account
- It helps to develop transferable skills for future education and employment.

Aims and objectives of the participation strategy:

We aim to ensure that:

- Residents with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their families/ carers are involved in shaping, developing and evaluating the services they use;
- The Parents Forum and Partnership Boards are included in all service redesign/ developments and their feedback is listened to and used; and
- Children, young people and adults have the chance to share their opinions about services and are listened to.

To achieve this we will::

- **Raise awareness** by championing the inclusive participation of children and young people across the council, and its health and education partners, at all levels so that it is a recognised part of the decision-making process.

- **Develop accessible information** by ensuring all information is inclusive so that children and young people can actively participate and make informed decisions about their lives and the services and support they need to achieve their aspirations.
- **Ensure regular consultation and feedback** by providing a wide range of accessible opportunities for children and young people with SEND to have their say; in their way, and by making sure their voices are part of service development and commissioning.
- **Promote active participation in decision-making at all levels** by supporting and empowering individuals to be meaningfully involved in their own education, health and care plans right through to informing strategic planning.
- **Embed participation as an accepted way of working.** We will champion an organisational culture where it is everybody's responsibility to listen to children, young people and their families, to ensure their views inform the way we deliver services.

Our approach to participation:

To achieve participation that is effective and leads to positive outcomes for children, young people and their families our approach will follow agreed core principles. We will ensure that participation:

- Is meaningful.
- Is accessible.
- Is inclusive.
- Is enjoyable.
- Has a clear purpose.
- Is well-planned.

We are committed to capacity-building children and young people so they feel empowered to be involved and will provide support to assist with their communication needs, training to build their confidence and transport so that they can attend participation activities.

What will success look like?

It is important for the local authority to record the outcomes of participation so that we can celebrate success and ensure children, young people and their families feel valued for the contributions they make so that they want to continue to work with us.

To achieve this key performance indicators (*measures of success*) will be developed that capture the following outcomes:

- Children and young people say they feel listened to and are satisfied their views are taken into account;
- Number of children and young people actively contributing to their Education Health and Care plans and review meetings;
- Records of the decisions/initiatives children and young people have participated in;
- Impact of children and young people's participation on service delivery.

- An increase in the children and young people contributing to outcome focused planning which is captured by a 'My Support Plan'.

Specific areas for participation

The areas of SEND services that have been identified by the Disabilities Service as benefitting from the participation of children and young adults are:

- Education, Health and Care plan reviews.
- Developing and reviewing 'My Support Plans'.
- The development of a 'Disabilities Register.'
- Ofsted inspections.
- The ongoing development of the Local Offer.
- Transition to adulthood.
- Short breaks provision.

This is not an exhaustive list and will be added to as requirements develop.

Challenges to successful participation

Capacity: Successful participation requires a great deal of time commitment. Officers must be prepared to dedicate the appropriate level of time needed to plan and prepare for engagement activities, administer them and drive outcomes. To accommodate the attendance of children and young people it is highly likely that activities will need to take place outside of normal working hours.

Finance: Meetings and activities will require a budget to cover items such as:

- Room hire where appropriate.
- Refreshments.
- Travel costs for participants.
- Other associated costs for support and training.

Communication: Participation should be inclusive of all children and young adults with SEND. For instance, those with profound needs may not be able to communicate as well as those with less severe disabilities. We need to consider how we can communicate with them and how we can support them to tell us their views.

Key stakeholders

Hillingdon Council's Disabilities Service

Hillingdon Council's Youth Service(s)

Special provision schools & colleges in Hillingdon

Relevant third sector partners

Short breaks providers

Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

Central & North West London NHS Trust (CNWL): Children, Young People and Family Services

Cabinet Member, Social Services, Health and Housing

Carers/families of children with SEND

Hillingdon Parent Carers Forum

Participation Framework

In partnership with children and young people, we will develop a participation framework which will consist of a menu of opportunities for children and young people with SEND to be involved and participate in decision-making and service reviews.

Equality and Diversity

We will ensure that participation activities are inclusive and accessible. To achieve this we will conduct an annual Equality Impact Assessment. Where gaps are identified, we will take positive action to ensure every child and young person with SEND is empowered to be involved.

Appendix A: Participation Framework

