



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board

Report of the Head of Early Years, Inclusion and Partnerships Hayley Lervy

Matter for Decision.

Wards Affected: All.

Participation & Engagement Strategy.

Purpose of the Report

- To provide Members with feedback on the consultation with stakeholders regarding the proposed new Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Service (ELLLS) Directorate Participation and Engagement Strategy.
- To request Members' approval to formally adopt the strategy which will provide a clear framework for meaningful participation and engagement with children and young people.

Executive Summary:

This report will provide Members with information on the proposed new Engagement and Participation Strategy following consultation

with stakeholders and to request permission to formally adopt the final guidance.

Background:

As set out in the previous report presented on 27th October 2022 Neath Port Talbot (NPT) has established a strong history of participation with children and young people, in particular through the Youth Service. The Neath Port Talbot Youth Council was formed in 1999 and was the first fully elected county wide youth forum in Wales. This strategy aims to build on the good practice already in place, further enhance engagement with children and young people and provide a more systematic approach to participation and engagement that all services within ELLLS can follow.

Welsh Government (WG) is committed to promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the basis of all its work for children and young people in Wales. Participation is one of the guiding principles of the UNCRC with Article 12 setting out the right of children and young people to express an opinion and to have their opinion taken into account when decisions are being made on any matter that affects them. A children's rights approach is embedded across the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018(ALNET), in which person centred practice (PCP) places the child or young person's views, wishes and feelings at the heart of decision making. The New Curriculum for Wales 2022, ensures that pupil voice is integral to designing a curriculum around what and how they will learn. These reforms have provided an opportunity to review our approaches to participation and engagement to ensure all opportunities are accessible, appropriate to meet the needs of children and young people, representative and inclusive.

Response to consultation.

A range of stakeholders have been consulted on the Participation and Engagement Strategy but furthermore they have also been involved

in its development. Workshops were held with a diverse mix of children and young people from a range of backgrounds. This included learners from our special schools as well as mainstream pupils in primary and secondary schools, including welsh medium. Discussions were also held with young people outside the school setting including those involved with the Youth Justice Service, Neath Port Talbot Youth Council and YoVo, the youth council for care experienced young people. All the young people recognised the importance of participation and were very honest and insightful regarding their own experiences and ideas on engagement.

Children and young people liked the idea of having school cluster meetings and would *'like to meet with other schools to share ideas'*, in particular on how other school councils work. They also highlighted improving the use of technology with one saying *'doing stuff online is a good way for children who are shy to talk about important things'*. Ensuring children and young people feel safe was identified as an important benefit of participation, along with making sure they feel safe when engaging in participation activities. Also important was that participation opportunities were accessible to all children and young people, including those with additional learning needs and those where English is not their first language. Some young people also identified the role of peer mentoring in participation and felt it should be included in the action plan, along with greater detail on how school councils are being developed. Most children and young people felt that the document was more aimed at adults and wanted it to be *'less wordy'* with *'more pictures and speech bubbles'* to make it *'more fun'*.

Contributions were received from school staff and a variety of partners from other services, including the third sector. All were supportive of the strategy and the need to be accountable for participation activities. Discussions and feedback has provided very useful understanding of how to ensure participation is inclusive for all children and young people.

The most important themes that have emerged during the development of the strategy are that children and young people want to have more opportunities to be involved in purposeful participation on issues and decisions that affect them, along with engagement opportunities that are safe, accessible and inclusive. The strategy provides a model to ensure that as services we are accountable for providing meaningful participation activities, with a clear process for feedback on the impact of any participation activity.

This strategy provides guidelines for services within the ELLLS to implement, in order to ensure what matters to children and young people is at the centre of how we plan and deliver services (**see Appendix 1**).

Next Steps.

Moving forward work will continue with children and young people to produce a young person friendly version of the strategy and to further enhance its design. An easy read version will also be produced to ensure the strategy is accessible to all. An action plan is attached to the strategy outlining all the next steps.

Financial Impacts:

No impact

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A First Stage Impact Assessment has been completed (**Appendix 2**).

Valleys Communities Impacts:

Positive – the strategy will ensure the voices and opinions of communities and groups of children and young people are considered and that engagement will be purposeful. Training provided for C&YP should ensure they have the skills and confidence to have a voice on issues which affect them.

Workforce Impacts:

Positive. Further staff training and professional development will be implemented when the strategy is formally adopted.

Legal Impacts:

Positive. The new guidance strengthens how we fulfil our duties to the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child.

Consultation:

Consultation was undertaken with stakeholders.

Recommendations:

That Members approve the Participation and Engagement Strategy be formally adopted.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To further strengthen participation and engagement with children and young people on issues and decisions that affect them.

Implementation of Decision:

Decision to be implemented after the three day call in.

Appendices:

Appendix 1- Participation and Engagement Strategy

Appendix 2- Impact Assessment- First Stage

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Appendix 2



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Impact Assessment - First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Approval to formally adopt the ELLL Participation and Engagement Strategy
Service Area: Early Years, Inclusion and Partnerships
Directorate: ELLLS

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	x	
Staff	x	
Wider community	x	
Internal administrative process only		x

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age	x				M	The new guidance will impact on children and young people by providing enhanced opportunities to participate and engage in decision making.
Disability	x				M	The new strategy will encompass learners with protected characteristics and with additional learning needs. The strategy will benefit this group of learners by ensuring all participation opportunities are inclusive.

Gender Reassignment		x				This is not a criterion that will be directly impacted upon by this proposal.
Marriage/Civil Partnership		x				This is not a criterion that will be impacted upon by this proposal.
Pregnancy/Maternity		x				This is not a criterion that will be impacted upon by this proposal.
Race		x				This is not a criterion that will be directly impacted upon by this proposal.
Religion/Belief		x				This is not a criterion that will be impacted upon by this proposal.
Sex		x				This is not a criterion that will be impacted upon by this proposal.
Sexual orientation		x				This is not a criterion that will be impacted upon by this proposal.

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		x				Learners who receive their education through the medium of Welsh will have opportunities to participate in Welsh.
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		x				It is expected that participation opportunities will be made for pupils to engage using Welsh.

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity		x				There will be no change as a result of this proposal.
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment, such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.		x				There will be no change as a result of this proposal.

6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people	x		The guidance will positively impact on the long term well-being of children and young people ensuring they are involved in any decisions that affect them.
Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives	x		The guidance contributes to Well-being Objective 1 as it will contribute to giving children and young people the best start in life, raising aspirations and developing their skills.
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative	x		Numerous groups of children and young people, along with professionals from other services have been involved in the development of the draft strategy.
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions	x		The consultation process will included all stakeholders.

Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	x		The guidance will ensure processes for involving children and young people in good quality, effective participation ensuring they are at the centre of decision making processes and strengthen current arrangements for engagement.
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7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	x
Reasons for this conclusion	
There is no significant impact on any areas other than the guidance will provide further support for schools and vulnerable learners.	

A full impact assessment (second stage) is required	
Reasons for this conclusion	

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	Name	Position	Signature	Date
Completed by	Liz Dennis	Wellbeing & Behaviour Service Manager	E Dennis	13.1.23
Signed off by	Hayley Lervy	Head of Service	H Lervy	13.1.23