



Leicestershire Cares Youth Participation Strategy

This strategy sets out the ways in which Leicestershire Cares works in a participatory way with the children and young people it supports.

What is “participation”?

Participation involves listening to and amplifying young people’s voices by helping them to identify issues that matter to them both individually and collectively, translating these into a plan of action, and co-creating projects and activities to deliver the plan. It also involves reflecting on how any plans were (or were not) implemented and why.

We see a participatory approach as a journey and not an end point. We operate in a complex and ever-changing context in which we have to be creative and agile. We know some ideas will work, some will fail and some will work sometimes or for a while. This is why we are committed to ongoing reflection and learning with our young people and stakeholders and we strongly believe our only real mistake will be not to learn from our mistakes.

Why is participation important?

At Leicestershire Cares, we strongly believe that the lived experience and voice of children and young people should be the central guide to our work. We aim to follow a co-production model where children and young people are actively encouraged and supported to “create” rather than just “consume” ideas for projects, policies and services.

We are firmly committed to a children’s rights approach. We believe the Children Act and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provide positive frameworks for our co-production approach and we support the “no one left behind” ethos of the sustainable development goals. We also strongly believe in an asset-based approach to community development that recognises and draws on the strengths of the community. We see potential and solutions rather than blocks and problems.

There are lots of benefits of participation for young people and Leicestershire Cares, including:

- **Rights:** It supports young people to feel respected and listened to; they learn about and act on their rights; and are involved in decisions that affect them.
- **Empowerment:** It shares power between generations and can help young people overcome barriers to achieving goals.
- **Development:** Young people gain skills, confidence and self-esteem, and build connections and networks with their community. Leicestershire Cares gains an even deeper understanding of the issues that affect our young people.
- **Efficiency in policy/practice/services:** Young people help to improve services to meet their needs. Leicestershire Cares improves its decision making by involving young people, ensuring support and services are responsive to their needs.
- **Transformation:** It offers the opportunity for young people’s engagement as democratic citizens, that engages with different viewpoints, difficulty, and the importance of working together to determine a course of action. They become part of ensuring our communities are inclusive, equitable and responsive to 21st century challenges.

Our approach to participation

Leicestershire Cares takes a rights-based approach to participation. To help us do this, we use the Lundy Model of Participation. This model gives four key stages of participation that need to be met under Article 12 of the UNCRC.

These stages are: **space, voice, audience, influence**.



The Lundy Model works well with our [Power to Change](#) approach, which places young people and communities at the heart of what we do. This model was developed through reflection and in consultation with our young people, partners and stakeholders, and is underpinned by a commitment to participation.

We will ensure that space, voice, audience and influence are embedded within each of the three “circles of power” that we seek to move participants through:

Power Within: Support young people to identify the challenges they face, understand why this is and how they might bring about change.

- Space: Ensuring the spaces we use to deliver our work (both in person and online) are accessible and welcoming for all young people, and that young people feel safe and respected.
- Voice: Supporting young people to identify and voice their concerns and ideas, and encouraging them to stick with difficulty and uncertainty when identifying and working towards their goals.
- Audience: Ensuring that staff listen to and respect young people’s views, while also challenging young people to think deeply about difficult issues. Staff support young people to raise these views with senior managers where needed.
- Influence: Co-creating individual action plans and enable young people to take action for themselves. Acting on young people’s views and issues quickly and appropriately.

Power With: Support young people to build relationships, networks and connections which enable them to recognise and articulate the systemic issues which affect them.

- Space: Providing a range of group opportunities for young people to meet and share their views, with their peers but also with other organisations and community groups.

- Voice: Working with groups to identify common issues and experiences and to consider the reasons why this is the case. Using resources and tools that are creative and inclusive.
- Audience: Working with young people to identify who they want to influence, what their key messages are, and how they can communicate these effectively.
- Influence: Co-creating and co-delivering activities, campaigns and projects with our young people that seek to bring about positive changes for themselves and others.

Power To: Work with young people to enable them to take action to achieve their goals, voice their concerns to decision makers, and create change.

- Space: Establishing a young people's participation group for our work.
- Voice: Working with a diversity of young people to plan and practise how to share their views in constructive and effective ways. Encouraging young people to plan how they will seek change and working with them to reflect and learn from the process.
- Audience: Using our partnerships, networks and connections to enable young people to share their views and messages with appropriate audiences in a range of ways.
- Influence: Supporting young people to be active citizens by participating in relevant policy, practice and legislative debates and encouraging other young people to become involved. Gathering and sharing evidence of impact or differences made as a result of young people's actions.

Working with partners

Our commitment to participation goes beyond our own service development and delivery. We will seek to work in partnership with funders and organisations who share this commitment. We will also promote participatory approaches across our partnerships and encourage organisations to listen to and act on the voiced concerns of young people.

We will continually ask these questions of any work we are involved in:

- How have children and young people been involved in developing this work?
- How are children and young people involved in delivering the work?
- How are children and young people involved in monitoring and reviewing the work?

We also know that many businesses are committed to supporting children and young people and are keen to engage with them. We will continue to work with the business community to help them listen and learn from children and young people on a whole range of issues that might include:

- What are the issues and concerns you currently face?
- How best do we share information with you?
- How can we encourage more young people to consider a career in our industry?
- How can we best support children and young people to develop their communities?
- How can we build better links with and understanding of the needs of young people?

Monitoring and reviewing this strategy

This strategy will be reviewed and updated every year to ensure it captures our learning and progress in embedding a participatory approach in our work.

We will seek to capture the difference this makes to our participants, staff, business members and partners through our monitoring and evaluation systems. We will share this on a regular basis with all of our stakeholders.

Last updated: February 2022.