



Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2024



Contents

- Foreword (Lead Member for Children’s Services and Executive Director Children’s Services).....3
- Our Commitment to Participation 4
- Who are Children and Young People? 4
- What is the Participation Strategy? 4
- Slough Borough Council – Strategic Priorities 4
- The Participation Strategy for Children and Young People 5
- What does Participation mean?..... 6
- Our Model of Participation 6
- Key Language and Definitions 7
- Ways of hearing Children and Young People 8
- Areas that you can influence..... 8
- Benefits of participation..... 8
- How can you get involved? 9
- How will we check that the Strategy is working 11
- Action Plan..... 11

BETTER WHEN WE LISTEN

Foreword (Lead Member for Children's Services and Executive Director Children's Services)

You, the Children and Young People of Slough, are at the heart of everything we do therefore this Participation Strategy is about ensuring that you are central to decision making on issues that affect you, not just seeking your views but acting on them as part of ongoing improvement and development of services and support in Slough.

In the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in January 2023 you told Ofsted:

"They ask us, we tell them, they don't listen. So, what is the point?"

We want you to know that you are being heard and this Strategy is intended to make sure we listen to you, act on what you have said and then feed back to you.

This Strategy is for all services within Slough, especially the ones that work directly with you. We have worked together with our partners to hear what you are saying and we hope it strengthens your voice across all the services who work with you.

Our Commitment to Participation

Our Participation Strategy is led by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 12 which states that **“every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously”** and Article 23 states that **“a child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in their community”**

For participation to be effective, meaningful, and long lasting, it needs to be an ongoing process that we should develop together, rather than a one-off activity. It requires ongoing commitment in terms of contributions, staff time and funding. We are committed to embedding participation champions in all services at all levels, creating a culture of participation which in turn, makes our services more child and young person centred.

Who are Children and Young People?

When we speak of ‘children and young people’, what do we mean? To clarify, we mean those aged 0-19 years old or up to 25 years old if they are a Care Leaver or have Special Educational Needs or a Disability, sometimes referred to as ‘SEND’.

Slough’s population is one of the youngest in England with nearly 28% (43,800) of the population aged under 18, compared to 21% nationally. This is the second highest proportion of children under 18 in England. (Office for National Statistics 2023).

What is the Participation Strategy?

In Slough there are lots of participation opportunities. This document sets out how we plan to utilise these opportunities even better so that you can be *“actively be involved in something”*. We want to be sure that the actions we will take and the different ways we will engage with you make sure your voice makes a difference.

Slough Borough Council – Strategic Priorities

It is important that this Strategy sits within a wider framework of priorities that are overarching for all the residents who live in Slough.

Slough Borough Council has identified its clear purpose as ‘Closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focussing on children’ with three key strategic priorities, the first of which relates specifically to you:

<p>Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people Tackling high rates of child obesity <i>Increasing children and young people’s participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough</i></p>
--

This Strategy is a partnership Strategy for the benefit of all children and young people in Slough. All partners play an equal part in engaging with you and making sure that your voice is being heard and acted upon.

The Participation Strategy for Children and Young People

Our core Values:

Supportive:

- We will be clear and informative, and communicate with you in a way you understand.
- We will involve you as early as possible. We will be clear what we can and cannot change and will explain you why.
- We will talk to you about your options, and give you time to think through your ideas.
- We will share as much information as we can with you.
- We will help our staff to understand what participation is and develop their skills and knowledge, so they feel confident to involve you in decision making.

Innovative

- We will make sure that opportunities for you to participate in are relevant to you and have a clear purpose.
- We will create space for you to have ideas yourself about how we can work differently or how you can help change things.
- We will celebrate your achievements.
- We will continue to learn and develop how we support you.

Collaborative

- We will work with you to help you participate.
- We won't make assumptions about what you can and cannot do.
- We will find opportunities for you to take the lead, learn new skills and develop your confidence.
- We will find ways to involve you whatever your needs and however long you need to do so.

Respectful

- We will treat you with respect and take time to build a relationship with you.
- We will help you to feel safe to give your views clearly and honestly.
- We respect your view even if it's different from ours.
- We respect your privacy and won't share your information with your permission unless we legally must do so.
- We will let you know the outcome of the decisions we involve you in.
- If you feel you are not being listened to or understood, we will help you to speak to a professional you know best so they can help.
- If we can't resolve this for you, we will help you to make a complaint.

Happy, Safe and Loved, Thriving

What does Participation mean?

Participation is about how we can involve you in different ways to hear your views and you about the action we will take because of what you have said. Participation activities include events, fun days out, forums, youth councils/boards, consultations, interview panels, mentoring councillors and more. Put simply participation means:

“Actively being involved in something”.

Participation moves beyond engagement to informing the way we work together to achieve jointly agreed outcomes and feeding back on non-agreed outcomes

Our Model of Participation

There are many different models available to inform the way that participation can be developed. The model we have chosen in Slough was devised by Professor Laura Lundy. Lundy’s model is a way of explaining Article 12 and is what’s called a rights-based model of participation.



The model breaks Article 12 down into 4 key concepts

The Lundy Model is based on four key concepts, SPACE, VOICE, AUDIENCE, and INFLUENCE

SPACE:

- You must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express your views
- You are involved as early as possible and will have opportunities to meet to talk about the service and suggest improvements
- Any participation process is inclusive and accessible to all
- You feel comfortable and safe expressing yourself

VOICE:

- You must be supported to express your views
- You must know that participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time
- You are supported to give your own view, while ensuring we include age-appropriate and accessible information
- You are given a range of ways to express yourself that best suits your needs and choices
- You have opportunities to identify topics they want to discuss
- You have opportunities to influence local, regional, and national partnerships and initiatives to widen the influence and scope of your voice

AUDIENCE:

- Your views must be listened to
- You need to be aware of how and when your views will be communicated and who to
- You will be clear on the commitment of partners to ensure your voice is heard in the right situations
- You will know who the audience is for any participation work you contribute to
- You will feel confident that you will be supported in communicating your views

INFLUENCE:

- Your view must be acted upon
- You will be informed of the scope you have (including limitations) to influence decision making
- You will be given age-appropriate feedback at key points in the development of a service or policy
- Where your voice impacts on the design of a service your contribution will be publicly acknowledged
- You will be aware of what changes / developments have been agreed
- You will be given the opportunity to evaluate the impact of any changes

Key Language and Definitions

Some words and phrases you might hear when you participate:

Consultation – this is where adults seek your views, when work with what you say to shape the outcome. Some of your ideas are taken on board, and others are not. This will be explained at the start.

Co-Production – this is where adults work with you in partnership. Usually, adults have the initial idea or identify an issue or problem. They then involve you to work out

what needs to change and how. This approach recognises your contribution as being as valuable as adults working with you.

Child or young person led or initiated – this is where you identify the issue or problem and select your own activities and adults participate rather than lead on them; *(an example of this in Slough is the Slough Youth Parliament development of its manifesto and work plan).*

Ways of hearing Children and Young People

It is important that we understand there are different ways of you, individually, operationally, and strategically

- **Individually**
 - Decisions relate directly to your own lives.
 - Decisions are made about day-to-day activities.
 - Outcomes primarily impact you.
- **Operationally**
 - Decisions relate to planning, delivery, and evaluation
 - The activity aims to improve the quality-of-service provision.
 - The outcomes affect the individual and other children and young people. For example, delivering training, interviewing professionals, telling us how our services work or don't work for you.
- **Strategically**
 - Decisions relate to long term planning.
 - The activity includes meaningful roles in priority setting, monitoring, and designing services.
 - Outcomes influence policy and practice.

Areas that you can influence

We want to be creative and open up opportunities for you to participate in a number of areas. This might include:

- How our services work, how we evaluate what we do and how we know if we are making progress or have been successful
- How we communicate with you
- How we recruit and train staff who work with you
- The policies we write and work to
- How services are delivered by us or those we ask to do so on our behalf.
- Long term strategic planning

Benefits of participation

For you:

- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Learn skills such as problem solving, working with others and planning
- Make new friends and meet different people
- See the difference you make for others
- Help make services better for you and others in Slough
- Developing communication skills

For us:

- We create services that are better for you
- It challenges us to think about how we include others and make sure that services meet your needs
- Strengthens our accountability
- We know what you really think and we can respond to you

How can you get involved?

There are a number of groups and clubs that you can get involved in.

You could be elected as a Member of the Youth Parliament or participate in our Young Inspectors programme.

Our children in care and care experienced young people make a vital contribution to our services and we have the Reach Out and Space to Talk groups.

We also have groups to support our young people identifying as LGBTQ+ and our children and young people with additional learning needs or SEND.

Group or Forum	Brief Description
Slough Youth Parliament Slough Borough Council sloughforyouth@slough.gov.uk	Slough's Youth Parliament (SYP) ensures that young people in Slough can influence and be involved in decision making in the town SYP is part of the British Youth Council and has a representative that sits on the National Youth Parliament. The manifesto includes the national campaign run each year. Make Your Mark is the biggest youth ballot in the UK, available for 11-to-18-year-olds to participate. The SYP and Youth Voice Team coordinates the registration, elections, and results collection for Slough, via its schools, colleges, and youth groups. This enables Slough young people to feed into national campaigns and let decision makers know what areas of life children and young people want to impact the most. www.byc.org.uk/uk-youth-parliament/make-your-mark
Slough Young Inspectors Slough Borough Council sloughforyouth@slough.gov.uk	A Young Inspector is a volunteer aged between 13-19 and up to 25+ with SEN who will inspect services that impact children, young people, and their families within Slough. The programme is aimed at providing an opportunity to build confidence, learn new skills, make a positive difference, influence the way services are delivered from inspection outcomes. Young Inspectors Slough for You (sloughfamilyservices.org.uk)

<p>Children in Care Council– Reach Out Speak Out Space to Talk – Care Leavers Forum Slough Children First</p>	<p>In Slough the children in care council are made up of two groups, Reach Out is for young people who are in care aged 11+ Space to Talk is for care experienced young people aged 16 to 24. These groups provide children and young people with an opportunity to have a say on issue that matter and be heard, share ideas on how things can be improved, influence changes in organisational policy and meet new friends and enjoy social time and activities. Having my say - Slough Children First Care Council - Slough Children First</p>
<p>Spectrum (LGBTQ) Slough Children First</p>	<p>Spectrum is an LGBTQAI+ Targeted Group, which is a 10-week programme for young people, there are 2 groups - 11-13- and 14–17-year-olds. The programme allows young people to come together to build friendships and explore their identity in a safe place, each week there are opportunities for social time, exploration and focussed time discussing issues concerning wellbeing and building resilience. Add contact details</p>
<p>Young Health Champions Youth Engagement Slough (YES)</p>	<p>Established in 2018, Young Health Champions is a pioneering scheme funded by Frimley ICB and delivered by local charity, Together as One. Young Health Champions are students from local schools in Year 12. They are brought together to: LEARN: Complete a Level 2 qualification accredited by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH). HAVE A VOICE: Work with professionals to ensure young people’s opinions are heard when services are being designed and commissioned. MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Deliver positive messages to peers on themes relating to mental health and wellbeing Home - Youth Engagement Slough (yesslough.org.uk)</p>
<p>SEND Youth Forum Youth Engagement Slough (YES) Delivered by Together as One for Slough Borough Council and Frimley ICB</p>	<p>The new SEND Youth forum launching in 2024 will provide an opportunity for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to have a platform to shape policies, practices, and local services. The group will meet online and, in the community, /school so that young people can have fun and share their views, experiences, and work together with decision makers to impact the lives of young people with SEND. Home - Youth Engagement Slough (yesslough.org.uk)</p>

Volunteer Group Youth Engagement Slough (YES)	Help the community, have fun, develop your skills and make Slough 'Together as One' Home - Youth Engagement Slough (yesslough.org.uk)
Slough Young Carers Youth Engagement Slough (YES)	Cooking, creativity & more, for Slough's young carers (young people looking after a relative with an illness, disability, addiction or frailty) Home - Youth Engagement Slough (yesslough.org.uk)
Girls Group Youth Engagement Slough (YES)	Good vibes, like skills & empowerment Home - Youth Engagement Slough (yesslough.org.uk)

How will we check that the Strategy is working

Success in 12 months will look like...

- We will create a way of explaining this Strategy visually so that you can understand it in different ways.
- A training programme will have been developed and be accessible for all staff in the Council working with children and young people.
- Our young people's participation groups are thriving. The number of young people attending these groups is increasing and the same young people want to stay involved in them.
- We want all services interacting with children and young people to have completed a self-assessment and understand their areas for development in their delivery plan and those of our partners.
- We will be gathering evidence of how children and young people are participating in our services and influencing change through regular reviews and engagement activities.
- There will be an annual report to Cabinet on the progress made against this strategy.

BETTER WHEN WE LISTEN:

Action Plan

The action plan will be a live plan that will change over time in response to progress made and further actions identified and added. Example format below:

Space - Safe Inclusive Opportunities to Form and Express Views
Voice – Children and Young People Are Facilitated to Express Their Views
Audience: Children and Young People's Views Are Communicated to The Right People
Influence – Children and Young People's Views Are Taken Seriously and Acted

Upon

Action

Lead

When

Measures

Impact