

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 10 October 2017

Participation and engagement in Communities and Families

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	

Executive Summary

This report provides information on Communities and Families' approach to participation and engagement as well as an overview of some key engagement activities across the service area. The report aims to support the development of enhanced engagement processes to inform committee decisions and shape policy.

Participation and engagement in Communities and Families

Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the contents of the report.
- 1.2 Discuss appropriate ways to ensure that children and young people, parents and carers, staff and other stakeholders can better inform committee decisions and shape policy.
- 1.3 As a follow-on to the Scottish Government pilot on children and young people's engagement (3.5 – 3.10 below), agree to take part in a workshop with children and young people with a focus on what meaningful and sustained participation will look like in a children and young people friendly city.

Background

- 2.1 Establishments and services across Communities and Families carry out a wide range of engagement activities with children and young people, parents/carers, staff and other stakeholders.
- 2.2 This report summarises some of the key activities and approaches which are currently delivered with a view to informing a discussion of how to develop participation and engagement in the future.

Main report

- 3.1 **Children's Services Plan:** The new Children's Services Plan 2017 – 2020 underpins the work of the Children's Partnership and is based on a shared, multi-agency vision that 'Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and achieve their potential'.
- 3.2 Participation is a central feature of the new plan with partners agreeing to adopt standardised definitions of the range of participation and engagement activities. The plan also sets out the following participation commitments:
 - *'Improve approaches to engage with hardly reached and seldom heard children and young people, their families and their communities, specifically young carers, looked after children and children who share protected characteristics;*

- *Deliver high quality participation activities in line with the national Community Engagement Standards;*
 - *Acknowledge and address inequalities, power differences and capacities to participate;*
 - *Have more personal decision-making in a child's plan and extend the application of direct payments;*
 - *Shape school services through improved partnership working with parents and pupils/students;*
 - *Have an impact on policy developments, for example, through the work of our Young People in Care Council or Young Edinburgh Action;*
 - *Improve work with Edinburgh based members of the Scottish Youth Parliament and Children's Parliament;*
 - *Deliver the recommendations from the Scottish Government funded pilot on engagement of children and young people based on Children's Rights.'*
- 3.3 The plan includes a specific objective to 'enhance children's rights across the city in line with the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights' under strategic outcome 5 'Children, young people, their families and communities will be empowered to improve their wellbeing'.
- 3.4 As part of the plan's performance monitoring framework, lead officers will report on performance across all five strategic outcomes using a template which includes a description of how activities contribute towards the enhancement of children's rights and a description of what engagement has taken place with children and young people, parents/carers and others around the outcome.

Engagement with children and young people

- 3.5 **Scottish Government pilot: 'Putting rights at the heart of planning for children and families in the city of Edinburgh':** The Children's Partnership was successful in its bid to the Scottish Government to develop and deliver an approach to engagement with children and young people which is based on a model drawn from Scotland's National Action Plan for Human Rights. The pilot initiative was a way to develop a methodology for engagement that is jointly owned by children, young people and adult duty-bearers which could then be shared with other community planning partnership areas.
- 3.6 The model, delivered in partnership with the Children's Parliament, consisted of three linked events between March and May 2017:
- Event 1 with children and young people as rights holders
 - Event 2 with adult duty bearers
 - Event 3 bringing children, young people and adult participants together

- 3.7 The purpose was to identify what children and young people need to live their lives with dignity, to recognise barriers and to explore solutions across the domains of home, school and community.
- 3.8 The model produced a wide range of ideas for action and change under the headings of families, schools (or colleges or workplaces), communities and our city.
- 3.9 The intention is that this model will be used to help deliver the Children's Services Plan in the context of ongoing engagement with children and young people.
- 3.10 As part of the process, adult duty bearers made commitments at the end of the final event in the form of 'I can...' and 'I will...' statements. These will be revisited, reporting back to children and young people on progress. Children's Partnership meetings will also include the sharing of progress around the commitments as a regular feature.
- 3.11 **Young Edinburgh Action (YEA)** is an evidence-based approach to implementing Edinburgh's Young People's Participation Strategy that enables young people to set an agenda for action and supports groups of young people to undertake research and make recommendations on topics they choose. The model is made up of:
- 3.11.1 **Young Edinburgh Leaders for Change (YEL for Change)** a 40-hour training programme which develops confident and able young people who can participate and encourage others to get involved. It encourages young people to get involved in other YEA activities and their communities.
 - 3.11.2 At annual **Gatherings**, planned and facilitated by young people, 50-70 young people identify issues for the next year's action research groups. Gatherings ensure that young people set YEA's agenda.
 - 3.11.3 **Action Research Groups** enable a core group to explore and present the views of a wider group of young people. An action research group is established for each of the three topics chosen at the Gathering. The groups are open to any young people in Edinburgh and usually have between six and 15 participants. With support from YEA staff each group: considers the topic and what it means for young people; investigates the current views of young people in Edinburgh; and makes recommendations to decision-makers.
 - 3.11.4 A **Conversation for Action** is convened at the end of each action research process. This meeting is an important interface between young people and senior decision-makers to discuss the topic, make recommendations and develop an action plan.
- 3.12 Current topics for Action Research Groups include gender inequality (which led to the publication of a storybook for 4 to 7 year olds that challenges traditional gender stereotypes), mental health (with young people organising a consultation day for over 130 young people whose views will be included in NHS Lothian's review of young people's services) and LGBT+ issues (working with LGBT Youth Scotland, young people have developed an online survey that has currently been completed by 880 young people and teachers).
- 3.13 YEA staff also support Edinburgh's Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) who represent the views of their constituents. Staff's input includes co-

ordinating the SYP election, inputting into SYP's national campaign (currently rights for young people), regular support meetings and three residential meetings across Scotland each year.

- 3.14 **Young People in Care Council (YPiCC):** In 2010 the YPiCC was established to provide a forum for care experienced young people to engage with and participate in policy, planning and consultation on issues which lead to improved outcomes for looked after and accommodated children and care leavers. YPiCC is independently facilitated by Who Cares? Scotland. Care experienced young people are supported to participate by their Children's Rights and Advocacy Worker and Residential Workers. Membership of YPiCC has varied and numbers have fluctuated however its current membership is at its strongest with approximately 25 members who are representative of all care settings and care leavers. The agenda is set by the young people. There are creative/fun elements as well as a focus on business. Representatives from YPiCC have participated in away days to revise our Corporate Parenting Action Plan.
- 3.16 **Pupil Councils:** Most schools have pupil councils which involve pupils in seeking and representing the views of other pupils, liaising with school staff and taking part in specific projects, e.g. for charities.
- 3.17 **Pupil Surveys:** Pupils across Edinburgh's schools are surveyed on a biennial basis with the most recent survey taking place in the school year 2016/17.
- 3.18 All primary pupils from P3 onwards are asked to complete the Growing Confidence Pupil Wellbeing Questionnaire (PWQ). The PWQ consists of 33 statements on self-regard and self-confidence; resilience and personal coping skills; positive respectful relationships and empathy with others; and safe, caring and supportive learning environment. Pupils are asked to choose one of the following responses to each statement: 'Yes, definitely', 'Yes, most of the time', 'No, only some of the time' and 'No, not really'.
- 3.16 Secondary schools are asked to invite a sample of pupils to complete the 'About your school – Views of pupils' survey. Based on Education Scotland pre-inspection questionnaires, the survey consists of 28 statements with pupils asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with them. The statements cover: learning, support from staff, having a say, bullying, out of school activities and the overall difference school makes in my life.
- 3.17 The total number of responses to the surveys in 2016/17 were 16,002 to the PWQ and 4,441 to the secondary school survey, an increase of 19% and 23% respectively on the previous totals in 2014/15.
- 3.18 Each participating school can download (in the case of the PWQ) or is sent a summary of the responses from its pupils. Citywide summaries are produced and circulated to head teachers and the Schools and Lifelong Learning Senior Team. The reports feed in to school improvement plans and the identification of priorities for all schools.

- 3.19 **Choose Youth Work:** A total of £60,000 was allocated through the participatory budgeting initiative in the first year, with £166,000 available this year on a citywide and locality basis. Young people aged 11 to 21 can vote for youth work projects they think should be funded, once the funding criteria have been met.
- 3.20 The initiative began with a consultation with more than 400 young people, with young people co-analysing responses and co-delivering focus groups with other young people across the city. Young people then identified key priorities and used these to prepare questions for the application form. Applications from youth work organisations were then jointly assessed by officers and young people. Those that went forward were voted on by young people. This year's programme will include events and online voting in each locality.
- 3.21 **Engagement in the GIRFEC process:** Seeking the views of parents/carers and young people has always been an integral part of the GIRFEC process. In most situations where wellbeing information is received (except for child protection concerns), best practice would be to involve the child and parent/carer in discussion. Solution-focused child planning meetings are centred around the child, with attendance and their views being paramount in steering the process. If a child does not feel able to attend a meeting professionals are encouraged to think creatively as to how best to represent the child's views.
- 3.22 A range of GIRFEC documents is available to support the process, including the 'My views' document. Resources are also available to support a young person who has barriers that might affect their ability to contribute to the process e.g. visual cues, Wellbeing Web or a PowerPoint prepared by the pupil to present their views. Parents/carers are invited to comment on their experiences of the GIRFEC process through an evaluation form.

Engagement with parents/carers:

- 3.23 **Parent/Carer Survey:** A similar programme of surveys is carried out biennially with parents/carers across nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. The most recent survey took place in 2015/16. The survey is also based on the Education Scotland pre-inspection questionnaire and schools are asked to invite a sample of parents/carers to complete it.
- 3.24 The survey consists of 15 statements with respondents asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with them. The statements cover: learning, information, having a say, leadership and an overall view of the school.
- 3.25 The total number of responses to the 2015/16 survey was 4,758, an increase of 3% on the previous total in 2013/14. As with the pupil surveys, summary reports are sent to each participating school of responses from their parents/carers and a city-wide summary is distributed to head teachers and the Schools and Lifelong Learning Senior Team.
- 3.26 Some schools customise the surveys by adding in statements on issues which are specific to the school, sometimes agreeing these statements with their Parent

Council. Other schools carry out surveys of parent/carer and other stakeholder views on specific aspects of school life such as homework (St. Mark's PS), establishing a nursery class and changing hours (Wardie PS) and partnership working (Prestonfield PS).

- 3.27 **Parent Councils:** almost all schools have a Parent Council. These are key to representing the views of parents/carers, as well as supporting and promoting the work of the school and children and young people's learning.
- 3.28 Currently the support offered to Parent Councils includes: help for parents/carers who wish to set up a Parent Council; support and guidance with local issues; specific training to enable Parent Council members to be part of the recruitment of head teachers and deputies; and training for head teachers to work effectively with Parent Councils.
- 3.29 **Consultative Committee with Parents (CCwP):** The CCwP meets termly on a city-wide basis with representatives of Parent Councils in each locality and special schools across the city, the Scottish Parent Teacher Council and the National Parent Forum. The CCwP represents views from Parent Councils across the city, discussing city-wide issues and shaping policy and practice in relation to schools. There are ongoing discussions about how to encourage wider participation, to more effectively reflect the breadth of schools and diversity of parents/carers across the city.
- 3.30 Neighbourhood Groups meet in each locality and there is a city-wide Special Schools Group. These discuss and inform practice in each locality and for special schools across the city.
- 3.31 The **Partnership Schools** project, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, is the subject of a separate report to today's meeting (Parental Engagement: Partnership Schools).

Early Years engagement

- 3.32 With the expansion in early learning and childcare hours, the Early Years Team has carried out three major consultations with parents/carers of under 5s over the past three years on:
 - 3.32.1 The increase of funded hours to 600 per year – whether parents/carers would use the new hours and how they would like to see them delivered (2014). 1800 survey responses and 10 parent/carer focus groups.
 - 3.32.2 The proposed subsequent increase in funded hours to 1140 - potential delivery models for the additional hours (2016). 1700 survey responses and 5 parent/carer focus groups.
 - 3.32.3 The proposed increase in funded hours to 1140 – how the hours can be delivered flexibly, how people currently use early learning and childcare services and how they would like to do so in future (2017). The survey is still open with 1500 plus responses so far.

Feedback from each consultation has (or will) feed into service planning in terms of which models to pilot or offer.

Engagement with staff

- 3.33 All establishments and teams have their own arrangements for engaging with staff, for example through improvement plans, in-service days and development days. Some services consult with staff through surveys (e.g. Young People's Service and Throughcare and After Care) and some schools make use of teaching and non-teaching staff questionnaires.
- 3.34 In October, the Council will carry out its seventh wave of the Employee Survey. The survey aims to identify and explore issues that are important to employees, the impact of change on their working lives and their engagement with the vision and values of the Council. All employees are invited to complete the survey, with a range of methods used to ensure the survey is accessible to everyone. Each service area is also engaged in the planning, design and management of the survey - to ensure it is coordinated at a local level and to encourage response. The survey is the Council's most robust measure of engagement, satisfaction and attitudes to work.
- 3.35 Fieldwork for the Employee Survey will begin in mid-October and will continue over a six-week period until the end of November. Topline results from the survey will be available towards the beginning of January 2018, with further analysis completed by February.
- 3.36 The results of the survey will be widely communicated and acted on at a council and local level. Benchmarking data will also be sourced to allow comparative analysis with relevant public and private sector organisations on the key themes of the survey. The findings of the survey will be used to monitor and track overall performance, act as a focus for discussion and a motivator of change, develop our people planning approach and inform the Council's wider People Strategy.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Children and young people, parents and carers, staff and other stakeholders are at the heart of decision-making and service improvement.
- 4.2 Responses to the biennial school survey programme show an increase in children and young people, and parents and carers agreeing that they have a say/that their views are taken into account.

Financial impact

- 5.1 All work in this area is delivered within existing budgets.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There is a requirement on local authorities as part of the Children and Young People Act (2014) to report every three years on what they have done to improve the rights of children and young people, including the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
- 6.2 A risk of not engaging effectively with children and young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders is that the views of those who use services would not be considered in shaping services.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 Equalities is embedded in our approach to engagement:
 - 7.1.1 Survey results are analysed by gender, disability and race/ethnicity. Any significant differences are reported to senior managers and appropriate services.
 - 7.1.2 Efforts are made to ensure that ‘hardly reached’/seldom heard groups are included in engagement activities. The Children’s Services Plan includes this as a specific commitment.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no adverse impacts in relation to this report.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 This report is about participation and engagement across Communities and Families.

Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Item 7.1 - The Edinburgh Children’s Partnership – Children’s Services Plan 2017 - 2020](#) Education, Children and Families Committee 15 August 2017

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Appendices

None.