Wrexham’s Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy
2017 -2020
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Introduction

This Wrexham’s Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy 2017 - 2020 sets out how Wrexham County Borough embeds its long standing commitment to participation with children and young people with decision making processes through consultation, engagement and professional observations. The Participation Strategy is specifically concerned with how children and young people are involved in decision making and work through this strategy will support participation to address all aspects of planning, delivering and reviewing services within Wrexham Council. This strategy is fundamental to the local authority rights based approach for children and young people and sits under the Local Authority's Corporate Wrexham's Involvement Strategy 2018 -2020 and therefore supports the aims, objectives and principles of this overarching document. Department specific engagement plans should therefore be developed in line with the aims and objectives of this Strategy and in doing so support its implementation.

The duty on Wrexham Council is supported by its Wrexham’s Involvement Strategy 2018 -2020 and this Strategy aims to provide and develop opportunities and initiatives that put the children and young people at the heart of participation in Wrexham.
Our Vision

Wrexham’s vision for the next 3 years:

‘A Wrexham where children and young people have a voice on local decisions that impact on their lives!’  (Wrecsam Senedd Yr Ifanc)

We will support this by:

Working in line with the Council Planning Principles (and the 5 ways of working outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act), we will:

- Prevent problems arising
  - Work with children and young people to identify potential problems or obstacles before they arise

- Prioritise the most vulnerable
  - Ensure that we work in a way which encourages all children and young people to have their say, and allow decision-makers to hear the views of the most vulnerable children and young people in the County Borough

- Plan for the long term
  - Work hard to ensure that children and young people’s views are taken into consideration by decision-makers when they are planning services which will impact on Wrexham now and in the future

- Consult and involve
  - Involve children and young people in developing our action-plans, as well as ensuring their views are presented in decision-making processes

- Integrate and collaborate
  - We will work with all departments across the Council, and with partners in Public Service Board organisations, to share best practice and make sure that the views of children and young people are listened to and considered appropriately

- Treat the Welsh Language equally
  - Ensure that information and opportunities are equally available in English and Welsh
Policy Context

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that everyone under the age of 18 has

‘… the right to say what should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you and to have your opinion taken into account.’

This UNCRC is at the heart of Welsh Government legislation such as the ‘Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011’ (which places a duty on Welsh Ministers to give ‘due regard’ to children’s rights when making decisions). In particular, the ‘Children and Families’ (Wales) Measure 2010’ places a duty on Local Authorities in Wales to ensure they have arrangements in place for paying attention to the views of children and young people.

Most recently the introduction of the ‘Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015’ outlines key ways of working, in order to achieve the ‘well-being goals’. One of these key ways of working is ‘involvement’ – which means involving people in achieving the well-being goals. The statutory guidance for public bodies which accompanies this act refers to the ‘National Participation Standards for Children and Young People’, and it also provides ‘Statutory Guidance on the participation of children and young people’

It requires local authorities to make such arrangements as they consider suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them, and to publish and keep up to date information about its arrangements.

The articles of the UNCRC have been summarised into Seven Core Aims which should underpin the working practice of any service provision working with children and young people nationally and locally. Core Aim 5 in particular relates to children and young people’s participation with the aim that: All children and young people are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.
What is Participation?

Definition of Participation

‘Participation means it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action which might affect me. ‘Having a Voice, Having a Choice’

Participation is a process which ensures that all young people aged 0 – 25 years are involved in the decisions that affect them, the community and society in which they live. Participation is a vital part of empowering young people to become active and responsible citizens. Engaging with democratic processes and a variety of citizenship issues, both locally and globally helps children and young people to develop the confidence and skills for learning, life and work. Participation is about more than taking part. It’s about listening, sharing experiences and learning from each other. It’s an on-going dialogue with children and young people that values their voice on matters that are important to them and hears and considers their views when decisions are made which affect them.

At the core of effective participation is the need for adults to have a genuine interest and belief in the abilities and skills of children and young people. Organisations must ensure that everyone within their association is committed to the principles and strategies relating to participation. It’s important to remember that participation is not about ticking a box but it’s about having a quality process of involving children and young people in decisions that affect them.
Whilst this strategy may be primarily concerned with the development and implementation of systems for directly involving children and young people in formal decision making processes, it is also important to pay attention to the ways in which they involve themselves in the everyday lives of their communities, through their own self-directed actions, and recognise these as also being legitimate forms of participation. In doing so greater value should be placed on the professional opinions of those working directly with children and young people, particularly during their leisure time when they are free from other adult obligations, because they are likely to have developed a good sense of what children and young people want, think and feel through observations and informal conversations. This will be particularly important for children who may not be able to vocalise their opinions, for example those that are very young or severely impaired.

*Roger Hart’s ‘Ladder of Participation’* is often used to explain the different approaches and practices that organisations take in involving their children and young people in decision making.

The Ladder of Participation is based on 8 levels. The levels show an incremental increase in active involvement, level 1 being the lowest in terms of children and young people having very little influence on decisions to level 8 illustrating true involvement. The ladder will help an organisation determine where it is in terms of participation and help focus and improve the organisation’s approach if desired.

**Please note:** It is important not to view participation as a hierarchical model where organisations feel that their involvement of children and young people is judged as not good enough if it is not high enough on the ladder. Organisations need to start from a point that is realistic for them and then develop participation as their collective confidence, trust and skills increase.
Today, children and young people are increasingly engaged as researchers, planners, teachers, evaluators, decision-makers, and advocates. With this knowledge in mind, the rungs of the Ladder can help youth and adults identify how youth are currently involved in communities, and give them goals to aspire towards. Roger Hart, a sociologist for UNICEF who originally developed the Ladder, intended the first three rungs to represent forms of non-participation. However, while the first rung generally represents the nature of all youth voice in communities with the threat of “attend or fail”, there are more roles for youth than ever before. Rungs 6, 7, and 8 generally represent youth/adult partnerships, or intentional arrangements designed to foster authentic youth engagement. We at Wrexham aspire to reach the higher rungs.

History and development of Participation in Wrexham

Wrexham County Borough has had a long standing dedication to children and young peoples’ Participation. The initial work started in 2000 with the introduction of the first Youth Worker dedicated to participation that developed the initial Participation Strategy and inaugural Youth Forum. Since 2000 the participation team have had a number of ground breaking projects developed. They have participated in comprehensive and meaningful consultations on numerous matters that affect young people, amateur film making awards, development of the 1st Participation Tool Kit, designed to give organisations a clear understanding of the process of including children and young people in decision making. The basis of which we are still using. Training has been developed on decision making processes and interviewing skills to enable young people to participate in the selection process and to sit on interview panels to appoint workers across Wrexham, who are involved with children and young people. Since the introduction of the Welsh Government’s play sufficiency duty, significant numbers of children and young people have also been involved in a series of research studies aimed at developing a better understanding of their opportunities for play and the ways in which adults can support these.

Young people have been given the opportunity to be involved in local and national participation networks where they have given and been part of numerous presentations and workshops including international trips to Brussels, Strasburg and Budapest to learn about the European Parliament. They have participated in the development of the Participation Standards and been part of the consultations on the up-dated standards. They have had many question and answer sessions with AMs, MPs and Lead Council Members on matters that affect children and young people. Children and young people in Wrexham have participated in workshops with Berwyn Prison including the naming process, helped to develop UNCRC and participation training for children, young people and professionals. The Senedd yr Ifanc has had opportunities to input into strategies including the National Youth Strategy and Wrexham Participation Strategy. They have designed the Wrexham Participation Structure, been part of commissioning review workshops and run many events giving children and young people the chance to participate and have a voice.
National Participation Standards

There are 7 National Participation Standards. Participation in Wrexham is undertaken in line with these standards. The standards are set out to help organisations to follow good practice of participation with children and young people in decision making. They help us to make sure children and young people have a voice on matters that affect them.
# Safonau Cyfranogiad Cenedlaethol dros Blant a Phobl ifanc

**Children and Young People’s National Participation Standards**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>This means:</th>
<th>We will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gwybodaeth Information</strong></td>
<td>You have the right to information that is easy to understand and allows you to make an informed decision.</td>
<td>Provide information that is good quality, clear and accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi bidur dewis It’s your choice</strong></td>
<td>You have the right to choose to be involved and work on things that are important to you.</td>
<td>Give you enough support and time to choose if you want to get involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dim gwhaniaethu No discrimination</strong></td>
<td>Children and young people are all different and have the right to be treated fairly.</td>
<td>Challenge discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parch Respect</strong></td>
<td>You have the right to have a say. Your opinions are important and will be respected.</td>
<td>Listen to your views, experiences and ideas and take you seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bod ar ei chenill You get something out of it</strong></td>
<td>You have the right to learn and be the best you can be.</td>
<td>Work with you in safe, fun and enjoyable ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adorth Feedback</strong></td>
<td>You have the right to know what decisions have been made and how your ideas have been listened to.</td>
<td>Make the most of what you know and do things that build your confidence and skills.</td>
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Y Safonau hyn sy’n cynnal tair colofn CCUHP - Diogelu, Darpariaeth a Chyfranogi

The Standards underpin the three pillars of the UNCRC – Protection, Provision & Participation.
Our Aims and Objectives

1. Communication:

We will make sure that we communicate clearly with children and young people so that they know about the opportunities that exist for them to have their voices heard on matters that affect them. We will also make sure that we provide feedback to those people who have taken part and given their views, so that they know the value of their involvement.

- To embrace the usage of social media and technology, developing skills of children, young people, staff and stakeholders, allowing participation activities to be shared across wider networks.
- We will provide information and opportunities to children and young people engaged in voluntary sector organisations about participation opportunities.

2. Education:

We will make sure that pupils have the opportunity to give their opinions on matters about their education and school life.

- We will promote and support the involvement of ‘pupil voice’ in school life
- We will support the work of school councils across the County Borough.

3. Rights:

We will work to make sure that children and young people, those who work with them and decision-makers are informed about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, we’ll make sure that people understand Article 12, to ensure that children and young people’s views are listened to and respected.

- Support training and the promotion of participation, and develop knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC.
- Ensure that everyone recognises that children and young people have the right to participate in decisions which affect them.
- Promote shared understanding of the Participation Standards and how these will impact on the work of organisations.
4. Participation structures:

Develop structures and opportunities which enable children and young people to influence all aspects of planning, delivering and reviewing services

- We will facilitate the Senedd yr Ifanc, which will provide a representative voice of young people across the County Borough, and presents the views of young people to decision-makers on key issues.
- We will support Wrexham’s Young People’s ‘Care Council’ to ensure the voice of looked-after children and young people is listened to.
- We will support organisations within the voluntary sector to develop systems and structures for participation.

5. Accountability and Valuing Opinion:

We will to create a culture where listening to children and young people is undertaken as a matter of course by decision makers, in all aspects of their work.

- Work with professionals to help them evidence how they have meaningful involvement with children and young people in the decision making process, and to demonstrate that they paid attention to their rights, and how children and young people have benefited from this involvement.
- We will support organisations, families and carers to involve children and young people in decision-making and the planning of services.
- In addition, we will also value the views and opinions of professionals who work with children and young people.
Benefits and Barriers to Participation – the 2 Bs

Both research and our own experience tell us that there are many benefits for children, young people, parents and the community relating to participation.

Benefits to children and young people.

- Better understanding of organisations. By including participation there can be direct improvements on children and young people’s lives, for example- improved services meeting their needs.
- Empowerment and a greater knowledge of children and young people’s rights
- Improved confidence and self-esteem, in feeling valued, being of some worth to friends and peers, and feeling successful (not all young people can be academically successful, arty or sporty).
- Able to learn and practice important social and life skills such as problem-solving, decision making, negotiation, listening, communication and feedback
- Greater awareness of participation and decision making.
- Greater Collaboration with children and young people and parents.
- Gaining qualifications and work experience.
- Feel that they play an active and responsible part in their own lives and in their community, and understand that (and how) they can make a difference.
- Better safeguarding - Increased knowledge of safeguarding and how they can protect their health, wellbeing and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.
- Children and young people feel respected and listened to, and therefore feel able to report fears or concerns they might have – improving child protection and safeguarding
Benefits to the Community

- Fostering of positive relationships between older and younger community members;
- Children and young people able to contribute to how communities develop;
- Improved understanding of the wants and needs of different community members, which will improve levels of respect and communications within communities.
- Children and young people become active citizens within their communities and carry this into their adult lives.
- A better understanding of the rights of children and young people in the community;
- Communities and families benefit from children and young people’s knowledge and ideas.

Benefits to projects and organisations

- Improved services - More effective and cost-effective services, increasing sustainability and value for money
- Helps build capacity and sustainability within an organisation because they will meet people’s needs;
- Services and policies being designed, delivered and evaluated based on children and young people’s rights
- Improved partnership working.
- Better safeguarding; Increased knowledge of safeguarding and how they can protect their health, wellbeing and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.
- Enhances credibility, reputation and relevance to children and young people;
- Better quality and more inclusive decision-making
- Young people’s presence will attract other young people to use the service
Barriers to participation

Involving children and young people in decision-making makes good sense but can be perceived as being difficult for a variety of different reasons. These may include:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children and young people not wanting to get involved.</td>
<td>Participation is a voluntary process; therefore, it is young people’s choice whether to get involved or not. However, we will encourage their involvement and make every effort to show the benefits of their involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehension about asking children and young people for their views, in case it is not possible to implement what they have asked for.</td>
<td>Work with decision makers to ensure they are comfortable with the process of involving children and young people. Ensure there are clear explanations for participants, which are honest and provide clear feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing decision making processes not taking account of children and young people’s views, and therefore participation being seen as something which must be done in addition to all other parts of the process.</td>
<td>Influence current decision making processes so that children and young people are involved in the organising and implementing of the decisions as a matter of routine and so it’s not seen as an ‘add-on’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication barriers such as language and cultural differences.</td>
<td>Ensure appropriate education and training of staff and professionals, as well as maintaining key links with partners who can support this process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor communication skills and lack of consistency with children and young people.</td>
<td>Keeping in touch with participants is crucial, along with providing regular and appropriate feedback. Ensuring communication with young people is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge on safeguarding and concerns about ethical constraints of involving children and young people.</td>
<td>Undertaken in a way which is effective for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working flexibly with children and young people. Some issues are: accessibility, time, venues etc.</td>
<td>Ensuring appropriate training and professional development of staff, as well as developing examples of ‘good practice’ which can be shared throughout the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of confidence in knowing how to involve children and young people meaningfully.</td>
<td>Consult with children and young people for best times, places etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness of the benefits to be gained.</td>
<td>Ensure that there is adequate promotion of benefits, and sharing of ‘good news’ / successes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many ways to introduce participation. The starting points for children, young people, and parents/carers are different in each case, based upon what they want and the type of service offered. The same can apply to the adults who work with children, young people and their families. Participation is not created simply by modifying existing structures – it entails a change of attitude and outlook.
Monitoring and Reviewing

How will we know if we are making a difference?

- Through a partnership including the Participation Team, Performance, Improvement and Partnership Service and a variety of organisations from the Third Sector (and other key partners) we will work towards our objectives with children and young people across Wrexham
- We will regularly monitor and review our progress, in order to evaluate the impact on children and young people’s participation in Wrexham
- We will provide regular reports on our progress from our Action Plan
Wrexham’s Participation Infrastructure

Senedd yr Ifanc

The Senedd yr Ifanc Wrecsam is Wrexham Youth Parliament. The Senedd is made up of young people aged 11-25 who are elected to represent a group, project or area. The Senedd yr Ifanc works on gathering the views and opinions of young people on specific issues that affect the young people of Wrexham. The Senedd yr Ifanc meets every last Monday of the month in the Guildhall Wrexham. The meetings are structured with formal and informal sections. Senedd yr Ifanc meetings can also include debates, issue based work groups, training and much more. The Senedd yr Ifanc gives young people the chance to have their say and a voice on matters that affect them.

Voluntary Sector Section

AVOW has been providing support, advice and guidance to the voluntary and community organisation for over 25 years. As part of the support AVOW works in partnership with Wrexham Council to support the young people who are engaged with the third sector to engage in the Senedd yr Ifanc. There is a designated worker who supports these young people to engage with participation in Wrexham which includes a youth led panel to who make decisions on Grants and funding bids through AVOW. This worker’s role is to provide information, training and opportunity for young people to engage with participation structures and opportunities, and to have a voice. AVOW also supports the Millennium Volunteer Awards which recognises and accredits young people’s participation.
**Wrexham Young People’s Care Council**

The Young People’s Care Council collects the views of all looked after children and care leavers in Wrexham and ensures these views are listened to and acted upon by working with the staff of the Prevention and Social Care Department to support the improvements in looked after children and care leavers lives.

The Young People’s Care Council is made up of eight young people aged 11-20 from different walks of life in the care system. Meetings take place on a monthly basis.

**WCBC Play Development Team**

The Play Development Team leads on Wrexham Council’s work in respect of the Welsh Government’s Play Sufficiency Duty which requires all local authorities to work towards securing sufficient time and space for children’s play. An essential part of this process is involving children in researching their local opportunities for play and developing responses to protect and improve these where necessary. In doing so the Play Development Team have developed substantial knowledge and evidence as to how spaces, facilities and services can be designed to support children and young people’s playful behaviour.

**Key Links with decision makers**

The Participation team and the Senedd yr Ifanc have links with Scrutiny Committee facilitators – to ensure that issues of interest/relevance to young people are highlighted, and young people’s views can be fed in where relevant/appropriate.

The Participation team and the Senedd also work with the relevant Lead Member/s, to ensure effective communication between children and young people and Elected Members within Wrexham County Borough Council.
**Wrexham Youth Justice Service**

Work with young people who have come into contact with the Criminal Justice System who may have limited experience of participation and have low expectations about their ability to influence things and have a voice. They work constructively and alternatively allowing the young people they are working with to have the opportunity to engage with their appointments, give them a voice and take into account their views in order to shape the YOT service they receive.

**Wrexham Healthy Schools**

The Wrexham Healthy Schools team support all schools in Wrexham to implement the Welsh Government Healthy Schools Scheme Framework. Within the framework pupil participation is a cross cutting theme that schools have to demonstrate across all health areas. As part of teams work they support schools with the development of children and young peoples focussed policies and ensure pupil voice is considered across all areas of learning. In addition to this the team also support all primary schools to deliver a quality and effective School Council in line with Welsh Government guidance. A local ‘Developing a Primary School Council’ document was produced for schools and annual training to schools on this document is delivered. Primary school councils are audited to ensure that they are following the Welsh Government guidance correctly and an evaluation report is produced for the school following the visit which highlights areas of good practice and recommendations on improvements.
The Senedd Yr Ifanc welcome organisations in forwarding representatives to sit on the Senedd Yr Ifanc. Our aim is to have as many organisations represented as possible to give the young people a more inclusive voice – please contact us for more information – phone - 01978 317961, email - youngvoices@wrexham.gov.uk or at The Vic Young People's Centre, 11-13 Hill Street, Wrexham, LL11SN.
Local
AVOW
Ty Avow, 21 Egerton Street, Wrexham, LL111ND
01978 312556
avow.org

Senedd yr Ifanc
Caroline Bennett – Participation Coordinator
Caroline.bennett@wrexham.gov.uk 01978 317961
The Vic, 11-13 Hill Street, Wrexham, LL111SN or
youngvoices@wrexham.gov.uk

Wrexham Youth Service
The Vic, 11-13 Hill Street, Wrexham, LL111SN
01978 317952

Wrexham Young People’s Care Council
Jane Jones – Looked After Children Youth Work Coordinator -
jane.jones@wrexham.gov.uk 01978 295372 /07808 787777 or
youngpeoplescarecouncil@wrexham.gov.uk

WCBC Play Development Team
Ruabon Youth Centre, Stanley Grove, Ruabon, LL14 6AH
www.wrexham.gov.uk/play

WCBC Youth Justice Service
Kimberley.Davies@wrexham.gov.uk
Unit 21 Whitegate Industrial Estate, Whitegate Road, Wrexham LL13 8UG
01978 268140

Wrexham Healthy Schools
Alan Williams – alan.williams@wrexham.gov.uk – 07800 999070
Helen Jones – helen.jones@wrexham.gov.uk – 07800 999069
Nerys Bennion – nerys.bennion@wrexham.gov.uk – 07800 999068

Useful local website
www.yourvoicewrexham.net
www.youngwrexham.co.uk

National
British Youth Council www.byc.org.uk
Children Commissioner for Wales www.childcomwales.org.uk
Children in Wales www.childreninwales.org.uk
Children Rights Wales www.childrensrightswales.org.uk
Dynamix www.dynamix.ltd.uk
MEIC www.meiccymru.org
North Wales Advocacy Service www.trosgynnal.org.uk
National Youth Agency www.nya.org.uk
Pupil Voice www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk
Save the Children www.savethechildren.org.uk
UK Youth Parliament www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk
Welsh Government www.wales.gov.uk
Young Wales www.youngwales.wales
Your Assembly www.yourassembly.org
Useful resource links –

**WCBC Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2015 - 2017**
https://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/contact_wrexham/consultation_and_engagement_strategy.pdf

**YJB Participation Strategy**
Giving young people a voice in youth justice
https://yresourcehub.uk/yjb-effective-practice/youth-justice-kits/item/download/491_8ff0d5af0c757261dbdfc1ee5baecfcb.html

**Wrexham Play Sufficiency**
Welsh - http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/welsh/leisure_tourism_w/play_w/play_sufficiency.htm

**UNCRC**
http://www.unicef.org/crc/

**Involved and Included**, a participation toolkit for the meaningful involvement of young people

**A Children’s Rights Approach in Wales**

**Animated Harts ladder video.**
https://www.powtoon.com/online-presentation/cNnUjTsNwVW/youth-participation-ladder/?mode=movie

**5 steps to better service user engagement**
https://socialworktutor.com/social-work-engagement-service-users/

**Children’s Social Care Department Engagement Strategy**
Signatories

Lead Member for Youth Services, Leisure and Anti-Poverty

Name: Andrew Atkinson

Signature:  
Date:

Head of Education

Name: Ian Roberts

Signature:  
Date:

Service Manager Prevention and Support

Name: Donna Dickenson

Signature:  
Date: