

# Children & Families Resource Team



## Participation Strategy



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West Lothian  
Council

# Introduction

West Lothian Council's Children and Families Social Policy services are based in the community and provide support, advice and guidance to children, young people and their families. We are responsible for promoting the welfare and safety of children and young people in a range of services. These include early years support, early intervention and school based services as well as teams, which deal children about whom there are concerns, or who have or are affected by disability.

The Children and families service aims to contribute to making sure that all children and young people in West Lothian are safe, nurtured, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible. We will do this in partnership with children and young people, their families and carers, their communities and other relevant organisations. We aim to be open, honest and accountable and to make best use of our resources through a competent and confident workforce.

- Children and Families Mission Statement

The Children and Families Resource team is part of Children and Families Social Policy services in West Lothian Council. The Team is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, training and support of carers for children and young people. Our services include foster care, adoption and permanence, short breaks from caring, including for children with disabilities and their families, and outreach support. We also provide assessment and support services for kinship care arrangements, and reports for the courts in relation to legally securing family care.

We work in partnership with colleagues, carers and other agencies to provide the best possible outcomes for children and young people. We embrace the concept of continuous improvement and value the contribution, to service planning and development, of all our service users and partners.

This document sets out a framework to enable and maximise *participation* in the continuing development of all our services.

# What is participation?

The principles of participation are underpinned by a range of policy and legislation including:

The Children (Scotland) Act (1995)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007

Getting it Right for Every Child in Kinship Care and Foster Care – National Strategy (2007)

National Care Standards (2005) Foster Care and Family Placement Services

National Care Standards (2005) Adoption Agencies

There is a developing human rights culture in social care which recognises the rights of people who use services (adults and children) to have their say about decisions which affect them and to influence the services they use. *Participation* is about more than being present, or taking part, but is based upon people having some influence over decisions and actions. *Participation* means that services will be responsive to the needs and preferences of those who use them.

## Participation involves:

- ◆ believing that everyone who wants to can contribute to our work;
- ◆ respecting that not everyone will wish to be involved;
- ◆ giving everyone's opinions the same priority;
- ◆ developing and using different approaches to participation;
- ◆ being inclusive in everything we do;
- ◆ being clear about where people can be involved and where they cannot;
- ◆ ensuring that our work is accessible, so that people do not find obstacles to participation;
- ◆ using working approaches which are suitable for what is required;

- ◆ recognising that we can grow and learn by involving others and that it may be necessary to adapt to changing circumstances and expectations;
- ◆ recognising the importance of equality and diversity;
- ◆ having a commitment to taking action to tackle discrimination;
- ◆ promoting the things which empower people.

## The Benefits of Participation

- ◆ We believe the benefits of participation for our service are that:
- ◆ we can be responsive to the needs of those who use our service;
- ◆ Services can be designed, delivered and evaluated based on actual, rather than presumed needs;
- ◆ Accountability is enhanced;
- ◆ We know if we are doing a good job and how to change if we are not;
- ◆ We benefit from the shared skills, knowledge and experience of others.

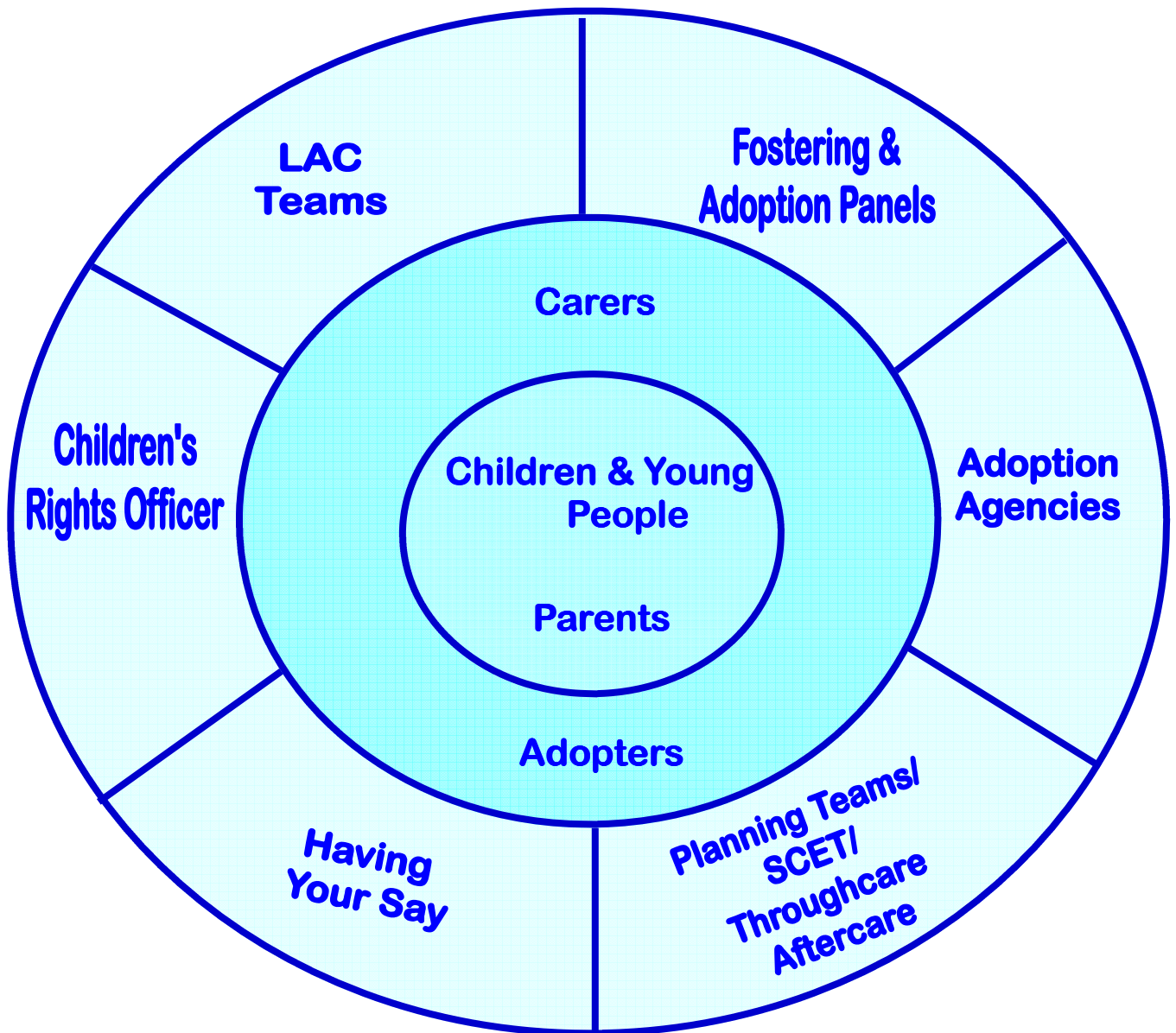
We believe the benefits of participation for you, the users of our service, are that:

- ◆ You are empowered;
- ◆ You can influence the future direction of our service;
- ◆ You can build on your existing skills, and develop new ones, increasing confidence and self-esteem;
- ◆ You enjoy new and better services that have changed and improved in response to your needs or ideas.

In encouraging participation we recognise that you have the right to:

- ◆ be involved at a level which they feel is appropriate to you;
- ◆ choose not to be involved and to change your mind if things change for you;
- ◆ receive support to enable you to become involved and sustain, develop, or withdraw their participation, as you choose;
- ◆ expect your contribution to be respected and to be valued for this.

# Who are YOU?



Our Service users and partners who participate with us

# What you say about participation:

**We are consulted  
on everything**

**We're pleased that  
we will be involved  
in staff recruitment.**

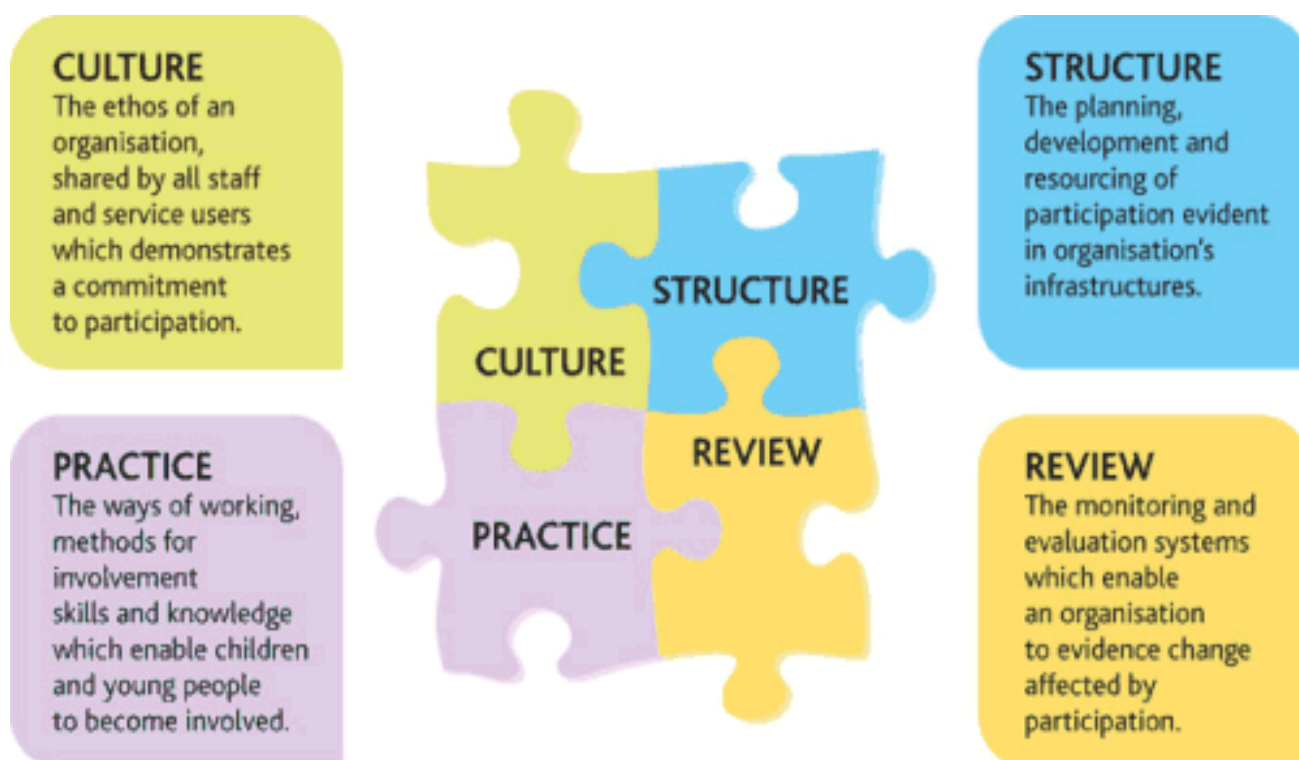
**The Resource Team  
are inclusive and we  
are treated equally**

**We get lots of  
opportunities at the  
carer forums to let you  
know what we think**

**We appreciate having our skills and  
experience recognised in providing  
training for others**

# How we Achieve Participation:

It has been suggested that organisations need to develop a ‘whole system’ approach to participation in order to affect change or improvements and that four parts of service development need to be considered. These can be thought of as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Using this model, participation is not about reaching the top of a hierarchy or ladder, it is about putting different pieces of the puzzle together in a way that can support us at different points in our journey towards involving others.



We have used this jigsaw to help us think about how we achieve participation

Wright, P., Turner, C., Clay, D. & Mills, H. (2006). [The Participation of Children and Young People in Developing Social Care](#). London: Social Care Institute for Excellence and Moriarty *et al* (2007) Practice Guide: the participation of adult service users, including older people, in developing social care, London: Social Care Institute for Excellence

# Culture

The ethos of our organisation demonstrated a commitment to participation:

Target	Planned Outcome	Tools
To maintain and develop our culture of participation	The participation strategy will be effective, flexible and responsive to changing needs	We will consult with users of our service on our strategy. We will review our progress and continually improve. We will develop our strategy in response to changing needs.
	<b>Participation</b> will be a priority within the leadership of the service	Our managers, including senior levels, will be involved in carer and youth forums.
	Our customer Service Excellence Award will be continued.	We will evidence excellence in customer service which is responsive and participatory.

# Structure

The planning, development and resourcing of participation is evident in our infrastructures:

Target	Planned Outcome	Tools
To remove 'barriers' to participation, be they personal, financial, situational etc.	Those who choose to participate are enabled to do so, and are valued for their contribution.	We will run participatory events (forums/support groups/training) at times which are convenient. We will provide childcare to facilitate attendance at events for carers and adopters. We will use a range of methods to consult with users of the service and partners. We will facilitate participation via appropriate others where necessary (eg use of translation services where necessary or via the Children's Rights Officer where appropriate etc.) We will reimburse travel costs and pay a sessional fee to carers and adopters who contribute to training or service development meetings.
	The number of people choosing to participate will increase.	We will talk to users of our service and partners about what would promote their participation and affect changes accordingly.

# Practice

Our ways of working, methods for involvement, and skills and knowledge enable you to become involved:

Target	Planned Outcome	Tools
<p><b>To achieve a practice model which is enshrined in the principles of participation.</b></p>	<p><b>Users of our service / partners will feel able to participate and be valued for their contribution.</b></p>	<p>All carers are allocated their own liaison social worker and adopters may choose to continue to receive this service.</p> <p>We will facilitate carer and adopter consultative forums as well as open forums.</p> <p>We will encourage the involvement of the Having Your Say Forums in service improvement and development.</p> <p>We will facilitate regular carer/ kinship carer support groups.</p> <p>We will facilitate regular groups for children of carers.</p> <p>We will formally survey our carers, adopters and other users of the service/partners annually.</p> <p>We will involve carers and adopters in staff recruitment.</p> <p>We will invite carers and partners to contribute to 'Newslines'.</p> <p>We will encourage carers, adopters, children of carers and looked after children and young people to develop and contribute to training.</p> <p>We will involve users of the service in working groups focusing on service development.</p> <p>We will invite carer comments about the service they receive at their annual review.</p>
		<p>We will invite looked after children and young people and their families to comment on the service they receive at carer annual reviews.</p> <p>We will network with placing team to ensure that they share any feedback they receive from service users which is relevant to our service.</p> <p>We will facilitate a fostering practitioner forum in partnership with placing teams.</p> <p>We will consult users of the service / partners as part of our Care Commission self-evaluation questionnaire.</p>

Target	Planned Outcome	Tools
	People will know how the service has improved as a result of participation with others.	<p>We will use Newline to let others know how we have responded to comments, complaints and suggestions.</p> <p>We will collate, analyse and publish survey results.</p> <p>We will monitor our performance against our service standards and publish the results.</p> <p>We will publish an annual team plan.</p> <p>We will feedback to users of the service how the Care Commission graded our performance in terms of participation.</p>

## Review

How we monitor and evaluate to evidence (and share) changes affected by participation:

Target	Planned Outcome	Tools
To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the elements of our participation strategy.	There are robust systems to monitor and evaluate.	<p>We will use standardised systems for collating survey feedback in order that progress can be tracked over time.</p> <p>We will monitor our performance against service standards and analyse changes.</p> <p>We will ask users of our service what they think.</p>
	People will know how the service has improved as a result of participation with others.	<p>We will use Newline to let others know how we have responded to comments, complaints and suggestions.</p> <p>We will collate, analyse and publish survey results.</p> <p>We will monitor our performance against our service standards and publish the results.</p> <p>We will publish an annual team plan.</p> <p>We will feedback to users of the service how the Care Commission graded our performance in terms of participation.</p>

## Are We Getting There?

We will know that this strategy is successful if:

- ◆ You feel involved and can participate;
- ◆ You feel we have listened to you and taken your views on board;
- ◆ You see our service improving as a result.

Thank you!

# YOUR VIEW

*If you have any comments or suggestions about this strategy, or our service, please do so here and return to the Children and Families Resource Team.*

<b>Signed:</b>
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<b>Date:</b>
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