



Kent Safeguarding Children Board

Children and Young Person's Strategy

October 2016

1. Role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

The meaningful involvement of children and young people in the work of the LSCB is essential. It is a key principle of the 2015 Working Together guidance and the draft multi-agency inspection framework. Research by Munro¹ and others has consistently shown that effective safeguarding systems are those that place the wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people at the centre. Engagement in which children are given a space to articulate their needs and interests and are treated as active partners in decision making processes has been proven to lead to improved outcomes for both individual children and the development of services. Failings in safeguarding systems have too often been the result of losing sight of the needs and views of children within them or placing the interests of adults first.

The Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) is therefore committed to promoting a culture of listening to the child and acting upon this. Engaging children and young people in the work that KSCB does; listening to their views in relation to matters that affect their lives; ensuring we respond to what children need and want influences policies, procedures and campaigns; and demonstrating the impact of this is vitally important as we move forward.

The involvement of children and young people in the work of KSCB will be underpinned by the following principles:

- The needs, views and experiences of children and young people must be what informs and drives the priorities of KSCB;
- There must be an understanding of the collective needs and concerns of children and young people in Kent, and their individual needs, particularly the most vulnerable;
- It must operate in ways which enable children and young people to contribute in a meaningful way, and to give and receive feedback on developments and outcomes;
- It must respect the rights of children and young people enshrined in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and UK legislation; and
- It must be integral to the way in which KSCB works and make a demonstrable impact.
- Members of the board must ensure that their agencies and organisations adopt this strategy and use can provide evidence of participation at all levels.

2. Purpose of the Children and Young People Strategy

This strategy aims to formalise the way KSCB works with children and young people. It lays out the mechanisms that will be used to capture the wide variety of participation and engagement models currently being used in the county and demonstrates how the

¹ Munro, E. (2001) *Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report – A child centred system* (available online at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175391/Munro-Review.pdf)

Safeguarding Board will develop, publicise and sustain dialogue with children and young people.

It builds on the excellent participation work that has already been put in place by the KSCB Partnership Development Officers, who have established links with groups and forums in the county, particularly the Kent Youth County Council, and seen the development of on-going relationships and one off projects.

3. KSCB Policy Statements

This strategy is premised on the belief that:

Children and young people are service users;

As service users, they have the right to participate in decisions that affect them;

This places a responsibility on agencies and organisations to open up their processes and engage children and young people with dialogue;

Children and young people are the best source of information about themselves and what is happening around them; and

Dialogue should be aimed at bringing about improvements in the lives of children and young people.

In all cases, KSCB will work collaboratively with children and young people to ensure meaningful and effective engagement activities. This strategy will be underpinned by the following standards²:

Standard 1: Appropriate methods
Children and young people will be engaged in a variety of ways, based on what is best suited to their age and level of development and maturity.
Methods may include focus groups on particular issues, one-off workshops or online surveys.

Standard 2: Support
Children and young people will be provided with the support needed to engage effectively.
Those who are being asked to give their views, share their experiences, identify their needs or contribute their ideas should be adequately prepared and supported to do so. This is particularly important on occasions when they are being asked to share or reflect upon sensitive issues or experiences.

² Following Keenan, P. (2011) *Appendix 3: Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership – Strategy for ensuring the participation of children and young people.* The Participation Network.

Standard 3: Knowledge

Children and young people will be provided with the knowledge they need to engage fully in collaborative work.

KSCB will clearly explain to children and young people what the purpose of the engagement is, the extent of their involvement and what the KSCB is asking them to do. Information should be easily understood and child friendly. Differences in language and learning styles will be considered and necessary adaptations will be made to ensure participation of all young people is possible.

Standard 4: Feedback

Children and young people will be told about the outcomes of their involvement and how their input has been considered.

Where their suggestions have not been actioned they will be told why and alternative arrangements will be explained. Accurate information and feedback will be provided at regular intervals including an honest assessment of the scope for change. Expectations will be managed to ensure children and young people are aware of timescales and limitations on organisations' abilities to respond to views with which they may be less familiar.

Standard 5: Respect

Children and young people will be treated with respect.

They will decide the nature and extent of their involvement, including the option not to participate. Any involvement however, must be honest and meaningful. The views of children and young people will be taken seriously and processes will be transparent. Children and young people will be encouraged to set their own agendas and raise their own issues rather than solely being guided by topics chosen by the board.

Standard 6: Senior people

Children and young people will have direct contact with senior people who are in a position to make decisions and take action in relation to their ideas, views and experiences.

Participation is more effective when it involves direct communication between children and young people and those who are responsible for planning, delivering and evaluating services.

Standard 7: Timing

Children and young people will be involved at the earliest possible stages of development.

If participation is to be meaningful it is important that children and young people are engaged from the outset. Their input in describing the problems they face, giving their views on current services and offering their ideas for solutions, provides an invaluable perspective.

4. Aims of the Children and Young People's Strategy

KSCB's engagement work with children and young people aims to do the following:

a) Receive and act upon direct information about the views and experiences of children and young people

Through the Quality and Effectiveness Group, KSCB will collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data in relation to children and young people's experiences of in a number of ways:

- Section 11 audits
- Single agency annual reports
- Single agency reports which include a detailed analysis of data and key concerns and developments
- Single agency audits
- Multi-agency case audits and deep dive reviews
- KSCB dataset and quarterly reporting

Data will be analysed and areas of concern highlighted at a strategic level for remedial action and management direction. This will form the basis of a robust scrutiny and challenge mechanism for the Safeguarding Board.

In addition, case reviews, including Serious Case Reviews, will provide information about the experiences of individual children and provide single and multi-agency learning to promote the welfare of children and young people in the county.

b) Develop links with existing children and young people's groups and forums

It was agreed by KSCB we will work collaboratively with existing groups, representatives and organisations in the statutory and voluntary sector rather than develop a 'shadow' Youth Board. This decision recognised the expertise of professionals currently working with children and young people in the county and the creative and innovative models of engagement already in place on which KSCB can draw and build.

KSCB will continue to develop links with a range of youth groups or forums in order that a cross section of Kent's youth can be accessed. However, there will be a particular emphasis on those groups for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged such as those for children in care, children not in education and young carers. Groups such as these will be targeted due to their particular relevance to the work of the KSCB and in an effort to combat disempowerment and exclusion. Partners will be asked to help the Business Unit, which will lead on this work, to identify groups for projects and on-going work.

Work has already begun to 'audit' the range and type of youth panels and forums that are currently run for and by children and young people in Kent. This should be continued so that a directory of forums that can facilitate access to particular groups of children and young people is developed on an on-going basis. Information on purpose and aims, membership and current priorities or work should be noted so that groups can be sorted thematically and

targeted for specific projects. This will allow KSCB to build upon the existing participative mechanisms and practice of partner agencies and organisations.

c) Raise awareness of safeguarding issues amongst children and young people

Under Working Together 2015, LSCBs have a responsibility for “communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can be best be done and encouraging them to do so”³. KSCB is committed to raising the awareness of safeguarding issues amongst young people and providing knowledge and contact details of relevant services. This will be on an on-going basis through the KSCB website and also through one-off awareness raising projects with particular groups such as the creation of DVDs and promotional literature by and for young people about subjects that directly affect their lives e.g. self-harm, adolescent mental health, bullying and e-safety.

d) Promote the direct participation of children and young people in the work of KSCB

Different degrees of engagement will be appropriate and/or possible in relation to different issues and different groups of children and young people and KSCB will be guided by the children and young people themselves and youth practitioners when determining the scope and scale of participation projects. These may involve one-off engagements with a range of groups or the development of close on-going relationships with a small number of groups on the basis that they are particularly relevant to the work of the Safeguarding Board.

Direct engagement activities will take the form of:

- Strategic involvement
Established groups of children and young people will be given the opportunity to contribute to the development and evaluation of the KSCB annual report and business plan so that their views, experiences and priorities are captured and drive the contents of these documents.

Young people will also be invited to present to KSCB at every Board meeting on the projects they have participated in with or on behalf of the Board. Wherever possible this should be in person and in liaison with their schools.

- Operational involvement
At a more operational level children and young people will be asked to contribute to the work of the KSCB subgroups through their participation on particular projects. Young people’s groups which are relevant to the work may be commissioned to

³ Department for Education (2015) *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children* (available online at <http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213160/working-together-to-safeguard-children>)

consult on policies, procedures or campaigns or develop promotional/awareness raising literature, DVDs or events to publicise specific issues.

Children and young people will also be asked to contribute to quality assurance systems through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews.

e) Ensure input from children and young people is communicated outwards

It is important that the input from children and young people such as key messages about issues that affect their lives or services they use are communicated and publicised to those best placed to address them. At a strategic level this will be through the updates to the KSCB meetings already noted but children and young people should also have an opportunity to contribute to the KSCB website and newsletter in their own words about projects and issues with which they are involved.

f) Challenge partners to demonstrate how the voice of the child influences their work

In addition to the quality assurance work already described in section 4, KSCB should ensure that there will be a general expectation that all reports presented to KSCB should contain information about direct contact with and feedback from children and young people. Partners should be challenged to provide information on the views of children and young people in relation to their service provision and demonstrate how they are acting upon this.

5. Challenges

In order for this strategy to be effective KSCB will need to ensure that:

- The work underpinning this strategy is given the resources and time to become established;
- There is agreement from schools and youth practitioners to support the children and young people who participate;
- Agendas, meetings, documents etc. are adapted to meet the needs of children and young people; and
- There is a commitment to incorporate children and young people's priorities into planning and development, and to demonstrate how they have impacted on service delivery.

6. Demonstrating Impact

KSCB recognises that this strategy will be effective in promoting meaningful engagement with children and young people only to the extent that the aims in it are met. Activity will be assessed against the following measures:

- The views of children and young people can be demonstrated to have influenced KSCB priority setting and business planning;
- Partners are regularly challenged to demonstrate how they respond to the voice of the child and act upon this;
- Improved services are provided by partner agencies in response to the views of children and young people;
- Relationships are developed with a network of youth groups, panels and forums so that groups can be targeted for engagement and participation activities;
- The views and experiences of children and young people are communicated to agencies and organisations throughout Kent via the KSCB website, newsletter and annual conference.
- Young people will present at the KSCB meetings and inform members of their views and opinions around issues and services within the county.

7. Review and Evaluation

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis. An operational work-plan with key milestones developed by the KSCB Business Unit will sit behind this strategy and will be monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure timely progress. This progress will be reported at Board and Business Group meetings. The work will be led by the KSCB Business Unit.

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