

Making Participation Work



Stoke-on-Trent: Co-production & Participation Relaunch event 2026

Participation, Information and Advice Consortium

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1. Kids Foreword

Kids have been jointly commissioned with the Council for Disabled Children (CDC), Contact, and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) to deliver a national contract called [Participation, Information and Advice](#) (PIA). This programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and Kids/CDC strand, [Making Participation Work](#) (MPW) focuses on enabling the effective participation of children and young people (CYP) with a special educational need and/or disability (SEND).

Discussions with Stoke-on-Trent's Head of SEND children and families lead¹ began in **May 2025**, with Kids acting as a critical friend to review SEND participation and co-production arrangements. Key challenges identified included limited engagement of children and young people with SEND, difficulties embedding "*Nothing About Us Without Us*", and a lack of clear local priorities. Kids advised Stoke-on-Trent to develop an action plan, which they would review and support with recommendations.

Following a review of the draft action plan in **June 2025**, further discussions focused on the SEND Participation Coordinator role, staff training on participation and co-production, and plans for a launch event. A follow-up meeting in **August 2025** clarified expectations and next steps, with ongoing discussions continuing into **January 2026** before formal support arrangements were agreed. During planning, it became clear that the planned launch of the SEND Co-production Toolkit would need to be postponed, as the resource remained in production. As a result, the relaunch of the Stoke-on-Trent SEND Co-production Charter became the primary focus of the event.

In the development and delivery of this project, Kids co-produced and co-delivered the event with young people and parents and carers from Stoke-on-Trent, alongside the area's youth participation lead² and SEND local offer engagement lead³. Kids also engaged with CYP from across England, utilising an evolving collective who support this work.⁴ Groups are given opportunities to participate in activities that aim to upskill, enhance knowledge and understanding of wider issues affecting CYP with SEND, and empower them to exercise their right to be heard.

This report will document the process and delivery of the support offered through the Making Participation Work (MPW) project for Stoke-on-Trent; offering constructive conclusions and recommendations to further develop participation of CYP with SEND across the area.

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² Kellie Williams – Youth Participation Lead kellie.williams@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk

³ Suzi Edginton – SEND Local Offer Engagement and Development Lead suzi.edginton@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk

⁴ The Collective is an assembly of individual young people, forums and participation groups supporting children and young people with SEND, wishing to have a voice in national agendas, funded by Department for Education.

2. Executive Summary

The support provided to Stoke-on-Trent City Council was delivered through the Department for Education-funded Participation, Information and Advice Contract, which Kids delivers in partnership with the Council for Disabled Children, the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, and Contact.

This support involved working collaboratively with Young People, Parent Carers from PEGiS⁵, the city's Youth Participation Lead⁶, and the SEND Local Offer Engagement and Development Lead⁷ to co-produce and co-deliver a practitioner workshop. A Kids representative⁸ worked closely with local partners to design and facilitate a session that met the agreed objectives outlined in the support overview below.

2.1 Stoke-on-Trent's Support Overview:

A practitioner workshop, co-produced and co-delivered by young people and parent carers from Stoke-on-Trent, was held to relaunch and strengthen co-production across the city.

The workshop covered:

- Understanding participation and co-production.
- Exploring the values and benefits of co-production.
- Relaunching the Stoke-on-Trent Co-production Charter.
- Translating the Charter into meaningful pledges and commitments.
- Celebrating existing examples of effective co-production across the city.

The event took place on 30th June at the bet365 Stadium, Stoke-on-Trent, and was attended by 125 practitioners from health, education, and social care services. The delivery team involved Kids staff delivering alongside **10 parent carers from PEGiS, the local Parent Carer Forum, and 8 young people from Stoke-on-Trent**, whose contributions ensured that lived experience was at the centre of the delivery of the event.

Prior to the workshop, practitioners were invited to attend a marketplace event between **11:00am and 1:00pm**, creating opportunities to network, build relationships and increase awareness of services available to children and young people with SEND and their families across Stoke-on-Trent.

A full list of attendees and represented services can be found in Appendix 1.

⁵ Pegis.Stoke-on-Trent@hotmail.com [PEGiS - Parent Engagement Group in Stoke-on-Trent - Organisations – Local Offer](#)

⁶ Kellie Williams – Youth Participation Lead kellie.williams@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk

⁷ Suzi Edginton – SEND Local Offer Engagement and Development Lead suzi.edginton@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk

⁸ Heather Harper – Kids Youth Voice Coordinator heather.harper@kids.org.uk

Among the comments from practitioners who attended the workshop were:

‘Hearing the young people’s voices’

‘The engagement and interactivity’

‘Focus on students and parents’

‘The strong emphasis on co-production throughout the event’

Information about the Making Participation Work support and event content is in the subsequent sections of this report.

2.2 Recommendations

Throughout this report we have made recommendations based on the development and outcomes of the session, combined with nearly 10 years’ experience working on participation with local authorities across England.

Recommendation 1: Stoke-On-Trent SEND Participation Team to share overcoming barriers with practitioners across services.

Recommendation 2: Stoke-on-Trent SEND Participation Team to share the key themes and potential actions to support teams in embedding the charter principles into everyday practice.

Recommendation 3: Stoke-on-Trent SEND Participation Team to follow up on ‘Practitioner’s call to action’, offering guidance and support where limited action has taken place.

KIDS would like to maintain contact with the local area, being kept informed of progress against the above recommendations.



3: Support Offer

3.1 Development of the offer

The work was commissioned in response to priorities identified by the Local Authority (LA), which highlighted a number of areas they wished to improve, develop, or change within their SEND system. In line with our co-production approach, Kids worked collaboratively with Young People, Parent Carers, and Local Authority representatives to design and deliver an engaging session that would drive meaningful reflection and action within the city.

During planning, it became clear that the planned launch of the SEND Co-production Toolkit would need to be postponed, as the resource remained in production. As a result, the relaunch of the Stoke-on-Trent SEND Co-production Charter became the primary focus of the event.

Kids identified that, although the Charter had been available on the Stoke-on-Trent website for over two years, awareness and engagement with it appeared limited. Kids therefore emphasised that the event should move beyond simply raising awareness of the Charter and instead help participants understand its practical application. The session was consequently designed to provide attendees with meaningful, real-world examples of how the Charter could be implemented within services and everyday practice.

The agreed outcomes for the workshop were:

- Understanding participation and co-production.
- Exploring the values and benefits of co-production.
- Relaunching the Stoke-on-Trent Co-production Charter.
- Translating the Charter into meaningful pledges and commitments.
- Celebrating existing examples of effective co-production across the city.

Kids then worked with the co-production leads⁹ to develop an initial outline plan for an engaging and interactive session. Following discussions with the LA regarding available timings and desired outputs, the plan was refined and adapted to fit the agreed event schedule.

3.2 Attendance and Stakeholder engagement

Kids worked closely with the Local Authority to advise on attendance and stakeholder engagement, recognising that broad and meaningful representation would be essential

⁹ Kellie Williams – Youth Participation Lead kellie.williams@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk Suzi Edginton – SEND Local Offer Engagement and Development Lead suzi.edginton@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk

to maximise the impact of the SEND Co-production Charter and support its implementation across the city.

Recommended attendees included:

- Community and voluntary sector organisations supporting children and young people with SEND
- Social care teams
- Health service representatives, particularly those working with SEND children and young people
- Education representatives from mainstream and specialist education settings.
- Careers, employment and transition services
- Local Authority officers and decision-makers from across education, SEND, inclusion and commissioning services
- SENCOs
- Leisure and community facility providers
- Other organisations supporting children and young people with SEND

Whilst Kids offered advice on stakeholder engagement and promoting attendance, the Local Authority was responsible for coordinating registrations. The Co-production Leads created and circulated an invitation, based on the agreed workshop outline plan, through Eventbrite to manage bookings and attendance. See appendix 2 for invite.

The workshop was attended by 125 practitioners; the full list of attendees can be found in appendix 1.

The overall, attendance reflected a strong multi-agency commitment to improving inclusion for children and young people with SEND and Parent Carers. The breadth of representation created opportunities for shared learning, collaboration and collective ownership of the Charter's principles and future implementation.

3.3 Developing the Workshop

To ensure the event reflected local experiences, Kids worked directly with Parent Carers and collaborated closely with the Local Authority Participation Leads. Together, they gathered insights from young people and families with lived experience of the SEND system in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Local Authority also assigned relevant leads to contribute to specific sections of the programme. For example:

- The Local Authority Children's Lead¹⁰ was due to open the event but due to unforeseen circumstances, Wendy was unable to open the event.

¹⁰ Wendy Fairman Interim Director of Education

- The Principle Educational Psychologist¹¹ opened the event in Wendy's absence. Michelle also led the original development of the Co-production charter so introduced the work and background.

This approach ensured that attendees heard from both strategic leaders and individuals with specialist knowledge of the local work

3.3.1 Co-production work

The facilitation team co-produced the workshop in collaboration with Young People from Stoke-on-Trent and Parent Carers from PEGiS, ensuring their voices and lived experiences were at the centre of the planning and delivery.

To inform the workshop, Young People and Parent Carers were asked to reflect on several key areas, including:

- How it feels when they are genuinely heard, which was used to create a word cloud for the workshop.
- What participation means to them personally.
- A specific time when they felt listened to and valued.
- Barriers that prevent them from becoming involved in participation and co-production activities.
- Reviewing the Co-production Charter and providing feedback on what each cornerstone meant to them.
- Young people were also tasked with selecting the workshop icebreaker.

These contributions were instrumental in shaping the workshop content and delivery. By embedding the experiences, perspectives and recommendations of Young People and Parent Carers throughout the planning process, ensuring co-production principles were demonstrated in practice rather than simply discussed.

As part of the charter review, young people and parent's carers identified practical actions and behaviours that would help bring the charter to life, such as ensuring meetings are held at suitable times, using accessible venues, maintaining consistency in the professionals they work with, and communicating in clear, jargon-free language. Their feedback provided valuable insight into how practitioners can engage more effectively with young people and families and this would be shared within the workshop. **See appendix 3** for comments from parent carers and young people.

3.3.2 Preparing for the Workshop

To prepare participants delivering the workshop, the Kids team held a virtual run-through session with parent carers during the week before the event. A separate session was then held with the young people on the evening before the workshop to go

¹¹ Michele Perry - Springer Principal Educational Psychologist.

through the agenda, review the content and ensure they felt confident in their role. During the session, the group worked through all the presentation slides, practised sharing their experiences, and rehearsed speaking in front of others using their notes. This preparation helped build confidence and ensured participants felt ready to contribute meaningfully during the workshop.

Email takepart@kids.org.uk to request copy of PowerPoint.

4.The Event

The event took place on **30th June at the bet365 Stadium, Stoke-on-Trent**, and was attended by **125 practitioners** from health, education, and social care services. The delivery team involved Kids staff delivering alongside **10 parent carers from PEGiS, the local Parent Carer Forum, and 8 young people from Stoke-on-Trent.**

4.1 Marketplace Event

Prior to the workshop, practitioners were invited to attend a marketplace event between 11:00am and 1:00pm, providing an opportunity to network, share information, and learn more about the wide range of support available for children and young people with SEND and their families in Stoke-on-Trent.

A total of 20 organisations and services attended, representing education, health, social care, advocacy, voluntary sector and community provision. Stands included services such as Aiming High, Local Offer, SENMAS, SENDIASS, PEGiS, Youth Voice, Kids, mental health services, advocacy providers, alternative provision, post-16 education providers, and community organisations. The event enabled practitioners to build connections across the local SEND system, increase awareness of available support pathways, and strengthen relationships between services to support more joined-up working for children, young people and families. **See appendix 4** for full list of marketplace stands.

4.2 Workshop

4.2.1. Introduction and Ice Breaker

The workshop began with an icebreaker facilitated by young people from Stoke-on-Trent. The activity was designed to help participants feel comfortable, build rapport, and create a safe and inclusive environment for the day. Participants were invited to introduce themselves by sharing their name, where they worked, and any information that might help others understand how best to work with them during the session. This simple introduction activity encouraged conversation across tables and helped establish connections between attendees from different organisations and backgrounds.

Following the introductions, participants took part in a collaborative team-building challenge known as the "Cup Activity". Each table was provided with six cups and an elastic band fitted with multiple strings. Working together, team members had to coordinate their movements to manipulate the elastic band and transfer the cups from a stack into a tower formation. The challenge required communication, teamwork,

The activity generated a high level of engagement and energy across the room, encouraging participants to work together, communicate effectively, and build relationships in a fun and interactive way. It also demonstrated the value of collaboration and collective problem-solving, themes which continued throughout the workshop. The young people led the activity confidently and effectively, helping to create a positive atmosphere and encouraging active participation from all attendees



Practitioners used an online engagement app called Vevox to answer the following question: What is Participation and Co-production?

[illegible]

This was also used as an example of an alternative mechanism that can be used to gather information quickly, from a large number of participants, reviewing and representing responses effectively.

4.2.3 Value and benefits to including the voice of young people.

Before moving into the activity exploring the benefits of partnership working, the young people and parent carers shared how they feel when this work is done meaningfully.

Participants were shown two-word clouds: one representing how young people feel when they are listened to, and another illustrating the experiences of parents and carers when their voices are heard.

The word clouds highlighted a range of positive emotions and experiences, including feeling valued, respected, understood, included, and supported. This provided a powerful visual reminder of the impact that meaningful engagement can have on children, young people, and families.

The facilitator emphasised that everyone in the room has the ability to create these positive experiences through their day-to-day interactions and professional practice. This message reinforced the importance of actively listening to the voices of children, young people, parents, and carers, and ensuring that their views are considered within decision-making processes and service development. The activity helped set the context for subsequent discussions on collaboration, highlighting the positive impact that meaningful engagement and co-production can have on outcomes for children, young people, and families. Stoke-on-Trent are going to hang the word clouds on the wall at Hazel Trees the multi-agency hub for children and young people with SEND.

Young people's word cloud



Parents carers word cloud



4.2.4 Benefits activity;

The practitioners worked together on their tables to identify the benefits to children and young people, parent carers and local authority and services. There was a very positive discussion around the impact young people and parents/carers can have in supporting the local area to do things better and the importance of working together.

Below are a few highlighted comments from this section (see appendix 5 for all comments)

Key benefits for children and young people when they are involved

Feedback from participants highlighted a strong consensus that listening to children and young people leads to better outcomes, more effective services, and greater inclusion. When children and young people's voices are actively heard and acted upon, they feel valued, respected, and empowered to influence decisions that affect their lives. Participants emphasised that involving young people in service design and delivery helps ensure support is person-centred, responsive to need, and informed by lived experience. This approach strengthens engagement, builds trust and relationships, promotes a sense of belonging, and enables children and young people to access the right support at the right time, ultimately improving wellbeing, achievement, and life outcomes.

Key Highlights

- **Feeling heard, valued and respected** was the most consistent theme across all groups.
- **Empowerment and ownership** were frequently cited, with participants noting that involvement helps young people develop confidence, agency, and self-advocacy skills.

- **Better services and support** result when children's lived experiences directly inform service design, delivery, and improvement.
- **Person-centred approaches** ensure support is tailored to individual needs, aspirations, wishes, and feelings.
- **Improved engagement** with services occurs when young people feel included in decisions and can see that action has been taken based on their feedback.
- **Stronger relationships and trust** are built when professionals work *with* children and young people rather than *doing things to them*.
- **Increased inclusion and belonging** help children and young people feel connected to their communities and involved in wider decision-making.
- **Better outcomes and wellbeing** were linked to earlier intervention, appropriate support, improved educational achievement, and opportunities to thrive.
- **Influencing change** was viewed as a significant benefit, enabling young people to shape both their own lives and the services they use.
- Participants emphasised the importance of **turning feedback into action**, with visible change being key to maintaining engagement and trust.

Key Message

"Listening to children and young people is not only about hearing their views; it is about acting on them. Meaningful participation creates more responsive services, empowers young people, and leads to better outcomes for children, families, and communities."

Benefits for Parent Carers When Children and Young People Are Listened To

Participants highlighted that when children and young people are genuinely listened to and their views are acted upon, the positive impact extends beyond the individual to their families and carers. Parent carers reported feeling more supported, valued, and respected when their expertise and lived experience are recognised alongside their child's voice. This creates stronger partnerships between families and services, helping to build trust, improve communication, and foster a sense of shared responsibility for achieving positive outcomes.

Listening to children and young people was also seen as leading to better support and more appropriate provision, giving parent carers greater confidence that their child's needs are understood and met. Participants described reduced stress, frustration, and isolation when families feel heard and do not have to repeatedly advocate for support. Improved understanding of services, clearer communication, and meaningful co-production were all identified as helping families navigate systems more effectively.

Many participants also emphasised the wider emotional benefits, including stronger family relationships, happier home environments, increased wellbeing, and reassurance about the future. When children and young people receive the right support and experience positive outcomes, parent carers feel empowered, validated, and more

confident in influencing change. The opportunity to connect with other families, share experiences, and contribute to service development further strengthens community networks and helps families feel less alone.

Key Highlights

- **Parents feel heard, valued, and respected** when their expertise and lived experience are recognised.
- **Reduced stress, frustration, and isolation** were among the most frequently identified benefits.
- **Improved family wellbeing and happier home lives** result when children receive appropriate support and achieve positive outcomes.
- **Stronger partnerships with services** are built through trust, mutual respect, teamwork, and shared responsibility.
- **Better navigation of systems and processes** helps families access the right support more easily.
- **Greater confidence and empowerment** enables parent carers to advocate effectively and hold services accountable.
- **Meaningful co-production** ensures services are shaped by lived experience and better meet family needs.
- **Improved communication and clearer, more consistent messages** provide reassurance and reduce uncertainty.
- **Community connections and peer support** help families build networks and reduce feelings of loneliness.
- **Positive outcomes for children and young people** remain the primary benefit, with families reporting greater confidence, relief, and optimism when they can see that feedback has resulted in meaningful action.

Key Message

"When children and young people are listened to, parent carers benefit too. Recognising and valuing family expertise leads to stronger partnerships, reduced stress, improved wellbeing, and more effective support. Together, children, families, and services can co-produce solutions that deliver better outcomes and create lasting positive change."

Benefits for the Local Authority and Services

Participants recognised that listening to children and young people delivers significant benefits for the Local Authority, partner organisations, and wider services. By understanding the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of children, young people, and their families, services are better able to design and deliver support that is responsive, targeted, and effective. This helps ensure that children access the right provision at the right time, reducing the need for more intensive interventions later and improving overall outcomes.

Participants highlighted that meaningful engagement supports a more coordinated and child-first approach, strengthening partnerships between services, families, and communities. Listening to children and young people enables services to make better-informed decisions, allocate resources more effectively, and develop evidence-based solutions that reflect actual need rather than assumed demand. This was seen as leading to improved trust, stronger relationships, better take-up of services, and greater confidence in local provision.

There was also a strong view that early and meaningful participation can reduce complaints, disputes, and escalation to formal processes, while supporting more efficient use of public resources. By working collaboratively with children, young people, and families, services are better positioned to achieve shared outcomes, improve wellbeing, and deliver value for money.

Key Highlights

- **Services are better able to meet needs** when informed directly by children, young people, and families.
- **Improved outcomes** were consistently identified as the primary benefit for both services and the people they support.
- **More effective use of resources and funding** results from understanding actual needs and targeting support appropriately.
- **Earlier intervention and the right support at the right time** can reduce pressure on specialist and statutory services.
- **Reduced complaints, disputes, and tribunal cases** were seen as a potential benefit of better engagement and co-production.
- **Stronger relationships and increased trust** are built between services, families, and communities.
- **Better planning and decision-making** are supported through access to lived experience and evidence-based feedback.
- **Greater collaboration across services** promotes a coordinated approach and shared responsibility for outcomes.

- **Improved efficiency and value for money** come from providing the right provision first time and reducing duplication or inappropriate support.
- **Inclusive engagement and representation** help ensure services reflect the diverse needs of children, young people, and families.
- **Improved wellbeing, educational achievement, and participation** contribute to stronger communities and reduced long-term dependency on services.

Concluding Statement

Across all discussions, participants consistently identified that listening to children and young people creates benefits at every level. For children and young people, it promotes empowerment, inclusion, wellbeing, and improved outcomes. For parent carers, it strengthens partnerships, reduces stress, and ensures that family expertise is recognised and valued. For the Local Authority and wider services, it enables more responsive, efficient, and effective support that is shaped by lived experience, builds trust, and delivers better outcomes for communities. The clear message from participants was that meaningful participation is not simply about gathering views—it is about acting on them to create lasting change and ensuring that children, young people, and families remain at the heart of decision-making.

The final element from this section the practitioners were shared a video from young people, you can watch here https://youtu.be/_6C4aWFEI-0?si=sxQ9ZrFK8bAVY8c

4.2.5 Sharing positive experiences

Sharing successes from across the area, including young people's experiences and those from parents and carers, helps to remind people that there is good practice, and it can be replicated.

We heard from young people and parent carers within the workshop on the amazing work they have been in co-production with.

Young people celebrating existing participation and co-production

Young people shared a range of examples demonstrating how participation and co-production are already making a positive impact across Stoke-on-Trent.

Maddie highlighted the success of the city-wide Youth Council, which has been bringing together young people from schools, colleges, and youth organisations since June 2023. Through regular meetings, young people contribute to consultations, co-production projects, and strategic discussions, while also gathering the views of their peers to ensure a wide range of voices are heard. Young people are now represented on several strategic boards and have played a key role in shaping the city's new Youth Strategy.

Ollie spoke about his involvement in the newly formed Young Safeguarding Champions group. The group provides opportunities for young people to discuss issues affecting them, including social media, education, and wellbeing, and to help shape safeguarding

priorities and campaigns. Members emphasised the importance of providing support and involving young people in finding solutions to challenges they face.

Kirstie, the Youth Council's SEND Lead, shared how participation has helped build her confidence and develop her leadership skills. She highlighted the importance of ensuring young people with SEND can contribute in ways that feel comfortable and accessible to them. Through work with PEGIS and other engagement activities, young people have helped shape discussions around SEND provision, independence, activities, and education reforms.

Overall, young people reflected positively on the growing opportunities to influence decisions across the city. They spoke proudly about the difference their involvement is making, and the positive impact participation has had on both services and their own personal development.

Parent Carers from PEGiS also shared their positive co-production examples that have happened within the city.

4.2.6 Introduction to the Charter Relaunch

The Charter was reintroduced by the Educational Psychologist¹² who supported its original development. They provided valuable context on the journey from the initial concept through to the final agreed version, highlighting the collaborative work undertaken with partners, parent carers, and young people. While the Charter has remained available to practitioners since its launch, there was a clear recognition that it needed to be brought back into focus to ensure it remains a meaningful and active framework rather than a document that sits unused.

The relaunch aimed not only to raise awareness of the Charter but also to equip practitioners with practical tools and ideas to bring its principles to life in their day-to-day practice. By revisiting the Charter, partners were encouraged to reflect on how the commitments it contains can be translated into tangible actions and behaviours that improve the experiences of children, young people, and families.

Following the introduction, parent carers and young people shared their reflections on each of the Charter's four cornerstones: **Welcome and Care, Value and Include, Work in Partnership, and Communicate**. Their contributions helped to bring the Charter to life by moving beyond high-level principles and identifying practical actions that demonstrate what good practice looks like in reality. Participants were asked to reflect on these views throughout the workshop and would later revisit the activity to identify how they, as practitioners, could better meet the commitments outlined in the Charter.

Young People's Perspectives

Young people's contributions highlighted the importance of creating welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environments where they feel comfortable and heard.

Under **Welcome and Care**, young people emphasised the value of being met by someone before a meeting, receiving a friendly greeting, and having name badges

¹² Michele Perry-Springer michele.perry@Stoke-on-Trent.gov.uk

available so they do not have to remember everyone's name. They also highlighted the importance of practitioners being kind in both their tone and body language, and of holding meetings in familiar environments wherever possible to reduce anxiety and uncertainty.

For **Value and Include**, young people stressed the need for understandable language, ensuring all opinions are listened to and respected, and for meeting leads to actively ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute. They also highlighted the importance of creating safe, respectful spaces free from judgement, and recognising that some individuals may prefer opportunities to contribute anonymously.

When discussing **Work in Partnership**, young people spoke about the importance of valuing all opinions equally and ensuring that the views of children and young people are given the same weight and consideration as those of adults.

Within **Communicate**, young people identified the need for simple and clear language, ensuring speakers can be clearly seen and heard, and providing information in multiple formats. They explained that verbal information should be supported by written information, either on paper or through presentations, so that participants can refer back to key messages. They also highlighted the importance of receiving feedback and understanding how their contributions have influenced decisions.

Parent Carer Perspectives

Parent carers echoed many of the themes raised by young people while adding insights based on their own experiences of working with services.

For **Welcome and Care**, parent carers highlighted the importance of professionals being approachable, accessible, and willing to listen. They valued opportunities to speak openly, receive regular updates and follow-up communication, and participate in mixed-group discussions rather than professionals sitting separately from families.

Under **Value and Include**, parent carers asked practitioners to avoid jargon and complex terminology, recognise that parents and carers know their children best, and ensure everyone is given equal time and opportunity to contribute to discussions.

For **Work in Partnership**, parent carers emphasised the need for information to be accessible and for professionals to recognise that families are often managing multiple pressures and challenges. They encouraged practitioners to keep processes as straightforward as possible and work collaboratively to reduce unnecessary complexity.

Within **Communicate**, parent carers highlighted the importance of receiving accessible information in advance, allowing time to read, process, and prepare for discussions. They also stressed the need for flexibility in how meetings are held, ensuring arrangements meet the needs of all participants, and emphasised the value of professionals taking the time to genuinely listen and engage with families.

Together, the contributions from young people and parent carers provided a powerful reminder that the Charter's principles are best realised through everyday actions and behaviours. Their reflections formed the foundation for later on in the workshop where

practitioners considered how they could embed these commitments more consistently within their own practice.

See **appendix 3** for all their principles.

4.2.7 Barriers

Barriers to Engagement and Truly Listening to Children and Young People

During this table activity, participants explored the barriers that prevent effective engagement with children and young people and limit opportunities to genuinely hear and act on their views. The discussion highlighted a wide range of challenges experienced by children, young people, families, and professionals.

Several common themes emerged:

- **Communication barriers** were repeatedly identified, including language differences, use of jargon and acronyms, literacy difficulties, SEND-related communication needs, lack of responsiveness, and young people not knowing how to express their thoughts.
- **Accessibility and practical barriers** such as transport, travel costs, inaccessible venues, childcare responsibilities, technology issues, timing of meetings, and financial constraints were frequently raised.
- **Confidence, trust and relationships** were significant factors. Many participants spoke about fear of professionals, anxiety, feeling judged, previous negative experiences, not feeling listened to, lack of trust, power imbalances, and concerns that participation would not lead to change.
- **Knowledge and awareness** issues were also common, including limited understanding of available services, processes, opportunities to get involved, and a lack of awareness among professionals of children's and young people's needs.
- **Professional and system barriers** included workload pressures, staffing shortages, lack of resources and funding, inconsistent professional involvement, poor communication between services, eligibility criteria, long waiting times, and a lack of co-production approaches.
- **Cultural and personal factors** such as different values and beliefs, stigma, mental health challenges, caring responsibilities, disabilities, and hard-to-reach communities were also highlighted as barriers to participation.
- Participants emphasised that **attitudes and assumptions** can have a significant impact, including stereotypes, professionals believing they know best, lack of respect for lived experience, and assumptions about an individual's willingness or ability to engage.
-

Key Messages from the Discussion

Participants consistently stressed that children, young people and families are more likely to engage when they:

- Feel respected, valued and listened to.
- Understand how their views will be used.
- Can access information and opportunities in ways that meet their individual needs.
- Have trusted relationships with professionals.
- See evidence that their participation leads to positive change.

Overcoming Barriers

Following the identification of barriers to engagement and participation, participants worked in groups to explore practical solutions and approaches that could help reduce or overcome these challenges. Each group focused on a specific barrier and considered actions that organisations, professionals, children, young people and families could take to improve engagement and support meaningful participation.

While the groups explored a range of different issues, several common themes emerged throughout the discussions:

- **Communication is key** – groups consistently highlighted the importance of clear, accessible and jargon-free communication, using a variety of methods to meet individual needs and ensuring messages are consistent.
- **Accessibility and flexibility matter** – participants stressed the need to adapt engagement opportunities around the needs of children, young people and families, including offering different formats, venues, times and ways to participate.
- **Relationships and trust are fundamental** – building trusting relationships through consistency, transparency and positive interactions was seen as essential to encouraging participation and ensuring people feel safe to share their views.
- **Co-production should be embedded throughout** – many groups identified the importance of involving children, young people and families from the outset, helping shape resources, services and decision-making processes rather than simply consulting them.
- **Community-based approaches can increase engagement** – participants emphasised the value of meeting people where they are, working alongside community groups, and creating opportunities that feel welcoming and inclusive.

- **Understanding individual needs is essential** – groups agreed that asking people what support they need, listening to their experiences, and responding accordingly is critical to making participation meaningful.
- **Recognition of strengths and lived experience** – participants highlighted the importance of valuing the knowledge, experiences and ideas of children, young people and parent carers, and ensuring these voices influence service development and delivery.

Overall, the workshop demonstrated that many barriers can be reduced through proactive planning, meaningful collaboration, accessible communication, and a genuine commitment to co-production. The key messages from each group are included in **appendix 6**.

Recommendation 1: *Stoke-on-Trent SEND participation team to share overcoming barriers with practitioners across services.*

The SEND participation team can support practitioners to translate the learning from this workshop into everyday practice, helping to create more inclusive opportunities for children, young people, and families to contribute to decisions that affect them. This will help ensure participation is not treated as a one-off activity but becomes embedded within service culture and delivery.

Kids also have some overcoming barrier worksheets developed by young people from Kids Collective and available through the Kids young people's Hub - [Resources for young people – Young People's Hub from KIDS](#)

4.2.8 Implementation of the charter

To explore what the Stoke-on-Trent Co-production Charter looks and feels like in practice, workshop participants worked in groups to consider each of the four charter principles: Welcome and Care, Value and Include, Work in Partnership, and Communicate. Participants shared their experiences, ideas and examples of good practice, identifying the behaviours, approaches and systems that help to create meaningful co-production. The discussions generated a wide range of suggestions which are included in the appendices. The key themes and potential actions emerging from these discussions are summarised below to support teams in embedding the charter principles into everyday practice.

Section 1: Welcome and Care

Key themes

Participants consistently highlighted that feeling welcomed starts with relationships, respect and accessibility. Groups emphasised the importance of creating environments where children, young people and families feel valued, listened to and understood from the first point of contact. This included using preferred names and pronouns, adopting non-judgemental and person-centred approaches, providing information in accessible formats, and making physical and communication environments inclusive.

There was also strong emphasis on building trust through consistency, openness and regular communication. Participants felt that genuine co-production requires time to develop relationships, understand individual needs and create safe spaces where people feel comfortable contributing.

Possible actions

- Ensure information, meetings and communications are accessible through multiple formats, languages and communication methods.
- Introduce routine conversations about individual communication and access needs before meetings and engagement activities.
- Develop welcoming processes such as welcome packs, meet-and-greet opportunities, drop-in sessions and clear points of contact.
- Strengthen relationship-based practice through consistent communication, familiar contacts and dedicated time for engagement.
- Embed the principles of the Co-production Charter into everyday practice, induction processes and team development.
- Regularly seek feedback on whether children, young people and families feel welcomed, cared for and able to participate.

Section 2: Value and Include

Key themes

Groups identified the importance of ensuring that all voices are genuinely heard, particularly those who may be less visible or traditionally underrepresented. Participants stressed that inclusion is about more than collecting views; it involves actively listening, acting on feedback and demonstrating how contributions influence decisions.

Trust, transparency and diverse representation were recurring themes. Participants felt that children, young people and parent carers should have meaningful opportunities to contribute to decision-making, policy development and service improvement. Feedback loops, clear communication and visible evidence of change were seen as critical to maintaining engagement.

Possible actions

- Create clear mechanisms to show how feedback has influenced decisions, for example through "You Said, We Did" updates.
- Increase opportunities for diverse groups of children, young people and families to participate in engagement activities.
- Review policies, processes and accessibility arrangements to identify barriers to participation.

- Ensure parent carers and young people are included in strategic planning, recruitment, panels and service development activities.
- Use a range of accessible methods to gather views and feedback.
- Strengthen staff confidence and skills in active listening, inclusive practice and co-production.

Section 3: Work in Partnership

Key themes

Participants described partnership working as moving from "doing to" people towards "working with" people. Effective partnership was seen as requiring shared responsibility, transparency, mutual respect and recognition of the expertise that exists across families, professionals, voluntary organisations and wider communities.

Groups highlighted the importance of involving the right people at the right time, reducing duplication, making use of existing networks and ensuring decision-makers are part of co-production discussions. Participants also stressed the need for stronger feedback mechanisms and clearer accountability for agreed actions.

Possible actions

- Increase opportunities for co-design through workshops, focus groups and partnership forums.
- Strengthen collaboration between education, health, social care, voluntary sector organisations, parent carers and young people.
- Establish clear processes for sharing actions, responsibilities, timescales and outcomes following meetings.
- Improve feedback on how contributions have influenced service development and strategic decisions.
- Map and utilise existing networks, forums and community groups to avoid duplication and maximise participation.
- Ensure young people, families and decision-makers are involved together in discussions about service improvement.

Section 4: Communicate

Key themes

Communication was viewed as a fundamental enabler of co-production. Participants emphasised that communication should be timely, accessible, flexible and responsive to individual preferences. There was strong agreement that jargon, acronyms and overly formal approaches can create barriers to participation.

Groups highlighted the need for communication to be ongoing rather than limited to specific meetings or consultations. Participants also stressed the importance of clear

expectations, transparent information-sharing, regular updates and opportunities for two-way dialogue.

Possible actions

- Adopt accessible communication standards, including plain language and reduced use of jargon and acronyms.
- Offer a range of communication methods, including face-to-face, telephone, email, video, online platforms and accessible formats.
- Establish clear expectations around response times, information-sharing and follow-up actions.
- Provide regular updates to children, young people and families on progress, decisions and next steps.
- Support self-advocacy by communicating directly with children and young people wherever appropriate.
- Ensure staff understand and adapt to individual communication preferences and needs.

Summary

Across all four sections, participants consistently highlighted the importance of **relationships, accessibility, trust, transparency and meaningful involvement**. The discussions demonstrated a shared commitment to moving beyond consultation towards genuine co-production, where children, young people, parent carers and professionals work together as equal partners.

Key priorities for future action include improving accessibility, strengthening feedback loops, embedding relationship-based practice, broadening participation and ensuring that people can clearly see how their contributions influence decisions and service development.

All comments from practitioners can be found in appendix 7.

Recommendation 2: *Stoke-on-Trent SEND participation leads to share the key themes and potential actions to support teams in embedding the charter principles into everyday practice.*

This recommendation will help bridge the gap between policy and practice. Providing teams with clear themes and actionable steps will build confidence in applying the Charter principles consistently, strengthen co-production across each service, and create a shared approach that improves outcomes and experiences for people who access these services.

4.2.9 Call to action

At the end of the workshop, attendees were encouraged to reflect on everything they had heard, discussed and learned throughout the session and consider how they could apply this within their own role, team or organisation. A key message of the workshop was that meaningful participation is everyone's responsibility and that positive change can be achieved through many small actions taken collectively.

To illustrate this, facilitators demonstrated how individual actions can create a much greater impact when combined. Participants were reminded that if every person commits to taking just one small step towards improving participation and co-production, the cumulative effect can lead to significant and lasting change across Stoke-on-Trent.

Attendees were invited to make a personal pledge by completing the Stoke-on-Trent Call to Action form. They were asked to identify one thing they would commit to doing differently, improving or developing further to strengthen the participation of children and young people. Participants were also encouraged to set a timescale for when they would begin implementing their action.

The Call to Action aimed to move the learning from discussion into practice, ensuring that the workshop would lead to tangible outcomes rather than ending when the event concluded.

Recommendation 3: *Stoke-on-Trent SEND participation team to follow up on 'Practitioner's call to action', offering guidance and support where limited action has taken place.*

Stoke-on-Trent partners committed to following up with attendees during the Autumn Term to hear about progress, celebrate successes and offer encouragement as organisations continue their journey towards more meaningful participation and co-production.

Examples of pledges and actions shared by participants are included below, with further examples available in **appendix 8**.

- ❖ Focus on the “why” and “how” when working with families and young people: why we are having the conversation, how we can support them, and how we can listen and reflect before making decisions.
- ❖ Set up a stakeholder group of parents and young people to help co-produce elements of the Educational Psychology Service.
- ❖ Create consultation preparation forms to share before meetings, so attendees understand expectations and can tell us about any adjustments they need.

5. Session Evaluation

Feedback from participants were positive, with the most valued aspect of the day being the opportunity to hear directly from young people and parent carers. Attendees particularly appreciated the strong focus on youth voice, the confidence and passion demonstrated by the young people, and the emphasis on co-production throughout the event. Participants also highlighted the interactive nature of the workshop, opportunities for networking and collaboration, and the marketplace session as key strengths.

Additional comments reflected the impact of the event, with attendees describing it as “brilliant and useful”, praising how well prepared the young people were, and noting the strong community feel created throughout the day. Overall, feedback indicated that the workshop successfully embedded the principles of co-production and provided a meaningful platform for young people and families to share their experiences and influence practice.

The attendees were asked what they enjoyed most about the training.

5 respondents (29%) answered young people for this question.



Things gained and they will use.

- How to build positive relationships with parents and young people from the start
- Action plan on how to move forward with the coproduction team
- Self-reflection on how to improve co-production in my setting.

Additional comments received

- The young people were very well prepared and clearly passionate.
- Listening to the children's voices, networking with providers. Embracing co-production at every stage.
- Today was brilliant and useful for my job.
- It gave me a real community feel

Below are comments from those involved in the co-creation of the event.

'It was great to bring together professionals, parents, carers, children and young people from across the city to renew our focus on co-production. The event created an opportunity to share experiences, recognise what is working well and identify areas for improvement. Professionals made pledges that we will be following up on, and the feedback from the day will help us continue to learn, improve and work together more effectively, with the voices of children, young people and families at the heart of our decisions.'

Suzi Edginton

SEND Local Offer Engagement and Development Lead

'It was nice to share my story with everyone that was there and I felt heard and respected.'

Young Person Kirstie.

6: Conclusion

The Stoke-on-Trent SEND Participation Charter Workshop was well attended by representatives from across education, health, community and voluntary sector organisations, alongside a broad range of Local Authority services. The strong level of engagement demonstrated a collective commitment to improving inclusion and outcomes for children and young people with SEND across the city.

A key strength of the workshop was the collaborative approach taken throughout its development and delivery. The involvement of young people and parent carers with SEND in shaping the Charter and informing the workshop content ensured that lived experience remained at the heart of discussions. The enthusiasm, openness and willingness of attendees to reflect on current practice and identify opportunities for improvement created a positive foundation for future partnership working.

It is important that the momentum generated through the workshop is maintained. Embedding the principles of the Charter will require continued commitment from all partners, ongoing collaboration across services, and a shared responsibility for creating more inclusive environments for children and young people with SEND.

Kids hope that the workshop, the Charter behaviours and the resources developed through this process will support Stoke-on-Trent in strengthening its inclusion, outcomes and co-production approach and further developing inclusive practice across the city. The breadth of stakeholder engagement demonstrated throughout this work provides a strong platform for meaningful and sustainable change.

Kids wish Stoke-on-Trent every success as it continues its SEND inclusion journey, working together with children, young people, families and partners to create a city where all children and young people feel valued, included and able to thrive.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 Attendance and Stakeholder Engagement

Education Representation

There was strong engagement from the education sector, with attendees representing 28 schools across Stoke-on-Trent, including:

- 24 mainstream schools
- 4 specialist schools

Several schools sent more than one member of staff, demonstrating a commitment to developing a shared understanding of the Charter and supporting implementation within their settings.

Representation was also secured from further and higher education providers, including:

- Keele University
- Stoke-on-Trent College
- Sixth Form College

This broad educational representation ensured that discussions reflected the experiences and needs of children and young people across a range of educational stages and settings.

Health Representation

Health colleagues attended from a number of health organisations and NHS trusts, alongside representation from Healthwatch. Their involvement provided valuable perspectives on the role of health services in supporting children and young people with SEND and highlighted opportunities for stronger partnership working across education, health and care.

Community and Voluntary Sector Representation

A diverse range of community and voluntary sector organisations attended, bringing expertise from parent support, advocacy, participation, wellbeing and inclusion services. Organisations represented included:

- Family Focus
- Diamond Families
- North Staffs Asperger and Autism Association (NSAAA)
- Project Indi
- Together We Make A Difference (TWMAD)
- ASIST Advocacy
- Shaw Trust (Careers)
- Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS)
- The Endorphins Group
- PEGiS

The involvement of these organisations helped to ensure that the voices and experiences of families, children and young people remained central to discussions.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Representation

There was strong attendance from across Stoke-on-Trent City Council, demonstrating organisational commitment to the development and implementation of the SEND Inclusion Charter. Services represented included:

- Educational Psychology Service
- Stoke-on-Trent Educational Psychology Service
- SENMAS
- Inclusive Learning Service

- SEND Visual Impairment Service
- Stoke-on-Trent Virtual School
- SENDIASS
- Director of Education
- Leisure
- Commissioning

This cross-service representation supported collaborative discussions and reinforced the shared responsibility for embedding the Charter across education, health and community systems.

Appendix 2 Invite

CO-PRODUCTION & PARTICIPATION

Relaunch Event

📅 DATE: 30 JUNE 2026
⌚ TIME: 11:30 AM - 4:00PM
📍 PLACE: WADDINGTON SUITE, BET365 STADIUM, ST4 4EG

AGENDA

11:30 – 1:00

Stands and networking

Visit information stands, access resources, and speak with organisations.

1:00 – 1:15

Welcome and overview

Introductions, icebreaker, and overview of participation and co-production.

1:15 – 1:45

Why participation matters

Key benefits, young people's rights, and strong practice examples.

1:45 – 2:30

Charter, barriers & solutions

Presentation + discussion on overcoming barriers.

2:30 – 2:45

Break and energiser

2:45 – 3:15

Putting it into practice

Real-world application with practical examples.

3:15 – 4:00

Impact and next steps

Measuring impact, recognising practice, and closing.

contact: UniversalParticipation@stoke.gov.uk
Tickets available on [Eventbrite](#), scan to book



Appendix 3 Young people and parent carer comments prior to workshop.

Barriers

Young People comments

- Not being asked to be included or feeling left out
- Not building friendships/ relationships within the group during the time so harder to feel included
- Not advertising opportunities
- Not offering support to get involved
- Feeling it might not be accessible - need to feel able to do it

- Transport to get there.
- Not knowing what will happen

Parent Carers

- Funding x 6
- tired
- SEND system
- inconsistent advice
- broken promises
- time x 3
- lack of trust x 2
- not understanding technical language and acronyms
- staff attitude x 2
- school
- not being listened to
- judgmental
- parent blame culture
- knackered
- being ignored
- transport
- no feedback
- not the right people listening (no power)
- inability to action or change things
- Not being believed
- false narratives
- misunderstandings
- not being involved in important decisions
- lack of child's voice included
- red tape
- lack of common sense from professionals
- Words included with barriers work
- Disrespected
- neglected
- helpless
- sad
- exhausted
- defensive
- sceptical
- prisoner
- stuck in a cycle

Young people Charter Principles

Welcome and care:

- Someone to meet before the meeting so you know them and they can meet outside and go in with you
- Friendly greetings
- Name badges so don't have to remember names
- Kind in their tone and face
- In a familiar environment - don't keep changing things

Value and include:

- Understandable words
- Take all opinions
- Lead needs to make sure everyone has a chance to speak
- Staff to make sure everyone is respectful and safe
- No judgement
- Allow anonymity

Work in partnership:

- Value all opinions
- All views are equal - young people are just as important as adults

Communicate:

- Simple language
- Speak clearly and no hands-on mouth
- Make sure it's in a variety of ways - if you say something make sure there is a written copy to refer to on paper or on a presentation
- Feedback is really important

Parent Carers Charter Principles

Welcome and care

- Body language
- Introduce Yourself
- Be open
- Let us speak
- Do what you say will do
- Build trust
- Be kind
- Always remain as a team
- Remembering I have a disability
- Approachable
- Supported
- Don't call me mum
- Enable mixed groups, don't all sit together – it creates them and us.
- Clear and consistent
- Accessible and responsive
- Empathetic
- Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- Follow up. Updates even if there is no update.
- Use my name.

Value and include

- When we don't agree – don't parent blame
- Respect all – allow everyone equal time to talk, active listening is important.
- Don't use words I don't understand
- Don't use acronyms
- Remember I know my child the best
- Listen to understand not to give answers
- Respect the views – but when we don't agree don't de-value our views – we know our young people best. You value your own views higher than ours. Power in balance.

Work in partnership

- We need to better understand each other's pressures. We need to make the most of our breaks, e.g. summer holidays.
- We need to remember just because I don't have a degree I am just as knowledgeable as you.
- Work in partnership

- Remember we have pressures too, not just you.
- Information should not just be available – but accessible. Don't make it too complicated.
- Let us contribute every time, not just when it suits.

Communication

- I think an important thing is that yes mistakes happen, but that people apologise and not just sweep it under the rug. Accountability in action.
- Learn basic Makaton and sign language.
- Use Braille when needed or English as another language.
- Phone so I don't have to take the child who can't cope with people talking. 9 times out of 10 I take my child along to health and they speak to you and not the young person, this could have happened over the phone.
- When meeting face to face with young person present causes more distraction and I have to ring anyway as I have forgotten to say things.
- Offer coloured leaflets – this helps people who have dyslexia and are unable to read on white paper.
- Actually, asking questions to understand – don't just think 'you get it' take time to talk to us.
- Ensure that you make the room quiet when possible for those with hearing issues.
- Provide information.

Appendix 4 Market place stands

We had 20 marketplace stands booked and all of them attended:

- Port Vale FC
- Aiming High
- Project Indi (local SEND organisation providing activities and day opportunities, commissioned by Stoke-on-Trent City Council to provide family SEND support)
- Local Offer
- SENMAS (EHCP Team)
- ASIST Advocacy
- Travel Training
- SEND Youth Clubs
- Best Start Family Hubs
- SENDIASS
- Kids
- Youth Voice
- North Staffs Combined Healthcare
- Stay Well and Changes (mental health services)
- Together We Make A Difference (TWMAD) – Alternative Provision
- Stoke-on-Trent College (16+ provision)
- Diamond Families (alternative provision and activity provider)
- North Staffs Asperger and Autism Association (NSAAA)
- Endorphins
- PEGiS

Appendix 5 Benefits

The benefits of listening to children and young people.

- They are more likely to engage with local services
- They have to live it
- They access the correct services
- They feel valued and heard
- Their voices involved can shape future services
- Solution focused outcomes
- Person centred planning
- They feel listened to
- More engaged
- Help to get what is needed
- Ownership and empowered
- Building relationships
- Happier
- Providing what is wanted and needed
- Getting lived experience
- Young people's strengths
- More opportunities for young people
- Young people realise their potential
- Feel included
- Involved in decisions
- Sense of belonging
- Engaged with services
- They see the difference in what actions have taken place based on what they've said
- Children sitting under the correct services
- Qualifications achievements and outcomes
- Better well-being
- Wishes and feelings
- Inclusion
- Feeling heard and valued
- Things are acted upon
- Improved outcomes
- Action!
- Building relationships
- Breaking down
- Child's voice
- More opportunities
- Increased awareness and understanding
- Services meet young people's needs
- Young people feel like part of the community
- Earlier intervention for children
- We provide what they feel is needed
- Their lived experience equals voice
- Encourages participation
- Ownership
- Empowers young people to use their voice at other times
- Helps them to feel safe and included
- Voices are heard
- Provide insight into services they use
- Services better meet individual needs
- They feel included
- We know what is important to them - to be listened to
- Advocacy
- Self actualization
- Better sign posting to what is available
- Involved Stoke-on-Trent-wide
- Being successful
- Feel included
- Needs are understood
- Influence change in own lives and with services
- Makes them feel heard
- Allows them to express and explore passions
- Not having things done to them builds trust
- Breaks the cycle
- Gets to the root person centred
- Needs and aspirations
- They feel secure
- Needs are met and understood
- They feel heard and valued
- Better support and outcomes
- Clear and consistent messages - managing expectations

- Values and opinions
- Taken seriously
- No fight for support
- Right support at the right time
- Ensure they feel valued
- Matching provision to needs so it became a mercy
- Sense of competence increases
- To develop skills and empower them
- Their voice matters
- Doing something with people not to people
- Providing agency and returning control
- To ensure child centred approach is used
- Services meet needs
- Empowerment
- Listened to
- Respected
- Feeling of control in their own life decisions
- Improved knowledge base and growth
- Get the right support to thrive
- Self-esteem and valued
- Given a choice in a way that is meaningful to them
- Best chance in life
- Everyone is working in the best interest of the child
- Not having things done to them
- Happiness!

Benefits for parent carers when young people are listened to.

- Positive outcomes for that child
- Their lived experience
- Less complaints when they feel listened to
- Less stress and assurances for the future
- Improved family relationships
- Changing attitudes to become more positive
- Parents feel heard
- Engaging
- Supported
- Understood
- Progress
- Empowered
- Community
- Valued
- Promotes A happier household
- Better understanding of the condition
- Easier for parents to navigate the system
- Having their voice heard
- Having the correct provisions for their child or young person
- Engaged with services
- See the difference in what actions have taken place because of what they said
- Better wellbeing
- Sharing their knowledge
- Included
- Feel heard
- Improved outcomes
- Solution focused
- Building relationships
- More supported
- Community
- Not feeling alone
- Listened to about their expertise and experiences
- Working together with other families
- They have somebody to turn to or to speak to
- Provided the correct support
- Clearer understanding

- Feel less isolated
- They feel empowered
- More eager to participate in the plan
- To give them confidence to hold people accountable
- Provided with opportunities to vent
- They feel supported
- More likely to use the service
- Mutual respect
- Improved relationships
- Increased confidence
- Chance to influence change
- Build networks
- Relief and validation
- Happy child
- Reduced frustrations
- Advocacy
- Involved in Stoke-on-Trent-wide
- Knows the child best
- Parents will feel supported
- Can share good practise from home
- Right support
- Understanding the required support
- Removes layers of stress
- They feel heard and empowered
- Breaks down stigma
- No longer feeling alone
- Good understanding of needs and lived experience
- removes barriers
- Feel heard and valued
- Understands processes
- Relief they are involved
- Championing lived experience
- Builds trust
- Clear and consistent messages
- Teamwork
- Happier family life
- Valued
- Respected
- Feel proud
- Less stress
- Ensure they feel supported and valued
- Sense of partnership
- Experts by experience
- Rebuilding and restoring relationships to true partnerships
- Humanising services making them accessible
- Services meet need
- Being heard
- Different perspective
- Shared responsibility
- Time to meet own needs
- Improved understanding
- Knowledge and experience is respected
- Supported to navigate the system
- Understanding their rights
- True co-production is meaningful to families
- Not having to repeat your story over and over
- Reducing isolation

The benefits of listening to children and young people for LA and services

- Appropriate services working together
- Less pressure on other services
- Less complaints
- Less cost to the local authority
- Trusted
- Engaging
- Providing the correct provision
- Correct
- Better understand
- Better outcomes
- Focused

- Families become less dependent on the local authority
- More productive and happier citizens
- Able to adapt services to needs of young people
- Children sit under the right services with the correct provision
- Happier families
- Less complaints
- Better working relationships
- Qualifications achievements and outcomes
- Better well-being
- Reduced caseloads
- You reach more families
- Make the right decisions
- Stabilised
- Purpose turns into impact
- Better outcomes
- More efficient use of services and money
- More direct pathway
- Less young people NEET
- Better take up of services
- Inclusive engagement and representation
- Better support for families
- Provide the right funding
- Be more specific
- Provide and benefit for young people
- Improved relationships
- Cost effective
- Bring services together
- Understand the actual needs and demand
- Closer communication between services and families
- Offer bespoke support
- Resources are used most appropriately
- More cost-effective

- Improved outcomes
- Solution focused
- Better relationships
- Better informed
- Feeling less pressure
- Better infrastructure surrounding framework
- Support is more targeted
- Access to actual experts on the child
- Knowing where to spend the money well next line to write more accurate plans
- Improved outcomes
- Ensures needs are met
- Builds trust
- Value for money
- Follows strategies
- Better relationships
- Constant and consistent messaging
- Less complaints
- Waste less money
- Better inspection targets
- Provide the right support at the right time
- Allocation of provision is better
- Shared visions and outcomes
- Improved relationships
- Building trust
- Evidence based solution focused
- Childfirst approach
- Needs are met and understood
- Inclusive
- Reduced costs
- Responsive to need
- Coordinated approach
- Shared responsibility
- Services meeting needs
- Less likely to end up at tribunal
- The right services are provided at the right time
- Better planning
- Better use of resources

- Really understanding children and families views

Appendix 6 Barriers to Participation

- Suitable locations to meet available
- Not being specific enough no focus or agenda
- An allocated leader for a meeting
- Fear
- Transport
- **Lack of confidence**
- Finance
- Time - put off by waiting lists
- Lack of knowledge
- Negative attitudes based on negative experiences
- Language barriers
- Alternative methods of communication available?
- Different cultures
- Speaking other languages or communicating differently
- Time
- Parents not being completely honest
- Judgement or assuming they won't be heard
- Lack of knowledge
- Professionals not listening due to workload
- Communication difficulties
- Additional needs of adults
- Lack of resources
- Lack of appropriate services
- Post code lottery
- Lack of understanding from professionals around child's needs
- **Teams who just sit behind their desk**
- Hands off management style
- Lack of willingness to be involved
- Limited awareness of who to connect with
- Tight timelines

- Funding
- Broken or damaged relationships
- Lack of communication
- Transport
- Accessible buildings
- Expectations
- Hard to reach communities
- Lack of respect
- Acronyms
- Expectations too high
- Confidence
- Health
- Culture
- Lack of engagement
- Time barriers
- Poverty
- Long processes
- Language barriers
- Lack of communication
- SEND needs of parents
- SEND needs of young people
- Transport
- Negative attitudes
- Parenting skills
- Lack of knowledge and understanding
- Lack of ownership
- **Communication**
- Capacity and availability
- Prioritising large workloads
- Other communication barriers dyslexia speech augmented technology
- Lack of communication and responsiveness
- Scared of change
- Commitment from all partners
- Eligibility criteria
- Technology
- A lack of belief
- Nervous about sharing
- Conflicting priorities
- Hierarchies

- Young people unaware of what is out there
- People not aware or understanding of processes
- Confusion
- Friendships and relationships
- Unrealistic expectations
- Young people don't know how to word their thoughts
- Lack of opportunity to be involved
- Insufficient progress or no direct change
- What you want to do versus what you can do
- Language and accessibility needs
- Time constraints
- Power imbalances
- Lack of transport
- Breakdown in relationships and communication
- **Lack of shared vision**
- Lack of understanding
- Conflicting schedules
- Resources and money
- Differences or conflicts in priorities
- Workforce understanding
- Lack of transparency and honesty
- Not being clear what you are asking
- Not open to change
- **Behaviour before the children and young people (stereotypes or bias)**
- Knowing how to talk to young people
- Lack of awareness of needs of children and young people
- Building trust and relationships
- Time and resources
- Identifying how to engage
- Accessibility
- Language
- Not attempting to explore strategies
- Refusal to engage
- Not respecting what is said
- Not listening and not understanding
- Overwhelm
- Inconsistency of professionals at meetings
- The professionals lack of confidence or knowledge
- Not being listened to
- Not feeling like you fit in
- Lack of confidence
- Poor mental health
- Technology
- Other commitments
- Time
- Not being understood
- Travel and transport
- Engagement
- Cost
- Inaccessible
- Communication
- Premeditated assumptions
- Knowledge
- Caring responsibilities
- Lack of co-production
- Acronyms and understanding
- Assumptions
- Language
- **Accessibility**
- Practical resources
- Cost
- Professional availability
- Travel
- Language
- Understanding
- Confidence and empowerment
- **Lack of knowledge**
- Different values and beliefs
- Lack of trust
- Lack of independence next line
- Financial implications
- Services overwhelmed
- Accessibility
- Lack of opportunity
- Not aware you can participate

- Poor communication
- Transport
- Parental involvement and motivation
- Language
- Work
- No opportunities
- Timing
- Transport
- Parental blame
- Disabilities and illness
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of time
- Eligibility
- Caring responsibilities
- People
- Lack of understanding
- Not being listened to
- Attitude of staff "I know better than you"
- Not being invited
- Boundaries and what can be achieved
- Transport and accessibility
- Trust
- Anger
- Time and time scales
- Safeguarding
- Unclear benefits or outcomes next unclear communication
- **Literacy skills**
 - eal and learning needs
 - Need for financial reimbursement for time and travel
 - Own negative experiences
 - Power and authority
 - parents thinking 'what's the point'
 - Confidence to participate
 - Varied voices needed
 - Childcare and timing
 - Funding
 - Feeling judged
 - The systems
 - Mental health

- Lack of awareness
- Contacts and connections
- A lack of handovers
- Misunderstanding of what Co production is
- Factoring in enough time for true Co production
- Building strong meaningful relationships
- Ensuring every voice is valued
- Motivating all groups to be involved and have their voices heard
- Making sure the right people are involved
- **Making opportunities to engage and meet**
- Making meetings and documents accessible
- Understand the difference between engagement and true co-production
- Motivation
- Money
- Stigma
- Not invited
- Previous negative experiences
- Didn't know about the event
- Language barriers
- Not wanting to go alone
- Fear of professionals
- **Hogs and Logs 'unequal participation'**
- Time
- Staffing
- Funding
- Lack of choice
- Limited activity
- Lack of confidence
- Not understanding own needs
- Transport
- Anxiety
- Accessibility
- Poor support network

Overcoming the barriers

Making opportunities to engage and meet.

- Formal invite
- Structured
- Agenda in advance
- Get right professionals on board
- Ensure understanding why this is important.

Literacy Skills

- Easy read / Plain English versions
- Clear simple language (no jargon)
- Agenda before the event
- Different communication methods considered
- Visual prompts
- Reassurance of what the input will and wont involve.
- Chance to discuss the event beforehand
- Coproduce the resources

Communication

- Diversity / equal opportunities – range of communication methods
- Consistency of messages
- Keep it simple
- Keep communicating

Increasing knowledge

- Increase and improve communication
- Provide accessible resources and information
- Listen to the voice of young people and parent carers
- Ambassadors or champions to mentor and coach
- Sharing good example stories and case studies
- Build trust through consistency of workers/supporters
- Transparency
- Be open to change to improve services
- Manage expectations and be realistic with young people and families

Inaccessibility

- Ask people what they need to access meetings and activities
- Give them meaningful options
- Outreach or community based
- Online or in person
- Outside of core working hours

- Better communication and messages about services
- Listen to what people need and make it happen!

Behaviour before the children and young people.

- Pre-visit protocol. EG one page profile
- Assessments - write a letter to children and young people, use you said we did
- Hold stakeholder group meetings. Parent carers / young people
- Strengthen pupil voice resources - do this with young people

Lack of shared vision

- Use the Co production charter
- Establish your objectives from the outset
- Make a commitment to real participation
- Meet people where they're at
- Transparency
- Open communication
- Dedicated time assigned
- Training needs identified and met

Confidence

- Create a welcoming environment
- Low stake events - coffee mornings
- Encourage them to bring someone with them
- Project Indi
- Collaboration through better relationships and partnerships
- Positive interactions early on
- Sign posting to services (EAL / Project Indi, Aiming high)
- Peer interactions

Teams who sit behind their desk

- Get out to community events
- Commit to being responsive and involving others
- Be present in the community
- Understand the different communities in area
- Link in with local charities and groups

Hogs and Logs – 'unequal participation'

A hog takes over the conversation / workload, while a log is a passive participant who sits quietly and has limited contribution.

- Ensure Everyone is listened to (protocols in place)
- Active listening
- Rules of engagement
- Expectations clear - set at the beginning

- Terms of reference shared
- Punctuality
- Prepared
- Physical cues and facial expressions next line in person meetings
- Mindful of language used
- “No silly questions”
- Make others feel appreciated

Appendix 7 - Implementation of the charter

Co-production Charter – what it looks and feels like in practice, practitioner comments.

Section 1. Welcome and care

- Using my preferred name and pronouns correct. If you don't know ask.
- Accessible formats for written communication. Offering language options and visuals
- Interpreters where needed
- Don't judge me or my disability
- A welcome sign by reception in different languages
- Student and parent questionnaires
- Meet and greet opportunities
- Safe spaces
- Allow different ways to communicate. Face to face, e-mail, telephone, teams, paper etc
- Accessibility of meeting rooms
- Friendly formats of information EG dyslexia, ASD, young people
- Use of technology where appropriate
- Adopting the charter and making it part of everyday practise
- Ask if we feel welcome and cared about
- Including the voice of parent carers, children and young people is a priority
- Being friendly
- Listening
- Non judgmental
- Kind
- Understanding
- Time do not rush
- Be honest and clear
- No false hopes
- Communicate effectively
- Varied communication
- Introduce T and talk
- Kenco with the senco
- Using names

- Open door policy
- Ease of access and full accessibility
- availability
- Mutual respect
- Low stakes - so people don't feel under pressure
- Adaptations - using different platforms
- Adaptations interpreters, different languages, paperwork in various formats
- Ice Breakers
- Host meetings in well known comfortable environments
- Changing your approach when engaging and communicating
- Regular communication
- Become a familiar face
- Openness
- Actually getting to know others and understanding individuals needs
- showing interest and willingness to work together
- Making adaptations to meet all needs
- Develop a welcome pack
- Open and drop in events / coffee mornings
- Open door policy
- Consistent communication
- Discussions around visions
- Building relationships
- Mutual respect
- Meeting in familiar places
- Meetings; consider introductions roles, how to organise for access, think about length time, and place
- Refocusing on the purpose
- Checking in with everyone
- Giving everyone a voice
- Consider needs of your audience and make adjustments
- Have a shared agenda
- Give people a brain break
- Pre meeting processes EG one page profiles, request for involvement
- Use name badges and you use parents real name
- Body language
- Building rapport
- Asking people what they need
- Addressing the elephant in the room; talking to a stranger and labelling emotions
- Introductions
- Use names
- Monthly send cafe
- Say goodbye if you're leaving or moving on
- EG send needs, eal

- Hold shared vision
- Information needs to be accessible; Simplified, jargon-free
- Digital exclusions
- Dedicate time and funding
- Regular contact
- Allocated time to talk
- Inductions focus on relationship building
- Be clear you don't have to participate alone
- Transparency
- Inclusive practise
- Differentiation
- Same faces to feel friendly
- Information available in many formats and many places
- People who have lived experience are involved
- People involved are given the time to deal with issues

Section 2. Value and include

- Active listening
- Giving the right people opportunities to share views
- Having diverse teams
- Good record keeping
- Take an interest - ask questions
- Write things in 'their' voices
- Diverse representation
- Open and honest communication
- Feedback loop
- Use the charter to inform the best art inclusion practitioners
- We will become champions and advocates for the charter
- Obtaining views and feedback and actively responding to it
- Always being reflective practitioners
- Improving accessibility opening times and days et cetera
- Really listening and doing something
- How are decisions made and by who?
- What works for the parent? And what works for the child?
- Respect
- Build trust
- Open and transparent
- Collaboration
- All kept informed
- Adaptations and flexibility
- Be visible
- Explain plans and work that is being done
- Communicate with a you said we did

- Active listening
- Regular feedback and engagement
- Making resources accessible EG make changes to language and visuals
- Promote options
- Encourage engagement
- Inclusive language, avoiding acronyms
- Build trust
- Build relationships
- Develop understanding
- Provide safe environments
- Personalization
- Opinions are welcome
- Communication
- Accessible
- Clear protocols And expectations
- Invite quiet members to talk if they wish or provide other opportunities to share
- Clear actions for follow-up
- Ask people if they are happy to have the opportunity
- Be honest [especially if you don't know an answer]
- Make no promises
- Everyone has opportunity to speak
- Setting ground rules
- Accessibility for online or in person
- Parental input in decision-making
- Inform the child of outcomes
- Include the child in plans
- Gain the child's views
- Ensure parents on panels
- Consider send needs
- Ensure policies don't block engagement
- Parent / learner forums with all collaborative teams present
- Clear pathways try to cut out the middle person to simplify
- Ensure parents and young people are included in creating shared values and send strategic practises
- Provide surveys in different formats
- Offering the best IAG of facilities and resources on offer in the city
- Enrichment opportunities
- Don't listen to the same people and assume they speak for the whole group
- Approach all ages and groups of people
- Demonstrate understanding by following through with actions

Section 3. Work in partnership

- Make sure you're aware of what already exists and tapping into this EG approaching the youth council
- Feedback on what is being done with parent views and contributions including; what has happened, the next steps, and impact on services
- Co designing through discovery groups and workshops
- Offer a range of timings for engagement sessions
- Liaise with other services and provisions
- Buy in experts
- Feedback loops like you said we did
- Questionnaires
- Dedicated time
- Commitment to agreed times
- Representation in meetings is accurate and valuable
- Tap into available expertise
- Referrals and signposting
- Ask for feedback
- Share information
- Reassure young people and families around the things they are unsure of
- All parties are aware of what's going on
- Family hubs will be open to partners and parents using the spaces and resources
- Use time wisely less duplication
- Willing to work with and promote partner services
- Enhance Co production with partners
- Working with not doing things to people
- Transparency and not being dismissive; include all partners
- Education, health, social, parents, and young people
- Regular meetings with everyone
- Utilise other organisations; LTO's, charities etc
- Provide opportunities to work in partnership
- Get to know people and their stories
- Be available
- Listen to lived experiences
- Listen and use expertise
- Send professionals
- Hospitals health schools parents
- Work colleagues and pupils on caseload
- Collaboration between parents and children and young people
- Discussions with different professionals
- Building relationships
- Better transitions
- More regular check-ins with all stakeholders
- Clear agenda
- Clear expectations

- Summary of actions shared responsibilities [dates who when how]
- Time to build relationships
- Really appreciate contributions of all
- Effective records with all contributions recorded and shared to all
- Shared responsibilities and allocation
- Remain as a team
- Shared outcomes with young people
- Invite all necessary people
- Prioritise parent voice
- Prioritise young people's voice
- Involving others meaningfully
- Decision makers should be in the room with others
- Involve staff from certain areas
- Open conversations
- Keep the young person and family at the centre

Section 4. Communicate

- Use student reps to gather views
- Speak to people directly cut out the middleman
- Don't always rely on written communications consider alternatives like video and audios
- Preferences know the individuals you're working with
- Information shared with reasonable deadlines
- Meeting options
- Keep communication up to date
- Make time to communicate
- Don't use jargon or acronyms
- Consent explaining when and why information needs to be shared
- Pre-meeting conversations and follow-up conversations
- Five working day response
- Use a variety of communication platforms languages and formats
- Sharing knowledge
- Sharing resources
- Health literate messaging and communication
- Offer a true relational approach
- Joint training and workshops
- Consider the environment
- Education, health, social, parents, and young people Ensure communication between all is accessible
- Networking
- Attend regular events
- Keeping everyone in the loop
- No false promises; be accountable

- Make time
- Be present
- Regular conversations
- linking with hospitals and other health professionals
- Schools start conversations, meetings, training
- Communication with children and young people encourage their self advocacy
- Peer training
- Share reports training and information
- Regular communication
- Respect everyone's views
- Agenda and minutes in good time keeping language simple
- Ask what stakeholders want and how they want feedback (what would be useful?)
- Accessible resources
- Coloured paper, e.g dyslexia
- Access to translators where needed
- Accessible meetings EG online, CC, separate room
- Give information about referrals especially follow-ups
- Listen
- Understand parent and young people communication needs language send etc
- No abbreviations
- Give everyone equal opportunity to share
- Communicate Accessibly
- Be available
- Communication shouldn't be rigid
- Flexibility around procedures processes and policies

Appendix 8 Call to action

What is your co-production pledge? Tell us one thing you will commit to doing differently or developing further.

- Working together to help services understand how to be more inclusive
- Communication with the learners and parents
- Collaborate with students and parents on content of learning.
- Call parents by their first name. Some parents who I have a relationship with I do. Not all though yet.
- Seeing if we can work with the youth Council to develop some of our marketing and services.
- To make sure that the child's and carers voice are heard and full listened to and actions put in place.
- Think about the Why and the How when working with families and young people. Why are we having this conversation and how can we support? Advocating with others in my team for taking the time to truly listen and analyse the how before making decisions too quickly.

- Get the views, wishes and feelings of our children to ensure their participation in decision making so we are able to meet their needs
- Use parents/carers names, rather than “mum” or “dad”
- To set up a stakeholder group of parents and YP to help coproduce some of the Educational Psychology Service
- I will continue to do my best for all the young children I work with and always fight for their voices and rights.
- I will develop preparation forms for consultations to share in advance of meetings that I facilitate. This will enable those attending to understand the expectations of the meeting but more importantly, communicate what the need during the meeting (any adjustments).
- Visit more children in person to capture their thoughts and feelings
- To listen more and use names not “mum” etc
- Co-produce parent information sessions that will be offered as part of the Discovery Group
- Give our children a bigger voice: a new PEP where it is embedded and can be recorded. Invite to speak at our conference. Be involved with participation to collect voices from in and out of Stoke.
- To keep parents informed about decision making process and phase transfer. To have a call before the annual reviews.
- To listen to families and communicate in an understanding way for the children and parent/carer
- To use the charter to inform the recruitment of and service delivery for Best Start inclusion practitioners in Best start family hubs
- Ensure that the voice of all within a meeting is heard and that everyone feels confident to share.
- We will continue to do the work that we do and pledge to keep developing our service to support more families.
- Continuing to offer placements and volunteering opportunities to young people, including opportunities to sit on interview panels, critique leaflets, websites etc.
- Engagement of parents when planning changes with delivery. E.g. parent sessions for Discovery Group.