

Participation and Engagement Strategy

2013 - 2016

We Asked

You Said

We Did



Falkirk Council

*Children & Families
Criminal Justice
Adult Services*

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1. Introduction

Falkirk Council Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services are committed to improving outcomes for people who use our services, their carers and families. In order to improve outcomes, services require to be responsive, supportive, empowering and must reflect the needs and aspirations of both current and future service users and their carers and families.

People make a valuable contribution when they are involved in shaping the services they receive and the policies which impact on them so that these are effective in meeting their needs. People have a right to have their views heard. This is an ongoing process and will be embedded within the philosophy.

Our aim is to continue to develop a systematic approach to participation and engagement in the way services are planned and delivered. This will complement the current democratic process with elected members and working arrangements with other stakeholders, for example service providers and employees.

It is important that a flexible approach is maintained that reflects the varied needs of service users, their carers and families, and ensures there is effective influence from the bottom up as well as from the top down.

2. Purpose

Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services want to access the views of service users/carers to inform and develop service design and delivery specifically to improve outcomes leading to more effective and high quality service provisions. The development of an overarching engagement and participation strategy will ensure that services are informed, developed and needs led and that service users/carers are equal partners in the process.

The Vision is:-

- To deliver, through our competent and confident workforce, high quality care and protective services that make a real and positive difference to the quality of people's lives.
- To do this by working with the people who need/use the above services and by developing services that, as far as possible, meet their unique circumstances.
- To make services integrated and straight forward by working with other agencies and communicating clearly and effectively.
- To ensure that the values of courtesy, care and respect are evident in everything that the services do.

3. Context

3.1 Legislative/Policy Context

All services are governed and monitored by a raft of legislation, regulation and guidance, codes of practice and standards, and are subject to inspection by various bodies.

The overarching legislation which enshrines participation and engagement as a right is the Human Rights Act 1998. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

3.2 National Standards

A range of National Standards and National Care Standards were developed to ensure everyone in Scotland receives the same high quality of service no matter what age they are or where they live. The Standards have been created to let people know what they can expect from services and, should they have any concerns, know how and where to go to raise them. These apply across many of the services provided by Falkirk Council.

3.3 Equalities and Diversity

Equalities legislation determines that everyone has the right not to be discriminated against on grounds of ethnic origin, gender, disability, religion, age and sexual orientation. Falkirk Council's Equality Scheme http://underground.falkirk.gov.uk/employee/strategies_policies_procedures_guidance/equality_docs/equality.pdf outlines how the Council will carry out its statutory obligation including assessing and consulting on the impact of our policies. Services understand their duties and actively promote good practice both within services and in partnership work. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out to ensure there is no adverse impact on particular groups of people.

3.4 Service Planning

The Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services' Participation Strategy is not a standalone document. Services work towards delivering priorities set out in a range of plans, for example the Council's Corporate Plan and Performance Plans.

This Participation Strategy demonstrates how services will work with service users and their carers and families to ensure that the right priorities have been identified in these plans and how best to deliver these.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan sets out the goals, values and priorities of the Council, which are aligned with the vision and themes contained within the Strategic Community Plan. This approach will ensure the Council's contribution to achieving the outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement.

<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/single-outcome-agreements/>

Falkirk Council Community Participation Strategy

Falkirk Council has implemented a Community Participation Strategy and action plan for the Community Planning Partnership. The Participation and Engagement Strategy for Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services reflects the principles outlined in the Corporate Participation Strategy.

Separate engagement will take place with communities under this strategy.

Performance Plans

The plans set out the priorities for Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services that reflect and support the corporate goals and values of the Council and set out the way services will work with people. Services are committed to the following values:-

Public service, which means:

- fairness
- listening and responding
- being accessible and accountable
- promoting our services using Plain English as far as possible

Performance, which means:

- providing quality
- achieving value for money
- promoting innovation
- seeking continuous improvement

Partnership, which means:

- effective communication
- sharing decision making
- encouraging participation

4. Principles for Engaging with Service Users/Carers

Participation is a right. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child <http://www.unicef.org/crc/> says that any child or young person has a right to express their views and have them taken into account, in decisions that affect their lives. The European Convention on Human Rights provides the same entitlement to adults. This is now further enshrined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Engaging with service users/carers should start at an early stage. The engagement should suit individual needs and circumstances and necessary structure and procedures should be put in place to ensure this becomes commonplace. To ensure consistency and also to avoid duplication of effort, an appropriate set of Principles for engagement with service users/carers need to be in place, as outlined below.

Principles

- Fairness, equality and inclusion must underpin all aspects of participation and engagement.
- Participation and engagement should have clear and agreed purposes, and methods that achieve these purposes.
- An effective participation and engagement process will recognise, utilise and share the knowledge, skills and experience of all participants.
- All participants should be given the opportunity to build on their knowledge and skills.
- Accurate, timely and accessible information is crucial for effective participation engagement.

5. Standards

1. There must be a clear commitment at all levels to involve service users/carers in meaningful participation.
 - Barriers to involvement will be identified and resolved.
 - There is clear commitment from the Director and Senior Managers across Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services.
 - Participation is built into service values and is reflected in strategic planning, delivery, resourcing, communication and improvement activities.
 - Opportunities are provided to enable employees to develop the skills and attitudes to engage effectively with service users/carers.
2. Service users/carers involvement is valued and respected.
 - Service users/carers have access to appropriate training to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary for meaningful participation and engagement.
 - Services will ensure that service users/carers' expectations in relation to their involvement are managed.
 - All practical, legal or political boundaries to service user involvement (e.g. confidentiality) are clearly communicated from the outset.
 - Input from service users/carers will contribute to service development and feedback from service users/carers confirms this.

3. Ensure participation opportunities are inclusive of and accessible to service users/carers.
 - Service users/carers are not discriminated against or prevented from involvement on grounds of race, religion, culture, disability, age, ethnic origin, language or sexual orientation.
 - Services take a proactive approach in targeting those facing greatest barriers to getting involved.
 - Relevant information is available to service users/carers in appropriate formats, is jargon free, culturally appropriate and accessible.
 - Methods of engagement which are used will be fit for purpose.
4. The participation of service users/carers will be monitored, evaluated, reviewed and adapted as appropriate.
 - Quality indicators against which progress will be measured are set out from the start.
 - Service users/carers are involved in the review process.
 - Processes are in place to capture comments and complaints and include arrangements for ensuring feedback has an impact on service delivery.

6. Methods to be Employed

Identify people who use our services and their carers who would like to participate and understand their needs and areas of interest

Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services understand people who use services, their carers and families and communities will often be interested in specific service areas, or want to be involved at particular times depending on their personal circumstances and in different ways.

Use different approaches to participation

Services can already identify a number of different approaches in place. These will be continually developed, examples of which are catalogued at Appendix 2.

Ensure there is balanced service user and carer participation across all areas of the services

We are aware that there are some areas of the services which more routinely engage with service users and their carers. We will develop mechanisms to share good practice across services and ensure a balance of participation, to both reflect the profile of our client groups and to avoid consultation fatigue with others.

Communication in clear and accessible formats

Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services will ensure that necessary information is communicated in the required format and that this is clear, understandable and relevant. This information will be made available in time to ensure people are able to take full part in any activity.

7. Conclusion

This strategy provides Children & Families, Criminal Justice and Adult Services with an overarching framework to ensure participation and engagement of all service user groups. The strategy will enable service users/carers to meaningfully inform services designed to meet/support their needs.