How to write a children and young people's engagement plan - RCPCH &Us

Children & Young People Engagement team
This how to guide has been created to support your thinking around engagement and capturing the voice of children, young people and families to help shape health policy and practice.

Engagement 101
UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR HEALTH SETTING

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The questions below support you to shape your thinking around an engagement offer for
your organisation or service, and to develop a process that is meaningful and beneficial for all.

The offer will have a number of components based on your local processes. It will include understanding the why (strategic plan), getting to the detail (operational plan) and finding out the voice (engagement plan).

Once you have your basic plan in place, you can use project planning tools within your organisations to create your engagement project. This can be referred to as 'strategic voice', creating an evidence base for change to inform decision makers through a collective voice of service users. Within this are the individual stories of young patients which will be shared, giving you a real insight into their experiences.

**Why engagement?**

Answer these four initial questions to begin to shape your engagement bigger picture.

1. **Why** we want to engage and involve children, young people and their families…
2. **How** their engagement will make a difference to the bigger picture and the individual experience…
3. **What** will we do to engage in an active, supportive and positive way…
4. **What** we want to find out…

**Getting the detail**

Use these topics headers to start to plan out some of the questions, areas for consideration, resources and elements that you need to have in place before you begin work on your engagement offer.

- Outcomes for engagement (direct and indirect benefits of doing this work)
- Outputs of engagement (measurable products or targets that will be achieved through this work)
- Actions that need to take place (the what, when, where of the activity)
- Resources (physical, social, emotional)
- Safe working practices (consent, staffing, risk assessment)
- Timescales for design, delivery and monitoring
- Identifying the right people (children, young people and families, internal and external decision makers, target groups/ages)
- Engaging at the right time (seasons, hour of the day, cultural celebrations taking place, health intervention)

**Listening to the voice**

Once you have identified the main elements of your engagement programme, you need to write your engagement plan, which brings together your engagement tools and methods to capture the voice.

This can be delivered in a range of different ways including:
• Face-to-face: individual or group work, events, workshops, sessions, conversations, project-based
• Online: eSurveys, submit your story, digital artwork
• Paper based: questionnaires/feedback forms, artwork

It is important that you look to engage a representative group of children, young people and/or families to meet the outcomes for your engagement offer. You will need to consider geographical location, age group, ethnicity, disability, health care experience and other backgrounds that you may wish to actively involve to ensure their voice is involved and has influence.

You will need to think about how you best support children, young people and families to engage and will need to consider safe working practices. You may need to identify resources to provide support workers, interpreters and play specialists. You may also need to think about incentives such as food and travel and about appropriate venues for the engagement activity.

Our Recipes for Engagement booklet has a number of engagement activities that can be adapted to support discussion and capturing the voice of children and young people.

Once you have engaged children, young people and families and listened to their voice, you will need to act on it, working on how the voice will make a difference to health policy and practice. Involving children, young people and families in this stage is also important to ensure there is clarity of meaning in understanding experiences and voice.

Sharing your story

A vital part of engagement is in sharing the learning and findings and keeping stakeholders informed throughout the journey.

Remember to include direct stakeholders (children, young people, families, decision makers) and indirect stakeholders (friends, colleagues, service users not directly involved in the programme) in communications about your engagement offer. They may have ideas, resources, contacts or be able to support as well as benefit from the outputs and outcomes.

Next steps

Our Engagement Collaborative offers information, advice and support for practitioners who are developing or leading engagement to improve the voice of children, young people and families in child health and health care. Once you sign up you will receive a regular eBulletin full of news, resources and opportunities for funding and support.

If you wish to discuss your engagement offer further, please contact and_us@rcpch.ac.uk