

**Voice of the Child Strategy**

**Implementation Document for**

**Tameside Educational Psychology Service**

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**Mission Statement for the Voice of the Child Strategy**

“I am the expert in being me You are the expert in your field. If we truly join forces and work together as equals I can be a better me and you would be able to help more young people, which would make you a better you.”

**This document aims to:**

* Outline our visions and aims for how Tameside Educational Psychology Service can listen to the views of children and young people.
* Identify what we are already doing well.
* Detail areas for further development.

**Definitions**

Voice of the Child - When we say the Voice of the Child, we mean talking to, listening to and engaging with what children and young people have to say about the service they receive, and using what they tell us to change and develop the way we work. This can be day-to-day, where practitioners make time to talk to children and young people individually and in an environment where they feel they can express their needs. However this can also take other forms, such as in groups or surveys, and can result in wider systemic change as well as informing care planning.

Co-production - Co-production is an equal relationship between people who use services and the people responsible for services. They work together, from design to delivery, sharing strategic decision-making about policies as well as decisions about the best way to deliver services.

Participation - People who use services will be actively involved and work together with strategic and operational groups to have a direct influence in decision making and shaping services.

**Introduction**

This document has been created with children and young people in Tameside, Tameside Educational Psychology Service and The University of Manchester.

In August and September 2019 children and young people across Tameside were asked how they would like to be involved with developing the Tameside Educational Psychology Service and how they would like to continue to support this development.

These children and young people in Tameside were from:

* Youth Council
* Young Carers
* Young Parents Group
* Greenside Primary School
* Rayner Stevens High School

Research shows supporting children and young people to make informed decisions about their own lives improves outcomes in terms of self-confidence, social skills and positive life choices. It also leads to better services as they are more able to meet the strengths and needs of the communities they support.

This document is primarily focused on improving the participation of children and young people, promoting a rights-based approach linked to United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also recognise that in many instances the involvement of parents and carers in participation activity is appropriate for service improvement and development.

**The refreshed Tameside Pledge:**

This is a Pledge that Tameside Council has agreed to and should be incorporated in how all services are created and developed, and individual practices are carried out:

• Always involve children in the decisions that will affect them

• Help children to stay in touch with people they consider to be important in their lives

• Keep children safe and help children to keep themselves safe

• Help children achieve their potential

• Help children prepare for independence and adult life

• Listen to 2BeUs, our Children in Care Council

Tameside Educational Psychology Service is committed to listening to children and young people and wants to develop their service in a way that involves them from individual work, to how the service overall is set-up and run. It is hoped that these pledge will guide the actions of how we work.

**Tameside Statement of Expectations from children and young people**

These statements were created by the Tameside Youth Council and they are the expectations that they hold the practitioners who support them to:

1. If you say you are going to do something, DO IT. If it can’t happen then check back in with me and explain why.
2. I won’t always agree with you, my views should be respected even if adults disagree with them.
3. Don’t make excuses; tell us honestly rather than being vague and unclear.
4. Respect confidentiality, ask before sharing. We know there are times what we say has to be passed on, we ask that we are told that is going to happen and to whom the information is being passed.
5. Young people’s wishes should be taken seriously. Why ask us what we think or want, if it has no influence on what happens. This builds false hope. Don’t ask our opinion if you have already made your decision, what would it change? I want to see, how what I have said, and influences the way forward.
6. We are young not stupid, don’t patronize us. Our words should have the same weight as an adult.
7. Difference doesn’t mean BAD or WRONG, embrace my differences.
8. Professionals should be knowledgeable and passionate about the topic.
9. Young people want to know that the adult is qualified and relatable. We need to be able to build a valued relationship.
10. Make commitments and appointments and stick to them. To cancel a meeting can lead to us thinking you don’t value us.
11. Is the young person comfortable? If not do something about it! Think about the way to build a positive relationship.
12. All adults should take on board young people’s concerns and ideas. Help us find the solution rather than impose your own on us.
13. Honesty is a good way to build trust.
14. We are all unique, our problem is unique, and the solution should be unique! One size DOES NOT fit all.
15. We need to be an equal partner in any relationship, we are as important as any adult.

**This document includes:**

This is an ever evolving working document which includes a co-produced plan of action of how Tameside Educational Psychology Service will implement the Tameside Pledge, the Tameside Statement of Expectations from children and young people alongside information and ideas collected from children and young people across Tameside. It is hoped that it will led to sustainable systems of listening to and acting upon information from children and young people. This includes guidance for how individual educational psychologists should practice as well as how systems should run within this service.

Once any actions are taken forward within Tameside Educational Psychology Service, the children and young people who suggested these actions will be informed that this has taken place. This feedback system is an integral part of how children and young people are involved in developing Tameside Educational Psychology Service.

**Work completed so far (December 2020):**

* We have a Voice of the Child Strategy – annually reviewed.
* We have a new local offer page with photos and videos about who we are and how we work: [Education Psychology Service - Information for Parents (tameside.gov.uk)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/education/psychologyservice)
* We have parent/carer leaflets and one-page profiles which we ask staff to share with children and young people before they meet us.
* We ask parents/carers, SENCOs and children and young people sign the consent form (where appropriate). The form states that a member of school staff needs to have explained our role to the pupil.
* We try and arrange a visit at a time and place that fits with the children and young people (as appropriate).
* We introduce ourselves using our one-page profiles and again ask children and young people if they want to work with us.
* We ask for feedback from children and young people through an evaluation form and have an email address: EPFeedback@tameside.gov.uk
* We dress casually.
* We have conducted an online survey in July 2020 to ask children and young people how they would like to be supported from our team following Covid-19. This has led to changes in our service and we have fed this by to children and young people involved in this work
* We meet with the youth council once a term to talk about where we are up to and what we need to do next.
* All members of the team have time dedicated to youth participation and co-production.

**Next steps:**

* We have arranged to receive training from the youth council.
* Involving children and young people in the recruitment of Educational Psychologist’s to our team.
* To gain meaningful feedback from children and young people through online processes
* To develop our online presence through social media.
* To develop a process for children and young people to refer themselves to our service.

**Review Date: August 2021**