

**Voice of the Child Strategy**

**Implementation Document for**

**Tameside Educational Psychology Service**



**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 36 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. Some of these children and young people had special educational needs and some did not. It was hoped that a representative group of children and young people around Tameside were involved in this work.

Focus group took place with established children and young people groups as well as at schools. These included:

* 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) for Tameside Educational Psychology Service. 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 need to inform 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.

**Working Ideas:**

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| ***Levels of which we incorporate Voice of the Child*** | ***How we do this*** |
| ***Individual*** | *Before*   * **‘Launch’:**    + C&YP would like us to launch and advertise our service and what we offer. Including having a website (with photos, one page profiles and videos on – one for each member of the team introducing themselves and sharing something about them), social media if possible (facebook/twitter), posters around schools, doing talks and introductory sessions (e.g. talks in assemblies/info for school newsletters/internal school bulletins/school notice board/information on school support system/stands at LA events/could organize a fun event for C&YP etc). Could include ‘Are you worried about school?’ as a headline.   + Having an ‘implementation document’ about how we are going to incorporate C&YP views into practice, having a matching ‘child-friendly document’ online about how we include pupil voice into how we work.   + C&YP would like us to be called something less formal then ‘Educational Psychologists’ (e.g. TEPS). * **Referral system:**   + C&YP would like to be able to refer themselves as well as referrals coming through schools.   + Would like additional support during difficult periods, e.g. GCSEs, A-levels (drop-ins).   + Would like parents/carers to be able to refer as well.   + Prior to EP involvement C&YP would like a meeting with parent/carer and SENCO whereby EP involvement is explained that they agree if they would like to have an EP involved or not (then complete the referral form). Would like to one page profile (colourful/eye catching) / parent carer leaflet information to be used at this stage to explain the service, suggested a ‘welcome pack’ of information that is given out – so they are able to make an informed decision.   + Would like to be signposted to additional information online, website/social media.   + Would like lots of information about their school EP on their school website. * **Referral form:**   + Having a form for C&YP (age considerations) to sign, parents/carers and SENCO. Would like to include:  1. a question about understanding what an EP is/how they work – have you seen a one page profile? 2. A question about what the greatest concern/area of need is – that is agreed by pupil/parent or carer/school staff.   (3) Who would you like to be in the consultation (pupil/parent carer/key people/school staff) – some pupils would like to meet the EP prior to the consultation – choice wanted.  (4) Where the work takes place – school / office / youth centre / home visit.  (5) When the work takes place – morning / afternoon / evening (option for specific times if possible, e.g. not during specific lessons). Option to contact the EP prior to meeting via text/phone/email/whatsapp.   * **EPs meeting C&YP:**   + How we are introduced to C&YP (e.g. one page profiles – want to know information about who we are as people before they find out what we do or how we work, said this would help them be ‘more inclined to open up’).   + Would like a question on the one page profile ‘why do you think you have been referred’ or for this to be a conversation had when appropriate (could match referral form).   + Would like leaflets for parents/carers.   + How we dress – being causal not too smart   + The name we use to introduce ourselves, e.g. first name. * **The meeting:**   + Need to follow what is requested within the RFI.   + C&YP do not want to feel as if they are being categorised by and EP.   + Would like snacks available.   *During:*   * **EP involvement:**    + EPs to introduce themselves using their one page profiles.   + Suggested making/filling out a one page profile if a pupil does not have one as a way to get to know them in the initial meeting.   + Possible ice breaker activity / Younger children would like to start their meeting with a fun activity.   + C&YP want to set goals/action plans with EP.   + Suggested using carbon paper – giving schools/parents carers and young people a copy of notes and goals, or hand written letter or post card (rather than formal a pupil report or letter / EP report or JOP).   + Would like the opportunity to be invited to all EP meetings.   *After:*   * **Length of involvement:**   + Would rather meet with the EP on more than one occasion, e.g. at the first meeting and at the review.   + Ideally, would like to meet more than this where appropriate. Need to be flexible. * **Reports:**   + Reports for parent/carers and schools only if really needed.   + Information about where to find website and how to feedback on service (include giving out hard copy of feedback questionnaire with envelope/or survey monkey website).   + No using black and white paper – difficulties with reading this. * **Feedback:**   + Would like a short, simple questionnaire that is sent out with the EP report which they could anonymously send back (including open and closed questions [e.g. what did you like/what didn’t you like/what could be better], if scales used, have to be an even number to force a preference / no smiley faces)   + And/or have the opportunity to fill it out online, e.g. through survey monkey.   + A ‘We said, you did’ part of the EP website which is kept regularly updated.   + EPs to continually meet with C&YP and gather their view on our practice/ideas moving forward (e.g. through specialist group of young people from the youth council who we meet with 3 times a year). |
| ***Strategic*** | *Before:*   * **Team training/upskilling:**   + All EPs to have an understanding of participation and co-production.   + All EPs to attend the VOC strategy training.   + All EPs to collaborate on the creation and implementation of the VOC strategy for the service. * **Recruitment of EPS:**   + C&YP putting input into application forms / writing interview questions / being on interview panels / having joint involvement in appointment decisions.   *During:*   * **Feedback systems:**   + Clear, consistent and advertised system of gathering feedback on the service e.g. questionnaires, survey monkey, feedback email.   + Termly meetings to discuss and implement feedback from C&YP – directly impacting on service delivery. * **Service changes:**   + Need to consult specialist group of C&YP from the youth council in the first instance. Use of questionnaires and/or focus groups where appropriate.   *After:*   * **Feeding back on feedback:**   + Post on website - ‘you said we did’ section. |
| ***Community*** | *Before:*   * **‘Launch’:**    + Where possible/appropriate advertising our services within the community, e.g. website / social media / talks and sessions for C&YP and parents & carers (e.g. working alongside OKE and SENDIASS) * **Advertising:**   + Having leaflets/information with related services, such as HYM/SALT. Advertising website.   *During:*   * **Communication:**   + Developing and improving current systems for communicating with other services, e.g. inviting other services to consultations/planning meetings. * **Other services:**   + How do we support other services to think about VOC?   *After:*   * **Implementation of VOC:**   + EP’s meeting regularly to developing practice and systems through above ideas.   + Importance of asking for, receiving and building on feedback from C&YP. |