

# Rising Voices: Our Promise

2024 to 2027

Participation and Engagement

[cumberland.gov.uk](https://cumberland.gov.uk)

# Foreword by Bobby Forbes, Member of Youth Parliament for Cumberland

It is a great honour, and with much enthusiasm, that I introduce the Participation and Engagement Strategy for Cumberland Council. It is so much more than the scoping of ideas or aspirations, but an important and clear commitment that the voices of young people in Cumberland will be listened to with respect and acted upon. It is an investment in our voice and potential, building a future that all young people will be leading, contributing to, and thriving in.

Being a young person, I know the challenges we go through and at the same time the hopes and dreams, which drive us forward. Our generation is an ocean of potential, creative and fired up for a meaningful change in everything that surrounds us. To realize this potential, however, we need systems and opportunities that would afford us the chance to collaborate with the decision-makers toward the betterment of our communities.

This is a bold step in the right direction. It offers a route map for meaningful engagement, ensuring not only that young people are consulted but also that they drive the policies and decisions affecting their future. It reflects a vision whereby young people are valued as equals in the task of building a stronger, more inclusive Cumberland.

As a youth parliament member, this plan that I wholeheartedly endorse presents an excellent opportunity, which I would encourage all the children and young people across Cumberland to rise to. We can make these plans real and the difference we could bring in would be permanent. Let's work hand-in-hand towards a rich legacy of empowerment, collaboration, and progress that would live in history with pride for years to come.

**Bobby Forbes**

Youth Parliament Member for Cumberland

# Foreword by Chloe Morley, Ambassador for Care Experience Apprentice for Cumberland

It is an honour as an ambassador for care experienced individuals I support introduce the participation and engagement strategy for Cumberland. As an ambassador I have a great commitment to make sure children and young people's voices are listened to and acted upon.

Being a care experienced individual myself I know the challenges we may face but also the great potential that children and young people have when they know their rights and the choices available to them.

As an ambassador I am passionate about making sure that there are safe spaces for our groups so that all children and young people feel listened to and feel comfortable to share their experiences to help us to develop services that support children and young people to reach their full potential.

I hope that this strategy will help show the commitment to giving children and young people a voice and will allow them to be taken seriously in shaping their lives and communities.

**Chloe Morley**

## Voice acrostic poem

Voices rising, breaking through the noise,  
Open hearts that celebrate each choice.  
Individual dreams expressed with pride,  
Creating spaces where they can abide.  
Empowerment blooms in every sound,  
Sharing stories that unite us all around.

Sign: Naomi

# Introduction

We are delighted to set out our first Participation and Engagement Strategy for Cumberland.

Our participation strategy is led by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 12 which states that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

As a Children and Family Wellbeing Directorate, one of our strategic priorities for 2024 – 2026 on our Journey to Excellence is **Nothing for Us, without Us**.

This strategy sets out how we will create opportunities for children, young people and their families to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives, to help shape the delivery of the services they receive and to have an input to the policies that impact them.

## What's it all about

We are committed to embedding the voice of children and young people in our service design, delivery, evaluation and transformation.

We want to share:

1.

Our vision for Cumberland: what we want to achieve.

2.

What our young people are telling us is important: what is important to us.

3.

Where we are now: our starting point.

4.

How will we know it's working: what data we will use and how we will listen to our children, young people and families.

5.

Our plans moving forward: next steps.

**"Children's participation is a strength in Cumberland."**

**"Children feel valued as their voices are listened to." Ofsted ILACS 2024**



# 1. Our Vision

Our vision for Participation and Engagement in Children and Family Wellbeing is to create opportunities for children, young people and their families to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives, to help shape the delivery of the services they receive and to have an input to the policies that impact them.

Our aim is to ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard and listened to, ensuring they know their rights and the choices available to them.

Involving children and young people in our decision-making processes can positively impact their lives; their views should shape decisions that are made about them. The voice of the child is central to what we do. Anyone working with children and young people should see and speak to the child or young person, listen to what they say, take their views seriously; and work with them and their families collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.



## 2. What our young people are telling us is important: what is important to us

It is important to us that we create opportunities for meaningful participation to take place. We asked our children and young people what is important to them; this is what was said and what we will commit to do.

### What you said is important to you: Your Voice.

Voices to be valued, respected and actioned (actually listen to our views and do something with it).

Being able to be heard  
(have your voice heard).

### What we will do:

We will support you to have your voices heard, ensure that you are listened to and give feedback explaining why. We will value all children and young people and promote their successes.

### What you said is important to you: Access to the right people.

Access to the right people (to get what we say to the right people at the right time to get the right response.)

Making sure we can make changes.  
Telling important people.

### What we will do:

We will promote the voices of children and young people and facilitate a clear link between Cumberland Council decision makers, children and young people. We will create opportunities for conversation between children and young people and the people who need to hear their views.

### What you said is important to you: Providing safe spaces.

Time to think, quiet spaces to think.  
Finding out what people want in person.

Need fidget toys and space.

### What we will do:

We will provide safe spaces that are friendly and accessible for all children and young people and will check that you are happy with our meeting spaces. We will ensure participation promotes the safety and protection of all our children and young people.

## What you said is important to you: Helping us to participate and contribute.

Having priorities and support to work on them.

Stick up for young people.

Giving opportunities to express yourself and to be heard and social.

Important to have a fun time.

### What we will do:

We will offer all children and young people an opportunity to participate, should they choose to, and in a way that works for them. We will actively involve children and young people, rather than simply consult; we will ensure our children and young people know the difference their voice makes. We will work to support those who face the greatest barriers.

## What you said is important to you: So what...?

Being taken seriously.

Sharing what we do.

Need to give feedback about changes made.

### What we will do:

We will ensure that children and young people's participation leads to positive outcomes that are agreed and communicated with them.



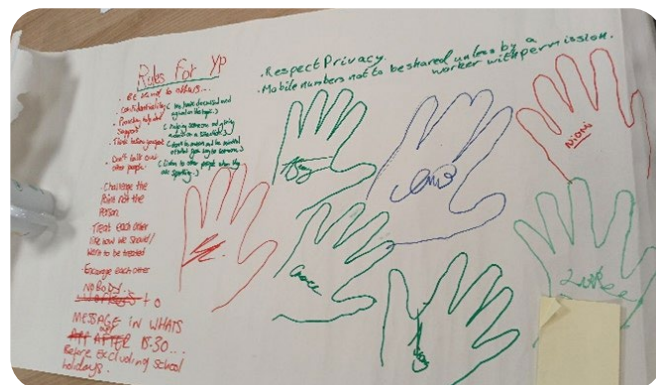
### 3. Where are we now: our starting point

The involvement of children, young people and their families in the development of services is vital in ensuring that our future provision is relevant, effective, and sustainable. Cumberland Council supports a number of Participation and Engagement groups, and we use different approaches to ensure we capture the voice of as many children and young people as possible. We recognise and understand there are many children and young people and we will work hard to ensure opportunities are available to all children and young people in Cumberland, regardless of where they live and what barriers they face.

Cumberland Youth Voice Participation and Engagement groups include:

#### Cumberland Youth Council

Cumberland Youth Council is a group for young people who are aged 11-19yrs representing the voice of all children and young people living in Cumberland. They campaign on issues raised and voted for by young people across Cumberland through the national Make Your Mark campaign. The current campaign is Culture, Media and Sport.



Cumberland Youth Council is open to all children and young people within the Cumberland area, aged 11–19 years providing the opportunity for children and young people to become involved in shaping what happens in their community and informing decisions that will affect their lives.

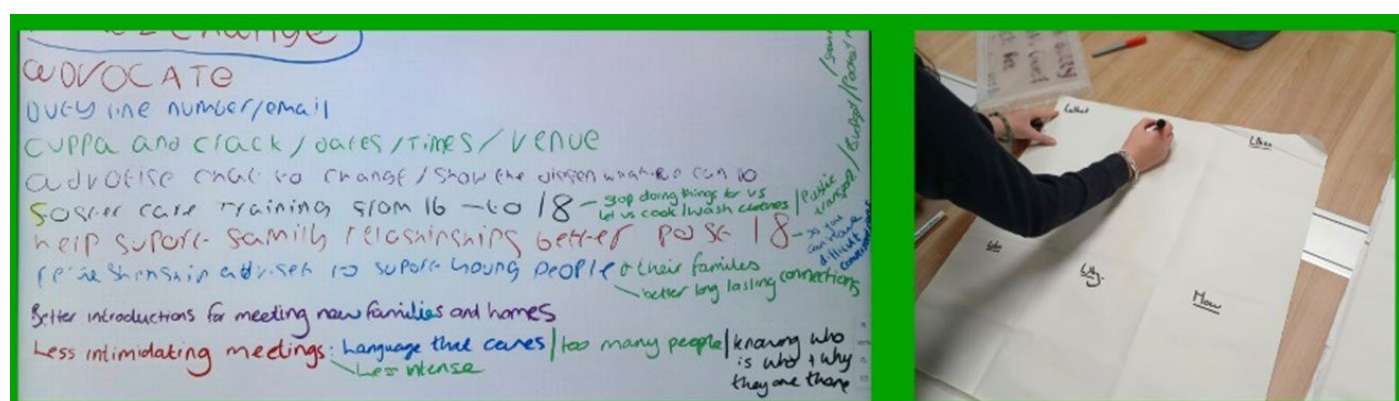
#### Chat 2 Change

“Allows you to express yourself whilst giving you the chance to meet people with similar shared experiences. We support each other without judgement a step at a time to make changes for care experienced young people in Cumberland.”

Cumberland Chat 2 Change is a group for young people who are aged 16-25yrs representing the voice of all young people who are care experienced from Cumberland.

They campaign on issues identified by young people and make change for care experienced young people.

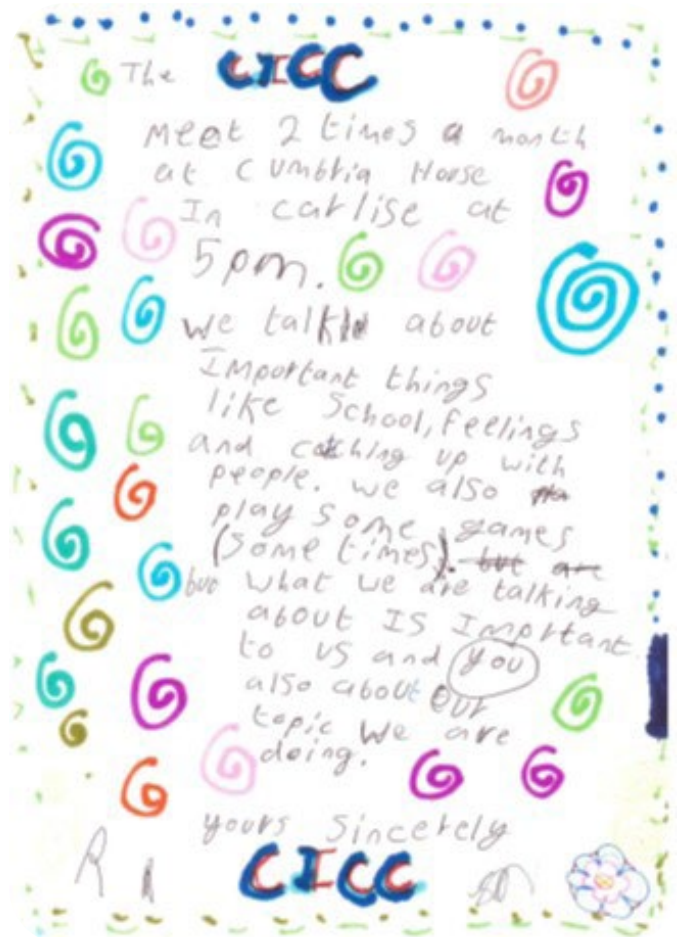
Chat 2 Change is available to any young person with care experience, who is aged 16 to 25yrs and from the Cumberland area.



## Courage Influences Creative Change - CICC

"We are a group that helps Cared for young people aged 10-16 get their voice heard, like a tag team we help each other to share what we think should change. It also gives us a chance to meet new people and make new friends.."

Cumberland CICC (Courage Influences Creative Change) is a group for young people who are aged 10-16yrs representing the voice of all young people who are Cared For from Cumberland. They campaign on issues identified by young people and focus on making change for cared for young people.



## Unique Voices

Unique Voices is a group for young people aged 11 to 25 years old who have SEND in Cumberland. It's a safe space to get your voice heard. We are all supportive within the group. We came up with the name Unique Voices because nobody is the same.

Cumberland Unique Voices is a group for young people who are aged 11-24yrs representing the voice of all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities living in Cumberland. They campaign on issues identified by young people, their current focus is on accessibility and inclusion.



## Unique Voices Acrostic Poem:

Underneath a tapestry of stories, we rise,  
Navigating paths where silence often lies,  
In every whisper, a world to embrace,  
Questions of worth, each moment we trace.  
Uplifted by differences, like stars in the night,  
Every voice carries echoes of light.

Valid, like rivers carving through stone,  
Opening hearts to all we've known,  
Inclusion we seek, hands clasped in delight,  
Creating a chorus, a dance of the right,  
Echoing strength in the bonds that we weave,  
Sense of belonging, in love we believe.

Sign: Naomi

We understand that our participation and engagement groups are not for everyone, and we will actively seek out opportunities to connect with a wide range of our children and young people. We are committed to ensuring children and young people are involved in service design, delivery, evaluation and transformation. Other approaches we employ to hear our children and young people's voices include:

## Mind of My Own

We are introducing Mind of My Own to give the children and young people who are supported by Cumberland Council's Children's and Family Wellbeing services, an easy way to tell us their wishes and feelings.

**Mind Of My Own One:** this enables young people to create a structured statement of their views in relation to events and situations they encounter while receiving support from Cumberland Council Children's and Family Wellbeing Services. This could include cared for reviews, personal education meetings, Child Protection Conferences, Family Group Conferences, Pathway Planning, raising a problem or complaint, sharing good news, reviewing their wellbeing and as part of the overall assessment process.

**Mind of My Own Express:** this is designed specifically for younger children and those with learning difficulties or disabilities, the app can help children and young people have their voice heard regarding their education, life, health and care.

## Signs of Safety

In Cumberland we use a Signs of Safety model of practice. Working in a strengths-based, solution-focused way, we place children and families in charge of their own lives and empower them to achieve long lasting and sustainable safety, wellbeing and success.

Signs of Safety is an innovative strengths-based approach, using solution focused practice to support the family and network to come up with their own solutions to their difficulties, moving away from professionals like Schools, school workers or health visitors having the answers and telling families what to do.

## UK Youth Parliament

The Member of UK Youth Parliament (MYP) for Cumberland is the lead voice for children and young people locally, regionally, and nationally. The MYP is elected through a peer-led process to ensure that the voice and priorities of children and young people are represented through policy and decision-making. Key responsibilities of the MYP include attending the annual UK Youth Parliament Annual Conference and the House of Commons Sitting, at which they develop and set UK-wide policies and manifestos. The MYP keeps in contact with his constituents, so he knows and understands the issues that are of utmost importance to them. Being a MYP gives him the opportunity to express the concerns and wishes of the children and young people of Cumberland regarding things that are important to them, whether it is regionally or nationally.

The MYP plays a very important role in developing leading and participating cultures among children and young people. The MYP gets elected for a period of two years. Cumberland Council supports this program through resources and finances for the MYP to carry out the job.



## Advocacy

NYAS advocates are independent from professionals such as social workers, police and your parents or carers.

Advocates listen to what you want, inform you of your rights and empower you to get your voice heard. They ensure your wishes and feelings are expressed and acted upon to improve your situation.

Advocates can help children and young person to:

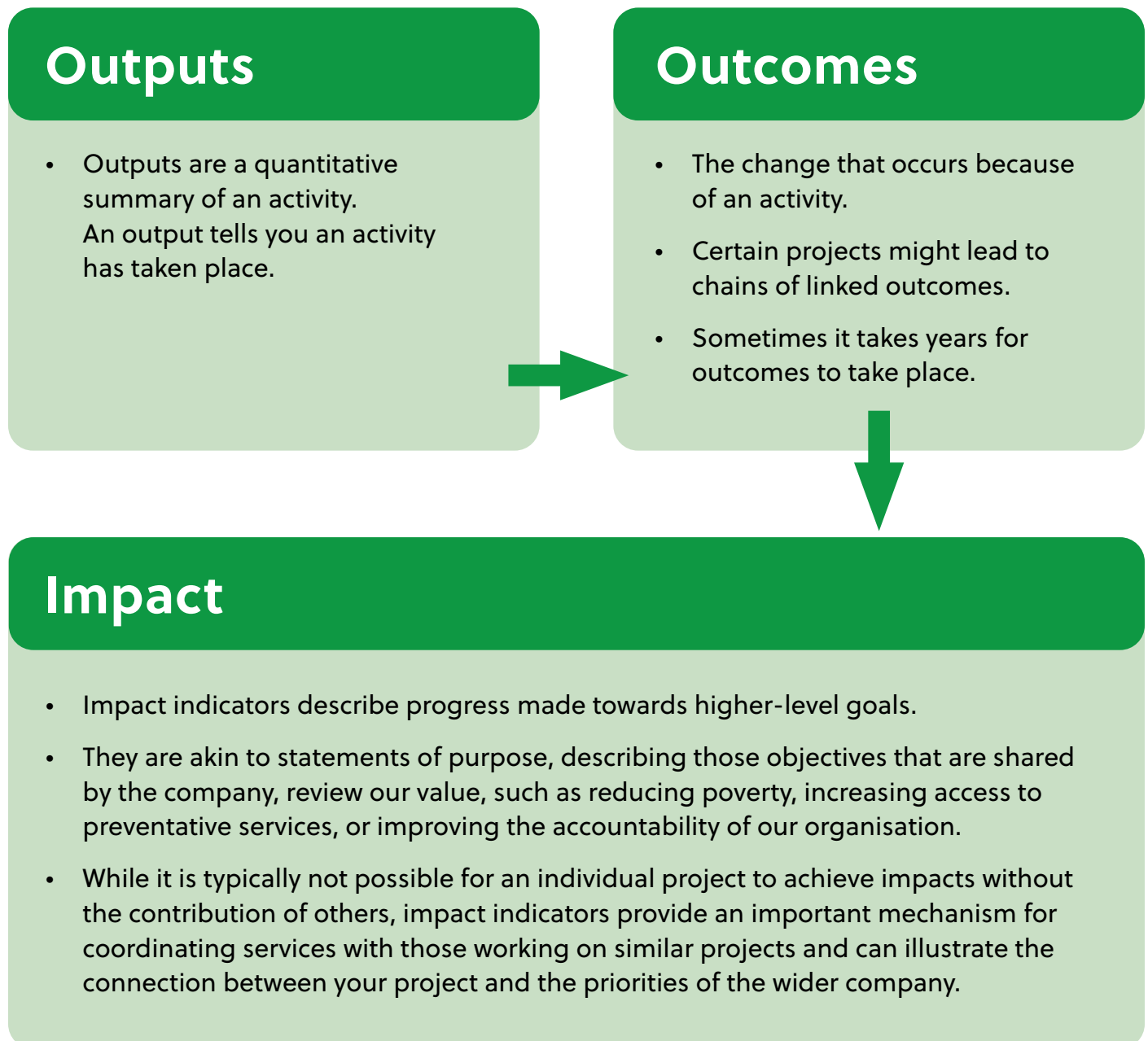
- Speak up for themselves and make sure they are involved in decisions affecting their lives.
- Understand what choices are available and inform them of their rights and entitlements.
- Prepare for and take part in meetings.
- Access other relevant services and signpost to additional helpful support.
- Understand information in a way or format that is accessible to them.
- Make a formal complaint and raise any queries and concerns.





## 4. How will we know it's working: what data we will use and how we will listen to our children, young people and families

We will use a range of approaches to measuring the outputs, outcomes and the impact of our work.



## 5. Our Plans Moving Forward: next steps

Moving forward, we will stay connected using our values to:

- **Empower:** we will develop a culture where children, young people and their families have ongoing opportunities to be active participants in the design, delivery, evaluation and transformation of services across Cumberland.
- **Collaborate:** we will create ongoing opportunities to hear the views of our children and young people. We will ensure that those who are seldom heard, have opportunities to do so and are supported to participate. We will encourage and support our partners to adopt a similar approach.
- **Be ambitious:** we will improve how we monitor, measure, and collate the views of children and young people to ensure we deliver high performing services that we know achieve the best possible outcomes.
- **Be compassionate:** we will respect our children and young people giving their time to share their views. We will have open and honest conversations so they know we understand their views and we will share any changes we make as a result; when we can't make changes we.
- **Innovate:** we will think big and offer opportunities for children and young people to participate in the planning and reviewing of services to provide creative and accessible services, that are tailored to the needs of our communities.

### Contact details:



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Facebook: [Youthvoicecumberland](https://www.facebook.com/Youthvoicecumberland)



Instagram: [Cumberland Youth Voice](https://www.instagram.com/CumberlandYouthVoice)

## Inclusion acrostic poem

In every heart, a spark ignites,  
Nurtured dreams in soaring flights.  
Connections bloom in open hands,  
Lifted voices where kindness stands.  
Understanding bridges the divide,  
Support surrounds them like a tide.  
Intentions pure as stars align,  
Open doors and hearts entwine.  
Never alone; together we rise!

Words to describe inclusion

**Embracement**

Sign: Nonu

**Inclusive**

↓  
(making adjustments  
so that young people  
with SEND can join in)

**Belonging**