

About this project

- [Background to the project](#)
- [Why did we decide to write a Parent and Carer Engagement Toolkit?](#)
- [A duty to engage](#)
- [How was the Toolkit developed?](#)
- [Addressing CWDC themes](#)
- [Who was involved in developing the Toolkit?](#)

Background to the project



Each year the **Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)** makes funding for participation projects.

An application for £25,000 was made by the Commissioner for Parents in Staffordshire and the Parent Expert for Stoke-on-Trent to develop a Parent and Carer Engagement Toolkit.

The CWDC thought this was a good idea and granted us the funding which was available from July 2009 to March 2010.

Why did we decide to write a Parent and Carer Engagement Toolkit?

Parents and carers are the single biggest influence on childhood outcomes so it is common sense to engage them with the life of your service. The equation is simple:

*Better parental engagement =
Better childhood outcomes*

BUT...there is no national standard or model of parental engagement, no ideas bank or help to support the development of practice and very often, the same parents are consulted (not engaged) by different services, using different techniques at different times.

Because of this we thought that the development of a Toolkit would support effective partnership working with parents across the integrated workforce and help improve childhood outcomes.

We wanted to produce a tool that would support **all** Children's Trust partners (that's those agencies that work with children, young people and their families) by:

- having a common definition of parental engagement
- having a common set of standards around parental engagement
- having a common method whereby partners could assess how well they were engaging parents
- having tips, ideas and examples of good practice to draw on to help partners consider how to develop or improve parental engagement practice.



Through developing a Parent and Carer Engagement Toolkit, which works hand in hand with the Hear by Right framework for engaging young people, services have a common set of standards for family engagement.

A Duty to engage

Most Children's Trust partners have a duty to engage. One of the 11 organisational competencies for World Class Commissioning (WCC) requires Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in England to:

“Proactively seek and build continuous and meaningful engagement with the public and patients, to shape services and improve health.”

New Ofsted criteria for schools includes a judgement about a school's ability to effectively engage with parents and carers; and Local Authorities have a duty to involve and consult with children, young people and their families under the *Health and Social Care Act 2008 Section 11*.

How was the Toolkit developed?

In conjunction with the CWDC we set ourselves some key milestones. The following account provides a month-by-month break down of what we did to develop the Parent and Carer Engagement Toolkit.

August 2009

During the first month of the project, we established a **Project Team** as well as a **Young People's Task Group** and a **Parent's Task Group**. We also made sure that we set up reporting lines into a **Steering Group** to scrutinise our work and keep us focused.

September and October 2009

In September and October, we focused on research. There were three components to this:

1. literature review
2. consultation with parents and young people
3. gathering good practice case studies and visiting good practice areas.

We conducted an in-depth literature review which included reading research papers and books that had already been written on parental engagement. This gave us insight into the theory and principle behind engagement and what other people believed was good practice.

In addition to the literature review we set about talking to parents. Back in May 2009 we had spoken to 2000 parents in Staffordshire. We now talked to an additional 122 parents and 40 young people specifically about parental engagement. We used questionnaires, telephone interviews, focus groups,

paired discussions and parent champions to seek the views of parents. We asked them:



- What they thought the term 'engagement' meant (**what is engagement**).
- What the payoffs are for them and their family if they engage (**benefits of engagement**).
- What a good and a bad experience of engagement looks like (**skills to engage parents and foundations of engagement**).
- What stops them from engaging (**barriers to engagement**) and how to overcome these barriers (**removing barriers to engagement**).
- Different ways parents could engage (**methods of parental engagement**).
- Key questions to ask an organisation to assess their level and standard of engagement (**assessing standards of engagement**).
- What encourages and maintains engagement (**sustaining engagement**).

These topics formed the basis of our Toolkit.

We spoke to young people about what parental engagement meant to them and what they thought the advantages and disadvantages of their parents getting more engaged would be for them or their parents. For copies of the **research report** please contact Charlotte Bailey 01785 355 604 or charlotte.bailey@staffordshire.gov.uk.

During the research period, we also sent out a call for good practice and went to visit projects and services that were flagged up to us as good practice projects. The **case studies** we gleaned we have put onto the Toolkit and we managed to get video footage of some practice in action which is also available in the Toolkit.

November and December 2009

Using the findings from the literature review, the research and good practice the Project Team spent the next two months working with the Parent's Task Group to write the resource.

Parents took responsibility for producing some sections of the Toolkit and worked alongside us at all times making sure that we got the content right.

January 2010

During the month of January, **13 services trialed the Toolkit** for us. They were each asked to have a go at undertaking the self-assessment. They provided us with crucial feedback that helped us make some changes to the Toolkit.

We also received feedback from the Parent's Task Group who spent a great deal of time going through the resource with a fine toothcomb.

We even managed to present the Toolkit at a Government Office West Midlands meeting to **Parent Commissioners** in the region, some of whom kindly provided their ideas around improvement for the Toolkit.

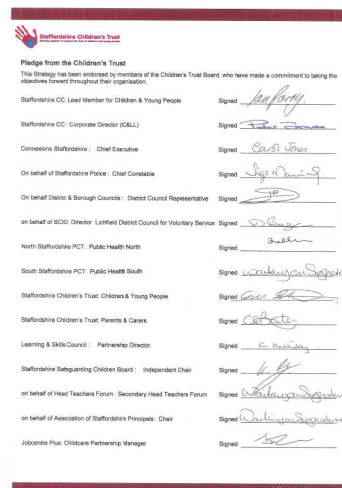
February 2010



We spent much time during February fine tuning the resource and making it as fit for purpose as it could be. We had the **Fatherhood Institute** look at it for us and help us make it more father friendly.

The Children's Trust in Staffordshire held a **pledge-signing event** where the local Parent Strategy and the Parent and

Carer Engagement Toolkit were endorsed by members of the Children's Trust board. The event was attended by parents and senior managers and directors and it gave an opportunity for parents to tell decision makers why engagement is important.



March 2010

We did a lot of planning ready for the **launch of the Toolkit** which took place on the 29th March 2010. The event was attended by 150 practitioners from Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The diversity of the services that attended was vast and included:

- Joint Commissioning Unit
- Police
- Fire Service
- Jobcentre Plus
- Schools
- Colleges
- Health Services
- Councillors
- Charities
- Social Care
- Adult Services
- Fostering Services
- Hospitals
- County Councillors
- Children's Centres
- Prisons

Addressing CWDC themes

The project will support two of the eight themes of the **One Children's Workforce Framework** - *Shared Identity, Vision and Purpose* and *Common Values and Language*. These themes will be covered by:

- Establishing a common value base about the benefits and standards of working with parents and engaging them in service design and delivery
- Understanding that working in partnership extends to parents
- Using a common model and process across all agencies to effectively engage parents
- Supporting the National Occupational Standards in working with parents across all agencies

Who was involved in developing the Toolkit?

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to all those who have been involved in turning the Parent and Carer Engagement Toolkit from an idea into a reality. Great effort, support, hard work and dedication has gone into this development by all involved. Thanks to:

Funders

- Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)
- Staffordshire Children's Trust
- Staffordshire County Council

Project Team

- Charlotte Bailey Staffordshire Children's Trust
- Alison Dury Think Vivid
- Jane Brookes Connexions Staffordshire
- Mark Smith Connexions Staffordshire
- Lesley Boughey Stoke-on-Trent City Council/VAST
- Chrissy Marston Staffordshire Children's Trust
- Tracey Munday Representing Parent's Task Group
- Nasim Khan Representing Young People's Task Group

Parent's Task Group

- Tracy Munday – Chair
- Paul Long
- Helen Howell
- Debbie Stangroom
- Mohammed Nusrat
- Machita Denny
- Beverley Mills
- Lorna Jones

Young People's Task Group

- Nasim Khan – Chair
- Amy Porch
- Ben Bryan
- Kimberley Buxton
- Becky Coldough
- Jade Haywood
- Morgan Ellesse
- Elizabeth Carton
- Bethan Linnone
- Laura Flint
- Daniel Washington
- Jackie Louise
- Louise Marketos
- Alex Shaw
- Emily Simpson
- Kira Higgin
- Callum Higgin

Steering Group

Staffordshire Children's Trust Board and Stoke-on-Trent Children's Trust Board each set up steering groups that consisted of a range of partner agencies to oversee the remit of this project.

Pilot agencies

- Stafford Children's Centre
- Kingsmead Community & Learning Partnership
- South Staffs Primary Care Trust
- Home-start East Staffs
- Staffordshire Parent Partnership
- Tamworth Early Years Centre
- Gingerbread
- Hope Centre
- Vast
- Cheadle Children's Centre
- Home-start UK
- Cannock Community & Learning Partnership
- Third Sector

Contact

Amanda Rowley
Carol Middleton
Deborah Futers
Graham Lowther
Janet Markwell
Kim Holyman
Lynette Beech
c/o Lesley Boughey
Lesley Boughey
Michelle Cooper
Sian Brace
Val Till
Dave Bengé

A special thank you to all the parents who took part in these pilots.

Others:

Special thanks to those who have helped and supported us in getting the content right, and also to those people we visited and who shared good practice with us.

- Connexions Staffordshire
- Coventry Commissioner for Parents
- Fatherhood Institute
- Family & Parenting Institute
- Parent Commissioners – GOWM
- Stoke-on-Trent Children's Trust
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- West Midlands NHS