



Council Looked After Through Care Team Participation Strategy



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Aim

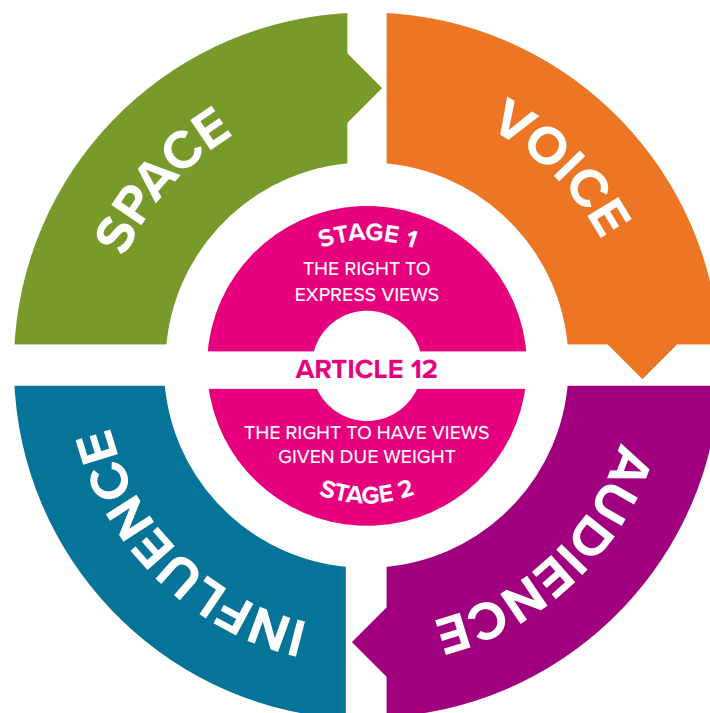
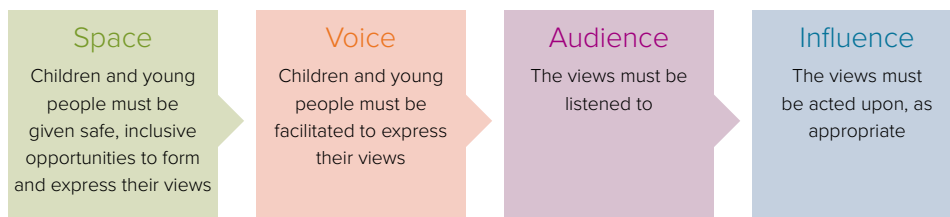
The aim of this participation strategy is to lay out the actions to be completed over the next four years to ensure that young people, of all backgrounds and ages, are listened to and what they say is acted upon effectively and efficiently.

Ambitions for 2024-2028

1. Extending our network of connections to further support children and young people.
2. Creating and developing existing opportunities to allow children and young people to be engaged and heard.
3. Offering a variety of ways to create safe spaces for children and young people in Darlington to be heard.

Lundy Model of Participation

Throughout participation, we follow the Lundy Model of Participation. The model was developed by Laura Lundy and it outlines a framework of four sectors which are needed to create effective youth participation. Without all of these sectors, the voice of a child may be missed or not effectively communicated. All four stages must be addressed and completed effectively to ensure the voice of a child is heard and taken seriously to be in line with Article 12 of the United Convention on the Rights of a Child.



Quotes from our current young people

"I love being an advocate and voice for other young people in my community. I might even go as far as to say it's one of the factors that drove me to run for Member of Youth Parliament in the first place. I saw people unhappy with certain things, or they'd come up with a good idea, but with no way of making that come to fruition. I hope to be that voice for those people and ensure that they feel heard."

Stephen

"This is our group, and we can behave how we want to behave, and you know what we've been through so we can be who we want to be."

Courtney

"It's fun because we get to go out places and get away from things."

Kyra

Current Youth Voice activities

- Ongoing support for young people with external partners, including Fair Share, financial support and gifts for young people as required.
- Children in Care Council Groups which meet monthly to discuss young people's care experiences and changes they want to see – Our Life 5-12 years, Still Our Life 12-16 years and Care Leavers Forum 16+ years.
- Additional consultation and opportunities for young people including girls' craft group, Regional Children in Care Council, Safe Space and Lego building sessions.
- Live cards offered to all care experienced young people so they can access sporting facilities, soft play and swimming for free.
- Mind of My Own is available for staff and young people in Darlington – it is a digital platform which allows young people to have their voices heard about different aspects of their lives in a way that suits them.
- Supporting consultation across the council with different directorates and staff.
- A safe Youth Hub for care experienced young people to access.
- Involve young people in interview processes to ensure they have a say in the staff who will be working with them.
- Highlighting the work of the participation team through newsletters, corporate panels and regular feedback.
- Provide fun enrichment activities for young people to build relationships and rapport.
- Referrals to increase support for young people with both internal and external providers.



Recent actions

Make Your Mark 2024

Make Your Mark is an initiative, run by the British Youth Council with the support of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, offering young people the opportunity to let decision makers know the issues that most affect them. In Darlington, schools, colleges and other local youth providers promoted the opportunity for young people aged 11-18 to ensure their voices were heard. With the support of the four Member of Youth Parliament candidates, 3,440 votes were cast and the top three issues for Darlington were identified as health and wellbeing (746 votes), culture, media and sport (517 votes) and jobs, the economy and benefits (404 votes). More than 500,000 votes were cast across the UK – 100,000 more than in 2022 – and the top issue was again health and wellbeing.

Member of Youth Parliament 2024-2026

Stephen Adenuga, Darlington's Member of Youth Parliament



In March 2024, after a few months of elections and campaigning for votes, Stephen Adenuga was voted as the Member of Youth Parliament for Darlington. Stephen will be in post until March 2026. He is an advocate for other young people in Darlington, driving forward changes based on the outcome of Make Your Mark 2024 and pushing his campaign topics to make positive changes in Darlington.

Stephen three campaign topics are:

- Improving transport -- improving bus stops and other transport facilities.
- Mental health - promoting positive mental health and wellness days.
- Schools of sanctuary - expanding the scheme for asylum seekers across Darlington.

Stephen is working alongside his deputy Jack James and other cabinet members to drive the voice of young people in Darlington.

Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) 2024

Darlington Council values the views of young people. The Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) gives a voice to young people living in Darlington.

We have spoken to children and young people who live in Darlington about what is working well and what needs to be improved. As a result, five priorities have been identified.

1. Health (being as healthy as possible)
2. Education (schools and learning)
3. Family and carers (life support and growing towards independence)
4. Employment, training and real opportunities
5. Darlington (being part of your community, activities and opportunities, and your environment)

The CYPP is a call to action to organisations in the borough and sets out how they will work together to help every child have the best start in life and reach their goals.

To create the latest plan and keep young people’s voice and opinions at the heart of decisions making, we consulted with over 70 young people across seven schools about the five key priorities. Following this consultation work we have created a poster and video to drive forward the plan across the borough.

Actions to take

Action	Date to complete	Ambition addressed
Bi-annual session with young people and staff to consider aims and create areas of focus around what young people need	Aug 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote event to all staff associated with care experienced young people • Ensure a range of young people involved in sessions delivery and creation • Make key decisions makers accountable to actioned challenges faced by care experienced young people
Continue identifying and supporting opportunities for young people and apply for these where appropriate	Aug 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share opportunities with staff to get these distributed to young people • Continually release newsletters with opportunity updates • Develop a cohesive network of companies and staff who can share new and upcoming experiences • Consider alternatives methods of engaging and communicating with the young people

Action	Date to complete	Ambition addressed
Develop new groups to encourage young people to participate in having their voices heard	Aug 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to how young people want to have their voices heard and adapt accordingly • Redevelop links with local school councils to engage a wider audience of young people • Continue engagement with and increasing existing groups • Develop new and exciting activities to build relationships and establish trust annually
Develop a training programme and video by young people for fosters carers	Aug 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laise with the fostering network and support the team to deliver annual training for foster carers • Engage a group of young people to support with sharing their opinions on what they would like from a foster carers • Link in with foster carers to create a session delivery plan lead by young people
Offer training and support to staff on hearing the voice of a young person e.g. Mind of My Own training and champions	May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a cohort of knowledgeable and supportive Mind of My Own Champions across Children's Service • Offer regular training sessions for staff to attend to develop knowledge and increase confidence in using the platform • Increase the amount of young people using the platform to ensure more young people are being heard in a way that suits them • Add Mind Of My Own training to Academy 10 for new starters to access • Admin staff to attend regular Trainers Hub sessions
Youth Cabinet and MYP	Apr 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a diverse and cohesive Youth Cabinet which support changes and actions needed to support young people in Darlington • Complete research into the details around the Make Your Mark 2024 consultation • Work with key decision makers around changes that can be made within Darlington • Make progress on the MYP's 3 main campaign topics

Action	Date to complete	Ambition addressed
Lundy Model	Aug 2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When conducting youth voice activities, staff will follow the Lundy Model of Participation. Staff will aim to address each of the 4 areas (Space, Voice, Audience, Influence) with due consideration to ensure youth voice is being heard effectively
Increase the amount of key decisions makers involved in face to face activities with young people	Aug 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop activities which involve key decisions makers and young people and increase a positive working relationship to share challenges and barriers in casual environment Ensure the sessions are appropriate and convenient for young people so they can be heard in a way that meets their needs

If you want to be involved in hearing the voices of young people in Darlington, please get in touch with our participation team members, Jamie Wassell (Jamie.wassell@darlington.gov.uk) and Evie Burford (evie.burford@darlington.gov.uk).





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Duration: Aug 2024 - Aug 2028

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