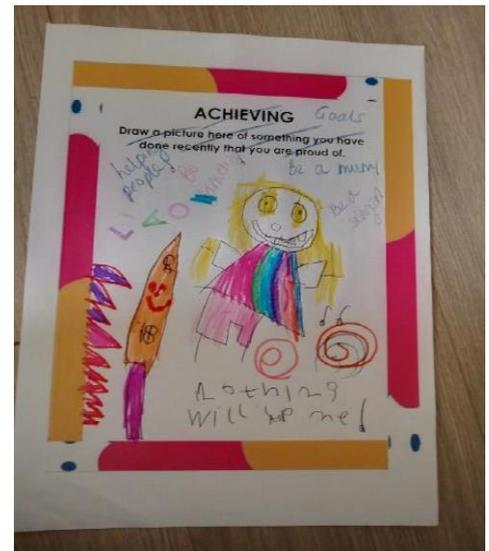


Children and Young People Plan Consultation.

Feedback from the 2024 SHOUT survey and public consultation on the priorities for children and young people, in Sefton.



Final Report released: September 2024.

Jayne Vincent, Strategic Support, Sefton Council.

Forward by Cabinet Sponsor.

Sefton Council has just updated its Corporate Plan which sets out our ambitions for Sefton for 2024 – 2027. One of our top priorities is for Sefton to be an inclusive, child friendly borough where children and families thrive. To support this aim, we decided that we needed to update our Children and Young People's Plan.

The Children and Young People's Partnership Board is leading on updating the Children and Young People's Plan, considering the longer-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit and the current cost of living crisis. We want a three-year plan for all children, young people and their families in Sefton, focussing on what is important to them.

It is really important that the voice of the child and young person is at the centre of the Children and Young People Plan and we have worked very closely with the Primary and Secondary Associations of Headteachers, the Strategic Youth Voice Steering Group, the voluntary, community and faith sector, our workforce and our local communities. They have helped us engage children and young people so that we can understand what makes them happy and unhappy, what they are doing to keep healthy, what they are proud of and their hopes for their future, the things that make them feel safe and unsafe and if they are listened to and if not, how that makes them feel. We also asked our adult population and people who work or support children and young people for their views too.

The extensive engagement that was carried out to help us with our understanding saw us engaging with 3395 children and young people and 239 members of the public and people who work with and support children and young people. In addition, there were 712 wellbeing and involvement observations of babies and pre-school children carried out by the Early Years providers. We also wanted to use existing consultation findings, and this includes the children and young people with experience of care who had taken part in previous, relevant consultations, and we have included them in this report.

Developing the Children and Young People's Plan 2024 – 2027 will help us with the delivery of our Corporate Plan. We will build upon the many strengths that we have in Sefton, including our partnership working and the involvement of people with lived experience. As this is your plan, it is important that we continue to involve you as we develop and implement our Children and Young People's Plan and we look forward to your involvement as we work together. We believe that the consultation has been successful and would like to thank everyone who has taken part and supported us during this stage of the engagement process.



Councillor Diane Roscoe, Cabinet Member, Children, Schools, and Families.

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1. Executive Summary – Feedback from the Consultation and Engagement for the Children and Young People Plan.

This report provides the findings from the engagement process undertaken by Sefton Council and partners on the refresh of Sefton’s Children and Young People Plan 2024 - 2027. The Council worked closely with partners of the Children and Young People’s Partnership Board, the Strategic Youth Voice Steering Group and the Associations for Primary and Secondary Headteachers to plan and carry out a 13-week consultation and engagement programme with children and young people, members of the public and people who work with children and young people to help us focus on what’s important and to be ambitious for children and young people of Sefton.

The Cabinet Sponsor, Cllr Diane Roscoe, Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families agreed that developing the Children and Young People Plan should have a strong emphasis on the voice of the child influencing the plan. It should also build upon what we already know from the Sefton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and previous work and conversations. The Children and Young People’s Partnership Board agreed to keep the themes Heard, Happy, Healthy and Achieving but agreed to add the theme of Safe. The following seven proposed priority areas were identified, which were consulted upon.

- 1) Ensuring that children are safe, and that we protect those at risk of harm.
- 2) Strengthen families and build resilient communities.
- 3) Placing children and young people at the core of the decisions we make about them.
- 4) Getting the most out of life by through play, leisure, culture, and sporting activities.
- 5) Protect children and young people from discrimination and advance equality and opportunity for all.
- 6) Reduce health inequalities and support families to live healthy lifestyles.
- 7) High aspirations, opportunities and achievement for all children and young people.

The consultation and engagement process took place from the 12th February until 10th May 2024. It included a wide range of methods including the SHOUT survey for children and young people aged 8 - 19 years (25 years for those with SEND), an online public survey, an engagement workbook, observations in early years settings, stakeholder briefings and presentations to partnership boards, a dedicated social media campaign and a video promoting the consultation, involving children and young people. [Link to video.](#)

Key messages from all the elements of the consultation and engagement process.

In total, 3395 children and young people and 239 members of the public and people who work with and support children and young people took part in the consultation. This includes the children and young people with experience of care who had taken part in previous, relevant consultation, that is included in this report. In addition, there were 712 wellbeing and involvement observations of babies and pre-school children carried out by the Early Years providers.

The following are key messages from the SHOUT survey and consultation and engagement activity:

Children and young people feel safe at home and younger children value a supportive family. They also feel safe when doing leisure activities. They feel less safe when alone, in the dark, in the park and more police presence and better street lighting would help. Some older young people - 28% of 12 – 16-year-olds and 26% of 17+ also don't feel safe on public transport.

A significant number of children and young people said that they have experienced some form of bullying – verbal, physical and online; 23% of 8 – 11 years olds had experienced some form of bullying and 53% said that it makes them unhappy or sad. Over 38% of children and young people aged 12 – 16 years have experienced verbal bullying and 15% have experienced physical bullying and 24% online bullying, whilst nearly 43% of young people aged 17+ said that they have experienced verbal bullying, with less experiencing online (24%) and physical bullying (20%).

This aligns to our proposed priority of ensuring that children are safe, and that we protect those at risk of harm.

Approximately two-thirds of people who completed the public survey feel satisfied that Sefton is a place for children and young people to grow up in and live and is a place that is welcoming and inclusive to all children and young people and 53% believe Sefton is a place where people get on well together. Children and young people also reported that they like where they live as they are near friends, the shops and the park. They say that being with family and friends makes them happy.

This aligns to our proposed priority to strengthen families and build resilient communities.

Children and young people are largely positive about the involvement in life decisions and feel listened to, but there are a group who feel that their contributions are not acted upon. They feel annoyed, sad, angry, upset and unhappy if they are not listened to. Involving people with lived experience and including the voice of the parent and carer is important.

This aligns to our proposed priority of placing children and young people at the core of the decisions we make about them.

A significant number of children and young people take part in exercise or sports and they like having fun and being active and join leisure and social activities to socialise. In the public survey, a significant number of respondents feel that there should be more free and inclusive activities and investment in parks and 84% of the respondents to the public survey are concerned about the cost-of-living crisis. It is possible that the cost-of-living crisis is impacting on children and young people partaking in leisure activities.

This aligns to our proposed priority of getting the most out of life by through play, leisure, culture, and sporting activities.

Sefton is a diverse borough with many communities with different needs and equality of access and opportunity is important to all. As mentioned, respondents to the public survey are very concerned about the cost-of-living crisis and say that this and household income, and having a child with special educational needs or disabilities are reported as contributing factors to the inequity.

Whilst the experience of bullying is high for children and young people, the incidents are higher for children and young people who are Non-binary, Fluid or Transgender; 65% said they have experienced verbal bullying and a higher number of people have experienced both online and physical bullying, implying possible hate crime.

Of the children and young people who said they don't feel safe on public transport, whilst a smaller number are male, 31% of 12 – 16-year-olds and 34% aged 17+ are female. For children and young people who are Non-binary, Fluid or Transgender, this is higher, with 43% of 12 – 16 years old and 41% 17+ saying they don't feel safe, implying possible hate crime.

This aligns to our proposed priority to protect children and young people from discrimination and advance equality and opportunity for all.

In the public survey, a cross-cutting theme was emotional and mental health and accessing support, with 73% being concerned about children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing and 74% concerned about accessing support. Mental health and wellbeing services was identified as the main gap when asked about the priorities.

The cost-of-living crisis is a concern for children and young people aged 12+, with 20% of 12 – 16 years and 38% of 17+ say that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting their mental health/emotional wellbeing.

In the public survey, there are reports that family circumstances may be having an impact on family members and children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing. Timely access to a diagnosis and low intensity mental health support for neurodivergent children and young people is important. Talking to someone they trust can help but waiting times for talking therapies is too long.

Some members of the public and people who work with children and young people are concerned about the waiting times for health services, including dentists, GP's, and hospital appointments, with feedback referring to the long waiting lists having an impact on children and young people, school attendance and family life.

On school days, 76% of 8 – 11-year-olds always eat breakfast and lunch and 20% eat lunch but not breakfast. As children become older more of them skip breakfast with 40% of 12 – 16-year-olds saying that they eat lunch but not breakfast. Notably, 11% of 12 - 16-year-olds don't eat either. Just under half (48%) of 12 – 16-year-olds and over half (52%) of 17+ report they regularly eat junk food.

Half of children and young people aged 12 – 16 years and 41% of young people aged 17+, say that body image causes them anxiety and is affecting their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

This aligns to our proposed priority to reduce health inequalities and support families to live healthy lifestyles.

On average, 58% young people aged 12+ feel anxious and worry about tests and exams and 57% of respondents to the public survey are also concerned about tests and exams and the impact on children and young people. There are also a cohort of children and young people who say that attending school and college affects their mental health and wellbeing; 38% of 12 – 16-year-olds and 28% 17+, respectively.

Approximately two thirds (65%) of children and young people aged 8 – 16 years are hopeful about the future, but they are also worried (41% of 8 – 11-year-olds) and anxious (56% of 12 – 16-year-olds) too.

Children and young people have many achievements and are proud of these, and 80% children and young people aged 12 – 16 years and 84% aged 17+ have a plan for the future. Preparation for adulthood, managing money, being able to live independently and affordable housing are essential to support this.

This aligns to our proposed priority of high aspirations, opportunities and achievement for all children and young people.



Key findings from the SHOUT survey.

Mind of My Own Ltd was commissioned to design three age-appropriate short surveys to gather feedback from children and young people aged 8 – 11, 12 – 16 and 17+.

Mind of My Own are leading experts in designing surveys for children and young people and have co-designed a question bank that can be accessed using the 'SHOUT' survey tool. The questions and surveys were accessible and easy to use. The surveys were in plain language and used icons and images. They were linked to Recite Me, which enables the child/young people to access the survey if they need the information in a different colour, font size, language etc.

For the SHOUT surveys, the language for the priorities was changed to be more accessible/appropriate to the age group.

At the request of the Association for Headteachers, a SHOUT Survey Guide (Annex 1) was developed to support schools, colleges and those working with children and young people to complete the survey.

This and information about the SHOUT surveys were shared to schools through the Education Portal at the beginning and regularly during the consultation period and the list of schools and colleges who took part can be found as Annex 2. It was also shared with colleagues and partners who work with children and young people not in education or training or who are educated at home and who are cared for or have experience, and there was an 'other' option for them to choose, if they didn't attend a school/college.

By the end of the consultation period, a total of 3,102 responses were collected from children across the borough:

8 – 11 age group - 487 responses
 12 – 16 age group - 1530 responses
 17+ age group - 1075 responses

How do you identify your gender?				
	8 – 11	12 – 16	17+	Totals
Female	255	1029	520	1804
Male	175	312	444	931
Rather not say	28	46	24	98
Non-binary	5	27	27	59
Trans male	2	23	10	35
Fluid	4	19	12	35
Trans female	1	9	11	21

SHOUT Survey – 8 – 11 age group.

- Responses to the question, 'How do you feel about the future?' ranked 'hopeful, excited and happy' in 1st, 2nd and 3rd position. Sad and angry were ranked 9th and 10th.
- This cohort ranked 'supportive family and friend's' as most important to them, with 'being safe' 2nd and 'having fun' 3rd
- Most of the children who responded usually travel by car (84.2%), with walking being the second most common mode of transport (54.8%).
- Notably, some children expressed feeling unsafe in specific situations such as when alone (54.9%) or when on public transport (16.0%).
- Bullying emerged as a significant theme in this cohort. Although 46.9% of children stated they had not been bullied, 23% reported currently experiencing bullying or having been bullied within the year.
- This theme was reflected by 52.8% of children choosing 'Bullying' as something that makes them sad or unhappy.
- 76% of children answered that on school days, they 'always eat breakfast and lunch'. 20% of children answered that they 'eat lunch but not breakfast' with only 1.4% answering that they 'do not eat either'.

SHOUT Survey – 12 – 16 age group.

- Responses to the question, 'How do you feel about the future?' showed a mixed outlook. The most common answers were 'Hopeful' (65.6%) and 'Anxious' (56.3%), with a greater selection of positive emotions than negative. 'Sad, unsafe and angry' ranked 8th 9th and 10th.
- This cohort classed 'having fun' as the most important thing to them however, 'being happy,' 'listened to', 'healthy' and 'safe' were all ranked highly along with having a supportive family/social network and being treated the same as others.
- When asked about what worries them, children identified 'Test or exams' (56.6%), 'Body image' (50.3%) and 'Attending school' (37.8), as the top three areas of concern. 'Sexuality/Gender identity', 'Climate Change' and 'Crime' were the least concerning, each receiving less than 10% of responses.
- When respondents were asked about the meals on a school day, 40% said that they 'eat lunch but not breakfast', a figure nearly equal to the 40.9% that eat both meals. Additionally, 11% of respondents are not eating 'either breakfast or lunch'.
- When asked about whether they had experienced bullying, 572 (38%) said that they had experienced verbal bullying (404 female), 354 (24%) online bullying and 221 (15%) physical bullying. Some young people who are trans, fluid and non-binary also say that they have experienced physical, verbal and online

bullying.

- When asked about where they feel unsafe, 418 (28%) feel unsafe on public transport: 324 of these were female, 33 male, 9 fluid, 9 non-binary, 12 Trans-males and 4 Trans-females.
- 298 (20%) say that the cost-of-living crisis is affecting their mental health/emotional wellbeing.

SHOUT Survey – 17+ age group.

- When identifying what impacts their emotional wellbeing, 'Test and Exams' was identified by 58.6% of children as the most common factor. This was then followed by 'Body image' (41.2%) and 'Cost of Living' (37.8%).
- This group ranked 'having fun,' 'being happy,' 'being listened to' and 'being safe' as their top 4 most important things.
- When asked about perceptions of safety in the local area, most respondents indicated they 'feel safe everywhere'. However, 'Public transport' was identified by 26.4% as an area of concern. This is a notable detail considering that 59.2% travel by 'Bus' and 23.1% by 'Train'. Of those who said they don't feel safe on public transport, 177 are females, 57 males, 6 Fluid, 13 non-binary, 3 Trans-females and 3 Trans-males.
- Perceptions of involvement in life decisions was largely positive among this cohort. 80.7% of children answered with one of the two most positive answers: 'I am able to contribute' (49.6%), or 'My contributions are acted on' (31.1%). Less than 10% answered that they 'felt ignored'.
- A high percentage said they have experienced verbal / physical abuse (63%), pressure to do something they didn't like (32%) and online bullying (24%). Some young people who are trans, fluid and non-binary also say that they have experienced physical, verbal and online bullying.
- Most young people (84%) have a plan for when they leave school and college, with 35% wanting to go to university, 19% getting a full-time job and 17% wanting to start an apprenticeship, with 13% doing some other form of training or travelling.

Whilst there were some differences about the priority areas for each group, the feedback from all three age-groups shows that the children and young people feel that the following is important to them.

- 1) Having fun.
- 2) Being happy.
- 3) Being healthy.
- 4) Being safe.
- 5) Being listened to.
- 6) Supportive family and friends.
- 7) Happy when they are older.

- 8) Being treated the same as others.
- 9) The world around them.

The SHOUT survey three age group reports and the SHOUT overview report can be found as Annexes 3 – 6.

Key findings from the Engagement Workbook.

As part of the Children and Young People Plan Consultation, an Engagement Workbook was designed by Sefton Youth Advisors and Sefton Council so that children and young people had another way to give their views. There was a Workbook Guide to support participation.

The Workbook had questions connected to the following themes:

- Heard.
- Healthy.
- Happy.
- Achieving.
- Safe.

It also included questions to find out which of the priority areas was most important and why these were important.

The Workbook was completed by 69 people from 7 different youth settings and groups and the key areas of feedback are:

- They feel 'annoyed', 'sad', 'angry' and 'upset' if they are not listened to. It makes them feel left out and anxious.
- Most people said they did some kind of exercise or sporting activity and some people said that they eat fruit and vegetables and drink water to keep them healthy.
- Being with friends made people feel happy the most and the thing that makes people unhappy the most is when they are left out of things by other people.
- They like their house, and they live close to their friends. They like living close to a park and the shops. Some people said that they feel safe where they live, and the neighbours are 'nice'.
- There are lots of achievements that people are proud of. Many connected to school and sports and leisure activities.
- Being with family, friends and pets are the main things that help people to feel safe. They like being with people who care for them. They also feel safe when at home – in their bedroom or personal space.
- Attending leisure and social activities is also a place where they feel safe; SPACE was a place that was mentioned a few times.

- The main times when people said they are not safe are outside when it is dark or travelling on public transport when it is dark. Some people said they don't feel safe at school, in strange places and also when they are alone.

The feedback shows that the children and young people feel that the following is important to them. Two of them had the same number of responses, so they are joint-fourth.

Here is the order that people said was a priority:

- 1st Making sure that children are safe, and that we protect those at risk of harm.
- 2nd Helping families to be stronger.
- 3rd Protect children and young people from discrimination and improve equal opportunities for all.
- 4th Involving children and young people in the decisions we make about them.
- 4th Getting the most out of life through play, hobbies, culture, and sporting activities.
- 5th High hopes, opportunities and achievements for all children and young people.
- 6th Reduce differences in people's health and help families to live healthier lives.

A copy of the Workbook can be found as Annex 7. Key findings from the different groups/organisations who completed the Engagement Workbook.

Young Carers - 7 participants.

- They feel annoyed, sad, angry, upset, and anxious when they are not listened to.
- They walk, do different sports and physical activities, and eat apples and draw to stay healthy.
- Their pets make them happy. They like socialising with their friends and on the phone. They like doing physical activities and eating.
- People saying unkind words, being left out, getting sick and going to school makes them unhappy.
- They like the shops, the park, it is easy to get to school and the scenery.
- They are proud of handling and looking after animals and pets. Making things for other people, achieving at school and sports and creative activities.
- They feel safe with their parents and at home and being in school and feel unsafe at the bus-stop.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of the things they said were:

"So, no children feel unsafe."

"Because young carers live in quite an unsafe world, so they need to be kept safe."

"I like helping people. I want them to be happy and strong."

Buddy-Up (young people aged between 13 and 18 who have additional needs and disabilities and are at risk of social isolation).

7 participants.

- If they are not listened to, they feel angry, annoyed, upset, sad, un-happy, isolated and it affects their mental health.
- To keep healthy, they take part in physical activity – walks, swimming, yoga, tai-chi, and dance. For their mental health they go on walks in nature, have pets, meet up with friends, talk to family and play on the PS4.
- Being with family and friends, going to Buddy-Up and doing activities, where they have support and an opportunity to be creative makes them happy.
- They feel unhappy when people are mean to them and when other people are unhappy.
- They like the area that they live because they feel safe, have good memories. They like their room in their house and the neighbours are kind.
- They would like to have driving lessons, get a job and go to university and some said that confidence and anxiety would stop them.
- They feel safe with family and friends and unsafe waiting in the dark and public transport in the dark.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of things they said were:

“Because if you are making decisions about a young person they should be involved and they need to be involved in the decisions that you're making about them.

It's helping them feel safe and that they're protected from risk or harm.”

“It's good for children and young people to achieve high hopes, opportunities and achievements for all young people and children.”

“Because everyone has a right to an education and protection with families in a safe area.”

Dance (Netherton Activity Centre) -22 participants

- They feel sad, annoyed and anxious if they are not listened to.
- As well as dancing they do other sports and leisure activities and eat fruit and vegetables to be healthy.
- Dancing, being with friends and family make them feel happy and arguing, people being mean, not listening makes them feel unhappy.
- They like living where they live because it is near friends, by a park and shops.
- In the future they would like to pass their GCSE's, be a dancer or play football and some said that this might not happen if they make mistakes, but many said that nothing would stop it from happening.
- They feel safe with family and friends or at dance and unsafe outside in the dark and in the park/North Park.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of the things they said were:

"It is important that kids stay safe so families are not emotionally hurt and so kids don't get involved with the wrong people as it can ruin their future and safety."

"I think it's the most important because they talk about keeping children safe and helping the children who actually need help."

"Because everyone should be able to be included."

MYA SPACE - 14 participants.

- If people are not listening it makes them feel upset, angry and frustrated.
- To stay healthy they walk, dance, do PE in school, drink water and read.
- Spending time with family and seeing friends makes them happy and being at SPACE.
- Being bullied, left out and arguing cause unhappiness.
- They like where they live because they are close to their friends, the shops and the local community.
- In the future they want to be performers, actors, musician, and pass tests and GCSE's.
- Going to SPACE makes them feel safe, as does being at home (and in bed) and with family and friends.
- They don't feel safe at school, in crowded places and outside on the street, in Derby Park and the Strand.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of the things they said were:

"Protecting our youth paves way for a new generation of individuals to make a genuine impact politically, socially and culturally on our communities. Ensuring the youth that are involved in vicious cycles are given the tools to dream and make decisions and have a voice is valuable, especially in this climate. The youth are our

future and our present. Thanks to Brian McCann (Drama and Music Youth Arts Coordinator), we all have bright futures ahead of us."

"I think that these are important because helping families and making children feel safe but honestly, I agree with every single one of them."

"So children can have a voice and they can have fun."

SEND Youth Conference (from school pupils) - 7 participants.

- They feel annoyed, sad and left out if they are not listened to.
- Football, PE and playing outside keeps them healthy.
- Doing sports, performing, being with friends makes them happy and littering and dis-respecting each other and diseases like cancer, inequality, seeing people upset makes them unhappy.
- Having sport and leisure activities and the beach are things they like about where they live.
- Being a footballer, a singer and making sure everyone feels equal is a goal.
- Being with family, friends and having someone to talk too helps them feel safe and they don't feel safe when out at night and when alone.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of the things they said were:

"Helping families because some families might not have a great relationship. Because it could help us access a community. Protecting those at risk of harm because it could be stopped and it can all end and if not done, whoever can build their mental health up. "

"It's important for people like me to be recognised. Without equality, people miss out on things that they might enjoy, like sports, cheerleading etc. Achievements help people to be recognised and they feel like they have a place in the world, especially for them."

Summerhill School pupils - 4 participants.

- If they are not listened to, they feel sad, anxious and angry. Teachers and pets listen the most.
- Walking, sports, eating apples and water keeps them healthy.
- Pet dogs and learning times-tables makes them happy and being attacked and people annoying them makes them unhappy.
- They like where they live because of their parents and pet.
- Family, pets, being at home and in school makes them feel safe and going to strange places makes them feel unsafe.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of the things they said were:

"To stay safe. To keep healthy and It's important to learn."

“To protect people, so people don't get sick.”

Youth Service - 8 participants.

- They feel sad, angry and annoyed if they are not listened to.
- To keep healthy they dance, do exercise, eat and sleep.
- Sleeping, horse-riding, achieving things makes them happy and being woken up and getting out of bed and losing at things makes them unhappy.
- Family and friends, the Strand and Town are reasons why they like where they live.
- They would like to see friends more, be an actor and travel the world and the things that might stop them are money, not studying, laziness and anxiety.
- They feel safe with family and friends and youth staff but don't feel safe at school, when it's dark, on public transport, the Strand and the beach.

When asked why they choose their priority areas some of the things they said were:

“People around us need to be safe and happy whenever we go in our environment.”

“To build a better community and make an impact.”

“People should get opportunities.”

Key findings from SEND Youth Conferences.



Annually, there are two SEND Youth Conferences organised by the SEN and Inclusion Policy Development Officer, with the support from Alder Hey Hospital, Edgehill University, Royal Air Force, Hugh Baird College, Southport College, Sefton Adult Social Care (Transitions Team), Mersey Care and Sefton's Special Educational Needs & Inclusion Team.

The conferences are held over two days: one for primary aged children and young people and another for secondary schools and colleges. The Sefton SEND Youth

Conference for primary aged pupils took place on the 12th of March 2024 and a total of 11 primary schools attended bringing 44 pupils.

The are invited to express their views on the themes:

- Happy.
- Healthy.
- Heard.
- Achieving.

The Sefton SEND Youth Conference for students between the ages of 11 – 25-year-olds took place on the 19th of March 2024. A total of 47 secondary and college students attended on the 19th of March from 9 settings.

They were asked to consider and express their views on the four Preparation for Adulthood outcomes of:

- Education/Employment.
- Good health and wellbeing.
- Community inclusion.
- Independent living.

A full report has been written, which is attached as Annex 8. Below are some of the key findings.

Primary Conference.

Healthy and heard.

This session was run by Edge Hill University and Alder Hey Hospital.

Alder Hey received feedback from the children relating to reasonable adjustments. The children felt that when they went into hospital, they felt scared. Things that would help them would be sensory toys and lights and having things to do in the waiting areas to improve the waiting.

Edge Hill University focus was to share and discuss the Support rights-based standards for children having tests, treatments, examinations and interventions. There was discussion during the activity about experiences the children had had in health care settings and what their rights are. The children's work will directly inform the creation of a symbol-based version of the standards which we are working with Inclusion Ireland and Children in Hospital to create.

An additional activity asked the children to write to the doctors and nurses on a postcard to share what makes them feel safe when they come to hospital and post this in the post-box. The children enjoyed this activity, and many messages and pictures were shared. These will be collated and shared with health professionals.

Happy.

- Family members, pets, holidays and friends are some of the things that make them happy, and they know they are happy because they smile, laugh, relax and have a warm, peaceful feeling inside.
- Some of the reasons they are happy in school is because of the lessons, they see friends, doing things well and learning something new.
- Some of the reasons they are happy in their community is they can walk with their friends or pets, visiting the shops, Crosby Marina and Crosby Library. They like to play sports and take part in activities.
- They said that the things they do to move from sad to happy include, playing sports, play with friends, watch video games, listen to music, talk to parents or a teacher.
- When asked what else they would like in Sefton to make them happy, some answers were, more parks and green spaces and youth clubs, free activities or things that don't cost a lot of money and more litter bins.

Achieving.

- Sports and physical activities are goals for some children and other children aspire to have jobs such as a police officer, a bus driver, a gamer on YouTube, a teacher or teaching assistant, an artist, running their own businesses and going to space!
- School and education also feature as goals for some children. They want to be good at their timetables, keep going to school and getting better at reading.
- The things that would stop them from achieving their goals is age, someone else stopping them and Some children also said that nothing would stop them from achieving their goals. Several children also displayed some self-awareness through their answers, in that they acknowledged that they had a short attention span, over think things, or can get distracted, and these may act as a barrier.
- Some of the things they are proud of are having a longer attention span, learning new skills and helping others which included delivering a presentation to peers on ADHD to help raise awareness of the condition, giving money to a homeless man, helping nan to fix the washing machine, and buying a gift for baby sister.

Secondary Conference.

Good health and wellbeing.

The focus was again to share and discuss the Support rights-based standards for children having tests, treatments, examinations and interventions. The young people were asked to use some specially developed Velcro boards to help us understand how the statements from the standards could be written more accessibly using symbols. The young people engaged really well with the boards, helping to identify how the statements could be improved to be more accessible. The content the young people helped to develop will directly inform the creation of the symbol-based version of the standards which we are working with Inclusion Ireland and Children in Hospital to create.

Community Inclusion.

This session focused on the topic of 'preparing for adulthood' and was based around the future goals and aspirations of the young person, their perception of being an adult and what this meant to them.

- There was a high volume of individuals who wished to live more independently and/or find some form of employment. Many individuals mentioned job roles such as the police or bus drivers.
- A common theme was also surrounding the desire to contribute towards maintaining the environment.

Achieving.

- Sport and physical activities were goals for some young people, including going to the gym, playing football and being a professional footballer, swimming, and dancing.
- Some young people also aligned their goals to schoolwork and doing their GCSE's and tests and getting good grades, as well as going to college or university.
- Having a career was an aspiration for some young people – joining the SAS/Marines, being a gardener, a police officer, a nurse, an actor, and a singer were some of the careers that the young people said they wanted to do.
- Life-skills were important for some young people – being able to live on their own and making money to support themselves was important.
- Providing support for others was a goal for some young people, including, raising awareness and equality of wheelchair users and setting up a walking group.
- Several young people said that nothing would stop them from achieving their goal and some young people also had a sense of self-awareness – they

acknowledged that being lazy and not being motivated may stop them from achieving their goals, as would not working hard enough and giving up. Awareness that medical conditions may also prevent them from achieving their goal was also mentioned and being stressed and worried may prevent them from achieving their GCSE's.

- Not having support was also identified as something that might prevent young people from achieving their goals. Having access to transport and lifts, other siblings (so support is limited) and parents not thinking it a good idea, were all things mentioned by young people. Not having enough money was also identified as a barrier.
- Many young people expressed that they are proud of things connected to school, to achievements at sport and physical activities and some were more personal, like cleaning their room and getting over nightmares.

Feedback from cared for and cared experienced young people.

Children and young people who are care for or have care experience were given the link to the public survey to complete and to avoid consultation fatigue, the Children's Social Care Participation Officer has provided recent feedback from relevant consultation and engagement activity that children and young people have been asked to take part in.

From reviewing these reports, the following information can provide an insight into what children and young people who are cared for/have care experience think about the thematic areas and priorities of the proposed Children and Young People Plan.

The Pledge Survey is conducted annually over two age groups – 5yrs to 9yrs and 10yrs plus. The survey has been in place since 2009 and gives the Council the opportunity to take a 'temperature check' of the experiences of children and young people in relation to the support and services we provide for them. From the 2023 Pledge Survey, the 5 – 9-year-olds:

- Said they feel safe and cared for where they live now.
- All young people who responded said they get help to keep themselves healthy.
- 94% of young people said they get help to take part in things they enjoy doing.

From the 2023 Pledge Survey for the 10 - 17 age group, of the respondents:

- 100% of young people said they feel safe where they are living.
- 94% of young people said they feel their successes are celebrated with 91% saying they are supported to take part in their interests and hobbies.
- 92% of young people said they have regular health and dental checks with 91% saying they receive enough information to stay healthy.

- 80% of young people said they were involved when decisions about which family members they could have contact with, with 81% saying if they could not have contact with someone it was explained to them why.
- 89% of young people said they feel involved when decisions are made about their care and that their opinions are listened to, with 84% saying they feel their thoughts and ideas are acted on.
- 70% of young people said they feel they live close to friends and family who are important to them.
- 48% of young people said they get a choice in the time, place and who is invited to their review.

Young People from the Making a Difference Group took part in the 2023 Care Experienced Survey. From the findings, the following relate to the thematic areas:

- 96% of young people said they have a smartphone and 82% of young people said they have internet access from home.
- 93% of young people said they are aware of local services to support their physical and mental health with 82% saying they feel they receive enough support to make good choices about their health.
- 75% saying they felt safe in their home and neighbourhood. 64% of young people felt they had a choice where to live with only 29% saying they feel there are enough housing choices.
- 79% of young people feel in control of the decisions that affect their life.
- 75% of young people said they feel confident making a health appointment with 68% saying they feel their physical and mental health are prioritised.
- With regards to Education, Employment and Training, 71% of young people said they feel they have enough practical support to access EET whereas only 61% said they feel they receive enough financial support.
- 50% of young people said they are involved with putting together their pathway plan with only 46% saying it meets their needs and only 29% saying they have a copy of their pathway plan.

Children and young people took part in the Cheshire & Merseyside's Integrated Care Board's **mental health consultation**. They had a focus group in February 2024 and the following information is taken from the feedback report.

What works well with children and young peoples' mental health services?

- The group had a lot of discussion around mental health support in schools and the community. Positive experiences included speaking to a trusted mentor / teacher in school, who they have a good relationship with and who can give advice when needed.
- Young people felt that talking was beneficial and that young people should have one or two close people who they trust and can speak to about anything they are worried about, whether that is a friend, family member, teacher, or other support worker. Some young people thought this was more helpful than trying to speak to a stranger such as a counsellor.

What could be better and how to improve?

- The young people's experiences of therapy were mostly related to CAMHS; all young people agreed that the waiting times to access support were too long.... waiting times to get through to someone on the phone were too long and made them feel like their issue didn't matter.
- Support needs to start earlier, and a lot more needs to be invested in things such as anxiety and low mood before it reaches crisis point.
- Young people suggested more could be done in school to support children and young people's mental health. Suggestions included having chillout rooms or a safe place to be able to retreat to without getting trouble and having calming music played in corridors and public spaces.
- The group also suggested there should be better appointment times to suit them.
- Young people said they would rather go to somebody they know and trust instead of contacting a service, although sometimes they would want it to be anonymous particularly if they were feeling very down or embarrassed.

What helps your mental health?

- Things the group felt helped them with their mental health included, listening to music, taking part in hobbies, going outdoors and being in nature, particularly in the summer. Young people agreed there was a difference in their mood between summer and winter months – their mood being lower in the winter with less opportunity to get outdoors.
- The group also agreed physical activity helped to improve their mood... Young people commented that when you look and feel good physically, this improves your mental health and how you feel about yourself.
- The group agreed it was good to have a routine with a regular bedtime / wake up time.

Barriers when accessing mental health support services?

- Some young people said that they have been too nervous to approach somebody when they need help. They also didn't access mental health services because they don't trust the service and don't feel safe. This is often due to experiences with other professionals and being let down previously. One young person said, "If a social worker isn't listening, it makes you think that nobody will listen."
- All young people in the group have experience of being Cared For. They said they often feel different and are treated differently by other adults and their peers. The young people said they sometimes feel judged, and this is a barrier to opening up about their mental health as they feel misunderstood.

Children and young people who are care experienced aged 16+ also took part in a consultation about **serious violence** in September 2023. From the findings the following insight relates directly to the Children and Young People Plan thematic areas and priority areas:

What does it take for you to feel safe?

a) More police on the streets.

Some of the group felt that more police presence on the street would make them feel safer as it may deter people from committing violence however most of the group said they had a lack of trust in the police force and would not feel confident if they contacted the police that anything would be done.

b) Better Housing options.

Some of the groups are living independently; they felt there were 'pockets' of violence across the borough. Young people felt that there was more social housing in areas with violence (such as Bootle, Seaforth, Litherland) than what they described as more affluent areas (such as Southport, Birkdale) Some of the group, have had to move from an area they grew up in to get their own property and added that they imagine other young people would be scared moving communities. The group agreed more focus needs to be on placing care experienced young people in areas that were safer or where they felt more comfortable. Young people acknowledged that areas may have less violence but if young people are not used to being in that area, they may still feel vulnerable.

c) Better street lighting.

Young people said there is lighting, and streetlights are no longer as bright. Young people said they feel vulnerable when walking the streets after dark and said they feel safer in the summer than they do in the winter. The young people commented that the area around Stanley Road is particularly poorly lit. The young people said they avoid parks and isolated places after dark, stick to main roads and use the longer way around to feel safer at night. One young person said there is a field between her house and her parents but will not walk across it after dark and goes the long way around. One young person said their parents worry about where they are living and their safety (young person lived alone).

Early years observations.

The child's voice in the Early Years (0-5) is best captured through observation and during interactions with familiar adults. Skilled practitioners assess children's well-being using verbal and non-verbal methods. One of the tools that we promote to Early Years Educators is the Leuven scales of well-being and involvement.

Happy, Heard, Healthy, Achieving:

Well-being and Involvement are considered essential dispositions for learning. Observing children through this lens can tell us about their readiness to learn, interact and engage and therefore **achieve** their potential. Children who present at the highest level on the scales would be present as **happy**, they are likely to have their physical and emotional needs met and therefore be **healthy**.

The scales do not consider the product of a particular activity but how the child presents during the process. The child does not have to have acquired spoken language; therefore, this tool can be used during observations of the youngest children in the borough to ensure that all are **heard**.

Early Years Educators use their observations to determine where children best fit within the scales of wellbeing and involvement as detailed descriptors below. This provides an assessment of an individual child. The data can be further analysed to look at cohorts of children in particular groups, classes, schools/settings. Collating this information can give some insight into how children are presenting across the borough. This information can be used to plan an appropriate approach to addressing any concerns for children individually and at a class, school/setting/service level.

Implementing Leuven Scales of Well Being in Sefton:

Ferre Laevers Conference:

As part of project and funding the Early Years Service are really pleased that to have been able to organise for Professor Ferre Laevers who developed the Leuven scales to come to Sefton and deliver a session to our Early Years Workforce including schools, settings, and Early Help staff. This took place on 24th January 2024, and it generated a lot of excitement amongst the sectors! This reinforced key messages that has previously been shared with schools and settings as part of the SSTEW programme (Sustained Shared Thinking and Emotional Well-being.) The tables below demonstrate a small-scale sample of data that we collected following the Ferre Laevers conference and the SSTEW project. This provides data to give us a snapshot of how the youngest children in Sefton may communicate their 'voice' through their presentation of wellbeing involvement when accessing an Early Years setting. This demonstrates our commitment to capturing the 'Voice' of some of our youngest children.

Responses were gained from 3 PVI (Private Voluntary Independent) settings, 2 school/maintained nurseries and 5 reception classes.

- Data for children under 2 was shared by 1 setting.
- Data for children aged 2 was shared by 1 setting.
- Data for nursery aged children aged 3 and 4 was shared by 4 settings.
- Data for reception aged children was shared by 5 schools covering 6 classes.

The total number of children in the observations was 350 for wellbeing and 362 for involvement. The tables below summarise the scores.

Wellbeing Results:

Wellbeing Level	Percentage of children presenting at each level %
1 Extremely Low	1
2 Low	7
3 Moderate	19
4 High	50
5 Extremely High	23

Involvement Results:

Involvement Level	Percentage of children presenting at each level %
1 Low activity	2
2 Frequently interrupted activity	8
3 Mainly continuous activity	26
4 Continuous activities with intense moments	48
5 Sustained intense activity	16

Limitations:

There are limitations of this data. Children's involvement and wellbeing can vary depending on the activity, day, physical factors such as being hungry or tired etc. There is reliance on practitioner knowledge and judgement of each child for this exercise and therefore there is a degree of subjectivity. The returns we have received is a small sample and the service aims to increase this to give a more accurate overview. There is also a need to ensure representations from different geographical areas and types of settings including Private, Voluntary, and independent settings, schools, and childminders.

This approach will continue to be promoted across the sector. The aim is to work with colleagues in other Children's Services team to explore how this could contribute to assessments such as Early Help as a further indicator of a child's 'voice'.

Feedback from the public survey.

An online survey for members of the public and people who work/support children and young people was available from the 12th February – 10th May 2024. There was also a hard copy survey available that was in easy read and was web accessible. This was available at libraries and town halls across the borough. It was available to post out to people if required and a phone line was available if anyone wanted to complete it over the telephone. No requests to complete the survey over the telephone were received.

In addition, the members of the Sefton Strategic Youth Voice Group promoted it to their colleagues, networks, and members of the public and posters were designed that were displayed in community buildings and distributed to family wellbeing

centres, partner organisations and youth settings and organisations to be displayed. Information about the survey was also promoted on the Education Portal and on the Council's intranet and on social media.

There were 239 responses to the survey. Twenty-six of these were hard copy surveys, the rest being completed online.

The questionnaire was themed around the following areas:

- Sefton as a place for children and young people to grow up and live.
- Sefton as a place that is welcoming and inclusive to all children and young people.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Safety and online safety.
- Education and preparation for adulthood.
- Engagement and participation.
- The proposed priority areas and gaps.
- Barriers to achieving the priority areas.

The equalities questions were optional for respondents.

Overall Headlines.

A full consultation report can be found as Annex 9 and Annex 10 (graphs) and the Easy Read version of the report as Annex 11. From a review of the both the quantitative data and the comments received, there are some cross-cutting themes. A summary is as follows:

- There is recognition that the borough has some great places – beaches, coastline, schools, parks and green spaces and communities and the borough has potential to be an ever-greater place for children and young people. Over two-thirds of people feel satisfied that Sefton is a place for children and young people to grow up in and live and that Sefton is a place that is welcoming and inclusive to all children and young people. Over half are satisfied that people get on well together.
- Some respondents recognise that Sefton is a diverse borough and said that activities and services are not equitable across the borough and where people live, and their circumstances may prevent equality of opportunity. Respondents are very concerned about the cost-of-living crisis and this and household income, and having a child with special educational needs or disabilities are reported as contributing factors to the inequity.
- A cross-cutting theme was emotional and mental health and accessing support, and mental health and wellbeing was also identified as the main gap in the priority areas. Respondents are concerned about not having timely access to services and early access to low intensity support and mental health support for neurodivergent children and young people. It was identified that family circumstances may be having an impact on family members and children and young people.

- In addition to mental health support, respondents are concerned about the waiting times for health services, including dentists, GP's, and hospital appointments, with feedback referring to the long waiting lists having an impact on children and young people, school attendance and family life.
- Support for children and young people with SEND was highlighted. In addition to inclusive services, activities and opportunities, feedback was in connection to poor identification and assessment processes, a lack of knowledge and training, education provision, better playgrounds and activities, mental health support, support for parents and carers and services working better together.
- Over half of the respondents are concerned about children and young people being active and being able to meet friends. Free/affordable leisure and youth activities is something that many respondents said is needed for children and young people in Sefton, so they have somewhere to go and something to do, without costing money. There should also be more youth clubs and inclusive activities which should also include children with additional needs and older young people. Some respondents also said it was important to renew and invest in parks and open spaces.
- Respondents are concerned about the tests and exams for children and young people. Preparation for adulthood and supporting children and young people to prepare for work and being able to access further education, training and local jobs and manage money are all areas of concern. Affordable housing and young people having somewhere to live is also identified as a concern.
- Respondents are concerned about safety for children and young people. This includes safety online and safety after dark. Community safety and anti-social behaviour are mentioned with reports that children and young people do not feel safe, particularly in parks. Respondents are also concerned about children and young people smoking cigarettes and vaping and alcohol and drug use. Some people said there should be more police on the streets.
- Over two thirds of respondents are concerned about children and young people being listened to and about them being involved in decisions that affect them. Some people who responded also felt that it was important to listen to children and young people and parents and carers. There were some reports that children and young people are not being listened to and it is important to listen to people with lived experience. Some people felt it was also important to listen to the voice of the parent and carer.
- Some people said that it was hard to rank the priorities and that they all should be a priority. Children being safe and protected was the number one priority, with the others all being identified as important. Mental health and wellbeing support was identified as the main gap in the priority areas.
- Lack of funding and resources was identified as the main barrier that would prevent the priority areas being implemented, with respondents identifying both national and local funding as a barrier, as well as allocation of money and resources. A lack of staff and staff turnover was also mentioned. Many of the

themes above were identified as barriers. Another barrier was not having enough post-16 provision.

The proposed priority areas and gaps.

There were 7 specific areas under the Proposed Priority Areas and gaps section. Respondents were asked to rank each on a 1-7 scale with 1 being 'most important' and 7 being 'least important'. The 7 priority areas can be ranked by level of importance as follows:

1. Making sure children are safe and protected.
2. Involving children and young people in the decisions we make about them.
3. Getting the most out of life through play, hobbies, culture, and sporting activities.
4. Equal opportunities for all children and young people.
5. Stronger families and communities.
6. All children and young people have hopes and can achieve what they want to achieve.
7. Helping families to be healthy.

Equality Monitoring Analysis.

An analysis of the responses to the equality monitoring questions has been undertaken to see whether there are any themes relating to equality issues and the protected characteristics. Most of the comments were general comments, not directly related to a protected characteristic.

There were 13 respondents who said that they were **cared for** by Sefton Council; 5 of these were aged under 18 and 1 aged 18 – 29 years old. There was also 13 people who said they had **care experience**, again different age groups. From an analysis of the comments received, no themes were identified.

Ninety-nine respondents said that they were a parent/carer and identified as having at least one **disability**. From a review of their comments, a theme they identify is a lack of household money, and the cost-of-living crisis are barriers for children and young people. Support for children and young people with SEND and inclusive services was also mentioned by some of the parents and carers.

Feedback from People First Merseyside.

People First Merseyside is a self-advocacy organisation run by and for people with learning disabilities. Eleven members of People First Merseyside completed the public survey but also sent some feedback on the priorities they chose and why they are important.

Education.

- Education is important - People with LD and or Autism can be educated just in a different way, we all want to achieve.
- Most people in our group think they have not got or ever had a social worker but attended special schools.
- We feel it's best to be attending an integrated school - We can build friendships that will last, it's much better than being banged up.
- It's important to be monitored to ensure you are attending school - "I was a problem when I was at school, I was disruptive, and they did not notice when I did not attend."
- We need one to one support in schools. Specialist training for teachers - We want more concentrated learning and more specialist teachers.

Social Care.

- People should get an assessment as early as possible – because the earlier and better your assessment makes it easy to develop as a person.
- Family and carers should not have to resort to paying for our education and participation in the community - it's important to find the stuff that works for us, and I'll learn at my own pace.
- Most people in our group think they have not got or ever had a social worker but attended special schools – it's important we have our own information that we can understand. It's important to ensure people have a named social worker they can contact.
- More Respite necessary - might have to go into care if the family breaks down.
- Family's need more support - if we get the right support, we can achieve anything.

Voice.

- All children no matter the age should be involved and be listened to – children should be involved.

Annexes:

- Annex 1 SHOUT Survey Guide
- Annex 2 List of schools/colleges who took part in the SHOUT survey 2024.
- Annex 3 SHOUT survey report 8 – 11 years
- Annex 4 SHOUT survey report 12 – 16 years
- Annex 5 SHOUT survey report 17+ years
- Annex 6 SHOUT survey overview report
- Annex 7 Engagement Workbook.
- Annex 8 SEND Youth Conferences 2024 report
- Annex 9 Children & Young People Plan public survey consultation report
- Annex 10 Children and Young People Plan public survey graphs (annex)
- Annex 11 - Children and Young People Plan public survey easy read consultation report