

Voice of the Child

Why is this important to Bradford?

We want Bradford District to be a place where every child, young person and family is safe and well. Our **greatest asset** as a District is our **children and young people**, and it is they who will help us to achieve our aspirations to grow and develop the economy and prosperity of the District. This JSNA section considers how we listen to the voice of children, young people and families, and work with them to shape services and promote active citizenship.

Strategic context

National Context: Article 12 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) notes that children have a right to express their views and have them taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity. The Save The Children resource [‘Every Child’s Right to be Heard’](#) (2011) highlighted that participation contributes to personal development, leads to better decision-making and outcomes, serves to protect children, contributes to preparation for civil society development, tolerance and respect for others, and strengthens accountability.

Local Context: Priority 6 in the [Bradford Children, Young People and Families Plan](#) (2017-2020) is *‘listening to the voice of children, young people and families, and working with them to shape services and promote active citizenship’*. This acknowledged the challenge to continue to grow the number of young people who are involved, and to enable the voices of young people to be listened to, heard and respected so that they influence change.



What do we know?

Living in Bradford: The Health Foundation’s ‘Young people’s future health inquiry’ site visit to Bradford in June 2018 listened to 137 young people aged 12-24 years old. Some of the feedback included a desire to see:

- *Greater support for community and voluntary services, including existing children’s centres – especially for early years;*
- *Increase the number of high quality, long term (e.g. three year) apprenticeships;*
- *Creating more walk-in/walk-out or youth café services, which provide emotional support in more casual settings;*
- *Free transport for young people aged 11-19 years to allow them to take up opportunities on the other side of the city;*
- *Greater understanding of different cultures should be encouraged with greater opportunities for cultures to come together;*

The [‘Growing Up North’](#) consultation (2018) included Bradford, and reported that children were proud of where they were from, and most wanted to stay in their local area as adults. There were many reasons for this, not least a **strong sense of community** and a desire to stay **close to family**. Young people often considered these factors as important as their career aspirations. This research also suggested most young people believed that their local area would be better in 5 years’ time, particularly in terms of jobs and opportunities. Career aspirations were dominated by traditional choices and gender biases, and tended to be informed by friends and family rather than any knowledge of sectors of local employment.

Self Care: In May 2018 the Engaging People Team obtained feedback from 143 young people. The most popular self-care pledges were to **eat less junk food, to spend less time on their phones, and to drink more water**. They noted that young people are influenced by the social culture which they are a part of, therefore what their **peers** think is really important. Adult role models also play a big part in the decisions that young people make. Further findings are below:

Their most common barriers to self care



They had these ideas about improving self care messages

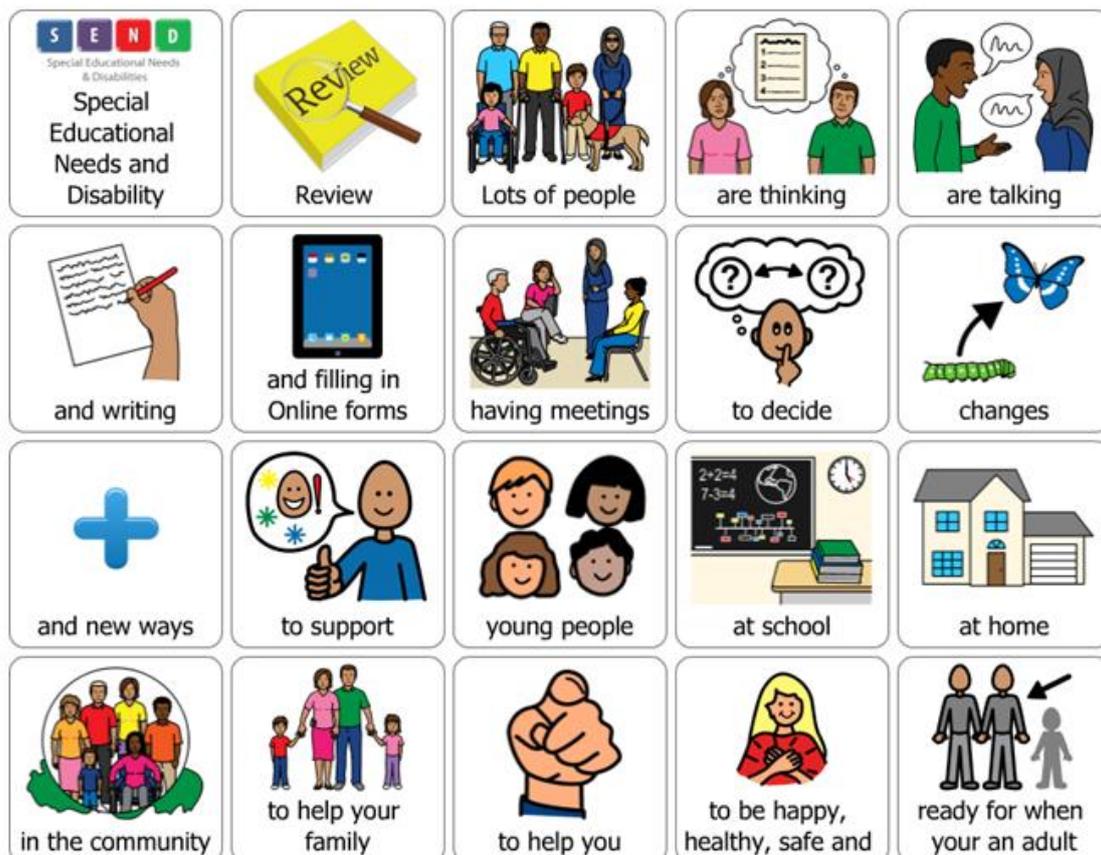


Early Years: In March 2016, Better Start Bradford (BSB) was visited by The Children’s Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield. BSB invited Anne to one of its community venues to meet parents and children, projects, and Born in Bradford’s Better Start cohort study; this was an opportunity to put the voices of 0-3s at the forefront. Conversations flowed as families spoke about

what babies really need, what a day in the life of a BSB child is like, and the excitement of how working together they can give children the best possible start, all whilst painting papier mache with the young children.

School Nursing: 92 children and young people participated in the Special School Nursing Service review (2016) coordinated by Public Health. The aim was to obtain views on the current and future service. Children expressed a need for **health promotion support** with topics such as healthy eating, worries, private body parts, as well as relationship and sex advice coming out quite strongly as something children would like the school nurse to help them with.

Young People with SEND: The Specialist Inclusion Project works with young people aged 8-18 years with a disability that prevents them from accessing Short Breaks. The project has a young person's panel ("the Crew") to design, support and develop the project. The involvement of young people has resulted in new sessions, including dance and drama, Pineapples Summer Camp and swimming. They also have had 20% of the scoring for all Short Breaks funding applications. High levels of engagement led to an increase in service users (from 705 in 2016, to 1,724 in 2017).



Young people were supported to contribute to the SEND review using a pictorial version of the questions (see image above).

In 2017 Barnardo's consulted with young people with SEND to obtain feedback on their Short Breaks, and to identify what else they would like to be offered. They reported the following:

Dreams: *to work when they are older, to do activities which support life skills, to have their emotional wellbeing supported, and to have support for socialisation and to gain independence*

Worries: *being discriminated against, barriers due to anxiety or lack of confidence, not enough resources in Braille, not feeling respected, anxiety around transport, new places, finance and time*

Many young people with SEND were unaware of available support and didn't know about the Local Offer website. They have **ambitions** in terms of careers yet feel they are not supported enough to prepare for this. Support around emotional well-being seemed to be lacking which may hinder both emotional and social development.

Learning and Innovation: The third 'Learning and Innovation' event took place in January 2018 and was around integration, design and system change for children and young people's services across Bradford and Craven. Young people from the local area took a leading role in planning, organizing, and delivering the day. After listening to stories from young people, attendees had to pledge to make changes. As a result of this work the following recommendations were developed by young people:

1. To see Bradford leading the way as a City that supports, inspires and works with young people to be the best that they can be. Ensuring there are **more opportunities** for young people to grow, more support for young people to **thrive** and see Bradford become a place that young people want to continue living in. Ultimately, to see Bradford wear it's 'youngest city' badge with pride.
2. To create **social spaces** for young people. Places for young people to create natural peer support networks, to reduce feelings of isolation and to harness the talent and drive that our young City has to offer.
3. To have opportunities for young people to truly influence service design at delivery at all levels within organisations, within both the statutory and VCS arenas. To think creatively about what this will look like to ensure that the widest youth voice is heard.
4. To revive **Bradford's Youth Parliament** and make the most of the strong youth voice within our District. To enable meaningful representation from the young people of Bradford and Craven on the social issues that affect them, and to support projects and campaigns that will provide the opportunity to influence at a local, regional and national level.
5. To have clear **youth leadership** routes for all with the inclusion of easily accessible leadership courses supported by both the Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups. Courses from age 8-25 to grow young leaders from an early age with progression and support routes to follow on.

What Assets do we have?

Services for children and young people touch all families. Currently there are significant numbers of young people actively participating in the shaping of services. This is very positive, and already there are many examples of how this has influenced the commissioning, provision and approach of services.

Gaps / challenges / opportunities

Our challenge is to **continue to grow the number of young people who are involved**, and to enable the voices of young people to be listened to, heard and respected, so that they influence change. We have the challenge of responding to what young people have told us in the way in which we design, deliver and influence services. We also need to find better ways to include the voice of younger children. We need to be clear how we have acted in response to the challenges young people have set, and that we feed back to them about the difference made. This is also about how we work with partners, and in particular young people to develop the District, making Bradford a great and safe place to grow up and live and work

City of Youth is a young people's led initiative that recognises the potential of young people and the importance of involving them in shaping our city. Bradford will be the youngest city in Europe by 2020 and City of Youth aims to provide a platform for young people to have a voice, shape the city and create positive change.

Children's Services is transforming the approach it takes to family support and how we care for children and young people within the Bradford District. **Signs of safety** will be a new way in which the Council will work with children and families that all practitioners will use to be child and solution focused.

What are we doing about it and what does the information presented mean for commissioners?

- To put in place a Youth Voice Framework that includes opportunities to influence decisions, to challenge and to take part in recruitment.
- To ensure that we respond to what young people tell us and address the challenges through effective partnership.
- To have strategic support and leadership in promoting opportunities for Youth Voice across all of the sectors who deliver services for children and young people.
- To work with partners to make sure we hear the voice of younger children and families.
- To develop effective pathways between the District's young people and strategic and decision-making bodies including the Children's Trust and the Safeguarding Children Board.
- To make sure that there are a range of opportunities for all staff directly working with young children and young people in all sectors to develop their skills and confidence in listening and responding to children's voices.
- Review with young people the effectiveness and influence of Youth Voice.
- Use the review to set out annual plans for participation activities taking into account the voice of all young people.
- To reach into and work with communities to make sure representation of a full diversity of young people including those who may not otherwise have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.
- To develop ways of listening to the voices and views of younger children by supporting early years settings to develop a listening culture so children's experiences and views inform day-to-day practice, the quality and sustainability of settings, and their response to community needs.
- To support social action carried out by young people in their communities.