

# Children and Families Engagement Framework 2024-2026



## What is the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership?

The role Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership is to make sure that different people and organisations in Herefordshire are working together to keep children and young people safe. The partnership is led by three agencies: the council, police, and health.

These three key agencies are supported by all key agencies involved in safeguarding children and young people. Other key partners include Education, voluntary and community groups, Youth Offending Services and Probation.

The three key agencies have Leaders at the most senior level working together to ensure that everyone is doing their best to make sure that children and young people in Herefordshire are safe, happy, healthy, looked after properly, free from harm and away from those who could cause them harm.

## Children and Young People Have a Say

We believe that children and young people in Herefordshire should have a say about:

* Their lives now and in the future.
* The services and support they, other children, and young people receive.

We believe that we should listen and take their views into account when we are involved with them, their families, or in the development of our services.

## Principles for Working with Parents and Carers

Working Together 2023 states that:

*“In the context of a child-centred approach, all practitioners should work in partnership with parents and carers as far as possible. Parents and carers need to understand what is happening, what they can expect from the help and support provided, what is expected of them and be supported to say what they think.”*

Four principles underpin work with parents and carers:

* Effective partnership working with parents and carers happens when practitioners build strong, positive, trusting, and co-operative relationships.
* Verbal and non-verbal communication should be respectful, non-blaming, clear, inclusive, and adapted to parents and carers needs.
* Practitioners empower parents and carers to participate in decision-making to help, support and protect children.
* Practitioners involve parents, carers, families, and local communities in designing processes that affect them, including those focused on safeguarding children.

## What is Engagement?

The engagement and participation of young people, in any context, matters so much that it is written into the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

*“Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously”* Article 12: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC – Child friendly version)

Engagement is not only about listening to someone’s views, it is about people influencing what is decided and how things are done. It is an ongoing process of engagement, not only one meeting or discussion.

When children, young people, parents and carers share their views, they should also be told how their views and feedback have been taken into account.

## Children and Young People have told us:

***‘We need to understand our rights so that we can speak out when something isn’t right.’***

***‘Keep listening. Even if you don’t like what we’re saying, just keep listening’***

***‘Your facial expressions and body language when you’re listening makes a MASSIVE difference on how supported someone feels!’***

*‘Understand that every young person is different and have been through different experiences with life that will need different approaches to help support them’*

*‘You should not press people, give them time to express how they feel in their own way because for some people it is harder than others’*

*‘It often feels like adults have much more important things to be doing than listening to kids’*

***‘We need regular updates when we’re involved in services’***

***‘We would like to know how our feedback is acted on/used’***

*‘Give me questions I understand’*

*‘They listened to me and kept trying different tactics to help me get better’*

*‘Let children know that they are important, don’t abandon them, make sure they’re alright’*

## Why is it important to hear the voice of children, young people and families?

We believe that listening to the views of children, young people, parents and carers helps to:

* Support families to understand their own needs
* Help families contribute to plans for change
* Keep children safe
* Develop better services
* Bring a fresh viewpoint
* Improve relationships and trust
* Develop skills and knowledge
* Empowers children to be more confident, make good decisions, and have rewarding lives
* Make sure children and families get the right help for them and at the right time.

## We Want To (our aims)…

* Make sure that all organisations in Herefordshire value the views of children, young people, parents and carers, and actively promote the opportunity for them to have a say.
* Ensure that agencies actively involve children, young people, parents and carers so they can influence the development of services that affect them.
* Make sure that children, young people, parents and carers have been involved in decisions, planning and delivery of services they receive.
* Know that all professionals and organisations in Herefordshire recognise diversity and different needs in children, young people and their parents/carers, and take steps to ensure that people of different cultures, backgrounds and abilities are able to participate.
* Ensure that organisations work together and talk to each other about the child or young person they are working with, sharing the views of the child, young person, parent and/or carer appropriately when it is right to do so.
* Make sure that children, young people, parents, and carers understand their rights when they are involved with services, and know how to speak out if something isn’t right.
* Make sure that agencies feedback to children, young people, parents and carers, to let them know how their views have made a difference and been acted upon.

## What We Will Do

### 8.1 Support practitioners in their direct work with children and families:

The HSCP will support practitioners to hear the Voice of the Child and parents/carers in their work by…

* Providing guidance and tools for practice through the [HSCP Voice of the Child Toolkit](https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/professional-resources/childrens-policies-guidance/hscp-voice-of-the-child-participation-toolkit).
* Creating learning opportunities for professionals, for example through Voice of the Child Practice Briefings, showcasing examples of good practice, and sharing tools and resources.
* Helping practitioners to understand issues that children and young people face, for example through topic-specific learning briefings led by children and young people.
* Emphasising the importance of the Voice of the Child in every HSCP multi-agency training course, resource and event.
* Helping children and young people to know how to access services to support them, and understand their rights, through information on the [HSCP Youth Hub](https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/youth-hub) website.
* Promoting the four principles for working with parents and carers (Working Together 2023).
* Promoting trauma-informed practice and restorative/relational practice, to strengthen skills in listening, building relationships and trust.

The HSCP’s online [**Youth Hub**](https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/youth-hub) is for young people in Herefordshire, age 11+, who are worried about something and are looking for information, help and advice on topics that will help to keep them safe. There is a Glossary of Safeguarding Terms, information about children’s rights, and links to local and national support services.

The [**Voice of the Child Toolkit**](https://www.herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/professional-resources/childrens-policies-guidance/hscp-voice-of-the-child-participation-toolkit) was developed by the HSCP to support practitioners to ask, listen, act, and feedback on the views of children and young people that they work with. The Toolkit has a range of resources that can be used for direct practice, through to service and strategic planning, recruitment and quality assurance.

### 8.2 Make sure that organisations in Herefordshire listen to the Voice of the Child, and work positively with parents and carers:

The HSCP will be assured that agencies receive and act on feedback from children, young people, parents and carers by…

* Reviewing agency responses to the Voice of the Child section of the “Section 11” Self-Assessment, identifying good practice and areas that need improvement.
* Holding Check and Challenge Sessions for each agency’s s11 Self-Assessment responses.
* Monitoring progress in how agencies ensure that children and families are involved in decisions about them, and shape services, by monitoring s11 Self-Assessment Action Plans.

### 8.3 Ensure that children, young people and families shape the work of the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership directly:

The HSCP will ensure that children, young people, parents and carers have the opportunity to shape the work of the partnership directly by:

* Children and families’ views will inform the priorities in the HSCP Strategic Plan.
* Children and young people will be part of the recruitment processes for key roles.
* Including the voice of children, young people, parents and carers in the plan for Independent Scrutiny.
* Involving children, young people, parents and carers in shaping the HSCP’s work, adapting the methods as appropriate depending on the subject.

## We will know that we have made a difference because:

* Children, young people, parents and carers tell us that services have worked well, together, to support them, they understand their rights, have felt “heard,” and that professionals have fed-back to them and kept them updated – this will be understood through feedback to the Independent Scrutineer.
* The HSCP can provide examples in its Yearly Report of how children, young people, parents and carers shaped its work over the year.
* Agencies in Herefordshire can evidence that they have strong feedback channels for children, young people, parents and carers, and how this has shaped their services – this is reported through the s11 Self-Assessment.
* The HSCP hears from professionals that the Voice of the Child Toolkit and training opportunities have supported them to engage directly with children and young people in a meaningful way.

**Current Participation and Engagement Activity in different organisations in Herefordshire**

See Appendix A for a list of how the agencies carry out engagement with children, young people, and parents/carers on a regular basis. This list is not exhaustive.

For any questions about this document, please contact the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership at [admin.sbu@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:admin.sbu@herefordshire.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1. Engagement opportunities in different organisations in Herefordshire

Different partnership agencies carry out engagement with children, young people, and parents/carers on a regular basis. This list below set out how children, young people, parents and carers can share their views.

This information was collected in December 2023. Ask your worker about how to get involved.

### Health partners

#### **NHS Integrated Care Board**

* Patient experience surveys.
* Stories collected for theme and trend analysis for Patient Experience reports and individual ones presented to Integrated Care Board e.g. SEND story (Sept 2023)
* Children & Young People Asthma practitioner – gathers feedback from families.
* “Your health your say” project commissioned by Children & Young People team from Action for Children - Large engagement piece speaking to children, young people and families across Herefordshire & Worcestershire about their experience of health services.
* Integrated Care Strategy – engagement with children was completed as part of development of Strategy

#### **NHS Health & Care Trust (Herefordshire and Worcestershire)**

* Complaints and Compliments reviewed via PALS
* Family and Friends Test
* Incident reporting

*\*for the three above, all feedback is considered at team level and escalated where necessary to SDU Integrated Governance meetings.*

* CAMHS service invite young people to participate in their recruitment processes.
* Patient experience groups.
* SDU Integrated Governance Monthly Meetings. Learning from feedback / Service Incidents etc. are a regular agenda item.
* Youth Board in Worcestershire and Young People’s Advisory Groups for specific work strands – Although the Youth Board sits in Worcestershire, it impacts on practice in Herefordshire. Youth Board has been in place for 10 years.
* Experts by Experience.
* SDU IG meetings report to the Trust Quality and Safety Committee.

#### **Wye Valley NHS Trust**

* Patient Engagement forum and a recently established Patient Engagement Committee.
* All child safeguarding training delivered within the trust includes content exploring how to, and the importance of, listening to the voice of the child.
* The health visiting service capture the views of parents who use the service. In order to further understand the family’s experience a telephone feedback questionnaire is completed every quarter and triangulated with a notes audit for consistency. Surveys conducted at 6-8 weeks, 4-6 months, 9-12 months, 2 -2.5 years and all opportune contacts where appropriate.
* Teams, including health visiting, school nursing, and paediatric physiotherapy, use the Friends and Family Test, which is promoted at each contact and in our clinic setting.
* School nursing request feedback at the end of each piece of work completed with a family and child.
* School Nurses and Health Visitor data is discussed within the leadership team, with commissioners and staff in order to influence the service provided as we are able to make changes where we have noted to be a theme provided within the feedback.
* Orthoptist service satisfaction surveys for children and/or parents.
* Plans in place to recruit new Young Ambassadors, which was paused during Covid.
* The SALT service use a variety of tools and mechanisms to gain feedback from children, parents and other professionals and hold regular departmental and team meetings where specific issues of service quality are raised and discussed.
* SCBU use the ‘Monkey’ survey form to capture feedback on family experiences on SCBU together with the national Friends and Family cards. A Feedback Board displays feedback, what we did well, how we can improve etc. Families discharged to the neonatal outreach team receive a similar feedback form around their experience of continuing neonatal care in the community; collated in a monthly report.
* Feedback from children and families has informed service provision in a number of ways, for e.g:
  + Review Health Assessment templates have been changed to ensure that the voice of the child is captured within the assessment.
  + Introduction of a Paediatric Assessment Unit within a dedicated children and young people area in A&E. This allows for children to receive early treatment and assessment at the first point of contact. During day hours (7.15-19.45) children and young people are seen by a paediatric nurse from the children’s ward, this supports good communication between the 2 areas and supports the assessment of children presenting in A&E. Partly service re-design a response to feedback from Young Ambassadors.

### Education

Schools in Herefordshire use various approaches to get students involved so that they can influence how the school is run and what activities are offered. This includes:

* School Councils
* Focus groups led by Heads of Year
* Pupil Voice Questionnaires
* Whole school / class votes through assemblies
* Comment boxes

### Local Authority

#### **Early Help**

* Evaluation forms at end of EH intervention – from parents and children
* Evaluation forms at the end of parenting groups.
* Feedback is gained from parents and children as part of our monthly audit process.
* Compliments / Complaints

#### **Children’s Social Care**

* Feedback opportunities completed as part of case audits, targeted audits, through and at the end of period of interventions
* Leaving Care monthly groups – LGBTQIA, Arts and Baking, UASC, Young Parents, etc.
* Focus groups of care experienced / leaving care children & young people are arranged where requested/required for specific pieces of work
* Children in Care Council - in development
* Safe Cadets work with exploitation / SAFE team
* Edge of Care Team have a feedback process at end of intervention
* SEND Participation Framework and programme of engagement with young people and families
* Parents for Change group

### West Mercia Police

* Early help and intervention prevention officer engages and works with children and families.
* Child exploitation officers work closely with young people at risk of and those being exploited.
* Officers are trained in utilising the voice of the child, including being victim focused in line with the Victim’s Code.
* Local SNT officers support and attend youth groups (boxing and football)
* Youth Police cadets provide feedback from a youth’s perspective.