

Engagement and Inclusiveness policy.

Participation of children, young people, parents and carers

Background & Context

As a Healthcare provider, '**Southern Ultrasound**' has a responsibility to ensure that we offer an inclusive approach to the services we provide, but this needs to represent more than just lip-service.

The requirement for engagement to generate this inclusiveness is backed up by law; under the provisions in the Children and Families Act 2014.

There is a growing body of learning that new approaches to inclusiveness being adopted by healthcare, education and social care providers, are making a real difference to the lives of children, young people and families, but that the workforce development and culture change needed to implement the reforms takes time, energy and determination. Services and professionals across education, health and care for children and adults need to work together closely, putting families and young people at the centre of commissioning, assessment and planning.

Engagement can be split in to two separate but related divisions - Strategic and Operational.

The Strategic section is outside of our day to day control, and includes:

- Strategic participation of parent carers
Parent carer participation in co-production of strategic planning, decision making, commissioning and service evaluation is important. The Department for Education (and previously DCSF) has supported and funded the development of parent carer forums in every region across England. Representatives from the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) and Contact a Family (CaF) work strategically with Department for Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH) to strengthen and develop Parent Carer Participation and ensure that parent carers become effective partners in strategic planning, decision making and evaluation.
- Strategic participation of disabled children and young people
In some areas, there are representative groups of both children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities who are enabled to be involved in strategic decision making. EPIC – a national group of disabled children and young people are currently working with the DfE and DH to model and embed this approach.

Of more importance to ourselves is the Operational section, which includes:

- Engagement of individual children and young people
Working in a person-centred approach enables both children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabilities to have an active part in their own assessment, diagnosis and care delivery.
- Engagement of individual parent carers and families
Working with and enabling a meaningful participation of parent carers and families in relation to the assessment, planning and delivery of care services for their own individual child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities

There are a number of principles we can apply to help us achieve our aims for inclusiveness. On a day-to-day basis, the important ones are:

- Involving children, parents and young people in decision making
- Identifying children and young people's needs
- Greater choice and control for parents and young people over their care and support

These principles aim to provide a "Family Centred" system, to promote positive engagement with children and with young people (SEN and their parents & carers. This includes taking steps to ensure that parents and/or young people are actively supported in contributing to their examinations and care.

Enabling parents to share their knowledge about their child and engage in positive discussion helps to give them confidence that their views and contributions are valued and will be acted upon, and increases their faith in the diagnosis and treatment plans undertaken by the Clinician.

At times, parents and others may have differing expectations of how a child's needs are best met. Sometimes these discussions can be challenging but it is in the child's best interests for a positive dialogue between parents and healthcare practitioners to be maintained, to work through points of difference and agree outcomes.

It is very important to engage directly with children and young people to discuss their needs. This should be integral to all planning for children and young people with SEN throughout their lives. The Children and Families Bill gives significant rights directly to young people once they reach 16. When a young person is over 16, local authorities and other agencies should normally engage directly with the young person, ensuring that as part of the planning process, they identify the relevant people who should be involved, and how to involve them.

Parents are often the main carers for young people with SEN, and their views and opinions are important and valid during assessment, planning and reviewing'.

Care delivery should start with the individual and take account of their wishes. It should enable parents, children and young people to have more control over decisions about their support.

Effective care planning should help parents, children and young people express their needs, wishes and goals and should:

- focus on the child or young person as an individual, not their SEN label;
- be easy for children, young people and their parents to understand and use clear ordinary language and images, rather than professional jargon;
- highlight the child or young person's strengths and capacities;
- enable the child or young person, and those who know them best, to say what they have done, what they are interested in and what outcomes they are seeking in the future;
- tailor support to the needs of the individual;

This approach is often referred to as 'person-centred planning'. Using this approach can ensure that parents, children and young people are genuinely involved in all aspects of planning and decision making.

Effective parent participation happens when parents are enabled to work alongside professionals to ensure that:

- the engagement and participation of parent carers is valued, planned and resourced;
- the participation of parent carers is evident at all stages of care delivery

Working together properly requires all parties to listen to each other, consider each others views and respect them.

It is important to recognise the realities of life for parent carers of children with special education needs and disabilities, especially when setting appointment times.

Our Commitments:

We promise to all children, young people, parents and carers that:

- *We will ensure you are valued and treated with respect by everyone within our organisation.*
- *We shall operate with equality of opportunity for all*
- *We will recognise the child or young adult as a whole person.*
- *We will work with you to achieve the best possible outcome for you and your family*
- *We shall be open and honest with you and know that you will be the same with us.*
- *We will keep our minds open to new ways of working together to improve the service we offer you.*
- *Where it is thought to be of benefit, we shall seek the views of children, young people, parents and carers to ensure that the service we offer best meets your needs*

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