



Children's Manifesto

A Voluntary and Community Sector Manifesto for Leicester and
Leicestershire's Children & Young People



Children and Young People have one chance and they
deserve the best chance

Introduction

The foundation of this manifesto is based on the understanding and belief that voluntary and community organisations, the public sector and stakeholders, working in close partnership with each other, are ideally placed to support children and young people to give them the best life chances. The task of tackling the needs of children and young people is a heavy weight for any one sector to accomplish alone therefore organisations working with children and young people aged 0-25 in Leicester and Leicestershire have come together to deliver this shared vision.


Research shows that vulnerable families with multiple issues i.e. economic, health and education make significant demands on a wide range of local services. To deliver real progression with families and in turn young people we must take a whole family approach when planning strategies that aim to provide vulnerable families with opportunities and better life chances.

Through this Manifesto we want to bring about a transformation in children, young people and families services that can weather political change and economic downturn and ensure that there is greater protection for societies most vulnerable in bad times as well as good.


This document will form the cornerstone of agreements between all sectors and will be reviewed every three years to ensure relevance, partnership approach and accountability. As well as outlining a number of ways in which policy-makers and commissioners can improve outcomes for children and young people, and make sure that we all think of the children and young people of tomorrow as well as the children and young people of today.

This manifesto was developed by a core focus group:

- Focus charity
- Leicester Holme Project
- Leicestershire Cares
- Soft Touch Arts
- Peepul Centre
- Voluntary Action Leicestershire



Leicestershire Cares works with children and young people across the city and county and their needs are very close to our heart. Having a Children's Manifesto for Leicestershire means that all children will have a voice for their values, beliefs and wishes



Aims

The overall aim of the Children's Manifesto:

To Improve the Design, Quality and Quantity of Services for Children and Young People

We will achieve this by:

- Galvanising the voluntary and community sector to demonstrate their strength and commitment
- Giving children and young people a genuine voice throughout the design and development of services and through this Manifesto
- Providing a pathway of how to improve services that will give commissioners and funders solid direction and recommendations of working with and commissioning the voluntary sector



Key Outcomes for Children and Young People

The range of recommendations in the Children's Manifesto reflect the complexity of children and young people's lives in Leicester and Leicestershire.

- Children, Young People and Families have High Quality, Responsive & Accessible Services
- Children and Young People have genuine Participation & Engagement opportunities
- Children and young People have Improved Health and Wellbeing Services
- Children and Young People have High Quality Education, Employment & Training Opportunities
- Children and Young People have Play, Sport and Community Recreation Opportunities
- Children and Young People have a range of opportunities to celebrate their achievements

1

Sign up to the shared vision and the principle of taking a truly joined up approach across sectors as outlined in this document!



2

Use the range of recommendations contained in this manifesto as a guide whenever you are faced with a policy or funding decision



3

Sign the pledge and display the core principles poster in your organisation to champion your commitment



Section 1

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES HAVE HIGH QUALITY, RESPONSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

Introduction

Early intervention and preventative work must form the cornerstone of children's services. It offers a way of supporting children and young people from the outset avoiding costly crisis interventions later. The voluntary and community sector in Leicester and Leicestershire has a strong track record of providing early intervention work for children, young people and families in need, which is both holistic and child-friendly. Information, advice and guidance, childcare and early years, the government's troubled families programme, transport, the criminal justice system and child poverty interventions all deliver the best outcomes for children and young people when they have an early intervention focus.

These are all vital services and represent particularly pertinent issues, which impact strongly upon the lives of children and young people and indeed families. The recession and its impact on young people furthers the case for the importance of early intervention work. Leicester and Leicestershire public sector partners with the voluntary sector must continue to invest in a range of targeted and universal child-friendly interventions that we know work for our most vulnerable children, to improve outcomes and short-circuit the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage.

1.0 Looked after children and young people

- 1.1** Provide genuine opportunities for voluntary and public sectors to work as equal partners to provide support services.
- 1.2** Support children in care to reach their potential in education and training that will equip them for their futures through statutory and VCS services.
- 1.3** Ensure children and young people are prepared when leaving care

2.0 Childcare & Early Years

- 2.1** Provide a variety of childcare facilities to enable parents to work or study
- 2.2** Ensure 570 hours of childcare provision is available as and when required for the most disadvantaged
- 2.3** Close the 'childcare gap' by providing more provision during school holidays, for disabled children and for older children.
- 2.4** Ensure provision is flexible to support parents as they move in and out of employment.
- 2.5** Ensure the targets for provision in the 2020 child poverty agenda are met.

3.0 Information, Advice and Guidance

- 3.1** Develop a voluntary sector directory of independent, impartial advice and guidance services
- 3.2** Provide professional and accessible advice and support to be available to children under 5, and their parents or carers through fit for purpose Children's Centres and satellite centres
- 3.3** Provide signposting to specialist services for health, mental health, education, early years, returning to work and childcare through a variety of mechanisms that enable parents to be able to access information
- 3.4** Ensure all services are safe, stable and secure to enable children to be protected from criminal activity, exploitation and anti-social behaviour.

4.0 Criminal Justice

- 4.1 Provide support for young people in the criminal justice system for their mental and emotional health needs, and to ensure they are able to continue in education during community service
- 4.2 Ensure that media and policy makers do not disproportionately report anti-social or criminal activities of young people
- 4.3 Provide support to the parents and families of young people within the criminal justice system
- 4.4 Provide resources for all young people to be supported to stay out of crime and anti-social behaviour systems.

5.0 High Quality Youth Provision

- 5.1 Ensure clear communication between all sectors.
- 5.2 Provide services that respond to the changing needs of young people.
- 5.3 Involve children and young people in the design and delivery of services.
- 5.4 Ensure that the most disadvantaged are able to access services.
- 5.5 Enable young people to quality assure youth services

6.0 Children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities

- 6.1 Continue to provide services for young people with complex needs.
- 6.2 Provide advice and guidance to young people and their families.
- 6.3 Give parents, children, young people and communities more influence over local services.

7.0 Children and Young People are able to transfer between services to reflect there needs and age

- 7.1 Ensure the pathway for young people transferring into adult services is guided by consultation and young people are involved in decisions
- 7.2 Provide a variety of information and guidance to parents and carers about the options for young people
- 7.3 Ensure schools and other services provide information and guidance about training and further educational opportunities.



Section 2

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE GENUINE PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

Effective participation and engagement of children and young people in influencing policy, planning, delivery and evaluation of all services can maximise outcomes. The key to fostering participation is the provision of high quality support to participate in volunteering opportunities and well-structured and supported engagement activities. Both of these can build children and young people's self-confidence and develop their personal skills whilst engaging and integrating them within their communities.

1.0 Participation

- 1.1** Provide opportunities for children and young people to be involved in all decisions and issues that affect them.
- 1.2** Provide places for children and young people on local and regional decision making forums, including meaningful roles and responsibilities
- 1.3** Provide financial, transport and childcare assistance to young people in order for them to participate in forums and consultation events.
- 1.4** Ensure staff supporting young people's participation are appropriately trained and supported
- 1.5** Provide support mechanisms to young people to join and lead youth-led community projects
- 1.6** Provide support, resources and training to enable under-represented young people to participate in decision-making processes
- 1.7** Ensure representation of the full diversity of local young people in decision-making process.

2.0 Volunteering

- 2.1** Increase the quality, quantity and diversity of volunteering opportunities that meet the needs of young people
- 2.2** Ensure that volunteering recognises the skills and confidence gained, over and above the hours completed in volunteering
- 2.3** Provide peer mentors to young people engaged in education, training or other activities who are in need of additional support
- 2.4** Enable voluntary sector organisations to work with schools to provide volunteering opportunities both within and outside of the school day
- 2.5** Ensure that organisations with volunteering expertise share their knowledge with others

3.0 Community Empowerment

- 3.1** Involve local people, including children and young people in local decision-making
- 3.2** Ensure that children and young people are aware of local developments in services, strategies and policies and know how to engage in these
- 3.3** Provide networks and forums for local people, including children and young people to identify service gaps, and to secure funding and design services to fill them
- 3.4** Provide a mechanism to improve communication to avoid service duplication or excessive competition
- 3.5** Provide opportunities for people to work together to influence decisions in communities, such as local networks and boards, in particular bring together the young and old as well as different cultures, ethnicities and groups of young people with SEN

Section 3

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICES

Introduction

As they begin to enjoy greater independence, children and particularly teenagers want to test boundaries and experiment with new experiences. This is a normal and important part of growing up. But in contrast to many of our European neighbours, too large a group of young people in England are taking risks with their current and future health. Given the strong link between good physical and mental health and learning, achievement and enjoyment, it is essential, at one of the most important points in a young person's personal, social and academic life, that we provide the very best care, advice and information.

Many young people are in school and can therefore expect to be able to access a range of services. But as they grow older they should find that services are offered in a way and with a focus that speaks to their particular needs. This includes, for example, accessible sexual health advice, and integrated youth support services providing information, advice, healthy opportunities and support.

We want to promote services that provide the full range of advice, support and care that young people need, services that help them make healthy choices and give them access to healthy opportunities. Personalised, multi-agency and co-ordinated services from the point of referral through to the identification, assessment and delivery must be provided. Information tailored to the needs of children and their parents, in a readily accessible range of formats should be made available for all communication and promotion of services. Voluntary organisations play a key role in providing information and resources to the wider public about the needs of children and young people and resources to help families. Therefore transparency about resources, how services work together and are commissioned is important for all.



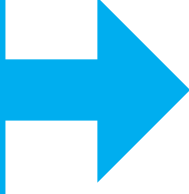
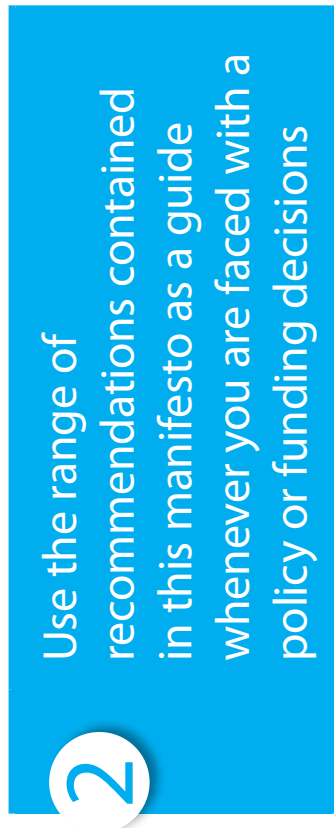
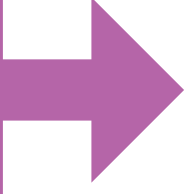
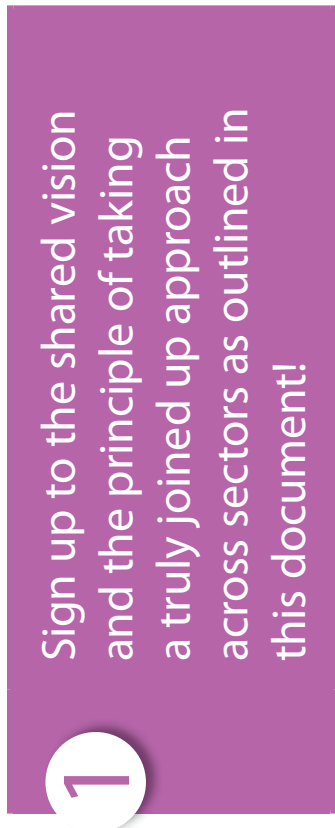
Please use this pull out poster attached for display.

This is an example of the poster you can display in your organisation to show your commitment and endorsement of The Children's Manifesto when you sign up

Children's Manifesto for Leicester and Leicestershire



Improve the Design, Quality And Quantity of services for Children and Young People



Children and Young People have a range of opportunities to celebrate their achievements

3 the core principles poster in your organisation to champion your commitment

Pledge of Commitment

I want to show my commitment and endorsement by signing up to the core set of recommendations and principles as outlined in the children's manifesto. I agree.....

...that the manifesto is based on the understanding and belief that voluntary and community organisations, the public sector and stakeholders, working in close partnership are ideally placed to support children and young people to give them the best life chances.

...that, through the Children's Manifesto we bring about a transformation in children, young people and families services that can weather political change and economic downturn and ensure that there is greater protection for societies most vulnerable in bad times as well as good.

...that the children's Manifesto document will form the cornerstone of agreements between all sectors to provide the best outcomes for children, young people and families and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure relevance, partnership approach and accountability.

...make sure that we all think of the children and young people of tomorrow as well as the children and young people of today!



1.0 Safeguarding

- 1.1 Ensure all organisations have a member of staff or senior manager committed to safeguarding.
- 1.2 Improve checking procedures for staff and volunteers, procedures for dealing with allegations against staff, training, and signposting systems to other organisations.
- 1.3 Provide therapeutic support to abused children and young people
- 1.4 Provide advocacy support to looked-after children and young people and those subject to Section 47 enquiries.
- 1.5 Ensure appropriate voluntary sector organisations are able to provide support where the local authority has a duty of care.

2.0 Sexual Health

- 2.1 Ensure all health and other practitioners can identify signs of sexual exploitation.
- 2.2 Raise awareness of prevention work through schools and voluntary and public sector services.
- 2.3 Raise awareness amongst young people

3.0 Mental Health

- 3.1 Provide all voluntary sector staff training and support to the mental and emotional health needs of young people exhibiting 'challenging' behaviour.
- 3.2 Improve pathways of access to mental health services.
- 3.3 Challenge the stigma attached to mental health, through positive attitudes, local networks and boards.

4.0 Substance and Alcohol Misuse

- 4.1 Provide support services for children and young people in households with alcohol and substance misuse.
- 4.2 Provide immediate support, advice and guidance for young people with alcohol and substance misuse problems.
- 4.3 Provide collaboration between sectors to improve workforce skills and knowledge.

5.0 Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)

- 5.1 Ensure support is provided at an earlier stage in the assessment process.
- 5.2 Provide support to children and young people with SEBD to improve educational attainment.
- 5.3 Provide opportunities for partnership work between sectors to develop SEBD policies.

6.0 Infant Health

- 6.1 Provide specialist care to young parents at risk of infant death.
- 6.2 Provide advice and guidance to all parents through Children's Centres and commit to continuing the 'Baby Friendly' breast-feeding initiative.
- 6.3 Provide support and advice to increase the rates of breast-feeding.



7.0 Speech language and communication

- 7.1 Provide clear, accessible information and support to parents of children with speech and language needs, including early identification.

8.0 Oral Health

- 8.1 Work with the VCS to develop an oral health strategy for children and young people for Leicester and Leicestershire.
- 8.2 Provide VCS support to design resources and identify funding that supports the delivery of the oral health strategy.
- 8.3 Provide consistent advice, support and community based activities so that children, young people and parents/carers can work together to prevent tooth decay.

9.0 Housing and Homelessness

- 9.1 Provide opportunities for all homelessness service providers, associated providers and interest groups working collaboratively and in partnership, to deliver high quality, value for money services for all service users.
- 9.2 Improve access to support services for young offenders and ex-offenders
- 9.3 Support vulnerable homeless people (including young and single homeless and PSA 16 groups; who are care leavers, offenders, adults with learning disabilities and adults with mental health problems) to access settled homes and establish and sustain independent lives
- 9.4 Ensure there are clear pathways for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to access local VCS groups for information and advice.

10.0 Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire

- 10.1 Provide a direct route for the VCS, children, young people and families to access consultations, events and forums to shape the design of health and social care services in Leicester and Leicestershire.



Section 4

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

High quality education, employment and training opportunities are fundamental to the successful futures of Leicester and Leicestershire's children and young people. Whilst education continues to improve in Leicester and Leicestershire more than 30% of children in Leicester City are not at the recommended levels in English and maths at the end of primary school. Results from (2011) Key Stage 2 tests show that around 100,000 pupils in England failed to reach the expected standard in English. This means that around one in six pupils (16 %) fail to master the basics of reading at the end of primary school and around one in four pupils (25 %) fail to master the basics of writing at the end of primary school. Being able to read fluently by the end of primary school is essential. Without these skills children fall further behind in their education and is more difficult to bring children back up to desired levels of achievement.

At the other end of the spectrum, less than half of children are ready to start school at the age of 4 or 5yrs and if a child starts school that is already behind it is harder for them to catch up. Leicester City has one of the biggest gaps in the country between those children who get the lowest scores and the rest of the peer group.

1.0 Education

- 1.1** Develop ways for the voluntary and public sector to work together to create more opportunities
- 1.2** Better understand the needs of children most at risk of underachievement before they start school
- 1.3** Work together to improve attendance at school across all ages
- 1.4** Provide opportunities for volunteering through schools
- 1.5** Decrease the number of NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) young people after leaving school through volunteering and training schemes

- 1.6** Ensure equal access to services for children and young people with an SEN (Special Educational Need)
- 1.7** Use peer support and advocacy to reduce school exclusions
- 1.8** Provide free advice and signposting to educational support services at Children's Centres
- 1.9** Provide free advice to increase the take up of free school meals

2.0 Training

- 2.1** Provide free advice and support to young people to take up more vocational training, apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities
- 2.2** Work together to develop, design and create more apprentice opportunities
- 2.3** Work with young people to support them to make the transition from school into opportunities to build on skills and knowledge to further their learning
- 2.4** Work together to develop and create volunteering opportunities to reflect the desires of young people

3.0 Employment

- 3.1** Develop more flexible vocational courses
- 3.2** Support young people to access volunteering opportunities that will develop their employability skills
- 3.3** Provide mentoring and support to young people with complex needs to develop their employability skills

Section 5

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE HIGH QUALITY PLAY, SPORT AND COMMUNITY RECREATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

Introduction

Provide opportunities to inspire and encourage young people to develop healthier lifestyles through sport, play and the use of green spaces. An active lifestyle is core to the health and wellbeing of all Leicestershire's children and young people and this can only be supported through varied, safe and accessible play, sport and recreational activities. We should build the long-term capacity of statutory services and of voluntary and community organisations to strengthen and diversify the range of sports and healthy activities on offer to children and young people on their doorstep.

Community involvement is increasingly important in creating opportunities for children to play. It's a way of bringing communities together, overcoming barriers and providing a focus for different agencies to work together more closely with local people that improve the quality of life for children, parents and families.

1.0 Education

- 1.1** Provide accessible play opportunities for children within and outside of their community
- 1.2** Ensure children's welfare by using play rangers, play workers and youth workers to supervise play spaces
- 1.3** Use play spaces for wider innovative projects
- 1.4** Ensure all play spaces are well maintained and safe
- 1.5** Ensure access to play spaces for disabled children
- 1.6** Ensure that a sustainable infrastructure is in place for the delivery of high quality play opportunities

2.0 Art, Music and Dance

- 2.1** Provide outreach services to ensure access to 'hard-to-reach' groups who do not access conventional services

- 2.3** Provide a diverse range of musical experiences for children and young people

- 2.4** Ensure that music, art, drama and dance provision promotes the development of social skills

3.0 Sport and Physical Activity

- 2.1** Provide a range of high quality; inexpensive sports sessions outside the school gates
- 3.2** Ensure sports provision promotes personal and social development
- 3.3** Provide greater information to parents and other adults to encourage children and young people's involvement in sport

4.0 Outdoor Adventures

- 4.1** Ensure sectors work together to provide outdoor activities and residential opportunities for children and young people, especially those with additional support needs.
- 4.2** Provide opportunities away from home to develop leadership skills and to raise aspirations and self-esteem.
- 4.3** Ensure children and young people are supported to lead healthy and active lifestyles through access to outdoor play



Section 6

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

Introduction

All-too-often the achievements of children and young people go un-noticed by the wider community and are often portrayed in a negative light. 0 – 25 year olds make nearly one third of Leicestershire's population and their aspirations, ideals and achievements must be recognised and celebrated. Awards, events and accreditation positively build young people's skills and help them become more employable citizens.

1.0 Celebration and Recognition

- 1.1 Engage children and young people in the design and delivery of celebratory events
- 1.2 Promote and celebrate the range of youth-led work that takes place in the voluntary sector
- 1.3 Encourage councillors to use the media to promote achievements of young people
- 1.4 Ensure that all volunteering provides accreditation, awards or celebration events
- 1.5 Recognise the educational achievements and other contributions of young people in schools

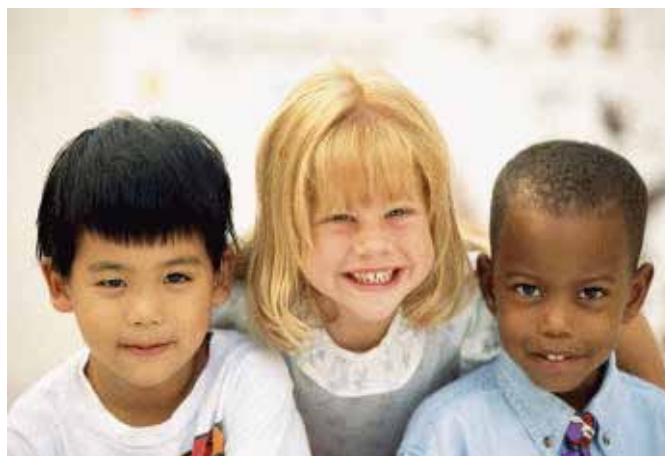


Key Considerations

If policy makers and decision makers are to benefit from the VCS's potential to improve outcomes for children and young people, the following considerations are key:

Partnership and Collaboration

- The VCS are continually looking to engage and have conversations with other charities as well as the private, public sector and stakeholders as equal partners. VCS services are often aimed at vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and communities providing holistic support and services in areas including children services, employment and community and family development.
- Leicester and Leicestershire's VCS comprises of a range of diverse registered charities and hundreds of community groups working in specialised areas. The VCS are ideally placed and possess the knowledge to have meaningful representation on Local Strategic Partnerships, Trusts and influence commissioning and multi agency boards.
- Better partnership working between the VCS alongside statutory services would expand the capacity of these services, as well as facilitating access to services that enable individuals to live independently and reduce their need for statutory services. The VCS is also able to offer value for money and local expertise as well as volunteers.
- It is crucial to encourage and enable communities to shape public services and play a full role as active citizens in local democracy by engaging with partner organisations in the voluntary and community sector. Authorities must lead from the front and support the use of local and national Best Value and Compact agreements, as well as linking with the VCS and Public Sector Strategy Groups in Leicester and Leicestershire.
- Allowing the VCS to feel included in the decision-making processes that affect them as work on shared initiatives can create positive change in communities. The sharing of information both top down and visa versa allows groups and communities to make informed choices.
- Partnership working needs to be strengthened with adult services whilst greater use needs to be made of service users in the planning, design and delivery of services.
- Communication with service users is not as effective as it could be and needs to be more joined up to ensure children, young people and families are aware of what is available for them in their local areas.



Quality Assurance

- We recognise that policy makers and commissioners see quality as a key element of public service delivery. We are aware of a number of robust and respected quality assurance frameworks that exist, including some specifically for small and volunteer led organisations. With the financial support of public body authorities, we believe that small VCS organisations can obtain relevant quality assurance accreditation and develop quality assurance systems.
- However, smaller third sector organisations may find the cost and time involved in attaining externally recognised and validated quality systems, such as ISO9001 a barrier to them competing for contracts, particularly if they are new to tendering procedures and requirements. For example, PQASSO, the Practical Quality Assurance System for small organisations, was designed specifically for small and medium-sized organisations. Its flexibility and adaptability to organisations of varying types and sizes has made it a firm favourite in the sector. Designed as a work pack, it helps an organisation identify what it is doing well and where improvement is needed. Designed primarily as a self-assessment tool, PQASSO Quality Mark is an optional accreditation by peer review launched in November 2007.

Workforce Development

- The Children's Workforce includes all those who are employed or volunteer in the statutory, voluntary, private and independent sectors to work primarily with children, young people and their families. Continued investment in the workforce (paid and voluntary) is crucial in order to find ways of working to deliver increased integrated services and support.
- The previous Government's vision was that every member of the children's workforce should be:
 - Ambitious for every child and young person
 - Excellent in their practice
 - Committed to partnership and integrated working
 - Respected and valued as professionals
- It is vital to ensure that we have a skilled and knowledgeable workforce that has access to information regarding training e.g. safeguarding, key policies and local, regional and national agendas affecting the workforce, together with opportunities to influence outcomes that impact on the lives of children, young people and families.
- Workforce development is more than just training; It includes workforce planning, leadership, recruitment and retention, integrated working, induction, competencies, supervision and appraisal, equality and diversity, health, safety and well being.
- The driving force behind the Children's Workforce Development Agenda is that, in order to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and their families, we need the best staff and volunteers working with them.



One
Voice

Children's Manifesto

To read the Full draft evidenced based Children's Manifesto please contact:

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Leicester Holme Project
– Supported Housing

