**VOICES: National Alliance for Local Area Partnership Working**

Co-production involves children, young people, families, practitioners and partners working jointly together in an equal and reciprocal relationship. It enables genuine participation in decision-making. Although there are many models of co-production across the country, there are no real measures of participation, or formal measures of the good practice underpinning the principles of the Children and Families Act and the SEND\* code of practice.

The VOICES Alliance recognises the need for a shared approach to partnership working together with examples of good practice and resources to help Local Areas establish and embed recognisably good co-production. The development of the Alliance and its aims are supported by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health (DH). Within Health, co-production at an individual and collective level is a cornerstone of the Health and Social Care Act (2012) and the NHS Constitution (2015).

The VOICES Alliance has agreed terms of reference signed up to by the following organisations:

* The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi)
* The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF)
* Leicester City Local Authority
* Trafford Local Authority
* NHS England (NHSE)
* Rotherham Parent Carer Forum
* Genuine Partnerships
* Rotherham Council
* The Council for Disabled Children (CDC)
* Preparing for Adulthood
* Contact
* Mott MacDonald

\*Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

**The purpose of the Alliance**

The purpose of the Alliance is to ensure there is a nationally agreed framework, process and principles for whole area co-production and participation that can be used in partnership by all stakeholders in each Local Area in England.

These should capture the shared values that all Alliance members have in relation to participation and co-production and reflect the intent of the Children and Families Act (2014), Health and Social Care Act (2012) and the NHS Constitution (2015) in ensuring families, parent carers and children and young people are fully involved in individual and strategic decisions that affect them.

VOICES intends to achieve its purpose by promoting the use and understanding of the cornerstones of co-production which have been developed and quality assured, and are adopted from, the Rotherham Charter and wider Genuine Partnerships model.

The Four Cornerstones of Co-production are:



The Alliance sees these cornerstones as a common language of co-production that will support Local Areas to develop their own locally agreed and understood approach to partnership working.

The Alliance hopes that a common framework for Local Area partnership working that is recognised and supported by a wide range of reform partners, will help develop a shared level of expectation to which all Local Area partners can aspire.

Developing locally agreed approaches to partnership working which are based on nationally recognised models of good practice will mean that local reform partners can offer consistency of values, approach, language and communication, and engagement and co-production across all services informed by evidence from their Local Area.

From March to July 2017, the Alliance worked with 3 Local Areas to pilot the model. These pilots have been evaluated and a report of the outcomes presented to the Department for Education, Department of Health, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). A further Voices project is also being delivered in Rotherham.

**Genuine Partnerships** is a friendly, Rotherham-based team made up of skilled practitioners, parent carers and young people, with a diverse range of experiences, which models and inspires co-production. Using the Rotherham Charter as a foundation, the team’s unique packages of support, training and tools are incorporated into an appreciative inquiry approach. This means the team builds upon and celebrates good practice, and promotes the meaningful involvement of parent carers and young people in decisions that affect them at individual, organisational and strategic levels.

Genuine Partnerships works with schools, settings, Education, Health and Care services. In June 2016 the team began working nationally and was invited to contribute to VOICES: National Alliance for Local Area Partnership Working.

**Contact (formerly Contact a Family)** is a family-focused charity covering all four nations that supports families with disabled children whatever their disability or health condition. Support is offered via national and regional teams and includes: publications; a Freephone helpline (including specialist benefits and education advice); website and SENDirect; information on rare conditions and medical information; linking families with other families, and with support groups; parent and practitioner workshops and information sessions; hospital and hospices, and early years work.

Contact is the Department for Education’s contracted partner and has been supporting the development of parent carer forums and co-production since 2008. Contact coordinates the VOICES Alliance, which is a tangible opportunity to develop national standards for co-production based on the principles of Rotherham’s Genuine Partnership model.