

CHILD FRIENDLY CITY & COMMUNITY



Our Story of Change 2018 – 2025

Derry City and Strabane
District Council Area



CHILD
FRIENDLY
CITIES &
COMMUNITIES

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CONTENTS

Summary	06
Culture	13
Co-operation and Leadership	16
Communication	21
Healthy	24
Equal and Included	28
Education and Learning	33
Sustainability Plan	38





*I come from trauma, music, and pain,
From lessons learned through loss and gain.*

*I carry talent, strength, and fire,
A voice that speaks, a heart's desire.*

*I offer kindness, acceptance, grace,
Family, love, a warm embrace.
I carry difference, a unique mind,
In activism, I seek to find.*

*Faith and love are close to me,
Fighting for justice, for all to be free.
From the past, I rise with light,
I offer a future where all are right.*

*I come from Derry, Creggan, Strabane,
from community streets and quiet corners.
I come from family, from bullying, loneliness,
the feeling of being left out.*

*I carry passion, humour, music,
motherhood, gratitude and struggle.
I carry my voice, even when it's hard to use.*

*I offer kindness, strength, and joy.
Art, love, friendship, and awareness
for those who feel unseen.*



FOREWORD BY MAYOR LILLIAN SEENOI BARR

It is with immense pride and a profound sense of responsibility that I present this story of change as part of our bid for the Derry City and Strabane District Council area to be considered for recognition of Child Friendly Status through UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative.

Our City and District, rich in history, diversity, and community spirit, is a place where every child deserves the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive in an environment that supports their rights, well-being, and aspirations. This bid is not merely a project—it is a promise to our children, ensuring they are at the very heart of the decisions we make and the actions we take.

The Derry and Strabane area has long understood the importance of creating a city and communities that are welcoming, safe, and nurturing for children and young people. We are a place where families feel supported, and where children can freely explore, learn, and shape the future. It is our firm belief that the more we invest in our children today, the brighter our community and future will be.

Becoming an area recognised by the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative perfectly aligns with our vision for a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable council area. This initiative will empower us to continue making strides in providing our children with the best possible start in life—whether through access to quality education, healthcare, safe play areas, or opportunities to engage in their community.

We envision a city and district where children's voices are heard, their rights respected, and where they are given the tools and opportunities to succeed.

In our story of change, we outline the strategies, actions, and goals that have guided our path to recognition. From ensuring that our community are educated in child rights and welcoming to all children and young people, to providing spaces for play, recreation, and education, we are committed to building a city where every child can flourish. We are also focused on addressing the broader social, environmental, and economic factors that

impact children's lives, working collaboratively with children services, their families, guardians and most importantly the children and young people directly.

This bid represents not only the hard work of our lead partners, Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC), Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST), Education Authority (EA) Youth Service and The Youth Justice Agency (YJA), but also the dedication of our community partners and young people who have shown leadership in advocating for child rights.

Together, we will create a future where every child in Derry and Strabane is not only protected but also empowered to reach their full potential.

Becoming recognised by UNICEF as a Child-Friendly City and Community is an exciting and transformative journey and we are ready to continue your work towards a more sustainable, compassionate, and child-centred district.

I am confident that, with the support of UNICEF, our community and partners, we will continue to build a future where our children are not only seen and heard but are active participants in shaping the world around them and deliver on the outcomes for children and young people within our Shared and Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan (2017-2032).

Together, we will create a city and district where all children can live, learn, and grow in a place they are proud to call home and where others can learn from the value we place on our younger citizens and gain insight into best practice we collectively have made to embed a child right based approach at the heart of all our decisions.

SUMMARY OF OUR JOURNEY:

BUILDING A CHILD-FRIENDLY CITY & DISTRICT

Derry City and Strabane District Council area is a place of resilience, creativity, and ambition—home to one of the youngest populations across Ireland, the UK, and Europe. With 21% of our residents under the age of 16 and 31.5% under 25, there is a unique opportunity to re-imagine what it means to be a truly child-friendly place.

For too long, decisions affecting young people have been shaped by policy and procedure rather than a fundamental commitment to children’s rights. The legacy of conflict, social and economic challenges, and structural inequalities continue to impact every generation, with children and young people bearing the deepest burden. It is time to change that.

EMBRACING A CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

When the opportunity arose to adopt a Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA) through UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFC) programme, partners embraced it as a chance to transform not only policies but also mindsets, to benefit children and young people aged 4+ years in our area.

Derry City and Strabane District Council area, comprising Derry-Londonderry, the capital of the North West and the second-largest city in Northern Ireland, has a population exceeding 150,800. The region boasts an excellent education system, a vibrant cultural tradition, beautiful landscapes, and strong community identity. However, economic, social, and structural deficits continue to impact citizens, with deprivation levels among the highest regionally and beyond.

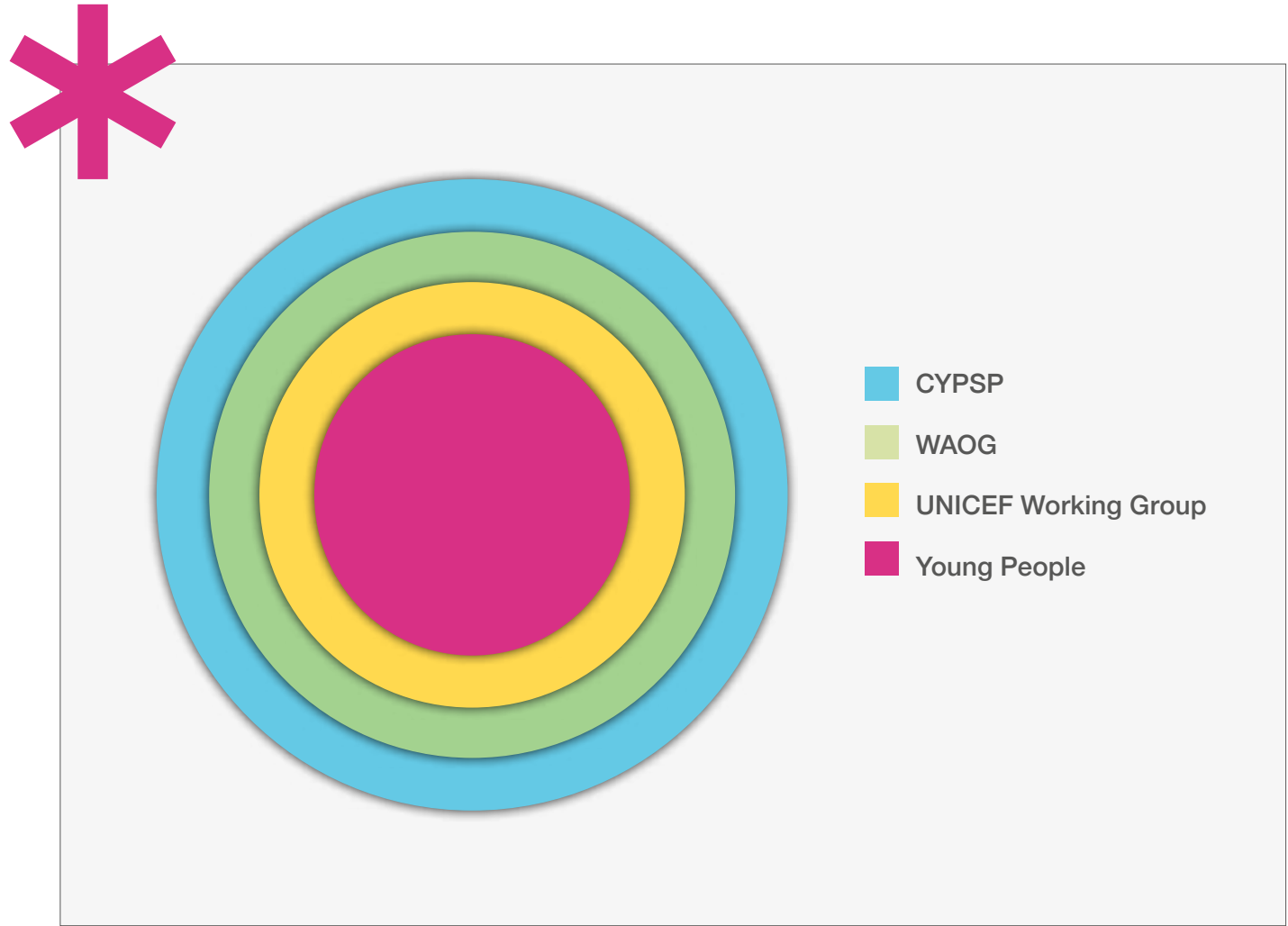
Derry City Council (Legacy Council) was involved with UNICEF since the initiation of the Child Rights Partners Programme back in November 2011 and helped shape the current Child Rights Partners programme via a partnership approach. DCSDC also worked in partnership with UNICEF to assist in the delivery of a number of programmes using a child rights based approach, such as the development of the One Plan, the youth Council Action Plan and the strategic Community Plan.

Recognising these challenges, but also seeing the strengths that we had in our City and District, partners identified an opportunity to ensure that decision-making affecting young people is driven not just by policy but by an unwavering commitment to children’s rights. The district had already demonstrated a willingness and capacity by embarking on the European Youth Capital bid in 2019, although the bid was unsuccessful, we knew that we were on the right track for children and young and a commitment was made for a localised programme to empower young people to take the lead, the initiative would become YOUth 19, a year of youth with a programme of projects dedicated to young people aged 12-24.

Partners were ambitious with our aspirations at the beginning of the journey and an expression of interest was submitted to UNICEF in 2017, with the official launch taking place in July 2018 at the Foyle Maritime Festival.

The initial hopes for the City and District were to focus on strengthening youth participation and embedding child rights through:

- Child Rights Training for a shared understanding across all levels.
- NI’s first council-endorsed Participation Policy shaped by young people.
- New Youth Voice structures and a youth manifesto.
- A child rights-based accountability framework in commissioning.
- Youth-led training for organisations.
- Staff training to integrate child rights into daily practice.



A COLLABORATIVE COMMITMENT

Initially in 2018 Derry City and Strabane District Council and the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) led the initiative to engage young people in a more meaningful way through the UNICEF UK CFC programme.

They were later joined in 2021 by the Education Authority (EA) and in 2023 by the Youth Justice Agency (YJA), making a collective commitment to put children’s rights at the heart of everything we do. This meant embarking on a journey of transformation to embed a CRBA across these four lead agencies and progressively extend it to wider sectors and organisations.

The Western Area Outcomes Group (WAOG) oversees the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities (CFC) initiative locally, providing direct funding and reporting to the regional Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).

Locality Planning Groups (LPGs) operate within this structure, linking statutory and community services for children and young people.

A key theme in our action plan is **connection** — we aim to build stronger links across services, policies, and strategies through a child rights-based approach.

These governance arrangements have since developed and we currently operate a whole systems approach, developed over the course of the action plan but essentially the important element was that they had sight of each other and that children and young people are at the centre.

We fully recognise that there remains work to be done to further embed this approach both within each organisation and across the partnership and will be central to our sustainability plan.

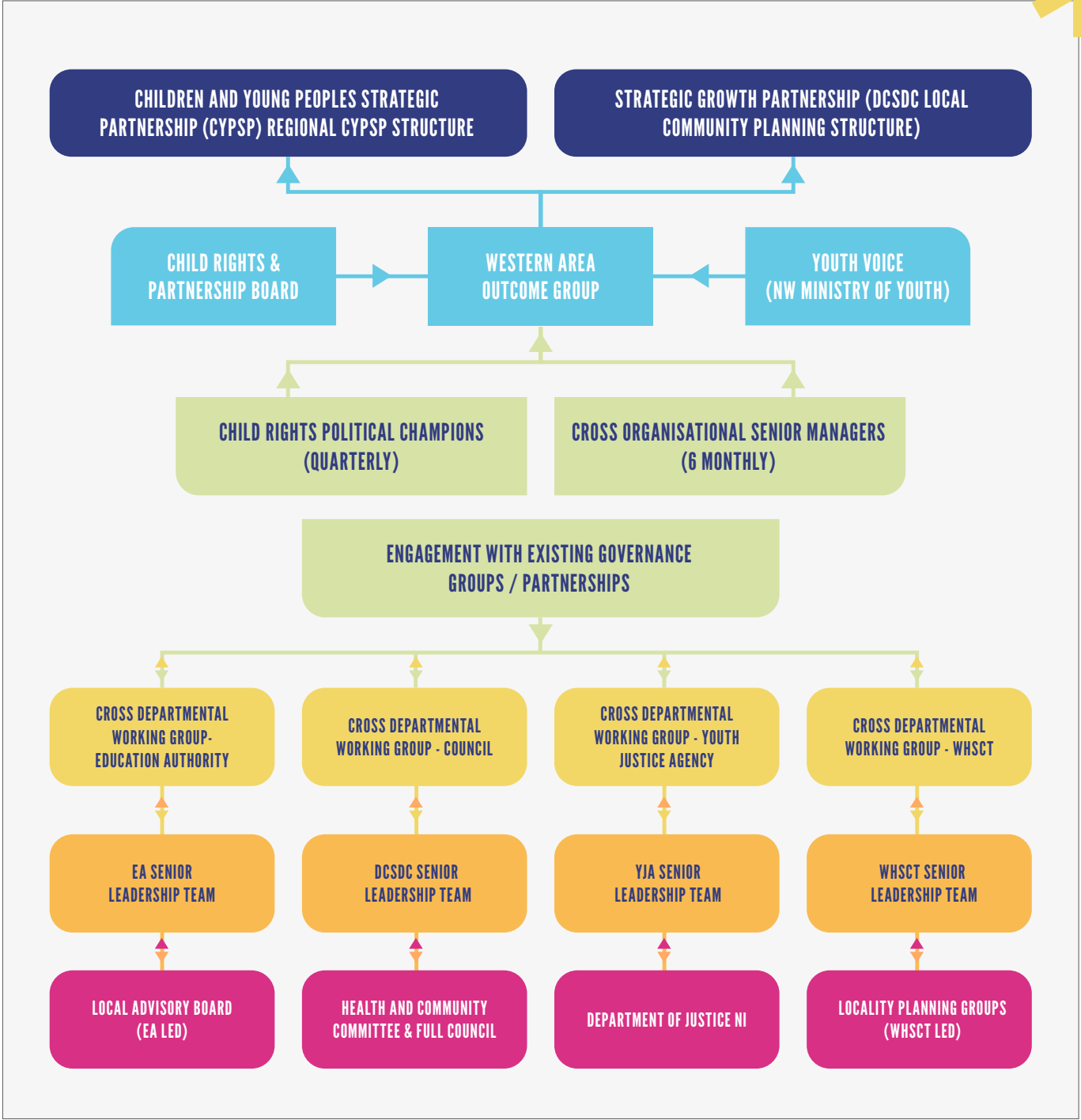
WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

- Western Area Outcome Group (WAOG):** Accountable Body for UNICEF CFC multi-agency action plan.

Child Right & Participant Board: Advisory role with aim to embed a Child's Rights Based Approach. Primary focus Youth Participation.

Working Groups: In each of the lead organisations to monitor actions to work towards the outcomes (EA/WHSC/DCSDC/YJA).
- Existing Governance:** Engagement with Community and Voluntary Sector, Locality Planning, Local Growth Partnerships, Outcome Groups to deliver action plan.

Decision Makers: Political Champions from each political party meet quarterly. Senior Management - SLT updates by UNICEF CFC leads in each organisation and six monthly cross-organisational senior management briefings.



Children’s rights are now a standing item on WAOG and LPG agendas, and key stakeholders have completed relevant training. WAOG has completed UNICEF Child Rights training, and CFC implementation remains a regular agenda and reporting item.

This was not just a policy shift; it was a journey of transformation. Collectively we recognised that meaningful engagement means moving beyond consultation—it means co-creating solutions with young people, ensuring their voices lead decision-making, and embedding their rights in governance, service design, and everyday practice.

Given that the 4 lead agencies hold varying degrees of authority and responsibility for children and young people, working in collaboration was key to making this transformation.

Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC), while not a statutory authority for education or child protection, has important local responsibilities that influence young people’s lives. These include delivering community services such as leisure, arts, good relations, and youth engagement programmes. The Council also holds responsibility for supporting youth voice and participation in local democracy, helping ensure that young people are included in decision-making processes that affect them.

The Education Authority (EA) Youth Service holds statutory authority for youth services under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 and the Youth Service (NI) Order 1989. It is responsible for delivering informal education and youth development programmes for children and young people aged 4 to 25. This includes operating youth centres, funding youth organisations and safeguarding young people through training and support. The EA also has a clear responsibility to promote youth participation in shaping the services they access.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) holds statutory authority and legal responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children under the Children (NI) Order 1995. Its duties include investigating child protection concerns, delivering children’s social services, supporting families, and providing specialised health services such as CAMHS and autism support. The Trust also has responsibility for early intervention, parenting programmes, and services for children with disabilities.

The Youth Justice Agency (YJA) operates under the statutory authority of the Department of Justice and is legally responsible for working with young people aged 10 to 17 who have offended or are at risk of offending.

It is tasked with providing community-based interventions, custodial care through facilities like Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre, and restorative justice processes such as youth conferencing. The Agency also carries responsibility for safeguarding young people in the justice system and supporting victims of youth crime.

Our story of change demonstrates how we achieved the journey of transformation through collaboration, overcoming challenges, and evolving our understanding of children’s rights. Central to this, was our recognition that children and young people are rights-holders, and partners, as duty-bearers, are responsible for ensuring their rights are upheld.

BADGE OUTCOMES

Our discovery phase from 2019 - 2022 informed our action plan, which in turn has guided us through our UNICEF CFC journey. Our co designed youth survey had 645 responses, we held child rights mapping sessions in local youth clubs involving over eleven different organisations. We held youth discovery evenings with 33 young people along with adult and youth discovery evenings with 133 individuals, 65% of whom were young people. A youth manifesto was developed with our youth voice through the North West Ministry of Youth (NWMY).

We conducted Youth Zone research with two web based surveys with 243 responses from young people aged 10-24. There were 44 responses from existing voluntary and community groups as well as four youth zone focus groups with 30 young people.

Our Discovery Phase identified six key themes, including three mandatory UNICEF CFC badges:

- 1. Culture
- 2. Cooperation
- 3. Leadership & Communication

Worked with people in the community so they know how to respect Children’s Rights and can help them feel welcome.

Created more opportunities for children and young people to have a say and meet people who make decisions about things that affect them.

Provided opportunities and training so everyone knows about child rights, can read child friendly updates, and can see positive news stories about children.

Offered information and support so young people know how to look after their mental health, the impact of alcohol and drugs, and have safe places to go when they feel sad or worried.

In order to select the other badges and outcomes for Derry and Strabane there were four key components to the process;

1. UNICEF Youth & Adult Advisory Panels
2. Remote Consultation
3. Review of Statistics and existing Youth Consultation
4. Community & Youth Discovery Day's

The decision on final badge choices was passed over to the UNICEF Youth Advisory Panel on 9th April 2020. The group agreed that the individual votes from the Discovery Day should be taken into consideration for the final badge choice as Education and Learning and Safe and Secure were tied through group votes.

The final 3 chosen badges were:

1. Healthy

Promoting mental health awareness, reducing substance abuse, and providing safe spaces.

2. Equal and Included

Ensuring fair treatment and equal access to opportunities, have equal enjoyment of their rights, feel valued and have places to play and enjoy in their free time.

3. Education and Learning

Encouraging learning and spaces to promote well-being and empower children in decision-making and help develop their personality and talents.

ACHIEVEMENTS & IMPACT

Our journey led to significant milestones, including:

Youth Participation & Leadership

- Development of a new Youth Voice structure, the North West Ministry of Youth, feeding directly into decision-making.
- Co-development of a Youth Manifesto setting priorities for change.
- A participation toolkit (EA) to ensure young people's perspectives shape current and future planning.

Training & Capacity Building

- Over 422 staff trained in Child Rights, embedding principles in their work.
- 55 staff completed Engagement and Participation training, ensuring CRBA integration.
- Promotion of the Lundy Model of Participation to enhance youth involvement.
- Introduction of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for staff to deepen their understanding of children's rights.

Embedding Rights in Policy & Practice

- Child Rights incorporated into funding agreements, tendering, and partnerships (e.g., DCSDC SLAs, PEACEPLUS, WHSCT).
- Development of a new Participation Policy, making DCSDC the first council in NI to formally adopt one.
- Creating and promoting a child rights accountability framework within appropriate commissioning, governance and procurement structures.

Health & Wellbeing Support

- Launch of the Youth Wellness Web, Text a Nurse service, and Child-Friendly CAMHS Communications, ensuring accessible mental health support.
- Expansion of mental health awareness campaigns to schools and youth organisations.

Inclusive Spaces & Play

- Implementation of the DCSDC Play Plan, ensuring all children, regardless of background or ability, have access to safe, inclusive play opportunities.
- Engagement with children with disabilities to co-design accessible recreational spaces.

Communication & Awareness

- Promotion of child-friendly communication, including YJA publications and a Dual Language Child Rights Defenders Programme.
- Implementation of Child Rights Impact Assessments to evaluate policies and decisions affecting young people.
- Increased visibility of child-friendly updates and positive news stories across print, social media and community networks.

“

With 21% of our residents under the age of 16 and 31.5% under 25, there is a unique opportunity to re-imagine what it means to be a truly child-friendly place.”



IMPACT ON NI WIDE STRUCTURES

As a result of the work carried out in the CFC programme for DC&S the Youth Justice Agency made the following Agency wide (regional) changes or introductions: All YJA staff across NI to complete NICCY Child Rights Training.

The 7 principles of a child rights-based approach was added to the Youth Justice Agency corporate plan 2025-2028 under the service development category. YJA will explore the use of child rights impact assessments for new areas of work, although CRIA has not been directly mandated by the department of justice, CRIA is a valuable mechanism for the development of service for and with children and young people.

As a result of the work carried out by DCSDC on the Child Rights Defender Programme, and the development of the accessible animation videos in Irish, Ulster Scotch, BSL and ISL, the programme will now be delivered in Regional Capacity.

CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

Working collaboratively across four distinct organisations posed logistical and procedural challenges, compounded by the political landscape and the collapse of devolved government from 2017-2020 and again from 2022-2024. During this time, we experienced delays in distribution of resources, youth service cuts leading to restricted capacity which resulted in some initiatives not being taken forward and impacted on local priorities.

The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted public health, education, services and economic stability, exacerbating difficulties in reaching, engaging, connecting and supporting young people.



Additionally, the area's unique governance model, with more limited functions compared to other UK local authorities, made systemic change a complex process. Different organisations hold varying levels of responsibility and authority, requiring a nuanced approach to integrating a shared vision for child rights across Derry City and Strabane District Council area.

Late in 2023 Senior Leaders from all partner organisations began to review continued involvement with the UNICEF CFC programme, given pressures and challenges faced with the journey towards receiving recognition. These centred on said governing arrangements, roles and responsibilities of lead partners in comparison to other local authorities involved in CFC programme, a review of public resources invested to date and monitoring of progress with an overambitious multi-agency action plan.

Partners recognised the achievements made in relation to Child Rights and impact on children and young people and recognised that community planning structures created conditions for continued improvements achievable through collective partnership working to improve child rights and lives of children and young people.

These pressures resulted in engagement with UNICEF CFC to address voices of the consortium lead partners, and in 2024 agreeing a revised action plan with UNICEF UK and partners agreeing to commit to the CFC programme within their agreed resource allocations.

What initially seemed like obstacles became strengths. As relationships deepened, collaboration improved, and partners gained a better understanding of each organisation's workings. Despite personnel changes, our commitment to learning from each other and from young people remained steadfast.

1 in 5

children in NI grows up in poverty influenced by broader socio-economic factors

THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite progress, there is still work to be done. One in five children in NI grows up in poverty (22%, according to DfC), influenced by broader socio-economic factors beyond the control of the four lead partners. However, our commitment to breaking down barriers, challenging outdated structures, and embedding children's rights remains unwavering. Currently, there is a stronger voice and champion of Child rights across the city and district, the active youth voice, North West Ministry of Youth has its largest membership.

Going forward, we will continue to work within the current governance structures, as it appears to be working, with more focus on mechanisms that allow children and young people's voices to feed into these structures across the city and district, **our sustainability plan will:**

- **Strengthen partnerships** across sectors to ensure long-term sustainability of child rights initiatives.
- **Expand child rights training** to a broader range of service providers.
- Continue **refining participation structures** with participation mapping to ensure youth voices remain central in decision-making, in line with the Lundy Model of Participation.
- **Develop new strategies** for measuring impact and ensuring accountability in child-focused policies and services.
- Develop and **improve child friendly communications** across all services that impact on the lives on children and young people.

Through strategic planning, direct engagement events, partnerships with organisations like UNICEF, and collaborative groups such as the WAOG, Derry City and Strabane District Council and its partners have demonstrated a robust commitment to implementing a child rights-based approach. These efforts not only prioritise the well-being and development of children and young people but also actively involve them in shaping the decisions and services that impact their lives, fostering a community where their rights are recognised, respected, and realised.

Together, we are building a future where every young person understands their rights, feels empowered to challenge injustice, and sees their voice reflected in decision-making. This journey is not just about policy; it is about culture, accountability, and a shared vision for a child-friendly city and district for generations to come.

**This is our story of change.
And it is only the beginning.**

CULTURE BADGE

During the Discovery phase, children and young people shared that they didn't always feel welcome in their local communities.

Reasons for this included:

- A lack of services in rural areas.
- Feeling stigmatised or judged due to age.
- Being stereotyped or excluded by adults and businesses.

Feedback included:

"Disrespected and always moved on."
"Tarring us all with the same brush."
"Told to move on... not welcome."

Young people described being denied entry to shops unless accompanied by an adult, restricted to entering in small numbers and generally treated with suspicion. They felt judged and unwelcome, particularly outside their immediate community, often due to unfamiliarity or assumptions about their behaviour.

BADGE OUTCOMES

- Children and young people enjoy meeting people in their community who understand how to use child rights to improve their work.
- Children and young people do not feel judged or labelled; their rights are respected by everyone.
- Children and young people always feel welcome and respected by people of all ages

KEY PARTNERS

Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC), Western Health and Social Care Trust, Education Authority (EA) Youth Service, Youth Justice Agency (YJA)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Training and Capacity Building

It was clear that, in order to achieve the outcomes, training and capacity building would play a prominent role. A comprehensive multi-agency training programme began in 2018, starting with the training of strategic staff before moving on to operational staff and community partners.

By March 2025, 375 individuals had completed the Introduction to Child Rights in Practice and 55 completed the Engagement and Participation training.

Notable training participants were Government Ambassadors (Youth 19), NWRC Early Years lecturers/students, WHSCT staff, EA Youth Service, Communications staff from all the partners, local Elected Members, and Governance groups. To widen the reach of the training and make it more accessible, three of the lead partners launched two key modules in 2024: Introduction to Child Rights and Child Rights Impact Assessment. These have been available on their e-learning platforms since the beginning of 2025.

Embedding Child Rights in Structures

One of the first steps to embedding child rights in structures across the lead agencies was having it integrated into job descriptions within the organisations, this was the case for the Children and Young People Coordinator role that was recruited in 2018, the Community Development Programme Manager within Council in 2023 and the Youth Justice Agency Participation Senior Practitioner roles in 2024.

One of the key discussions between the lead agencies was the notion of how they could influence other agencies to become more appraised and involved with a child rights- based approach. One method suggested was to embed a greater focus on children's rights within the commissioning process. This approach was adopted in 2019, before the full detail of UNICEF CFC programme was finalised. At this stage, the focus was on meaningful participation of children and young people and access and inclusion. As the programme developed and staff knowledge increased, the Good Relations Strategic Grant was used as a mechanism to pilot embedding the '7 Principles of a Child Rights Based Approach' in the funding application and guidance, 2023 -2024.

Cross-agency working led to child rights clauses in service level agreements and contracts, many agencies within the community and voluntary sector had service level agreements with the Western Health and Social Care Trust and Council. The Trust were supported by champions from finance, procurement and legal to align with procurement law and realistic expectations.



To further embed child rights in our structures, in 2024 Council included Child Rights in Service Level Agreements and funding contracts for the Community Development, Consensual Grant and Community Development Contracts, requiring funded organisations to explore Child Rights training and to evidence child rights implementation in their practice delivery.

The Peace Plus Programme, a substantial EU funding stream of approximately £8m for cross-community, people-based reconciliation projects within the council area, is managed by a small team in Council. The model used by the team to embed Child Rights is a model of best practice - starting with staff training in Child Rights in 2022, youth co-design was then introduced, involving children and young people in the decisions of the types of projects that should be included in the funding. Child Rights were embedded in the tender specification and assessment and community training was included for all prospective agencies.

Informed Consent and Inclusion

In order to ensure that children and young people were respected and their rights, in 2024- 2025 the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) reviewed its Equality Monitoring processes, as part of this review YJA updated its Equality Monitoring form to be more inclusive and reflective of a more diverse service user group. Through the development of a child-friendly Equality Monitoring coversheet, co-designed with young people, understanding and voluntary participation were enhanced. The completion of an Equality Monitoring form is voluntary and can be declined, most children and young people have not been aware of this, this review aligns with Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC (respect for views of the child and freedom of expression).

Dedicated Roles and Strategic Integration

Key to having people in the community who understand how to use child rights to improve their work, was having trained professionals in lead agencies, in 2022 the Youth Justice Agency created the role of Participation Officer to lead the development of participation and children’s rights across the agency. In 2024 YJA elevated the role of YJA Participation officer into organisational management structures. In summer 2024 they recruited a ‘Participation Senior Practitioner’ with a bespoke job description that ensures a child’s rights-based approach is embedded systemically.

Embedding the role of participation into the management level structures of the Agency ensures that participation and children’s rights priorities strategically and systematically embedded across the breadth of work delivered by YJA.

The Trust embedded youth work staff in family support teams, despite initial professional barriers—bridged through child rights training and CFC support, these roles helped to develop greater opportunities for promoting engagement with young people within their services in a more meaningful way. The desire to promote a more relational, informed approach to working with young people who often interfaced across justice, welfare and education was clearly a priority.

Participation, Delivery, and Monitoring

EA Youth Service has revised its Delivery Plans to embed a Child Rights-Based Approach, ensuring that the rights of children and young people—such as the right to be heard, included, and supported—are central to service planning and delivery. The continued use of Target Monitor helps measure programme reach and impact, supporting accountability in how services meet young people’s needs. However, it’s recognised that current systems do not yet capture subjective experiences like feeling respected or welcome—key aspects of rights to dignity and non-discrimination. Addressing this is being considered in the sustainability plan.

There is now a stronger focus on programmes being co-designed and evaluated with youth involvement, which directly supports Article 12 of the UNCRC—the right of children and young people to have their views considered in decisions that affect them. Programmes also promote rights awareness and self-advocacy, empowering young people to understand and claim their rights. Clear monitoring and evaluation processes ensure that learning outcomes are achieved and that young people can actively shape future service delivery.

Participation

The Lundy Model of Participation (Space, Voice, Audience, Influence) has been adopted as the preferred model for participative work, across the four lead agencies, Council utilise the model across the City and District in it’s engagement with children and young people as a key stakeholder group. It has also been integrated into EA’s Participation Toolkit, as the systemic approach to embedding the approach regionally. The use of the Lundy Model has allowed key staff to feel supported in the enhancement of participative structures and has seen the development of work that has the voice of young people spread throughout. Some clear examples within EA Youth Service was the introduction of thematic voices to challenge key themes such as Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, as well promoting gender inclusion.

The development of a small grants panel also saw young people become involved in decision making around the allocation of funding and prioritising need from young people’s viewpoints.

Within the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT), the Personal Public Involvement (PPI) Forum has introduced a dedicated focus on children and young people, supported by a Children and Families Champion. This reflects a growing recognition of the importance of youth participation and co-production in tackling health inequalities and delivering responsive, inclusive services. The forum has been introduced to the Lundy Model of Participation, deepening its understanding of how to ensure space, voice, audience, and influence are present in engagement with children—bringing the principles of the UNCRC into everyday practice.

YJA operates a champion model to ensure the principles of children’s rights and participation is systemically embedded across the Agency. The Participation working group has been in existence since 2021 and the role of participation officer was developed by this working group. Participation and children’s rights and the role of participation officer in YJA has developed significantly over the previous three years. In 2025 the participation working group within the Agency will be reconfigured and an action plan will be developed to give participation champions a more strategic role in the development of participation. The Lundy Model is embedded at a regional level through the participative work of the YJA.

KEY CHALLENGES

Progress was slow embedding child rights in funding/ management agreements in some of the lead agencies due to regional governance complexities, we realised early on that there would be different paces of adoption across organisations and that this would require a flexible, tailored approach.

Limited workforce development infrastructure in Council slowed training rollout, we faced some challenges in training Elected Members due to last minute diary commitments, working with UNICEF to create and facilitate a briefing specifically for Elected Members increased the uptake, with 22 now having received the training. The procurement route had been originally agreed to facilitate the delivery of the Child Friendly Mapping programme, due to resource implications and the capacity of the Children and Young Peoples Coordinator.

The tender failed due to a lack of bidders after going out to public tender on two occasions.

At this stage we knew we would have to change course and re-evaluate the process to make is more accessible for local community groups to access the funds and facilitate the participation mapping process, this will be addressed as part of our Sustainability Plan.

LESSONS LEARNED

Flexibility is key, agencies progress at different rates and our differences can also become our strengths.

Sharing best practice and creating peer learning opportunities increases impact and consistency, partners are at different stages and have strengths in specific areas, this benefits us all.

Participative work requires time effort, and can be very productive when the Lundy Model is adopted, allowing us to evaluate our practice in engaging children and young people in a meaningful way, adhering to the 4 elements of the model.

NEXT STEPS

In terms of sustainability planning under Culture - the four lead partners endeavour to continue to embed child rights in policies, contracts, monitoring systems, and training platforms. Participation Mapping will be a key element identifying safe, welcoming spaces for young people, but also establishing an agreed approach to having the voice of children and young people heard at already established local community governance structures. In terms of workforce development, the Train-the-Trainer Programme will help build internal training capacity across all lead agencies to sustain knowledge and practice.

The work undertaken across the Culture Badge clearly demonstrates a profound cultural shift towards embedding Child Rights in community life, services, and systems. What began as a response to young people’s feelings of exclusion and marginalisation has evolved into a robust, multi-agency commitment to creating welcoming, rights-respecting communities. Through sustained training, structural integration, policy reform, and meaningful participation, a culture of respect, dignity, and inclusion has developed. Children and young people are no longer viewed as passive recipients of services but as valued contributors to decision-making and community development. The consistent application of the Lundy Model has underpinned this change, ensuring that young people are given space, voice, audience, and influence across all areas of work. While challenges remain, the progress made affirms a growing recognition that a child rights-based approach enriches not only the lives of children and young people but strengthens the fabric of the entire community.

CO-OPERATION & LEADERSHIP BADGE



During the discovery phase, children and young people shared their experiences and perceptions around participation and leadership in decisions that affect their lives.

A number of strong themes emerged, limited opportunities and representation:

“Only the minority is involved at the moment.”

Many young people felt that youth voice initiatives tend to involve only a small group, often leaving out the broader population of children and young people. There was a shared belief that true inclusion is still far from being realised.

“Adults make assumptions without asking – no one bothers to ask.”

“We can make decisions on some things but not others.”

Participants reported that even when their views are sought, they are often ignored or not taken seriously. Adults are seen to dominate decision making without genuine collaboration or follow-up.

“More of a chance now.”
– Young people aged 13–17

Older participants acknowledged that their influence increases as they get older, but younger children felt they have very little say, despite decisions impacting them directly.

“We don’t get a say in what happens to us.”

“We can’t vote or influence what goes on in the community or where the money is spent.”

The structural limits placed on young people – including their inability to vote – were viewed as significant barriers to being heard, especially when it comes to decisions at community or policy level.

BADGE OUTCOMES

To address these challenges, the badge outcomes are focused on shifting power and improving cooperation between young people and adult decision makers:

- All children and young people have the chance to have their voice heard. Adults value and respond to youth input.
- Staff and leaders working with young people have the skills and tools (e.g. Child Rights Impact Assessments) to support meaningful youth participation.
- More people, organisations, and businesses work together to promote and protect the rights of children and young people.

KEY PARTNERS

- Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)
- Education Authority Youth Service (EA Youth Service)
- Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)
- Youth Justice Agency (YJA)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Youth Voice Development through PEACE IV and YOUTH 19

Even prior to UNICEF’s discovery phase, a local Youth Voice programme had been scoped and secured through PEACE IV, based on community insight during the 2019 European Youth Capital bid. This laid the groundwork for YOUTH 19, a £1.5 million initiative dedicated to youth leadership and participation, co-designed with young people aged 12–24. YOUTH 19 resulted in improved partnerships between Council, youth organisations, and communities, Opportunities for diverse youth leadership and Integration of Child Rights principles in practice. YOUTH19 ran for a full year from 2019 – 2020.

“Everything from my friends to my experiences, nothing would be the same if I hadn’t taken part.”
– Tiegan, Youth 19 volunteer

A range of high-impact initiatives were delivered as part of YOUTH 19 and beyond, reaching thousands of young people, ranging from health promotion to street arts, governments ambassador programme and music festivals, 19 of which were hosted by young people themselves.

“Youth19 helped one of the most isolated groups of young people enjoy a jam-packed social calendar.” – Gavin Melly, The Playtrail

However in 2019, we learned that the UNICEF CFC programme had to have its own discrete pathway of discovery, development, delivery and recognition. With the development of a multi-agency action plan. We subsequently found out that the action plan was taking a theory of change model and required the development of 18 outcomes, impact measures, means of verification. A systemic change approach was required to enable recognition to take place. One off funding and isolated programmatic activity such as Youth 19 could not be used for the journey. Council was therefore required to deliver on the £1.5 million programme of activity for Youth 19 alongside the progression of the UNICEF CFC programme.

Embedding Political Commitment to Youth Rights

At this stage we knew we had to have our elected members on board, so in 2019, a Health and Community Committee paper proposed formal Political Champions for youth engagement. Although delayed due to COVID-19, cross-party meetings began in 2021, gaining momentum post-2023 elections. Child Rights became a standing agenda item for the Health and Community Committee in 2023 – a major systemic milestone. In 2022 a motion was passed to lobby on behalf of the voluntary youth sector, who were facing funding cuts, infringing on the rights of children and young people to education, leisure rest and play.

The next stage was where we started to see Systemic Change Through Multi-Agency Collaboration, in the form of Multi-Agency Senior Leadership Engagement. Since October 2020, senior leaders from across the partnership have convened bi-annually to:

- Stay informed about programme developments
- Provide cross-organisational support and oversight
- Strengthen interagency cooperation around child rights and participation

In response to strategic delivery needs and ensuring child rights were at the forefront of political champions and senior leader’s agendas, joint meetings of senior leaders and political champions commenced in 2024. This focus of discussions centred on setting the scene, reviewing progress, consideration of delivery options under current constraints and budget pressures, and involved UNICEF UK to provide feedback and guidance and UNICEF CFC delivery plan formally presented. Stakeholders valued the joint approach and whilst not a permanent structure but will be utilised as a forum in the future to respond to emerging needs, the other current structures of the Political Champions and the bi-annual Multi-Agency Senior Leadership Engagement will continue as ongoing forums.

This forum has enabled a whole-system approach, allowing political leadership and senior executives to co-review priorities and resource needs in a challenging funding landscape.

We began to realise the need for stronger internal governance, multi-agency senior briefings in late 2020 led to the formation of cross-departmental working groups within each lead organisation.

This structure does a number of key things; Bridges strategic planning with frontline delivery; Reflects Northern Ireland’s unique governance landscape and Enables agency-wide buy-in and operational accountability for the CFC Action Plan

Child Rights in Political Structures

UNICEF UK encouraged leveraging Council motions for change, to date we have seen;

- Child Poverty Motion (Feb 2024) – People Before Profit
- Cost of Childcare (Apr 2024) – Ulster Unionist
- Childcare Support Awareness (June 2023) – SDLP
- Childcare Strategy Review (Apr 2023) – Sinn Féin

As well as the support across all parties for the cut to youth service funding.

Participative Structures

A key part of the journey has been the Evolution of the Youth Participation Structure from UNICEF's Adult Advisory Board to a Child Rights and Participation Board showing clear evolution in inclusive governance:

- **April 2021:** Youth Participation Board launched with clear Terms of Reference
- **June 2024:** Refreshed and renamed as Child Rights and Participation Board with a Rotating senior chair across key agencies (Council > EA > WHSCT > YJA)

This rotating leadership model helped promote shared ownership and ensures child rights remain a cross-cutting organisational priority. The key responsibilities of the Board include, promote a child rights-based approach and stay updated with training. Supporting all UNCRC articles in practice and policy. Ensuring diverse youth voices are heard, especially seldom-heard groups. Advocating for time, funding, and skills for youth participation, and prioritising young people's wellbeing. Sourcing funding and align work with project goals. Reviewing risks, providing advice, and representing each organisation as well as sharing updates to grow the understanding of child rights across networks. **The Board receives updates on;**

- Youth Voice (NW Ministry of Youth)
- Child Rights Cross Departmental Working Groups (on the delivery of the action plan in each lead organisation)
- Community and Voluntary Sector update
- Spotlight Agenda item – focusing on a different element of good practice from statutory, community and voluntary sector.

To date some of the practice shared through the Board has been; Child Friendly Communications, Complaints Procedures, Child Rights Impact Assessments, Inclusive Play Park Planning and Family Support Work. This Board will continue as a permanent structure as part of the joint Sustainability Plan.

In June 2021, the Chief Executive of DCSDC formally requested Education Authority to become a lead partner, acknowledging its statutory role in youth services.

At this stage EA Youth Service joined the CFC programme leadership, although schools were excluded due to COVID-19 impacts, industrial action, and academic pressures. Then in April 2023 the Chief Executive of the Youth Justice Agency formally requested to become a lead partner, the request was supported and agreed at the Western Area Outcomes Group.

Youth Participative Structures

In line with the Lundy Model for Participation, Youth Governance of the UNICEF programme has also been on a journey, from 2019 until 2021, at the early stages of programme development the UNICEF Youth Advisory Board was formed, Giving young people a safe and inclusive SPACE to form and express their views. As part of this young people engaged in; Training, Co-design of programme structures and outcomes, facilitating and presenting at events and Reviewing and analysing consultation data, giving them opportunities to express their views and have their VOICE heard.

The young people played an active role in governance which is clearly documents in our Badge Rationale Report. Due to staff reductions post-Youth 19, the board merged with the NW Ministry of Youth, a PEACE IV-funded structure, the name, brand and logo of NW Ministry was co-designed by 20 young people and continues to support inclusive, youth-led governance in the district.

NW Ministry of Youth had its formal launch in October 2019, marking a major milestone, with young people leading from the front. A key quote from Magali Wing, a youth steering group member, highlighted the transformational journey:

"It's crazy to think we were debating about what the North West Ministry of Youth should be called a year ago and now it's up and running... I've grown so much as a person."

Young people also worked alongside the Nerve Centre to co-design a Youth Manifesto Video, which became a powerful advocacy and engagement tool, shared at youth events, "Meet the Mayor" sessions and Senior leadership briefings.

In 2022 after the Peace IV funding came to an end we knew we were on the right track with the, NW Ministry of Youth and to ensure continuity and evolution there was a transition to EA Youth Service-led delivery. There have been huge strides in the reporting and evaluation, with development of an OBA scorecard integrating UNCRC articles, inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative data, ongoing quarterly reporting to the UNICEF CFC Governance Structure and a pause and rebuild phase from September 2023 – March 2024 allowing re-engagement and systems alignment.

A key moment for the NW Ministry was getting the opportunity of a Study Visit to Cardiff in 2023, facilitated by EA Youth Service, youth representatives and staff explored Cardiff's implementation of the UNICEF CFC programme, met governance representatives and participated in events.

A full evaluation report was submitted by EA Youth Service, informing future action.

We began to realise that we needed regular opportunities for young people to have their views listened to by an AUDIENCE, who have the ability to make decisions and affect change. The Your Say – Child Rights Event took place in 2023, an initiative designed to raise awareness of the UNCRC, hear directly from young people about rights they feel are upheld or denied and facilitate dialogue between youth and decision-makers. The event took four months of planning/co-design with stakeholders, two months of remote youth workshops but saw 170+ attendees attend in the Guildhall. In order for the young people to see their INFLUENCE, and that their views would be acted upon, a child-friendly follow-up was distributed post-event. North West Ministry of Youth played a key role in the event that hosted seldom-heard youth, supported by: VOYPIC – care-experienced young people; WHSCT – family response service; Rainbow Project – LGBTQ+ youth; First Housing – supported housing residents; Ardnashee School – youth with learning disabilities; Rural Youth – via EA Youth Service and Local youth clubs and community groups. The event is planned to continue on a bi-annual basis and will be co-designed with young people and key stakeholders.

Lundy Model of Participation tools were used for evaluation, including direct quotes from young people. Best bit about the day was;

"Being able to voice my opinions about important subjects I felt strongly about."

"Meeting other young people and Councillors and having a platform to voice my concerns."

The current processes for the NW ministry of Youth involves a co-designed roadmap with participants outlining their engagements and plans, this includes consultations with decision makers around policy and practice, as well as quarterly meetings in the Guildhall Chamber where they link in with council staff and politicians to influence decision making.

The Mayor of Derry and Strabane launched her proposed initiative Our Guildhall, Our Space in the summer of 2024, the aim of this was to make the Guildhall a safe space for all children and young people from across the city and district. Young people had raised that they "didn't feel welcome in their local community" and that adults had "negative perceptions of them". The Mayor wanted the Council building to be a place where young people could socialise together, a space where they would feel welcome and supported, a place where they would be comfortable to have fun and meet new people.

The events were co-designed with young people right down to the evolved branding: Your Guildhall *Mayors Inclusive Youth Network* Our Guildhall Our Space. Young people from NW Ministry of Youth have been part of all stages of the initiative to date. The events were planned by Council with key partners collaborating through firstly pooling non-financial resources through ensuring that those seldom heard young people were engaged and the event was made accessible to them and secondly, the key partners collaborated by pooling financial resources, with both Council and WHSCT providing funding to the events for entertainment, food and transport to ensure sustainability of the initiative. The events have created a space where young people from all backgrounds and abilities feel welcome, comfortable and safe.

Youth voice in action:

"This initiative will make young people like myself feel welcomed, appreciated and important in council decisions," – Cara, youth representative.

Youth Participatory Budgeting (PB) – 'YOUth Making It Happen'

A landmark Youth PB pilot was delivered in 2020, enabling young people to directly decide how funding was allocated in their communities. It was co-designed with a diverse Youth Panel, including members with learning disabilities, had a robust informed consent process and direct decision-making on budgets by young people. It also has strong senior leadership and political support (including two Mayors and the Council Chief Executive), showed recognition and reward of participants and Youth Panel Members participated in positive media and promotional activities, including radio interviews.

"It shows young people across the Council area that there are people who want to listen to them and help them lead... especially during and after the Coronavirus." — Mayor Graham Warke

This project proved resilient through COVID-19 disruptions and was celebrated in 2021 with 85% of participants reporting that they felt that they had been able to influence decision making and would get involved in another PB process. 85% agreed that All of the projects would be good for the area and community, felt inspired about what they were seeing and hearing; liked voting for the project ideas; enjoyed the process and felt they had made a positive difference in their community.

Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

20 staff from the Community Services team in Council have completed Child Rights Impact Assessment training with UNICEF UK, as a result of this staff have completed a pilot and reported the learning from the pilot to the Child Rights and Participation Board, based on the shared learning, NICCY advised that they would revisit their current regional template following the meeting, in a bid to condense it, whilst still meeting all the requirements of a CRIA. Child Rights Impact Assessment is a key part of the Sustainability Plan, with a view to open the training up cross-organisationally.

Child Rights is now included in the Community Service Plan within DCSDC, and has been added to the draft Directorate plan. The Youth Justice Agency has the Child Rights and the 7 Principles of the CRBA included in their Corporate Plan, seeing Childs Rights embedded in strategy.

KEY CHALLENGES

Feedback from UNICEF UK after the discovery phase and moving into development was that the original governance was too operational and relied too heavily on one individual (Children and Young Peoples Coordinator) to coordinate and chair. The suggestion was that the governance needed to be strengthened to include senior leaders and decision makers from across the system. The partnership benefitted from this change.

The structures within Northern Ireland mean there is no children and young people's infrastructure support within in Council, which mean coordination of the programme has been challenging since its inception, however we overcame this structural challenge through a partnership approach, which in itself was not without its challenges. Embedding CRIA in policy and procedures across key Statutory and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations was also a challenge and perhaps too ambitious, due to the fact that it is currently not a legislative requirement, it will now be a key focus in the Sustainability Plan.

LESSONS LEARNED

As a partnership we have realised that Youth-led co-design creates lasting ownership.

We also see that institutional support (agenda items, policy integration) secures sustainability and that political and senior leadership buy-in is essential in creating systemic change. Derry and Strabane has evolved from programme-led youth participation to a whole-system, rights-based approach to governance.

NEXT STEPS

We aim to maintain child rights as standing items in all current governance structures, and utilise these structures to continue to raise awareness of priority areas of work for Children and Young People. In particular, the Child Rights and Participation Board, which will act in an advisory capacity to embed a Child Rights Based Approach in the design, delivery and review of policy, strategy and services within the Derry City and Strabane District Council area. The principle of participation will be a primary focus for the board. All four lead partners have laid out their commitment to Child Rights and the Sustainability Plan, with the Child Rights and Participation Board playing an active role in promoting the Lundy Model of participation to shape and evaluate Youth Voice opportunities, providing connection, support and operational links between the Youth Voice and Council departments / partner organisations / regional youth participation opportunities. Proactively carrying out meaningful engagement with the Youth Voice, whilst recognising and supporting the Youth Voice as a representative group. Finally, the Child Rights and Participation Board will play a key role in considering ad hoc Youth Participation opportunities that provide young people with creative ways to add their views and opinions, as formal Youth Participation structures are not appropriate for all young people.

From initial grassroots efforts like YOUth 19 to the systemic change enabled through strategic governance and multi-agency collaboration, there is strong evidence of systemic change in cooperation and leadership. Through NW Ministry of Youth and the Child Rights and Participation Board, young people are not only being heard—they are shaping decisions. The progress made underscores the power of youth voice, co-design, and political leadership in building a truly inclusive, rights-based community. The focus in the Sustainability Plan of the Lundy Model of Participation, Workforce Development and systemic integration of CRIA, will ensure that this momentum will carry forward, with young people at the heart of decision-making.

COMMUNICATION BADGE



During the Discovery phase there was a general feeling that children and young people don't know where to go to access information about their lives that they will understand and that information is 'centred towards adults only...we rely on adults to tell us what is going on'.

Some felt that older people have a bigger voice. We heard that some feel there should be teaching of human rights at school and that there should generally be much more child friendly information.

It was felt that Council website was 'confusing and boring'. 'Even when you take part in lots of groups linked to Council you still don't know half the stuff that's going on...if you do find the information you are looking for it is geared towards adults'.

BADGE OUTCOMES

"There is better awareness of Child Rights and the importance of children, young people and adults working together to make improvements."

"All children and young people, including those with additional needs can access child friendly information and support to make their lives easier, healthier, safer and happier."

"Children and young people see positive stories about their achievements. Staff involved with the media understand and value child rights."

KEY PARTNERS

- Youth Justice Agency (YJA)
- Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)
- Education Authority (EA) Youth Service

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

In working towards these outcomes, our strategies were to work with children and young people to understand the issues, to then create different formats and types of communications and to review and reflect on the results with children and young people. To date the communication efforts of the UNICEF CFC programme have significantly improved youth information accessibility, media representation, and cross-agency collaboration.

Youth Information Accessibility

The YJA Performance Impact Report provides stakeholders with an update on core information on the Agency's performance and its impact on children, families, victims and communities. Each year YJA features different areas of its work. Participation has been a key feature of the Performance Impact Report for the previous three years which maintains participation and children's rights work as core business of the Agency.

Through sensory rooms EA Youth Service has created trauma and attachment informed spaces that prioritise children's emotional and psychological wellbeing, reflecting a strong child rights based approach.

These safe, inclusive spaces are co-designed with young people, supporting their right to participate in decisions that affect them. They aim to meet the needs of all children, especially those affected by trauma, while promoting dignity, respect, and non-discrimination.

The approach recognises the link between emotional, psychological and sensory needs and includes clear guidelines to ensure transparency and accountability. By supporting emotional regulation and development, these spaces uphold the principles of survival, development and the best interests of the child.

EA Youth Service and NW Ministry of youth are taking the lead on the co-design of the brand and strapline, they are at the beginning of a process and considering what does recognition as a Child Friendly Community mean to them, they have been exploring what is important to them in the city and they will work on developing the logo as well as a strap line that encapsulates the Derry City and Strabane District being recognised as a Child Friendly City.

EA Youth Service monitoring report is used to evaluate the effectiveness and compliance of a youth project during a monitoring visit. It covers various areas to ensure that the project is running smoothly, meeting statutory and regulatory requirements, and aligning with child rights principles. Work has been completed to ensure that Child Rights are integrated, requiring evidence that the programme respects the rights of young people under the UNCRC by promoting participation, inclusion and empowerment in youth activities. It emphasises how young people's voices are heard and acted upon in the project's delivery.

Children and young people had been involved in a consultation around inclusive parks and leisure spaces, they identified specific parks in the south of Ireland that they liked because they had communication boards. An approach was made to Donegal County Council who confirmed that this is a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), the Parks team from Council also made contact with Ardnashee College following the design of their board in the new nursery school. The first board is planned for Castlederg Park and plans are being developed to have communication boards included in all new parks across the city and district.

Media Representation

A key part of the Youth Justice Agency's communications plan is sharing positive stories about children and young people, there has been a commitment to work with children and young people and communicate more widely their experience of youth justice, where the challenges of working sensitively, anonymising content and informed consent have been successfully navigated, with new organisational procedures established. YJA shares good news stories of the personal accomplishments of children and young people throughout their time with the Agency, although all content is anonymised, these successes may otherwise go unnoticed or uncelebrated. Members of the public do not always attribute criminal justice involvement with success and achievement and making the point of sharing good news and success helps fix this perspective. Children and young people greatly benefit from being celebrated, even small wins matter and often can be the first time a child or young person has received acclimation or acknowledgement of genuine success.

The EA Youth Service YBOX programme in Derry and Strabane engages young men in topics like masculinity, violence, relationships, and emotional wellbeing. It was introduced in response to anti-community behaviour in Hazelbank and involved group work, mentoring and podcast development. Working with both the young men and their parents, the programme raised awareness of social pressures, healthy relationships and equality. It took a child rights-based approach, promoting participation, non-discrimination and linking content to real-life experiences.

By involving young people in designing and delivering the podcast, it empowered them as equal partners. The programme highlighted the value of community support and the importance of promoting healthier choices for young men.

DCSDC have a section on their website dedicated to UNICEF Child Friendly Communities as well as the Youth Voice, Social Work Support Hub. The UNICEF CFC Multi-agency plan was reviewed in June this year and was approved at multi-agency partnerships the Child friendly summary document will be available on the website, it is currently being reviewed by the North West Ministry of Youth. The child friendly annual report is also available on the DCSDC dedicated Children and Young People's page as well as being shared across our Children and Young People's services network.

Derry City and Strabane District Council use a media monitoring contract that records any coverage relating to Council initiatives and can narrow their search down to those about children and young people. The 23/24 Media Review showed examples of where Child Rights were and were not upheld, 84.6% of local media news stories were positive and 15.4% negative and children's rights were not upheld. This then led to EA Youth Service carrying out a Focus Group with Children and young people about their experience of local media, showing how they feel they are portrayed in media and whether they feel their rights are upheld.

The findings were that Children and young people believe that the media portrays young people in more of a negative light across their communities. Their opinion is that the positive media of young people doesn't get as many likes or comments as that of negative portrayals. This suggests that there is a need for further training on showcasing positivity with the media and any service who have a responsibility on working and reporting on young people within our City and District. There have been a few recommendations made by the young people in this focus group to help change the narrative on young people in the media. The main one being that an action point is established in all Youth Workers yearly action plans on the promotion of services and the views of children and young people will help promote the positivity of the young people in our communities and help change the narrative.

This has resulted in lead organisations reviewing their communications and Child Friendly Communications being a key part of the Sustainability Plan. The Youth Justice Agency is leading the way in this area and has been sharing their good practice with the Lead agencies

Cross Agency Collaboration

Care-experienced young people are often marginalised and face multiple challenges. The action plan highlights the need to involve them more in shaping the services they use. Under Articles 12 and 25 of the UNCRC, they have the right to be heard and have their care reviewed regularly. As many key decisions are made in multi-agency meetings, it's vital they are included in these discussions.

In partnership with VOYPIC, young people with care experience co-designed 12 meeting standards, now embedded in the care system, to support their meaningful participation in decisions about their lives.

The action plan focused on city-wide outreach to promote children's rights through collaboration between various agencies.

Locality Planning Groups and a monthly e-zine helped share resources and updates on the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities (CFC) project.

Although challenges such as siloed working and building trust arose, these led to improved collaboration and shared learning. This helped connect different teams within the Trust, uniting them under a child rights-based approach.

This joint working supported initiatives like Autism Social Cafés, which aimed to improve access to services for marginalised children and inform families using local community resources—despite logistical difficulties.

KEY CHALLENGES

Complex Multi-Agency Collaboration

Four lead agencies, each with multiple departments and regional remits, made alignment challenging, therefore a strategic plan was developed to ensure each organisation sets its own internal communication strategy while contributing to a shared framework. Training for media, communications and marketing teams in child rights was essential to ensuring that communications respect and uphold rights as well as being accessible and child friendly.

Youth Engagement in Decision-Making

Some young people found Council and government communications inaccessible. To address this, youth-led podcasts and digital platforms were introduced. Young people also had other commitments which had to be prioritised at certain times of the year such as exams, this could mean slow progress on consultations.

LESSONS LEARNED

Celebrating Youth Success is imperative and agencies need to make a conscious effort to promote positive youth stories in traditional and social media. Clear and accessible communication matters, a shift towards child-friendly formats such as infographics, podcasts and videos has improved engagement.

Cross-Agency coordination is essential and effective communication requires regular updates and consistent messaging across agencies.

Communications and Marketing is now a standing agenda item in cross departmental working groups.

NEXT STEPS

We recognise that this area is where Derry City and Strabane District can develop most and progress further, whilst there has been significant improvements, some agencies have made great strides and other agencies are benefiting from the sharing of practice in this area.

Some key areas we will be exploring include the development of a dedicated youth friendly website to centralise information on child rights, youth events, and services.

A calendar of events for young people will be developed by the project partners, young people will be able to submit their own events for inclusion, similar to Council's existing What's on Derry Strabane Facebook page. The calendar will be available in venues used by young people across the City and District and online.

More PECS Communication Boards will be installed in parks and youth spaces across the City and District, however this will depend on cost and funding.

Staff across agencies will receive child rights-focused media training to improve how young people's stories are shared. Each lead organisation will develop an internal communication plan to align with the UNICEF CFC strategic goals.

Moving forward, the focus will be on sustaining engagement, increasing visibility of youth voices and ensuring that all children and young people can access child-friendly information that supports their rights, participation, and well-being.

HEALTHY BADGE



During our Discovery phase young people shared that they were unsure of what kind of support was available to them and they found the process of navigation particularly complicated.

They told us they also had difficulty accessing services that could provide support. Importantly they felt that those supports that were readily available seemed to be directed more for adults.

In 2019 young people told us in relation to mental health support:

“We still don’t know the half of stuff that is going on...if you do find the information you are looking for it is geared toward adults.”

Information was important, without good information young people felt that it impacted on their sense of agency and their capability to look for support independently when they needed it most.

“Don’t know where to go to access information about things...information is centred toward adults only, we rely on adults to tell us what is going on”

Clearly young people were speaking to article 17 and 12 in relation to the right to access information from a variety of sources and telling us that it is simply not good enough.

It was clear that young people from the Council area regarded health as a priority area for them and in particular mental health and associated wellbeing.

Having a safe place and a listening ear was important for young people, they told us:

“Access to a listening ear service or a mental health HUB would be useful and well used.”

“Mental Health Services were lacking across the district that the services currently in place weren’t fit for purpose.”

Emotional health and wellbeing remains important today for our young people and we have endeavoured to maintain a keen focus on this through our Healthy badge to try and capture the many wide ranging and fluid factors that can impact the wellbeing for young people.

Some of the challenges within this were clearly structural and not within our immediate ability to affect change. However, there were clearly areas we could affect within our action plan and that was reflected in our outcomes.

BADGE OUTCOMES

- Children and young people have access to quality, child friendly services when they need it.
- Children and young people are aware of the impact of alcohol and drugs on health and can access age appropriate services to develop a healthy awareness.
- All children and young people know how to protect their mental health and have a safe place to go to get child friendly support when they feel sad, worried, or anxious.

KEY PARTNERS

- Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST)
- Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)
- Education Authority (EA)
- Youth Justice Agency (YJA)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Our action plan worked towards improving outcomes for young people in these identified areas. The challenges presented within this badge were, and in some instances remain, significant due to a range of factors. However, there has been key achievements that have helped to progress the views of young people in relation to their emotional wellbeing and mental wellbeing and we will continue to progress this in our sustainability plan.

Transformational Approach to CAMHS Communication for Young People

One significant factor in our journey was the involvement of CAMHS in our cross departmental working group. Young people told us that they wanted more information about services that supported their mental health and emotional wellbeing. They told us that they wanted services to be more accessible and visible within their localities and communities. They told us that they were concerned with the waiting times for services particularly when it related to mental wellbeing and of the importance of having earlier support before more complex need developed.

The input from the wider CAMHS family has helped us progress within this area particularly in relation to accessibility and greater information on services.

The threshold criteria for CAMHS involvement often meant that many young people referred to the service did not necessarily meet the required criteria and often felt confused in relation to next steps.

The CAMHS service in the WHSCT now responds to young people who may not meet their threshold for involvement via correspondence that outlines and signposts to a range of support services. For example, the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) have created a range of emotional and mental wellbeing supports, that have been co designed with young people, for young people. This menu of support is accessible in a range of formats and is linked to the CYPSP translation HUB so as to include a range of languages and communication.

The local service now actively consults with young people and parents on their communication material and have made changes to make it more child and young person friendly. We feel this is a significant milestone and achievement and our working group champion is embedded within the service helping to shape the cultural architecture through the voice of young people.

Our EWTS along with UNICEF CFC have already trained 90 young people from the DC&SDC /WHST area in CR. This is significant as it aligns with our wider vision for DC&SDC as a child friendly city. As a result of this training we see potential for young people to become CR trainers and peer educators. We want to create a synergy with adults and young people are collaborating on creating an ecosystem where young people feel valued in promoting change and impacting on services, policy and strategy.

Development of EWTS

The Emotional Wellbeing Team in Schools (EWTS) is a regional development within the CAMHS and EA families where dedicated teams of practitioners who have experience of working with young people with the goal of achieving positive mental health within schools. Our mental health champion and departmental working group CAMHS lead is the service manager for the WHSCT area. The main focus of this team is to support schools in enabling positive wellbeing, strengthening resilience and self-esteem among pupils.

We heard what young people said at our discovery phase about the service landscape that supports mental health and wellbeing and we building on making this more connected through a child’s rights based approach (CRBA). Whilst this is a regional provision we feel that we have connected this important service into our UNICEF CFC structure which has been a significant achievement.

Key staff within the EWTS area have been trained in CRIP by UNICEF helping us to build and strengthen the connection and partnership with this service. Staff surveys as to the impact of the training have also been completed. These are key achievements within our Health badge helping to strengthen our young people’s narrative of what an effective mental wellbeing response should look like,

The surveys conducted by our EWTS with young people and staff will allow for the building a variety of mechanisms that allow young people to shape mental health support in schools such as peer led youth councils, pupil voice publications and wider training opportunities.

Through EWTS we were able to ensure that the youth voice was heard in the most recent mental Health Strategy Consultation process and the Young People’s Mental Health Guide. Already initial baseline surveys in schools have been conducted with over 10,000 young people taking part. Baseline surveys for teaching and non-teaching staff have also been conducted on how they feel they can be supported to better converse about mental wellbeing with pupils.

UNICEF have provided CR training to 90 young people who are involved with EWTS and this has helped to further embed a CRBA into this service which we will continue to build upon through our sustainability plan. We feel that this is a significant achievement from our initial starting point. Threading the voice of young people into our emotional and mental wellbeing provision is fundamental to what we want to achieve. Young people now are actively shaping the communication regarding support services within our locality and this is a significant milestone.

“

A key challenge is resource, we are hopeful that as a result of our achievements we can create conceptual approaches... with young people through resourcing dedicated participation and engagement staff to support this process, particularly relating to mental health and wellbeing.”

Development of FYI Publication

Another key achievement was the inclusion of specific information regarding young people’s services within our FYI monthly publication within the WHSCT.

There is a dedicated space so that wider community based organisations are informed of where to go to find support for the young people they are involved with.

Young people told us that they appreciated supports and a “listening ear” when they are facing issues in their lives. We feel that this help equip youth organisations to better support young people.

We have successfully promoted and continue to promote the resources developed by the CYPSP in relation to the range of supports available for young people. Our FYI publication is updated on a monthly basis and forwarded via a mailing list to a range of community, voluntary and statutory providers who provide services to children and young people. We also have a dedicated section on UNICEF CFC and children’s rights that recommend good practice and further reading and training opportunities.

There remains a challenge in finding the correct mechanism to promote the local drive increase local knowledge about the centrality of children’s rights in aspects of child centred work. Our FYI publication is a start and we intend to develop this across multiple platforms within our community network and this is reflected in our locality action plans.

KEY CHALLENGES

Regional versus Local

One of the key challenges for us was negotiating the variables of working to a local context within a wider regional provision. The CAMHS service, for example, is a regional provision, much of what is progressed is done on this basis. By adopting a best interest principle we have listened to young people and have shaped the local response.

Embedding the Narrative

We became increasingly aware as we progressed through our plan that this was a core part of what we were trying to achieve. Promoting a CRBA across the many different organisations and services would require persistence and patience.

Some of this was progressed more quickly in some environment than others. One of the key challenges was developing this CR narrative within senior structures. Within large, busy organisations priorities differ and there are a range of pressures. Within our partnership we have learned that this will require time, space and resource.

A key challenge is resource, however, we are hopeful that as a result of our key achievements to date we can create conceptual approaches to engagement and participation with young people through resourcing dedicated participation and engagement staff to support this process, particularly relating to mental health and wellbeing. One of the major successes of the process to date has been the learning gained by the respective partners from each other. Within Health we have seen the benefits that a full time participation and engagement coordinator has had within our partners at the Youth Justice Agency in creating significant change within the agency. By advocating for a similar approach within the WHSCT we feel that much can be gained and make a real impact in how young people will inform and shape services/practice/policy and strategy. We already have commitment from Heads of Service to progress this idea within senior decision makers within the Trust.

Reach and Spread

We are aware that there is a great amount still to achieve even though our achievement to date have been significant. We recognise, for example, that we need more people trained in a CRBA and we would have liked to be in a better position at this stage. We have, however, had positive conversations with UNICEF about developing a “train the trainer” provision which will allow us to strengthen this and make it more sustainable.

LESSONS LEARNED

We need to be persistent and continue to advocate across all aspects of our services to strengthen children’s rights. Whilst four years of this process has been valuable we have more to do.

Our strength lies in the relationships we have developed through our partnership. We have a nuanced environment in Northern Ireland which has proved very difficult to negotiate in the early days of our journey. However, as time progressed we found a strength in this and we have developed a mutual respect and understanding of our respective agencies and the challenges posed by trying to embed a CRBA. We have also come to understand that we can learn from each other and at times at different points on the continuum.

Adopting a consistency of approach across the lead agencies is important and must be central within our sustainability plan. Young people have told us that they need to be kept informed and that they are tired of inconsistent approaches to participation and engagement. We have adopted the Lundy Model of participation as a preferred option for engagement and will be progressing within our sustainability plan.

NEXT STEPS

Build on what we have Achieved

The area of emotional mental health and wellbeing remains significant for our young people, they have told us. We will continue to promote and embed a trauma informed approach within practice to assist with equipping staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to support this. We have already incorporated within our training in the WHSCT through our Learning and Development Team but also via more specific training for Social Work Teams through our “Back to Basics” training.

Strengthen Support for Young People

Young people told us about the need for greater accessibility to services, the need for more information, the need for a “listening ear” when required, a safe place to have. Our next steps will be to systematically progress these further, for example, our civic spaces have already been opened up for young people and our CAMHS service locally is actively promoting greater information and wider supports for young people. We can use local achievements to influence wider regional supports in adopting a CRBA ensuring more young people can benefit.

Peer Support

One of the interesting dynamics to emerge from the young people’s training by UNICEF within the local EWTS programme was the idea of progressing peer supports and building a wider community of young people vested in children’s rights by becoming more appraised and trained in what this means.

Health and Children’s Rights

We see health within its wider context and understand that in Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care are interconnected. Within Social Care, we have successfully place a child’s rights lens on our PPI structures with specific reference to children’s rights now explicit in the terms of reference of our wider participation forum. We have also linked with NICCY to progress CR training through their online modules and continue to highlight the importance of connecting into the mental health strategy supported by our EWTS. Our colleagues in EA provide opportunities for youth workers to connect better with A&E where required for young people and this is connected to wider forums such as our “Concern HUB” which provides a multi-agency response for young people at risk.

“

The area of emotional mental health and wellbeing remains significant for our young people... We will continue to embed a trauma informed approach within practice to assist with equipping staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to support this.”

EQUAL AND INCLUDED



During the Discovery phase children and young people highlighted various aspects within society where they felt they did not always feel equal and included.

Lived experiences relating to everyday occurrences, from knowing how to access services, understanding their rights and how to raise and take forward a complaint were highlighted.

Services, programmes, and play opportunities were highlighted as priority areas to become more equal and included as citizens, which influenced the badge outcomes. General feelings expressed outlined that children and young people do not know where to access relevant information, and too often its centred to adult audiences. We heard that all children and young people should be able to access child-friendly information about their rights and entitlements. It was voiced during the Discovery phase that all children and young people should feel valued and respected. Both positive and negative views about play parks were heard, and there was a desire to enjoy public spaces and meet other children freely. It was recognised that we needed to be more ambitious to ensure access to suitable play park provision, especially within rural areas and inclusive for children with disabilities.

Reasons included:

- Children and young people did not always feel valued, important or respected.
- Information relating to services, programmes and initiatives is not always centered towards children and young people.
- Cost is sometimes a barrier for children and young people being included and protected from discrimination.
- Not all areas have access to suitable play park provision, especially within rural areas.
- Play areas may not always be inclusive for children with disabilities.
- *“Respect for children - all decisions that are made about us are through adults. We don’t get a say in what happens to us. It shouldn’t be that way.”*
- *“Information is centred towards adults only... we rely on adults to tell us what is going on.”*
- *“Not enough equipment/ activities for older kids.”*

- *“We are lucky to have these. There is also plenty of open, green space that can be used as a safe place to think.”*
- *“No accessibility for people with disabilities, not enough opportunities for the disabled... not inclusive.”*
- *“No one involved us in how the play park would be made for my friends who are in wheelchairs.”*

BADGE OUTCOMES

- Policies, services, and programmes are free from discrimination. All children and young people feel important, respected, and valued.
- All Children and young people have access to play and leisure spaces. With a special focus on location, age and ability.
- There is a process for children and young people to report complaints. The complaints are taken seriously and acted upon.

KEY PARTNERS

- Youth Justice Agency (YJA)
- Education Authority (EA) Youth Service
- Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)
- Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

(including reference to key supporting evidence)

The following outlines an overview of the key strategies implemented and achievements to the initial outcomes which outlines that policies, services, and programmes are free from discrimination and all children and young people feel important, respected, and valued from across the partner organisation. The WHSCT’s learning and development team provides comprehensive training across the Directorate, driven by a dedicated Champion for the Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA). This was recognised early to help embed training and influence CR training, as a strategic approach to deliver key outcomes, resulting in training included as mandatory in key

social work training areas, including social work student induction, Level 2 & 3 Children’s safeguarding training, neglect, pre-birth risk assessment, and court skills. Social workers can access synchronized online training portals for additional resources including Social Work Support HUB and NICCY Child’s Rights Training. Trainers have been identified to participate in UNICEF’s Train the Trainer development, focusing on sustainability. Integrated training within childcare teams complements CR training, aiming to embed children’s rights in everyday practice. The “Back to Basics” training targets teams and intentionally connects specific CR training with key aspects of core social work training. The WHSCT acknowledges the need for systemic integration and continuous improvement. Organisation challenges of delivering and rolling the training programme across the key audiences has strengthened the work through a whole rights based approach being rooted, in particular the principles of dignity, non-discrimination and best interests being realised.

Enagh Youth Forum

During this Discovery Phase, Child Rights Mapping exercises were completed by Education Authority (EA) youth workers and the community and voluntary sector within environments where young people felt comfortable and safe. Feedback from one group involved, Enagh Youth Forum, focused on disability access and equipment in a local park, which they led a campaign to address inclusiveness and participation. At the Discovery Day event held in February 2020 young people directly identified specific items and areas of concern for the meeting agenda and discussions thereafter. The principles of participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability and life, survival and development came to the forefront and through external challenges in relation to securing funding the success of the voice of children and young people has been realised as approximately two years later, in June 2022 the disability equipment was installed within the play park, creating a more inclusive space for all. Throughout this period issues in relation to regular communication and updates to ensure best interests principle was key to the process involved.

The Executive Office District Councils Good Relations Programme, led by Council, implemented various initiatives for children, young people, and the wider community as part of delivering on the strategic action plan for the area. Child Rights are central to these, fostering a sense of value and respect among participants.

During the programme journey challenges were faced with establishing an Irish Language Community Network Forum for consistent engagement with CYP from Irish Medium Language Schools and also roll out of co-design approach across Council facilitated Irish Language events. Due to several factors this was revisited and a strength in reviewing and amending the action plans has resulted in a notable project recognised, the need for the Dual Language Child Rights Defender programme, which was piloted in Irish Medium (IM) primary schools. This received positive feedback for addressing respect and valued in addition to tackling discrimination, resulting in an inclusive programme which overcome challenges. NICCY and DCSDC collaborated to meet the specific learning needs of children in the IM sector through tailored interventions. This was the first time that a resource like this has been translated, addressing non-discrimination, dignity and best interests principles. This programme was piloted and to-date 50% of IM schools within the area have accessed this. Challenges in relation to time required to translate resources were overcome through partners working collectively to deliver this important priority. Alongside this pilot a video was developed in partnership with DSCDC, NICCY and CCEA in Irish and Ulster Scots, British and Irish sign language outlining Child Rights and the UNCRC, and is included on the CCEA resource website for wider dissemination locally and regionally, which partners recognised as important and significant and has emerged as a great strength in addressing the non-discrimination principle. Feedback from children and young people who participated was extremely positive and included the following comments, illustrating the awareness and understanding of a rights based approach.

“I didn’t know about my rights before so it’s good to hear about it.”

“Being able to learn about my rights in Irish has been useful.”

Learning has arisen from the pilot, relating to appropriate changes including offering an introductory session in advance and tailoring the content to be more age appropriate. Whilst piloted in DCSDC initially, these resources have been utilised by NICCY and plans in progress to roll out within Belfast.

Signs of Safety (SoS) Model

The WHSCT identified improvements and achieved significant progress in relation to supporting children and young people through the embedding of Signs of Safety and its practices to enable child-centred planning and inclusion of child rights in all systems including training, supervision records and assessment plans.

Children voice in practice is central to all aspects of work within each plan signed off by both child and social worker. This model is a relationship grounded safety organised approach to child protection practice which upholds child rights and children's voice in practice. The model is now adopted by every Health and Social Care Trust in NI and by TULSA in the Republic of Ireland. The Northern Ireland Staff Survey Report 2019 by Eileen Monroe and Mary Devine on the Signs of Safety reported that in the WHSCT 86% of staff and 100% of managers received training in the Signs of Safety Model. Over 80% of staff reported confidence in applying the model within their practice. One of the challenges faced is ensuring that children and young people are not connected into the multi-dimensional paradigms within family support and child protection processed. The SoS model strengthens connections across support networks and across respective agencies which interface with children and young people in need and the strength in relation to this approach is that there is an all-Ireland holistic approach in place.

Working with 10 year olds

In NI, the age of criminal responsibility is 10 years old, therefore as a justice agency, YJA works with 10-17 year olds. YJA recognised a challenge in that youth justice system by its design caters for adolescents aged 14+ years old, and in 2025 developed a workstream to support 10-13 year olds within the youth justice population, whilst not highly represented, do meet the justice system. YJA explored resources and developed information, resources and communication alongside approaches which better meet needs and are reflective of the age and stage of children aged 10-13 years old. A strength of this achievement is the work of the YJA Participation Officer creating age-appropriate resources to support a child of 10 years old to engage in a restorative justice process (Youth Conferencing) child rights are upheld and in particular best interests, dignity and non-discrimination.

YJA Strand 1 Funding

YJA provides funding to individual children and young people to support their disengagement with offending behaviour and re-engagement in their local community. Each child or young person will work 1-1 with their youth justice practitioner through their youth justice intervention. Children and young people have a voice and a say in what goes into their interventions and supports they might need. Despite challenges faced with disengagement and re-engagement, YJA established Strand 1 Funding provision to support young people access local services within their communities they might otherwise not have access

to, such as local council gyms, sports clubs, or training centres. The youth justice practitioner works closely with service providers to ensure the services are suitable, meet needs and ensure beneficiaries aren't subject to any additional barriers due to their backgrounds or previous behaviour. The strength of this approach is that Strand 1 funding enhances the social capital of children and young people, contributes to overall health and well-being, whilst supporting them to reengage in their communities and ensures that child rights are being upheld, especially participation, transparency and accountability, non-discrimination and best interests.

Throughout the journey partners have been instrumental in delivering key achievements within the second outcome of the Equal and Included badge, where all Children and young people have access to play and leisure spaces, with a special focus on location, age and ability. The strategies and approaches outlined as follows illustrate successes within this outcome.

Development of DCSDC Play Plan

At an early stage of the process, the importance of involving the voice of children and young people in developing initiatives and plans for the area became clear. Council's Parks team attended the Discovery Day and opted to take a different approach by committing to include the voice and views of children and young people in the development of the areas Play Plan. The development of the Play Plan outlines the target groups to address and is underpinned by the seven principles of a child rights-based approach and the UNCRC. The principle of participation was upheld during the consultation phase despite the impact of Covid-19 and associated restrictions and lockdown measures. PlayBoard completed targeted consultation for specific groups and existing data collected during the Discovery phase and from Enagh Youth Forum's campaign was utilised to inform the strategic direction and the development of the plan. The plan promotes inclusive accessible and safe play places ensuring all children regardless of background or ability can engage in recreational activities and emphasises community involvement, children and young people consultation and cross sectoral collaboration to prioritise children's voices, which fosters holistic child development and well-being reflecting a rights based approach to local policy making. Following a review by the UNICEF Youth Advisory Board an outcome was developed to improve the accessibility of play parks. In 2023, it became clear to us that we needed to review outcomes and make the language more child friendly.

We felt confident we were heading in the right direction following feedback received and since the launch of the Play Plan, with significant achievements in both urban and rural areas has been achieved with five play areas completed (Eglington, Claudy Park (partial upgrade), Ballynagard, Culmore and Creevagh Heights which is a Derry developer led play area, not included in the Play Plan. Design development is complete on seven locations: Rosstown Drive, Derry, Hazelbank, Derry, Hillview, Castlederg, Glebe, Clady, Ballycoleman, Strabane and Sperrin Heritage Centre. Furthermore design development is in progress for a further five sites in Prehen, Killaloo, Carnhill, Glenowen and Carlton Drive. Age, inclusive equipment and a skatepark were young people's key priorities at Discovery and have all been identified within the Play Plan and will continue to be addressed as resources are secured to deliver on actions and fulfil the aspirations and the rights of young people to play, outlining strengths of play parks for the future which have overcome challenges presented. Positive feedback from children and young people, their families, carers and local schools and community groups has been highlighted to the Parks team, recognising the improvements, differences to inclusive play and delivery of real changes in the lives of young people in the areas.

Pupil Voice – Knockavoe School (Special School)

Focusing on the voice of children and young people and upholding their rights, the voice of Knockavoe School pupils was included through work with ONSIDE in 2022 to explore inclusive play. The young people and school staff had worked with ONSIDE to design models, draw pictures, write poems and verbally give their ideas about what inclusive play looks like for them. These were presented in video format, vision boards, models, Makaton and song. Key themes identified by the young people were presented from a play park design perspective, with decision makers, Elected Members and Council Officers invited into their school to hear the pupils present their ideas. We chose to pivot this important piece of work and to further help create change, young people were invited to present to the Youth Participation Board in February 2023, where the presented key significant points and aspects which the governance body. This has been a prime demonstration of where all the principles of a child rights based approach have been upheld. Following the presentation to the Youth Participation Board, consideration was given to change course and Council are exploring the process and cost of installing communication boards as a standard requirement in all parks, accessible swings in all manned park locations and ziplines in parks as standard practice.

The Education Authority's 'Games with Aims' programme delivered at Lenamore Youth Centre empowers young volunteers to co-deliver inclusive play activities for children, especially those from marginalised backgrounds or with additional needs. This initiative fosters leadership, communication, and empathy among volunteers while promoting social, emotional, and cognitive development for children. By adapting games for children with disabilities, the programme increases access to structured play, promoting social, emotional and cognitive development, ensuring non-discrimination and equal access. It aligns with several UNCRC principles, including supporting children's rights to play (Article 31), participate (Article 12), and express themselves. The programme benefits children by providing a supportive environment and empowers volunteers, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

During our journey we recognised that improvements were needed in complaints processing for children and young people and that complaints need to be taken seriously and acted upon. Shantallow Youth Club held a focus group, involving 10 young people, and reviewed the Education Authority's Complaints Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy. Participants provided feedback on accessibility and effectiveness, contributing to new posters and documents to improve clarity and access. The anti-bullying policy now reflects a trauma-informed approach, emphasising safety, support, and understanding individual needs. This approach involved parents and guardians creating a collaborative environment. The focus group's activities and policy reviews uphold child rights principles of participation, non-discrimination, and the best interests of the child, ensuring policies are accessible, inclusive, and prioritise children's rights to safety, support, and participation. YJA identified the need to improve their complaints process to ensure that a tailored child version was valuable to ensure an easy to understand responsive complaints procedure to allow any concerns to be raised and addressed. Resulting in procedural changes to embed child rights, the complaints process information ensures that complaints are taken seriously. Child friendly complaints information is given to every child when they make first contact with the Agency and discussed. The new complaints information was created with input from children and young people across the YJA to ensure understanding. Changes in practice have been introduced as a result of the effective complaints policy, an example of this is a change to the child protection case conference report writing process which includes sharing the report with parent and carers and children where appropriate, before the meeting takes place.

These milestone steps within EA and YJA have been valuable in delivering outcomes within this badge and also incorporating a CRBA to complaints processes resulting in shared strength between partners to improve practices to address child rights and improve complaints procedures within key organisations, whilst sharing learning to other partners and stakeholders.

KEY CHALLENGES WITHIN EQUAL AND INCLUDED FOCUS

Slow progress in some areas coupled with funding limitations is challenging. Certain initiatives have been delayed due to funding limitations or cuts, which impacted on delivery and timescales, such as a skate park which is still identified as a key area where young people would feel safe and welcomed and Council are progressing with its future development.

Regional versus Local Barriers

Some services are regionally managed, making local implementation difficult and partners will continue to champion this.

Embedding a Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA)

Progress in delivery of awareness and training has been achieved, however ensuring CRBA is consistently applied in daily practice remains challenging in terms of continuous efforts to promote and embed, however this is achievable through continued engagement, training and awareness within and beyond partners.

Complaint Processes and Accessibility

Some young people remain unaware of how to raise concerns about services. Shared learning continues to influence partners and others processes and encourage these to be child friendly so their voice and concerns are heard and listened to. Ongoing awareness and understanding to promote awareness is required.

LESSONS LEARNED

Child Participation Improves Service Design

Engaging children from different backgrounds (e.g., Knockavoe students, Enagh Youth Forum, YJA Strand 1 Funding) led to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

Sustained Funding is Crucial

Programmes deliver many positive outcomes but sustained funding is essential to ensure continued success within financial constraints.

Embedding Child Rights Training across all Sectors Strengthens Impact

Making CR training mandatory has increased awareness but needs further integration into everyday practice.

Dual Language Child Rights Defender programme

Within the Dual Language Child Rights Defender programme, partners realised from the pilot that an introductory session in advance of programme delivery would benefit to ensure awareness and content is age appropriate.

NEXT STEPS

Expand the Complaints Process

Roll out child-friendly complaints process and raise awareness in various locations including youth clubs and leisure centres, also ensuring easy access to online complaints procedures within EA and DCSDC.

Enhance Play and Leisure Spaces

Install communication boards in parks for non-verbal children and continue rolling out accessible equipment where feasible. Secure funding for a skate park to provide safe recreational space for teenagers.

Strengthen Child Rights Training

Continue integrating Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA) into staff training. Ensure young people remain involved in the design and review of policies affecting them.

Improve Access to Play and Youth Facilities in Housing Developments

Work with Housing developers to ensure playgrounds and youth spaces are included in new developments

CONCLUSION

Accomplishments in making policies, services and programmes free from discrimination, complimented by achievements relating to complaints procedures and also ensuring that all play parks, leisure spaces, and public services are more inclusive for children and young people. However, challenges remain, particularly around funding and ensuring child-friendly services are embedded in all policies. The next phase will focus on sustaining these initiatives, strengthening complaint mechanisms, and continuing to involve and amplify young people's voices in decision-making and feedback mechanisms.

EDUCATION & LEARNING



The feedback from children and young people at discovery phase was both positive and negative about their education and their learning spaces.

Some of the groups consulted felt safe in school.

“Welcomed, warm and safe.”

“School is amazing in local area.”

Some teachers are very supportive, they see qualities and support young people to not only attain academically but to do other activities.

“Get involved in social activities, groups and sports sessions.”

Whereas others felt that their education experience wasn't so positive, there was too much focus on academia and not enough on soft skills.

“Focusing too much on GSCE / A-Level exams.”

Some felt that there was *“no way for students to voice their opinions”* especially on topics such as the *“structure of the education system and to examination bodies”*.

Whilst those with Special Educational Needs felt left behind in class because they can't keep up with the work. They felt there was not enough support in the post primary classrooms for people who struggle.

“Teachers don't understand, sometimes they expect too much...too much pressure”

“Poor training, bullying, lack of support”

BADGE OUTCOMES

“All children and young people receive education for the whole child. Preparing them for life, looking at issues of their time, giving time to play and offering activities in and outside of school.”

“Children and young people shape decisions made within their learning spaces to ensure their wellbeing.”

“Children and young people feel accepted, free to be themselves and express themselves in learning spaces which promote health and wellbeing.”

KEY PARTNERS

- EA Youth Service, Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and Circle of Courage

ACES AND THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE

Frameworks that support youth workers in adopting a child's rights-based approach by emphasising the importance of understanding and addressing the unique needs and challenges of young people, particularly those who have experienced trauma or adversity. ACES training helps youth workers recognise the impact of trauma on a child's development, encouraging a trauma-informed approach that aligns with children's rights to safety, protection, and proper care. By fostering empathy and understanding, youth workers can better support children, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect and that their rights are upheld.

The development of trauma informed spaces emanated from a desire to meet the needs of young people who were experiencing significant ACES in their lives and this training complemented the delivery of these. This, along with the review of the anti-bullying policy to adopt a trauma informed approach has ensured that the rights of young people who experience it are upheld and that they are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve but are also being supported by staff who are now trained to do so properly.

The delivery of the training is linked to providing an environment that allows every young person the right to feel safe and protected, with their rights to safety and proper care upheld. It also allows youth workers to be more self-aware about how they interact with young people and empower them to help children develop resilience and emotional well-being. The training was undertaken by youth workers who felt they needed to develop their skills around dealing with trauma and this has helped them to ensure that young people are actively participating in decisions that affect their lives and developing the skills to become more independent.

The Circle of Courage focuses on the strengths and potential of children, highlighting the principles of Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. These principles support a child's right to participate, develop their skills, and make decisions about their own lives. The framework encourages youth workers to create environments where children feel included, empowered, and valued, thus promoting their right to education, autonomy, and community involvement. Together, ACES and the Circle of Courage help youth workers adopt a holistic, child-centred approach that prioritises children's rights, fosters resilience, and supports their emotional and social development.

SCHOOL REFUSERS AND CRBA

The development of this work is an example of raising standards for all and closing the gap that exists for some young people who were not comfortable returning to school. The work began in October 2021 and lasted until June 2022 as the outworkings of Covid and a return to full-time education became troublesome for nine young people after the pandemic. The offer of our youth centre as a space for school refusers to come and learn, and re-engage with education, strongly aligns with a child rights-based approach by prioritising the needs, well-being, and participation of young people in education. It fosters the right to education, as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, by providing an alternative learning environment for those who may not feel safe or supported in a traditional school setting. This approach respects the individuality of each child, acknowledging that they may learn differently or face challenges that prevent them from thriving in conventional school environments, and thus offers them an opportunity to re-engage with learning in a way that suits their needs.

The provision of daytime services meant that we had to alternate our services with a number of youth workers rotating their sessions to ensure that we had the right level of support for the young people. The co-facilitation with teachers was important and allowed for the young people to re-establish relationships with school staff in a supportive environment. This is something that has led to the development of more joined up approaches in the school and young people are now experiencing a more holistic way of learning about issues that affect them.

By offering this alternative, our youth centre also upholds the child's right to protection from discrimination and marginalisation.

A lot of the young people felt excluded or stigmatised, and by providing a supportive, non-judgemental spaces, there was a reduction in feelings of isolation, increasing the chances of re-engagement with education on their own terms when they felt ready. This approach fostered a sense of belonging, dignity, and empowerment, where young people were treated as active participants in their learning journey encouraging autonomy, supporting children in regaining control over their own educational paths, ensuring that their rights to participate in decisions affecting their education are respected.

PODCAST

The YBOX programme in Derry and Strabane focuses on engaging young men with themes of masculinity, violence, relationships, and emotional health and wellbeing. The initiative employs group discussions, community mapping, practical activities, and podcast development to address these themes. The programme was introduced in response to concerns about anti-community behaviour by a group of young men in the Hazelbank area, which was causing trouble at a local shop.

To tackle this issue, the programme involved engaging with the parents of the identified young men and delivering the YBOX programme along with one-to-one mentoring by senior youth workers. The intervention led to increased awareness among the young men about the issues affecting them, a better understanding of the negative pressures from social media and improved knowledge of healthy relationships and equality.

The programme also adopted a child rights-based approach, addressing issues within the formal school environment and using digital technology to enhance learning. It emphasised participation by involving the young men in the co-design and co-delivery of the podcast, recognising them as equal partners. The initiative promoted non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability, and linked the content to the young men's everyday experiences to promote their wellbeing. Lessons learned highlighted the importance of a supportive community ecosystem and the need to explore healthier choices for young men in future sessions.

ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

The facilitation of Environment and Climate programmes is a prerequisite for youth workers in the Education Authority Youth Service as it is a key area of action in our action plans. The delivery of these programmes is carried out through consultations with young people who determine how they are rolled out with a focus on addressing issues highlighted by them. Some programmes that have been delivered have seen the development of green spaces, whilst other programmes have focused on recycling initiatives and reusing clothes or up-cycling them. For the story of change I have highlighted the programme in Lenamore Youth Club as it incorporated Emotional Health and Wellbeing into environmental work.

The FLARE youth worker co-delivered a personal and social development programme at Lenamore Youth Centre, focusing on horticulture and climate, underpinned by an emotional health and wellbeing framework. The programme involved up to 10 young people aged 9-11 years old and ran for six months from March to August. The young participants experienced an experiential learning environment, understanding the real-time impact of weather on their goals to grow vegetables, flowers, and berries. This flexible approach allowed them to step back when frustrated and return when progress was visible, fostering empowerment and patience.

The programme significantly transformed an outside area that was previously collecting rubbish into a flourishing green space with flowers, vegetables, hanging baskets, and edible berries. This change instilled a greater sense of belonging and ownership among the young people. Adult stakeholders, including staff members and senior youth club members, supported the group throughout the programme. At Lenafest, an annual youth festival, the young people shared their achievements with the Mayor of Derry, Youth Service Senior management, and the local community, showcasing their success and resilience.

Educational outcomes of the programme included learning about the growing cycle and the impact of climate and environment on this process. The young people felt listened to and valued for their contributions, with positive feedback from programme evaluations, parents, and attendees at Lenafest. The programme's sustainability is supported by the hope that staff will renew the space in the coming year, and the FLARE worker plans to offer a similar programme at another youth centre. Key lessons learned highlighted the importance of co-delivery, the hard work required in an unpredictable environment, and the young participants' curiosity and interest in learning about horticulture and climate impacts.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The RAG Participation Event focused on addressing the needs of children and young people affected by the digital divide. The event was conducted via Zoom and satellite venues across Northern Locality, including Derry & Strabane, Causeway Coast & Glens, Mid & East Antrim, and Antrim & Newtownabbey, to ensure maximum participation. It engaged 116 key stakeholders from statutory and voluntary youth sectors, who discussed the impact of the digital divide and developed practical recommendations. Key priorities included improving access to online services and devices to enable young people to participate in statutory education.

The event methodology involved interactive workshops facilitated via Zoom, with live feedback and keynote presentations to stimulate discussion. Participants identified various aspects of the digital divide, such as affordability, connectivity, skills and support, and safe online environments. Issues highlighted included the high cost of devices, poor internet connectivity in rural areas, lack of skills to use online systems, and the need for better online safety education. Feedback from these workshops was collated and presented to all participants, leading to the development of actionable recommendations.

Recommendations for the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) included setting up a small grants scheme to provide devices for young people, ensuring WiFi access in all youth centres, and exploring subsidised home internet access. Local Youth Services as a result provided strong WiFi within centres, creating equipment banks and virtual links with other youth services. Youth groups were encouraged to raise awareness of the digital divide, provide access to digital workstations, and engage in campaigns to highlight the issue to local politicians.

The outcomes of the event emphasised the need for continued focus on the digital divide in future planning and service delivery. The Education Authority's Information and Planning team was tasked with considering the key themes identified for the Regional Assessment of Need and incorporating them into upcoming three-year plans and annual action plans. Local Advisory Groups were also urged to take account of the recommended youth service responses for future area planning and service delivery.



EA OUTDOOR LEARNING SERVICE

The Education Authority Outdoor Learning Service provides a range of outdoor learning opportunities for children and young people, integrated into both school curriculums and youth work programmes. These services aim to enhance educational experiences through engagement with the natural environment. The EA also offers a peripatetic instructor service to schools and youth groups, providing expertise in outdoor learning activities.

Since April 2023 a child rights-based approach has been embedded through the delivery of outdoor learning experiences for young people. In practice, this approach involves creating inclusive environments where young people can express themselves freely, participate in decision-making processes, and access opportunities for personal and social development. It emphasises the importance of listening to young people, respecting their views, and ensuring their participation is meaningful and not tokenistic. Youth work programmes designed with a rights-based framework aim to empower young people, promote their wellbeing, and address issues such as discrimination and inequality.

By integrating outdoor learning with a child rights-based approach, the EA OLS team ensures that youth work not only enhances educational outcomes but also supports the holistic development of young people, fostering their growth as confident, capable and resilient individuals. The development has also seen the co-design of programmes integrating the views of young people into a programme of activities that meet the needs of young people and appeal to their interests. This has increased participation levels and has seen young people become more enthusiastic about engaging with our Outdoor Learning Service.

FLARE SERVICES

The FLARE service within the Education Authority Youth Service focuses on providing youth work support to enhance the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people. FLARE youth workers deliver programmes that address personal and social development through various activities, including horticulture and climate education. These programmes are designed to create experiential learning environments where young people can engage with nature, develop new skills, and improve their emotional resilience.



“A range of outdoor learning opportunities for children and young people, integrated into both school curriculums and youth work programmes...These services aim to enhance educational experiences through engagement with the natural environment.”

REACH SERVICES

The REACH programme is part of the EA's initiative to support the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils within schools. It offers a range of youth work methodologies, including workshops, group work, and one-to-one support. REACH aims to develop positive emotional health, increase readiness for learning, and build resilience among pupils. The programme is available to all schools in Northern Ireland and includes support for teachers, parents, and carers to ensure a holistic approach to wellbeing.

The CONNECT Hospital Programme, led by the Education Authority Youth Service aims to reduce violence and exploitation among vulnerable young people aged 15-25 by stationing youth workers in Emergency Departments (EDs) to engage during critical 'teachable moments'. This initiative has supported over 1,400 young people in the last year, demonstrating the effectiveness of co-locating youth workers with medical teams to address complex needs. The programme embeds a child rights-based approach, grounded in the principles of the UNCRC, ensuring dignity, participation, non-discrimination, transparency, accountability, and holistic development.

EAT WELL LIVE WELL

The Eat Well Live Well project, implemented by the Education Authority (EA) Youth Service, adopted a Child Rights-Based Approach to support young people in improving their physical and mental well-being, particularly in the wake of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people expressed a desire to stay connected with their youth workers and this programme was an excellent vehicle to facilitate this whilst also providing nutritious food on a weekly basis. The programme was to ensure that connections were maintained during lockdown and ran from April 2020 until October 2020 and addressed issues such as lack of food and mental health concerns, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The Child Rights-Based Approach ensures that the project is rooted in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This approach guarantees that young people's rights are at the centre of the project, empowering them to actively stay connected. The young people had a say in the type of food that they wanted to receive and were also able to request activity based sessions that were facilitated online. The project prioritised their right to information, services, and support, especially in challenging times. Through weekly check-ins young people were encouraged to build confidence, enhance their well-being, and understand their role in keeping them and their families safe during worrying times.

CRED

The Education Authority (EA) Youth Service in Northern Ireland embeds Community Relations, Equity, and Diversity (CRED) into its youth work practice to promote mutual understanding, respect for diversity, and community cohesion. This approach is guided by the Department of Education's CRED policy, which aims to educate young people to develop self-respect and respect for others and to equip them with the skills needed to engage positively with diversity. The development of inclusive spaces allows for the creation of environments where young people feel safe and valued and have a voice in how services are delivered.

The embedding of CRED in youth work practice has seen young people from all backgrounds and ethnicities being welcomed into our projects. The development of a newcomer project in Derry since November 2024 has seen a space created for young people to feel part of the local community and engage in programmes that promote a sense of belonging and encourages integration. With the creation of inclusive and supportive environments that foster mutual understanding and respect among young people, this approach not only enhances community cohesion but also equips young people with the skills needed to navigate and contribute positively to a diverse society.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

As a recognised Child Friendly Community, Derry City and Strabane District is committed to a future where children's rights are central to every aspect of civic life.

We aim to establish a stable rights-respecting culture in which children and young people are recognised as active citizens and equal stakeholders. Through sustained workforce development, inclusive governance, rights-based tools, and a commitment to meaningful participation, we have prioritised key areas that contribute to change from a systemic level, whilst embedding children's voices in local decision-making. We believe this can be sustained in the long term.

To achieve this, we are pursuing a long-term, system-wide transformation underpinned by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Through dedicated leadership, cross-agency collaboration, and active participation from children and young people themselves, we aim to embed a culture of equity, inclusion, and accountability. The plan has been shaped by our work with children and young people throughout the UNICEF CFC journey, as well as through our learning, challenges and experiences from our multi-agency action plan. We have listened to children and young people as our valued partners and agents of change, reflecting the areas they feel can be built on and the areas that need more attention to ensure that Derry City and Strabane District remains a Child Friendly Community.

PRIORITY AREAS

Our approach centres around five interconnected priority areas:

1. Workforce Development

There is already good knowledge and awareness of child rights across the City and District, key staff, Elected Members and partner organisations have received child rights training. There is a good understanding of child rights in practice among Council, WHSCT, EA Youth Service and Youth Justice Agency colleagues, who have begun to apply the approach through service planning and delivery. However, we feel that the capacity to facilitate the training within our own agencies will cultivate a community of professionals who not only understand child rights but actively implement them in daily practice. Children and young people will also be included in the training delivery, particularly those groups whose rights are at risk and this seldom heard, increasing their knowledge of their rights. From e-learning modules to applied training and a 'train the trainer' model, our strategy is building capacity at every level. By Year 3, we envision an environment where child rights knowledge is widespread and deeply embedded in planning, service delivery, and leadership. Success will be measured by increased training uptake, increased knowledge of rights in children and young people, staff confidence, and observable shifts in practice.

2. Participation Mapping

This has been delayed and was not achieved as part of the action plan. It is seen as a key element in identifying safe, welcoming spaces for young people, but also establishing an agreed approach to having the voice of children and young people heard at already established local community governance structures. Children and young people will be empowered to explore and express how their rights are upheld in their communities, with particular focus on those seldom heard.

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The plan has been shaped by our work with children and young people throughout ... as well as through our learning, challenges and experiences from our multi-agency action plan. ”



Through creative workshops and participatory mapping across all eight Local Community Growth Partnership areas, we're ensuring that their insights shape local development. This work includes creating child-friendly maps and co-designing governance frameworks that sustain youth voice. By Year 3, participation will be systemic and self-sustaining, with clear impact on decision-making, with children and young people in a leadership role.

3. Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

Embedding CRIA in policy and procedures across key Statutory and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations was not fully achieved as part of the action plan and perhaps may have been too ambitious because it is currently not a legislative requirement. However, we feel that ensuring child rights are considered in every policy and decision is essential. We plan on rolling out CRIA training across sectors and developing a locally tailored CRIA framework. These assessments will become a standard part of policy review and service change processes. By the end of year 3, we aim for a local/regional system where CRIA is routinely practiced and contributes to child-informed governance.

4. Child Friendly Communication

We feel that this area is where Derry City and Strabane District can develop most and progress further, whilst there has been significant improvements, some agencies have made great strides and other agencies are benefiting from the sharing of practice in this area. Through our consultations and work with children and young people it is clear that communication is key to empowerment. We're developing inclusive, accessible communication standards co-designed with young people. From awareness-raising animations to multilingual materials and child-friendly reports, every interaction aims to be engaging and understandable. By embedding co-design practices with children and young people as leaders, and training staff, child friendly communication will become a norm—not an exception—across all services.

5. Lundy Model of Participation

Although the Lundy Model is the preferred model for Participative Practice across all lead agencies and is embedded in participation toolkits and strategies, expansion is needed across all key agencies, so that it can be integrated into decision making processes. The Lundy Model, rooted in UNCRC Article 12, is our compass for meaningful participation, used with children and young people as partners, supporting them to lead, shape, and evaluate participation in line with the UNCRC. We plan to embed it across all agencies through training, policy alignment, and practical tools. Children will be co-evaluators of projects, their feedback is looped into planning, and their voices are central to strategic decisions. By Year 3, participatory practice will be embedded in governance structures, and the model will be consistently used to shape and evaluate services.

SUSTAINING A CHILD FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

We are very aware that this plan needs to be a collaborative approach involving practitioners and leaders across council, youth justice, health, and education. Oversight will be provided through governance structures that ensure transparency, quality assurance, and ongoing evaluation. However, the main stakeholders and the key to the plan's success are the children and young people, not only as participants, but as leaders.

As we move toward and beyond our July 2025 commencement date, we will continue to measure progress through training audits, participation and service evaluations and child-led feedback mechanisms. Our commitment is clear, to ensure that Derry City and Strabane District is not only child friendly today—but for our future generations to come.

THANK YOU

To all the children and young people who bravely shared their voices, visions, and experiences—thank you. You are the heart of this journey, and your insights have shaped a more inclusive and rights-respecting district for generations to come.

To our partners, community leaders, families, and dedicated staff across agencies—thank you for your commitment, collaboration, and belief in a better future for every child in the Derry City and Strabane District.

This story of change is not the end—it is a promise to continue walking together, led by the voices of our youngest citizens, toward a sustained child-friendly city community.



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin
Derry Cittie & Strabane
Districk Council