

Child Friendly Cardiff Strategy

2018

Foreword

As a capital city Cardiff aspires to be a 'child friendly city' where all children and young people have an equal chance to thrive and reach their potential.

Many children and young people in Cardiff lead safe, happy, healthy lives and feel listened to and respected by the adults around them. However, despite significant effort by organisations working with children and young people, there remain further challenges to make rights a reality for all.

We recognise the importance of embedding a child's rights approach across public services to deliver lasting solutions to complex problems. Removing the barriers that prevent some of our young people from making a successful transition into the world of work, delivering the best outcomes for children in our care and helping young people to live independently must be a priority for all.

This will require partners to work together to make a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children and young people are at the heart of public policies, programmes and decisions.

Introduction

Cardiff is the first city in Wales to participate in Unicef UK's national "Child Friendly Cities" initiative. Our ambition is for Cardiff to be recognised as a Child Friendly City: a city with children and young people at its heart, where the rights of children and young people are respected by all, a great place to grow up.

Cardiff is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. We will work together to create a city where all children and young people can:

- Understand their rights and influence decisions that affect their lives.
- Experience equality of opportunity in all that they do.
- Be safe, respected and free from any form of discrimination or harm.
- Experience and share kindness in their everyday lives.
- Move around independently and safely and are able to enjoy the freedoms of the city.
- Have a great start in life and grow up healthy and cared for.
- Experience a high quality and inclusive education that prepares them for life.
- Easily access any information, advice or support that they may need, when they need it.
- Share in the success of the city in all its forms, whatever their background.

Background

The Unicef Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched in 1996 to respond to the challenge of realising the rights of children and young people in an increasingly urbanised world. It works by bringing together local people, public services and Unicef to create safe, inclusive and child-responsive cities and communities.

Local governments play an important role in enabling the most vulnerable groups living in their communities, including children and young people to have their voice heard and participate in local decision making.

Cardiff Council and its partners have partnered with Unicef UK to embed a child rights approach in the planning and delivery of public services for children and young people. The aim is to make children's rights integral to policy and practice which transform services, leading to improved outcomes in all aspects of children and young people's lives.

Public and Third sector services play a vital role in the lives of children and young people working to safeguard and nurture their wellbeing. Despite this, services are seldom designed around the experiences and voices of children and young people, in particular those in vulnerable situations. This can leave them in danger of becoming further marginalised.

By approaching children and young people as passive recipients defined by a set of needs rather than capable and resourceful individuals entitled to legally enshrined rights, services risk systematically excluding the group they aim to support.

Wales has placed children's rights at the heart of policy and legislation including the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. All place responsibility on public services to contribute toward making children's rights a reality.

A vision for a Child Friendly Cardiff

Cardiff is a great place to grow up.

- A city with children and young people at its heart, where the voices, needs and rights of all children and young people are respected.
- A city where all children and young people, regardless of belief, ethnicity, background or wealth are safe, healthy, happy and able to share in the city's success.

Principles

A Children's Rights Approach ensures that children and young people have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions about their lives.

We are committed to a Children's Rights Approach in Cardiff grounded in Unicef's seven principles:

Dignity - All children and young people are valued and respected citizens, treated with care and respect in all circumstances.

All rights are equal - All children and young people enjoy all of their rights all of the time because all rights are equally important.

Best interests - The best interests of children and young people are a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect them.

Participation - All children and young people are supported to freely express their opinion; they are both heard and listened to.

Non-discrimination - Every child and young person has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and none have to endure poor life chances because of discrimination.

Transparency and accountability - Strong relationships and meaningful and open dialogue between children and young people, professionals and local politicians make rights a reality.

Life, survival and development - Children and young people are supported by adults to enjoy opportunities, to be safe, healthy, grow and flourish.

UNICEF Definitions at Appendix 1

Context

Cardiff Today

Cardiff is the 10th largest city in the UK with a young, diverse and growing population. It has a long history of inward migration, with the Industrial Revolution providing a catalyst for significant population growth. Today the city continues to grow rapidly, attracting people to work and study. 74,155 children and young people live in Cardiff (2017) and account for a fifth of the total population (20.4%). Net migration into Cardiff is the highest in Wales and is proportionally comparable with other British core cities. A third of the school population now comes from a non-White British background.

Cardiff's total population is projected to grow by over 20% in the next 20 years – an increase of 73,000 people. Within this, the number of children and young people in Cardiff is projected to increase by 25%, an increase of 20,159.

Some wards of Cardiff have a particularly young population, with almost 30% of residents aged 17 or under. These tend to be some of the more deprived wards of the city.

Cardiff is already a good place for many of its children and young people to grow up. In particular, young people identify the city's good health services, its low crime, strong inclusive communities and the access to green spaces, sports, leisure and culture as some of the great things about living in the capital city of Wales.

Cardiff has a vibrant arts and culture scene including museums, live music venues and theatres as you would expect of a capital city.

Cardiff's city centre has a spectrum of retail and leisure facilities alongside outstanding green open spaces and waterways. There are leisure centres, community centres and libraries across the city and sports teams for all ages and interests, from football and rugby to athletics and water sports.

Cardiff is home to three universities, attracting students from across the world. Performance in the city's school system has advanced significantly over recent years as GCSE outcomes continue to improve with 60.2% of pupils in Cardiff in 2017/18 achieving at least five A* to C grades, including mathematics and English or Welsh.

However, not all children in Cardiff are able to participate in the life of the city. Although Cardiff is the commercial heart of the Welsh economy and contains many of the nation's most prosperous communities, the gap between rich and poor is too wide, and it is growing. Over a quarter of dependent children and young people under the age of 20 in the city are living in poverty, ranging from just 5.2% in Rhiwbina to almost half of those in Ely. In a Welsh context, Cardiff has one of the highest proportions of dependent children living in low income families.

If the 'Southern Arc' of Cardiff, from Ely in the West to Trowbridge in the East, was considered a single local authority area it would be the most deprived in Wales by a considerable margin. Poverty casts a long shadow over too many lives, particularly those of our young people. As is the case across Wales and in cities across Britain, there is a significant gap in educational outcomes between pupils from low-income families and those from more affluent backgrounds in Cardiff.

Children and young people living in the most deprived communities are also more likely to suffer poorer health outcomes today and demonstrate symptoms which point towards poor health in the future, such as obesity, low immunisation rates or poor dental health. They are also more likely to have feelings of isolation, be drawn into anti-social behaviour, offending or suffer the effects of crime. In some wards, nearly four times as many children have poor health compared to the least deprived areas of the city.

Children and young people from low-income families are also more likely to be at risk. The rates of children considered to be at risk, being placed on the child protection

register, or taken into care, are significantly higher in the city's most deprived communities.

Across Cardiff, approximately 1,745 children and young people receive care and support from Children's Services (2.4% of Cardiff's under 18 population). In June 2018 there were 866 looked after children and 249 children on the child protection register, who were not looked after.

Data indicates that economic disadvantage can have an impact on the educational attainment of children and young people. In 2017, at foundation phase, the gap in attainment between those entitled to free school meals and those who are not was 13.8%. This gap widens through the education system, with the attainment gap increasing to 32.8% at Key Stage 4 in 2017.

What do children and young people say?

We know that children's rights play an important role in protecting some of the most vulnerable in society but for rights to have a positive impact, people have to gain an understanding of the concept of human rights.

Less than half of children and young people in Cardiff stated that they know about their rights. Family members and professionals in their lives are reported to lack knowledge and confidence around the subject of children's rights.

Reducing the gap in health and education outcomes can at times require additional support. Cardiff has a wide range of services well placed to work with children, young people and their families but a key message has been that gaining access to the right service, at the right time can be a challenge. This is further frustrated by the lack of opportunities to be meaningfully involved in shaping and designing those services as well as limited involvement in wider decision making across the city.

Children and young people have told us that the effects of modern day life mean they experience a wide range of issues around their emotional health and wellbeing. They have asked for improvements in prevention, early intervention and education on healthy lifestyles to address these issues. We know that there are increasing numbers of Looked After Children and those educated outside of main stream school which puts further pressure on services.

Environment and relationships have a profound impact on families. Children and young people report that there are too many cars and that they can often feel unsafe when cycling, scooting or playing in communities. They would like to see improvements in public transport and be able to freely move around the city.

Developing caring, positive relationships is important with many children stating they would like to spend more time with family and friends and that people should be kinder to each other as this makes them feel safe and happy.

Cardiff Tomorrow: A Child Friendly Capital

Actions taken today will be felt for generations to come. It is therefore vital that children and young people are informed, given a voice and can help influence decisions about where they live, the services that they receive and the future development of the city.

This strategy outlines the approach that we will take to build a Child Friendly Cardiff. It sets out a shared vision for the city and identifies a clear set of goals and actions that the Council and its partners will deliver together. By focusing on these five key goals, we aim to make a lasting difference in the areas that are a priority for children and young people. There will be a particular focus upon our most vulnerable children and young people, to ensure that we make rights a reality for all.

Goals

The five key goals of the Cardiff Child Friendly City Initiative are:

1. **Every child and young person is valued, respected and treated fairly.**

Leaders of public services in Cardiff champion the rights and priorities of children and young people and cooperate in endeavouring to ensure equality and fairness for all.

We ensure that all children and young people are made aware of their rights. A systematic approach to child rights training and awareness raising is adopted using the UNCRC framework, with a particular focus placed on those working in our education, health and social care services.

Childhood is seen as important and is celebrated across the city.

Children and young people are provided with accessible information and are able to take part in decisions that affect them.

2. **Every child and young person has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into account.**

Children and young people have ready access to meaningful information and resources to enable them to take full advantage of their rights. Participation of children and young people in key policy and decision making processes is embedded within the working practices of the local authority and partner organisations.

Children and young people are instrumental in the design of the city and adult decision makers respect children and young people's knowledge, understanding and skills to meet their own needs now and in the future. Authorities and individuals become more accountable to children and young people for decisions, and for outcomes that affect their daily lives.

3. **All children and young people grow up in a safe and supportive home.**

Children and young people grow, develop and achieve in safe environments, with supportive and stable homes. Vulnerable children and families are identified early and services collaborate to provide appropriate and timely support when required.

Where a child or young person is at risk, the council where necessary, will act as the corporate parents. Working with partners it will strive to ensure the same positive outcomes and childhood experiences for children in care that every good parent or carer would want for their own children.

4. **All children and young people access high quality education that promotes their rights and helps them develop their skills and talents to the full.**

Every child and young person is able to claim their right to an education, and has equal opportunity to make the most of their talents and develop to their fullest potential.

All schools respect children's rights and ensure that these rights are at the core of a child's experience of education.

All children and young people are treated with dignity and respect and no child or young person has to endure poor life chances because of bullying or discrimination.

5. **Children and young people have good physical, mental and emotional health and know how to stay healthy**

All children and young people are able to make informed healthy choices at school and within their communities. Public sector services support them to maintain their wellbeing through the provision of safe and accessible infrastructure, supportive services, activities and relevant information.

Children, young people and partner organisations work together to ensure access to safe outdoor environments for formal and informal play, to streets which prioritise walking, cycling and scooting, and opportunities for active travel to school across the city.

Emotional and mental wellbeing is of paramount importance and all children and young people, when required, have access to appropriate support, care and treatment at the right time, in the right place, from the right service. Emotional and mental wellbeing support in school-based and other key settings is easily accessible and reliable.

Goal 1.**Every child and young person is valued, respected and treated fairly.**

Leaders of public services in Cardiff champion the rights and priorities of children and young people and cooperate in endeavouring to ensure equality and fairness for all.

We ensure that all children and young people are made aware of their rights. A systematic approach to child rights training and awareness raising is adopted using the UNCRC framework, with a particular focus placed on those working in our education, health and social care services.

Childhood is seen as important and is celebrated across the city. Children and young people are provided with accessible information and are able to take part in decisions that affect them.

Why this matters

Too many children and young people in Cardiff are still living in poverty and are not receiving the services or resources they need to be healthy, well-educated and to develop to the best of their abilities. These individuals are not receiving the human rights that they are entitled to under the UNCRC. Many children and young people do not have the opportunities to develop their talents and potential, and face discrimination because of their background, or sometimes simply because they are deemed to be 'too young'. Too often, there is an intolerance of children and young people with negative stereotypes in local media and a risk of negative attitudes towards individuals that may be experiencing challenges in life through no fault of their own.

Adopting a child's rights approach will mean that organisations will prioritise rights in their work with children, young people and families to improve young lives.

A fundamental cultural shift is needed to develop a workforce knowledgeable and confident in applying a child rights approach when both designing and delivering services.

Plan of action***To achieve success Cardiff will:***

- Develop our workforce through the delivery of an appropriate level of child rights training to all staff, managers and senior leaders in our respective organisations.
- Design and implement appropriate arrangements across our public services to enable children's rights, as defined in the UNCRC, to be embedded into policies, functions and ways of working. For example, Rights Charters or Schemes.

- Schedule opportunities to celebrate the importance of childhood and promote the importance children's rights through a wide range of communication platforms, local media and events.
- Provide children and young people with easily accessible information, across various channels, to enable them to make informed decisions and be active in city life.
- Carry out initial and on-going evaluation of levels of knowledge and understanding of children's rights amongst staff at all levels.
- Design and apply a unified approach to assessing the impact of policy and strategy decisions on children's rights.

Success measures

- Permanent mechanisms are established to enable children and young people to measurably influence decision-making
- Regular events to bring together decision-makers, elected members and children and young people are established
- The impact of decisions on children and young people is systematically assessed and evaluated
- The vision of childhood is promoted and progress and impact of CFC programme is regularly reported through a Child Rights Report
- Children, young people and wider community have access to platforms and media channels that share information about CFC programme and children's rights in a child friendly way
- Effective children's rights training is delivered to the right people

GOAL 2

Every child and young person has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into account

Children and young people have ready access to meaningful information and resources to enable them to take full advantage of their rights. Participation of children and young people in key policy and decision making processes is embedded within the working practices of the local authority and partner organisations.

Children and young people are instrumental in the design of the city and adult decision makers respect children and young people's knowledge, understanding and skills to meet their own needs now and in the future. Authorities and individuals become more accountable to children and young people for decisions, and for outcomes that affect their daily lives.

Why this matters

Too often, children and young people do not know they have rights which means they cannot take advantage of the rights they possess. Despite being experts on their own lives, children and young people are often excluded from decisions that affect them. They are often powerless to hold to account decision-makers, or those responsible for services.

Children's rights should be at the core of planning and service delivery and integrated into every aspect of decision-making. At its most basic this requires acknowledgement of the UNCRC as a framework for services impacting on children and young people. Children's rights should guide decisions and actions which have a substantial impact on children and young people's daily lives in areas such as education, health or social care, but also in other areas such as planning, transport and the environment.

Plan of action

To achieve success Cardiff will:

- Develop the skills and capacity of children and young people to ensure they are able to meaningfully participate in strategic developments which affect their lives.
- Routinely provide opportunities for children and young people to actively participate in the design of services and the evaluation of their impact.
- Ensure that children and young people are empowered to hold organisations to account for the implementation of a child rights approach to service design and delivery.

Success measures

- Formal participation structures are adequately resourced including staff that are trained and experienced.
- Children and young people receive training and support to enable them to design and shape services.
- Children and young people are encouraged and supported to take part in meaningful opportunities to evaluate services and influence decision making.
- Ongoing training and support is in place for staff on how to sustain meaningful participation of children and young people.

Goal 3.

All children and young people grow up in a safe and supportive home.

Children and young people grow, develop and achieve in safe environments, with supportive and stable homes. Vulnerable children and families are identified early and services collaborate to provide appropriate and timely support when required.

Where a child or young person is at risk, the council where necessary, will act as the corporate parents. Working with partners it will strive to ensure the same positive outcomes and childhood experiences for children in care that every good parent or carer would want for their own children.

Why this matters

The terms 'family' and 'belonging' are experienced in many different ways but what they have in common is people you love and who love you, the people you feel safe around, and the people you can count on to be there when you need them.

Families have the most significant influence on children and young people and on their future lives. Outcomes for children and young people are best when they are supported to grow and achieve within their own families.

However there are occasions when many families will need support of some kind. Sometimes personal, family or economic changes can place the wellbeing of families and children under pressure. Most families are vulnerable at some stage, and some vulnerabilities can have long-term effects. It is particularly important for families and individuals to feel a sense of belonging to the place that they live including those who have recently arrived to the city from another country.

Local experience and national research highlights that effective parenting support improves parenting capacity. Whilst disadvantage is not a block to good parenting, other difficulties such as low levels of literacy and numeracy, and low confidence are obstacles.

Identifying problems at an early stage, and delivering services to prevent these escalating is key. Early Intervention for families is not just about support for those with very young children, it also requires effective and timely intervention for families with children of all ages to prevent issues escalating.

When a child comes into care, the council becomes the Corporate Parent – the 'family'. The term 'Corporate Parent' means the collective responsibility of the Council, elected members, employees, and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after.

Children and young people experiencing or leaving care, often have many complex needs and risk facing disjointed service provision which can exacerbate the many challenges they face. The support these children and young people need cannot be delivered by any single profession or agency. It will have the most impact if designed and offered in the best interests of children, responding to their personal views and opinions.

Plan of action

To achieve success Cardiff will:

- Deliver a new Family Help and Support model, which fully embraces a child's rights approach.
- Improve the wellbeing of children and young people who are, or have been in care by providing:
 - Robust channels and opportunities for their voices to be heard and listened to on issues that are important to them.
 - High quality foster carers that offer a safe and loving home.
 - High quality housing options that meet individual needs.
 - Opportunities to develop skills for life, in readiness for independence and future employment.
 - A wide range of affordable citywide activities that enable them to have fun, meet friends and try new experiences.

Success measures

- Services are aligned and able to identify families in need of support at an earlier stage.
- Families are able to access services quickly and effectively, that enable them to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes.
- Children and young people in our care have the best possible life experiences, are safe, happy and healthy, and achieve their full potential at school and in their future lives.
- Our corporate parenting strategy is regularly reviewed in relation to the Unicef principles of a child rights approach (appendix i).

GOAL 4

All children and young people access high quality education that promotes their rights and helps them develop their skills and talents to the full.

Every child and young person is able to claim their right to an education, and has equal opportunity to make the most of their talents and develop to their fullest potential.

All schools respect children's rights and ensure that these rights are at the core of a child's experience of education.

All children and young people are treated with dignity and respect and no child or young person has to endure poor life chances because of bullying or discrimination.

Why this matters

Education is a key social and cultural right and plays an essential role in overcoming poverty and disadvantage.

Education is consistently ranked as the top priority for the city's children and young people. The experience of education is one of the most important factors that impacts on their life chances and future wellbeing.

Whilst education standards in Cardiff are continuing to improve in all age groups, not all children and young people are experiencing improved outcomes. In particular those pupils completing statutory education outside mainstream provision and children looked after, are often unable to access their full rights to an education.

Embedding a rights-based approach to education will ensure equitable access to education for all, and quality educational experiences that better prepare vulnerable children and young people for their futures.

Plan of action

To achieve success Cardiff will:

- Prioritise the education of Looked After Children by providing high quality, well-supported school places to meet their needs and ensuring that they are assisted to progress after school into ongoing education, training or employment.
- Work with Unicef to roll out the Rights Respecting School Award across all Cardiff schools over the next three years.
- Provide all pupils with an appropriate, full-time curriculum that meets their needs, wherever possible within a mainstream school setting.
- Work with pupils, schools, communities and wider city partners to offer a 'Curriculum for Life' which is enriched with experiences that will help prepare children and young people for independent living, active citizenship and the world of work.

Success measures

- All Cardiff schools are actively involved in the Rights Respecting Schools programme
- Improved levels of achievement of vulnerable learners in line with their individual requirements, needs and aspirations.
- The gap in the educational attainment of Looked After Children and their peers is reduced
- The number of EOTAS pupils is reduced
- Pupils report that they feel better prepared to be independent active citizens
- Increased number of young people make a successful transition into education, training or employment after school.

GOAL 5

Children have good physical, mental and emotional health and know how to stay healthy.

All children and young people are able to make informed healthy choices at school and within their communities. Public sector services support them to maintain their wellbeing through the provision of safe and accessible infrastructure, supportive services, activities and relevant information.

Children, young people and partner organisations work together to ensure access to safe outdoor environments for formal and informal play, to streets which prioritise walking, cycling and scooting, and opportunities for active travel to school across the city.

Emotional and mental wellbeing is of paramount importance and all children and young people, when required, have access to appropriate support, care and treatment at the right time, in the right place, from the right service. Emotional and mental wellbeing support in school-based and other key settings is easily accessible and reliable.

Why this matters

Being healthy is essential for children and young people to achieve educational and future employment success and to maintain social and family relationships. Children and young people have expressed a wish to access timely and appropriate services to support their emotional health and wellbeing and to be able to actively move around the city easily and safely.

Emotional and mental wellbeing is important in every aspect of children and young people's lives. It enables young people to be resilient, more ready to accept learning experiences, to be curious and discover creative ways of thinking about the world around them. Delivering supportive services within the school setting, identifying problems at an early stage and intervening to prevent these escalating is of paramount importance. Prevention and early intervention are key to ensuring overall well-being for children and young people.

An active lifestyle leads to short and long term health benefits including maintaining a healthy weight, improved self-confidence, improved social skills and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Around a fifth of 4-5 year olds in Cardiff are overweight or obese, and across Wales fewer than 1 in 10 teenage girls are sufficiently physically active. Children are more vulnerable to exposure to air pollution, with levels of NO₂ in some parts of Cardiff currently exceeding EU limits. The commonest cause of death for children aged 5-14 is being hit by a vehicle. Making our streets more child-friendly will reduce casualty rates and increase parents' confidence in allowing their children to be physically active outdoors.

Making regular physical activity a routine part of life, including getting to and from school, is an essential habit for life, to improve children's health now and as they grow up.

Plan of action

To achieve success Cardiff will:

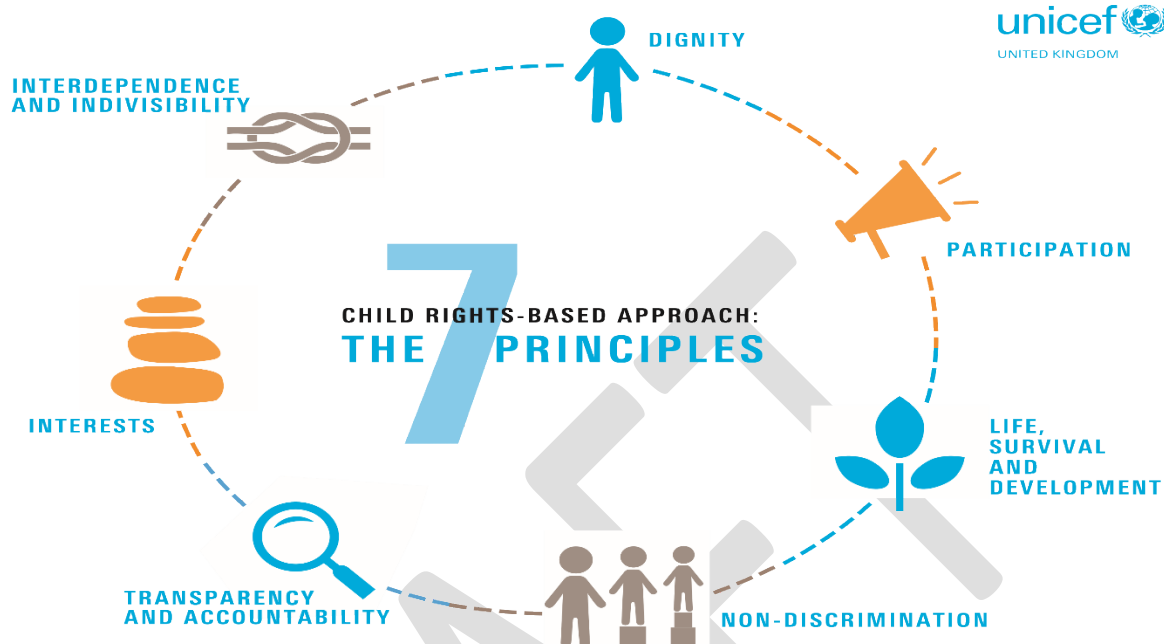
- Improve the opportunities for children and young people to be active during their daily lives by
 - Extending active travel to school initiatives and 20mph areas across the city
 - Providing safe, open and green spaces for informal and formal play, that include organised activities and street closures
 - Providing affordable and accessible integrated sustainable transport options to enable safe walking and cycling, with greater priority given to non-motorised road users, focusing first in more deprived areas
 - Creating resources for schools that deliver elements of the curriculum through focusing on active travel, road safety and supportive environments
 - Improve air quality in the city through implementation of the Council's Clean Air Strategy, and related partnership plans

- Improve the emotional health and wellbeing care experienced by children and young people by
 - Delivering a single point of access for emotional wellbeing and mental health services that provides timely access to appropriate support and services
 - Adopting a systemic, partnership approach to service delivery
 - Raising awareness of emotional wellbeing and mental health services to reduce stigma and barriers to access

Success measures

- Children and young people report that they are active, moving and travelling easily and safely within their communities and across the city
- Air quality in the city is improved
- Exemplar schools for active travel are identified and supported in every ward in Cardiff, with learning and actions disseminated to all schools
- The built environment and transport strategies support social interaction between children and young people, contributing to their overall health and wellbeing
- Services are aligned and identify children and young people in need of emotional and mental wellbeing support at an early stage.
- Fewer children and young people develop serious mental health problems and those that do are given the best support possible in the community

DEFINITION OF UNICEF'S SEVEN PRINCIPLES



Dignity: every child and young person, like each adult, has inner dignity and worth that should be valued, respected and nurtured. Respecting children's dignity means that all children should be treated with care and respect in all circumstances – in schools, hospitals, police stations, public spaces or children's homes.

Best interests: the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children and young people. Decisions can relate to individual children – for example about adoption or groups of children and young people – for instance when designing play spaces. In all cases, children and young people should be involved in deciding what is best for them.

Non-discrimination: every child and young person should be treated fairly and protected from discrimination, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, family background or any other status. Having access to equal opportunities and best possible outcomes doesn't mean being treated identically; some children and young people need more support than others to overcome barriers and difficulties.

Life, survival and development: every child has a right to life and each child and young person should enjoy the same opportunities to flourish in order to be safe, healthy, grow and develop. From birth to adulthood, children and young people develop in many different ways – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and educationally – and different professionals should work together to help make this happen.

Participation: all children and young people have the right to have a say in matters that affect them and to have their views taken seriously. In order to participate

meaningfully in the lives of their family, community and the wider society, children and young people need support and opportunities for involvement. They need information, a space to express their views and feelings and an opportunity to ask questions.

Interdependence and indivisibility: all children and young people should enjoy all of their rights all of the time because all rights are equally important. Rights cannot be 'cherry-picked' depending on circumstances. Children and young people's right to a good standard of living or to be protected from abuse, neglect and violence is as important as the right to get together with their peers or to freedom of expression.

Transparency and accountability: open dialogue and strong relationships between children and young people, professionals and local politicians are key to making rights a reality. For this to happen, everyone needs to be supported to learn about and understand rights. Knowledge of rights also allows children and young people to hold to account the people responsible for ensuring their rights are protected and realised.