

Date: 20 January 2021

My Ref: SS/CYP/CFCPR



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Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
CARDIFF
CF10 4UW

Dear Sarah,

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 19 JANUARY 2021 –
CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES PROGRAMME**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of the Committee for attending the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to facilitate the consideration of Cabinet proposals relating the Child Friendly Cities Programme. Please also pass on our thanks to Mel Godfrey, Suzanne Scarlett and Lee Patterson. The comments, observations and recommendations below were captured during the Committee's discussion at the Way Forward.

CFC Accreditation

Members were satisfied that Cardiff will continue to move forward for Child Friendly City status in autumn 2021 (as recommended by Unicef), despite the potential obstacles that the Covid-19 pandemic may continue to present.

Members heard about the challenges that still remain, such as getting more schools signed up, given the environment in which they are currently working; but were heartened to hear about the opportunities around resourcing and partnerships, as well as technology for engaging with children & young people.

Members noted that an ongoing and open discussion was taking place between the Council and Unicef, and that the performance of services remains a focus in gaining and retaining accreditation. Members were informed that a number of responses from inspectors were due in the coming months, and the results of these will inform the way forward.

One of the recommendations of the Cabinet proposal is to seek further Cabinet support in relation to the CFC submission. This Scrutiny Committee would also wish to lend its support to the submission and accreditation process. Members would therefore request that this Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of progress throughout the rest of this year, via regular updates to the Committee. This should consist of an indicative timetable of key milestones in the process including times when you could report to this Committee.

Embedding the Child's Rights Approach and Sustainability

Members welcomed the message that over and above the CFC accreditation, the Council and partners are working to ensure that children & young people's voices are embedded in how business is conducted, with children & young people leading the way in policy development and service evaluation.

The Committee was pleased to receive examples on how this is being achieved (LDP; One Planet Cardiff; 21st Century schools) and updates in relation to training and development across the Council and partners on this issue.

Members received news that core funding was now in place for the Child Friendly Team, which indicated a commitment to ensuring that this was sustainable.

Members received an update on the Children's Rights Impact Assessment and welcomed the inclusion of children's views in this assessment. Members noted that it had not yet been launched or implemented formally, but accepted that this was due to an issue beyond the control of anyone.

Members would request further evidence on the extent to which the strategy is being embedded and its sustainability. We would welcome further information about the accreditation itself and be kept up to speed on progress, including the launch and implementation of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment. We would expect this via the regular updates to Committee, as already requested.

Engagement of Children & Young People

Members were pleased to hear numerous examples of engagement and consultation with children and young people as part of this process and how some of the methods and approaches adopted will continue to be used and developed going forward.

Members noted information received on webinars; Coronavirus & Me survey; CFC Survey; using Minecraft (in partnership with Microsoft) to engage and use as an educational tool; and the work being progressed in relation to young carers, LGBTQ and those with additional needs. Members also remarked on ward based, "on the

ground” evidence in relation to different perceptions and capturing inequalities across Cardiff.

Members concurred with yourself and officers that there is a need to closely monitor the levels of engagement with vulnerable groups, or those whose voices are not normally heard, and that a multiplicity of approaches was required to encourage this. Members noted the establishment of the group from Cardiff University (Chris Taylor); head teachers and the Consortium in looking at this issue, and would look to receive updates from this Group on how engagement with vulnerable children and young people can be achieved. We would request that this form part of the regular updates to Committee, as requested above.

Non-Formal education settings

Linked to the previous paragraph, Members asked questions regarding what practical steps had been taken to engage with those not in formal education settings. We heard progress in relation to work being undertaken by EOTAS and Youth Services, as well as developments in relation to the summer programme. At a previous scrutiny committee meeting, we requested sight of the draft summer programme so would welcome an indication of when this will be available for us to consider.

Recovery Planning

Members of this Committee felt that the issue of the mental health and well-being of children and young people arising from the pandemic be recognised and accepted as a priority for the Council and its partners in recovery planning going forward.

Goal 5 of the CFC Strategy states that *“Children and Young people have good physical, mental and emotional health and know how to stay healthy”*. We shared the concerns of yourself and officers around the levels of support that will be needed for children and young people coming out of this period.

Members noted the implications of the 25-30% increase in the number of young people with existing mental health conditions presenting themselves at healthcare settings (as reported to the PSB), and the backlog of court cases within the youth justice system.

Members highlighted that this does not include those currently “under the radar” and there is an urgent need for the Council and its partners to look at progression routes to mental health support across ALL public services to avoid “a ticking time bomb”.

We also discussed with you the issue of children and young people labelling themselves as the “covid generation” and having “imposter syndrome” in relation to issues such as their educational achievement. We agree with your view that we need to do everything we can to counter the narrative that they are “worth less”. We feel it is critical all partners work together to ensure that the narrative, language and communication going forward is planned and consistent across the board to tackle these feelings.

Therefore, we **recommend** that the Cabinet agree to meet Cardiff Public Services Board reps, schools and young people groups as a matter of urgency, to consider and agree a Covid Recovery Plan for Children & Young People. This recovery plan should include mental health and well-being support routes, and messaging and communication with young people.

To recap, the Committee **is requesting**:

1. A suggested timetable to allow this Scrutiny Committee to monitor and support the Child Friendly City Accreditation. These updates must include:
 - Progress towards meeting the accreditation;
 - Evidence on the extent to which the strategy is being embedded and its sustainability;
 - The launch and implementation of the Childs Rights Impact Assessment; and
 - Feedback on increasing levels of engagement with vulnerable groups, including progress arising from the Cardiff University/CFC Team/Head Teachers and Consortium Group.
2. A date when this Scrutiny Committee can receive details of the Summer Programme.

The Committee is **recommending** and will formally monitor:

1. That the Cabinet agree to meet Cardiff Public Services Board reps, schools and young people groups as a matter of urgency, to consider and agree a Covid Recovery Plan for Children & Young People. This recovery plan should include mental health and well-being support routes, and messaging and communication with young people.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to a response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. BRIDGEMAN', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

COUNCILLOR LEE BRIDGEMAN
Chairperson – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

CC: CYPSC Members
Melanie Godfrey, Director of Education & Lifelong Learning
Suzanne Scarlett, OM Partnerships & Performance
Lee Patterson, Community Education Officer
Joanne Watkins - Cabinet Officer Manager
Melanie Jackson, Cabinet Support Office
Helen Eager, PA to the Director of Education & Lifelong Learning