

COUNCIL: 30 NOVEMBER 2023

DEPUTY LEADER & EDUCATION STATEMENT

UNICEF Child Friendly City

On 27 October, Cardiff was officially declared as the first UNICEF Child Friendly City in the UK.

In 2017, the Council and its partners joined the UK Committee for UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme as part of a pioneering cohort. Since then, the Council has been implementing strategies to embed children's rights, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), into its policies and services. Working with the city's children and young people, the Council has prioritised six key areas: Co-operation and Leadership; Communication; Culture; Healthy; Family and Belonging; and Education and Learning. These priorities and goals have been enshrined in Cardiff's Child Friendly Strategy since 2018.

Working in partnership with organisations across the city, a significant number of projects, initiatives and actions have been undertaken to ensure that children and young people are able to claim their rights, thrive and reach their potential, whilst addressing the barriers which may limit their life chances. We now move forward into new priority areas to further embed a child's rights approach to our work across urban planning and addressing inequality.

Rights Fest

Over 500 children and young people attended a two-day Rights Festival or 'Rights Fest' that was held at Cardiff City Stadium on 26 & 27 October. The first day was for girls and young women and had a focus on gender equity. It included talks, workshops and performances, with the last session being facilitated by Professor E J Reynolds from Cardiff University, which focused on developing a manifesto for change that will be presented early next year.

The second day was a celebration of children's rights, with over 50 partners coordinating four zones of games, workshops and fun activities over two floors of the stadium. Participants were joined by Cabinet Members, public service representatives and a delegation from UNICEF UK, with the event culminating in the signing of the Child Friendly City Recognition Agreement between the Council and UNICEF UK.

New Cardiff School Developments

This month, I have been delighted to join the Leader of the Council in attending both the official opening of the fantastic new Fitzalan High School building and in visiting one of the city's newest primary schools, Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary School, which forms part of the Plasdŵr development in north-west Cardiff and was delivered in line with commitments set out in the existing Local Development Plan.

Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary School is the first of its kind in Cardiff and Wales, providing a dual language stream and a Welsh-medium stream. The dual language stream will consist of 50% Welsh and 50% English, known as a 50/50 split. In addition, there is a 96 place, part-time nursery provision that is supported by a Cylch Meithrin, which will offer wraparound provision and also operate an after school club for pupils. This new school supports our aspirations to grow the Welsh language and develop bilingualism in Cardiff as set out in our Bilingual Cardiff strategy.

The Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) process for the new Willows High School site commenced on 20 November and will run until 18 December. This process is taking place ahead of the submission of the planning application for the development of the new school on the former Splott Market site.

In June 2023, the contract to carry out the enabling works associated with the development of the new Willows High School site was awarded to Morgan Sindall Construction. An event was held on 15 November at Cardiff Arms Park to mark the official launch of a new partnership between Morgan Sindall Construction, Cardiff Rugby Community Foundation, Cardiff Council and Willows High School. The event saw students from Willows High School participate in a series of activities, which included a guided tour of Cardiff Arms Park and the opportunity to meet a Cardiff Rugby player. As part of their social value offer, Morgan Sindall is currently sponsoring three educational enrichment programmes within the Willows High School cluster that will use the power and values of sport. These programmes will be delivered by Cardiff Rugby Community Foundation, a not-for-profit community arm of Cardiff Rugby, until at least summer 2025.

Western Learning Federation

The Western Learning Federation of three schools in the Caerau ward has been recognised as an exemplar of best practice by Estyn, with an impressive six areas of effective practice being recognised and published. Following a visit in November last year, Estyn invited all three of the federated schools (Riverbank, Ty Gwyn and Woodlands) to prepare case studies on some of the positive work taking place, so that other educational settings can learn from them.

Riverbank Special School was praised for its efforts in relation to the work of the family liaison officer, particularly on the way parents and carers are supported around addressing the poverty agenda and the school's use of outdoor learning to meet the needs of pupils with complex and sensory needs.

Inspectors acknowledged Ty Gwyn Special School for its support for families, including those who have English as an additional language, and its work within the curriculum to support pupils with complex needs to attend appointments for their personal care.

Woodlands High School was also commended for the way in which the school supports pupils' attitudes to learning, the sharing of curriculum and learning experiences and the development of a culture that supports staff well-being.

Local Authorities Caterers Association (LACA) Awards

The Council's Education Catering Service has been recognised for its dedication, innovation and outstanding contribution made in the school catering sector. At this year's Local Authorities Caterers Association (LACA) Wales Region Awards, Cardiff won the Community Impact Award for the delivery of the Flexible Supported Employment Pathway (FSEP). This provides young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) with the support and training necessary so that they can go on successfully to employment and is delivered by the Cardiff Commitment, in partnership with our post-16 ALN team and the Education Catering Service as the employment partner.

Since launching in May 2023, four young people with Additional Learning Needs and/or autism, have received training and 12-month work experience placements to prepare and support them in their transition from school to full time employment. The pupils aged 16-18 from the Specialist Resource Bases at Cantonian and Llanishen High Schools gained hands-on experience in a commercial kitchen and accessed work skills training, including the Level 2 Food Safety Qualification. They have gained access to unique opportunities and transitioned into paid employment through the Food and Fun initiative, Cardiff's multi-award-winning school holiday enrichment programme, which provides children with health and well-being provision during the school holidays.

In addition to the Community Impact Award, the Education Catering Service has also been awarded the Welsh Government's Food in Schools Award for the work undertaken to roll-out the Universal Free School Meal scheme for primary aged children, which is now provided to all pupils from Reception to Year 3. The scheme is also being rolled out to Year 4 from 20 November.

Period Poverty

The Cardiff Period Dignity programme has been expanded further in schools, with primary schools now providing free reusable period pants for learners, in addition to single use pads that are already available. As well as being an excellent eco-friendly option, period pants are proving to be popular with young people due to their ease of use and help in preparing them for their first period. The Education Service is also continuing to provide secondary schools with a wide range of eco-friendly and reusable options for learners.

Passport to the City

Passport to the City facilitated a wide range of experiences and opportunities for children and young people in Cardiff during the recent school half-term holiday period. On 31 October, a group of young people from the east of the city had the opportunity to visit the BBC Cymru Wales studios for a Halloween special tour. Passport to the City is now being offered regular exclusive tours of the studios during school holiday periods as a result of the strong partnership with BBC Cymru Wales.

Passport to the City worked closely with one of its targeted schools to facilitate access by some of its most vulnerable families to unique locations within Cardiff. The school had recognised the limited mobility of some of its families, especially in accessing the city centre, even though the community is within close proximity. Through working closely with the school, families and city partners, Passport to the City was able to structure a day out within the city centre, with children visiting Cardiff Castle, whilst also enjoying exclusive access to a ticketed event with a Halloween theme. All those involved had lunch within the Castle grounds before undertaking further activities and a private tour of the Museum of Cardiff.

In addition, a small group of young people from North Ely Youth Service also had the opportunity to engage with a one-off, face-to-face Dungeons & Dragons campaign, which has been structured in direct response to requests made by the young people. As a result of sessions like this, this specific group of young people has continued to engage regularly and face-to-face to play the game, and there is also an appetite to grow this project further.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Education
24 November 2023