



Child Friendly Cardiff

Annual Report

2024/25



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Cardiff is proud to be recognised as a Child Friendly City, guided by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Over the past year, children, young people, schools, communities, and the Council have worked together to ensure that rights are not just words on paper but a reality in the lives of young people across our city.

This Annual Report marks the second year of Cardiff's three-year sustainability plan, which sets out our shared commitment to embedding and strengthening this status. We are proud of the progress made so far and remain determined to build on this momentum as we look ahead to the final year of the plan and beyond.

We've seen real impact. Pupil attainment in Cardiff continues to exceed the Welsh average for GCSE and A-Level results, reflecting the dedication of our schools and learners. More schools than ever are embracing the Rights Respecting Schools framework, with over 80% now accredited and a growing number achieving silver and gold status. Within the Council, over 80% of staff have completed Child Rights Training - surpassing our year-two target and keeping us on track to meet full compliance by 2025-26.

Children and young people are increasingly shaping decisions that affect them - from influencing school policies and city planning to participating in national debates. Alongside this growing civic participation, we've continued to strengthen the services that support our most vulnerable children. Through our Striving for Excellence in Children's Services Strategy, we've seen a positive shift in the balance of care, helping more children remain safely with their families and communities.

Yet we know challenges persist. Schools continue to grapple with attendance, exclusions, and rising demand for Additional Learning Needs provision and home-to-school transport. Children's Services remain under pressure, with many children in care requiring more complex and costly support. At the same time, the ongoing impact of inequality, the cost-of-living crisis, and the legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to affect the wellbeing of many young people.

Looking ahead, our shared vision is clear: a Cardiff where every child and young person feels safe, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential. We want children's rights to remain at the heart of everything we do as a city - in classrooms, in communities, and in the decisions that shape Cardiff's future.

This Annual Report is a celebration of what has been achieved together, but also a reminder of the work still to be done. With children and young people as equal partners, we will continue building on Cardiff's status as a Child Friendly City and ensuring it delivers for every child.

Cllr Merry (Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Education)
and Emily Gao (Chair of Cardiff Youth Council)

INTRODUCTION

Cardiff Council and our local partners joined the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme in 2017. After years of work to embed children's rights into the way the Council makes decisions, creates policies, and delivers services, Cardiff was officially named the [UK's first UNICEF Child Friendly City](#) in November 2023.

At the end of 2023, we launched a three-year [Child Friendly Cardiff Sustainability Plan](#) to guide the next stage of this journey. This Annual Report marks the second year of that plan, reflecting on progress made so far and setting out how we are continuing to strengthen our commitment to children's rights.

The plan is about making sure that babies, children, and young people not only know their rights but can use them in their everyday lives - to take part in decisions, access the services they need, and be treated with fairness and respect. Cardiff's recognition as a Child Friendly City was an important milestone, but our focus remains firmly on building a city where rights are a lived reality for every child and young person.

This work focused on four key areas:

Children's Rights Education

We are teaching everyone in Cardiff about children's rights so that they understand and respect them.

Participation

We make sure children and young people have a say in how Cardiff is run and how the city develops.

Place

We are designing Cardiff's buildings and spaces with children in mind, so they're safe, fun and fair.

Equal & Included

We want every child, no matter who they are, to feel valued and included in Cardiff.

Glossary explanation

In this report, we have underlined some of the difficult words and explained them at the end on [page 23](#)

Common Acronyms

Sometimes we shorten common phrases to just the initials (acronyms). Here are some common acronyms we use in this document:

CF Cardiff – Child Friendly Cardiff

CYC – Cardiff Youth Council

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Leadership & Oversight

Cardiff Council's Cabinet (Executive) provides political leadership in overseeing delivery, whilst the Council's Senior Management Team (SMT), provides managerial leadership.

A dedicated Delivery Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council, meets regularly to monitor progress against the CF Cardiff commitments. This group receives performance updates from officers responsible for delivering key commitments, identifies areas of good practice, and ensures timely responses to areas of focus.

The Cardiff Public Services Board (PSB) - which brings together senior leaders from the city's key public service organisations - provides broader oversight of the CF Cardiff programme. The PSB receives the Annual Report each year as part of its ongoing monitoring of progress. In addition, updates on the programme are reflected in the PSB's own Annual Report, helping to maintain visibility and reinforce accountability across the city's public service landscape.

Reporting

Progress is reported on an annual basis through the publication of an Annual Report. This report is received by the Cabinet, SMT, and the Delivery Group, and is formally signed off by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education. The report is submitted to UNICEF as part of Cardiff's ongoing Child Friendly City commitments.



WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

We want Cardiff to be 'a great place to grow up'. We want to live in a city with children and young people at its heart, where the voices, needs and rights of every child and young person is respected.

Children have the same general human rights as adults and also specific rights that recognise their special needs. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights.

Children have 42 rights under the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC). These 42 rights give children and young people what they need to grow up happily, healthily and safely.

Children's Rights are so important that 15 years ago Wales put them at the [heart of their laws](#). All Welsh ministers, [public services](#) and large national organisations have to pay attention to children's rights in everything they do.



ABOUT CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES & COMMUNITIES

Child Friendly Cities & Communities (CFC) is a UNICEF UK programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice. The programme aims to create cities and communities in the UK where all children – whether they are living in care, using a children's centre, taking the bus, or simply visiting their local library – have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.

Recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City signifies that UNICEF publicly recognises that a council and its local community partners have taken significant and sustainable steps in specific areas towards advancing the human rights of children and young people growing up in their city or community. Recognition lasts for three years before they need to apply for reassessment by UNICEF UK to check what progress has been made for children and young people.

The programme is part of Child Friendly Cities – a global UNICEF initiative that supports more than 30 million children in over 40 countries.



A CHILD'S RIGHTS APPROACH

[The Right Way](#), a child's rights approach in Wales, is a way of working with and for children, grounded in the UNCRC to help public bodies build children's rights into every part of decision-making and the work they do (this mode aligns with [UNICEF's 7 principles](#) of a child rights-based approach).

The 5 Principles of The Right Way are shown below:

1

Embedding Children's Rights: Ensure that children's rights are embedded in everyday decision-making, policies, and practices.

2

Equality and Non-Discrimination: Promote equality and fight discrimination so that all children have equal access to their rights.

3

Empowering Children: Empower children to express their views and take an active role in matters affecting them.

4

Accountability: Hold institutions accountable for implementing children's rights and ensure transparency.

5

Participation: Ensure children are listened to and that their views inform decision-making.

Throughout this report, the 5 principles of the Right Way have been mentioned (or suggested) and **emboldened** to demonstrate Cardiff Council's commitment to upholding these values. By highlighting these ways of working, this report aims to show the Council's dedication to building in children's rights into its decision-making processes and how we work.

1.1 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EDUCATION

Workforce Development

We want adults across the city have a good knowledge of children's rights and actively support children to claim their rights.

Approach

This year, Cardiff continues its commitment to **embedding** children's rights at the heart of council decision-making and policy development, recognising that a diverse and inclusive training offer for staff is key to improving the services we deliver.

Increase the number of council staff who know about children's rights

Over the past year, we have continued to expand and diversify our children's rights training offer to ensure it is accessible to all council staff, including those without regular access to a PC or who prefer alternative learning formats. The training is now available in multiple formats: a workbook which can be accessed as a PDF or word document, a PowerPoint presentation, and a video. Managers have been provided with access to all these resources, along with accompanying knowledge checks which they oversee to assess staff understanding. Once passed, staff are marked as compliant with children's rights training.

In addition to these resources, we have continued to use the digital compliance dashboard to identify teams who need extra support. As a result, we have delivered in-person children's rights sessions to several teams, including the Youth Service, Fostering, and the Music Service. These sessions were scheduled at times and locations that suited each team, recognising and respecting the unique nature of their work. This approach has helped **embed children's rights** more meaningfully into practice across diverse service areas.

Develop and deliver bespoke Children's Rights and Participation trainings to various groups

We have continued to identify areas within the council where bespoke children's rights and **participation** training would support staff in their unique roles. This year, we delivered tailored sessions to school governors (three sessions), the fostering team within Children's Services (two sessions), and early years professionals (one session). Each training and associated resources are different to ensure that staff are equipped to promote and protect children's rights in ways relevant to their work.

We are also developing a suite of training resources for elected members, including a dedicated PowerPoint and training video. By highlighting members duty towards championing children's rights, these resources will reinforce **accountability** and promote **non-discrimination** through emphasising the importance of engaging meaningfully with children and young people.

The creation of a 'Children's Rights Champion model'

Having explored the most effective way to disseminate information to managers, it was agreed that a formal training module may not be the most practical solution. To ensure that guidance on championing children's rights remains accessible and actionable, we have developed a document titled *Championing Children's Rights: 5 Key Responsibilities for Managers*. This resource outlines essential information about the UNCRC and presents five practical actions managers can take to meaningfully champion and embed children's rights within their teams. We are currently creating accessible versions of the document, including a Welsh-language translation, and will establish a clear plan for sharing the resource in the most effective and inclusive way across the organisation.

In conclusion, our continued work to embed children's rights across the council has had a positive and growing impact, and we remain committed to adapting our approach to meet the evolving needs of our workforce and community.

Impact

Since last year, the council's children's rights
compliance percentage has increased

FROM 70% TO 85%

This is over our predicted impact of 70% in year two.

Before the training, 68% of attendees strongly agreed or agreed that they felt knowledgeable and confident about children's rights. However, after completing the training, this figure rose to **100%**

**From July 2024 – July 2025,
we have delivered:**

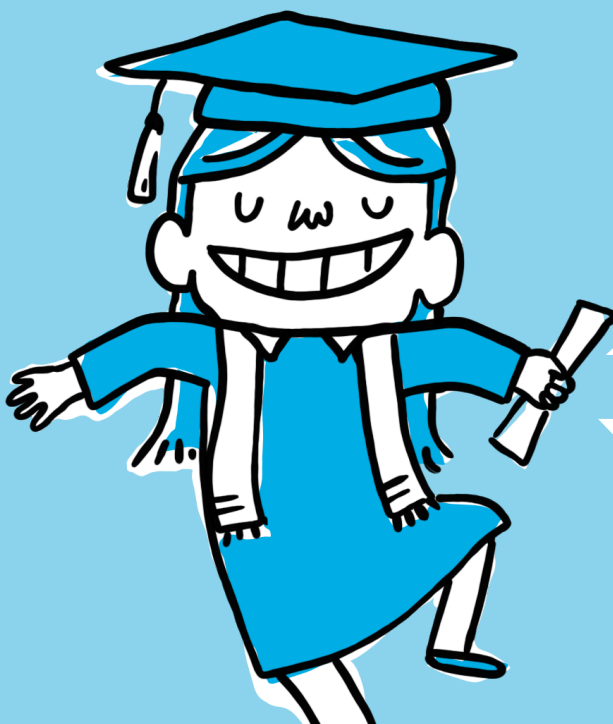
Bespoke Training for
School Governors, Early Years
Professionals, and Children's Services
Fostering Team

Children's Rights Training
17 sessions, 209 attendees

Training Comments:

'The discussions were invaluable and contributed to the training that was successfully delivered'

'The trainer was excellent – knowledgeable and engaging, this has been the best training I have been on in a while, highly recommend!'



1.2 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EDUCATION

Rights Respecting Schools Award

Across the city we want children to have good knowledge of children's rights and are actively supported to claim their rights.

Approach

Support schools to engage with and progress through the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA)

Children in Cardiff have been clear — they want to learn about their rights in school and from the earliest opportunity. The UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award is the framework we use to make this happen. It helps schools **embed** children's rights into daily life, shaping policies, teaching, and relationships so that every child knows, understands, and can enjoy their rights.

Through our service level agreement with UNICEF UK, every maintained school in Cardiff can register, receive training, access resources, and take part in quality-assured assessments at no cost to them. This removes barriers and ensures the award is available **for all** maintained education settings.

This year we have strengthened our direct, in-person support. From January, our CF Cardiff team began delivering tailored visits to schools, offering guidance, answering questions, and helping staff and pupils plan their next steps. This support provides schools with the confidence and setting-specific information that enables them to move forward and embed a children's rights approach to policy, practice and pedagogy. Staff tell us this bespoke support makes a real difference, helping them turn good intentions into visible progress.

We have also taken the lead on Silver-level assessments, meaning Cardiff schools benefit from locally delivered, face-to-face visits rather than remote assessments. This approach builds stronger relationships, ensures feedback is rooted in the Cardiff context, and supports the steady increase in schools achieving higher award levels.

Our annual RRSA celebration event brought together pupils, staff, and leaders from across the city to share achievements and inspire one another. The day included a "drop-in clinic" for teachers, pupil-led activities, and the chance for non-engaged schools to see the benefits of a rights-based approach first-hand.

Develop and deliver a sustainable approach to the RRSA in Cardiff

Cardiff is the first local authority in Wales and England to fully train local council officers as UNICEF-accredited Silver assessors, creating a more sustainable and cost-effective model for the future. This year we have continued to build assessor capacity and experience, while preparing for the introduction of Gold-level assessor training. We have already begun shadowing Gold assessments to make sure we are ready to offer this next stage locally as soon as it becomes available.



We continue to maintain and develop our RRSA database, which allows us to monitor progress closely and provide targeted offers of support. This ensures that participation is meaningful — we can respond quickly to schools that need extra help and recognise those ready to progress.

Welsh-medium provision has also grown, with our Welsh-speaking assessor supporting schools to deliver the award in pupils' first language. Targeted work with special schools and non-engaged settings has ensured that all children, including those with additional needs or those educated other than at school, have the chance to benefit from rights education.

By embedding the RRSA into our city's education strategy, we are creating a lasting culture where children's rights are understood, respected, and championed by pupils and adults alike. As of today, Half of our schools have achieved either Silver or Gold.

Impact

"Pupil's emotional and social wellbeing has improved dramatically, and children knowing they have a voice and are valued and inclusivity has led them to taking more accountability for their learning and interest in school and love of school. Attendance has gone up too because pupils want to be in school more"

– Headteacher in Silver school

**Quarter of Cardiff schools
have achieved Gold!**

**Half have achieved
Silver or Gold!**

"Being part of pupil voice groups is my favourite thing about school. I feel valued in decision making. I like being involved in meetings and sharing my views. Article 12, that's my favourite."

– Year 6 pupil in Cardiff silver school

Of 128 maintained schools **104 are engaged** with the RRSA

33 Gold Schools
32 Silver Schools
39 Bronze Schools
24 non-engaged schools



**[Find a school
on our map!](#)**



"Rights are for every child in the world, in every country. Your rights are yours no matter what. They do not have to be earned. They are all equal. In our school, the duty-bearers make sure we're getting our rights. "

– Year 5 Pupil in Cardiff Gold school

Children's Rights in Action

Rights Respecting Schools Award

Amara

When Amara joined her new school in Cardiff, she was nervous about starting somewhere unfamiliar. In the country she lived before, she had never learned about children's rights and felt her voice didn't matter.

From her first day, things were different. A welcoming group of pupils — some speaking her first language — made her feel safe and at home. She quickly learned about her rights in lessons, assemblies, and across school life.

Encouraged to use her voice, Amara joined pupil groups, took part in staff interviews, and helped shape school policies through a rights lens. Over time, she also began to speak up for others — especially new arrivals — and shared ideas with the council on how to make the city more welcoming for young people.

Within a year, Amara's confidence had flourished. She felt a strong sense of belonging in a school community built on respect and equality, where her views were valued and she had the power to shape her school, her city, and her education.



2. PLACE - URBAN PLANNING & DESIGN

We want Cardiff to be designed with children and shaped by their experiences, including how they move around the city and enjoy public spaces.

Approach

Ensuring that Elected Members and Council Officers know what children think about their neighbourhood and city.

CF Cardiff have undertaken many different consultations with Children on how they use and perceive their local area. It is important that this information is passed on to decision makers in Cardiff Council. We brought together a group of elected members to inform them about the consultations and the data collected. We also spoke to many different council officers in planning, parks, neighbourhood regeneration, play and more, about the important data we collected with Children. This data is now accessible for decision makers in the council, to ensure we are embedding children's rights in planning and design. By sharing evidence directly with decision makers, we are also promoting **accountability** for acting on children's views.

Ensuring planning and design of public spaces is inclusive and non-discriminatory

CF Cardiff commissioned a research project led by Cardiff University to better understand what it's like to be a teenage girl in Cardiff, particularly in parks. This research helps to ensure that spaces are designed to meet the needs of all children, including those who are often marginalised, upholding **equality and non-discrimination**.

We have also worked with the city planning team to capture final comments and feedback from children on the latest Local Development Plan (LDP) for the city. We ran workshops with Cardiff Youth Council and two high schools to make sure the LDP reflected the views and needs of children across the city. This demonstrates our commitment to participation, ensuring children's voices are not only heard but influence long-term city planning. Themes explored included climate, transport, housing, jobs, leisure/play and green spaces. Along with data captured previously, this last consultation exercise now helps shape the final plan, to be presented in 2026.

Lastly, we have made further progress to embed the right to play (Article 31) into the LDP as it progresses through scrutiny and cabinet decision making. We are working with city planners to ensure Cardiff Council and its partners are accountable for improving opportunities to play for children when building new developments.

Beginning work on a 'Vision for Play' for Cardiff

Alongside Cardiff Council's obligations on its Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA), CF Cardiff have detailed how we plan to showcase Cardiff as a city with rich and diverse opportunities to play for all children. We know that there is so much good work happening across the city and our 'Vision for Play' will capture this, along with some of the challenges we face and examples of good practice from around the world. This process will empower children and young people by making clear that their everyday play experiences shape the city's vision.

Collaboration with Academic and Private Sector partners

CF Cardiff continue to work with Cardiff University School of Geography and Planning. This year there has been important research carried out with girls to understand their experience of parks in Cardiff. The research took place in two parks across the city and consisted of observations, a survey and focus groups. Participants spoke about safety, shelter, male-dominated sports facilities and co-developed ideas to improve green spaces for girls. This demonstrates participation in practice, with children co-producing solutions. Interim findings were shared at a multi-agency event in May.

We are also pleased to have become a critical friend for the development of a new 'Child Friendly Urban Environments' (CFUE) Framework by Atkins Realis. The framework explores how the built environment affects children's (aged 4–14) wellbeing and asks how children's interaction and use of spaces can enhance their development. As the UK's first Child Friendly City, we are piloting the framework on a housing development in the city, with a short report expected in Autumn 2025. This is another example of **embedding** rights into planning structures and holding future development to accountability standards.

Impact

Elected Members and Senior Officers

are informed about the views and needs of children supporting **accountability**

Our Local Development Plan (LDP)

reflects the views and needs of children, demonstrating **participation** and **embedding** rights in long-term planning.

The LDP contains play-specific guidance for planners and developers, ensuring **equality and non-discrimination** by making play accessible for all children.

A 'Vision for Play'

will allow policy makers and practitioners to identify good practice and opportunities to improve play for children in Cardiff, further **empowering** children.

Cardiff University's literature review to support the 'Vision for Play' cites national and global examples of good practice. CF Cardiff will utilise this review to strengthen our child's rights approach.

HerParks research project

Interim findings from Cardiff University, have been shared with a wide group of stakeholders. A full peer-reviewed research paper will be presented to policymakers and relevant council officers in Autumn 2025, reinforcing accountability.

The CFUE Framework pilot

will produce a report, due Autumn 2025 for Cardiff Council officers, to consider findings with potential to implement change on a new housing development in the City. This further embeds rights and accountability in future developments.



What have young people told us?

"It's really positive to see how much children and young people have been involved so far, and encouraging that there are plans to strengthen this engagement even more in the future."

"While Article 31 (the right to play) is clearly central to this work, I think other rights, such as Article 15 (freedom of association) and Article 24 (health), are also important and could play a stronger role in shaping how we think about place."

"The way feedback has been handled is improving – concerns are listened to and acted on, and plans have been made to support everyone. But it would help if these responses were made clearer and more visible, so that people know what's happening and feel part of the process."



Children's Rights in Action

Place - Urban Planning & Design

Amina

Amina often felt unsafe in her local park. The space was dominated by boys playing football, and there was little shelter or seating for others.

She joined a focus group run by Cardiff University and Child Friendly Cardiff, sharing her experiences and ideas. She helped co-design improvements like better lighting, inclusive play areas, and sheltered spaces.

Amina now feels proud seeing her ideas reflected in park plans. She feels heard, valued, and empowered—knowing she is helping make Cardiff more welcoming for girls like her.



Mia

When Mia, a 15-year-old secondary school student, first heard about the Local Development Plan, she thought it was “just for politicians.” In her workshop, she realised the plan would decide how her city looked and felt by the time she was an adult. Mia spoke passionately about bus services: how expensive tickets stop her and her friends from getting to after-school activities. She also highlighted the lack of safe cycle routes in her neighbourhood.

For the first time, she felt decision-makers were really listening. After the session, Mia said: “It feels like we’ve actually got the power to make Cardiff better for us and for the kids who come after us.”

3. PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK LOOP

We want to make sure Children's opinions and experiences are regularly used to help shape, improve, and review policies, services, and programmes.

Approach

To improve children's Participation, particularly under 11s, ensuring all children and young people can help shape services and make a difference.

Cardiff is committed to becoming a city where babies, children, and young people are meaningfully involved in shaping the decisions, services, and environments that affect their lives. High-quality participation is both a right and a driver of better outcomes for individuals, communities, and services. As part of its ambition to lead as a UNICEF Child Friendly City, Cardiff is carrying out a citywide Participation Review to understand current practice, identify strengths and challenges, and determine what is needed to embed a consistent, inclusive, and impactful approach to participation.

The review has so far included a citywide adult survey and call for case studies, engaging 29 organisations from education, youth work, health, the voluntary sector, and local government, capturing both practical insights and strategic reflections. Additionally, a separate survey commissioned by the Children's Commissioner for Wales was distributed across Cardiff Council teams working directly with children and young people, generating 15 responses. The next step is to undertake a review from the perspective of Children, this will be developed and run with Children. Together, these findings will provide a detailed picture of participation practice in Cardiff today and provide recommendations for improvement.

Through our Cardiff Young Citizens' Panel, children are invited to give their views on changes being suggested by the local authority and claim their right to be heard on matters that may affect them.

To continue to help empower children, we have supported them on numerous projects where they have been able to help shape services. These include working with: Cardiff Met, Cardiff University, Queen's University Belfast, Young Changemakers, LDP, Interviews, Debatemate, PSB, Wales Millennium Centre, Flying Start, The BBC, Pride and numerous departments across the council.

To identify ~~discrimination~~ or inequality in children being able to claim their rights.

It's important for us to look at the bigger picture when understanding **discrimination** and **inequality** across Cardiff. This is why we analyse lots of data from partners, to gain a better understanding of children's experiences in the city. For example, School Healthy Research Network (SHRN) now captures ~~data~~ from both Primary and Secondary school children on various topics, including their rights. We also receive Cardiff-specific data from the Children's Commissioner's Office for Wales from their 'Monthly Matters' survey. This asks children their views on current issues such as online safety. We continue to update our online library where organisations can access and share data on CY&P. Helping Cardiff Council and partners make better decisions for children and only engage when there's a lack of data.

Provide children with more accessible feedback on decision making processes.

Information on decisions and changes from Cardiff Council often come from sources that are not very child friendly. To ensure further accountability and transparency, we added a suggestion and feedback page on CYC's website, making it easier for young people to provide their views on improvements to CYC.

Inform children how their views have influenced decision making & highlight when a children's rights approach has been followed when making decisions

When young people collaborate with or are asked for their views by organisations, we ensure that they are provided with feedback about what happens because of their contribution. This is a key strand of the Children and Young People's National Participation Standards for Wales. This feedback can be found on the CYC website & the CF CARDIFF Website. A process has been created to capture all engagements done with Children, ensuring that feedback can be chased and given back in a promptly manner.

Impact

Policy Influence

- Helped shape the Local Development Plan, prioritising affordable housing, better transport, more green spaces, and climate action.
- Influenced the Education Inclusion Strategy and recruitment of senior education leaders.
- Provided regular contributions to scrutiny meetings, improving transparency and accountability in local decision-making.

Youth Empowerment

- Over 120 young people actively involved in volunteering and leadership roles.
- Children have given over 2800 hours attending 107 opportunities to influence change.
- Developed skills in leadership, public speaking, critical thinking, and advocacy.
- Increased confidence, civic engagement, and aspiration across diverse communities.

Rights-Based Change

- Played a key role in maintaining and progressing Cardiff's UNICEF Child Friendly City status.
- Led evaluation sessions and produced recommendations to embed children's rights across services and policies.

Cross-Sector and International Collaboration

- Built strong partnerships with Cardiff Council, Public Health Wales, schools, and universities.
- Delivered joint initiatives with Stuttgart and St Helens Youth Councils, including a youth-led film project on democracy and sustainability.

Inclusion and Representation

- Adopted an inclusive approach welcoming young people across all protected characteristics.
- Removed barriers to participation through flexible, supported, and accessible opportunities.
- Represented young people visibly at public events, including Cardiff Pride, to champion equality and inclusion.

Feedback loop

- Children are involved in creating accessible and engaging feedback which highlights what is happening in the city.
- Children's views are being fed back to them regularly and consistently through the Children's Commissioner's Monthly Matters survey.
- Children are being given feedback via the CYC website & the CF CARDIFF Website when a child rights approach has been followed during big decisions.



What Young People Told Us About Participation

What's Working Well:

Young people told us they value the wide range of opportunities available to them. They described Child Friendly Cardiff (CFC) as "fab" and said being part of CYC provides meaningful chances to get involved in city life, including scrutinising politicians. Cardiff's status as a Child Friendly City was seen as making the city more welcoming.

They felt there was good transparency with Cardiff Council, with easy access to councillors when needed. Volunteer certificates were also highlighted as a positive, motivating factor that encourages ongoing participation.

What Could Be Better:

Young people said they would like:

- Stronger links between CFC and the Welsh Youth Parliament to ensure responses are received on key issues.
- More opportunities for larger gatherings in addition to small focus groups.
- A better balance between online and in-person engagement, with a preference for face-to-face to share ideas and make friends.
- Schools to provide more face-to-face opportunities.
- Improved engagement with the Public Services Board (PSB).
- Greater connection with Senedd Members as well as Cardiff Council elected members.
- Vouchers for all Children meetings, including CYC General Meetings, as recognition of time and commitment.

This feedback, along with the Participation Review, is shaping our next steps, ensuring that the participation offer in Cardiff remains relevant, inclusive, and impactful.

Children's Rights in Action

Participation

El

El joined Cardiff Youth Council at 13. At first, they weren't very confident and found it hard to speak up. But through workshops, training, and encouragement from other young people, they gradually began to take part in debates and projects.

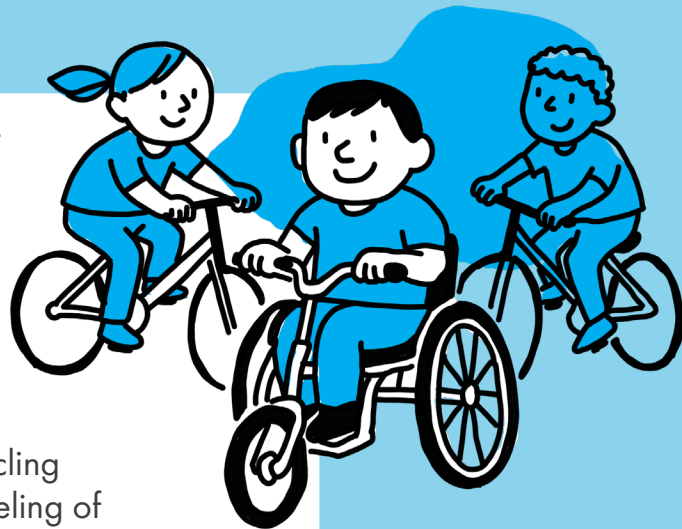
By 16, El had developed a real passion for the environment. They built confidence through subgroup work, public speaking, and projects tackling climate change and plastic pollution. They also joined scrutiny meetings, the Young Interviewers and Young Inspectors programmes, and represented Cardiff at a national environmental summit, where they co-led discussions with scientists.

Over time, El became one of CYC's most dedicated volunteers, contributing hundreds of hours and showing how participation can transform a shy teenager into a confident leader and advocate for children's rights.

Idris

Idris has a physical disability and worried he wouldn't be able to join in cycle training at school. When he explained this to the road safety team, they worked with Pedal Power to provide an adapted trike and ensured staff were trained to support his needs.

Taking part alongside his classmates was a turning point for Idris. He was no longer watching from the sidelines but learning the same skills as his friends. Cycling with them gave him independence, freedom, and a feeling of belonging. For Idris, the experience showed that when services listen and adapt to children's needs, inclusion becomes possible.



Sara

Sara has additional learning needs and sometimes felt left out when adults made decisions about the services she used. When the council advertised for a new manager in the Independent Travel Training team, Sara and a group of pupils who had completed the training were invited to help with the recruitment.

She listened to presentations, asked questions, and filled in candidate evaluation forms after each interview. For Sara, this was the first time she had taken part in such an important decision. She felt her opinion genuinely mattered. Knowing that her input helped to select the person who would support future pupils gave her pride and a new sense of confidence in her own voice.



4.1 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

CEDAW

In Cardiff, we want all children to be treated with dignity and respect and free from discrimination.

Approach

To deliver key corporate commitments that meet the principles and standards in the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Council has taken forward a programme of work to progress the Council's commitment to acting in accordance with the CEDAW principles. This has included a number of strands of activity:

- The commitments made have been incorporated into the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024-28 which was formally agreed by Cabinet in September 2024.
- The progress made by the Council in delivering the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy will be captured in an Annual Report set for publication in September 2025.
- The Council continues to host dedicated space on its website to promote the Eliminating discrimination against women (cardiff.gov.uk) and contains information about its CEDAW commitments.
- A mandatory Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training module has been developed and was launched in January 2025.
- Through the Council's Single Impact Assessment (which includes Equality Impact Assessments), all formal Cabinet decisions now systematically consider the impact on women and girls.
- Equality Impact Assessment training is now a mandatory requirement for all Chief Officers (Senior Officers)

Impact

94% of Senior Officers
have completed the
Equality Impact Assessment Training

For 2024/25, when Equality Impact Assessments were identified as being required, they were completed. This meant that, of the 36 decisions identified as requiring EIAs, 36 EIAs were completed



4.2 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

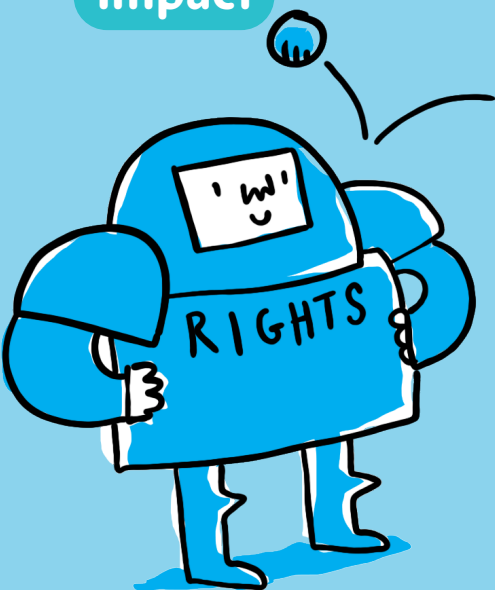
Cardiff Youth Justice

Approach

Monitoring and addressing any disproportionality in Cardiff Youth Justice Service (YJS)

- Continued profiling of case-loads to monitor ethnicity and outcomes against Year 0 baseline
- Engage children about their experiences and share findings with key partners e.g. police
- Review of existing strategy for the youth justice service and plan of activity from 2024 onwards.
- Continue to develop quality assurance within the youth justice service and ensure a consistent focus on diversity.
- Issues related to diversity and disproportionality embedded in supervision and workforce development plans.

Impact



Drafting a diversity strategy for the YJS, which will include an action plan to address disproportionality

Ongoing analysis of disparity includes undertaking deep dives of cases to identify if there is evidence of disparity and to identify any training needs for staff.

Continuing efforts in recruiting volunteers from all local communities within Cardiff to try and accurately reflect the YJS cohort

YJS is committed to taking a 'Child First' with the children and young people it works with. 'Child First' has its roots in the UNCRC

4.3 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Leadership Programme

Approach

Building on a successful pilot project for young people from ethnic minority and working class backgrounds which took place in 2024. Common Wealth Theatre are recruiting for the full roll-out of the leadership programme for autumn 2025.



Impact

This work has given skills, confidence and improved connections to 22 participants through a fun and creative process. Young people who took part in the pilot have continued to engage in various programmes of work and will be invited back to support the new cohort for 2025.

4.4 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

School Exclusions and Behaviour

Working to improve school exclusions and behaviour.

Approach

- Update school exclusion guidance with input from schools and the Children and Young People's Board.
- Launch and promoted the new guidance at headteacher conferences.
- Regularly track and review exclusion data, reporting every half term to the Education Management Team and sharing with schools through the All Schools Risk process.
- Develop a new Education & Inclusion Strategy.

Impact

- **Clearer school guidance now in place to help reduce exclusions.**
- **Regular data tracking means we can spot trends early and take action.**
- **A draft Education & Inclusion Strategy has been created to guide future work.**

4.5 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Public Transport Policy

Approach

Following the announcement by Welsh Government relating to reduced bus fares for children and young people across Wales Cardiff is now implementing the policy across the city - with a commitment to ongoing monitoring and evaluation as part of the national policy.

Impact

5 to 21 year olds in Cardiff will be able to access £1 single fares and £3 all-day fares for 2025/26 - enabling independent mobility accessing school, employment training, and leisure activities in a more equitable way.



4.6 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Neurodivergent Friendly City

Approach

Cardiff is committed to becoming a Neurodivergent Friendly City, making sure that children, young people, and adults who are neurodivergent are supported to live well. A draft strategy has been developed and is being consulted on over the summer. The strategy sets out practical actions to improve accessibility, inclusion, and understanding across the city, with a strong focus on co-production with neurodivergent people, including young people.

Impact

Commissioned virtual and audio tours for 20 Hubs and Libraries so visitors can explore the space and services before arriving. These were designed with input from neurodivergent young people, and their recommendations have been built in.

- Introduced sensory study aids and early years backpacks—co-produced with Scope youth group and Neuro Roots—which can be borrowed during visits to Hubs and Libraries.
- Improved Hub and Library spaces by adding neurodivergent-friendly equipment and furniture, creating sensory nooks in 10 locations, and raising awareness through campaigns, staff training, events, and activities tailored to neurodivergent children and young people.

What do children have to say?

'It is really good that the city is thinking about those children with autism as my brother has it and it can be hard'

Young person (16)

'You can tell when someone has made changes to make it easier for people like me, its much better'.

Young person (15)



4.7 EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Gender Equity

Approach

This year we expanded our gender equity work to include boys in shaping a more equal city, responding to the requests made by girls last year.. Working with Our Voice Our Journey, we piloted Boys Groups to explore healthy relationships and respect, co-designed with young people and practitioners. Recruitment has been strong, with trained facilitators preparing to deliver groups across multiple settings.

Practitioner development has also been a focus, with training, resources, and events delivered across education, youth services, children's services, and the third sector. This included promotion of the Create the Conditions resource and targeted bystander training.

We are also redeveloping the Relationships, Respect and Responsibility Toolkit for use in schools and youth settings, and distributing This Is Not Yours to Carry, a book that helps younger children exposed to domestic violence understand it is not their responsibility, to children in refuges and council supported housing services.

Impact

- Boys Groups co-designed with young people and now ready to launch across three settings.
- Over 30 practitioners engaged through training, events, and resources.
Toolkit redevelopment underway, with specialist input to align with the Curriculum for Wales.
- 150 books distributed to children and families, raising awareness of safety and respect.
- Rewired Summer programme delivered to boys and young men
- One more impact - Over 1,000 boys received workshops by She Is Not Your Rehab with the aim of reducing domestic violence



Children's Rights in Action

Equal & Included

Sian

Sian used to find some school lessons uncomfortable. Jokes and comments from boys in her class often went unchallenged, and she felt frustrated that girls weren't always treated with respect. This year things changed. Her school introduced classroom discussions on gender equity and positive masculinity, and boys from her year group took part in a workshop led by Matt Brown, founder of *She Is Not Your Rehab*.



Sian noticed an immediate difference. Male teachers began challenging disrespectful behaviour when it happened, and boys in her class spoke with more thought and understanding. Sian feels her school is serious about equality. She now feels more confident in lessons, enjoys better relationships with her peers, and sees her male classmates as allies in making the school a more respectful place for everyone.

Aled

Aled always wanted to cycle to school with his friends, but his family couldn't afford a bike. During cycle training at school, he shared this with the instructors, who fed it back to the council team. Soon after, Aled received a bike through the ReCYCLE scheme, which provides refurbished bikes to young people who need them.

Now, Aled rides to school most days, gaining independence and confidence. He feels proud that his voice - a simple comment during training - helped spark a solution that has supported over 100 children across the city. For Aled, being listened to meant not only getting a bike, but also being part of a city where young people's ideas can lead to real change.



Sita

Sita often found public spaces overwhelming. Visiting the library with her family could be stressful - she never knew what the space would be like, and sometimes the noise and bustle made her anxious.

Things began to change when the library introduced sensory nooks and borrowed backpacks designed with neurodivergent young people. Sita used a sensory backpack on her visits, which gave her tools to stay calm and focused. Before her first trip back, she also explored the new virtual tour online, so she knew exactly what to expect when she arrived.

Now, Sita looks forward to her library visits. She enjoys choosing books in a calmer, more welcoming environment, and her family no longer worries that the experience will be overwhelming. For Sita, these small changes have made a big difference - turning the library into a place where she feels included, safe, and able to thrive.



Mohammad

Before joining the Take Your Place leadership programme, Mohammad didn't see himself as a leader. He rarely saw role models who looked like him in positions of influence and wasn't sure how he could make his voice heard.

Through the programme, run by Common Wealth Theatre, Mohammad developed new skills in communication and leadership. He built friendships, found confidence in speaking up, and met role models from his own community who inspired him to believe that leadership was possible.

Since completing the course, Mohammad has become involved in two new community projects — a youth-led campaign on climate action and a local cultural festival. These opportunities have given him a platform to contribute and to see himself as part of Cardiff's future.

KEY INSPECTION OUTCOMES

Education

- Cardiff Council's most recent Estyn inspection report - [Inspection report Cardiff Council 2022](#) - Estyn - was published in 2022, and the date for the next inspection has yet to be confirmed.
- Over the past three years, 77 schools in Cardiff - representing approximately 60% of all schools - have been inspected. As of 2024/25, 2.3% of Cardiff schools are subject to follow-up activity, including one school requiring significant improvement and two placed in special measures.
- You can access school inspection reports directly via the [Latest Inspection Reports - Estyn](#). The page allows you to filter results by local authority to find reports relevant to your area.

Youth Justice

- Cardiff Youth Justice Service (YJS) was most recently inspected in 2022 by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, alongside inspectors from police, health, education, and social care agencies. The full inspection report can be accessed on the HM Inspectorate of Probation website: [An inspection of youth offending services in Cardiff](#).

Child Protection

- In 2024, Cardiff was the subject of a Joint Inspectorate Review of Child Protection Arrangements (JICPA), conducted by Care Inspectorate Wales, Estyn, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The published report highlights both areas of strength and areas for improvement, and can be accessed on the Care Inspectorate Wales website via the [Cardiff JICPA Report 2024](#).



ONGOING PARTNERSHIPS

Working in partnership has been at the heart of Child Friendly Cardiff's progress over the last year. By bringing together universities, council services, voluntary organisations, and young people themselves, we have strengthened a culture of collaboration that puts children's rights at the centre of decision-making.

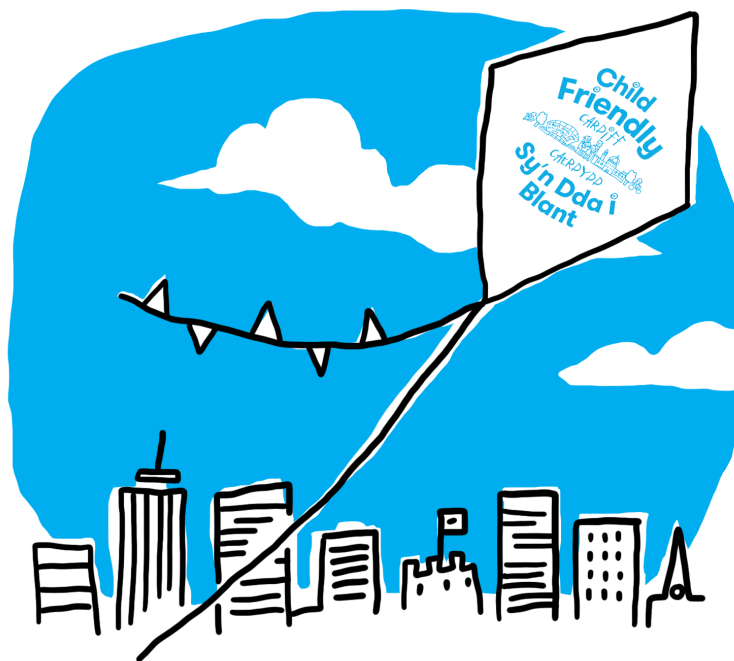
Highlights include work with Cardiff University's School of Geography and Planning to develop a "Vision for Play" briefing, and the HerParks project, which engaged young people—particularly teenage girls—in mapping and reimagining parks. In partnership with AtkinsRealis, we co-developed an innovative wellbeing framework for assessing children's experiences in urban environments, while collaboration with Cambridge University's Centre for Science and Policy explored what a 'Child Friendly Cambridge' could look like. Across Cardiff Council, young people helped shape strategies from education inclusion to neurodiversity and community safety, and contributed to major planning processes such as the Local Development Plan.

Partnerships extended nationally and internationally, with contributions to research on evolving capacities with Queen's University Belfast, supporting Members of the UK Youth Parliament with Children in Wales and the National Youth Agency, and exchanges with twin cities Stuttgart and St Helens. Local collaborations also flourished through Grand Councils, youth-led interviews, and co-design of inclusive spaces at festivals and events. Together, these partnerships demonstrate how shared expertise, innovation, and a commitment to participation are driving forward Cardiff's ambition to ensure every child and young person can thrive.



SUMMARY

As we move into the next stage of our journey, Cardiff will continue to strengthen its commitment to making children's rights a lived reality for every child and young person. Building on the strong foundations laid over many years, our ambition is to embed rights more deeply across all services, improve outcomes for children, and ensure fairness and inclusion in every part of city life. This includes supporting and training our workforce so they can deliver excellent services that meet the needs of children and their families. We know this can only be achieved by working in partnership – with schools, communities, organisations, and most importantly by listening to and acting with children and young people themselves. Together, we will continue to shape a city that is safe, fair, and full of opportunity for every child.



GLOSSARY

(A list of important words and their meanings)

Accountability - When a person or a group of people take responsibility for an action

Bespoke - Something made especially for someone

Children's rights approach - When children's rights are prioritised in the work that organisations do

CRIA - Children's Rights Impact Assessment

Compliance - means doing what you're supposed to do or following the rules

Compliance dashboard - Display of information showing you who is doing what they are supposed to be doing or who is following the rules

Consultation - When you meet with a person or group of people who are experts in a particular subject

Data - Facts and statistics which are brought together

Discrimination - Treating someone unfairly or differently just because of who they are or how they look

Disproportionality - When things are not in balance or not fair

Elected members - Members of the Council/parliament elected by residents

Equality - When everyone gets the same things

Equity - When everyone gets what they need for it to be fair – not necessarily the same things

Local authority - A body within the government which provides services in each local area

Marginalised - being pushed to the side or left out.

Participation - The action of taking part/being involved in something

Protected characteristics - things about people that make them who they are, and these things are protected by laws to make sure everyone is treated fairly. For example, your age, your gender, your race, your religion, or if you have a disability.

Public services - A service whose purpose is to help the public and is provided by the government. Some of these services are hospitals, schools, police etc.

Quality assurance - When something is checked to make sure that it is proper and of a good standard

Scrutiny - The role of scrutiny is to look at issues that matter to Cardiff residents, hold to account decisions made by the Council and push for improvements

Social action - When people come together to help make their lives better and improve issues that are important in their communities

Sustainable - When a project can continue to run because the resources will be available