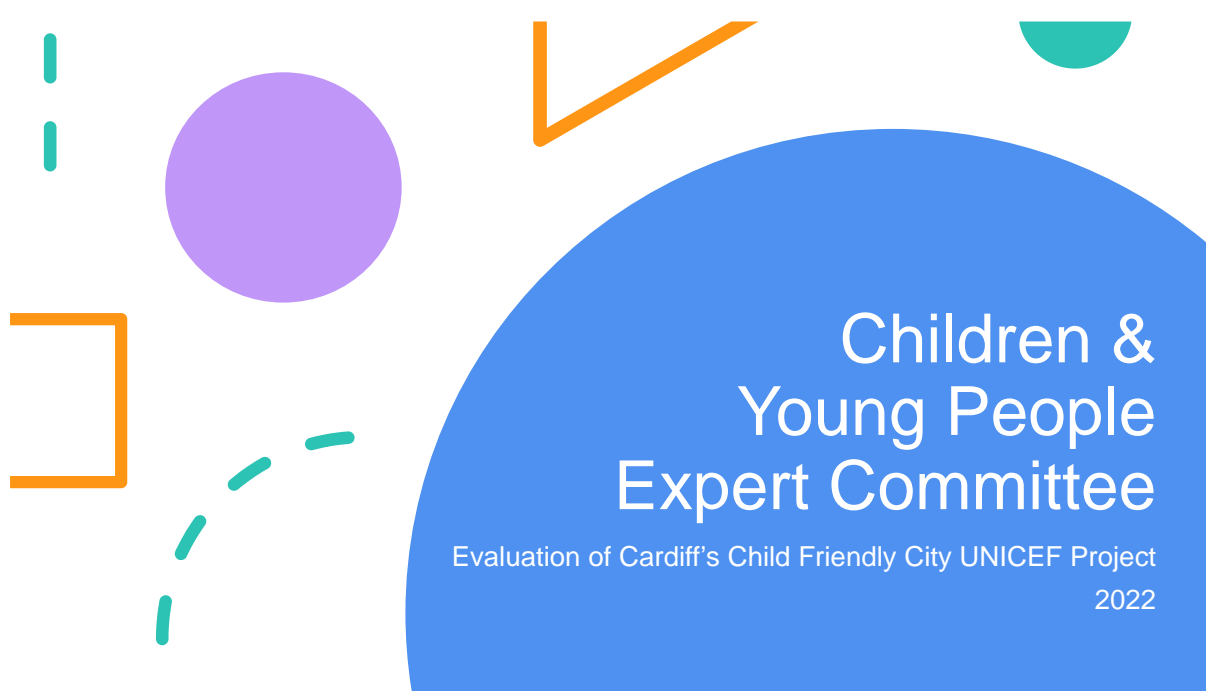


Children and Young People Expert Committee: Evaluation of Cardiff Child Friendly City and Children's Rights Approach



Authored by:

Children and Young People Expert Committee

Supported by [Observatory on Human Rights of Children](#)

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1 Introduction to our team and project

Who are we?

What we were asked to do ...



We are a group of children and young people ages 10-25 years who were asked to come together to evaluate the [Child Friendly Cardiff \(UNICEF\) project](#) from a children's rights perspective, ensuring that our voice was at the centre of the evaluation process.

We represent a range of different organisations and forums, Cardiff Child Friendly Advisory Board, Cardiff Youth Council, Oasis, National Youth and Advocacy Service (NYAS), and Ministry of Life. We feel very privileged to have been asked to scrutinise the evaluation report. We were also delighted to be given the opportunity to invite Senior Decision Makers within Cardiff Local Authority and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to a formal examination, where we were able to ask them some important questions in relation to the delivery of the Child Friendly Cardiff Programme and the implementation of a [children's rights approach](#). Within our discussions, we agreed that a children's rights approach was a key part of this process. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child must be central to all decision making and core to planning and service delivery. When a children's rights approach is adopted, there must be systems in place to ensure the full range of children's rights are fully understood and implemented.

2 Methods

We first met on the 24th of September in Cardiff Central Library to look at evidence from the Child Friendly Cardiff project evaluation report. Dr Rhian Croke and Helen Dale from the Observatory on Human Rights of Children were the experts commissioned to help us conduct our independent evaluation. They helped us to understand the goals that had been set out at the beginning of the Child Friendly Cardiff programme, to understand more about children's rights and how to evaluate each area within the Child Friendly Cardiff evaluation report.

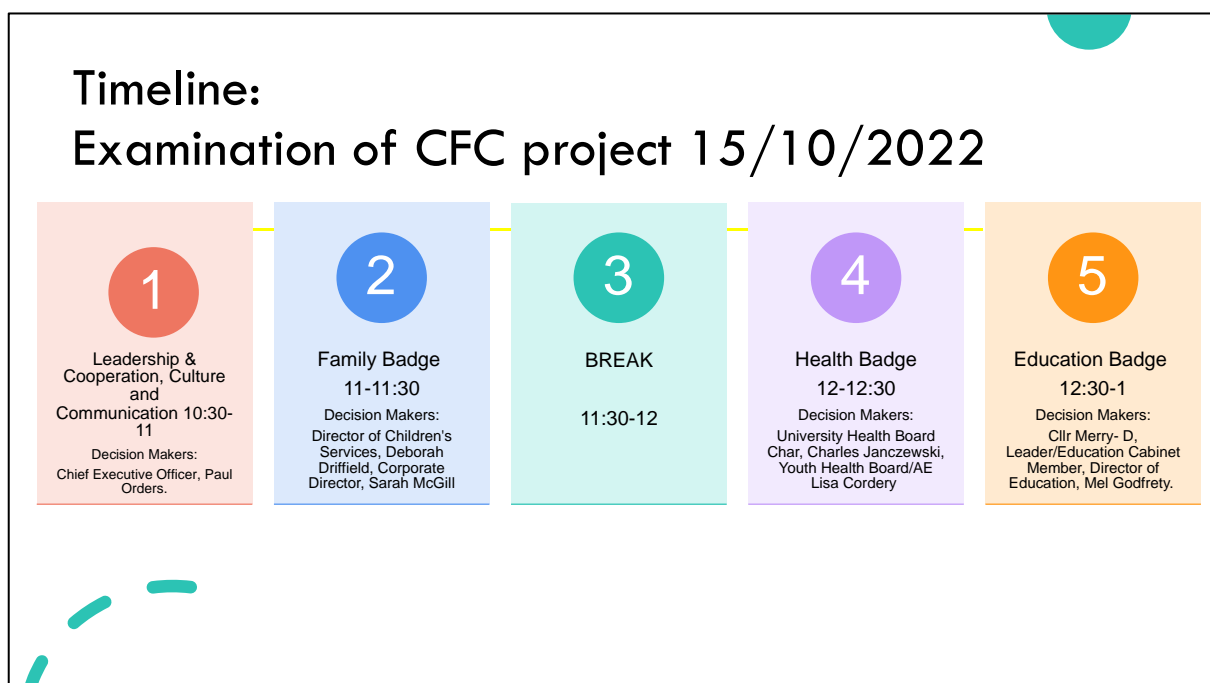
For each badge/or area of work undertaken by the Child Friendly Cardiff Programme, we took part in activities to help us understand what has been done well. It was also important for us to think about issues to take to the Senior Decision Makers to help us work together, ensuring that we are collaborating, to make rights a reality for children and young people in Cardiff. There are 6 badges in total:

1. Leadership and Cooperation
2. Culture
3. Communication
4. Family and Belonging
5. Health
6. Education

We came up with lots of suggestions regarding what has been done well but also reported on what our issues or concerns were/or what we felt was missing. From all of this evidence we came up with a list of questions for the key decision makers at Cardiff Local Authority and the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board.

All our suggestions and comments were collated into a draft report for us to consider. We then met again virtually to decide as group, if we were happy with what was included. We made further suggestions and amendments and then this report was turned into a powerpoint which we presented to key decision makers at a formal examination of the Child Friendly Cardiff Programme and implementation of a children's rights approach on October 15th at County Hall.

Below is a timeline for the examination, as well as some photos of us all presenting and asking questions of the decision makers.



Children and Young People Expert Committee Examination of Senior Decision Makers at County Hall October 15th 2022



3 Structure of the report

In each section of this report, we will share evidence from our evaluation of all the badges regarding:

- What we believe has been done well
- Our issues/concerns
- Key questions for Senior Decision Makers
- Examination of Cardiff Local Authority/Health Board key points of discussion
- Recommendations for Senior Decision Makers

4 Mandatory Badges, Leadership & Cooperation, Culture, Communication



We took part in an activity to help us understand children's rights and, listened to a presentation on the Child Friendly Cardiff Programme- that included telling us about the 6 areas of work called badges. We did an exercise to consider how well Cardiff has progressed on the work they have been doing on the Mandatory Badges of Leadership and Cooperation, Culture and Communication. Below we highlight what we believe has been done well.

4.1 What has been done well

What's been done well:

- Significant progress on training staff and elected members and children on children's rights.
- Resources dedicated to a team that focuses on children's rights.
- More children participating in groups that have an influence on decision making at lots of different levels.
- Senior leaders taking children's rights into account in policy and delivery of services.



What's been done well:

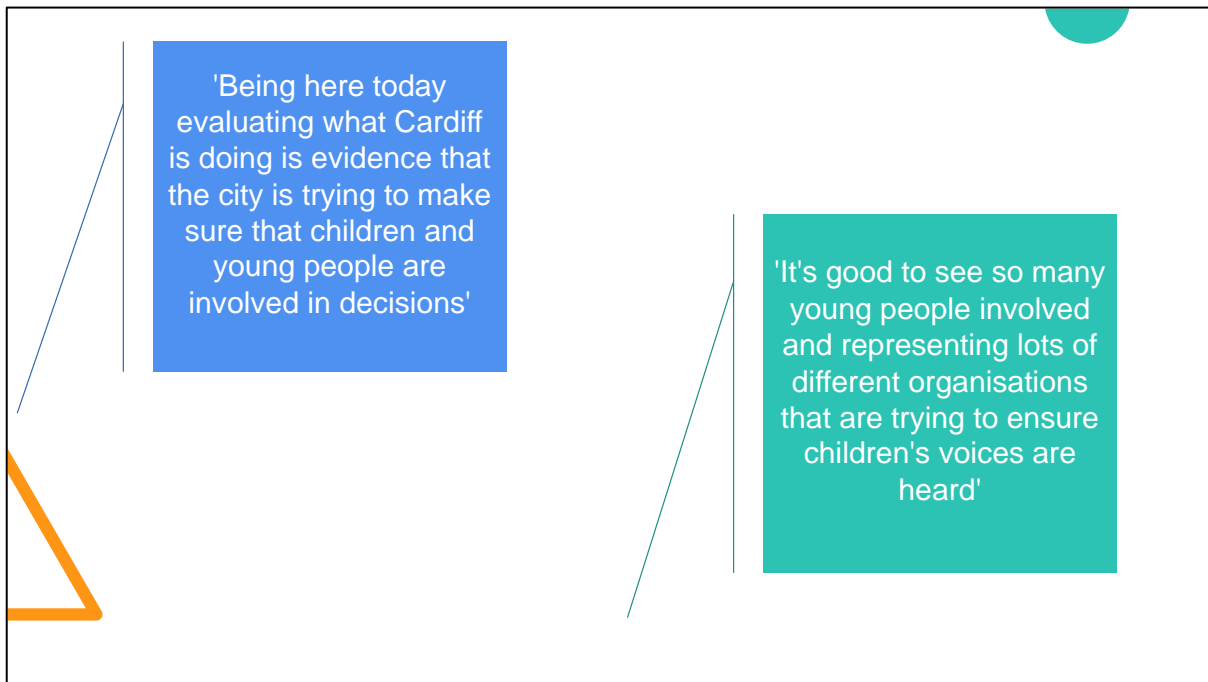
The majority of our group believe that:

People are working together to make the city better for children and young people.

Decisions are made that involve children and young people



See below what some of our Committee Members said:



4.2 List of Issues

We recognise that implementing the Child Friendly Cardiff programme and a children's rights approach is a journey. We believe Cardiff Local Authority has made a good start. However, there are always opportunities to do more to ensure that children's rights are embedded across services and policy in Cardiff. We hope to see work continue, moving forward.

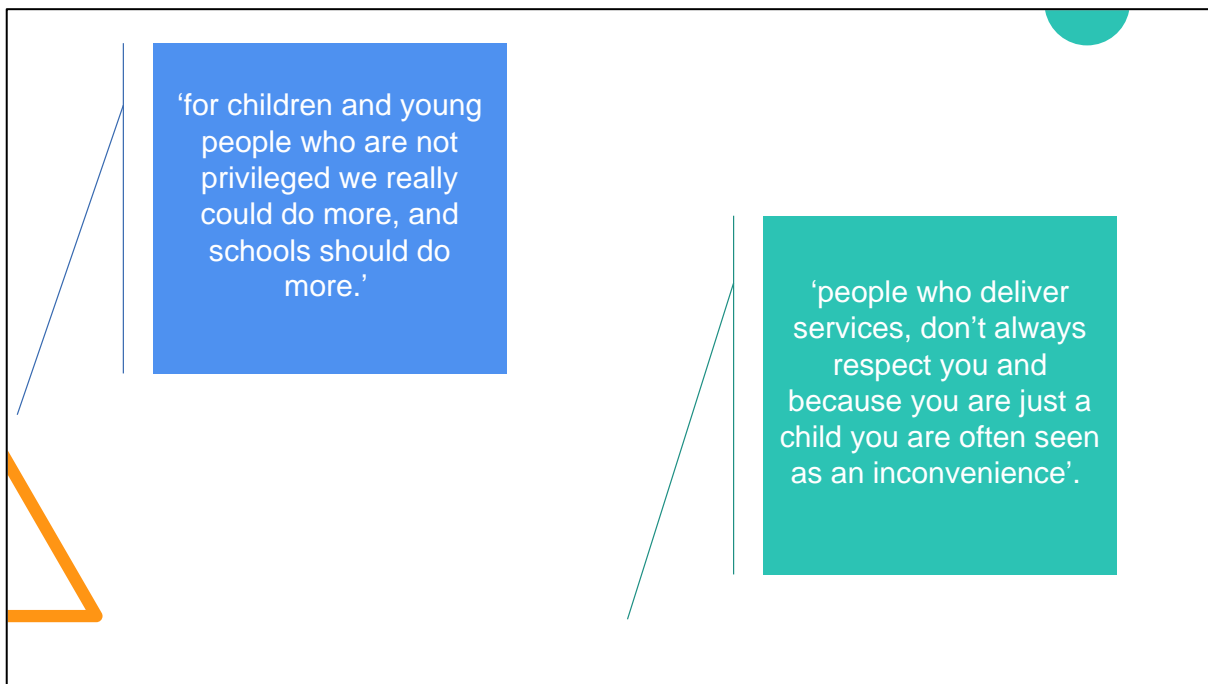
List of issues:

Senior decision makers and elected members say in the report they need more training and support on children's rights. We agree and think this is critical!

2/3 of our group believe that more needs to be done to ensure:

The people who deliver services for children understand children's rights and how to ensure they are respected.


While we acknowledge there has been positive work on educating and raising awareness of Senior Decision Makers and staff on children's rights, this is what some of our Committee Members had to say:



List of issues:

Majority of our group believe that more needs to be done to ensure:

All children understand their rights and are empowered to claim them and hold public services to account.

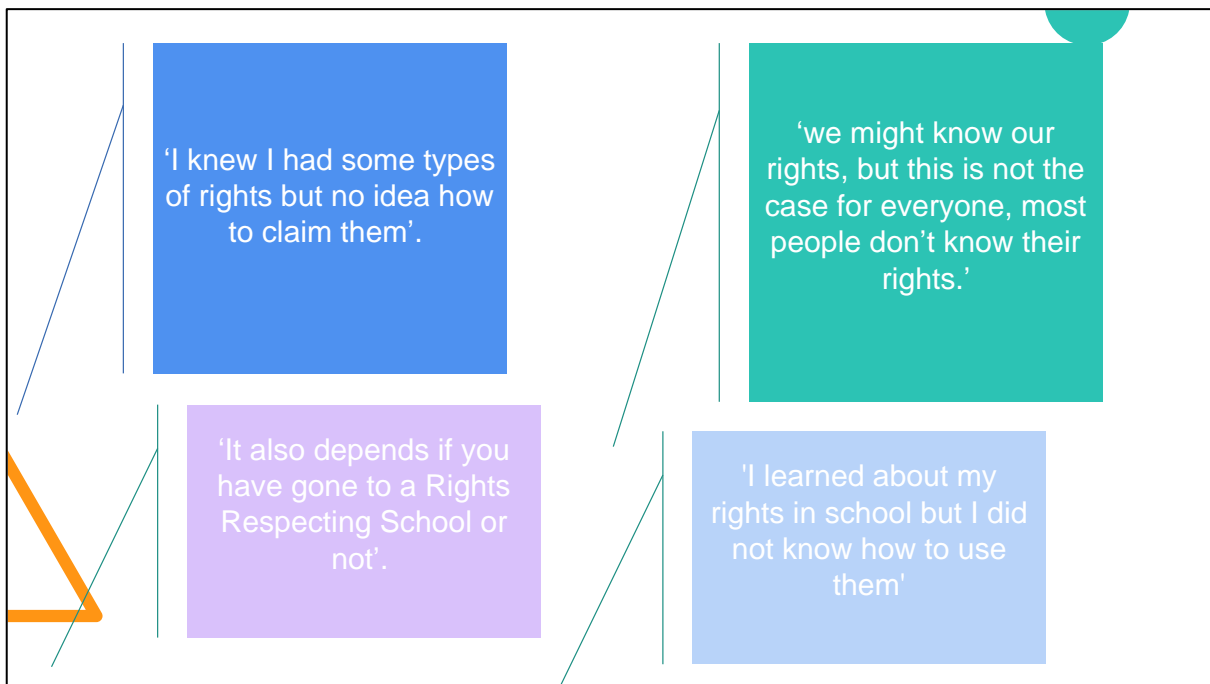


We read in the Cardiff Child Friendly Evaluation report that 86% of children have heard of their rights. We think this is fantastic, but the majority of our group also believe that more needs to be done to ensure that all children understand their rights and are empowered to claim them, holding public services to account.

We had a discussion that knowing your rights often depends on whether you attend a Rights Respecting School (discussed also in Section 7). Some schools are further forward on their Rights Respecting Award. Similarly, time and resources dedicated to the award is variable between schools, with some implementing the programme in a quick and efficient way, whilst others are at a standstill. School Council structures are also inconsistent, some doing good work, and others not so much.

We also discussed that it can depend on whether you are a member of a group or organisation that promotes children's rights. Lots of young people in the communities we live in don't have the same opportunities to learn about and claim their rights.

These are some examples of the things that our Committee Members said:



List of issues:

Majority of our group believe that more needs to be done to ensure:

People value and respect children and young people and people know about and respect children's rights.



In other words, we would like all children to be treated equally and with respect. Their views and opinions being listened to or taken into account. See below some of our Committee Members' thoughts in relation to this.

'People do not respect and value young people's rights, if we take the example of young worker's rights there is no equality'

'In my school treated with such little respect, even if it's one degree outside, we have to wear skirts, lack of equality, we should be able to wear trousers'.

'And boys should be able to wear shorts in summer!'

'In schools adults just don't respect children and much more needs to be done'.

'Our views or opinions are not always taken into account, as well as not being treated equally'

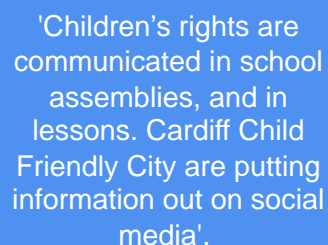
List of issues:

Majority of our group believe that more needs to be done to ensure:

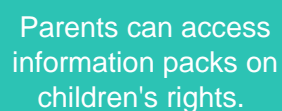
Information about children's rights is shared with children, young people and adults in different ways.



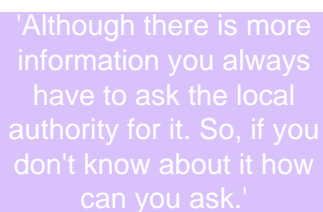
What we mean by this statement is the information needs to be accessible and child-friendly. It needs to get to the young people who need it. Some members were aware of some great work being done by Child Friendly Cardiff programme, but the majority are involved in organisations/groups who know about rights more than other young people. If children are not involved in groups/organisations, they don't always know there is information and where to access help. Please see some examples of what our Committee Members said:



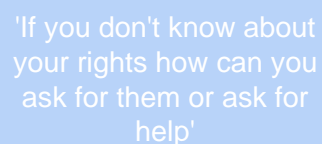
'Children's rights are communicated in school assemblies, and in lessons. Cardiff Child Friendly City are putting information out on social media'.



Parents can access information packs on children's rights.



'Although there is more information you always have to ask the local authority for it. So, if you don't know about it how can you ask.'



'If you don't know about your rights how can you ask for them or ask for help'

4.3 Questions for Senior Decision Makers

Please see our questions outlined below:

Key Questions	
1.	What actions are you going to take to ensure that the work that you have started will continue and all Senior Decision Makers and staff will understand the importance of children's rights in their work?
2.	What actions are you going to take to ensure that the work that you have started will continue and Elected Members will understand the importance of children's rights in their work?
3.	It is important that Senior Leaders are accountable to children in the work that they do, can you tell us more about your plan for ensuring accountability to children ?
4.	What actions are you going to take to ensure that all children across Cardiff feel that they are respected and are empowered to know their rights and how to claim them ? (Not only the children on youth forums or projects or excellent rights respecting schools)

4.4 Key points coming from discussion with Senior Decision Makers

We have taken the main themes coming from our discussion with the Senior Decision Makers on the Mandatory Badges and reflected on them below.

4.4.1 Child Friendly Cardiff Programme and the implementation of a child rights approach

The Senior Decision Maker communicated his commitment to both, he said:

'So, first of all from my perspective. I take an instruction from the political leadership of the Council about priorities. And we have a corporate plan which we agree every year. So that outlines all our objectives, and that corporate plan is really, really important in telling me, where we place our emphasis and in that corporate plan is a very, very significant commitment to achieving UNICEF child friendly city status, but also the child rights. So, I can't ignore that. It's my job to ensure with all the rest of the things that we deal with as a Council, but it's really important that I do everything I can as the chief executive of the Council to ensure that managers and services are implementing that commitment'.

With regards to ensuring money is invested in the delivery of both, the Senior Decision Maker recognised that there are challenges in terms of sufficient resources, but delivery of a programme cannot just be words it requires resources and actions. The Senior Decision Maker said:

'So that's very, very important, it's not just words, it also requires a commitment of resources, whether that's money, and we haven't got too much of that, but we have some which we have put into the child rights programme.'

We were pleased to hear the Senior Decision Maker express his clear commitment to continuing the work of the Child Friendly Cardiff Programme and the implementation of a child rights approach. We are concerned at the recent news that Cardiff Council has had to make a budget cut of £50 million. Children's rights are an obligation to be met by public bodies and no child should be experiencing any violation of them. Therefore, we are hoping that the budget cut will not mean that any children's rights are compromised.

4.4.2 Training of staff to understand how to implement children's rights in their work

The Senior Decision Maker commented that for staff to understand the implementation of a children's rights approach they have to be given training and support to be able to do this.

'So, it's really making clear that their priorities are understood and included in the programme that we're talking about today, so that's a really important thing. It doesn't just happen though. We've got to ensure and continue to ensure that our staff are aware of, the rights-based approach. The children and young people want to see this. And that's really about training, fundamentally about training. And so, what we've done recently, for instance, is that we've refreshed, the learning programmes that staff are required to receive. They're largely e-learning modules. And what we will be doing is ensuring that those modules are mandatory so they are compulsory for staff. So, we've got lots of staff in the Council, including teachers. We've got about 12,000 staff, that's a lot of people. But we are making a commitment quite apart from in schools, we're making a commitment that about, I think it's around 85% of our staff across the piece, go through that programme and understand child rights and the implications for their work. So that's a really high number of Council staff that will be asked to, you know, go through that programme. We've obviously got a child rights trainer as part of the child friendly City team, so that's a resource. A post which we've committed to. So that continues to ensure that our training happens.'

We were delighted to hear of the commitment that has been made to training staff across the Council via an e-module and in particular to hear that it is mandatory. We are really impressed with this step taken by Cardiff Council. We are also very pleased that resource has been found to recruit a child rights trainer as part of the Child Friendly Cardiff Team. We hope to see more resource dedicated to more

trainers and face to face training, to understand real case scenarios applied to staff's work will help them to better understand how to implement children's rights.

Another Senior Decision Maker made this important point:

'I mean one of my roles as child friendly champion, is actually when we're sat around the table and we're making those collective decisions is sometimes actually questioning people about how they've actually done. A consultation how they've engaged with children and young people and trying to make them think about that, so it becomes routine. It is written in our corporate plan and it's very clear about that. But sometimes when people are, you know, for the best intentions are trying to make decisions quickly, it's very easy to keep reminding yourself of the importance of that.'

With regards to elected members, it was added:

'Going back to hearing children's voices in terms of elected members generally, I think they're really enthusiastic actually about supporting children's rights. But, sometimes, they're not always quite sure how to do it. So, we had the training session when we had a lot of new and elected Members, but you can't just give them one training session and think that is enough.'

As the Senior Decision Maker acknowledges although there is a senior commitment to children's rights and it is written in the corporate plan, the challenge is to ensure that all staff and elected members actively consider children's rights when making decisions. This again further emphasises the importance of ongoing and regular training to help staff and elected members, have a children's rights perspective in all their work.

4.4.3 Listening to children and taking their views into account

It was positive to hear from a Senior Decision Maker that councillors want to engage with children and young people:

'And actually, most councillors desperately want to go and talk to any groups of people who are in their area, including children and young people. I think sometimes it's harder to actually listen to what's coming back and it's very easy if you're an elected politician to get a bit defensive and think well, you know that you meant something with the best of intentions, but people are criticising it, it is quite easy for you to think, well that's not fair because I did XYZ rather than them actually hearing what they're being told. '

As part of training on children's rights perhaps councillors can be better supported to have a constructive dialogue with children and young people, so they don't think that they are being criticised, instead they understand that children and young people are sharing their concerns and hoping they can be taken into account.

4.5 Our recommendations for the future

- Cardiff Local Authority must ensure the Child Friendly Cardiff programme and the implementation of a child rights approach continues and is supported by an appropriate level of investment and funding.
- Cardiff Local Authority must be clear and transparent about the funding of the programme and the implementation of a children's rights approach.
- Cardiff Local Authority must continue their commitment to mandatory training via the e-learning module on children's rights to staff across the authority and to invest more funding in face-to-face training with staff so they better understand how to apply children's rights in their day-to-day decision making and other activities.
- Cardiff Local Authority must ensure that children are not only informed about their rights but are empowered to claim them.
- Cardiff Local Authority must ensure elected members have ongoing and regular training on children's rights, as well as how to engage in constructive dialogue with children and young people.

5 Family and Belonging Badge



The next section of our report focuses on the Family and Belonging Badge.

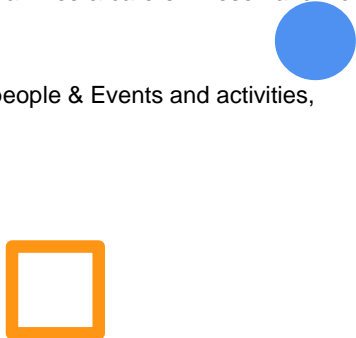
We evaluated the work delivered against this badge and placed it into two columns:

- What has been done well?
- What more could be done/worked on? (i.e., our key areas of concern)

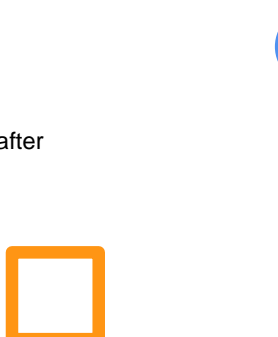
We recognise lots of positive work has been done. We will run through the main areas of work.

5.1 What's been done well

What's been done well:

- Free, fun activities for disabled & care experienced children, families & carers. These have included:
 - The development of the Young Carers Card
 - Priority access to three festivals for children and young people & Events and activities,
 - Visiting Flatholm Island,
 - Driving lessons,
 - Abseiling,
 - Theatre visits,
 - Sailing
 - Visiting Aqua Park
 - Development of one email or phone number for children, young people and their families in Cardiff Family Advice and Support (CFAS)
 - Awareness of children's rights amongst Children with a disability. However, they reported as one of the lowest groups with 82% as opposed to 85% overall.
- 

What's been done well:

- Cardiff's 'Corporate Parenting' Strategy:
 - Improving emotional wellbeing and physical health
 - Better connections, improved relationships
 - A comfortable, safe, and stable home whilst in care and after
 - Educational Achievement, Employment and Training
 - Celebrating our children and young people
 - Over half stating CYP are treated with respect by adults
 - Range of information provided by Child and family advice Service
 - UNCRC booklet for caregivers
 - Mind of my own app development
 - Training for CYP to sit on interview panels.
 - Children with a disability felt 'Their views were 'Always' listened to and taken seriously'.
- 

5.2 List of Issues

We noted some areas that require progress. Please see below our List of Issues.

List of issues:

Cardiff's 'Corporate Parenting' Strategy: Participation

To make the changes suggested by children and young people

Children with a disability - Mental health

Children with a disability reporting 'Excellent' mental and emotional health fell from 26.5% in 2019 to 21.6% in 2022. Work to improve and raise awareness of their rights

Just over half CYP stating that they are 'always' treated with respect by adults.

Work to improve the experiences of the CYP that are not 'always' treated with respect by adults

'WhatLeavingCareShouldBe' consultation to inform staff of what leaving care should look like from young people's perspective to improve policy and practice.

Provide more opportunities for CYP to share their experiences and perspectives as experts in their own lives

List of issues:

Cardiff Family Advice and Support (CFAS) offer a range of information, advice and assistance for children, young people and their families in Cardiff and are the initial contact point

More to be done to raise awareness

Children and young people have the best possible life experiences, are safe, happy, healthy, and achieve their full potential at school and in their future lives.

1 in 5 described their mental and emotional health as 'Poor'.

Prioritise projects to improve children and young people's emotional well being

Training for CYP to sit on interview panels

Offer more opportunities and for CYP to be part of the 'final say'

5.3 Questions for Senior Decision Makers

Please see below our questions, in relation to Family and Belonging:

Key Questions	
1.	It's good that there is now a single point of access for children and families. What methods will you use to raise awareness of this service?
2.	As care experienced children are such a vulnerable group of children, what further actions will you be taking to ensure they know about their rights and are empowered to claim them?
3.	How will you prioritise activities so there is better support to care experienced children's emotional and mental health?
4.	We are concerned that disabled children report that their emotional and mental health has deteriorated. What actions will you be taking to ensure better support to this vulnerable group of children?
5.	What actions will you be taking to ensure disabled children know about their rights and are empowered to claim them?
6.	How can you ensure that children who engage with your services have an opportunity to influence them?

5.4 Key points coming from discussion with Senior Decision Makers

We have taken the main themes coming from our discussion with the Senior Decision makers on the Family and Belonging Badge and reflected on them below.

5.4.1 Raising awareness of services and the single point of access

A Senior Decision Maker outlined:

'I think the first thing to say is that we are really, really pleased that we've been able to bring a sort of gateway approach to that huge range of services that exist for children and young people and their families. What used to happen in the past was that a lot of great services existed. The people didn't really know how to get hold of them and there was quite a bit of duplication as well as some gaps. We're not finished on that journey yet. There's still a long way to go, but we're very pleased with the progress so far and it's great that you think it's a good move in the right direction in terms of promoting it.'

Activities to promote the single point of access

- Social media: including, Face book, Twitter.
- Events.
- Blogs developed by young Cardiffians who use the service – talking about their experience and sharing it with others ‘And that that’s quite powerful, I think, because it’s actually people who’ve used those services explaining them.’

The Senior Decision Makers also commented on the importance of monitoring what is happening e.g., where referrals are coming from:

‘Recently we went to the Head Teachers Conference, and we were able to show head teachers those schools that were providing referrals into the services and equally. Those that weren’t. And so, it’s a combination of having, you know all of those mechanisms and making sure that we keep an eye on what what’s happening.’

A Senior Decision Maker added:

‘You know, we can’t rely on just social media. That’s why we need to be engaging with schools. We need to be engaged with partners in 3rd sector and Health Board to make sure that every professional who comes across a young person, which child that they’re working with can say, actually I think this might fit..... And it’s important for me that they are also aware of the support services that we offer so that we can get in as early as possible to give young people and their families the support they need and just build on those strengths’.

We are pleased with the introduction of a single point of access for children and that Senior Decision Makers are raising awareness of this important service. It is so important that they do everything they can to raise awareness of it.

5.4.2 Care Experienced Children

Care experienced children aware of their rights

We were pleased to hear that a Senior Decision Maker emphasised the importance of care experienced children being empowered to understand their rights.

‘You’re absolutely right, Care Experienced children are one of the most vulnerable groups of children in society. And then it’s absolutely right that we have a number of safeguards in place to make sure that we’re absolutely aware of what’s happening with those young people. But also the best way to safeguard those young people is to empower them so that they do know what their rights are. That’s well-rehearsed within sort of child protection and safeguarding research.’

Independent advocacy and independent reviewing officers

The Senior Decision Makers communicated that every child has a legal right to access independent advocacy as part of the active offer and also an Independent Reviewing Officer to review all of their care plans. With regards to a child's placement, they have to 'speak to each child before each review to make sure that their wishes and feelings are heard and to see if the child wants to go to their review or fill in a form before that'.

Child Friendly Leaflets

The Senior Decision maker also commented that they have developed child friendly leaflets to help children to understand all of the processes in children's services.

Legal representation or guardian

They also explained how if children enter the court system, then they automatically have access and are represented by their own legal representation and a guardian.

Mind of my own app

The Senior Decision Maker referred to the Mind of my own app, explaining that children can use this app to say how they are feeling, any concerns they have and then as the Senior Decision Maker added 'we're able to keep a close eye on that and that's being developed across the whole of children's services and being rolled out in a more accessible format for children with disabilities'.

Participation Framework

The Senior Decision Makers communicated that they intend to develop a participation framework to ensure that children are better able to be engaged and involved in service development. As commented on below:

'I think going forward, we've had plans for a while now to develop a participation framework for young people but especially for care experienced children so that they do have a bigger part to play, in terms of their own, assessments and care planning, because the most important thing is that young people are central to all of the care plans that we have for them and that we understand what they're lived experience is and they're able to voice any concerns. There's lots of work that we can do going forward to make sure that we not just gather individual voices, but a collection of voices and therefore those voices then can inform our future service delivery.'

The Senior Decision Maker said they would like to get care experienced children more involved in developing children's homes e.g., looking at the plans and the design. The Senior Decision Maker also commented:

'And also nationally there's a young person, young person's commissioners group that links into the four C's and they link in with all of our commissioning work. So again, I don't know if any of our local young people around the table today are involved in that, but that's another way that we can really look at young people being involved in in service

design.....I did say earlier that COVID delayed our participation framework within children's. Process, but we'd be hoping to put a lot of this together so that rather than just doing it on the individual basis, children are actually leading the way in terms of what our services look like.'

We were pleased to hear the commitment being made to develop and strengthen a participation framework for care experienced children.

Children's services joining up more with education services

One of our Committee Members who is care experienced, asked a follow up question in relation to care experienced children and the importance of doing more to raise awareness of the mentioned activities in schools and for children to understand their rights:

'I was just wondering if there's any way that it can be promoted more in schools, because I know I've never been taught about this in my school. It's never been mentioned to me. If people could possibly come in during assemblies or even just handing out leaflets about what they can do to feel supported. Because about this app you've mentioned again, I've never heard about it, never been told about it during school times. So, I feel like if we were informed about more things, it might be a lot easier. Children need to understand more about their rights and how they can learn more about them.'

In response to our colleague's question, we were pleased to hear that there will be a commitment to better collaboration between children's services and education.

'That would be absolutely fantastic. It's great idea. I'll link in with the Director of Education to make sure that we're able to do some of that in schools. Thanks for that suggestion. And perhaps if I could just add one of the areas of join up that that's quite a recent development is a regular meeting that we will attend with head teachers to look at areas where we feel actually perhaps communication isn't going as well as it should. So, we've put that one on the next agenda for the next meeting.'

Waiting times for services

One of our Committee Members asked another follow-on question in relation to care experienced children, they said:

'As a care experienced child, I didn't really get much support until I was out of care because my mum fought for it. But when I was in care, I got therapy for like 12 sessions and then they just went away, which didn't really help. Do you know when you're in therapy and they try and make things better, but it just gets worse if you go, I mean. And I've been waiting for advocates therapy, more therapy. And that's come from a service called NYAS, because I'm waiting for that. So, my question is maybe more

like some support for kids in care, because through COVID it was a really difficult time for them.'

The Senior Decision Maker responded that they were very sorry that they had to wait for so long for therapy and that the therapies did not really make them feel better only worse, but sometimes when you start to face difficult feelings it can feel quite uncomfortable but can be quite a healthy process.

In relation to waiting for so long for therapy the Senior Decision Maker said:

'It's just fair to say we have a real shortage of access to therapy to the health services and we end up buying in a lot of therapy ourselves. It's something we are working hard to work with our colleagues in health to try and address. I do believe that care experienced children need to have access to therapies a lot earlier on I absolutely agree with that. It's something we're working hard to achieve and we know that NYAS that you mentioned are the advocacy service that should be fighting for your rights to make sure that you get you get access to that in a timely way'.

5.4.3 Disabled Children

The Senior Decision Makers acknowledged the statistics that we had presented that demonstrated a deterioration in disabled children's emotional and mental health since the pandemic. The Senior Decision Makers then reported on some of the support systems that they have in place for disabled children.

Care and support planners and movement of disabled children into children's services

The Senior Decision Maker explained:

'We have care and support planners that are linking in with families to make sure that there's a variety of opportunities, for those children affected by disability and health conditions. We're working far more closely with health to make sure that those children have access to timely assessments and support. We've moved the child health and disability team back into children's services because children with disabilities absolutely of course are children 1st and have the same rights as any other child.'

Workforce development

The Senior Decision Maker communicated that they had created a new operational manager post. This post amongst other activities will be ensuring that the mind of my own app will be accessible for disabled children.

They are also working to reinvigorate the training programme to make sure social workers in the team have the skills necessary to communicate with disabled children, ensuring they are using accessible language and supporting language needs. As reinforced by the Senior Decision Maker:

'We need to make sure that those children's voices are heard and they're able to communicate, you know. Loudly to us what their concerns are.'

Increasing short breaks

Cardiff Local Authority has developed a plan to increase residential short breaks available for children and their parents as well as imaginative and creative breaks in the community.

Linking in with the rest of the Council and making sure the right services are available

Children's services are also committed to linking in with the rest of the local authority to make sure that all services are accessible to disabled children. The Senior Decision Maker commented:

'I suppose that the key thing is that we know that we need to do more work to make sure that the service that's required at the time that it's required is available. That's the key thing very often in the past and it still happens because demand is so great, you know there will be a referral into a service but then there's a long wait until somebody can actually see the specialist or get the support that they need. It's quite a new development working with health colleagues which is again a more of a single point of access approach which we think again is the start of some of that joined up approach that is needed. But I think one of the key issues for us at the minute is that the demand is really putting some strain on the system because clearly you know there are a lot more children and young people are coming forward with emotional mental health distress at the minute.'

A Senior Decision Maker commented that:

'CAMHS is not always the most appropriate support and we need to look at what else is actually out there and make sure that we're getting it at the right level at the right time.....it's just about working out what systems and support are actually available and again making sure people know about them so that we can refer in to the right services appropriately. And that's a piece of work that we can't do on our own and that's why you know it's great to have health here today as well'.

One of our Committee Members asked a follow-on question in relation to the Council having a constrained budget at the moment and if there were any opportunities for innovation with a small budget in regard to delivering for disabled people. The Senior Decision Maker responded:

'Yes, there are always opportunities for innovation and I suppose as I was saying one of the lessons that we've learned I think in terms of the way that we work together across a whole range of services is that in the past each organisation and very often each service within the Council would be trying to solve a problem that they saw from their perspective so that they'd be developing services and doing things separately. The problem is

that's not designed from the needs of the young person. What we've found is where we're able to genuinely design joined up services around the needs of the person is an infinitely better service because you get the right service at the right time. And nine times out of 10 it's also more efficient, which means you've got more money to reinvest in. In services, it's really easy to say and really quite hard to do. And one of the most important things about designing those services is that you talk to the people who are going to use them and who are involved in them before you set off down that journey. One of the things about children, you know, the child rights approach is that it's crucial that all the officers and everybody involved knows about them. But it's equally important that as well as knowing it, you also apply how you think about the development of services and how you think that through.'

Another Senior Decision Maker commented on the excellent question regarding innovation and how it was critical that services become accessible for all disabled people. They commented:

'It's just about making sure that all services are geared up to be far more accessible for all young people. So that everybody can have what I would just class as an ordinary life. If we are able to achieve that then you know we're able to go a long way and there isn't, so much pressure on very specialist services.'

Children's engagement with services and opportunities to influence them

The Senior Decision Maker responded that they had already touched on some of the mechanisms for engaging with children and there has to be recognition that there are lots of different mechanisms for engaging with children. They acknowledged that in the past they would rely on surveys but realised that only a certain number of people would respond to these. They now have youth and community hubs in Cardiff that creates opportunities to engage with children and families. They are also very keen to hear the best methods to engage with children because they are not necessarily the experts. As mentioned above they are looking to develop their participation framework.

It was also acknowledged by one of the Senior Decision Makers, that they need to be addressing compliments but also concerns raised by children about service delivery, the Senior Decision Maker commented:

'It's really important we have both compliments but also those concerns raised with us and we need to do it, as mentioned in service delivery and about the participation framework. But we also need to consider that individualised feedback as well to make sure that we're picking up on areas of good practise. Working with those to make sure that we're delivering the best services possible for children, young people.'

We are aware that the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 12](#), recommends that children must have access to child friendly complaints systems.

5.5 Our recommendations for the future

- Cardiff Local Authority and Health Board must do more to raise awareness of services and the single point of access, continuing the activities they have outlined but also making more effort to go into schools to communicate directly with children.
- There must be more effort made to join up all services (e.g., children's services, education, health) to respond to the needs of vulnerable children.
- The participation strategy for engaging with children must be strengthened, ensuring that children are involved in the commissioning, monitoring and design of services.
- Individual children's voices must also be heard on their experience of services and taken into consideration e.g., child friendly complaints system.
- There must be increased investment to ensure that services are accessible to disabled children.
- Care experienced children and disabled children are extremely vulnerable. We know that the local authority is facing severe budget cuts, but children and their rights must not be compromised, and every effort must be made to spend to the maximum extent of available resources to fulfil their rights. These children must not be left waiting years for the help that they so desperately need.

6 Health Badge



6.1 What's been done well

What's been done well:

- Establishment of a youth health board.
- Great progress on the Baby Friendly Initiative.
- Safeguarding for 16/17 year olds entering A & E.
- Some good progress on services and information for children's mental health.



When evaluating the health badge, we learned that there has been good work done by the City on establishing a youth health board so that they can influence decision making and also some progress on the Baby Child Friendly Initiative. We are also so

pleased to see safeguarding improving for young people who enter Accident and Emergency.

What we decided to focus on was children's emotional health and well-being. We did an exercise to get us thinking about what helps us to have good emotional health and what stops us. We did another activity to see what we all knew about the places and the people to go to access mental health support.

We then reviewed the work that Cardiff is doing to help improve children's emotional health.

When we reviewed the work being done by Child Friendly Cardiff on children's mental health, we learned that some progress has been made over the last few years, in relation to supporting children's mental health in schools. Parents and carers are now receiving better support through parent support workers, and all professionals can now refer children through a single point of access. Children have also been involved in co-producing a well-being focused website, child friendly information etc and children are influencing design of services.

6.2 List of Issues

We will now report on our List of Issues.

List of issues:

More needs to be done so that young people who **are in crisis** are able to access mental health services.



Support for the '**missing middle**', many young people have poor mental health but don't meet the criteria to be diagnosed.



Waiting lists are **too long** and children are **waiting longer than adults**.

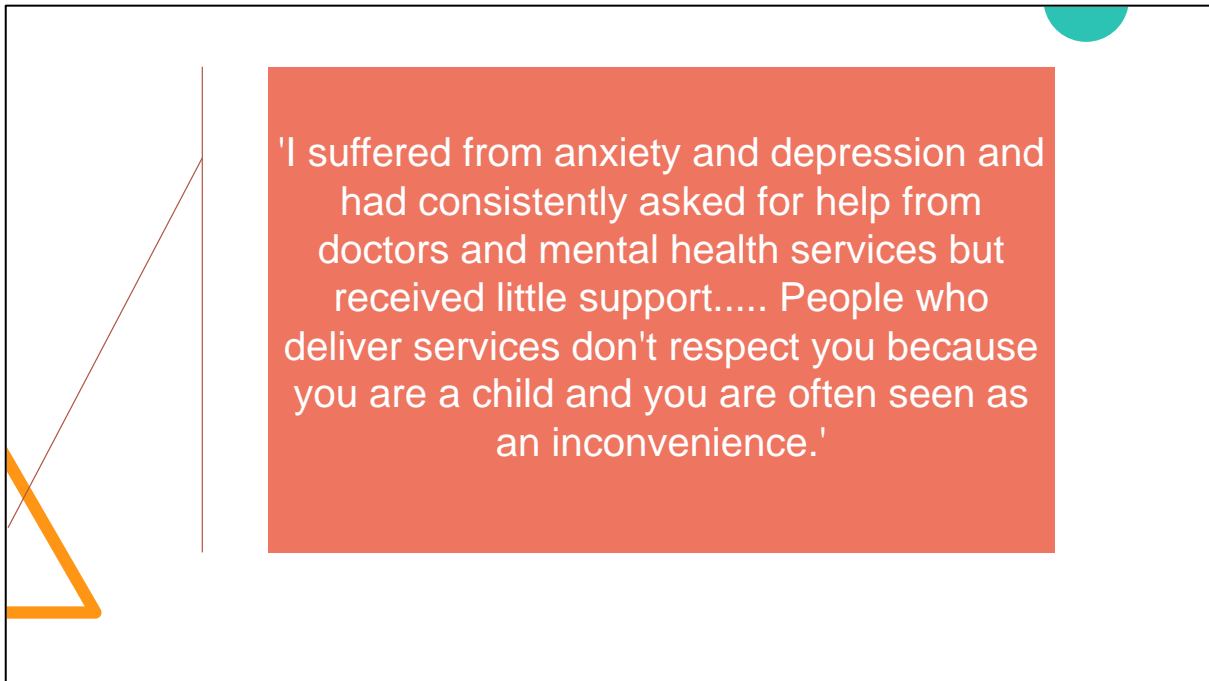
We noted that the children who were more aware of this work or were able to access help, were the children who were already on the Children and Young People's Advisory Board, or the Youth Council. This suggests to us that more needs to be done to educate all children and raise their awareness of what is on offer.

We did some research and we have found out that the [South Glamorgan Community Health Council](#) has done a report that includes evidence from young people on their challenges in accessing mental health services in Cardiff. This report suggests that

some children who have been self-harming or feeling suicidal are not able to access mental health services.

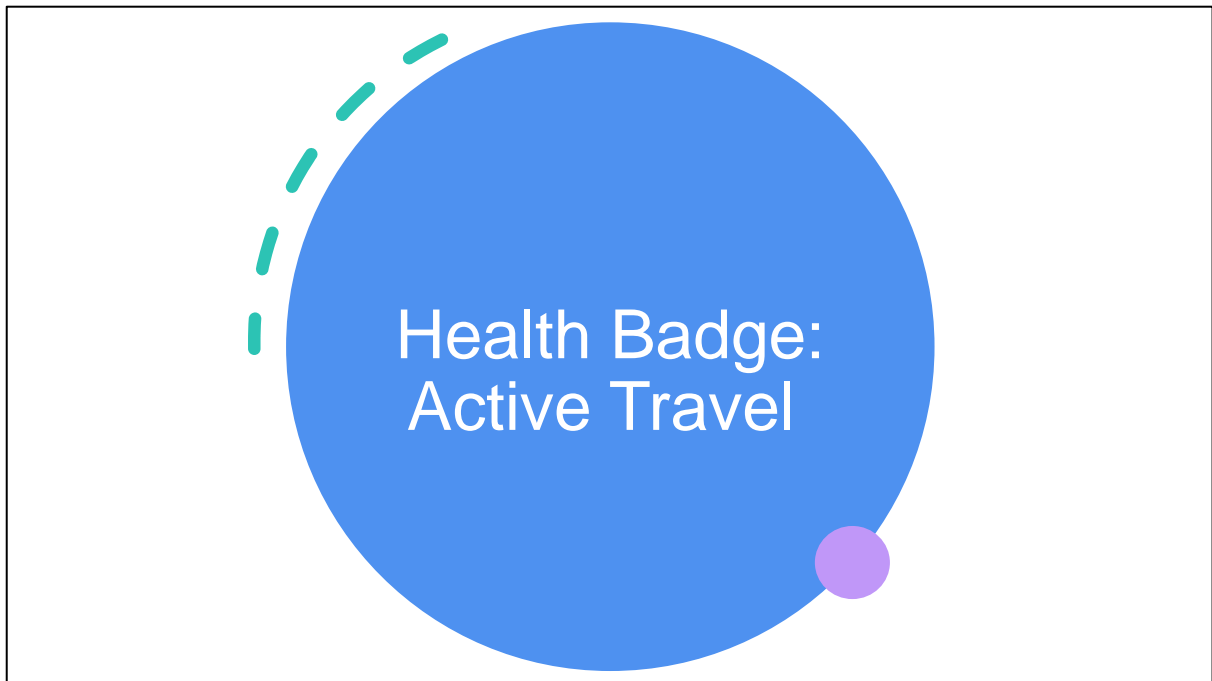
We have also learned that the charity [Mind Cymru](#) has found out that waiting times for children for mental health services are longer than for adults across health boards in Wales.

This is what one of our Committee Members shared with us:



Taking into consideration the evidence from lots of different research more must be done to support children and young people's mental health.

6.3 Active Travel



We then examined the success of the Child Friendly Programme on Active Travel that reports on a programme of activity that has been developed to encourage children and adults to do more physical exercise supporting better health and to promote protection of the environment.

6.3.1 What's been done well

We believe there has been fantastic progress on Active Travel. We did some research and found out that there are 123 schools in Cardiff so that means that 120/123 schools now have an active travel plan that has been coproduced with children. The other areas outlined in the report also indicate excellent progress. Please see below.

What's been done well:

- 4 Active Travel Team officers
- 120 schools with an Active Travel Plan (co-produced with pupils)
- 80 schools with bike fleets, improved storage facilities and training (Equality of opportunity has improved)
- Two thirds of Cardiff roads are now 20 mph zones (with more planned for 2023).
- 16 "school streets" are now in place with restricted street access at the beginning and end of school day with fixed penalty notice.
- Two high-quality, safe and fully segregated cycle networks are now in place with three more planned by 2026.



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6.3.2 List of Issues

However, our main issue is that there needs to be better public transport and free transport for children who are under 18 years of age.

We did some research and we have found out that bus travel is [free for everyone under the age of 22 years in Scotland](#).

We are also aware that over 65s have access to public transport, so what about children in Cardiff?

This is another example of what we mean by 'equality' for rights of children and young people in the city.

List of issues:

Majority of our group believe that more needs to be done to ensure:

There needs to be better public transport connections and free transport for children who are under 18 years of age.



Many children in Cardiff are facing poverty and this is only exacerbated by the fact that public transport is of poor quality and is expensive. We believe that children should be able to access free transport.

These are some examples of what our Committee Members said:

A graphic containing four colored boxes with quotes from committee members. The boxes are arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top-left box is blue, the top-right is teal, the bottom-left is purple, and the bottom-right is light blue. The quotes are: 'More free public transport such as trains and buses.', 'Often a decision whether to use money for transport or money for lunch', 'Very long waits for buses, not enough buses at peak times', and 'Too expensive and never come.' The graphic also features several thin lines and a partial orange shape on the left side.

'More free public transport such as trains and buses.'

'Often a decision whether to use money for transport or money for lunch'.

'Very long waits for buses, not enough buses at peak times'.

'Too expensive and never come.'

6.4 Questions for Senior Decision Makers

Please see our questions for key decision makers outlined below in relation to Health:

Key Questions	
1.	What actions will you be taking to ensure all children and young people across Cardiff are aware of the emotional and mental health support that is available?
2.	What actions will you be taking to ensure that all children that are in mental health crisis can access the services that they need, when they need it, from the right person ?
3.	What actions will you be taking to reduce child mental health services waiting lists ?
4.	Although it is not discussed directly in the Cardiff Child Friendly report, we would like to know if you will be supporting more opportunities for sport ?
5.	What is within your power to improve the quality of public transport and to make it free for under 18 year olds ?

6.5 Key points from discussion with Senior Decision Makers

We have taken the main themes coming from our discussion with the Senior Decision makers on the Health Badge and reflected on them below.

6.5.1 Emotional and Mental Health

In relation to raising awareness of the services that are available on emotional and mental health, one of the Senior Decision Makers responded:

'And so we're trying really hard to get the message out, We've got this website which from there will lead children, young people and families on to other health and other health services. And we we've got something called a chat at the child's health system, which means any young person can anonymously message their school nurse. So, any time they can text a school nurse with problems or questions. And this has been advertised throughout schools. So, we've done it very kind of practically. We've put massive banners and we've had to send beams and things like that. It's a slow process to get any word out, but that's what we've tried to do. *Chat Health* and everything that we've been doing with obviously youth work is with young people and with school nurses going into schools and hopefully, will get more ideas from you guys and from the health board is how we can spread the word.... . The website is new. A lot of the services

actually only started in the last 12 months. So, we've got quite a ways to go.'

Another Senior Decision Maker, added:

'I was given some stats about the website before it came along today, so quite interested to see what interest it was generating. And it kicked off on the 16th of November 21 and up to the 23rd of August this year there were 6410 users, 9000 plus sessions, 31,000 plus page views. An average of 3.4 pages visited per session. So, I get a lot of encouragement from the fact that is being used more and more and that level of growth is exponential, I think. So, we see quite a bit of expansion there and I thought, I want to share that with you because it is a major vehicle for us to communicate and communication is absolutely vital for us. I do recall being in part of my training, being told when you're talking to your team as a manager, you communicate, then you communicate some more, then you communicate even more until someone says, Stop, we've had enough. But really in the health environment and particularly the children, young people, communication, is absolutely vital and we are determined to improve as we go forward as well.'

The Senior Decision Maker then reported back on progress in relation to ensuring that children that are in mental health crisis can access the service that they need when they need it from the right person. She spoke at length. Here is the summary of the key points in her response.

Working closely with the Children's Commissioner for Wales

Decision makers are actively meeting the Children's Commissioner every 6 months, reporting on our implementation of the 'No Wrong Door' approach. This work is connected to the NEST/NYTH model.

The Senior Decision Maker commented:

'And as I said, the other thing we are working on, and this is something that's still very much in development,.... I don't know if you've heard of the Nest model, but it's, it's something where a child or young person is at the centre and services work around them rather than the other way around our youth board and campaigning for it, we have called it EMPOWER.'

A single point of access for children and families

As the Senior Decision Maker highlighted:

'So, it means it's just one phone call. So, all the things that we have been told before about young people being referred and waiting months for CAMHS, then going to CAMHS and then realising that it's not the right place for them. And then going back to the beginning of another waiting list for somewhere else, we'll stop that happening'.

CAMHS in reach programme in schools

This is to guarantee that emotional mental health support goes directly to children in schools.

As the Senior Decision Maker reported:

'There will be access to specialists that can advise. The main thing at the moment is advising teachers and supporting teachers with young people....that's really ground-breaking and it's still developing and we've got new emotional wellbeing nurses and it just means that there's the specialist nurses that can fill the gap between CAMHS and school to sort of link things up.'

New Social Prescribing service

The Senior Decision Maker commented on social prescribing, which is a new way of working that instead of medicalising or putting children straight into the health system finds opportunities to improve their mental health in the community or finding activities that might benefit them:

'Well, you might have a chat with a young person and their mental health might be because of loneliness or isolation or lack of opportunities. Things like that..... We'll talk to a young person in a room where they're most comfortable a coffee shop or a park, whatever they want, and talk to them about their needs and their wishes and try and find alternative ways to bring comforts to their lives rather than a referral.... So, it could be going to a dogs home to walk dogs with somebody, it could be volunteering with children, it could be a number of things. But it's a really, really good thing'.

Emotional and Mental Health Website

This was developed with children, young people and co-designed with children.

Recruitment of additional crisis nurses

We were pleased to hear that there is a commitment to recruit more crisis nurses to help those children who are facing severe mental health issues.

The Senior Decision Maker explained:

'The last thing we really want to see is youngsters coming into an emergency unit, which is a really busy and not a very pleasant place for youngsters to be. Unfortunately, sometimes that will be necessary, but hopefully we'll try and avoid it as much as we can going forward. So, we are looking to recruit additional crisis nurses going forward. What we're trying to do by increasing the number of nurses is to increase the hours that we offer the crisis support service so whilst we can't do 24/7 at the moment, we're working towards that type of delivery programme. So, a crisis doesn't occur when we open the doors of our hospital. They occur any time of any day, any night, and we are alert to that. So hopefully by building the resource in the crisis team, we'll offer that service'.

Early support hub drop in

The Senior Decision Maker explained how this would operate:

‘This is something that children, young people can access. They don't need to make an appointment, they don't need a referral, they can just drop in, talk to someone there and maybe get signposted to a suitable place where they can be looked after effectively, as our Lisa referred to earlier on’.

The other Senior Decision Maker added that young people had been involved in the commissioning of this service.

Intensive Home Treatment Team

This is another service that aims to prevent children having to enter the health system and instead are supported at home. As the Senior Decision Maker explains:

‘We're also looking to develop something called an intensive home treatment team. I talked about emergency services and this is perhaps a way of trying to avoid admissions where possible. So, we look at that team, we look to go into people's homes to provide treatment where they live rather than drag them out of their home into the hospital or acute setting environment. We're looking at that hopefully with this year some time or 2023. ‘

All Age 111

This will give 24/7 access to help and support at least on the phone.

CAMHS Waiting Times

The issue of long waiting lists for CAMHS was picked up strongly by one of our committee members in a follow-on response:

‘I'm obviously on the spectrum for Aspergers and I'd be waiting for at least two years for it when I applied when my mum applied for it first in COVID, but then I got taken off the letter for some reason and they sent my mum a story up. She reapplied like four months ago.’

This is an issue we are very concerned about as a group. So, we have included the Senior Decision Maker's full response below:

‘Thanks for your openness. Really appreciate that. And these are difficult times for the Health Board to deliver the level of service we need. And I think perhaps you all might understand that the pandemic has increased demand exponentially. You know, we've all experienced lockdowns. You've experienced perhaps an inability to go to school, having to change your way of receiving your education and not socialising face to face with your friends, having to rely maybe on your phone.

So, it's been a tough time and what that has meant is that demand has increased to an extent we've never witnessed before. So, we are now looking at how we deal with that and certainly we're looking to increase more staff into the team to help move that backlog. We have used digital providers as well to help. An organisation called Helios has been helping us with that and everything we're trying to do is aimed at reducing those waiting lists.

And just for you to know, for instance, on average, not necessarily waiting times for emotional wellbeing and mental health is four weeks for initial assessment and that's been reduced from a waiting time of 21 weeks at the end of January this year. So, we are making a bit of progress. Not enough. I'm really unhappy with the level of service we're offering at the moment. We are trying very hard to address that and being quite open with you. I really care about young people. They are future and know if we can't help you when you're young with a greater respect, your problems might compound and be more difficult in the future.'

So, it's really important that we look after you. I'm sorry we haven't got you sorted out, but we are looking very carefully at it.'

It was important to hear this detailed response from the Senior Decision Maker, we really do hope that they do everything they can to change the long waiting times, so children like our colleague above are not left in a crisis situation which can have a lifelong impact.

While we acknowledge progress is being made in relation to emotional mental health, we are still very concerned that action needs to be taken with urgency to support children who are in crisis. Austerity and budgeting cutting cannot be used as an excuse as to why the most vulnerable children are not receiving the support they need. Waiting lists are still too long for children in crisis. It is discriminatory as reported by [Mind Cymru](#) that children are waiting longer than adults. We are also concerned as reported by our colleague above, regarding excessive waiting times for neurodiverse children.

6.5.2 Sport Opportunities

We also asked a question regarding supporting more opportunities for children to participate in sport in the city.

The Senior Decision Makers highlighted that this was unfortunately not their area of responsibility. They referred again to their social prescribing model but said that fundamentally this was an area of responsibility for Public Health Wales and Sport Wales. One of the Senior Decision Makers then touched on privacy in sport and how some young people struggle with this. They mentioned they had been engaging in conversations with colleagues around having some trans, non-binary swimming lessons in local pools.

One of our Committee Members did a follow-on response:

'I think it's a great idea about the non-binary and trans swimming pools because as a non-binary person myself, I think that's a really good idea without choosing a changing room'.

6.5.3 Active Travel

We also asked a question in relation to Active Travel and focused on the importance of good quality and free public transport for children. We have referred to the main points in the discussion below.

Good quality and free public transport for children under 18 years

The Senior Decision Maker said:

'So, the Council plays an important role in relation to transport, and we want Cardiff to have the best possible transport system. Much of that vision is about encouraging people to get out of their cars and use active travel means, getting around walking, cycling, but also public transport, because it's more sustainable for the environment. If you look at really successful cities around the world, then they have really good public transport systems. So we are really committed to that and the point you made in the slide about you know the work that has taken place in recent years around active travel..... part of that is about improving the quality of public transport. But, we've got relatively limited powers in relation to public transport. That's the reality at the moment.

The Senior Decision Maker explained to us that they only own Cardiff Bus company, but that this is also independently controlled and there are lots of other bus companies in Cardiff that are privately owned. So, they are limited in their powers regarding making changes.

Non-discrimination and equality for children

He also said in relation to older people:

'Older people, currently they've got a concessionary bus pass, right, which allows them to use public transport that costs about £11 million. Now such a scheme for children and young people would probably cost about that level of funding which we currently haven't got. So that's the challenge that you're putting to us really in terms of. How can resources be found, right?'

As a group of young people, we are fully aware of austerity and the impact on the budget of Cardiff Council, but this is a matter of equality. How is that that older people who may be retired and not earning, get treated differently to children who are at school and not earning, yet they are granted free transport and we do not? We believe that this is a form of discrimination.

Further to the evidence we gave above, our Committee Member gave follow up evidence to the Senior Decision Maker regarding her experience of poor-quality public transport and making the decision to pay for lunch or the bus.

'I wanna talk you through my experiences. I've been taking a particular bus for like the last four years, going on five and it has not been good at all. So, there's been times when I struggled to be able to afford both lunch and also public transport. It was like £10 a week and I'm just like because if I missed this bus, I'd have to wait another 30 to 45 minutes so I'd have to run for the bus number one if and if I missed it then ohh, that was that. I wouldn't get lunch because I felt guilty. I felt guilty to spend on both. And the service is absolutely terrible on the average day, to just get home'.

Creating income generation opportunities for fund fee public transport for children

The Senior Decision Maker did inform us that they are considering the possibility of creating a situation where there are no cars in the city centre, similar to what occurs in London and imposing a charge on those who do enter the city centre. This would thereby create income that could possibly be reinjected to support free transport for children. He referred to the benefits of this approach:

'It makes sense on lots of levels because. There's the getting people out of their cars, getting them onto public transport. It's environmentally friendly. If children and young people are used to using public transport and using it for free, then as they get older, they're more likely to carry on using it, which is really important for the sake of the city. There's congestion issues, there's environmental factors and actually we want to get as many cars off the road. And we would want people to be using public transport or active travel.'

One of our Committee Members responded from his experience living in London that this would be a great idea.

Involving children in the discussions regarding good quality and free transport

There was further discussion regarding, how children must be involved in any discussions going forward to improve public transport and also fund free public transport.

The Senior Decision Maker said:

'I think it's a good conversation for children and young people in the city to have with Cardiff, I think they'd be really receptive to it and I think that's something that we can facilitate. My senior decision maker colleague made the point about Welsh government and policy in the area of buses. No one would claim that the way in which bus services are delivered in Wales currently is perfect. Far from it. So, I think there is a discussion being had about how we can improve the quality of bus services and I just think children, young people need to be part of that conversation and we need to ensure that that happens. The point around London I completely get that and it's exactly the kind of enhancement of service that you know if we had the money, if we had the investment that's where we would wish it to go.'

6.6 Our recommendations for the future

Emotional and Mental Health

- The Health Board needs to do more with regards to urgent investment and recruitment of staff so that young people who are in crisis are able to access mental health services when they need it.
- The Health Board must do more to raise awareness of the emotional health services, (including the single point of access) that are available for children and young people and their families.

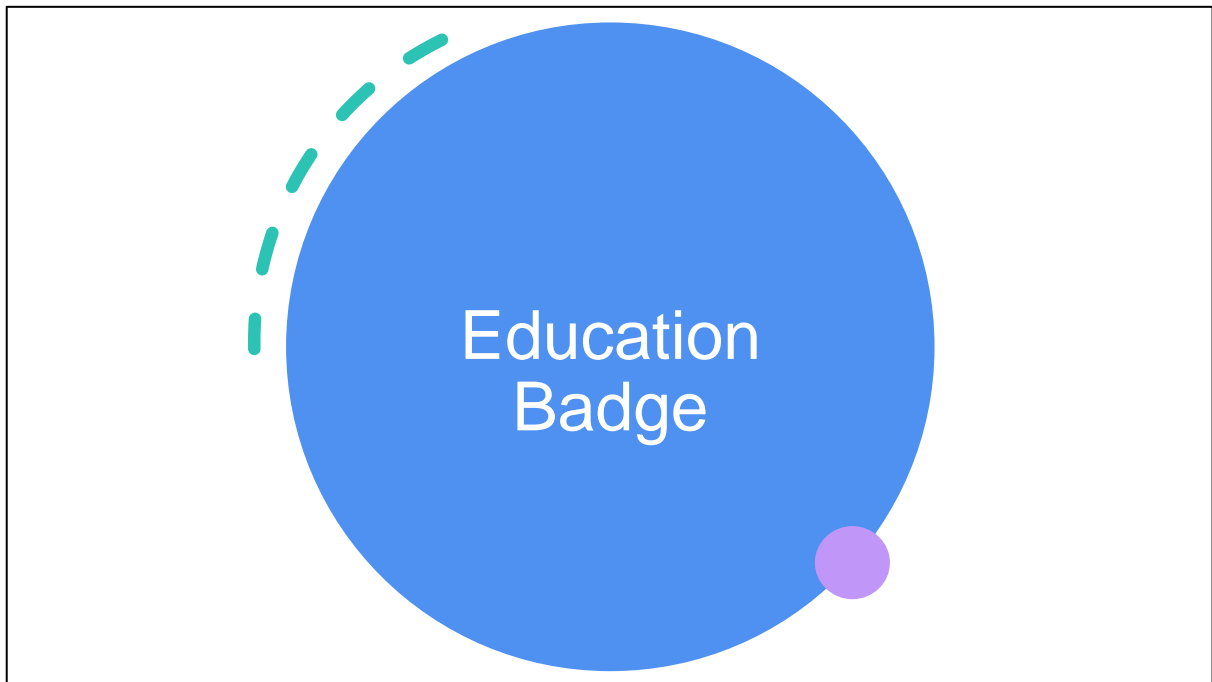
Sport Opportunities

- The Cardiff Child Friendly Team as part of their forward programme should seek an opportunity to meet with Sport Wales and Public Health Wales to consider what strategies are in place in Cardiff to make sure that children in poverty and girls are able to access opportunities to participate in sport.

Active Travel

- Cardiff Local Authority must not discriminate against children as compared to older people and ensure that they find a way with urgency to fund free public transport for children.
- Cardiff Local Authority must engage children in all discussions regarding both improving and funding public transport e.g., London based congestion charge system.

7 Education Badge



We were asked to consider progress within Education. We were quite pleased that there had been much progress across the areas we were asked to evaluate.

We reviewed the evidence in the Child Friendly Cardiff Evaluation Report and recognise that there has been progress across several areas, in particular in relation to the

- Rights Respecting Schools Initiative (UNICEF),
- Preparing Children for Life After School,
- Education for Children who don't attend school and the focus on improving education for both care experienced and asylum seeker children.

We were pleased to see some of the evidence of impact and changes in these areas.

7.1 What's been done well

What's been done well:

- Significantly more children attend a RRSA school.
- 6% decrease in pupils not making a transition to education, employment or training.
- Support to look after children in education has significantly improved.
- Asylum seeking children because of your work with the home office are able to access a school place.



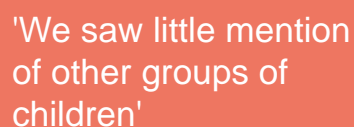
7.2 List of Issues

However, we also considered ideas regarding what is missing and what more could be done.

Turning to our list of issues, we hope to see the work programme continually strengthened on asylum seeker and care experienced children, but we are concerned about other groups of children.

List of issues:

1. The work must be **strengthened** and **continued** for Asylum Seeker and Care Experienced Children but **also other groups of children** must also be a focus of the Child Friendly Programme.



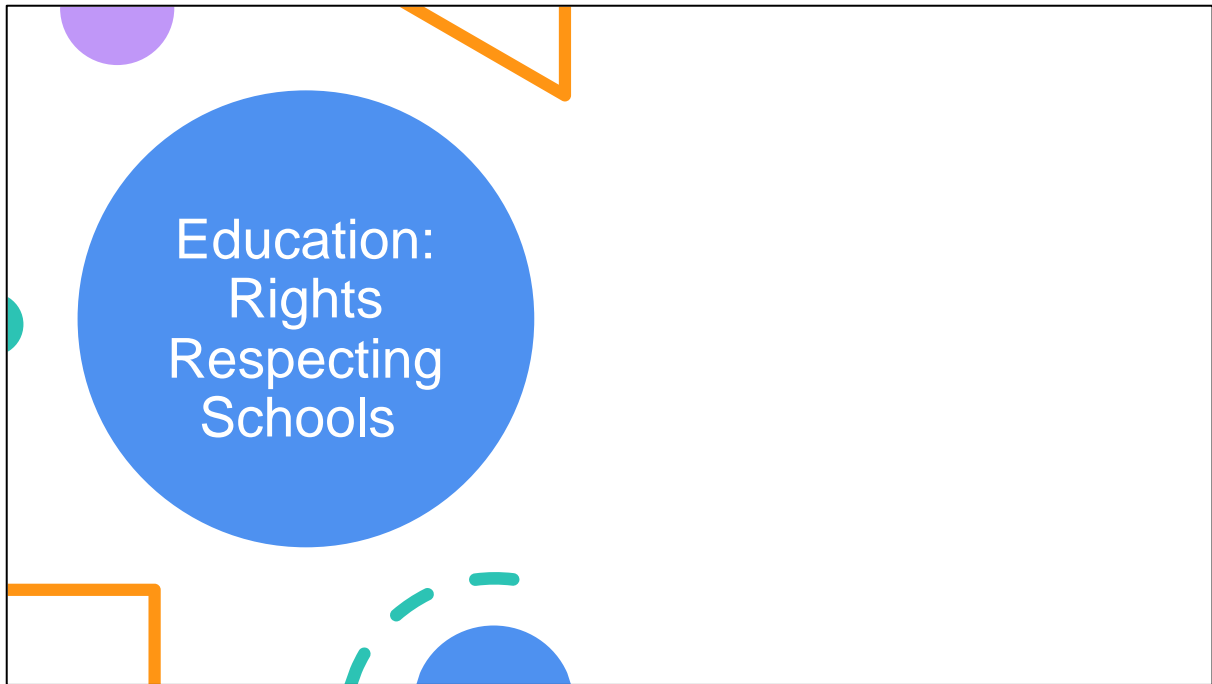
'We saw little mention of other groups of children'

These are some of the issues that we were concerned about in our group work activity. We are aware that Cardiff Local Authority may be addressing lots of these issues already, however we believed it was still necessary to share our thoughts with Senior Decision Makers. These are some of the issues that we were concerned about in our group work activity.

Make sure education is improved for all children

- 'People on the spectrum shouldn't have to wait so long because they need to know if they need extra support from school etc.'
- 'Tuition must be provided to children and young people in foster care/neurodivergent children'.
- 'Neurodivergent children should be given extra support in school'.
- 'Reasonable adjustments'.
- 'LGBTQ children need help and support'.
- 'Signpost to opportunities, make these accessible to all'.
- 'Depends on the culture of the school – what support is available'.

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We had lots of discussion throughout the day regarding, the fact that it depends on what school you attend and whether it is a Rights Respecting school. There is also a lack of consistency regarding the quality of Rights Respecting school approach. We believe that Rights Respecting schools should be mandatory and well-funded.

List of Issues:

2. Depends on which school you go to whether it is a rights respecting school or not.

'Make it mandatory for the schools to register for RRSA'

'More awareness for funding for RRSA'

We are aware that Cardiff Local Authority may be doing a lot of what we recommend in relation to Rights Respecting Schools, already but we were eager to share our thoughts, ideas and reflections. These are outlined below:

Our ideas for what more can be done to help children understand and have their rights respected in school

Education about rights

- 'They can make after school clubs that educate on children's rights'
- 'Have lessons to promote children's rights at least once a term'.
- 'Schools can have a visitor to teach more about rights'.
- 'Advice from the teacher about their rights and how they can use them'.
- 'Fun rights based activities in class'.
- 'Promotion of organisation of Cardiff Youth Council, which help children to realise their rights'.
- 'Rights lessons and how to implement them in the curriculum'.
- 'Yearly assemblies for year groups conducted by students'.
- 'Repetition mentioning once in a year is not enough'.

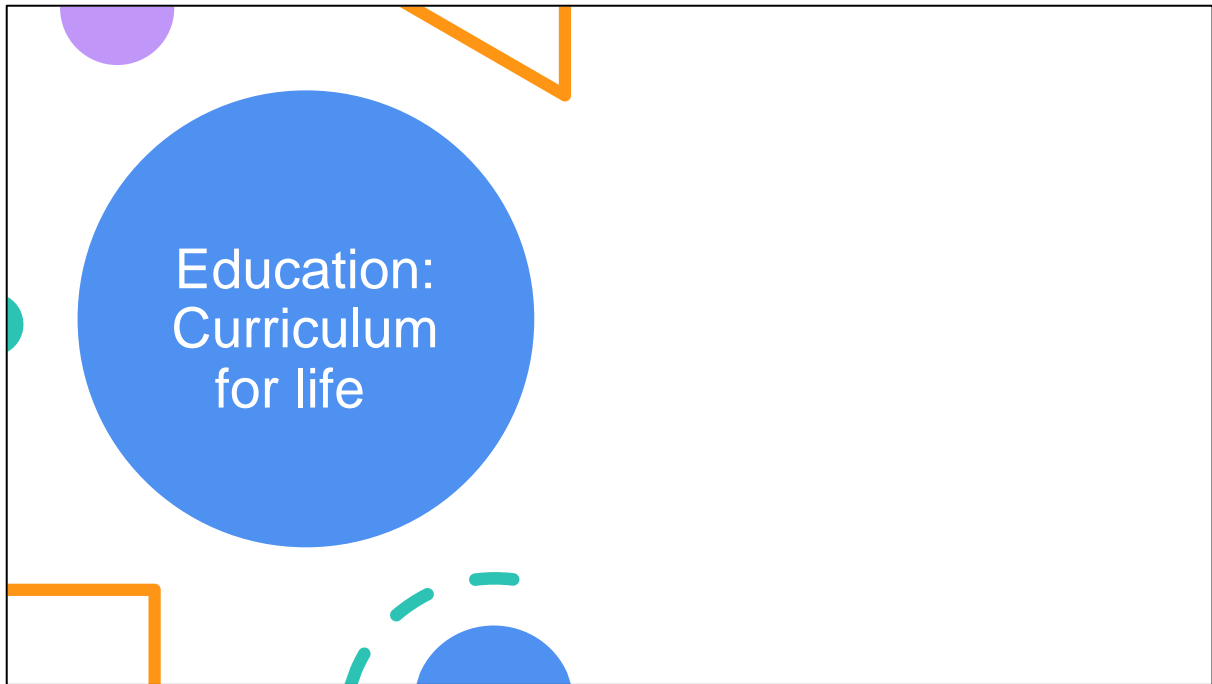


Our ideas for what more can be done to help children understand and have their rights respected in school

Encouraging a rights respecting school

- 'Respecting rights in school 'more time for break time'.
- 'Have more clubs inside school times, like breaks and lunches'.
- 'In schools, to stop bullying, schools should have prizes for people who don't bully others like a choice bar'.
- 'Importance of voting taught in schools.'
- 'More student voice, school councils but also consultations, open doors for whole school.'
- 'Outdated activities ignoring student voice and a lack of rationale'.





We then considered preparing for life after school and the curriculum for life. We read in the Child Friendly Cardiff Report, that 65% of pupils agree with the statement that:

'My school helps me to learn about all the different jobs/careers that I could do when I am older'.

We appreciate that we are just a small group of young people, but we believe that there needs to be more opportunities for young people to learn about what is on offer to help them prepare for life after school. We came up with lots of ideas to share with Cardiff Local Authority for them to take into consideration when planning for the future.

List of Issues:

3. There needs to be more opportunities for young people to learn about what is on offer to help them prepare for life after school.



'Give more job opportunities and ideas after school'.

Please see our ideas outlined in the boxes below:

Our ideas for what more can be done to help and support and prepare children and young people for life after school

Work experience /outside world

- 'Exposure to the outside by educational institutions for young people'
- 'I think having Cardiff council partnered with businesses to offer week long work experiences for students aged 11 and over' and in year 9 and 11.
- We need more job support'
- 'Bring back work experience in a job that they want to do'.
- 'What is being advertised is not what people are experiencing – job
- 'Jobs not the right jobs for people seeking asylum.'
- 'Charity work'.

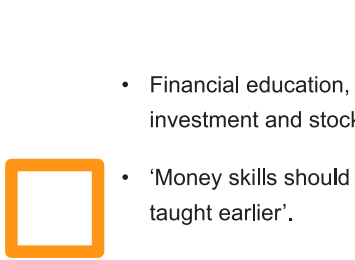


Education events

- 
- 'Workshops to help with knowledge and experience'
 - 'Lectures to let young people think about life after school and what they can do'.
 - 'Transition events, between education partners (if any).
 - 'Have lots of speakers at schools'.

Our ideas for what more can be done to help and support and prepare children and young people for life after school

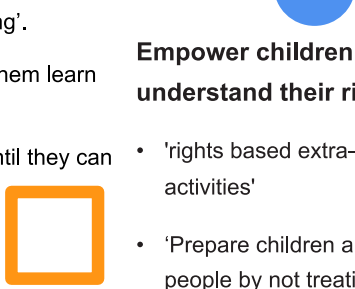
Curriculum for life

- 'More curriculum for life, investing, taxes, how political system works, understanding what a recession is.'
 - 'Secondary pupils disagree with careers and job counselling and education, only generic jobs are talked about. Also steps/advice what the career entails.'
 - 'Bring back PSE lessons in school'.
 - 'help with education, like language and new skills.'
 - 'Education about other cultures in schools, events celebrations, tradition'
- 
- Financial education, investment and stocks'
 - 'Money skills should be taught earlier'.
 - 'Encourage a LIBF course in all schools.'

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Our ideas for what more can be done to help and support and prepare children and young people for life after school

Support groups and peer support

- 'Need a support group for people just going into independent living'.
 - 'Young people need to have living support and a mentor to help them learn life skills and setting things up'.
 - 'create a shelter, food, placements for young people no family until they can be reunited.'
 - 'Breakfast clubs, friendship groups, support from people'.
 - 'You can help by supporting an helping to maybe get a job'.
 - Questionnaire to ask about jobs and careers'.
 - 'Have someone talk with them about life after school and how hard it will be'.
- 
- ### Empower children to understand their rights
- 'rights based extra-curricular activities'
 - 'Prepare children and young people by not treating them differently in some respects'
 - 'Help children to know they can have an opinion and a say'

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7.3 Questions for Key Decision Makers

Please see our questions outlined below in relation to Education:

Key Questions	
1.	We see the action you have taken to support care experienced and asylum seeking children but we want to be sure this work will be strengthened and continued . Can you tell us what actions you will be taking to ensure this happens?
2.	What free tuition and extra support can you give asylum seekers to support their education ? Is there any possibility that you can support schools with language devices so that we can better understand our asylum seeking colleagues?
3.	What action will you take to ensure that all children can exercise their right to a quality education ?
4.	What further actions will you be taking to ensure that all children in Cardiff learn about their rights in school and their schools are rights respecting ?
5.	We have lots of ideas about preparing children for life after school , how will you listen to us and other children and take our ideas on board ?

7.4 Key points coming from discussion with Senior Decision Makers

We have taken the main themes coming from our discussion with the Senior Decision Makers on the Education Badge and reflected on them below.

7.4.1 Care Experienced Children

Listening to care experienced children

We were pleased to hear the Senior Decision Maker communicate the importance of listening to care experienced children to really understand their lived experience.

She said:

‘They are the experts on their lived experiences and listening to them and the obstacles that they've actually had to overcome in terms of their learning as much as with the placement outside of school is really important trying to remove those barriers.’

As in our discussion above in relation to Family and Belonging, we are looking forward to stronger action regarding children's services and education working in a joined-up way and strengthening their participation framework.

Virtual Headteacher and School

A Senior Decision Maker informed us of a new initiative they are implementing:

'We're also putting in place what we've called a virtual head teacher so we now can explain more thoroughly. But we have a virtual school where we can track the performance of every single one of our children. In school who are in some form of care. So, we can pick up issues, we can pick up trends even within the school, and you can really actually get underneath the skin of what's going on across the learners and also for individual learners.'

The Senior Decision Maker added:

'The work with the virtual heads, essentially what that means in reality is a head teacher will be appointed by the local authority and that headteacher will have specific responsibility for care experienced children and that head will have equal parity with all the other head teachers across the school. They will have very specific responsibility, as I said, for care experience children. So, it will be their job to ensure that those children and young people get the right support and education in schools across the city. And that will happen now over the next six to 12 months. So that's quite, quite a progressive step for us as an authority.'

Again, we recognise this links in with discussion and recommendations in the Family and Belonging section of our report, with education and children's services coming together to support what is in the best interests of care experienced children.

7.4.2 Asylum seeker Children

Placement and right education support

The Senior Decision Maker commented on the challenges since the Ukraine war and the Afghanistan crisis, and the authority has been trying to ensure that all children have a placement and the right education support. We were pleased to hear that they have been making every effort to support these very vulnerable children.

'And in terms of an asylum seeker children, we are absolutely committed to ensuring that those children have a place but also have the right education support. And over the last few months it's been quite challenging for us as an authority. We've seen a marked step change in terms of the asylum seekers coming into the city. As you know with the Ukrainian war, we've had Ukrainian refugees and before that we also had refugees from Afghanistan. And it's our job to make sure as groups they get the right support. But aside from the groups of asylum seekers, that come in, we also can't forget those asylum seeker children that come from other countries.'

Team around the school

This approach was also picked up by Senior Decision Makers in the Family and Belonging session. As the Senior Decision Maker outlined:

‘Essentially what that means is bringing our services closer to schools, wrapping our arms around them. But more importantly, those services actually make sure they support individual children in their schools. So for those that have places across the schools, when that innovation, that new policy rolls out in theory and in practice, it should make sure as an individual, regardless of your background, that you get the right support but also the right educational support within the school that you're in.’

One of our Committee Members did a follow up question:

‘As an asylum seeker myself and I haven't got the support I needed and my school is an independent school and it felt kind of unfair, like not getting the same support. I learnt English in one year and it was really hard, difficult to learn a language that I didn't know myself and I wish other children don't have the same thing happen to them as well. Like me.’

The Senior Decision Maker responded:

‘Thank you. Did you say you went to an independent school? Okay, so my job is to look after the schools and the learners that go to schools that are maintained by the local authority. So, I don't have specific responsibility for those schools are classed as independent. However, there is no reason why I can't pick up a conversation with the principals and head teachers at the independent schools in the city.’

I just spoke earlier to another of your colleagues as well about her experience yes. Because we are driving towards being a child, a child respecting city. So that was a conversation to be had with our respective partners in independent schools.’

It was good to hear the Senior Decision Maker emphasise the importance of Cardiff being a child respecting city, where they are taking responsibility for *all* children.

Free tuition, extra support and language devices in schools to support asylum seeker children

The Senior Decision Maker responded that there is not a uniform approach to providing support across the city, they allow schools to make their decisions appropriate to their own school. They have a small team in the local authority, but they are trying to offer support where they are able.

‘Schools across the city use a variety of resources to support those that use English as a second language. And so, they use a whole range of device platforms, facilities. And so there isn't a uniform standard because we allow the schools to make the right decisions in the context of the learners.....’

We have a very small team, but it does exist and it does provide support. And we are looking at new ways of supporting asylum seeker children, for example, as a primary school in Cardiff that had Afghan learners coming in. And what they then used is two parents who came in as teaching assistants to provide additional bespoke support for the type of learners. So, there's lots of evidence, a good practise like that happening across the city.'

We were concerned at the comment that the local authority only has a small team. Given the global situation, the potential for more young asylum seekers coming to Wales, and our commitment to being a 'nation of sanctuary', we hope that there will be sufficient investment to make sure children who have fled persecution or war, have their rights respected.

7.4.3 Other groups of children

The Director of Education reassured us that although the Child Friendly Cardiff Programme has had a specific focus on asylum seeker and care experienced children that Cardiff Local Authority is focussing on supporting all children.

'I mean, absolutely. The fact that we've only named a few within report, that doesn't mean that those are the only people that were concerned about I think, you know, we recognise that, but we want to make sure is that every child gets the support that they need to meet their individual circumstances.'

We were pleased to hear from the Senior Decision Maker that they look to support all vulnerable groups of children.

Team around the school

The local authority is working hard to make sure that all the teams outside of education are helping children to have their needs supported as well as making sure that schools know and fully understand what is going on in their communities and how they can help children in school.

Children living in poverty

The Senior Decision Maker referred to children living in poverty:

'We know that children who are living in poverty are the ones who will have been hit the most during COVID. And now we know that lots of families are struggling even more than ever because of the things that are going on in the economy. And for me personally, it's really important that we make sure as far as possible, we remove those obstacles that could help them, that could prevent them getting the level of education they need in our corporate plan. We say education is the surest way out of poverty, and it absolutely is. But we also know that poverty really impacts on the ability of children to actually get the quality of education they need..... And all of those issues need plans that actually make sure that children do carry on in school and do get the education needed and the different things to have an impact.'

The Senior Decision Maker referred to their concerns about issues such as absenteeism and the level of exclusions within our schools.

The Senior Decision Maker also referred to children needing emotional support and children needing affordable access to school uniform. They referred to the importance of children's services offering early help and making sure that families that need help and support can access it early on, and are not having to wait until they hit a crisis point. They also referred to children going hungry and not being able to learn if they are hungry or upset.

The Senior Decision Maker also referred to the Additional Learning Needs Education reforms and was hopeful that these would bring positive changes for many children. They mentioned that at the centre of the reforms is ensuring that the voice of the child is heard and fed into the plans that are put in place to support each child/young person.

7.4.4 Championing children's rights and the voice of children

One of the Senior Decision Makers referred to the benefits of having a Councillor with responsibility for education, as a champion for children's rights. This really benefits the Department of Education as the cabinet responsibility is education. The Senior Decision Maker commented:

'We're always determined and always listening to you as young people and feeding in your ideas. And that's one of the benefits of this programme. And, that feedback loop does happen. And you're right, as ideas do come in and we do work through them to see if they will improve the issues in areas that you flagged with us.'

We agree wholeheartedly that having as many political and senior decision makers as champions for children's rights as possible, is incredibly important. We think every service area should have a children's rights champion!

7.4.5 Rights Respecting Schools

The Senior Decision Maker welcomed all our many suggestions for improving Rights Respecting Schools. They also reported that they have spoken to UNICEF who have agreed to give them further funding support, which they said was fantastic because extra money was very welcome, given the current challenges with budgets. As a consequence, they will be able to fund a programme for all schools across the city, where schools can register, and they can train and support the schools. Cardiff is the only local authority in England and Wales who is developing this approach.

They have decided not to make Rights Respecting Schools mandatory because they believe that schools should be able to voluntarily decide to take part in the programme. But they are willing to challenge schools and ask them why they may have decided not to take part.

Some schools are not really rights respecting

One of our Committee Members asked a follow up question on schools being truly rights respecting:

'So about schools respecting students there's a hierarchy in school of who's the most important, the least important. And our school is always talking about how we need to have some form of mutual respect to teachers and students. Then they're telling us that we're not important and compared to them. They are the people teaching us but by telling us that we're not important. Then that's kind of not showing the respect that they're saying we should have for them because respect goes both ways.'

The Senior Decision Maker responded:

'That's really disappointing to hear and that your rights aren't being respected to the extent that you wish them to be. And I think that's the whole benefit of why we're here in this room this morning. We have got this programme and how we can work collectively with young children in this city, having their voice heard and speaking directly to myself and my colleagues in the room and that we can hear these points being made and actually we can act on them.

In terms of the hierarchy, I have heard some good examples, early days, really great examples about how schools are reflecting and implementing new ways of working with their children in the schools. And again, it's early days, but it's a start and there's a sense of momentum.

And as I mentioned earlier, the curriculum gives you an absolutely fantastic opportunity. And to actually see that the delivery of your education support in the context of your community and where you come from and your voice should be heard from the Youth Council and their schools and to influence and create impact.'

Another colleague also reflected how children's right to religion and culture is not respected in some schools, regarding their uniform. Another colleague mentioned that many children cannot afford uniform and another colleague mentioned the importance of recognising LGBTQ children's rights as they can often be bullied or treated negatively.

The Senior Decision maker responded that children's right to religion and culture must absolutely be taken into account, that there are initiatives to support children who cannot afford uniform and that more needs to be done to ensure that LGBT children's rights are respected. The Senior Decision Maker said in relation to these three issues:

Religion and culture:

'It's a bit hard to know without knowing more about the details, but I would expect any school uniform to actually take into account people's religious beliefs when they're drawing up the uniform and give a choice in terms of the items they could actually wear would be typical of most of the schools where I've been.....The authority has also done quite a lot to work around race equality. The Cabinet have agreed to a race equality plan. And it's my role and my department's role now to make sure that we ensure all our

schools across the city in the context, the action plan, embrace inclusion and diversity and in doing so.'

LGBTQ:

'I absolutely agree and would also encourage schools to consider things like having an LGBT group, for example, you know, and, and that means that you can each have a mutual support as well. But every school, you know, if you talk about being advice, respect in school, you can't then ignore the needs of one group of pupils.'

Affording School Uniforms:

Well, I mean, they can actually apply for funding towards school uniform, which is really helpful..... And, you know, it's not just a poverty measure, but it's also an environmental one'.

It is good to hear that some schools as communicated by the Senior Decision Maker are making changes to be better rights respecting schools, however, it does pick up on our earlier point in Section 4 in the Mandatory Badges that this is not the case for all schools. Some schools are not as far down this journey as others, and they need the support to be a school where everyone's rights are respected.

7.4.6 Preparing children for life after school

It was wonderful to hear that the Senior Decision Maker was impressed with our list of ideas in relation to preparing children for life after school and will be taking them into consideration. The Senior Decision Maker said:

So, as I mentioned earlier, and as the Department for Education. We are absolutely open to your suggestions, and we welcome them. So, when I've been told that and then I can see it, this committee of experts who've come together your ideas have been absolutely fantastic. So we absolutely need to do more of that. That's absolutely critical'

The Senior Decision Maker also referred to some of the activities they have been working on to find out how they can be improving this area of work:

'And there are some really good examples again across the city where we are really listening very closely and responding.'

See the list below:

- Cardiff Youth Council and working on various groups and committees, the Child-Friendly survey.
- Open Your Eyes have focus groups and feedback regarding future progression into employment.
- Kick Start which helps young people into employment, ages of 16 and 24, particularly those on universal credit.
- In one particular school, inner city, they ran a series of focus groups, and the focus groups helped the offices in the authority to understand the blockages and

challenges that young people have and as a consequence of that they were then able to support young people more effectively.

- In a high school in Cardiff sixth forms they're actually engaging with pupils from the years 7 to 13 to help support them, realise their ambitions and what they need to do to help young people realise their ambitions.
- A survey across all sixth forms. This will be going up imminently to almost 3000 pupils in sixth forms. This survey which will better inform and enable the Council to have a greater understanding.

'So, lots of work going on for various methods, focus group surveys, feedback and also really good examples of whether operating right at the heart of the schools.'

We were pleased to hear of all these activities and also pleased that our own ideas will also be taken into consideration.

7.5 Our recommendations for the future

- Continue to strengthen the programme of work in relation to asylum seeker children, we are concerned there is only a small team to make sure this happens effectively. Consider how this can be better supported with increased investment.
- As discussed above make sure the links are strengthened between the Department of Education and Children's Services, so that the team around the care experienced child (and other vulnerable children) works as effectively as possible.
- So many children, from many different groups find it challenging to exercise their right to a quality education, consider what extra investment and support is needed to ensure their right is fulfilled.
- As you have evidenced, Champions for Children's Rights help to promote change for children, as you have in Education, consider having Champions for Children's Rights in every service area to promote the implementation of a child rights approach.
- Not all schools are Rights Respecting, while we understand your reasoning for not making the UNICEF Schools Rights Respecting Schools initiative mandatory, we do believe that as a local authority you should be introducing guidance that makes it compulsory that all schools adopt a Children's Rights Approach to Education.
- We also welcome that the Senior Decision Maker commented that because Cardiff is a Child Respecting City, they would communicate with leadership in independent schools on recognising and implementing the child rights approach.
- We thank you for taking into consideration our ideas in relation to Rights Respecting Schools and preparing for life after school.