

CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Recognition assessment outcome report: Cardiff Council

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INTRODUCTION

Child Friendly Cities & Communities (CFC) is a UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice.

The programme aims to support councils and their partners to embed a child rights-based approach across local strategy, policy, service delivery and public spaces.

Over three to five years a council, their local partners, and children and young people work together on an ambitious journey towards international recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City or Community.

Child Friendly Cities & Communities is part of UNICEF's global Child Friendly Cities Initiative, which reaches over 30 million children in close to 50 countries.

Summary

Cardiff became a Child Friendly City as recognised by UNICEF in 2023, covering the period until 2026. Over the past 3 years, Cardiff has continued to deliver a programme developing and implementing strategies for advancing children's rights.

Following assessment of the city's progress, UNICEF UK is granting **Cardiff full recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City 2026-29**



ABOUT RECOGNITION

Recognition is the final stage of the Child Friendly Cities & Communities journey.

Recognition signifies that UNICEF publicly **recognises** that a council and its local partners have taken significant and sustainable steps towards advancing the human rights of children and young people growing up in their community. **'Child Friendly' status recognises progress, not perfection.**

Cities or communities become eligible for recognition after implementing their CFC action plan for a minimum of 2 years. The action plan sets out how change will be achieved across six thematic 'badges,' or priority areas, which are chosen in collaboration with children and young people.

Councils and their partners are asked to demonstrate, through relevant, good quality evidence, how they have achieved the ambition set out in their CFC action plan, what they have learned, and how they plan to take forward the commitment to realising children's rights across the city or community once 'Child Friendly' status has been achieved.

At the end of their programme journey, cities and communities are asked to:

- Submit documentation setting out their case for recognition.
- Submit detailed evidence against the outcomes and indicators in their CFC action plan.
- Host a live assessment, during which UNICEF UK's independent CFC Recognition Advisory Panel holds exploratory discussions with key representatives from the area, including children and young people.

There are four possible assessment outcomes:

Recognition: 'Child Friendly' status	The council and its partners have made sustainable progress across all their priority areas and set out a robust plan for building on this progress. Child Friendly status lasts for three years.
Conditional Recognition	The council and its partners are required to complete actions, expand their sustainability ambitions, address gaps or submit missing evidence within an agreed time frame before being officially and publicly recognised.
Suspended Assessment	Evidence is missing or incomplete, but a promising case has been put forward. Assessment will be repeated later.
No Recognition	The quality of evidence poor, the sustainability plan is unconvincing, local commitment is unconvincing.

Recognition Assessment Framework

Assessment of evidence, progress and impact is carried out by UNICEF UK and scrutinised by the independent CFC Recognition Advisory Panel. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the foundation of the CFC assessment framework. It is realised through the seven principles of a **child rights-based approach**:

- Dignity
- Transparency and Accountability
- the Best Interest of the Child
- Non-Discrimination
- Participation
- Life, Survival and Development
- Interdependence and Indivisibility.

These principles are reinforced by the global Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) minimum criteria: **measurable results for children**, including quality, relevant, and significant data; **meaningful and inclusive child participation**; and a **demonstrated dedication to eliminating discrimination**.

Finally, the specific outcomes and indicators set out in the city's CFC action plan against locally chosen 'badges' are at the centre of the framework against which progress is assessed. Once recognised, Cities and Communities set out a 3 year Sustainability Plan, which develops and embeds their approach. Cardiff's delivery from 2023-26 has been assessed against their Sustainability Plan. This Plan was organised by four themes: Child Rights Education; Place; Participation; and Equal and Included

The Recognition Assessment Framework has been used to assess delivery of the Sustainability Plan, using the seven principles of a child rights-based approach and the global CFCI minimum criteria.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

Cardiff originally joined the Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme in 2017 as part of a pioneer cohort of cities and communities. Their priority badge areas chosen with children and young people were Cooperation and Leadership, Culture, Communication, Healthy, Education & Learning and Family & Belonging. Full recognition as a Child Friendly City was awarded in 2023. A Sustainability Plan for 2023-26 was put in place, and has been delivered over the last 3 years. This work has focussed on 4 priority areas – **Child Rights Education, Participation, Place and Equal & Included.**

In March 2026, Cardiff submitted a story of change, a youth evaluation report, evidence against the 2023-26 sustainability plan to support the case for being recognised once more, and a sustainability plan for the period 2026-29. Documents and evidence were verified and assessed by the CFC team at UNICEF UK using the assessment framework.

On 8th April 2026 an assessment day was held at the Spark Building, Cardiff University. There was a series of thematic roundtables, including a session with children and young people. UNICEF UK would like to thank everyone who was involved in the process, especially the children and young people.

Progress across all six priority areas

The evidence demonstrates that the council and its partners have made good progress across four priority areas. This includes:

CFC embedded as 'how the council does business': Children's rights and child rights-based approaches are increasingly mainstreamed into policy development, service delivery and corporate decision-making

Children and young people influencing governance: Youth involvement in scrutiny and long-term planning is growing in confidence and sophistication, with Democratic Services supporting young people to shape agendas. Input into the Local Development Plan is particularly significant.

Workforce rights training embedded and widely taken up: Children's rights learning is tied to performance processes, with high levels of training uptake

Increasingly routine use of CRIAs and integration with EIAs: Child Rights Impact Assessments are more commonly used, integrated into Equalities Impact Assessment, signaling stronger rights-based decision-making across varied policy areas

Rights in education: The Rights Respecting Schools Award model demonstrates children's rights increasingly present in curriculum, leadership and policy conversations, supported by the Curriculum for Wales and School Improvement Plans

A shift from projects to structural place-making levers: Place work is moving away from one-off initiatives toward embedding child-friendly approaches via planning policy, guidance, and ways of working, creating foundations for sustained long-term change through statutory and professional systems.

Play and lived experience integrated into planning frameworks: Play, child-friendly design, and children/young people's lived experience are increasingly integrated into strategic planning and regeneration frameworks, including the development of a Play Policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance mechanisms.

Early evidence of responsive neighbourhood improvements: Regeneration activity has begun translating children's feedback into visible local changes (e.g., crossings, park upgrades, safer routes and environmental enhancements)

An innovative approach to systemic issues of gender equity: A response developed in partnership with CYP on gender-based harm is a programme of critical reflection for boys. This has embedded a rights based approach, and has the potential for influence on a national level.

Recommendations

The assessment identified some recommendations for consideration by the partnership in the next phase of its child rights development:

- **Move from developing intentions to delivered, measurable action on child-first youth justice and racial disproportionality across policing and youth justice.** Cardiff has begun to develop this area of work; the next step is to strengthen pace and accountability by setting out clear actions, responsibilities and measures of progress. This should include a sharper focus on how racial disproportionality is identified, addressed and reduced across the youth justice pathway and in day-to-day policing practice, alongside stronger child-first safeguards. Proactive partnership working between the Council and police and youth justice partners will be critical, and learning from places where reductions in harmful practices have been achieved in a short timeframe (ie Manchester) can help Cardiff translate ambition into demonstrable change.
- **Clarify Youth Council and youth forum governance so children and young people's influence is connected to decisions, scrutiny and measurable outcomes.** Cardiff's participation offer would be strengthened by making decision pathways clearer and more consistent across youth structures. This should include defining the role, remit and governance position of the Youth Council and other forums, and setting out how they relate to each other and to formal council structures. Clearer arrangements for how issues are escalated, how decisions are shaped, and how feedback is provided will help ensure participation is not only visible, but also evidenced through impact. Developing a more systematic approach to tracking and communicating influence will strengthen accountability to children and young people and support sustained engagement.
- **Strengthen impact evidence by shifting from outputs to outcomes and lived experience change, with proportionate measures and independent learning partners.** Cardiff would benefit from a clearer
- approach to evidencing whether rights-based work is changing decisions, service design and children and young people's day-to-day experiences over time. Developing stronger outcome measures and verification mechanisms, such as a regular perception survey, would help track progress and identify where change is and is not being felt. There is also an opportunity to explore a more structured research and evaluation partnership with Cardiff University, building on existing connections, to strengthen evaluation design, data quality and shared learning. Quality assurance can be strengthened by moving beyond process compliance to assessing influence and quality, for example through sampling CRIsAs and tracking what changes were made as a result. Similarly, evaluation of training should move from monitoring uptake to assessing how learning is applied in practice and how it improves decisions and outcomes.
- **Strengthen feedback loops and accountability so children and young people can see what they said, what changed and why across participation and complaints routes.** Building on existing participation activity, Cardiff should make the link consistently visible between children and young people's input, decisions taken and outcomes delivered. This includes embedding clear, child-friendly feedback expectations after consultations and ensuring complaints and redress mechanisms are accessible, trusted and understood in practice. Communicating impact in straightforward formats and being transparent where decisions do not align with children's views will support trust, reinforce participation as meaningful, and strengthen the accountability of the system to children and young people.
- **Embed children's rights awareness through elected member and senior leader development, and strengthen rights education in secondary and non-mainstream settings.** Cardiff's next phase would benefit from making children's rights training a routine part of induction and ongoing development for elected members and senior leaders, helping ensure consistent leadership ownership and decision-making practice over time. Alongside this, there is a need to address the drop-off in rights-based approaches and rights education for older

- children, particularly in secondary schools and non-mainstream settings. Strengthening these elements will help embed a shared understanding of rights across ages and contexts, supporting more consistent practice and more equitable experiences for children and young people.
- **Strengthen inclusion by using disaggregated and intersectional insight to make participation more equitable and to demonstrate accountability to children and young people from the global majority.** Cardiff would benefit from a more systematic approach to identifying unequal experiences and gaps in representation, using disaggregated data and considering publication where appropriate to strengthen transparency and accountability. This insight should inform a sharper inclusion strategy for participation, ensuring less-heard groups including neurodivergent children and young people can access opportunities and have comparable influence. Further work with children and young people to understand how intersecting experiences of discrimination shape participation and outcomes would support more targeted action and clearer next steps. Strengthening understanding of children and young people's perceptions of agency and influence, including which cohorts have lower confidence, will help the system focus support where it is most needed. Clear expectations that action plans, including the sustainability plan, reach, engage and are accountable to children and young people from the global majority will help ensure inclusion is evidenced through impact, not only intent.

Assessment outcome

On balance, Cardiff has continued an impressive development of child rights infrastructure, with areas of excellent practice and children and young people influencing core governance, especially scrutiny and long term planning. A child rights based approach is now embedded as how the Council does business, not as a discrete project. The next Sustainability Plan for 2026-29 continues the focus on Child Rights Education, Place, Participation and Equal and Included

Based on these commitments and progress to date, Cardiff is awarded renewed Child Friendly City status for the period 2026-29.

Priority area review

Each of Cardiff's priority areas are set out over the following pages. A table summarises a selection of the specific activities and strategies that Cardiff adopted, the outcomes they worked towards, and the indicators they selected to measure progress and impact.

Each table is accompanied by commentary on the assessed progress, including recommendations for further development.

Please note, in the tables we have sometimes used the following abbreviations due to space constraints:

- **CYP** - Children and young people
- **CR** - child rights
- **CRBA** - child rights-based approach.

CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION

Progress

Overall, Cardiff's children's rights education workstream has been substantially delivered against its 2023–26 intention: sustaining and scaling rights education so that children know their rights and duty-bearers are equipped to uphold them. The foundations- workforce learning, manager guidance, a large-scale schools infrastructure, and emerging strategic levers- are aligned with a rights-based approach. The live assessment demonstrated a shift from champion driven activity to structural embedding of children's rights across education and workforce systems.

Alongside education delivery, the submission points to statutory and strategic levers that can help embed children's rights beyond individual projects. References to play policy within the Local Development Plan and to forthcoming planning guidance indicate that children's rights considerations are beginning to connect with wider systems that shape children's day-to-day experiences. Learning acknowledges pressures and limitations—such as variability in secondary school engagement and challenges securing attendance at elected member training. This transparency supports confidence that Cardiff is operating as a learning system, able to identify what is working, respond to barriers, and strengthen implementation over time.

The evidence also describes substantial delivery of a city-wide infrastructure for rights education through the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA). The model described includes local capacity for delivery and assessment, ongoing monitoring, and the use of data to maintain an overview of engagement and progression. The scale reported is significant: a large majority of schools are engaged, representing sustained growth over time and suggesting that rights education has become a recognised and supported approach within many education settings.

Importantly, children and young people reinforce the value of this work. Young people describe rights education- particularly in primary settings- as empowering and meaningful, indicating that where rights are made visible and relevant, children can develop confidence, language and agency to express views and seek support.

A notable strength is the way children's rights are being embedded into council culture through workforce learning and management expectations. Cardiff's corporate plan includes a clear organisational target for children's rights training, and reported completion levels show strong uptake across staff groups. Training delivery has also evolved in a pragmatic way: evidence points to an increasingly flexible model with bespoke sessions tailored to different professional audiences (including materials developed for specific roles such as school governors and elected members), alongside a growing set of accessible resources for staff who are less likely to use a PC or who prefer alternative formats. This reflects a focus on equitable access to learning and on equipping duty-bearers with practical ways to apply children's rights in everyday decision making and service delivery.

The next phase would benefit from a sharper focus on secondary-age provision and on closing the loop between school-based rights work and wider partnership practice, so that children and young people experience a consistent rights-respecting culture across education, services and community settings.

There are indications that elected member training has not yet been embedded at the level intended, with low attendance and a plan to incorporate training into induction around the 2027 election cycle.

CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION

While the submission provides useful information on the volume of training sessions delivered and reported gains in confidence, it would be strengthened by clearer reporting of participant numbers and evaluation findings, as well as stronger articulation of how rights-respecting school culture connects to children's lived experiences and engagement with services beyond school. The live assessment highlighted the need to close the evidence loop, by moving beyond completion rates to evidence training impact on service design and decision making.

Across the period, Cardiff has made clear progress in strengthening children's rights education by combining culture change within the council with wider place-based levers that can sustain and scale impact over time. The evidence presented indicates a shift towards children's rights being considered as default practice rather than dependent on individual champions, supported by continued learning, adaptation, and an honest assessment of remaining gaps.

CHILD RIGHTS EDUCATION

Impact Indicators	Number of strategies, initiatives, services and decisions explicitly using a CRA 85% staff completed online mandatory CR module						
Outcomes	Across the city, children, young people and adults have good knowledge of children's right and children are actively supported to claim their rights.						
Select strategies	Robust internal capacity is established by training staff members as trainers/champions, fostering collaboration and partnerships with other departments and external organisations, establish monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress. Roll out child rights e-learning to 85% of council staff Extend applied child rights training to other departments and external partners Identify and up-skill network of managers Develop bespoke resources and modules Deliver Elected Members training programme Cardiff has a sustainable approach to embedding children's rights across all schools with pupils, staff, governors and parents knowledgeable and confident in children's rights We will support schools to engage with and progress through the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award We will develop and deliver a sustainable approach to Rights Respecting Schools Award in Cardiff						
CRBA	Dignity	Participation	Best Interest	Life, Survival, Development	Interdependence and Indivisibility	Non-Discrimination	Transparency and Accountability
CFCI Minimum Criteria	Equity and non-discrimination		Data		Participation		

Progress

Cardiff's submission tells a clear story of a city shifting from one-off engagement activity to early embedding of children's rights into the everyday mechanisms of planning and place-making. Across 2023–26, the emphasis has been on building the foundations that make child-friendly change more routine and more durable: shared frameworks, policy levers, evidence pathways, and practical tools that help teams translate children and young people's lived experience into decisions about neighbourhoods, parks and development. At the live assessment we became aware of growing workforce capability and confidence, with officers described as braver, more collaborative and more rights aware. A child rights based approach, child friendly design and lived experience of children and young people are increasingly integrated into strategic planning and regeneration frameworks.

At the centre of this work is the Play Opportunities Framework, which provides a line of sight from evidence to framework, through practice, and ultimately to impact. It is organised around three reinforcing pillars: Policy and System Change (including a Play Policy, a Vision for Play, and play sufficiency assessments); Understanding Children's Lives (including digital and community mapping toolkits, Locality Place Plans, Local Development Plan workshops and targeted research such as HerParks); and Applying Child Friendly Design (including the Channel View pilot, Urban95 leadership training, and design prompts and checklists). Taken together, these elements indicate a strong commitment to building a coherent system that can understand children's perspectives, test child-friendly design principles in real settings, and embed learning back into formal planning processes.

Participation activity is broad and through a variety of opportunities. Children and young people contributed through school-based workshops, site-specific engagement in parks and neighbourhoods, digital engagement, and existing participation structures.

The submission reports around 700 children and young people involved in mapping activity, alongside more targeted involvement—over 50 young people taking part in Local Development Plan workshops at a critical point in policy development. This mix of wide-reaching engagement and focused inputs suggests an approach that is aiming to be representative and practical: gathering large-scale insight into everyday experience while also creating routes for young people to shape statutory policy conversations. The LDP is seen to create a significant opportunity for a new start that integrates child friendly principles.

By 2025, these rights-based planning efforts began to translate into tangible, local improvements. The Neighbourhood Regeneration Team delivered small-scale but meaningful changes- new crossing points, park upgrades, safer routes and locally influenced environmental enhancements- explicitly linked to children's feedback. While early, these interventions matter because they demonstrate responsiveness: the system is starting to act in real time on children's lived experience rather than treating participation as a standalone exercise. In parallel, the Channel View pilot has functioned as a testbed for child-friendly planning principles, generating practical lessons that can support wider adoption as the city moves toward formalising its Play Policy and Supplementary Planning Guidance. The emerging Supplementary Planning Guidance is positioned as a mechanism for integrating children and young people's priorities with statutory planning requirements—an important step if child-friendly intent is to be sustained through normal planning cycles and development decisions.

The strengths in the work sit most clearly in this 'system foundations' space. There is a consistent through-line showing professional engagement with children and young people, and a clear shift toward structural levers (policy, guidance and evidence mechanisms) that align with a children's rights-based approach and with longer-term ambitions for place.

Locality Place Plans in particular, offer spatially specific insight into what children experience and what changes they want, and the submission notes that these plans have been shared with elected members and stakeholders, with the intention of influencing regeneration priorities and investment decisions. Targeted work with teenage girls has also been undertaken as a way of ensuring that safety and gendered experience are not lost within wider engagement activity.

However, the submission also points to where Cardiff's story is still emerging—and what will most strengthen work in the future. Young people continue to report that some place-related issues remain prominent in daily life, including safety concerns, crossings and lighting, and the availability of genuinely teen-friendly spaces. This suggests that the 2023–26 period has delivered strongly on enabling work, but has only partly realised the intended 'felt' improvements that children and young people would notice in their neighbourhoods- reflecting the longer lead times associated with policy adoption, regeneration programmes and the built environment.

In several areas, it would be possible to increase the visibility of causality and accountability: for example, more explicit understanding of how children's input in Locality Place Plans has changed specific decisions; fuller description of the methods and outcomes of the teenage girls' research (including whether young people helped frame the questions); and a stronger feedback loop showing how those who contributed were updated on what changed as a result.

Addressing these points- alongside continued delivery of visible neighbourhood change and consistent tracking of progress over time- would help Cardiff move from strong foundations to demonstrably improved lived experience, and provide a robust narrative of outcomes to match the ambition of its child-friendly planning framework.

PLACE

Impact Indicators	Play Policy and SPG formally adopted into the Local Development Plan and applied in planning decisions Systematic use of CRIAs in all major development proposals (e.g., ≥10 CRIAs logged and reviewed).
Outcomes	Urban planning and design in Cardiff consistently uses children's lived experience and rights based methods to create safe, inclusive, and playful neighbourhoods, so children can move, meet, and play across our city.
Select strategies	A new 'Play Policy' is adopted into the Local Development Plan • Evidence gathering and engagement • developing the strategy • implementation of delivery plan and monitoring and review Consultation and engagement is systematically used to inform urban planning and design in localities. CYP understand how their views have informed developments Supplementary Planning Guidance for a 'Play Policy' is adopted into the Local Development Plan.

CRBA	Dignity	Participation	Best Interest	Life, Survival, Development	Interdependence and Indivisibility	Non-Discrimination	Transparency and Accountability
CFCI Minimum Criteria	Equity and non-discrimination		Data			Participation	

PARTICIPATION

Progress

Cardiff's Recognition submission for the Participation workstream sets out a strong and increasingly systemised approach to embedding children and young people's influence in decision-making. Progress is grounded in the development of a Participation Framework, informed by a citywide Participation Review across council services, schools and partner organisations. This combination of strategic intent and reflective self-assessment provides a credible platform for long-term culture change, helping Cardiff move towards more routine, rights-based participation across local systems.

A key strength is the breadth of participation routes described, alongside evidence that children and young people value direct access to decision makers. The submission highlights support for a citywide youth forum, including opportunities for young people to plan and facilitate meetings, engage with experts and partner agencies, and contribute to local and national discussions. Young people's representation on strategic groups and scrutiny structures further signals growing recognition of children as stakeholders in governance, and an increasing willingness to create space for youth voice within formal decision-making environments.

A consistent message from children and young people at the live assessment is that Cardiff has developed strong and well resourced structures for youth participation. Young people described influencing decisions across areas including education, planning, youth justice, transport, and play. The £1 bus fare was highlighted as a visible and practical change influenced by children and young people, alongside the development of a standalone Play Policy, both seen as tangible achievements. Young people also felt that Cardiff has made efforts to become fairer and more inclusive.

The evidence base is strengthened by practical tools intended to support consistency and organisational learning. The creation of centralised datasets and reports (a shared

repository) is a notable piece of system infrastructure, helping partners draw on existing insight rather than repeatedly asking the same groups of children for input. The active promotion and use of School Health Research Network (SHRN) data also demonstrates an emerging commitment to using population-level insight to inform policy and service development, an important feature of a sustainable child rights-based approach.

The submission includes concrete examples of participation shaping outcomes. Children and young people are described as influencing the development of Cardiff's Education Inclusion Strategy, with an emphasis on ensuring that those most affected by policy decisions had meaningful opportunities to shape priorities. The inclusion of an under-11s social action toolkit is another positive indicator of intent to broaden participation across age groups, supporting younger children to take action on issues important to them and reinforcing that participation should not be limited to older adolescents or those already confident in civic spaces.

At the same time, the submission is clear that practice is not yet consistent. Most notably, youth evidence points to an uneven 'you said / we did' feedback loop, with young people describing feedback as late, unclear, or absent. This matters because it shapes whether participation is experienced as influential or symbolic, and it represents the clearest gap against the ambition to strengthen accountability and transparency. Young people also suggest that opportunities can still be concentrated among those already engaged, underlining the importance of widening reach to less-heard groups and across a broader range of settings. Some children and young people have far greater access, influence, and opportunities than others, and change does not always reach all groups equally. Particular concerns were raised about experiences of discrimination and being overlooked, especially among neurodivergent young people, alongside the risk that targeted approaches can unintentionally exclude other groups

PARTICIPATION

The Participation Review provides a practical roadmap to address these issues.

Recommendations include strengthening awareness and implementation of the Wales National Participation Standards through training and accessible guidance; supporting organisations to adopt clear participation policies; improving feedback through creative methods and a shared participation log; widening inclusion through more accessible opportunities for underrepresented groups; and building a citywide network and online hub to share learning and promote good practice. The review also highlights the value of celebrating participation through communications and annual events, helping to sustain momentum and reinforce participation as core business across partners.

Alongside participation mechanisms, the submission includes a practice-based case study illustrating how relationship-centred approaches can strengthen children's outcomes. The example of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) within parenting services describes reflective, strengths-based work with parents and babies, supporting secure attachment and parental confidence—particularly relevant in the first 1,000 days.

While this sits alongside the Participation evidence rather than directly evidencing civic participation, it usefully demonstrates how reflective, relational practice can be embedded in services to improve children's lived experience and increase responsiveness to children and families.

Overall, Cardiff demonstrates strong progress in building participation infrastructure, with credible evidence of strategic commitment, partnership engagement, and examples of children and young people influencing policy and practice. The next phase will benefit from sharpening the accountability mechanisms that turn participation into visible change: a consistent feedback loop, clear governance pathways for Cardiff Youth Council, and more systematic reporting of influence and outcomes. With continued focus on inclusion—ensuring opportunities reach less-heard children and young people—Cardiff is well positioned to deepen impact and sustain a rights-based approach to participation through and beyond the next Recognition period.

PARTICIPATION

Impact Indicators	% of staff reporting they are confident and skilled in working with C&YP to have their views heard						
Outcomes	C&YP's views and supporting qualitative data about CYP's experiences are consistently used to inform the design, development and evaluation of policies, services and programmes						
Select strategies	Provide quality assured, high-quality opportunities for C&YP to influence decision making including younger children, Further embed National Participation Standards, Develop a dashboard for disaggregated data Develop Participation Review Action Plan to deliver recommendations Workforce is confident and skilled in working with C&YP to have their views heard CRIAs regularly take place to identify need for consultation with C&YP Mechanisms are embedded to listen to C&YP to inform service design & decision making Adults regularly seek support and advice regarding CRA / participation						
CRBA	Dignity	Participation	Best Interest	Life, Survival, Development	Interdependence and Indivisibility	Non-Discrimination	Transparency and Accountability
CFCI Minimum Criteria	Equity and non-discrimination		Data		Participation		

EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Progress

Cardiff's Recognition submission under the Equal & Included priority presents a programme of work that aims to make non-discrimination a practical delivery test for the city's services and systems. The evidence shows a strategic focus on tackling disproportionality of outcome (including in youth justice), improving inclusion, and strengthening leadership and data so that children and young people who face discrimination experience better access and outcomes. Taken together, the material reflects meaningful delivery underway, with a clear line of sight from lived experience to action and an emerging model that seeks to translate rights into everyday experiences across schools, communities and services.

A key component of the submission is Cardiff's gender equity workstream, which positions work with boys and young men as central to improving safety, wellbeing and inclusion for all children. Early listening with girls and young women highlighted that progress on gender equity requires engagement with male-dominated systems and the harmful norms that shape behaviour, relationships and online culture. Cardiff's response includes a blend of awareness-raising, dialogue and sustained participatory activity, reaching 1,611 children and young people overall. This includes large-scale school engagement with 1,542 boys through speaker sessions; a new non-profit launch that engaged 53 young people to shape future direction through lived experience; and a two-week summer boys' group involving 16 young people to support deeper reflection, emotional literacy and sustained discussion. Alongside this, workforce development has been through a learning resource aimed at strengthening support for younger children exposed to domestic violence, reflecting an intent to shift practice as well as provide direct interventions.

Across the evidence, Cardiff demonstrates a credible 'listen-design-deliver' cycle. Three short case studies show initiatives being shaped by what children and young people said they needed: school assembly feedback informing a boys' support group pilot; a city-wide co-design day determining the nature of groups and how success should be defined; and a professional learning resource developed in response to boys wanting more sessions and support. This approach is reinforced by the varied engagement methods described (school sessions, facilitated discussion, creative reflection, wellbeing measures and dedicated co-design activity), with participant quotes indicating potential for these interventions to support increased emotional literacy and healthier identities. The work also shows early signs of sustainability: development of a replicable citywide boys' group model, a monthly community of practice, a toolkit and resource library. This work is clearly gathering momentum, and is in the early stages of influencing a national approach.

At the live assessment, we heard about three other key pieces of work. There are a range of measures taking place in Youth Justice, including increasing practitioner confidence in discussing heritage and lived experience with young people, monitoring data and thematic deep dives informing governance processes, and CYP involvement in diversity policy review. Cardiff's commitment to becoming a Neurodivergent Friendly City was outlined, with the work at an early stage. The Take Your Place 12 week outreach programme with working class young people focussed on decision-making and power.

The submission highlights opportunities to strengthen how impact and equity are evidenced. While gender disparity is clearly articulated, there is limited use of disaggregated data to explore how experiences of harm and access vary by other characteristics (for example ethnicity, disability or overlapping disadvantage), or to identify cohorts at heightened risk. The Youth Summary also points to an ongoing theme of uneven experience- where rights and inclusion can depend on context, setting or awareness of available support- suggesting that initiatives are not yet consistently felt as universal across the city.

EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Cardiff would benefit from sharpening outcome indicators and measures of verification over time, clarifying how rights-based approaches are being embedded into systems and working cultures (particularly in youth justice disproportionality work), and showing how communications and accountability mechanisms ensure children can reliably access provision. The additional workstreams referenced- leadership capacity building for under-represented young people, local contribution to the national bus travel discount pilot, and participatory budgeting through Our City, Our Say- provide a wider picture of an inclusion agenda that is both practical and participatory, and they offer a strong platform for the next phase of consistent, data-informed delivery

EQUAL AND INCLUDED

Impact Indicators	Reduction in inequalities between male and females.		Number of evidence of less disparity, improved outcomes and interventions using data and qualitative findings			Published timeline for implementation of the Road User Payment Scheme subject to funding and approvals	
	Improving the lives of girls and young women by creating more inclusive urban environments.					Number of children and young people consulted	
Outcomes	All C&YP are treated with dignity and respect and are free from discrimination						
Select strategies	Equal and Included delivery plan		Cardiff Youth Justice Services Disproportionality Policy and Action Plan (updated July 2023)			Transport improvements including the consideration of free travel on public transport for children and young people	
	Cardiff sees reduction in inequalities highlighted in year 1 through robust review and evaluation phase including work with C&YP.		Continued profiling of caseloads to monitor ethnicity and outcomes against Year 0 baseline.			Consultation on the development of integrated road transport network including Road User Payment scheme and the potential transport improvements it could fund including affordability for C&YP	
	Development of further work to address inequality faced by C&YP to be built into engagement plan		Continued implementation of plan of activity.			Prepare, plan and implement bus travel discount scheme for 5-21 year olds.	
			A more consistent focus on disproportionality in casework across the service and evidence of work undertaken with children.				
			Continuous improvement and review is embedded into the service delivery culture.				
CRBA	Dignity	Participation	Best Interest	Life, Survival, Development	Interdependence and Indivisibility	Non-Discrimination	Transparency and Accountability
CFCI Minimum Criteria	Equity and non-discrimination		Data			Participation	

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[unicef.uk/cfc](https://www.unicef.uk/cfc)

T: 020 7017 1763

E: cfc@unicef.org.uk

United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF
(UNICEF UK), Registered Charity No. 1072612
(England & Wales), SC043677 (Scotland).