

PROGRESS NOTE

Candidate Community:	Nottingham City Council
Review period:	November 2023 – May 2024 (1 st progress review)
Date:	10 th May 2024
RAG Status:	

Summary

This note reflects a summary of Nottingham City Council’s first progress review meeting and accompanying evidence, relative to the local child friendly action plan. Reflecting on the last six months of delivery, political leaders and professionals across the community, alongside the Child Friendly Nottingham coordinating team provided The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) an overview of progress made to date. During the online meeting Nottingham made significant effort to ground the review in children’s participation, starting the review with an overview of key youth voice mechanisms and events.

The meeting was reflective and honest in spirit and tone, which is to be celebrated given the recent challenges experienced by the council. Significantly, despite recent changes which have impacted on the activities and outputs outlined in the local child friendly action plan, there were a huge number of strong, positive updates, that spoke to the progress being made locally. In particular, there was robust political engagement (both within the review meeting and in direct work with children and young people); multiple examples of children and young people having a voice and influencing local decisions (as evidenced in the creation of the new central library space and participative events); as well as, commitment to embed a child rights-based approach at a systems level (with Child Friendly being a priority in the council strategic plan and the ambition to pilot the seven principles of a child rights-based approach within commissioning).

Moving forward, there were some areas that require attention to further support the city’s work towards being recognised as a UNICEF Child Friendly City. Firstly, whilst there was evidently a huge amount of activity going on, it was not always clear how it linked to and was explicitly embedding the seven principles of a child rights-based approach. Secondly, there was a large amount of evidence shared in advance of the review meeting, most of which did not correspond directly with the local child friendly action plan. Recommendations within this note aim to focus and strengthen preparation for the next progress review meeting, alongside the local child friendly action plan (see recommendations relevant to all badge areas below).

This was a very strong progress review meeting both in terms of tone and progress being made, despite significant financial challenges locally. The approach to children’s

participation and the progress made in recent months was impressive and demonstrates that Nottingham remains on track to be recognised as a UNICEF Child Friendly City.

Recommendations (relevant to all badge areas):

- Consider how the seven principles of a child rights-based approach can be more explicitly evidenced across activity, outputs and the means of verification (evidence submitted); thereby ensuring that the work outlined within the action plan is consistently drawing from and embedding a child rights-based approach.
- Ensure relevance of means of verification (evidence) submitted to those listed within the action plan. Namely, resist temptation to share lots of evidence that is not directly connected to the action plan and where there is strong desire to include means of verification not contained within the action plan, agree with Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFC) Programme Officer rationale in advance of the progress review meeting.
- Consider utilising UNICEF UK impact study template to further elevate case studies. This will support the explicit outlining of how the seven principles of a child rights-based approach is evident.
- Strengthen the 'equal and included' golden thread across the entire plan; ensuring that is consistently framing and informing practice and being evidenced where possible.

Culture



Outcomes

- *Nottingham Councillors, leaders and staff across partner agencies confidently and consistently apply a child rights-based approach in their work.*
- *Children and young people can find help from public agencies when they need to and feel confident to do so. Babies, children and young people can find help from public services and organisations who are responsive to their needs and rights.*

It was powerful to hear directly from political leaders regarding the direct work with children in schools; thereby evidencing a child rights-based approach being applied within practice. Given how many leaders and professionals have been trained in the child rights-based approach locally since the start of the programme, moving forward it will be helpful to understand the impact in practice.

The supported lodgings case study was a welcome reflection of the piloting of the approach at a service level. It is positive that there will be a Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) briefing later this month, with a view to piloting the utilisation of a CRIA within local systems and processes.

Recommendations

- Clarify workforce development plan to outline clear training path for key cohorts of leaders and professionals.
- Consider how political and senior leaders' application of a child rights-based approach in practice can be understood and captured. For example, consider utilising impact case study template as a way of evidencing the principles in practice.

Evidence

For outcome one, the significant proportion of evidence related to the action plan launch event. This was a significant moment for the programme locally, galvanising energy and enthusiasm across the partnership, children and young people, and sharing the action plan to increase knowledge awareness. Key means of verification were missing from the culture badge, of particular note was the absence of workforce development plans (outlining the training needs and

priority cohorts) and information related to the roll out of CRIA locally.

The Notts Youth Trends survey was a key feature in evidence submitted for outcome two, and whilst there is no doubt it will generate important information regarding issues including barriers to services facing children and young people, it will be good to see the summary of findings included in future evidence.

Cooperation & Leadership



Outcomes

- *Children and young people are actively involved in local decision making.*
- *Children and young people are actively involved in local democracy.*

Discussion during the progress review meeting, highlighted the strength of partnership working across the city. Colleagues reflected on work that is being undertaken to understand the different “charters, standards and networks” across a variety of organisations, so there can be shared knowledge and awareness of the approach to work with children and young people.

A significant part of the co-operation and leadership badge is ensuring that political leaders are trained in a child rights-based approach and are able to evidence it’s application in practice. It was noted in the meeting, that while training has taken place, training records are yet to be added to the evidence.

Finally, it was positive to hear reflections about how the Youth Trends survey (inc. data from 11-25year olds across Nottinghamshire) informs core council plans, such as the corporate and improvement plans.

Recommendations

- Make stronger links between the great partnership working that is being developed, and the specific scope and structure of the Child Friendly Nottingham programme to tie the work more closely to the broader child-rights based approach and framework.
- Link to the workforce development plan, to ensure clear learning and development pathway for political leaders re. applying a child rights-based approach within practice.

	<p>Evidence</p> <p>Nottingham provided a range of strong examples of involving children and young people in local decision making and democracy. In particular, the children in care and care leavers charter demonstrates a clear application of embedding a child rights-based approach across the city, especially on collaborative development, taking a holistic focus, and in creating transparency and accountability across services. It was great to hear as part of the progress review meeting that this has now been approved by the Corporate Parenting Board and will now be embedded in practice.</p> <p>It is clear that the Child Friendly Nottingham team are building strong relationships with partners across the city and bringing together a range of resources and partnerships to support the programme. The ‘Notts Youth Trend’ blog shared as evidence, as well as the information on the ‘City as Lab’ project illustrate how much rich shared experience can be utilised as part of the Child Friendly Nottingham programme, and it was good to see a proactive discussion around some of the challenges and barriers to collaboration included in the Padlet Partnership Lab discussion.</p> <p>There were a number of strong additional examples of good practice shared as part of the progress review meeting itself – especially the successful Nottingham College Hustings event, the recent Primary Parliament session on online safety, and the upcoming work as part of this year’s Nonsuch Survey. These examples demonstrated a clear commitment to meaningfully engaging with children and young people, capturing their voice, and actively involving them in both the programme itself, but also more generally.</p> <p>Overall Co-operation and Leadership is currently one of the strongest badges in Nottingham’s Child Friendly programme, and it was great to see all of the positive work and progress so early in the process and in what have been understandably challenging circumstances. We look forward to seeing how this badge area develops over the coming months and look forward to joining the upcoming Partners Day.</p>
<p>Communication</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Our communications are clear, understandable, and responsive to the views of children and young people. A positive view of children and young people is widely held and promoted across Nottingham. Our communications will promote and encourage understanding of children’s rights across Nottingham.</i>



- *Our communications will promote and encourage understanding of children's rights across Nottingham.*

This was a great area of development, with reflections in the meeting including updates about the newly created child friendly website and early help provision prioritising animations and easy-read versions for children and young people. It was of note that the graphics for the website had been designed by a young person, reiterating the spirit of co-design with young people. There is also great practice emerging via LeftLion, the cultural magazine for the city, with the possibility of youth involvement.

The 'time to collaborate' session, captured in the evidence, where communications colleagues reflected on their work with and for children and young people demonstrates a desire to meaningfully review and adjust communications locally to better embed a child rights-based approach.

Recommendations

- Expand the CFC communications plan to further support a strategic approach to communications activity, from planning through to delivery and review (inc. partners).

Evidence

The evidence submitted under the communications badge was a good example of the documents being produced not aligning with the means of verification within the child friendly action plan. For example, of five pieces of evidence anticipated, approximately 93 items were shared (not all of which were accessible to the UNICEF UK team).

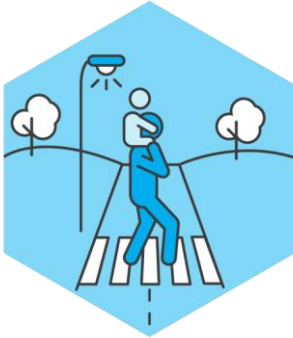
There is clear ambition and delivery with regards to child friendly communications; easy read versions of the child friendly action plan, alongside events designed with and for children, which speak to the first part of outcome one.

The local CFC communications plan demonstrates an overarching view of activity against the outcomes, including media releases and workstreams such as the 'right of the month', to continue to raise the profile of the CFC programme and children's rights more broadly.

Finally, it was good to see the activity related to the creation of the kindness quilt and indeed the reach of this project (children from across 28 different schools). However, given the emphasis placed on kindness by children and young people during the Discovery phase and the ambition within the plan to have a kindness strategy

developed, it would be good to see how this will continue to be rolled out going forward and possibly link to the 'equal and included' golden thread.

Safe & Secure



Outcomes

- *Children and young people feel confident and safe in their communities, such as in the park, neighbourhoods and on the way to and from school.*
- *Nottingham city centre is a child friendly area which makes parents of young children, children and young people feel welcome, engaged, and safe.*
- *Children and young people to feel safer online and understand how to manage the risks and able to recognise how changing technologies might impact on them.*

It is to be celebrated, the honest reflections that were shared regarding the impact of local changes on the safe and secure badge. It was also of note that despite the concerns about the impact on progress (against the activities and outputs contained within the action plan) there were plenty of reflections about ongoing work to make progress against the outcomes.

Examples provided as part of the progress review meeting included the safety mapping project being undertaken with the Violence Reduction Partnership, and the She Is Summit – which shows an excellent demonstration of an event created, developed and facilitated by a group of young people.

Acknowledging the impact on the activity related to the Neighbourhood Action Teams in the action plan, it was good to hear that alternative sources of funding have been sought, priorities identified, and a place-based approach has been adopted. For example, safe streets funding in two areas of concern and hot spot funding for open spaces in twelve different areas across the city. The work with Nottingham Trent University, to support community engagement has the potential to further strengthen youth voice and engagement in this area and would benefit from drawing from a child rights-based approach from the outset.

The initial partnerships with transport agencies, Sustrans, and Railway Children are also potentially going to be of significant benefit to the work of Child Friendly Nottingham as the programme develops.

	<p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review / refresh the action plan to reflect updates to safe and secure badge in view of ongoing local developments. <p>Evidence</p> <p>We are aware of the challenges faced by the team over the past few months, particularly in relation to the safe and secure badge, which has been particularly affected by the wider financial context of the council. However, it was great to see some of the initial evidence of positive work that has taken place in this area already. The example provided of the work carried out by a political champion at Rise Park School provided strong evidence of listening to and empowering children, involving them in responding to issues, and it was great to hear that there are plans to return to see the pupils again to demonstrate the importance of following-up and acknowledging the voices and potential of the children involved.</p> <p>The opening of Nottingham Central Library in November is a great example of a new physical space that places children and young people in the geographical centre of the city, providing a space that supports education, learning, and play. We really enjoyed exploring the space when we visited in Nottingham, and it's wonderful to know that it is a well-used resource, as discussed in the progress review meeting.</p> <p>Progress to meet outcome three was well demonstrated by the evidence provided around the recent Primary Parliament event – it showed an effective way of putting the voice of children at the centre of the event, gave them the skills and opportunities to empower them to set the agenda and provided an audience to listen to them and their concerns. This also shows good alignment with the outcomes and evidence required for the co-operation and leadership badge and demonstrates strong partnership working with other agencies in developing good quality engagement work with children and young people.</p>
<p>Healthy</p>	<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children and young people are aware of what mental health and wellbeing support is available and are able to access local services. Local health and care organisations and children and young people working close together to identify gaps in mental health and wellbeing support; collaboration and co-design enables children and young people in Nottingham to suggest solutions for these gaps.</i>



- *Timely support for children and young people with identified mental health need and preventative action to maintain good mental wellbeing.*
- *Nottingham will have a better understanding of children and young people's health needs and preventative health improvement initiatives that support children and young people in Nottingham to live healthier lives.*

It was great to hear about the work that has been taking place across health and partner agencies under the healthy badge as part of the meeting. Some of the examples shared as part of the progress review meeting were of great interest, and it was good to hear that the Health Equity Audit has been completed, as well as new practice such as the launch of the Wellbeing Hub pilot, the child and young person mental health partnership that links with police and others around sexual harm, and the integrated wellbeing service are all potentially great resources for the work of Child Friendly Nottingham.


The examples shared around engagement with young people were also positive, we were pleased to hear that it is hoped that the Youth Impact Board will be launching soon, and about the reach of the school pupil health and wellbeing survey in Autumn 2023 (nearly 2500 children and young people). The potential work around embedding a child rights-based approach across joint commissioning services will also potentially have a significant positive impact, and we look forward to seeing how this develops.

Recommendations

- Focus over the coming months on ensuring that it is clearly evidenced as to how work under the healthy badge is directly aligned with the implementation of a broader child rights-based approach, and the embedding of the seven principles of a child rights-based approach.
- Consider including in evidence core documents referenced during the meeting, such as the Health Equity Audit report.

Evidence

Supporting evidence was only provided for outcome three ahead of the progress review meeting. The evidence provided around the Behavioural Insights report into smoking and vaping was interesting to read and demonstrated a good piece of research drawing on a range of tools and methods to get an understanding of the issue locally. The brief information shared around the Joint Strategic

	<p>Needs Assessment Dashboard was also good to see, but it would be useful to understand more about how this will be implemented in practice and how this may be beneficial for children and young people specifically.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Education and Learning</p> 	<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children and young people are enabled to use their imagination and creativity to celebrate diversity and their cultural heritage.</i> • <i>Children and young people feel confident to create and access learning, skills, and training opportunities within the city, which enable them to learn new things, flourish and be guided and supported by trusted adults.</i> • <i>Children and young people will be empowered to be active learners and champions for all children and young people's voices.</i> <p>This was an interesting badge to hear updates on, because whilst there have been some changes locally, which had demonstrably impacted progress (such as the challenges in funding the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award [RRSA] programme locally), there were several examples of direct work with and support for marginalised children and young people to continue to access learning opportunities. This speaks directly to the participation and non-discrimination principles within a child rights-based approach, among others. It also draws parallels with the 'equal and included' golden thread running throughout the child friendly action plan.</p> <p>It was particularly exciting to hear about the opportunity to systemically embed a child rights-based approach within the commissioning of alternative provision.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the evidence did speak to a child rights-based approach broadly, the seven principles were not cited once; consider how they can be more explicitly understood and communicated throughout the work with vulnerable children and young people. <p>Evidence</p>

	<p>Under outcome one, there were eight pieces of evidence, none of which are specifically contained within the local child friendly action plan. However, they did speak to creative and cultural activities for children and young people; celebrating the strength of partnership work across arts organisations, children and schools. For example, the Cultural Rucksack demonstrated the opportunities for children and young people through schools. It was particularly meaningful to see the ongoing work with children who might be considered particularly marginalised and vulnerable. For example, the Art of Belonging activity spoke to the ambition to support asylum seeking and refugee children to develop a sense of belonging, and there was more than one example of opportunities for children with SEND.</p> <p>Under outcome two, the Future Impact* report was a comprehensive example of work undertaken with a large cohort of young people to increase their access to educative and vocational opportunities. Additionally, the Include Pilot**, with clear linkage to the healthy badge, was a good example of supporting vulnerable children at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>Finally, regarding outcome three, the opening of a new free school for children who have been permanently excluded, once again demonstrated the care and attention being paid to children at highest risk of falling outside of formal education. It is of note, that the desire to roll out the RRSA programme locally has stalled as a consequence of changes to funding, which impacted the evidence shared. Similarly, in the absence of a 'diversity pledge', it was positive to see that a regional conference in diversity in children's leadership had been held by the programme sponsor to explore increasing visible diversity in Children's Services leadership roles.</p> <p>* "Future Impact [...] provided long term, person-centred intensive coaching support to 16–24-year-olds who were Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and young people aged 15 at high risk of becoming NEET, who had Special Educational Need/Disability (SEND) support when at school." (Future Impact Programme Evaluation, June 2023)</p> <p>** "The InClude pilot provides intensive youth mentoring to young people, who are at risk of school exclusion in 3 Nottingham City schools." (Include Pilot interim report, March 2024)</p>
<p>Equal & Included (GOLDEN TREAD)</p>	<p>The ongoing work with the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) team is a welcome addition to exploring how this 'golden thread' will</p>



weave throughout the local child friendly action plan, and it's impact understood.

Recommendation:

- Consider how existing indicators and means of verification can be disaggregated to inform picture so there is increased understanding of the impact on different groups of children and young people.

Date of next progress review: Wednesday 6th November 2024, 09:30-12:30 (in-person)