



Notes from the Child Friendly Nottingham Partners' Event 11th June 2024 at the Nottingham Ice Arena



On the 11th of June around 70 colleagues and partners met at a Child Friendly Nottingham event which had a number of general aims to:

- Brief on Nottingham's ambition to become a UNICEF UK accredited child friendly city and on UNICEF's approach to children's rights. With a briefing on the background to UNICEF UK's Child Friendly Cities and the principles behind the children's rights based approach.
- Encourage partners to take part in child rights training to adopt a child rights based approach.
- Encourage the formation of a network of Child Friendly Champions across the city.
- Identify assets and resources which partners have to support the development of Child Friendly Nottingham.

The afternoon was highly interactive with valuable conversations and contributions. These notes are a summary of the issues outlined and some proposed solutions and actions.

Hearing the most important voices

- ✿ Our ambition in Child Friendly Nottingham (CFN) is to create a "movement" around children's rights and a culture in Nottingham with children at the heart.
- ✿ A children's rights approach is a step further than providing services. Under this approach children are respected. It is grounded in listening, engaging and reviewing activities and services in the light of children and young people's views and experiences.
- ✿ A number of participants signed up to take part in UNICEF children's rights training to support them in following a child right based approach. More people are encouraged to do so.

The activities of the afternoon were about:

- Empowering the voice of Nottingham's Children and Young people.
- What it takes to be a Child Friendly/children's rights champion in Nottingham
- Supporting the Badge choices of the children and young people who took part in the Discovery Phase of the Programme.

Partners / Group Discussions

How well do you understand different generations – what does it mean to you?

The afternoon started with a discussion to provide a context for Child Friendly Nottingham.

- ✿ There is a lot of variation across generations which we need to recognise and understand but we should avoid generalisations of whole generations. Generational differences will mean different things to different people/organisations.
- ✿ Generations communicate differently, it is often said that older people tend to be more firm and direct, "say it how it is", younger people have a softer approach.
- ✿ Mental health was identified as a key issue in the Discovery Phase engagement. What does mental health mean to each generation?
- ✿ Youth mental health is a challenge, anxiety from social pressure. Technology can exacerbate issues, it is addictive and many find it challenging to disconnect. An impact of short videos e.g. Tik Tok can lead to an attention deficit. Impact of social media – can also hinder societal norms.
- ✿ Society is still to feel the long term impacts of behaviours such as vaping, on generations to come, societal norms and peer pressure.

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- ✿ Our own generations will impact on how we view and work with other generations. People are expected to fit into a box and fit into a model of how generations should act and develop. Yet communications and engagement isn't generational, this should be dependent on the individual.
- ✿ Have social boundaries changed over the generations? How do generations see each other? What assumptions are made, which shared experiences and differences are likely to be influenced by unconscious bias?
- ✿ Young people are facing multiple disadvantages and challenges.
- ✿ Funding loss has led to targeted work. The consequence of less universal provision means less chance to meet other young people. The impact of covid on each generation has been different and it has changed the way that young people interact with the world.
- ✿ The skills deficit in young people for e.g. Nottingham has the most GCSE maths resits in the country. The literacy and digital divide is increasing the marginalisation of some groups.
- ✿ The financial struggles of young people affect their aspirations. The changing aspirations of C&YP could be a result of cultural change and lead to more culture change. Though generational splits can be unhelpful e.g a view that all baby boomers are wealthy. Nottingham is not a wealthy city and large numbers of families in the city live in poverty.
- ✿ Children are the most powerless people in society. A challenge for CFN is how do we ensure accountability and not override their wishes and views?

How do you engage C&YP – are your communications empowering their voice? How do we communicate?

- ✿ Changing patterns of engagement can lead to benefits such as improvements in mental health.
- ✿ The ever changing technology is a real challenge for all of us. Use of social media will be key and young people are aware of how noisy the world is given the amount of info out there so our messages will have to be good to be heard.
- ✿ Shared language is important. Communication with parents is essential, perhaps using some technology such as WhatsApp.
- ✿ To really engage C&YP we need to find a hook to get interest. Use creative environments to engage rather than surveys e.g. role play, tabletop games etc.
- ✿ Face to face contact is valued by lots of young people. The Importance of face to face communications cannot be underestimated.
- ✿ Grass roots organisations are quick responders. Community ambassadors are important and relatable and will help with diversity. In the grass roots there are worries about appropriate procedures, for e.g safeguarding etc.
- ✿ Some smaller providers do demonstrate best practices for working with C&YP, but commissioning processes can impact on their capacity to deliver as a result C&YP do not get access to the best options. How do we overcome pre – existing bias and prejudice?
- ✿ The college student union provides a strong voice for the younger adults.
- ✿ We can collaborate to create organic familial spaces.
- ✿ When distributing online information it is not necessarily what is shared which gets noticed but who is sharing.
- ✿ Communications should be context specific for instance geography, Nottingham specifically.
- ✿ C&YP can learn but they can also teach, for instance a recent Nottingham Primary Parliament dealt with the dangers of social media /online media.

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What does it take to be a Child Friendly / children's rights champion in Nottingham?

Champions need

- To work in teams and networks.
- To communicate and advocate.
- Take info back to their own teams and agencies.
- Share information with other service partners
- Take part in the UNICEF UK child rights based training.
- Commitment.
- Resilience.
- Desire to improve things.
- Draw on lived experience.

What assets do you bring to CFN?

- Ourselves
- Lived experience
- Leading organisations
- Direct youth work
- Community roots
- Engagement with C&YP & YP with complexity
- Networks system change experience
- Rooms & venues
- Youth work experience
- Knowledge of ACE's trauma , cce cse, ymh
- Research (Universities)
- Coverage of areas' communities
- Cultural and Creative skills and experience
- Well embedded. trusted providers
- Trusted contact with children and young people
- Events to link up opportunities and communications

🌱 Universities can bring people, resources, research and data across most badges.
Nottm College – students, data, possible mentor programme to support younger students.
Trusted and embedded community providers and VCS organisations.

🌱 The Violence Reduction Project Youth Charter – youth work is not a protected status but this could create good standards for the children of the city.

Who can you partner with and support/learn from?

- 🌱 The children and young people we work with.
- 🌱 Schools and teachers
- 🌱 The voluntary and community sector agencies.
The universities and college.
- 🌱 Businesses
- 🌱 Sporting organisations.
- 🌱 Creative and cultural organisations
- 🌱 Public sector agencies (even if they don't directly provide services to children).

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Partnerships

Every contact is an opportunity to build partnerships and share information.

Meet in the middle – not top down or bottom up.

Successful partnerships are honest, relatable and inspire trust.

Meet with children and young people themselves - ask them what they need from us.

Connect with ambassadors of the community – authentic voices across the city.

To share resources and have joint sessions to enable culture change and a joined up approach

Identify partnership funding/bid opportunities and submit collaborative funding bids and applications. The Child based approach is not a competition for funding.

The CFN programme and partners can benefit from a partnership with arts and cultural organisations around communications, safeguarding, mental health needs. A booklet was suggested which could support partnership with the arts.

- Artist - each artist with a descriptions
- Organisation - description – project and contact details
- Key agencies working with C&YP.
- Nottingham Music Hub,
- Nottingham Contemporary,
- Nottingham Playhouse,
- New Art Exchange.
- Hockley Hustle
- Acoustical
- NYF
- FNFL

(not an exhaustive list).

Freelance practitioners who are people with lived experience and are successful in their fields

Trusted and embedded community providers and collaboration within the VCS

Notts Fire and Rescue are consulting on a 3 year plan. They carry out consultation but not directly with C&YP. They would like to know more and embed it in their regular practice.

How will you evidence your activity?

To collect and provide evidence of activity will help us learn from each other and help Ekua to make the case that Nottingham really is a child friendly city. This can include:

- records of engagement
- measure / note of impact
- video evidence (powerful and relevant)
- children and young people to design feedback and forms or processes.
- Try to be inclusive in communications and conversations, avoid closed questions
- Measure what matters
- JAYP – just ask young people!
- Provide and use data to bring in funding (We need more!)

The CFN Cooperation and Leadership Badge group is presently drawing together a young people's perception survey.

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Takeaways and Conclusions

Take aways

- The Child based approach is not a funding programme.
- C&YP can learn but they can teach us too
- Every contact is an opportunity to share the CFN voice.
- Talk to the people (C&YP and adults) do not guess or make assumptions.
- Lack of resources and community spaces for people especially if it includes things like poverty etc.
- Engage with training opportunities
- Looking at education/ school exclusion/impact for C&YP
- Consulting with C&YP for shared vision and purpose
- Data and research support is essential.
- Measure what matters.
- Create better links with grassroots community /youth organisations
- Wider reach of C&YP in underserved communities.
- Powerful impact of video evidence and children's voices
- More collaboration with their sector CVS (& partnerships)
- Better representation from schools/education
- Information to be shared online – fast cheap and accessible
- Important who is actually sharing the information and the relationship
- We need people time flexibility and money (resources)
- Just be there and be reliable!
- Language and terminology used is important to form relationships

Conclusion.

The Network around CFN is really only getting going. This event was an illustration of the diversity and breadth of the partnership. It has the potential to lead to a real culture change in Nottingham.

We will keep you informed of further training and network events. We will keep in contact to develop the work around the badges and provide updates about programme activity. Please watch out for communications from CFN and from badge leads who will be bringing together partners to move forward on the CFN action plan. We will share relevant UNICEF UK briefings and opportunities as they arise.

Finally, this is an approach which encourages partners to get on and just do it, to share and make it sustainable so that working in this way becomes difficult to change.

CFN
June 2024.