

Report to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

24 March 2025

Subject:	Child Friendly Sandwell – Progress Update
Director:	Director Children and Education, Sally Giles
Contact Officer:	Child Friendly Sandwell Lead Officer, Samantha Harman Samantha_harman@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers the content of the report and Appendices and provides comment upon the progress made on the UNICEF Child-Friendly Sandwell activity to date.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 We are required to submit a report to UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities and Communities at the end of our Discovery Stage detailing which priority badges we will focus on during our journey to recognition.
- 2.2 The report must evidence how we have reached our decision and how this has been directly influenced by children, young people, families, communities and partners whilst illustrating a clear rationale to the decision-making process.
- 2.3 The guiding principles of a child friendly community are built on a Child Rights-Based Approach and the 7 principles that underpin this approach:

- Participation
- Life, Survival and Development
- Non-Discrimination
- Transparency and Accountability
- Best Interests
- Interdependence and Indivisibility
- Dignity

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

Growing Up in Sandwell	Prioritising children and young people in the public realm with consistent meaningful engagement with them, considering evidence, and highlighting successful strategies to influence policy effectively will support our child-friendly communities, towns, and neighbourhoods approach, benefiting everyone.
One Council One Team	Working towards and achieving Child Friendly status would impact positively on all strategic objectives and unify the council in the delivery of the Council Plan and the wider Five Board Plus Partnership priorities.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Sandwell was accepted as a Candidate Community by UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities and Communities Programme in September 2024.
- 4.2 The Discovery stage of this programme lasts for 6 months and coordinated activities have been taking place since September.
- 4.3 A Member Working Group comprising members of the Cabinet, Scrutiny and the opposition, to oversee both the submission and each of the phases within the application process of the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme has been established and meets regularly to provide oversight and guidance as the programme moves forward.

A Child Friendly Sandwell Officer Steering Group and project team have been identified to manage both the initial Discovery Stage Phase and the development and delivery phases over the next 3 years.

Engagement

- 4.4 Partnership Discovery Day October 2024 - over 40 partner organisations were represented at West Smethwick Park.
- 4.5 UK Parliament Week November 2024 - 103 children and young people participated in activities across the week held in the Council Chambers and 31 Strategic Leads, Cabinet Members and Officers worked with the children and young people during these sessions which included celebrating World Children's Day.
- 4.6 Child Friendly Sandwell presented at the Business Growth and Regeneration Summit in November to socialise our Child Friendly Aspirations to our business community across Sandwell.
- 4.7 Introductory Training to a Child's Rights Based Approach has been delivered by UNICEF UK reaching 40 partner organisations and the Child's Rights Impact Assessment Training has been received by 26 council officers.
- 4.8 UNICEF UK Schools Discovery Day in March reached 66 children and young people including participation by 3 specials schools, 1 free school and 1 alternative provision and a number of primary schools.
- 4.9 Baseline surveys to capture our current understanding of children's rights and the UNCRC are currently live to council officers and partner organisations and the children and young people's survey will be promoted shortly.
- 4.10 Play Sufficiency Research Project undertaken and findings currently being disseminated across the council and wider partnerships.

Next Steps

- 4.11 By the end of the Discovery Phase we must provide a report to UNICEF UK CCC evidencing our priority badge choices and how children, young people, families and communities have been instrumental in influencing these choices.
- 4.12 Baseline analysis of existing data and new emerging data is currently underway collaboratively with Public Health, utilising the expertise of the HDRC and Research Intelligence Team colleagues and expected completion by mid-March.

- 4.13 A Draft Badge Consensus report will be worked up during April with support from the Officer Steering Group and shared for comment late April to early May.
- 4.14 The final report will be agreed across the governance framework and shared with partners and children and young people who have contributed to the process prior to submission to UNICEF UK CFCC colleagues.

5 Implications

Resources:	The cost to the Council for each year of undertaking the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme is £35,000.
Legal and Governance:	There are no direct legal implications arising from these recommendations. Robust, transparent governance arrangements will be built into the process.
Risk:	A full risk assessment will be undertaken by the Officer Working Group as part of the development phase of the activity and be monitored by the Officer's Working Group and reviewed regularly through the Member Working Group.
Equality:	Progress throughout the Discovery Stage has identified gaps in representation which are being mitigated through targeted work with specific groups having a positive impact on equality across the borough.
Health and Wellbeing:	Children's capability to experience well-being is shaped through relationships they have with other people and the spatial conditions of their everyday life. Adopting a child friendly way of working can improve health and wellbeing not only for our younger population but also wider communities and residents.
Social Value:	Child Friendly Sandwell was presented at the Business Growth and Regeneration Summit in November to socialise our Child Friendly Aspirations to our business community across Sandwell.
Climate Change:	Adopting a child friendly approach requires the council to analyse the impact decisions have on the lived experiences of children and young people in Sandwell which includes the commitment to our climate change targets.

Corporate Parenting:	Embarking upon a journey to being a child friendly borough will require extensive consultation and engagement with children and young people across the borough. This will include our care experienced children and young people.
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6 Appendices

UK Parliament Week Evaluation – for information

UNICEF UK Discovery Stage Information slide deck and roadmap – for information

7. Background Papers

[The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Child Friendly Cities and Communities](#)