

Cabinet – Child Friendly Version

Report Title	Child Friendly Sandwell - Discovery Phase Report and Priority Theme Recommendations
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 10 September 2025
Report Author	Samantha Harman Michelle Rihoy
Lead Officer	Executive Director Children and Education Services
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Why is this a key decision?	This decision is important because it will make a big difference to people living or working in more than one area of Sandwell.
Wards Affected	
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Open
Is the report urgent?	No
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	
Appendices (if any)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sandwell's Child Friendly Discovery Phase Activity and our Recommended Priority Areas. 2. Discovery Phase Report - Rationale

1. Our Journey So Far

- 1.1 Since August 2024, Sandwell Council has been working with UNICEF UK. UNICEF have acted as a guide and mentor, helping us understand how to make our services more child friendly.
- 1.2 Being child-friendly means always thinking about children first when making decisions, listening to children and young people, and making sure Sandwell is a safe, fair and welcoming place for every child to grow up.
- 1.3 UNICEF UK have decided to change the way they work. This means that in June 2026 they will stop their programme that mentor's councils like Sandwell on becoming child friendly.
- 1.4 Even though the UNICEF mentorship is ending, Sandwell will keep working on becoming a child-friendly place. We are committed to changing the way we work, keeping children's voices at the centre, and learning from other councils and partners so that Sandwell becomes the best place for children and young people.

2. Making Things Better

- 2.1 We want to keep improving Sandwell for children and young people. You told us that six things are most important:
 - Feeling safe and secure in your neighbourhood
 - Having a sense of family and belonging
 - Making sure everyone is treated fairly and feels included
 - Getting better at listening and involving children and young people
 - Developing how we work as an organisation, with you and others to make changes
 - Showing good leadership and teamwork.
- 2.2 Together, we will make a plan for these six areas and check with you and our partners that it works. By listening, sharing ideas and treating each other kindly, Sandwell can be the best place for children and young people.
- 2.3 We are already proud of some changes, such as making sure your ideas are listened to when decisions are made, helping improve places and services, and sharing information in ways that are easier for children to understand.
- 2.4 Over six months, we spoke to children, young people and organisations across Sandwell. We asked what matters most to you, and how we can improve children's rights and wellbeing.

3. Who We Talked To

- 3.1 We spoke to 2,650 children and young people, over 80 local groups that help families and young people, and 117 adults who learnt about children's rights.

- 3.2 We also held a Children's Discovery Day on 30 March 2025. Children and young people from across Sandwell joined with council staff and leaders to share their ideas and check we were focusing on the right things.
- 3.3 Local businesses are also helping by offering children chances to learn and share their thoughts.

4. What Matters Most to You

- 4.1 From everything you told us, we chose three big themes for how the Council should work:
- **Culture:** making sure children's voices are part of everything we do.
 - **Communication:** sharing information in ways that are clear and easy.
 - **Teamwork and Leadership:** showing strong leadership and working well with others.
- 4.2 You also told us about three important areas to focus on in your everyday lives:
- **Safe and Secure:** Making sure you feel safe at home, at school, and everywhere in Sandwell.
 - **Family and Belonging:** Helping everyone feel like they belong and have people who care about them, just like family.
 - **Equal and Included:** Making sure everyone is treated fairly and nobody is left out, no matter who they are.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 We are now moving into the Development Phase. This means writing a plan that lists the actions we need to take so children and young people feel safe, happy and included.
- 5.2 We will keep talking to you, your families, schools and community groups so everyone's ideas are part of the plan.
- 5.1 We want this plan ready by November 2025, so we can start making real changes that you will see in everyday life.

6. The choices we had

Choice 1 – Use the areas we picked together. This is the best option and the one we are choosing.

Choice 2 – Wait and do more research. This would take longer and we would probably choose the same things anyway.

Choice 3 – Stop the work. This would not help children in Sandwell, so we are not doing this.

7. Money

- 7.1 This work will use the money and resources the Council already has. We will also ask for help and ideas from others in Sandwell and beyond.

8. Who Helps Run the Project?

- 8.1 Leaders from the Council and partner organisations meet regularly with children and young people. They make sure the project is moving in the right direction and is focused on making things better for children and families.

9. Watching Out for Problems

- 9.1 Big projects can sometimes face problems. If this happens, we will make a plan to fix them so we can keep our promises.

10. Treating Everyone Fairly

- 10.1 We check how our plans affect different children and families, so nobody is left out.
- 10.2 We made sure to listen to children in care and others who might not always be asked for their views.

11. Working together

- 11.1 We want Sandwell to be a place where all children can grow, learn, feel healthy and have fun.
- 11.2 When children and young people share their ideas and are listened to, it makes Sandwell friendlier, safer and happier for everyone.
- 11.3 You have the power to make a difference just by speaking up and being part of the team.