

Submission

Response the Cork City Draft Development Plan 2022-2028

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On behalf of and in consultation with Cork Child Friendly Cities Working Group

Date of submission 4th October 2021.

Definition

What is a Child Friendly City?

“A child-friendly city (CFC) is a city, town, community or any system of local governance committed to improving the lives of children within their jurisdiction by realizing their rights as articulated in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

In practice, it is a city, town or community in which the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions.”

Broadly speaking, it is a city, town or community where children:

- Are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.
- Have a good start in life and grow up healthy and cared for.
- Have access to quality social services.
- Experience quality, inclusive and participatory education and skills development.
- Express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them.
- Participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life.
- Live in a safe secure and clean environment with access to green spaces.
- Meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves.
- Have a fair chance in life regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability.

Guiding Principles

A child-friendly city is one which implements the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) at the local level. As such, the guiding principles of building a child-friendly city mirror the overarching principles of the Convention. These principles include:

Non-discrimination: The rights of all children are respected, without discrimination of any kind irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Best interests of the child: The best interests of children are a primary consideration in decisions that may affect them with the government assuring the care and protection necessary for their wellbeing.

The inherent right to life, survival and development: Children have the right to life, with the government committed to ensuring the maximum extent possible, their right to survival and healthy development.

Respect for the views of the child: Children have the right to voice their opinions and have these be taken into account in decisions that affect them.

The guiding principles also include the following additional principles associated with good governance:

Equity and inclusion: A child-friendly city aims to create equal opportunities for all children. This entails identifying the most marginalized and vulnerable children, the barriers to inclusion that they face and removing these barriers.

Accountability and transparency: Building a child-friendly city requires clearly identifying who is responsible for each aspect of implementation and holding them accountable. Transparency calls for clarity and openness in the decision-making process.

Public Participation: Building a child-friendly city requires having a system in place to facilitate public participation in decision-making to promote local accountability for children's rights.

Effectiveness and responsiveness: Building a child-friendly city requires that governments undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures to implement child rights to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation. The process is responsive to the needs of the children and families affected.

Adaptability and sustainability: Building a child-friendly city requires a flexible management approach in order to be able to anticipate and respond to changing circumstances and be sustainable over time.

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative provides a governance framework consisting of two pillars: goals and results to be achieved; and strategies to achieve these goals and results.

Goals and Results

1. **Every child and young person is valued, respected and treated fairly within their communities and by local authorities.**
2. **Every child and young person has their voice, needs and priorities heard and taken into account** in public laws, policies, budgets, programmes and decisions that affect them.
3. **Every child and young person has access to quality essential social services** (this includes healthcare, education, nutrition support, early childhood development and education, justice and family support).
4. **Every child and young person lives in a safe, secure and clean environment** (this includes protection from exploitation, violence and abuse, access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, safe and child-responsive urban design, mobility and freedom from pollution and waste).
5. **Every child and young person has opportunities to enjoy family life, play and leisure** (this includes social and cultural activities, and safe places to meet their friends and play).

<https://childfriendlycities.org/what-is-a-child-friendly-city/>

Context

Cork City received its current WHO Healthy City Designation in April, 2021. As part of the preparation for that designation, a 10 year Cork Healthy Cities 10 year Action Plan was developed by all the interagency and community partners and launched by Lord Mayor on 1st February 2021.

The first action point in the Cork Healthy Cities Action plan commits to “Exploring the development of a Child Friendly City in Cork city by:

- 1.1 Publishing demographic data of children in the Cork City Profile

1.2 Engaging with the key stakeholders who will lead the Child Friendly City

1.3 Organising a Child Friendly City Seminar

1.4 Supporting the development of a Child Friendly City Steering Group

1.5 Supporting the delivery and implementation of a Child Friendly City Plan”

At the March 2021 Council Meeting agenda item 8.3.2 CORK HEALTHY CITIES 10 YEAR STRATEGY An Chomhairle considered and noted the report of the Director of Services, Community Culture and Placemaking, dated 25th February 2021 on the following motion referred to Corporate Policy Group:- ‘That Cork City Council resolves to support the Cork Healthy Cities 10 year strategy to make Cork a child-friendly city and that the Council investigate including the recommendations of this strategy in the council’s development plan as well as developing a City Council strategy towards complying with UNICEF’s Child Friendly Cities Initiative.’ (Proposer: Cllr. L. Bogue 21/078) The report of the Director of Services stated that... Cork City Council is committed to working in a collaborative manner with all main stake holders in Cork Healthy Cities to achieve the actions outlined in the 10-year strategy including ‘exploring the development of a Child Friendly City In Cork City’. The actions taken in this action will align to the Unicef Child Friendly City Initiative and Cork city Council will engage with Cork Healthy Cities in consideration of this status. **The Cork City Development Plan is currently under review, and the Draft City Development Plan will consider how best to plan for children and to ensure that Cork City is a family and child-friendly city.**

The first action point in the Cork Healthy Cities Action plan which was itself adopted Council on(DENISE TO INSERT) names a key priority area of the Early Years.

The plan commits to Exploring the development of a Child Friendly City in Cork city by:

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1.5 Supporting the delivery and implementation of a Child Friendly City Plan

<https://corkhealthycities.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CHC-Action-Plan-Report-FINAL.pdf>

Cork Child Friendly Cities

With the mandate from the Cork Healthy Cities Action Plan, an interagency, multisectional working group was established in 2021 to progress the actions above to create a Child Friendly City Strategy and address the actions above, aligned with the UNICEF Framework and other supportive tools and approaches.

The working group is made up of civil society group representatives from across the city, from the statutory and non-statutory sectors.

Current representatives include:

- Cork Healthy Cities
- Nano Nagle Place
- Cork Migrant Rights Centre
- Cork City Council
- Health Service Executive
- University College Cork
- Munster Technological University
- Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG
- The Rainbow Club
- An Garda Síochána
- Traveller Visibility Group
- The Glucksman
- Playful Paradigm
- Pedestrian Cork/ PPN
- Tusla Child and Family Agency – Children and Young People's Service committee
- Cork Sexual Health Centre
- Cork City Childcare Committee

The group have been working on a number of actions such as:

- ✓ Engaging with UNCEF Ireland/Global to align with their framework for establishing Cork as a Child Friendly City.
- ✓ Children's participation in the development a Cork Child Friendly City strategy and implementation plan
- ✓ Research to identify measures and indicators under the child friendly city strategy and implementation plan
- ✓ Children's participation training
- ✓ Memberships & Governance
- ✓ Development of Cork Child Friendly cities Strategy and implementation plan

Submission

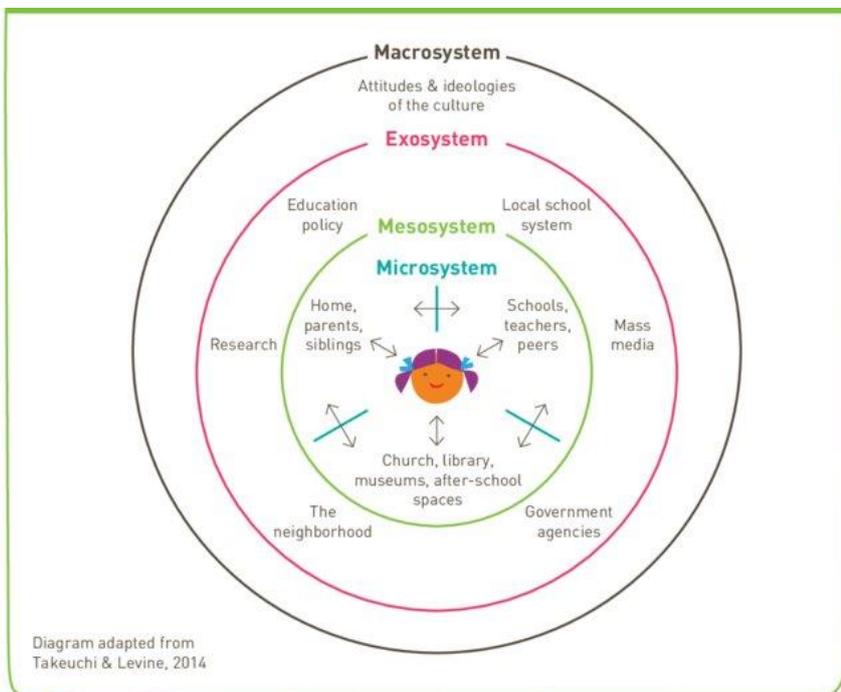
Theoretical context for submission:

Children thrive when they feel safe, have high quality relationships and environments, access to opportunity and be able to participate, be heard and be responded to and their rights respected. With this, they have the chance to reach their own potential and contribute to society.

Our experiences as children inform the foundations for life long, health, wellbeing and quality of life. Responsive relationships and supportive family environments that shape the child's future well-being, development, educational engagement and health. 'Families, however, do not exist in a vacuum. Communities and nations that value families and create environments where children are supported to achieve their full potential, perform better across a range of health and social indicators' (Nugent, 2015).

'Virtually every aspect of early human development...is affected by the environments and experiences that are encountered in a cumulative fashion, beginning early in the prenatal period and extending throughout the early childhood years' (Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000).

Children both influence and are influenced by the environment in which they live in and Bronfenner's Ecological Systems theory (1979) illustrates how child development is influenced by a number of systems including macro systems such as social policies and micro systems such as the child's relationship with their parents and teachers. It also draws our attention to the importance of understanding of risk and protective factors for children in all the environments which they experience.



Ireland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. The Convention outlines in detail the standards that apply to the needs of children, and binds States to adhere to these standards. The Convention is informed by four core principles: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development and respect for the views of the child. (IHREC)

The *National Strategy on Children and Young Peoples Participation in Decision-making* (2015) and the recently published *National Framework for Children and Young Peoples Participation in Decision-making* provide a policy context for children and young people to have multiple modes and opportunities for involvement in decision-making including though formal participation structures such as **Comhairle na nÓg** and Student Councils and opportunities for participation in children's every-day spaces such as schools, sports clubs, hospitals and class rooms.

City Development Plan

This City Development Plan is a plan for children as it sets out the pathway for the city for the decade in which they will grow up and lay the foundations for the city's future over the generations to come. Children need to identify and see themselves within the plan and have a sense of ownership and identity within it. **Considering the importance of this plan for children it is important that their visibility within it is strengthened and their specific needs addressed.**

Comments and Recommendations include:

1. The insertion on **page 9** of

"A Child friendly City"

Aligning with the UNICEF global child friendly city framework and which is embedded in life-long age friendly approach to planning.

2. We welcome on **page 74**: A Diverse and Inclusive city especially 3.12 The National Planning Framework recognizing the need to plan for a more socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity for a better quality of life, adding **including for children and young people**

3. Under **3.14 page 74** we recommend including "age friendly" for older people **and children and young people** And insert commitment to working in partnership with **Cork Child Friendly Cities.**

4. We welcome the insertion into the plan on **page 98, Objective 3.20** of Cork City as a Child-Friendly City. To promote Cork as a child-friendly city by considering the needs of children in terms of appropriate design when changes are proposed to the built environment.

We would like this to be expanded to include the following wording:

To promote Cork as a child-friendly city by considering the needs of all children in terms of appropriate design planning and implementation when changes and developments are proposed in all areas of decision -making which effect children. This includes housing, services, built environment, social and cultural activities, transport & mobility, connectivity, regeneration, inclusion and air quality for example. The voice and participation and rights of children will be included in *all* areas of planning and development.

5. Housing section, **pp 75-81 and pp 92-96** there is no mention of the housing needs of children. It is absolutely essential that children are named and included in these sections, particularly children with additional needs; from minority, ethnic groups and those experiencing poverty and deprivation.

High quality housing is critical for children's welfare, development; education and participation in social and cultural life.

We would like to see specific mention to their needs in points **3.36, 3.47 and 3.48 with the addition of a 3.49** children growing up in direct provision and their onward housing provision and children living in inadequate or unsuitable housing, to prioritize efforts to improve their housing situation.

6. Also in the housing section, we very much welcome the inclusion of and commitment to Children and Young People in the section Delivering Inclusive Communities pp 82 -90

In particular we welcome commitment to consultations and partnerships referenced in 3.63 and the inclusion of "Childcare" in 3.64 and that is forms part of all new development plan.

7. In Chapter 4 Transport and mobility and Chapter 5 Climate change and the environment there is no mention of children and young people.

Due to their physical size and development, children are more effected by pollutants than any other group (Landrigan et al, 2019) and evidence from the Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health indicated that pollution could lead to low-birth weight in children and non-communicable diseases such as asthma and cancer (ibid). In addition to the current burden that pollution can place on children, they will also live with the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation into the future. Recent youth activism such as the Fridays for Future campaign have demonstrated how important these issues are to children and youth people both in Cork and globally.

For these reasons they should be referenced in both chapters as a priority group.

We recommend using the URBAN 96 planning tools that supports the inclusion of children and their families mobility and safety into city design.

<https://bernardvanleer.org/solutions/urban95/> which includes consideration to the needs of parents and caregivers of young children as well children themselves.

People of all ages need appropriate, friendly, safe, practical places to rest, congregate and socialize and traverse easily. Benches, accessible walking and cycling routes, play equipment and opportunities, rigorous biodiverse planting across the city.

8. Strategic Objective 5 Blue and Green Infrastructure, Open Space and Biodiversity p. 205 should reference needs of recreational, play and open spaces for people of all ages, including ALL children

9. Page 211, Objective 6.19 is welcome however paragraph B, should also say "increase" as well as protect, retain and improve parkers and open spaces acknowledging that not all residents currently have this access including children.

10. Page 212, Objective 6.20

Remove the line "reduce anti-social behaviour" and phrase in a more positive way. This term is regarded as anti-teenager. In addition to removing this phrase there it is imperative to include and address teenagers needs in the development of recreational infrastructure.

Commented [MS1]: This point is not clear

11. In Chapter 7 Economy and Employment p219 objective 7.15 Local Community and Economic Plan **to include consultation with children and a full needs analysis.** A life course approach to include transition from education, alternative education to work options for young people, especially those living in deprivation who are most effected in terms of employment security and access in times of recession and during the pandemic.

12. Chapter 8. Heritage, Arts and Culture pp. 255 to 275. **There is no specific reference to the inclusion of ALL children or inclusivity with arts, heritage and culture or commitment to such within the creative strategy and arts strategy.** The purpose for doing so is so that children can identify and see themselves as part of this important aspect of city life, encouraging engagement, participation, relationship, appreciation and future stewardship of Arts Culture heritage of cork city.

13 Chapter 11. Placemaking and Managing Development. Although objective 13, p. 451. addresses Designing for Safety and Security does not specifically mention any group or need. **Children need to be visible here.**

14. Chapter 11: Neighbourhood & Community Development, pp. 492-496. Objective 11.59, the built environment is one part of community development. Consultations with children and young people (such as Freedom of the City and Let's Grow Together! Strategic Plan) continue to point to safety being a significant factor in children's wellbeing, social participation and movement. Children report a lack of safety, in homes such as fires, overcrowding and kitchen equipment etc. Externally too on streets because of dangerous levels and speed of traffic, and insufficient footpaths and crossings. Children and young people also report a lack of personal safety in city centre locations, and a lack of safety due to experiences of racism and social exclusion. **This objective needs to consider the non physical aspects of safety, community and social inclusion.**

Applying the UNICEF Principles for a Child Friendly City, we would also recommend:

- Children need to be specifically named within the plan. Specific mention should also be considered to address the inclusion of all children, incorporating neurodiversity, mixed abilities, and those experiencing poverty, deprivation, marginalization.
- Data and evidence of children’s needs and situation analysis should be used in all areas of planning and development.
- Cork City Development plan should address the themes emerging from the “Freedom of the City” consultation with children. It is one example of how consultations with children can inform policy and planning. This model should be expanded to include younger age groups, consultation with families and in the implementation plans of the city development plan.
- Within the Plan, make a budget provision to support the development of Cork Child Friendly City Strategy and Implementation plan
- Creation of the position of “Children’s Mayor”
- Make provision for a dedicated ringfenced children’s activities budget for the city

Other aligned submissions will come from:

- “Freedom of the City” Consultation with Children Report
- Cork Healthy Cities submission
- Trauma Sensitive City submission

References

Andershed, A-K., Andershed, H., & Farrington, D. P. (2012). *Risk and protective factors among preschool children for future psychosocial problems. – What we know from research and how it can be used in practice.* Nordic Welfare Center.

Children’s Rights Alliance; <https://www.childrensrights.ie/childrens-rights-ireland/childrens-rights-ireland>

Cork City Council Minutes: <https://www.corkcity.ie/en/media-folder/councillors-democracy/meetings-and-minutes/08-03-2021-minutes-council-meeting.pdf>

Cork Healthy Cities Action Plan: <https://corkhealthycities.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CHC-Action-Plan-Report-FINAL.pdf>

DCYA (2021) *Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young Peoples Participation in Decision-making*

Fridays for Future: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

<https://letsgrowtogether.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Many-Voices-of-Lets-Grow-Together.pdf>

<https://www.glucksman.org/projects/freedom-of-the-city>

Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission, <https://www.ihrec.ie/reports-international-bodies/united-nations-convention-rights-child/>

Landrigan, P., Fuller, R., Fisher, S. et al (2019) ‘Pollution and Children’s Health’. *Science of the Total Environment.* 650, 2: p2389-2394.

Liverpool Child Friendly City: <https://liverpool.gov.uk/children-and-families/unicef-child-friendly-city-programme/>

Nugent, K. (2015). Speech delivered at the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children on 12th Nov 2015. Available from: www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_health_and_children/2015-11-12/2/

UNICEF Child Friendly Cities: <https://childfriendlycities.org/what-is-a-child-friendly-city/>

Shonkoff, J., Phillips, D. (Eds.) (2000) *From Neurons to Neighbourhoods: The Science of Early Child Development.* (National Academy Press; Washington DC, 2000)

Appendix

Three lessons for toddler-friendly cities

1. **Design for caregiving:** Babies and toddlers do not wander through cities by themselves; those looking after them decide where to go and how long to stay. These caregivers need to feel safe and comfortable.
2. **Proximity matters:** Good public transport is important, as is being able to walk safely, comfortably and quickly to where you need to go. Learn about the 15-minute neighbourhood concept.
3. **'Think babies' as a universal design principle:** From a design perspective, babies, toddlers and their caregivers' vulnerability, dependency and strong drive to explore and play mean that if a space is safe, clean and interesting enough for them, it's likely to work for everyone.

<https://bernardvanleer.org/solutions/urban95/>

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Ireland committed to promote children's rights when it signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992.

What Does the Convention on the Rights of the Child Say?

The UNCRC defines the child as a person under 18 years of age. It acknowledges the primary role of parents and the family in the care and protection of children, as well as the obligation of the State to help them carry out these duties.

The UN Convention consists of 41 articles, each of which details a different type of right. These rights are not ranked in order of importance; instead they interact with one another to form one integrated set of rights. A common approach is to group these articles together under the following themes:

1. **Survival rights:** include the child's right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services.
2. **Development rights:** include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
3. **Protection rights:** ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee children; safeguards for children in the criminal justice system; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any kind.
4. **Participation rights:** encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their capacities develop, children should have increasing opportunity to participate in the activities of society, in preparation for adulthood.

The UN Convention includes four articles that are given special emphasis. These are also known as 'general principles'. These rights are the bedrock for securing the additional rights in the UN Convention.

- that all the rights guaranteed by the UNCRC must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind (Article 2);
- that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);
- that every child has the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and
- that the child's view must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her (Article 12)

<https://childrensrights.ie/childrens-rights-ireland/un-convention-rights-child>

for full rights on the child.

<https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/UNCRCEnglish.pdf>

Example: Liverpool's work to become a UNICEF Child Friendly City

After a consultation in September 2018 with young people and partners, Liverpool City Council officially began work to become a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City in March 2019.¹

The Council has engaged in ‘asset counting’ – finding that there are 700 children/young people well-being oriented assets such as libraries, leisure centres, youth groups. Consultation with children/young people determined however that they don’t have the information to find them, so efforts are being made to connect groups and to share best practice.

They are in the development phase of the project so they are doing a survey of views. Children and young people say that the issues of importance to them are mental health, healthier eating options, facilities, support for minority groups, a safer cleaner city, and being environmentally friendly.

Alder Hey Hospital in Liverpool is involved, and has mapped the health system locally, developing a website with children and young people on the work to establish themes, gaps, and accessibility of health care for children in Liverpool.

The University of Liverpool is also involved, doing ‘accessing education’ projects for children across the city. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has adopted [Children and Childhood as one of its core research themes](#) and has developed extensive and children’s rights-oriented ethics guidance and training for research involving children.

The University provides expertise based on work it conducts with young people, for example through a [Young Persons Advisory Group](#). This is comprised of young people from a range of backgrounds from across the city. The group, who receive an hourly wage for their work, provides feedback on the design and delivery of different research projects relevant to children.

¹ <https://liverpool.gov.uk/children-and-families/unicef-child-friendly-city-programme/>