

## Allies for Health and wellbeing across the life cycle, starting with our youngest citizens

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Cork's commitment to becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City was stated in the Cork Healthy Cities Action Plan in 2020. This attracted much attention across civic society indicating an appetite for progressing this work. The UNICEF Child Friendly City Framework underpinned by principles of equity and participation align well Cork Healthy City and other key strategies aiming to improve quality of life for all in the City. 'Child Friendly Cities'...actively pursue the rights of every child to 'grow up in an environment where they feel safe and secure, have access to basic services and clean air and water, can play learn and grow and where their voice is heard and matters' (UNICEF).

In 2021, intersectoral partners across Cork came together to form a Child Friendly Cities Forum. This Forum is led by Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships, supported by Cork Healthy Cities and University College Cork, and made up of statutory, community and voluntary and education organisations. The group recognises itself at the discovery phase under the UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiative.

Since its inception Cork Child Friendly City Forum has grown into an allyship of multiple sectors and stakeholders that represent the inter-sectionality of children's lives; focussing on strong relationships based on trust, consistency, action and accountability to children's needs, rights, participation and voice. The concepts of **allies, intersectionality, readiness, alignment** will be explored in this paper. How was WHO Healthy cities utilised as a lever to enable Cork to become a child friendly city. How have we accessed expertise in children's rights and participation, how have children themselves been involved? Who are the allies, why are they involved? How does the language of co-benefits advance the work of child friendly cities?

Further on, this paper will map some key actions to date including influencing policy with child friendly city considerations inserted into the City Development Plan. The paper will explore the barriers to progress and plans to overcome these. It will conclude by pointing to the direction Cork as a city will travel to place children into the heart of cross sectoral city development planning.