

2015

Report on the progress of the implementation of the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme in Swansea

September 2013 – September 2015



City and County of Swansea
Dinas a Sir Abertawe



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Foreword

Children and young people have always been a priority for the City & County of Swansea.

The City & County of Swansea is the first local authority in the UK to voluntarily make a public commitment to Children's Rights and create a platform for change to achieve a culture where there is a full appreciation of children's rights, and that we consciously consider them in all of our work so that ultimately it results in better services and lives for children, young people and families in Swansea.

Being the first and only local authority to adopt this approach challenges existing ways of working and we are starting to see a culture change as we further develop our approach and embed our policy into practice.

The Children and Young People's Rights Scheme is an innovative road map to ensure consideration is given to the UNCRC in every decision the council makes. The success so far would not be possible without a partnership approach which includes working with our schools, communities, council services and wider partners to make this happen. We are delighted to be working with a wide group of people with a shared interest and commitment to this agenda.

The report captures the actions and progress that we have seen so far and we are both really pleased and impressed with the feedback received in relation to adopting a rights based approach. Awards are good, but putting child rights at the heart of our business is the right thing to do which is far more important for the future of our children and young people in Swansea.

Lead Cabinet Member and Lead Director

Councillor Christine Richards, Cabinet Member for Services for Children & Young People

Chris Sivers, Director of People

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)¹ is an international convention that sets out rights for all children and young people up to the age of 18. It includes civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights and not only recognises children and young people's basic human rights, but gives additional rights to protect them from harm as one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

In September 2013 a report was presented to full Council² to embed the UNCRC within the Council's Policy Framework and to mainstream positive approaches to the rights of children and young people within the policy and functions of the City and County of Swansea. The Council expressed full support. This approach followed that taken by Welsh Government in March 2011, which saw the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011³ embedded into Welsh domestic Law. In November 2014 the City & County of Swansea launched its own Children and Young People's Rights Scheme⁴, which provides an overview of the arrangements in place to demonstrate that we pay 'due regard' to the UNCRC and consider the rights of the child in our decision making processes.

The UNCRC has 42 articles and covers many areas to ensure children and young people are safe, have the things they need to survive and develop and have a say in decisions that affect their lives. In Swansea we frame our work through the four guiding principle articles. These represent the underlying requirements for **all** the rights in the convention to be realised by children and young people.

The 4 guiding principles are;

- **Article 2 - Non-discrimination**
 - All rights apply to all children without exception.
 - It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.
- **Article 3 - Best interests of the child**
 - All actions concerning children shall take full account of their best interests.
 - The state must ensure children have the care and protection they need, whether from their parents or alternative care arrangements.
- **Article 6 - Survival and development**
 - Every child has the inherent right to life.
 - The State has an obligation to ensure to the maximum extent possible the child's survival and development
- **Article 12 – Right to be heard**
 - The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989

² Rights of children and young people: Creating a due regard duty and embedding the UNCRC(1989) Council Report

³ Rights of Children & Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011

⁴ Children & Young People's Rights Scheme (2014) Swansea

Developing and Implementing the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme

Following Council's decision, the Director of People took the lead on this area of work to ensure a clear plan was in place outlining the detail of how this would be implemented and developed. The challenge was to change culture and define our duty. This needed involvement from across all sections of the Local Authority to act as champions for Children's Rights. An **Implementation Group** was established to look at specific issues, with the aim of developing a Children and Young People's Rights Scheme that sets out arrangements on how we will comply with the 'due regard' duty to embed and promote the UNCRC and Children's Rights in Swansea. Subsequently, task and finish groups were set up to work on the different aspects of how this will work in Swansea. These groups looked specifically at how we develop;

- **Children's Rights and Equality Impact Assessments**
- **Training and Rights Based Practice**
- **Promotion and Awareness Raising**

Aside from these groups, a **Children's Rights Advisory Group** was established, made up of external partners to engage with us and jointly identify areas of good practice, make recommendations on areas for development and ensure wider partners feed into the process.

All the way through the development process we have prioritised **engagement with children and young people** to listen to their views and give them feedback on what we are doing and the progress we have made.

Developing a Children & Young People's Rights Scheme gave us the opportunity to create a platform for change and achieve a culture where there is a full appreciation of children's rights. The Scheme ensures that we consciously consider the rights of the child in all of our work. Ultimately this results in better services and lives for children, young people and families and ensures robust monitoring processes, whilst ensuring effective political oversight and developing a clear plan for the mainstreaming of children and young people's rights in Swansea. This clearly links to our five key corporate priorities of;

- **Safeguarding vulnerable people**
- **Improving pupil attainment**
- **Creating a vibrant and viable city and economy**
- **Tackling poverty**
- **Building sustainable communities**

Launch of the Children and Young People's Rights Scheme

The Children & Young People's Rights Scheme was launched by UNICEF UK Ambassador and Welsh actor Michael Sheen, who joined 111 children and representatives from Swansea at Pentrehafod Comprehensive School on Thursday 20th November 2014. The event also marked the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

(UNCRC). Children, young people and adults worked together in a series of rights – based activities.

Children and young people from a selection of 25 rights-respecting schools facilitated the event and they were joined by adults representing the Children’s Commissioner’s Office for Wales; Cabinet members, councillors and staff from the City and County of Swansea; Assembly Members; and external partners from UNICEF UK and the Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children & Young People at Swansea University.

Putting the arrangements in the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme in place

The Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme was launched in November 2014. This sets out the arrangements in place to ensure transparency in the processes that are being followed to demonstrate that we pay ‘due regard’ to the UNCRC. We do this by;

- Embedding Children’s Rights Impact Assessment within the Equality Impact Assessment process
- Training and awareness raising for staff, partners organisations, children and young peoples and the public
- Reporting and monitoring our work progress, highlighting expected outcomes and evidencing our work
- Demonstrating how we deal with feedback and challenges
- Ensuring the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives

Embedding the Children’s Rights Impact Assessment process within the Equality Impact Assessment

We have developed and embedded a Children’s Rights Impact Assessment process within the existing Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, which is a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010⁵. The EIA screening and report forms now include specific sections to identify;

- whether any proposal or policy undergoing screening will impact on those under the age of 18
- how the proposal might impact on children and young people
- how the proposal is designed or planned in the best interest of children and young people
- actions which will be taken to mitigate impact on children and young people or address any identified gaps in knowledge and understanding

Following a pilot, in 2014/15 further work was carried out to improve integration of the UNCRC in our EIA process to meet our commitment to Children’s Rights. Our focus has been on ensuring that the process remains user-friendly, effective and workable for managers across the organisation. The integration of a Children’s Rights Impact Assessment has been

⁵ Equality Act 2010

well received. Guidance and support is in place to assist in this process through the Access to Services Team.

The Children's Rights Impact Assessment process

The integrated Children's Rights Impact Assessment was launched in November 2014, when the Children and Young people's Rights Scheme was formally adopted by Cabinet.

The table below outlines the number of screening forms and full reports completed from November 2014 – September 2015

Number of EIA screening forms received	125
Number of full EIA reports required as a result of screening forms received	60
Number of full EIA reports that had a direct impact on Children and Young People	43

Children's Rights Impact Assessments have been submitted from across the directorates of the City & County of Swansea and examples received have had both a direct or indirect impact on children and young people. Some examples of these completed assessments are;

- **Restructure of the Young People's Service to encompass holistic family support work** including a change in management for the Traveller Education Service. All these services offer elements of lead work support to young people and their families, as well as supporting the agenda to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) opportunities by providing support for mainstream and alternative school curriculum.
- **Penalty Notices Consultation & Implementation** to improve pupils' regular and punctual attendance at school and alternative provisions. (Both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximize the educational opportunities available to them.) The issuing of penalty notices will be based on clear threshold criteria, which will be applied consistently and equitably.
- **School Remodeling Proposals (Pentrehafod Secondary School and Pentre Graig Primary Schools)** to ensure the initiative is planned to improve pupils' school environment thus giving them the best opportunity of achieving to their full potential.
- **Families First re-commissioning of services** to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. Ensuring all services are family focused and able to demonstrate impact, along with evidence of distance travelled for individuals. (Ensuring services are targeted and meet local identified need.) Re-commissioning focused less on numbers of individuals engaged and more on the difference interventions make on improving people's lives.

Case studies: Outlined below are specific examples of how embedding children's rights within the equality impact assessment process have changed practice and service delivery:

Swansea Museums

Due to Swansea's commitment to embed children's rights across the whole council and the development of a children's rights impact assessment, Swansea Museum have taken the opportunity to evaluate and demonstrate how as a cultural establishment they embed children's rights within their day to day practice.

The following explicit links were made to articles of the UNCRC and demonstrates how children's rights and the voice of children and young people have had an impact on service delivery.

Article 26 Standard of Living

Swansea Museum is a free venue which includes all activities and workshops.

Article 28 & 29 Rights and Goals of Education

9,000 primary school children visit the museum through educational trips. 4site education programme is co-ordinated by the museum and offers educational trips for all cultural venues. A charge of £130 allows unlimited amount of educational trips or a school may book a session for £35. Current figures indicate 61 out of 63 primary schools in City & County of Swansea have taken up subscription in this current financial year, 21 from NPT and 6 from wider counties. The vast majority are primary school visits and link to curriculum subjects such as the Romans and WW2. Exhibitions such as City of Sanctuary and Ann Frank will contribute towards article 29 on the goals of education. Other topics, including the life of a Victorian woman and Copperopolis, will also touch on aspects under goals of education.

Article 30 Welsh Language

All exhibitions are fully translated along with marketing materials. The series of educational booklets were written pre computer age but still sell on a steady basis. Discussions have been held around the placement of all Modes object records being accessed through remote means. This would allow access to 40,000 records of objects and photographs.

Article 12 Having a Voice

The museum was inspected by young people as part of a pilot for young inspectors approximately 5 years ago. The report by young people was positive. A significant number of points were lost on access issues. Since that inspection the museum has had a lift installed and toilets adapted. Swansea Museum is committed to being a family friendly museum and has signed the Kids in Museums manifesto (see

Outdoor Education Centres

As a result of embedding children's rights within the existing EIA process and breaking down the protected characteristic of age to specifically identify impact on children and young people aged 0-18, greater emphasis has been placed on ensuring children and young people have a voice and are engaged in decisions that impact on their lives. (Article 12)

When proposals were being explored to undertake a commissioning review of Outdoor Education Centres, an initial consultation about the centres was held whereby young people fed back that they felt that this service was an extremely beneficial learning opportunity, which they would not want to see lost. They also gave positive feedback about all three of the centres and questioned the extreme differences in cost between full price and the free school meal price and stated that this sometimes caused difficulties.

As a result of initial consultation feedback, a further consultation with school councils was undertaken as part of the proposed price charges. Numerous school councils fed back that they were particularly unhappy with the proposed highest price of £210, which resulted in the views being taken on board and reduced to £150.

The feedback from young people placing so much value on the service has continued to ensure that the council strive to maintain an Outdoor Educational provision and continue to offer the best prices possible.

Overall, EIAs have evidenced that services are changing delivery/policy as a result of embedded children's rights. EIAs have also shown the need to deliver services that are efficient and avoid duplication, in efforts to maximise funds available.

However a small number of EIAs have identified a negative impact on children's rights. As a result, services have been able to work with those affected to seek alternative solutions and proposals, for example, the EMLAS Service and the Home to School Transport proposals were withdrawn as a result of demonstrating the impact on children and young people and officers developed an option paper and revised the initial proposals.

Promoting Knowledge and Understanding of the UNCRC

Baseline Survey

In partnership with Wales Observatory on Human Rights for Children & Young People at Swansea University, we designed a survey for Councillors and staff from across all departments of the City & County of Swansea to complete. The aim was to measure the depth of knowledge and understanding of Children's Rights to assist us in ensuring that due

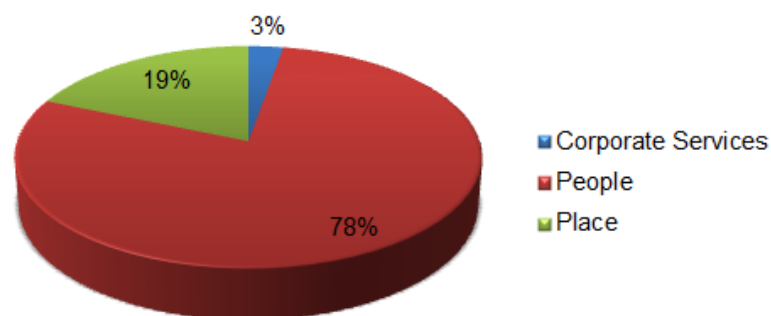
regard is paid to Children's Rights across the work of the Council. The first baseline survey was run in June 2014⁶ and the same survey repeated in September 2015⁷ to identify progress and highlight areas for development.

The results to each question are highlighted below and comparisons between the two sets of data made in this report, where appropriate.

The 2015 Children's Right survey link was promoted to Councillors and staff via the front page of the Council's Intranet site, through 'Top Brief', and via email within directorates. However, it should be noted that not all members of staff have email or Intranet access.

A total of 336 individuals participated in the 2015 survey, which was less than 2014 where 491 responded in 2014, this is reflective of employment patterns within the organisation.

Participants were asked to indicate which Council department they worked. Over three quarters of the respondents were from the People Directorate (n = 228, 78%), 54 (19%) were from the Place Directorate, and 8 (3%) were from the Corporate Services Directorate.



Participants were asked to choose an option that best described their position in the Council. More than one option could be chosen. Almost half of the respondents (46%, n=153) chose 'Service delivery'.

The respondents were then asked to choose options that best described their role. More than one option could be chosen. The majority responded 'Dealing with members of the public' (n=212, 63%).

When asked whether their role involved working directly with children, 133 (39%) of the respondents replied 'Yes'. When asked about whether their role included policy decision making or strategic planning in areas affecting children aged 17 and under, almost a third of the respondents (29%, n=98) said 'Yes'.

When asked whether their role involved working with organisations who work with children and / or their parents or carers, three quarters of the respondents said 'Yes' (75%, n=251)

Staff Awareness of the UNCRĈ

When the respondents were asked about how aware they thought staff in their Department were of the UNCRĈ, the majority of respondents thought it was good; with 37% (n=122)

⁶ Children's Rights Survey Results CCoS June 2014

⁷ Children's Rights Survey Results CCoS September 2015

responding 'Fairly good', and 18% (n=57) responding 'Very good'. In contrast, 32% (n=103) of all respondents thought the level of awareness was 'Fairly poor', and 13% (n=43) thought it was 'Very poor'

If we consider these responses by Directorate, in 2015 the best levels of overall awareness of the UNCRC were thought to be in the People Directorate, as in the 2014 survey. This is to be expected as the focus of the People Directorate is working with children, young people and families as part of their core business. Over both annual surveys, the poorest levels of staff awareness were thought to be in the Place Directorate's Operations Department. However, this may not be a true reflection of awareness levels within that Directorate area, as not many individuals responded to either survey and staff there have the most limited access to email and the intranet in the Council.

When asked about their own personal knowledge of the UNCRC, 13% (n=42) responded that they were not aware of it. Of those that were aware of the UNCRC, 25% (n=84) had a 'fair' level of knowledge of it, 24% (n=81) had 'some limited knowledge' of it, 21% (n=72) had 'good knowledge' of it, and 17% (n=57) had 'heard of the UNCRC'.

A key point demonstrating change was in responses to this question and when considered in percentage terms over the two years the survey was run, the level of respondents who were not aware of the UNCRC has fallen from 28% in 2014 to 13% in 2015. Alongside this change, the percentage of respondents with a 'good knowledge' of the UNCRC has risen from 13% in 2014 to 21% in 2015.

When asked the question 'Have you ever had cause to refer to the UNCRC in the course of your work with the Council?', 33% (n=109) of the respondents said that 'Yes' they had. This is a 10% higher percentage than responded 'Yes' to this question in the 2014 survey.

When asked 'Is there someone in your service area you could approach for information on the UNCRC?', 55% (n=184) of the respondents said 'Yes'. This is a rise of 21% responding 'Yes' to this question in comparison to those responding in 2014.

When asked 'Is there someone in the Council you could approach for information on the UNCRC?', 63% (n=211) of the respondents said 'Yes'. This is a 23% rise in 'Yes' responses to this question when compared to 2014.

The rise in positive responses to these questions corresponds with the rise in the personal knowledge of the UNCRC in the 2015 survey. This evidences our efforts to ensure Councillors and staff are aware of Children's Rights. However, it also highlights areas for development to improve awareness and training.

Training and Workforce Development Programme

As outlined in our Children and Young People's Rights Scheme we are committed to educate and develop the understanding of staff, partners and other stakeholders and have developed a suite of training programmes, which will help them to understand the processes they need to embed rights-based practice.

To do this, a training plan offering a range of opportunities has been developed. The plan includes:

A UNCRC-specific online training course

This package has been developed by Welsh Government and offers an introduction and basic overview of the UNCRC and its history. The course sits on the corporate e-learning pool and acts as a universal offer to staff.

Explicit links between the UNCRC and mandatory corporate training

The UNCRC has been incorporated into the following mandatory training for staff:

- Corporate Safeguarding
- Corporate Induction
- Customer Services and Equalities

Bespoke training for staff, partners and other stakeholders

Specific UNCRC training has been delivered by the Children & Young People's Rights Team to 314 individuals representing 53 services including council departments and wider partners such as:

- Young People's Service
- Nant Y Felin Residential Care Home
- Family Partnership Team
- 20 play organisations
- Children & Young People's Strategy Unit
- Family Information Service
- Team around the Family
- 27 early years settings, i.e. day nurseries, Flying Start settings, child-minders

Packages that support rights-based practice, i.e. training on National Participation Standards, Philosophy 4 Children, Communities of Enquiry and Cultural Participation have been delivered to 124 individuals representing 59 services:

- Young People's Service
- Family Learning Signature and Restorative Practice
- SNAP
- Info-Nation
- Careers Wales
- Lifelong Learning and Employment Training Service
- Play Team
- Team Around the Family
- ELiS
- SPARK Blaenymaes
- ABMU Health Visiting
- Smart Steps
- Stepping Stones

- Young Families Scheme
- Menter Iaith
- Family Partnership Team
- 26 day nurseries and flying start settings
- 17 National Cultural Organisations, e.g. National Museum of Wales

The following training has been delivered by UNICEF on behalf of the Council as a part of the Rights Respecting Schools Contract Agreement

- Agreed training days for schools have been facilitated:
 - 66 teachers have received Rights Respecting Schools Award training over 4 days;
 - A specific cluster event saw 138 members of teaching and support staff from schools in the Townhill ward being trained on the Award;
 - Schools have received individual support that has been bespoke to developing RRSA in that school, e.g. through additional sessions where up to 100 members of staff within the school received some Rights Respecting Schools Award related training.
- Sessions to Governors and Senior Leadership Teams have been delivered.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been successfully facilitated with 66 schools (198 individuals) currently engaged.
- Training on the Award to services outside of school have been delivered to:
 - The Ethnic Minority Language and Achievement Service (EMLAS);
 - Staff in Pupil Referral Units;
 - The Behaviour Support Unit Team;
 - Young People's Service;
 - The Family Partnership Team;
 - Team around the Family;
 - Family Information Service;
 - The Children & Young People's Strategy Unit;
 - Engaging Learners in Swansea (ELiS);
 - The Traveller Education Service;
 - The Play Team.

Promotion and Awareness Raising

We are committed to raise awareness of the rights of the child and actively seek out opportunities to join up work and promote our work on embedding the UNCRC.

Promoting and awareness raising opportunities and events that the Children & Young People's Rights team have supported include;

- Wales Observatory Conference in September 2014 covering Implementing Children and Young People's Rights in the work of Local Authorities
- St David's Trinity College session to year 1 students in October covering Children and Young People's Rights in the work of Local Authorities
- Flying Start Conference
- Youth Support Services Conference
- Childcare Network Events

- The UNCRC overview for decision makers
- National Play day event at Spark Blaenymaes
- Foster Swansea Event
- AMBU Children’s Rights Conference – November 2014, Swansea’s journey embedding Children’s Rights
- Families First Conference
- National Participation Workers Forum
- Presentation to Welsh Government on how Swansea meets the requirements of Shared Purpose Shared Delivery
- Presentation to the Children & Young People’s 3rd Sector Forum
- Interplay Conference
- Rights Respecting Schools Award ‘ Swansea – Doing it the Rights Way’ Conference
- Presentations to Headteachers of both Primary and Secondary Schools Presentation to the Strategic Equality Plan Working Group
- Early Years Tri County Conference

Case Studies

Below are some case studies outlining how the training and workforce development opportunities have impacted on practice.

Play

Children’s Rights has been an integral part of the work of the Play Team for a long time. It is clear that the values of the Team are underpinned by a child’s right to play, but importantly also by their right to voice, regularly consulting with children in decisions that affect them, e.g. about Play Spaces and on the content of the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Children’s Rights are intrinsic in the training that the Play Team offers to others, ensuring that understanding and awareness of children’s rights is extended through our communities.

The Play team have been leaders in advocating children’s rights within their work across departments, e.g. championing the right to play and the need for play spaces in the development of planning processes.

Recently, having attended the Philosophy 4 Children training offered by the Council, Play Workers have integrated this learning into their practice using the techniques to facilitate group work such as that which takes place at the 123 Forum.

Early Years

“We believe that all those caring and working with children have a role to fulfil in recognising children’s rights and helping them to reach their potential as individuals. We want to provide an opportunity to all childcare workers across Swansea to learn and understand how to embed the rights respecting theme in their setting”.

Successes so far include:

- The impetus of children rights as a council priority led to the 2014 Family Information Service Annual Childcare Networking event focusing solely on rights. The event at Hafod Primary hosted 64 child minders and workers in childcare settings and aimed to develop their understanding of the UNCRC and the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award. The event offered an opportunity for childcare workers to make explicit links between their work and its contribution to meeting children’s rights and to develop new skills that could facilitate conversations with young children about children’s rights. As a result of this, settings are using story telling approaches to implement and evidence rights based practice that mirrors the Rights Respecting Schools Award.
- Further requests for training and organisational support have led to Children’s Rights training being integrated into the Family Information Service training programme. This has led to a further 58 individuals participating in ‘Children’s Rights in Early Years’ training in 2014, reporting to have extended their understanding of children rights and their confidence in facilitating conversation’s about them in their settings.
- As a result of the Family Information Service’s enhanced understanding of the UNCRC, they have taken the decision to use children’s rights to underpin their small childcare grants. The criteria for the grants have been amended to encourage applicants to consider the impact on children’s rights when applying for equipment and resources.
- The workforce development packages offered to Early Years practitioners in Swansea has invited national interest from Officers, researchers and academics across Wales. A presentation on good practice in Early Years in Swansea will take place at the Children’s Rights Early Years Research and Development Network in November 2015 to share what has worked well so far.

Extending Workforce Development Opportunities

Nominated UNCRC leads in the Early Intervention Service and in Communities First have undertaken ‘UNCRC Trainer the Trainer’ courses delivered by Children in Wales. This means that capacity to enhance knowledge and understanding has been extended to a wider range of officers working with children, young people and families.

Housing

Officers within the City and County's Housing Teams have been working with young people for 12 months to develop mechanisms for young people affected by housing issues to have their voices heard in the development of its housing services. Young people from Action for Children, Swansea Young Single Homeless Project, BAYS and the Fi-Forum have come together to work with decision makers to identify issues relevant to young people in Swansea and to seek a way forward for change.

Issues such as learning to manage a household budget, support to live independently, anti-social behaviour in the community and homelessness were issues raised by young people.

As a result, a group of young people are now working with officers within the Authority to develop an advisory group which will consider how housing support for young people can be more widely publicised.

Whole Council Approach

Our ethos in Swansea is that everyone working for the Council is a member of the team committed to developing services to deliver the best outcomes for children and young people. Services for children and young people are at the heart of all our work with Safeguarding being our top corporate priority. Our commitment to children and young people is enshrined in our decision to become the first local authority in the UK to adopt the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as part of our Policy Framework. This approach has transformed the way the council works, developing services which are integrated and joined-up approach and deliver outcomes which are best for children and young people. An example of this is our work to embed Children's Rights being acknowledged within the Strategic Equality Plan, with every department across the Council is now contributing to specific objectives around the UNCRC.

The significance of Swansea's 'everyone is a member of the team' approach cannot be underestimated with us delivering the best outcomes for children and young people in our city. The integrated approach, under-pinned by our commitment to the UNCRC, has helped create an environment in Swansea in which children feel safe, supported and listened to.

Our approach has been recognised nationally at the MJ Achievement Awards in London in 2015, where Swansea Council's work on taking a whole council approach to embedding the rights of the child was recognised as a finalist in the Children's Services category. The MJ Awards are an opportunity to praise and promote the inspiring work that takes place in Local Authority teams displaying innovation and enthusiasm to frontline services.

Case Studies

Below are some case studies of how the departments across the council have embedded rights-based practice.

Child & Family Social Services is the first in Wales to implement 'Signs of Safety' as a driver for practice change to manage risk and promote well-being, and to enhance the voice of children and young people in our Child and Family Social Work teams.

The Signs of Safety model takes a safety and strengths approach to casework and it's all about practice with families. It's a way of working involving all the child's naturally-connected relationships, schools and friendship groups to safeguard the child. The approach continues to evolve through feedback from children, families, practitioners and professionals. The CSSIW has described what we do as 'refreshing', 'positive' and 'empowering'. It actually places children at the heart of everything we do.

Some of our biggest achievements from implementing Signs of Safety include;

- 15% reduction in the number of looked after children.
- Using engagement tools to learn children's views, wishes and hopes (*one child has their work enlarged on their bedroom wall*)
- Involving more children in their statutory reviews (*one young person chaired their own LAC review*)
- Providing children with a words and pictures storyboard safety plan (*one child showed a Police Officer their plan when they called to their home during a crisis visit and the Officer fed back that they were clear in how they needed to respond*)
- Reduced the number of children subject to Public Law Outline and Care Proceedings meaning more children remain living in their family
- Increased Special Guardianship Orders achieving permanence for children with their naturally-connected relationships.

Corporate Communication Department considers how children and young people can access Article 12 - *a child's right to say what they think should happen and be listened to* - and Article 13 - *a child's right to have information* - when preparing consultation and engagement opportunities.

Planning Department references Article 31 of the UNCRC - *a child's right to relax and play* - when writing to residents about proposed housing developments.

Library Services has introduced a Right of the Month promotion, identifying appropriate books linking to that Right

Strategic Equality Plan - The City and County of Swansea Council is required by law to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan (SEP). The purpose of the SEP is to show how we commit to fairness across all aspects of the Council's work. As part of the SEP there is a requirement to set Equality Objectives which demonstrate how the Council will go about promoting equality for all and making a real difference to the lives of those living and working in Swansea.

In our approach to embedding children's rights, we have now developed equality objectives that encompass children's rights alongside protected characteristics, across all service areas. All service areas have been required to set at least three UNCRC objectives with a focus on: Training & an increased knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC within each service area, Promotion and Awareness Raising of the UNCRC within each service area, by making the explicit link to the relevant articles, and use of "Dilly" (Children's Rights logo for Swansea) along with Compliance with the EIA process.

Work has already begun to consider how a similar model may be used within educational settings.

Participation of Children & Young People

Whilst local authorities have a statutory duty to promote and facilitate the participation of children and young people, the City and County of Swansea Council supports children's right to participate, recognising the value and importance of listening to what children and young people have to say about decisions that affect them.

The Big Conversation is a project co-ordinated by the Council's Partnership Team which aims to offer inclusive, safe and meaningful opportunities for children and young people to exercise their right to voice. The Big Conversation facilitates the widest possible participation of children and young people, by providing:

- opportunities to inform service delivery through consultation;
- opportunities to initiate agendas through philosophical enquiry;
- opportunities to be supported by an advocate/ or on an individual level to have their voice heard;
- opportunities to access online mechanisms, e.g. the Children & Young People Super Survey which covers a multitude of subject areas and themes;
- opportunities to engage through pupil voice and through the Rights Respecting Schools Award Framework.

Big Conversation Mechanisms

In 2014/15 there have been numerous opportunities for children and young people to inform service delivery through consultation, initiate agendas through philosophical enquiry and/ or be supported on an individual level.

In total 337 individual children and young people have participated in opportunities to have their voices heard in decisions that affect them. Some of the themes discussed, the key issues raised and outcomes of the engagement are outlined below;

Bullying and Stereotyping

- Young people explored reasons why bullying might occur and why people might choose to bully others. The enquiry provided a safe space for young people who have been bullied and those who may have bullied to talk about their experiences and make some sense of the concept.

Outcomes of engagement:

- Young people agreed that no further action needed to be taken as they were satisfied that there were lots of local and national support services that support anti-bullying.

Children's Rights and Looked After Children

- Young people felt it is important where possible to keep families together and for services to identify and provide the support required for families to be able to do that;
- Choice and location of foster placements are important, particularly in responding to the needs of young people being placed, e.g. being placed near friends and school;
- It is critical that services, carers and others listen to young people in care and work with them so that they receive the best care for them.

Outcomes of Engagement:

- This engagement took place at an event hosted by Foster Swansea. Issues raised by children and young people were linked to articles of the UNCRC and will be used to inform the work of Foster Swansea in 2015.

Sustainable Swansea and associated Budget Proposals

As part of the Big Conversation process and the on-going Sustainable Swansea consultation, 120 children and young people came together to discuss how Swansea Council can be smarter and leaner and provide the best possible services for children, young people, families and the wider communities of Swansea.

Key issues discussed were;

- reconfiguration of Youth Services;
- remodeling residential and outdoor centre provision including an increase in charging and income generation options;
- increase in price of school meals;
- review of delivery of free breakfast clubs;

- revised home school transport schemes;
- independent living - linked to social services proposals for the re-ablement of older people and people with disabilities;
- Park and Ride and other Bus service reductions and efficiencies;
- Children’s services proposals – linked to Foster Swansea and keeping children safe;
- smarter and more efficient use of resources included money and space.

Outcomes of engagement:

- a comprehensive report of input from children and young people was submitted to Council as a part of the wider Sustainable Swansea Consultation;
- feedback has been provided to children and young people about how their contributions have/have not been able to influence budget decisions. A clear area where young people’s voice has been influential in budget decisions has been in the reconfiguration of youth services; largely as a result of young people’s input, the closure of satellite youth clubs did not take place in the way that was proposed.

Children’s Rights and the UNCRC

Children and young people, via a series of road show sessions, were asked what they thought about the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme as developed, which sets out the arrangements the City & County of Swansea has made to ensure we take into consideration and pay due regard to Children’s Rights when making decisions. These workshops also linked in to the consultation on Welsh Government’s Rights Scheme.

Outcomes of engagement:

The input from children and young people was heavily utilised in the development of the Swansea’s Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme. There was also an opportunity for staff to feedback to young people about how this has been done; young people agreed at this session that felt they had been listened to and that their input was apparent within the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme. Examples of where this happened include monitoring arrangements; young people agreed that the implementation scheme should be monitored more frequently than every 2.5 years. This led to a decision being made that the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme would be monitored continuously and reported on annually.

National Participation

Children and young people in Swansea were also supported to participate in opportunities to inform service delivery at a National Level. Some of the opportunities, themes and outcomes of the engagement are outlined below;

Informing national priorities through the Young Wales (Children in Wales) Project

Young people from Swansea attended the first National Youth Forum event under Children in Wales where they worked to refine a set of priorities across Wales for the year;

Outcomes of engagement:

- Young people agreed 6 National themes for consideration by children and young people in 2015-16; Domestic abuse and healthy relationships; Online safety; Raising awareness of children's rights; Substance Abuse; Mental Health and Bullying

British Youth Council

As a part of the 'Make Your Mark' project, young people from Swansea were supported to take part in a special event at the Houses of Parliament to decide on the priorities for the British Youth Council for 2015.

Outcomes of engagement:

- Young people agreed that the UK wide priority for British Youth Council members to focus on this year will be, "**Everyone should be paid at least the Living Wage** of £7.85 per hour (£9.15 in London). Anyone who works, regardless of age, should have a decent standard of living";
- The living wage will be a focus of discussion at a Big Conversation in 2015, and will be also be an all-Wales priority for young people.

Review of Children's Commissioner

Young people took part in the review of the current Children's Commissioner for Wales, led by Dr. Mike Shooter. Young people were able to discuss how well they knew about the work of the Commissioner and his office and how this could be improved.

Outcome of engagement:

- Through discussion, young people developed a better understanding of the role of the Children's Commissioner;
- A full report of young people's contributions has been published.

Examples of the impact of the Big Conversation mechanisms as evaluated by children, young people and colleagues:

On children and young people:

- Increased motivation to enquire and learn
- More critical and reflective thinkers and learners
- Improved confidence and self-esteem
- Enhanced literacy, numeracy and oracy
- Independent thinking
- Higher order thinking skills
- Increased co-operative skills

- Improvements in behaviour, and a reduction in bullying
- Better relationships with peers and parents
- Increased self-awareness

On colleagues and organisations:

- New strategies to enhance facilitation skills
- Greater confidence with using open-ended questioning and dialogue
- Greater engagement of young people in learning and decision making processes
- Process is adaptable to a range of settings

Children & Young People Super Survey

The Super Survey is an online mechanism designed for children & young people aged 11 – 19 to complete to listen to the views of children and young people. Data gathered informs and provides evidence for a range of partnership priorities and service delivery including; education, safeguarding, leisure opportunities, health and lifestyle choices, community cohesion and barriers to participation in local services. In 2014 the views of **3,160** young people were gathered, primarily in Secondary Schools, but also in community settings **50%** of the young people were male (n = 1,587) and **50%** female (n = 1,566) and the majority of respondents were aged 13-15 (72%), 25% were aged 11 – 12 and 3% aged 16 – 19.

The Super Survey primarily seeks to address Article 12, when adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

Overall the findings of the 2014 Survey were more positive than the 2013 Survey. A full report with comparative data is available⁸.

As part of the Survey children and young people were asked if they had heard of Children's Rights or the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- **61% said they *had* heard of Children's Rights. This is a significant increase in the response given in 2013 where only 43% said they had heard of the UNCRC.**

Rights Respecting Schools

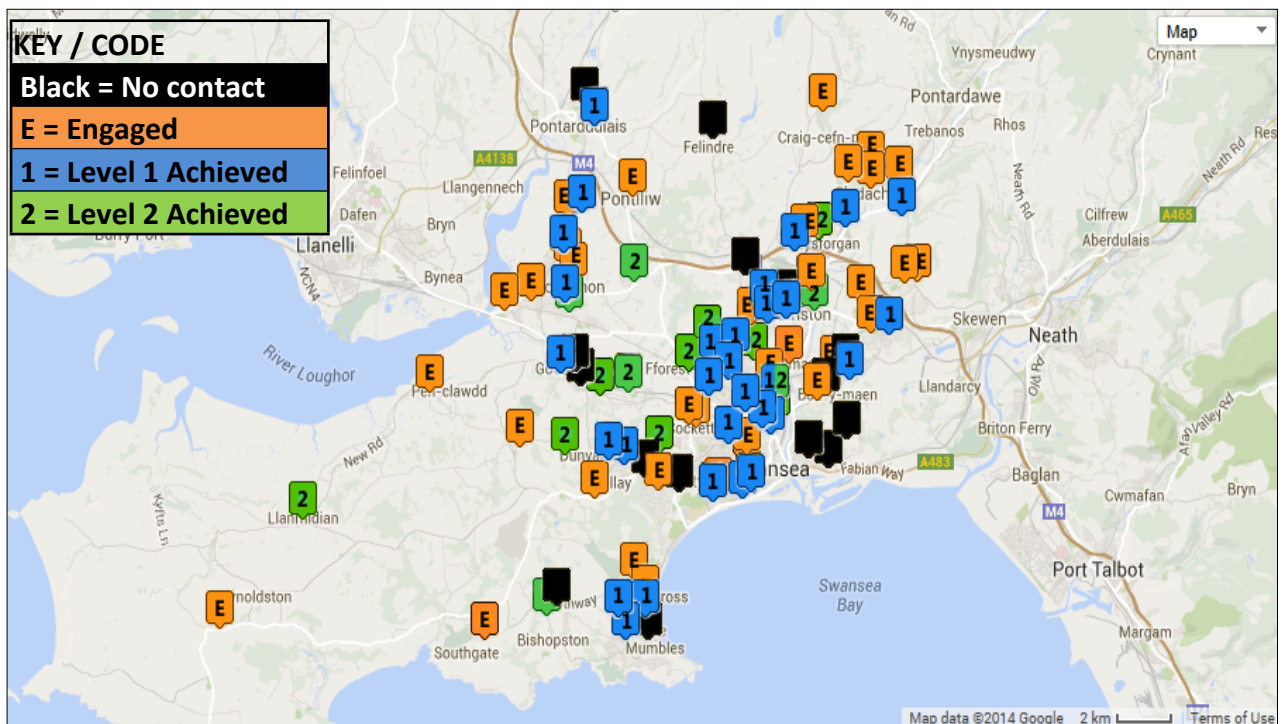
In May 2013 the City & County of Swansea signed an agreement with UNICEF UK to deliver the Rights Respecting Schools Award with a target set by the City & County of Swansea to ensure **all** schools become Rights Respecting School by 2017 with the support of UNICEF UK. The Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in **putting Children's Rights at the heart** of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos. A rights-respecting school not only teaches about children's rights but also models rights and respect in all its relationships between teachers and pupils, between parents and between pupils.

⁸ Super Survey Full Report 2014-15

Our key achievement to date is how children’s rights have been embedded in schools. The Rights Respecting School initiative supported the decision by Cabinet to promote and raise awareness of Children’s Rights in Swansea. Before this agreement was in place only 31% had engaged on a Rights Respecting Schools journey. To date 84% of schools have engaged on their Rights Respecting Schools journey.

- 33% have already achieved Level 1
- 16% have already achieved Level 2
- Only 16% of Schools have yet to start their Rights Respecting journey

The map below indicates which schools in Swansea as at September 2015 have engaged with the Rights Respecting Schools Award and the stage of their journey.



The aim is to target school clusters to ensure transition is in place for children and young people when they move from Secondary to Primary School. The challenge is to get Secondary Schools to engage in the process as in the past this has been seen as a primary model.

Case Studies

Below are some examples of the success of the Rights Respecting Schools approach and how this approach is contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people in Swansea.

Evidence of the success of the Rights Respecting Schools Award Approach

There have been a number of notable successes in Swansea including:

- Two Swansea primaries have been successfully re-assessed at level 2 (3 years) evidencing the sustainability of the programme. The reports were validated by Unicef UK Accreditation & Standards Committee
- Pentrehafod Secondary became the first Secondary in Wales to achieve RRSA level 1 and subsequently the first Secondary School in Wales to achieve RRSA level 2
- Ysgol Gyfyn Bryntawe became the first Welsh Medium School in Wales to achieve RRSA level 1
- Cefn Hengoed Secondary became the Second Secondary in Wales to achieve RRSA level 1
- Uptake of Welsh Medium Schools has significantly increased
- Estyn recognised rights as sector leading practice in Hafod Primary inspection. Following the report, Estyn produced and published a good practice review on rights and the impact on the whole school environment:
<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/343324.8/respecting-rights/?navmap=33,53,158>

This recognition was published in South Wales Evening Post:

<http://www.southwales-eveningpost.co.uk/School-praised-pupil-rights-teaching/story-26207440-detail/story.html>

- Projected number of assessments for summer term is higher than any previous year
- Keith Towler ended his role as Children's Commissioner for Wales with a visit to a rights respecting school and spoke about the difference learning in a rights based environment can have on children. This was followed by an article in South Wales Evening Post:

<http://www.southwales-eveningpost.co.uk/Human-rights-work-Hafod-Primary-outstanding-says/story-26181996-detail/story.html>

On the 3 July 2015 we held a celebration event run by pupils from Rights Respecting Schools in Swansea, who outlined the difference a rights based approach has made to them and their school and how this has impacted on attainment and wellbeing.

Children and young people from across Swansea demonstrated the positive impact a rights based approach has made to their lives and encouraged other schools to adopt the Rights Respecting Schools approach.

Initial feedback from School across Swansea have noted that adopting a rights based approach has had a positive contribution to pupils attendance, well-being and attainment indicators, with a reduction in exclusions and improved behaviour.

Accountability

Scrutiny

The Council's Scrutiny Programme Committee will undertake an approach to act as champions for Children's Rights when assessing the work of the Council and the way the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme is being implemented across the Council and its impact.

Questioning strategies will be developed for any scrutiny activity deemed to have a direct or indirect impact on children and young people (aged 0-18 years), scrutiny councillors can both champion children's rights and scrutinise how due regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been paid.

A training session will be held in October 2015 to develop scrutiny councillors' understanding of children's rights and the policy context within which they sit in Swansea. The session will enable members to feel comfortable and supported to both champion children's rights and apply them in their scrutiny role.

External Monitoring

From an external perspective, the Advisory Group continues to meet bi-annually. This group of external partners includes representation from Welsh Government Empowering Children & Young People, Fairer Futures Division; Children's Commissioners Office for Wales; UNICEF UK and the Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People at Swansea University. The group works alongside Officers and Cabinet Members in Swansea to identify and share areas of good practice and make recommendations on areas for development.

The Children's Commissioners Office for Wales and officers from the City & County of Swansea continue to work in partnership to address Children's Rights issues as they arise in Swansea through quarterly scheduled meetings.

The Wales Observatory on Human Rights of Children and Young People contributed to the development of the scheme and to the child rights aspects of Swansea's equality impact assessment procedures. The Observatory continues to attend the Advisory Group and to share best practice on impact assessment and evaluative methods derived from its national and international work on embedding rights. Furthermore, collaboration between City and County of Swansea and the Observatory and the Centre for Criminal Justice and Criminology on research studies, for example on education, mental health, asylum and child and family interventions, continues to produce findings supportive of implementation of the duty. The Observatory have a clear role in assessing the application of the UNCRC due regard duty within the City and County of Swansea and is able to make representation to relevant parties both within and outside the City & County of Swansea within this context.

Outcomes and Impact

Initial reports from schools who have already adopted a rights-based approach show how this approach has contributed to attainment, attendance and well-being outcomes for children and young people in Swansea. This has been recognised through the Estyn Inspection Framework and many of our Swansea Schools have had Estyn Best Practice Guides published to this effect.

Although it is early days, initial reports have shown us that a rights-based approach is having an effect on children and young people and adults.

Impact on Children and Young People

- Improved self-esteem and feelings of being valued and listened to
- Increased levels of respect, leading to improved relationships with others
- A sense of security as rights respecting language and behaviour is used consistently throughout service received
- Improved attainment and attendance and a reduction in exclusions in schools
- An understanding of religion, cultures, beliefs and abilities different to their own
- A wider and deeper understanding of the world in which they live
- Are able to recognise that rights apply everywhere not just in school
- Having more confidence to speak out about child protection or welfare issues
- Enhanced moral understanding and positive attitudes towards diversity in society and the reduction of prejudice
- Children and young people becoming more involved in decision making.

Impact on Adults

- Increased consultative approach – a platform is developed for engagement and discussion with adults and children, young people and their families
- A sense of ownership in developing an approach that meets the needs and aspirations of those we serve
- A sense that the whole authority is working towards a common goal, leading to feelings of empowerment for both staff and public.
- A whole Council approach to children's rights is emerging with many departments contributing a range of work that supports children and young people in Swansea (both directly and indirectly) and are making explicit links between that work and the UNCRC
- An emerging culture shift is happening where services are continuing to, or beginning to, recognise their work as rights based, and developing an understanding of how this contributes to our Corporate Priorities.

National Participation Standard for Children and Young People in Wales

The National Participation Standards sets out an accountability framework that organisations working with children and young people should aim to work by, to ensure that children and young people have a quality experience when participating or engaging in services or in decisions that affect their lives.

The Standards should underpin any work with children, young people and their families and as such the Children and Young People's Rights Team offer support to services/organisations to embed them into their practice. This involves completing a brief questionnaire based on the Standards to encourage services to think about how they can ensure a good experience for those engaging in their services. Sometimes this level of support is enough; on other occasions further support work has been offered to plan/develop opportunities for children and young people.

Good examples of where support has been provided include:

- ABMU 'Changing for the Better' – the ABMU Health Board used the Participation Standards to develop a series of sessions to engage with children and young people from Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend on the proposed changes to health services across the ABMU area
- Western Bay Safeguarding Board – Swansea Children and Young People's Rights Team supported the Business Unit of the Western Bay Safeguarding Children's Board to use the Participation Standards to think about how young people could enjoy a quality experience in engaging in the development of the Board's business plan. This led to providing support to run a session (using Big Conversation techniques) to determine priorities for 2014/15.

Internally, this accountability framework has been embedded into contractual agreements. All service providers contracted within the Families First and Flying Start programmes are required to give consideration to Children's Rights and to the National Participation Standards when making policy or service decisions that affect children and young.

In practice this means that these services should:

- make commitments to develop their knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC through training and workforce development opportunities;
- take opportunities to promote and raise awareness of children's rights in their work and settings, and;
- make use of the National Children and Young People Participation Standards to self-assess the quality of the participation experience for children and young people receiving their service.

The incorporation of the National Participation Standards into contractual agreements has meant that quality engagement of children and young people has been placed at the forefront of people's minds. As well as increasing awareness of what quality means in practice, training and support to understand the practical application of the standards has led to organisations recording the work they do to encourage quality experiences for those accessing these services.

Looking Ahead

Since the launch of the event, work has been on-going to implement and measure impact of the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme. An UNCRC Action plan has been developed which is based on clearly identified priorities for the year and encompasses a whole council approach to Children's Rights. There are five key areas which focus on:

1. Making such arrangements as is considered suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them, as required in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.
2. Developing knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC through training for all staff and decision makers within the City and County of Swansea, including other statutory and key voluntary partners.
3. Promotion and awareness raising of the UNCRC.
4. Ensuring appropriate and robust mechanisms are in place to receive feedback and complaints in relation to the UNCRC.
5. Ensuring compliance, accountability and impact of the UNCRC due regard duty that is evidenced based.

Listening to and involving children and young people

Big Conversation

The following themes will be considered by young people in Swansea during Big Conversations in 2015 -16:

- Housing and homelessness;
- The changing nature of youth work and services for young people (and their families) in Swansea;
- Impact of the implementation of the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme including RRSA;
- Domestic abuse and healthy relationships;
- Anti-Bullying;
- Sustainable Swansea and allocation of resources in Swansea during budget decision making periods.

These are themes that have been set by young people through feedback from previous Big Conversations and through emerging data derived from the previous Super Survey.

Super Survey

The Super Survey will be developed and rolled out in the Summer Term 2016 and information will be used to inform service delivery planning, improve service delivery and develop strategies and work plans.

Whilst Article 12 of the UNCRC states we should listen to the views and opinions of children and young people, it is also important to recognise how we feedback to children and young people, explaining what has changed as a result of the Survey. This will be done in the following way:

- all schools will receive an individual summary report
- discussion with the Children & Young People Participation Team and children and young people in each school via the school council
- school councils to disseminate wider via the pupil voice.

Rights Respecting Schools

The agreement with UNICEF UK will continue to support schools on their Rights Respecting Schools journey, with a view to all schools in Swansea achieving Level 1 RRSA status by 2017. There will be a focus on targeting the remaining schools that have yet to register an interest, especially Secondary Schools.

Training, Promotion and Awareness Raising

Bespoke rights-based training packages will be delivered to senior decision makers, including the Council's Cabinet Members, Scrutiny Board Members and Pupil Governors.

Building on the success and enthusiasm in embedding children's rights into early years settings, a bespoke six-day course opportunity has been developed. Taking place over one year, the course is aimed at Managers or Nursery Leaders in early years' settings, and is designed to develop knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC and its practical application. Included will be the introduction of tools to enhance settings e.g. storytelling and Philosophical Play, practices that have been shown to promote children's language skills and enhance their well-being. Based on action research, the course will culminate in the creation of case studies that will explore how rights-respecting provision impacts on individual children in childcare settings.

Promotion and Awareness Raising

Work has been on-going to promote and raise awareness of Children's Rights including publication of the arrangements for promoting and facilitating the participation of children.

The Children's Rights Team have been working closely with the Communications department to establish a communication strategy and campaign plan with key objectives to be delivered across the whole of Swansea including the use of our Rights Logo "Dilly".

Future developments will include online mechanisms for children and young people to have their say in decisions that affect their lives as individuals or as groups (such as Twitter or Facebook) and for young people to access information about the UNCRC and the work the City and County of Swansea.

Use of the Dilly Logo on Edunet sites across Swansea as a direct portal to local and national children's rights information as well as useful contacts, has been a recent suggestion by schools and one which we plan to explore.

The Children's Rights Team has also been working closely with the Children's Commissioner's Office and our Corporate Complaints Team to establish advocacy arrangements and ensure that children, young people and their families or support workers are able to explore queries around children's rights and the appropriate advice or action be taken and monitored for the best possible outcome.

Children's Rights Impact Assessments

By incorporating Children's Rights within the existing EIA process, the Children's Rights Team has forged a strong working relationship with Access to Services and colleagues across the local authority.

Work has already started to ensure that monitoring arrangements of EIA responses and record keeping is efficient and effective across the two teams by developing shared systems. It has also been identified that further work is required around the impact on Children's Rights and it is envisaged that, with increased training and continued use of Children's Rights within day to day practise, the quality of information provided by individual services will strengthen.

A working group has already been established to explore the use of a similar model within educational establishments and proposals will be presented to Headteachers in 2016.

Children and Young People's Partnership Board

A new Children & Young People's Plan will be developed for Swansea with a clear vision and aims for children and young people that will be aligned to our work on embedding Children's Rights. The new plan will:

- align to the One Swansea Plan and will outline the role of the Children & Young People's Partnership Board in overseeing the relevant section (B – People Learn Successfully);
- oversee our statutory requirements as defined in the One Swansea Plan, in line with the Shared Purpose: Shared Delivery paper Annex B; Child Participation;
- capture our strengths – what we are already doing - in order for us to note them and not duplicate but identify gaps where the action needs to take place for add value to what we already do as a partnership;
- capture our actions/areas for development as a partnership;
- identify plans/strategies the Children & Young People's Partnership Board will oversee;
- ensure we are able to evidence what difference a children's rights approach has made.

The re-established Children & Young People's Partnership Board will reinvigorate the partnership working on children and young people's issues, ensuring that the Council's top priorities around safeguarding, educational attainment, building sustainable communities and poverty reduction are reflected, along with the commitment to Child Rights, ensuring rights based practice is embedded.

The Children & Young People Participation Network, now re-named "Children's Rights Network" has agreed terms of reference to ensure a more robust set-up, which supports the Children's Rights work in Swansea and feeds into the Children & Young People Board to co-ordinate and further promote rights based working across Swansea.