



## Report of the Cabinet Member for Community

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

# Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme Progress Report 2021-2023

<b>Purpose</b>	To present the report on the progress of the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme in Swansea 2021-2023.
<b>Content</b>	<p>The report includes details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An overview of the refreshed Children &amp; Young People’s Rights Scheme in Swansea.</li><li>• A summary of the Countywide priorities identified by Children &amp; Young People</li><li>• Progress via the “Right Way” five principled approach.</li><li>• Recommendations</li></ul>
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	Give their views on the progress in relation to the Children & Young People’s Rights Scheme and how the UNCRC has become embedded within the Council.
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Hayley Gwilliam, Cabinet Member for Community
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Jane Whitmore, Strategic Lead Commissioner
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<b>Legal Officer</b>	Debbie Smith
<b>Finance Officer</b>	Chris Davies

## 1. Background

- 1.1 As outlined in the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme the Council's Scrutiny Programme Committee will assess the work undertaken and the implementation of the Scheme across the Council.

## 2. Progress Report

- 2.1.1 This report is the fifth progress report on the due regard duty for embedding the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) into the local authority policy framework and specifically focuses on progress made during 21-23 within the 5 "Right Way" principles of the Children's Rights Scheme in Swansea.

- 2.1.2 The full progress report of the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme in Swansea can be found at **Appendix 1**.

- 2.1.3 This report includes details of:

- An overview of the refreshed Children & Young People's Rights Scheme in Swansea.
- A summary of the Countywide priorities identified by Children & Young People
- Progress across all the Council via the "Right Way" five principled approach framework covering the following areas of:
  - Participation
  - Empowerment
  - Embedding
  - Accountability
  - Non-discrimination
- Identified recommendations going forward.

## 3. Key Points

- 3.1 It was agreed that the Council would use the 5 principles of the Nationally recognised "Right Way" approach to report progress made in relation to upholding the Children's Rights commitment in Swansea. Alignment to the National process has provided clear guidance, and tangible benchmarks for council departments to embed a whole council approach. (Five Human Rights Principles – Participation, Empowerment, Embedding, Accountability, Non-Discrimination)

- 3.2 The Children's Rights Scheme "Plan on a Page" has been recognised as best practice by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, who suggested use as a national model. The "Plan on a Page" provided a definition to each of the "Right Way" principles to ensure its meaning was clearly understood and provided a "We Will" section that clearly identified Council commitments, providing clear actions and opportunity to report outcomes for departments

across the Council which also informs and aligns to the “Human Rights City” work.

- 3.3 As part of the Children’s Rights Scheme consultation, Children and Young People identified six County wide priorities to be addressed by Swansea Council and its partners of the Public Service Board. Priorities were:
- Protecting the Environment and Green Spaces
  - Quiet Voices
  - Supporting Disabled Children
  - Equality for LGBTQ+ Children & Young People
  - Politics
  - Listening to Learners
- 3.4 Following the Covid pandemic thought was given to how and where we engaged with children and young people and so the “Big Conversation” Countywide model was temporarily put on hold and teams reverted to more regular and direct group work within schools and community settings as evidenced within the report.
- 3.5 The “Big Conversation” has recently been reviewed and remodelled to provide the overarching countywide structure to frame the local participation and engagement work with children and young people. Reintroduction of the “Big Conversation” infrastructure will involve a mix of Countywide engagement opportunities held within school and community settings. The “Big Conversation” will ensure an overarching platform to promote local, regional and national opportunities to participate and feedback to children and young people in relation to how their voice is being heard and influencing decisions.
- 3.6 Strong Children’s Rights foundations have been created within schools through the previous UNICEF contract to deliver “Rights Respecting Schools. Many schools embrace the principles that underpin the work of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and as a result have shared confidence when transitioning to the new curriculum that sees children’s rights embedded within day-to-day practise. School leaders have been using this knowledge to plan worthwhile activities that aim to further support the rights of children.
- 3.7 Welsh Government will soon be launching new Children’s Rights Training, on-line resources and “Train-the-Trainer” which will also be framed using the “Right Way” Human Rights principled approach and this will assist us locally to continue to promote Children’s Rights and further upskill and support services to embed within practise.

#### **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 In order to clearly identify development needs, recommendations have been separated via the 5 “Right Way” principles that shape the Children’s Rights Scheme in Swansea.

## **4.2 Participation:**

- 4.2.1 The refresh and remodel of the “Big Conversation” to provide a Countywide infrastructure, to enable improved communication of opportunities for children and young people to be heard locally, regionally and nationally and provide a platform for regular feedback and updates to take place.
- 4.2.2 Develop on-line opportunities to engage with children and young people in this ever-increasing digital age via increased use of social media & seeking opportunities to develop a “Have your Say/Participation” page on Hwb to enable the reach of young people via school-based platforms.
- 4.2.3 Further develop opportunities to involve children and young people in the recruitment of officers with responsibilities that impact the lives of children and young people.

## **4.3 Empowerment:**

- 4.3.1 Engage with Welsh Government regarding the soon to be launched Children’s Rights Training and on-line resources to continue to promote Children’s Rights and support services to embed within practice.
- 4.3.2 Continue to seek opportunities to increase accessibility of decision makers to children and young people.
- 4.3.3 Explore opportunities for greater use of simple language/accessible reporting to ensure children and young people can engage in opportunities to shape local services.

## **4.4 Embedding:**

- 4.4.1 Continue to raise awareness and increase knowledge of children’s rights (UNCRC) within Council Teams by developing an on-line training module and linking with the wider “Human Rights City” work.
- 4.4.2 Re-establish the “Children’s Rights Network” as a “Children’s Rights Information Network” with use of Mail Chimp to allow for monthly news updates and signpost to local, regional & national opportunities for practitioners.

## **4.5 Accountability:**

- 4.5.1 Improve opportunities for children and young people to get in touch with the Council to share thoughts and ideas or to share if they feel their rights are not being met.
- 4.5.2 Follow the Welsh Government model of reviewing the Children’s Rights Scheme which is based on a 5-year cycle with progress reporting midway through the cycle and at the end of the five years.

#### **4.6 Non-Discrimination:**

4.6.1 Ensure Children's Rights is embedded throughout the refreshed "Strategic Equality Plan" in Swansea.

#### **5. Legal implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications.

#### **6. Finance Implications**

6.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, it may lead to decisions being taken at a later date that may have costs attached. Any such costs will need to be managed within departmental resources at that time with due regard to the Council's medium term financial plan.

#### **Background papers:**

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Progress Report of the Children & People's Rights Scheme in Swansea  
2021 - 2023