



Report of the Cabinet Member for Community (Support)

Council - 25 January 2024

Progress Report on Swansea Councils Children and Young People's Rights Scheme 2021 – 2023

Purpose:	The report outlines progress made regarding implementation of a whole Council approach to the refreshed Children & Young People's Rights Scheme.
Policy Framework:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services, Social Service Directorate, Partnership Groups, Public including Children & Young People.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The 21/23 progress report on the implementation of a whole Council approach to the refreshed Children's Rights Scheme be approved.2) Permission be granted to amend the reporting cycle to five years in line with Welsh Government. Work will be on-going throughout this period with progress reports produced mid-term and at the end of the cycle. (Appendix 3 - IIA Screening)3) The Children's Rights Scheme 2021 be amended to reflect the revised reporting cycle. (Appendix 4, page 4)
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Children and Young People's Rights Scheme sets out the arrangements the Swansea Council will put in place to ensure compliance with its duty to have due regard to the UNCRC. It provides transparency about the processes that will be followed to comply with the duty, and outlines monitoring procedures and expected outcomes.
- 1.2 A substantial amount of work was carried out to look at the original Children's Rights Scheme adopted in 2014 and ensure a revised version complimented the 'Right Way' principled approach that is being embedded nationally. Alignment has provided consistency in terms of language and measurement (using the Children Commissioners for Wales matrix), and provides increased opportunity to access resources. Alignment to the National model provides clear guidance and tangible benchmarks for council departments to embed a whole council approach and evidence outcomes.
- 1.3 A plan on a page of the Children and Young People's Rights Scheme, was co-produced with children, young people and the Children's Rights Network in preparation for formal consultation. This incorporated National Principles for a Rights Based Approach to Children, and took account of previous extensive work with children, young people and practitioners on what a new Scheme should look like. The Children's Rights Scheme "Plan on a Page" has been recognised as best practise by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, who suggested use as a national model. (See Appendix A of the report)
- 1.4 The "Plan on a Page" provides 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.
- 1.5 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 as a whole Council during 21-23 within the 5 "Right Way" principles of the Children's Rights Scheme in Swansea. (Participation, Empowerment, Embedding, Accountability, Non-discrimination) See Appendix 1.
- 1.6 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.

- 1.7 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.

2 Hearing the Voice of Children & Young People in Swansea

- 2.1 Local Authorities have a duty to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions which might affect them. The legal basis for this duty is Section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. It requires local authorities to make such arrangements as they consider suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children in decisions of the authority which might affect them, and to publish and keep up to date information about its arrangements. (Much of the participation activity can be seen within pages 4-15 of the progress report) **Appendix 1**
- 2.2 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. Feedback to Children & Young People via a "You Said, We Did" infographic has been produced and can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

Priorities are:

- Protecting the Environment and Green Spaces
 - Quiet Voices
 - Supporting Disabled Children
 - Equality for LGBTQ+ Children & Young People
 - Politics
 - Listening to Learners
 - Women and Young Women's Safety in Public Spaces
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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. Recommendations from the Children & Young People's Rights Scheme Progress Report

3.1 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.

3.2 Participation:

3.2.1 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.

3.2.2 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.

3.2.3 Further develop opportunities to involve children and young people in the recruitment of officer with responsibilities that impact the lives of children and young people.

3.3 Empowerment:

3.3.1 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 practise.

3.3.2 Continue to seek opportunities to increase accessibility of decision makers to children and young people.

3.3.3 Explore opportunities for greater use of simple language/accessible reporting to ensure children and young people can engage in opportunities to shape local services.

3.4 Embedding:

3.4.1 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.

3.4.2 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.

3.5 Accountability:

3.5.1 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.

3.5.2 Follow the Welsh Government model of reviewing the Children's Rights Scheme which is based on a 5-year cycle with progress reporting mid-term and at the end of the five-year cycle. Work with Children & Young People with continue throughout this period. Please see attached IIA Screening- **Appendix 3** along with **Appendix 4** - Original Children's Rights Scheme 2021, which will need to be updated upon approval.

3.6 **Non-Discrimination:**

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

4. **Next Steps**

4.1 Following Council approval, the promotion and publication of Swansea's Children and Young People's Rights Scheme Progress Report will be driven forward.

4.2 An "Easy Read" version of the report will be produced in order to ensure accessibility of information.

4.3 The "You Said, We Did" document will be printed and circulated to all schools and shared at the first refreshed "Big Conversation in January 2024.

4.4 A revised set of County-wide priorities for Children & Young People will be established at the first refreshed Big Conversations in January 2024.

5. **Integrated Assessment Implications**

5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

5.2. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic,

social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 5.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 5.4 An IIA screening has been undertaken and concluded that a full IIA is not required (Appendix 3). The progress report 21/23 is the reporting of a wealth of activity across the whole Council as a result of the new Children's Rights Scheme framework and its clear commitment to embedding across all Council Directorates. The report focusses on the activity related to the five principles of the "Right Way" approach which are Participation, Empowerment, Embedding, Accountability & Non-discrimination. The impacts of the work are positive and demonstrates the embedding Children's rights.
- 5.5 The Children & Young People's Rights Scheme highlights the intrinsic links between the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act and the rights of children and young people.

When thinking about children's rights, there are equality implications with regard to age, and sometimes in relation to the other protected characteristics.

The due regard duty placed upon the Local Authority seeks to ensure that when decisions are made that affect children and young people, children's rights must be considered and acted upon if it is deemed that decisions being made have adverse effects on children and their equality rights. The inclusion of the UNCRC within the IIA process is intrinsic in supporting this.

- 5.6 The UNCRC embraces children's right to be able to express themselves, and receive information in a language of their choice, including Welsh. The report outlines opportunities for participation where children and young people have been able to engage through the medium of Welsh.

The Children's Rights Scheme is published and promoted to children, young people, their families and other relevant stakeholders. Copies are available in English and Welsh, as well as other languages if required.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Whilst there are no immediate financial implications arising from this report, it should be assumed that any resultant future spending needs will need be contained within existing budget provision and have full and due regard

to the budget principles set out in the medium-term financial plan and the likely levels of future budgets.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Children & Young People's Rights Scheme Progress Report 21-23

Appendix 2: "You Said, We Did" - Feedback to Children & Young People on their Countywide priorities.

Appendix 3: IIA Screening Report

Appendix 4: Children and Young People's Rights Scheme 2021