

Councillor Peter Black
Chair – Scrutiny Programme Committee

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Elliott King
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Our Ref: EK/KH
Your Ref:
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Dear Councillor Black

Thank you to members of Scrutiny Programme Committee who took the time to listen and hear the progress made in relation to Children's Rights work in Swansea. Even in challenging times, Swansea Council remains committed to doing what is right and best for young citizens in Swansea, in their efforts to recognise, respect and fulfil children's rights, outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In response to your question, *'As part of your plans, you particularly mentioned an ambition to ensure all departments challenge themselves and consider how children and young people can be involved, for example in the process of recruitment and developing policies, and where they are involved ensuring that they are given feedback to show young people that their views are valued in that process. There should be a mechanism in place to ensure this happens on a regular basis across the Council that is more than a tick-box exercise. Can you share with us your thinking as to how this might be achieved?'* the following actions are being taken forward over the next 12 months:

1. Formally consult on the plan of a page of the Children and Young People's Rights Scheme

Substantial work has been undertaken to co-produce an updated Swansea Children and Young People's Rights Scheme, initially adopted in 2014. The refreshed plan on a page of the Children and Young People's Rights Scheme in Swansea aligns to the Right Way principled approach that is being embedded nationally, enabling clear guidance and tangible benchmarks for council departments to embed a whole council approach and evidence outcomes that can be measured locally and nationally. Re-development and re-design of Swansea's Children and Young People's Rights Scheme helps to cement participation as a core element of embedding rights based practice and includes tangible benchmarks for the engagement and involvement of children and young people in decisions that affect them, encourage Council officers to utilise and adhere to the National Participation Standards for children and young people. This draft scheme has been co-produced, taking account of previous extensive work with children, young people and practitioners on what a new Scheme should look like, and is ready for formal consultation along with plans for engagement work on formalising forum mechanisms for children and young people to be heard (see below).

A robust action plan will be developed to support the Children's Rights Scheme. Developed and monitored by the Children's Rights Network Policy Group, the action plan will incorporate data from Swansea's response to the UN Call for Evidence, treaty tracker recommendations and feedback from children and young people and practitioners to provide an overarching framework for embedding rights. As a part of its co-production, the Children's Rights Network Policy Group will also give consideration to how this action plan will be reported on by Council departments, so that a more accurate picture of a whole council approach to embedding children's rights is reported and monitored.

2. Co-produce a formalised structure for the inclusive and effective engagement of all children and young people in Swansea

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.*

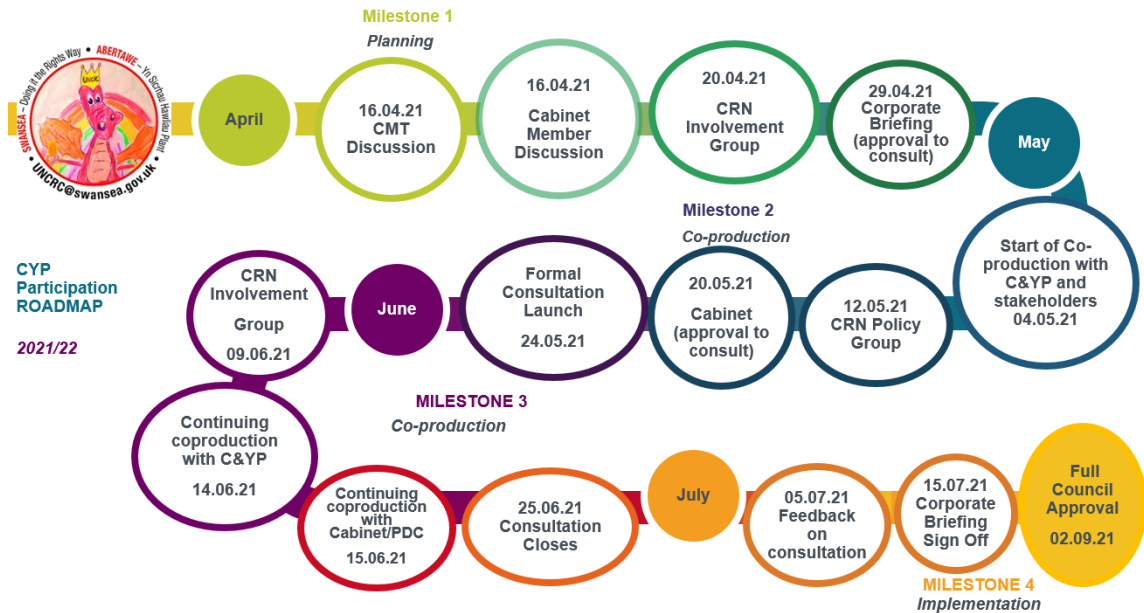
Evidence demonstrates how the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, having a devastating impact on children's rights, well-being and futures. Key concerns included more children being pushed into poverty, an observed widening of educational inequalities and worsening mental health especially for vulnerable children and young people. Therefore one of the recommendations going forward is to ensure we formalise structures for the inclusive and effective engagement of all children and young people, ensuring that these opportunities must:

- Increase the accessibility of decision makers to children and young people;
- Increase the number of opportunities for children and young people to meaningfully engage with decision makers in decisions that affect them;
- Be inclusive to those who would be traditionally be marginalised from civic participation, e.g. children and young people who possess protected characteristics

The establishment of formal mechanisms for listening to children and young people requires a co-productive approach to development. The Children's Rights Network Involvement Group led by Swansea's Children and Young People's Partnership and Involvement Officer will oversee engagement of all stakeholders affected to ensure any forum/mechanisms developed are inclusive, meaningful and operate in a way that aligns to the National Participation Standards for Children and Young People.

This work is one of the key principles outlined in the draft Children and Young People's rights scheme, under Participation, and as such a dovetailed approach to both the co-production of forum mechanisms and the participation element of the Children and Young People's Rights Scheme is required.

A timeline and key milestones for both actions above is outlined below:



I hope that this information addresses the committees' questions and we will keep you updated and involved in the progress and look forward to reporting on the development of this key infrastructure work in the annual reporting process 2021/22.

Yours sincerely

Y Cynghorydd/Councillor Elliott J King

Aelod Y Cabinet dros Wasanaethau Plant/ Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Services