

HOW TO BUILD A CHILD-FRIENDLY CITY: LESSONS FOR LIVERPOOL

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Aim: The UNICEF Child-Friendly City (CFC) initiative aims to provide local authorities with training, support and a framework for embedding children's rights within all local policy decisions. Children's health and wellbeing is impacted by a range of wider health determinants. By centring children's rights, CFC programmes can provide an opportunity to give children and young people a voice in relevant decisions locally. This study aimed to identify challenges encountered by professionals in developing CFC strategies across the UK, and how these were navigated.

Method: Eight semi-structured interviews were carried out with professionals involved in developing CFC programmes in various UK cities. Thematic analysis was used to explore experiences of participants, and to analyse relevant policy documents.

Conclusion: The CFC programme can be used by local policymakers to engage partners in children's rights, facilitate children's participation in policymaking and service design, and create a sustainable culture change within organisations. Child health and wellbeing can therefore be supported at a local level. Recommendations were made for CFC teams and for UNICEF in order to best utilise the CFC programme.

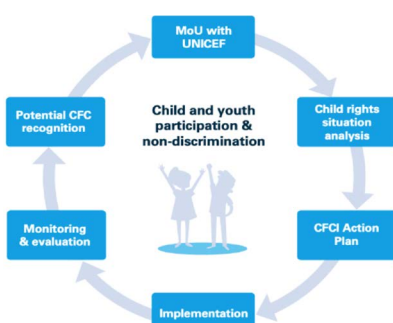
KEY FINDINGS

- Children and young people used the Child-Friendly City programme to raise issues affecting them, such as their mental health and access to mental health services, and the need for access to safe outdoor public spaces
- Child-Friendly City teams worked with Local Authority colleagues and other partners to address these concerns
- Challenges included:
 - > Resources (staff time, skills, funding)
 - > Gaining political support and navigating changing political priorities
 - > Achieving meaningful participation for children and navigating virtual events during the pandemic
- Solutions included:
 - > UNICEF training
 - > Partnership working with public and private sector partners
 - > Promoting culture change across organisations

CONTACT THE RESEARCHERS

Dr Pallavi Patel

Email: p.patel9@liverpool.ac.uk



Stages of the CFC programme

(Source: UNICEF. Child Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook 2018)



RELEVANCE FOR LIVERPOOL'S CHILDREN

In Liverpool City, almost one third of children live in poverty. Children are known to struggle with issues including access to green space and mental health concerns. During the pandemic, children in the UK have faced reduced social contact, worsening mental health risks and worsening poverty.

The Child-Friendly City programme in Liverpool could benefit from examples of successful work in other UK Child-Friendly Cities. In particular, the use of partnerships across Local Authority departments and with businesses can provide resources to the programme and help to address the priorities raised by children and young people, such as those around mental health. Voluntary sector partnerships can help to ensure underrepresented groups of children and young people can access opportunities for participation.

Liverpool City Council has also stated an aim to pursue a Health in All Policies approach to policymaking, which could strengthen the CFC programme by finding common goals between partners and centring child health across all policy decisions.

ABOUT LIVERPOOL'S CHILD FRIENDLY CITY PROGRAMME

- > [Liverpool City Council website](#)
- > [Email: cfc@liverpool.gov.uk](mailto:cfc@liverpool.gov.uk)
- > [UNICEF website](#)
- > [Email: cfc@unicef.org.uk](mailto:cfc@unicef.org.uk)
- > [Liverpool Health Partners CFC page](#)

Policy decisions affecting the living conditions of a city's inhabitants can affect the health of all children and young people.

The CFC programme can be used by local policymakers to engage partners in children's rights, facilitate children's participation in policymaking and service design, and create a sustainable culture change within organisations. Child health and wellbeing can therefore be supported at a local level.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Across the UK, use of relevant legislation has supported CFC programmes. In Liverpool, a Health in All Policies approach would align with the aims of the CFC programme
- Recommendations for CFC teams include:
 - > Appoint a full-time co-ordinator or ideally a CFC team
 - > Partnership working and negotiation with colleagues
 - > Transparent feedback to children and young people
- Future research directions:
 - > Researchers should consult children and young people directly around their experiences of the impact of the Child-Friendly City programme
 - > There is a need for further UK-based studies, and studies examining the programme after UNICEF accreditation is achieved

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