

# Nottingham City's **STORY** of **CHANGE**

Becoming a Child Friendly City



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# INTRODUCTION

Child Friendly Nottingham has been a long-standing ambition for Nottingham City Council and its partners who supported the council in its ambitions. The Children and Young People's Plan contained the vision.



Child  
Friendly  
Cities  
Initiative

## OUR VISION

*Nottingham will be a city where every child and young person can enjoy their childhood in a warm and supporting environment, free from poverty and safe from harm; a city where every child grows up to achieve their full potential.*

Children in Nottingham can face challenges but our city also offers many opportunities. Child Friendly Nottingham started out with an ambition for our city (all of it) to work creatively to secure good outcomes for our children. Everyone involved in the Child Friendly Nottingham programme has consistently worked to achieve this ambition. Here's where it all started.

## TIMELINE

### 2019

Pre-covid when a leading elected city councillor, Councillor Chantal Lee, made it her ambition for Nottingham to be a recognised UNICEF child friendly city.

### 2022

Nottingham was welcomed on to the UNICEF UK programme and work started in earnest to win recognition. We started our Discovery Phase; a process of research, engagement and understand where our focus is as a Child Friendly City

### 2021

The disappointment of the lockdown years and the ambition reemerged when Nottingham City Council joined forces with the Lottery funded Better Start Programme, Small Steps Big Changes, who agreed to finance the co-ordination and development of Nottingham's journey.

### 2023

Our story from that date on, is outlined in this Story of Change. It takes you through our Discovery phase in 2022 when we engaged with thousands of children and young people to the present day.



This Story of Change is a celebration of what we've already achieved, but it is also a further call to action. There will always be so much more to do and together, we can sustain Nottingham as a city where every child, no matter where they come from or who they are, feels safe, valued, and ready to achieve their dreams.

## Cllr Cheryl Barnard

Executive Member, Children Young People and Education  
Lead Councillor for Child Friendly Nottingham  
Nottingham City Council

Making Nottingham a Child Friendly City was never just a vision but a shared commitment that has gained strength throughout our extraordinary journey. I am proud that Nottingham City Council and a network of local partner organisations have collaborated with determination to live and breath what it means to put children at the centre of everything we do with a collective effort to be formally recognised by UNICEF UK as a Child Friendly City. This is not just about external recognition, it about shaping Nottingham into a city that nurtures and values every single child, building a city where children's rights are fundamental. A city where every child, no matter their background or circumstances, can feel heard, respected and supported.

Our city is home to a vibrant and dynamic mix of cultures, communities, and experiences. This diversity is our greatest strength. We are committed to ensuring that every child in Nottingham, regardless of their background, culture, or life experience, is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. Seeing how different organisations, schools, communities, and partners are coming together to embrace this vision fills me with pride.

My commitment is personal and I, along with fellow City Councillors, have had the privilege of actively engaging with children in schools, communities and beyond, taking part in activities that bring children's voices to the forefront. These moments remind us why we are doing this work and who we are doing it for; supporting opportunities for young people to get involved in democracy and decision-making and helping them understand how powerful their voices really are.

Across every organisation, we have opportunities to involve children and young people, to listen to them, talk with them, and invite them into the spaces where decisions are made. Becoming a Child Friendly City means doing all of this through a child rights-based approach, rooted in respect and inclusion. Importantly, our progress will not be judged by plans alone, but by how children themselves feel.

**Let's continue to make Nottingham the best place to grow up!**

Colin Parr  
Executive Member, Communities, Environment  
& Resident Services  
Corporate Lead for Child Friendly Nottingham  
Nottingham City Council



A golden thread running through the city's identity, ambitions, and future, one where children's rights, voices, and experiences shape how decisions are made, services are delivered, and communities grow.

## Colin Parr

Corporate Director Communities, Environment & Resident Services  
Corporate Lead for Child Friendly Nottingham  
Nottingham City Council

In the heart of Nottingham, a city-wide commitment is transforming the way children and young people experience their city.

This journey towards becoming a UNICEF UK-accredited Child Friendly City is driven by the voices of children and young people themselves – and the story so far is one of partnership, participation, and purpose.

In Nottingham, CFN has been embedded as a strategic priority that extends far beyond the boundaries of traditional children's services. Becoming a child friendly city is not viewed as just a children's programme – but rather as a whole-city ambition that affects every service area, every policy, and every community.

From transport and housing, to community safety, health, employment, and regeneration, the CFN programme aligns with wider determinants that shape the lives and outcomes of children and young people. As the programme has evolved there has been a growing recognition that what makes a city better for children makes it better for everyone.

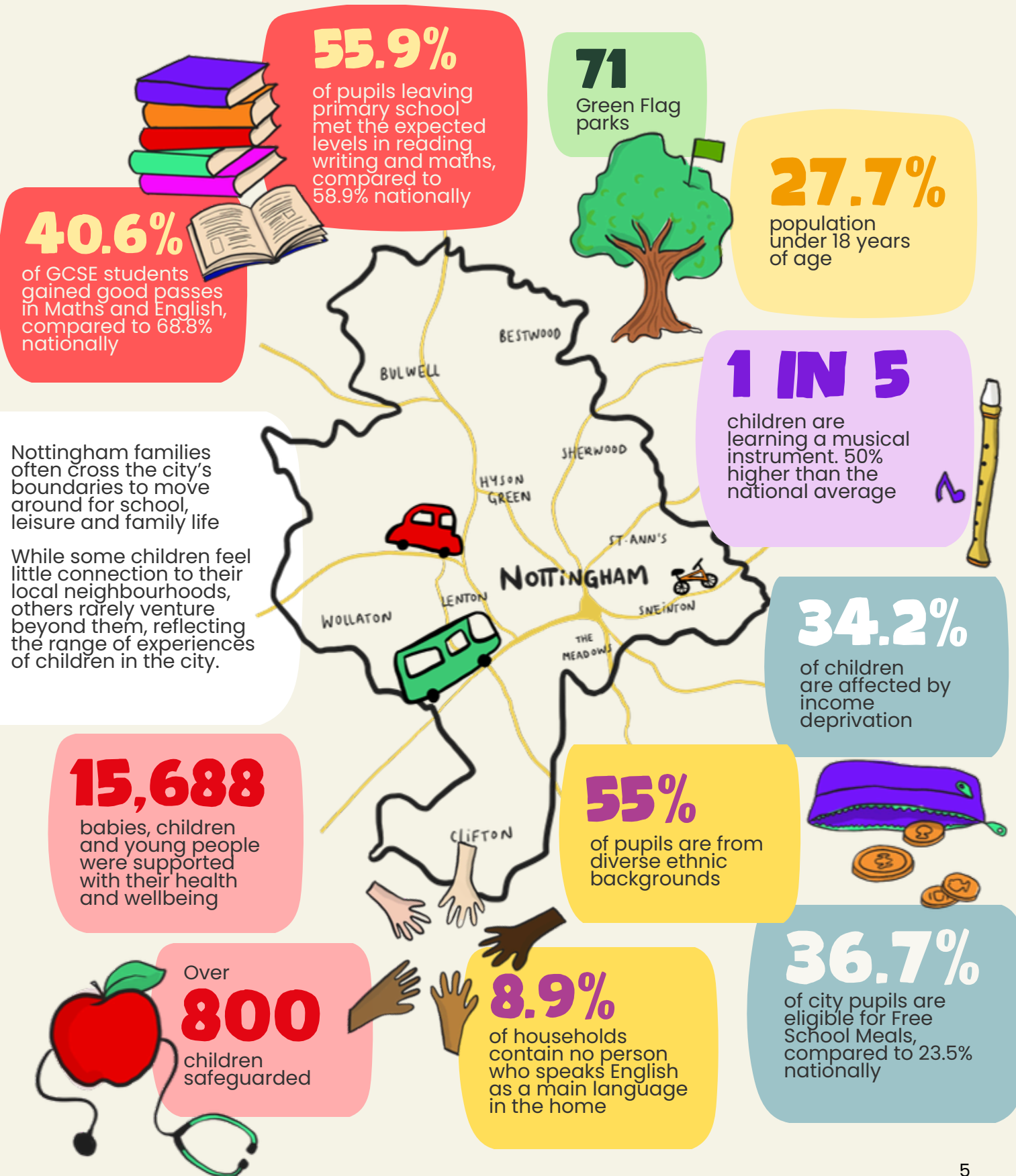
My corporate commitment has driven:

- Cross-council collaboration, with departments working together in new and more inclusive ways
- Policy alignment, ensuring the CFN principles are embedded in the city's wider strategic planning
- Community-wide engagement, recognising that the future of Nottingham depends on how well it nurtures and listens to its youngest citizens

Nottingham's journey towards Child Friendly City accreditation is not just about fulfilling a set of actions. **It's about embedding a new way of thinking.**

# NOTTINGHAM CITY

## CONTEXT & DEMOGRAPHICS



Discovering our

# SHARED AMBITION



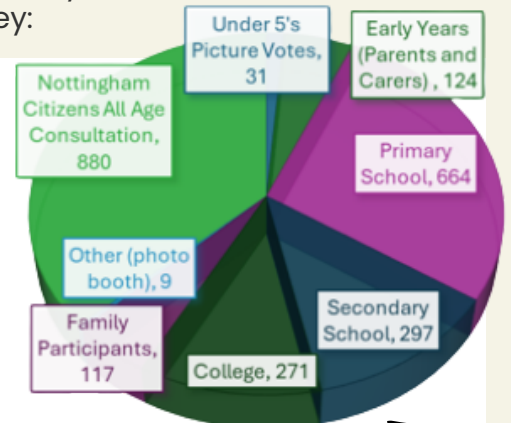
# DISCOVERY PHASE

The first part of our Child Friendly City journey was the 'Discovery Phase'. Here's what we did between 2022-2023 to inform our journey:

## Children and Young People Discovery Survey

Gaining a deeper understanding of what matters most to them, achieving unprecedented levels of engagement with Nottingham's children and young people.

This is what our children and young people like about the areas that they live in



Video with results

Who took part

## Focus groups in schools and local communities.

We joined in partnership with the Nottingham Citizens UK, paying close attention to their Young People's Manifesto and the views of over 8,000 young people.

## Engagement with under 5s and their parents or carers.

Through Small Steps Big Changes we visited primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and alternative education providers as well as local youth sessions and Holiday Activity Fund groups.

## Held discussions with Nottingham Primary Parliament and Nottingham Youth Cabinet.

## Workforce Partner's Survey

**MOST**

adults surveyed agreed that a children's rights-based approach means changing traditional ways of working

**90%**

said Involvement of children in decision which affect them generally leads to better outcomes

**87%**

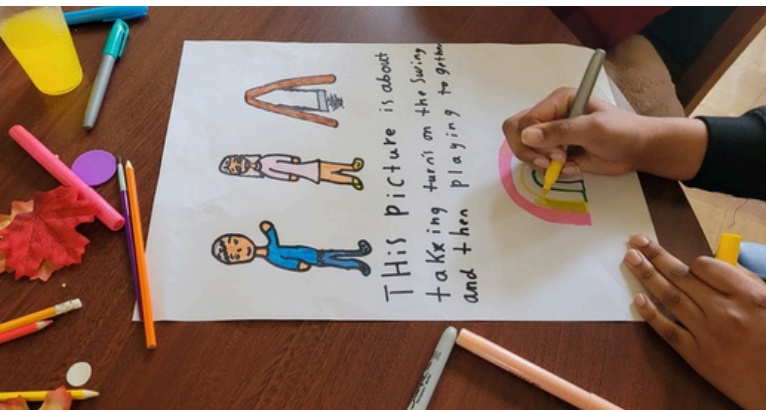
believe children should be involved in decisions which affect them

## Organised a Discovery Day.

This event was to celebrate World Children's Day 2022, this was an energising and inspiring way to draw the Discovery Phase to a close.

# DISCOVERY DAY

The Discovery Day was a celebration of participation, empowerment, and positive change, highlighting the importance of truly listening to the voices of our children. Their energy, ideas, and aspirations are now helping to shape a brighter, fairer, and more child-friendly future for Nottingham.



*"With participation we can change the world, pride and enthusiasm are good for communities. This is how we keep everyone involved"*  
Primary aged student at Discovery Day

- Every child is able to be creative and express themselves.
- A kind, enjoyable city to live in, where everyone belongs.
- Every child feels safer and happier.
- Children having the opportunity to have their voices heard.
- Less litter – in the city and its big parks.
- Better free sports activities.
- More parks! And more accessible girl-friendly play spaces.
- A trusted adult looking after us.
- Every child feels able to trust the police and officials; more police coming into schools.
- Free and affordable services.
- A clean healthy environment with fewer petrol cars in neighbourhoods and more electric vehicles.
- Better mental health services with shorter waiting times.
- More places to enjoy being a child.

What children and young people said would like to see in the future

One of the most exciting moments of the day was when the children made the final decisions on key priorities for the Programme known as the Child Friendly City Priority Badges. They voted for their chosen Badges, providing clear reasons to support each priority – ensuring that children's voices directly inform the next phase of Nottingham's Child Friendly City journey.



Cooperation and Leadership



Culture



Communication



Education and Learning



Safe and Secure



Healthy

# OUR BADGES



## EQUAL AND INCLUDED OUR GOLDEN THREAD

When we spoke with children and young people, the themes of fairness, kindness, and inclusion came up again and again. They told us that being treated fairly and seeing others included are what make a city feel kind and welcoming.

Because equality and inclusion matter so deeply to Nottingham's children, we chose to make Equal and

Included a golden thread that runs through all of our Child Friendly City badges – aiming for fairness, kindness, and belonging are at the heart of everything we do.

The Equal and Included badge runs as a golden thread through every part of Nottingham's Child Friendly City journey. While it does not stand alone as a separate outcome, its principles are deeply embedded across all aspects of the programme – from inclusive survey design to ensuring that every event, consultation, and training opportunity is accessible to all.

In Nottingham, equality and inclusion are central to building a city where everyone feels they belong. Our Citizen's Survey shows that 93% of residents feel people from different backgrounds get on well together – a powerful reflection of our community spirit and shared values. Yet, as one of the youngest and most economically challenged cities in the country, with a constantly changing population, Nottingham's focus on inclusion is more vital than ever.

# LAUNCH DAY

## THE START OF OUR JOURNEY

The Child Friendly Nottingham Launch Day was celebrated as part of World Children’s Day on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to mark the moment Nottingham publicly began its journey to becoming a recognised UNICEF Child Friendly City. The event was shaped to reflect children’s rights and the principles that will guide the programme as it grows.

Because the programme is built on children’s rights and children’s voices, we chose actively engaging tasks such as designing, voting, and creating, to reinforce the fact this programme is not something being done for children, but with them.



### THE AIMS

#### 1 Children’s voices and ideas to shape the programme

Children worked with councillors and staff from the council and partner organisations to explore what the chosen badges meant to them, with the aim of their voices informing the delivery of the project.

#### 2 Demonstrate the strength of Nottingham’s partnerships

Partners from across the city joined us, including Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC), schools, cultural organisations, and community groups, reflecting the collective commitment needed to make a Child Friendly Nottingham.

### THE OUTCOMES



Showcased the partnerships that will drive the programme forward

Brought children and young people together to celebrate their rights

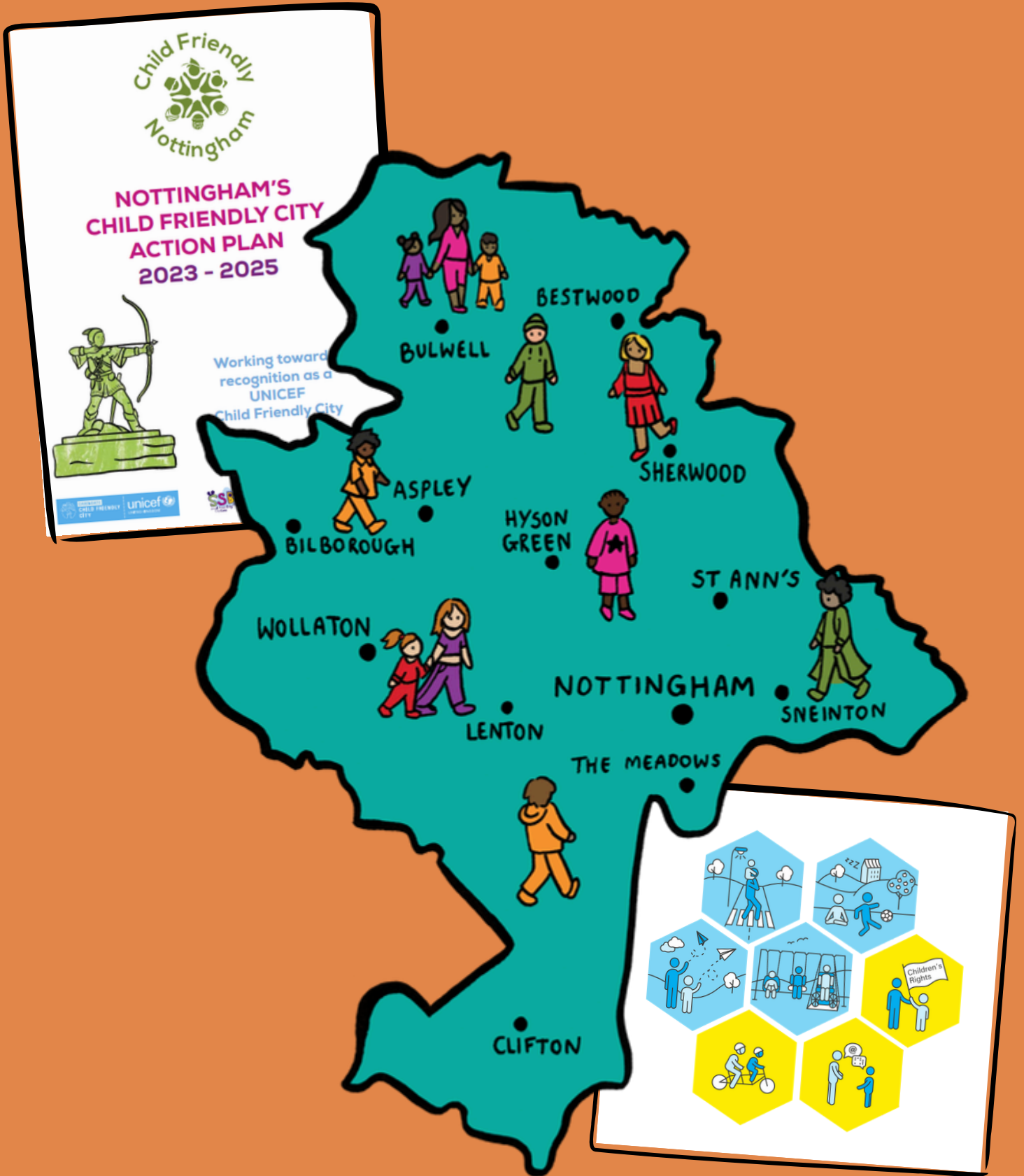
Marked a milestone in Nottingham’s journey toward UNICEF accreditation

Demonstrated our commitment to listening to their voices

Created a shared sense of excitement about what a Child Friendly Nottingham can become



# DELIVERY



# ENGAGEMENT

Right from the start of the project we have continuously sought out ways to have children's voices heard, and to have them in the same room as decision makers and organisations that can have an impact on their future by making a child friendly city. These engagement and surveys have informed and shaped our project throughout the 4 years.

## WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

### 2024

On 20th November 2024, Nottingham celebrated children's voices at an inspiring event at the Council House. Themed "Your Voice Matters – Get it Heard", the day brought together children from schools across the city to take part in a range of activities:

- Website design workshops
- A mock democratic election with ballot boxes and voting cards, supported by the City Council Electoral Services
- Magazine design with LeftLion, Nottingham's cultural magazine
- Sports activities with Nottingham Forest Community Trust and Notts County Cricket Club

This hands-on celebration of democracy and creativity reinforced a core principle of CFN: that children and young people not only have the right to be heard – they should be actively shaping their communities.



### 2025

In 2025 we worked with a number of youth and community groups, It's In Nottingham Foundation and local businesses on an engagement and research initiative about what makes a Welcoming and Safe City Centre. We have published the findings and the outcomes in WCD special report, including great videos and podcasts made by children and young people.

# NOTTINGHAM'S CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SURVEY

Each year we have run a perception survey which provides a good insight into what Nottingham children and young people are thinking. Each year we have published the results and encouraged the leaders and grown-up world to take note. More on the perception survey in the Co-operation and Leadership badge.



With the perception survey and the engagement events we have engaged with almost 20,000 children and young people. The largest engagement in Nottingham.

## PARTNERS DAY

On 11th June 2023, Child Friendly Nottingham held a landmark partnership event at the Nottingham Ice Arena, bringing together around 70 representatives from diverse sectors – including education, academia, health, local business, police, fire service, and the voluntary and community sector.



The event offered insight into the Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA), the CFN Action Plan, and how Nottingham is responding to the unique needs of its young population – particularly those of Generations Alpha and Z. Despite nearly half of attendees reporting limited knowledge of children's rights and the CRBA, over 70% engaged regularly with children and young people in their roles. This highlighted the urgent need – and real opportunity – for growth in awareness and practice.

Importantly, this event catalysed growing momentum, with many attendees signing up for UNICEF UK training and committing to Child Friendly Nottingham. The spirit of collective ownership and shared purpose was palpable.

# CO-OPERATION AND LEADERSHIP

## EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

We focused on creating approaches that encourage a diverse range of children and young people to take part in the programme. This included thoughtful design, meaningful engagement, consultation, shared decision-making, and democratic processes.

Our aim was to respond to the feelings of exclusion that children and young people shared with us during the Discovery Phase. By working collaboratively and recognising different forms of leadership, we created ways of working that embed children's rights into the everyday life of the city. These approaches strengthen our child-friendly city ambitions and are designed to be sustainable for the future.



### Delivery Partners

- Children and Young People
- Electoral Services (NCC)
- Ending Youth Violence Network
- Ignite (Primary Parliament and Festival of Science and Curiosity)
- Nottingham College
- Nottingham Trent University (NTU)
- Rainbows – Supporting SEND CYP
- University of Nottingham (UoN)

## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### Children and Young People Perception Survey

The programme successfully conducted the first Children and Young People's Perception Survey in December 2024, with over 1,100 children completing it across the city. Developed with age-appropriate language and formats to reach diverse groups, local universities were engaged to help design, analyse, and publish the results.

This was a significant milestone because it established the first baseline understanding of children's experiences and perceptions in the city. It captured demographic information, views on neighbourhoods, and perspectives linked to UNICEF's Child Friendly City programme.

The second survey, in December 2025, gathered 1,900 responses and gave us comparison data and informed our sustainability and development plans.



### Badge Outcomes

- **Children's decision making** (Children and young people are actively involved in local decision making)
- **Children's democracy** (Children and young people are actively involved in local democracy)

### City Data Hub (City As Lab) development

The City Data Hub is an advanced system developed with the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University. It brings together data from all CFN activities and surveys, along with existing information about children in the city, and maps it onto a 3D model of Nottingham (the "palm"). This enables detailed analysis of neighbourhoods and the factors shaping children's lives.

# CO-OPERATION AND LEADERSHIP



## Promoting children's democracy

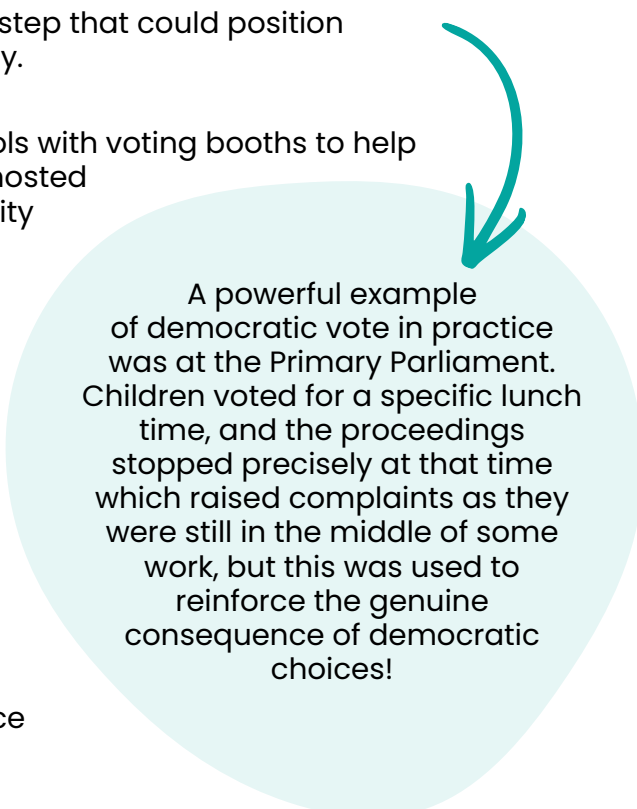
The Electoral Services team has been a crucial partner, providing practical democracy education. We worked with Nottingham College and the Electoral Services Team to explore a pilot around a reduced voting age, a bold step that could position Nottingham as a national leader in youth democracy.

The Electoral Services team went into primary schools with voting booths to help children understand the process of elections. They hosted Hustings events (e.g. for potential Combined Authority leaders) where college students posed questions and voted for their next leader.

## Councillor engagement and training

The CFN programme has successfully increased engagement between local politicians and young people. Councillors have received training in children's rights, with a further training session planned for the new cohort following this year's elections. This has subsequently seen regular councillor meetings and clinics established in colleges, where students were engaged on the local council budget consultation, and were able to question and influence the impact of funding changes.

The increased engagement has led to positive outcomes, such as councillors supporting specific local issues brought forward by young people (e.g. speeding campaigns, and issues related to pronouns/identification in schools).



A powerful example of democratic vote in practice was at the Primary Parliament. Children voted for a specific lunch time, and the proceedings stopped precisely at that time which raised complaints as they were still in the middle of some work, but this was used to reinforce the genuine consequence of democratic choices!



## Primary Parliament acknowledged by planners

Primary Parliament is now formally recognised by the Planning Department as an important consultation body. This means children's views are considered from the earliest stages of developing the statutory Local Plan, rather than only during a short consultation period at the end. Because the Local Plan shapes future housing, jobs, infrastructure, and environmental decisions, embedding children's voices in this process has the potential to be transformative for the city.

# CO-OPERATION AND LEADERSHIP



## CHALLENGES

### Local election and councillor turnover

A local election occurred during the programme, which proved a significant challenge to councillor training and engagement. The election resulted in trained councillors leaving and new ones joining who required training. The new councillors were less knowledgeable of the programme and more inexperienced with regards to child friendly practices.

### Impact of Section 114 on council clinics

The council's financial challenge (Section 114) and subsequent restructuring impacted the original vision for councillor clinics. The plan for family-centred clinics in libraries was affected by resource shortages, libraries closing or changing Saturday hours, and concerns about mixing young children with adults attending within clinics. This challenge led to the clinics being scaled back or shifting to individual councillors championing specific issues in schools instead.

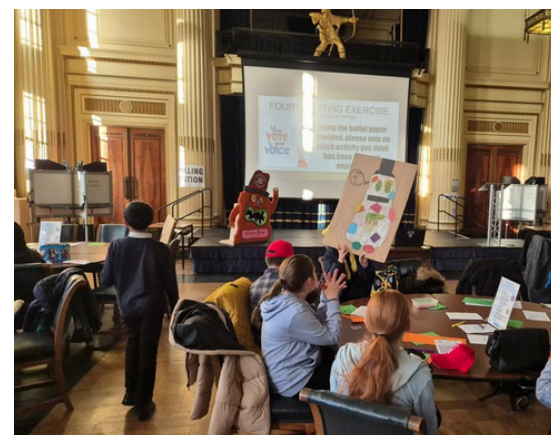
### Restructure of the Youth Service

The Youth Service underwent a restructure and saw a major shift away from providing a universal service towards a targeted service focused on high-risk, vulnerable groups. This change presented a key challenge to the programme because it severely impacted the commitment to establishing a comprehensive Child-Friendly Network that could engage the "average Joe/Joanna's" and provide a voice for every youth and group across the city.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### Value of dedicated youth forums

The team learned that having a formal, dedicated forum for children and young people, such as the Primary Parliament, is highly important for supporting engagement and decision-making. The acknowledgment from the Planning Department demonstrates the value of this resource for high-level statutory consultation, ensuring children's voices shape key documents like the Local Plan.



### Move towards targeted service provision

With the reduction in central and local government resources, many services that were previously universal and engaging with all children and young people have become targeted and subsequently engaged with only vulnerable and high-risk groups, or they no longer exist in any meaningful form. This presents significant challenges for engaging with children and young people outside of the school environment, which are currently the only near-universal services, and risks the disenfranchisement of the majority of children whose voices are easy to ignore as they are 'just about getting by'.

# CO-OPERATION AND LEADERSHIP



## NEXT STEPS

### Utilise and grow the City Data Hub

A priority is to build on the established Data Hub (City As Lab) by running the perception survey annually to build and map the picture of children's lived experience over time. It is also important to encourage community partners to submit their own data to support this resource, ensuring this ongoing action research project continues to provide a long-term evidence base that can positively impact the lives of children in the city.

### Primary Parliament and Local Plan integration

The Planning Department will continue to utilise the Primary Parliament in developing the statutory Local Plan. The goal is to prioritise this to influence development decisions from the earliest possible stage.

### Pilot children's voting and research

Nottingham is planning to be a pilot area for 16-year-olds voting in the next general election. This is a priority for Electoral Services, focusing on research related to attitudes, turnout, and the demographic information of 16-18 year-olds who vote. Electoral Services will work on outreach and school guides over the next couple of years to support this initiative.



### Continuing the CYP Perception Survey

The perception survey will continue as a key action. Communicating the results of the 25/26 survey will be an immediate priority, with future sustainability focussing on continuing the survey and building on its success and outcomes for many years to come.



# CULTURE



## EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

Our Culture Badge built an approach that promoted understanding of children's rights and enabled partners to hear and act on the needs and views of children. We did this through encouraging listening, raising understanding, increasing skills and awareness, building mutual trust and confidence to support the development of a child friendly culture in Nottingham.

The culture of our child friendly city encouraged partners to value, listen to and celebrate the diversity, energy and youthfulness of our children and young people. This badge embedded a child rights culture felt across Nottingham through training, changing organisational culture, and child friendly champions.

### Badge Outcomes

- Children's rights at work (Nottingham Councillors, leaders and staff across partner agencies confidently and consistently apply a child rights-based approach in their work)
- Children & Young People can access support when they need it (Children and young people can find help from public agencies when they need to and feel confident to do so)

### Delivery Partners

- Children and Young People
- It's In Nottingham
- Nottingham City Council (NCC), including:
  - Councillors and Senior Leaders
  - Equality Diversion & Inclusion Team
  - Neighbourhood Safety Officers
  - Youth Offending Team
  - Youth Services
- Nottingham Trent University (NTU)
- Police Community Support Officers
- University of Nottingham (UoN)
- Violence Reduction Partnership

## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### Training and Workforce Capacity

In order to alter organisational culture and effect change amongst the local workforce we began a comprehensive training programme focussed on Children's Rights in Practice.

The training was delivered by UNICEF to staff from across the city and partners. It included staff who were frontline practitioners working with children daily, through to senior leaders and councillors in more governance and organisation decision making roles. In total over 400 people have so far completed the training.

Groups of staff who participated in the training included Youth Services, Communications staff, Neighbourhood Safety Officers, Police Community Support Officers, It's In Nottingham business partnership, staff from the two Nottingham Universities, Elected Members, Senior Leaders in the City Council, and a variety of Children's Services staff.



The training has successfully trained staff beyond internal Children's Services staff, and pushed knowledge out to a range of diverse agencies who may not previously have thought to build child rights into their day-to-day operations.

The training has enabled staff to understand their impact on children's lives, build Child Rights in Practice into their operations, and help them better understand children's concerns and take account of their views when delivering services.

## **Child Rights within Organisational Culture**

We knew that simply training individuals was not enough if we really wanted to amplify children's voices and embed rights in organisational decision-making across Nottingham.

To change the culture within organisations we promoted child rights through a variety of different mechanisms. We engaged in internal corporate leadership team briefings, conducted workshops, and attended Partners Day and other partner meetings to stress the need to hear children and young people. We produced a range of tools such as a communications toolkit, and planning and evaluation tools, to aid organisations in connecting to existing children and young people groups and structures such as the Primary Parliament. We updated the Children & Young People's Participation Strategy.

Some examples of local organisations taking a child's rights approach and actively listening to the voices of children and people include:

- The Transport Department attending the Primary Parliament to ask children about cycle lanes in their city, gain their views on where they currently were, and about how they could be improved and which new routes would be most beneficial.
- The Police have conducted sessions with children on online safety.
- It's In Nottingham is working with children's groups and Primary Parliament on ways to make the city centre more child friendly.
- Schools utilising children's voice boxes.

This work has started a cultural shift where partners and council staff are actively thinking about the impacts of their decisions on children and young people. It respects children's rights, specifically Article 12, regarding their right to have their voice heard.

## **Child Friendly Champions**

To promote child rights and further embed it within organisational culture across the city we knew that it had to be adopted by people within those organisations to make it business as usual. To do this we established a network of Child Friendly Champions across partners to drive and promote the programme and embed child rights.

Child Friendly Champions are individuals, including senior leaders and staff from across the partnership, who were nominated by those partners as best placed to deliver impact within their organisations.

Champions all went through the training programme and Role Descriptions were produced laying out the responsibilities and expectations of Champions.

# CULTURE



Child Friendly Champions have helped fly the flag for the programme across the whole city and ensure it is not perceived as solely a Children's Services initiative. Champions have successfully helped change culture within organisations and are driving major long-term projects, key examples include:

- **Karla Capstick** from Small Steps Big Changes and **Katy Ball** from Nottingham City Council, without their work and support the Programme would not have received the funding to make it possible..
- **Cathy Mahmood** from Nottingham Trent University and ChalleNGe, who has successfully secured 3 years' funding from the Arts Council to achieve better cultural opportunities for children.
- **Alison Donaldson** and **Gareth Sayers** from Nottingham City Council, who have worked to mainstream Child Friendly Nottingham and children's rights across the Council.
- **Graham Moran** of the It's In Nottingham Foundation who has ensured Child Friendly Nottingham is one of their strategic objectives in their 10 year plan 'Thinking Differently'. This has the ambition of embedding children's rights into city centre business practices over the next few years
- **Jacquie Thomas** and **Nottingham City's Adolescence Youth Team** for their ongoing support and drive throughout Nottingham's Child Friendly city journey.

## CHALLENGES

### Language misconceptions

The public, council, and some partners misunderstood key Unicef terminology early in the programme.

"Child Friendly" was often misinterpreted as focusing only on physical services specifically for children (parks, playgrounds, soft play, schools etc) rather than relating to children's rights, their voices, and participation within all aspects of life. The team had to spend significant time early on dispelling these misconceptions and explaining that the focus was on the rights and voice of children across all aspects of delivery.

Additionally, the "Culture Badge" was often mistaken as one that relates to arts, creative opportunities, films and music, rather than being focussed on the organisational culture of the council, partners, and workforce in how they ensure children's rights and voices are taken into account within their work.

### The loss of One Nottingham

The "One Nottingham" partnership was the strategic, overarching collaboration forum for the city, bringing together public, private, faith, and voluntary sectors to address city-wide challenges and priorities.

One Nottingham was a key connector, initiator, network, and communications forum for partners and the city council. It's loss challenged the processes of bringing partners together from outside the council to collaborate. Alongside this loss and the Section 114 notice, the council's reputation took a hit, making conversations with external partners and securing buy in for the programme more difficult due to an uncertain future.



## LESSONS LEARNED

### Framing and language is critical

It was learned that continuous, early engagement is crucial to framing the overall program, and explaining what specific things like "Child Friendly" and the "Culture" badge really meant in the context of children's rights and organisational change.

### Tailoring training

A key lesson regarding training is the difficulty in getting strategic leaders to commit four hours for training, and that many people trained subsequently left the council due to redundancy or elections. Future efforts must focus on working out who the right people are to send on the training to ensure the learning is fully utilised and the impact maximised and embedded.

Prioritising sustainability infrastructure early

The delay in the implementation of the "Train the Trainer" model was an issue that hampered programme delivery as well as future sustainability. The lesson is that core components for sustainability, such as transferring training expertise, must begin to be implemented immediately and independently rather than solely relying on external bodies (like UNICEF) to deliver on agreed timelines.

## NEXT STEPS

### E-Learning training development

Developing the children's rights training into an online E-module is a priority. This could be made mandatory for all council employees and accessible to partners, and will ensure ongoing sustainability.

### Knowledge transfer and internal capacity

The two accredited UNICEF trainers will work to pass their expertise and knowledge to a new group of people, establishing an internal network of trainers who understand and can deliver the children's rights approach.

### Strategic Embedding

The broader Child-Friendly Nottingham agenda, including child rights, is to be secured within the Council's new four-year strategic plan. This ensures the commitment to embedding the culture from the top down.

### Development of engagement and participation

Continuing the work on the citywide engagement and participation strategy is essential for embedding children's voice into partnership structures.



# COMMUNICATION



## EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

We sought to communicate through diverse, appropriate, and easily accessible channels, shared by children, young people, and partner organisations.

Communications were co-produced in clear and understandable language, in the locations in which children and young people spent their everyday lives and tested by a diverse range of young people.

### Badge Outcome

- Communicate clearly with children and young people (Our communications are clear, understandable, and responsive to the views of children and young people. A positive view of children and young people is widely held and promoted across Nottingham)
- Promote understanding of children's rights (Our communications will promote and encourage understanding of children's rights across Nottingham)

## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### Child Friendly Nottingham partner communications

The CFN programme successfully developed essential communication tools: a dedicated Child-Friendly Nottingham website and a newsletter. Although primarily aimed at partners rather than children, this was a deliberate strategy to spread understanding and messages across the partnership.

The website contains information on the programme, including upcoming activities, training, and events, while the newsletter

promoted rights of the month, training opportunities, and updates on what the CFN programme had been doing. Partners, such as the Director of Children Services, frequently redistributed the information, amplifying their reach.

These resources were deemed highly effective as they acted as the main route of recruitment for staff training. The outcome was that the Nottingham programme was putting considerably more people into UNICEF training courses than any other city (sometimes as many as all other the cities combined), and almost every event was full. Involving young people in programme communications design

A conscious decision was made to ensure the programme "kept it young" by involving young people in producing design elements. This focused on working with local young creatives to develop the program's illustrations and logo, rather than using professional adult designers. We achieved this by asking partners (schools, college, ChalleNGe) to put forward young people looking for creative design opportunities.

One key achievement was that our CFN logo was designed by a 17-year-old and subsequently animated by a college student of the same age.

### Delivery Partners

- Children & Young People (two-way communication and engagement)
- ChalleNGe
- Communication teams across organisations
- It's In Nottingham
- LeftLion
- Nottingham College
- Nottingham Trent University (NTU)
- Schools
- University of Nottingham (UoN)
- Youth Service (NCC)

# COMMUNICATION



## Voice Boxes Initiative

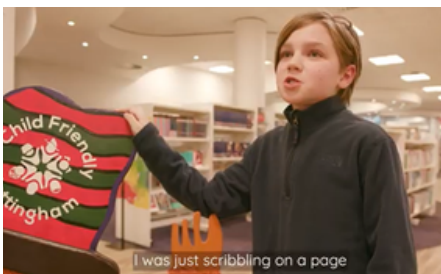
The Voice Box is a physical box that has now been established in 19 primary and secondary schools across the city, with another 5 coming onstream in the next few months. They are designed to give children a voice, to make suggestions and raise issues, and have also been placed in libraries to gather views on specific topics.

Children designed the individual boxes in many schools to ensure they were representative of the community. The initiative was important as it directly supported children's rights by providing a space where they could write or draw information about their concerns and post it, giving them a role in decision-making and input.

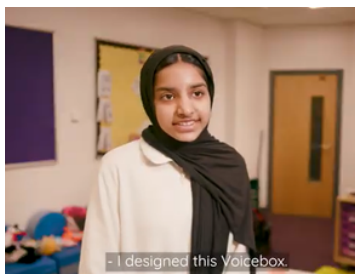
School council groups regularly empty the boxes, read the 'voices', sort areas of concerns (i.e. school, local neighbourhood, or external), and act on them, sometimes they may contact local councillor's dependent on the topics.

One Voice Box was housed at Bulwell Riverside Library, where the box was used for consultation on local improvements and how Levelling Up government funding could be used. This led to a significant, localised impact in Bulwell, resulting in the council re-vamping the splash pad and the park area. Other suggestions from the voice box on how to improve Bulwell were creatively put on placards and displayed during the Bulwell Arts Festival Week, so that children's voices were placed around the area for adults and the community to see what change children wanted locally. It is the developer's intention to keep children involved through the full duration of this programme of redevelopment in Bulwell town centre.

Scan for video



I was just scribbling on a page



I designed this Voicebox.



- [All] We have a right to be heard.

## Re-design of Broadmarsh 'Green Heart'

This focused on securing children's voices in the large, long-running Broad Marsh shopping centre redevelopment project. Consultations were undertaken within schools regarding the new 'Green Heart' public space, and the play area redevelopment adjacent to the site.

This work demonstrated responsiveness to children's views, as the Green Heart and play area were undertaken incorporating specifications set by children. Children were involved in selecting the colours of the floors and frame areas, and their suggestions (like floor markings) were incorporated into the design. This demonstrated the embedded practice of listening and acting on children's views and is intended to become the standard in future local development projects.



# COMMUNICATION



## CHALLENGES

### **Lack of dedicated communication resource**

The programme faced a significant challenge due to the lack of dedicated communication support and expertise, which the UNICEF model typically relies upon. This deficit occurred because of local financial issues which resulted in the City Council's entire communications team being broken up, with staff made redundant or spread across other areas due to resource constraints.

This lack of institutional and expert resource meant CFN programme staff had difficulty producing and disseminating communications. To mitigate this, we relied on generating tool kits and a newsletter, so partners could disseminate information themselves.

### **Children's magazine**

The CFN action plan included a workstream to research the feasibility of a local magazine produced by and for children and young people and then act on the results of the review. The review was completed and conducted by LeftLion, a local magazine, which found overwhelming support and willingness from children to contribute. However, the review also found that there was not a willingness to purchase the magazine, and therefore it was deemed too expensive to produce and not commercially viable.

LeftLion are a commercial organisation and confirmed that funding via an advertising model would not be viable, and that a dedicated fundraising strategy through charitable sources would be required to move forward with it which they could not provide.

### **Social media restrictions and platform barriers**

The council's internal restrictions acted as a barrier to communicating directly with young people. The council restricts access to platforms favoured by children (like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat), limiting the programme to platforms such as Facebook, which young people identify as being "for old people".

This restricted communication prevented the CFN team from targeting their audience as effectively as it could have been. Safeguarding of children and security are clearly the council's concerns and the challenge here



### **Communications translation and inclusivity**

The Translation Service in the council was restructured and completely changed, which had a big impact on the programme as it hampered our ability to translate resources for children and young people into different languages. We managed to mitigate some of the impact by having a translation button on the programme website, but for non-digital resources we did not have the resource to pay for external translation and could not use local community resources as we had no way of checking their accuracy.

# COMMUNICATION



## LESSONS LEARNED

### **Need for proactive continuous communication**

The fundamental lesson learned is the importance of continuous communication: "you can never do too much" and staff must "just keep talking" to promote the programme and embed understanding of its core concepts effectively across the partnership. The team learned not to be overly prescriptive about the language used or the labels expected. The goal is to speak in ways that people understand and that make them feel welcome and able to participate. This ensures communication remains open, transparent, and inclusive. By simplifying messages, such as "kids are the next people that are going to be running this place" it made partners understand their roles and impact.

### **Bypassing rigid bureaucracy to get things done**

A lesson in adaptability was realising that slow bureaucratic pace meant the team couldn't wait if we wanted to maintain momentum and meet the timescales required within the action plan. We learned that sometimes we had to bypass the process to maintain momentum and deliver the programme effectively. Sometimes had to "ask for forgiveness" rather than "wait for permission".

## NEXT STEPS

### **Developing a Children's Guide to Nottingham**

There is continued interest in creating a children's guide to Nottingham, such as "50 things to do before you're 13." To make this viable, a fundraising plan is needed to support production and distribution through schools and colleges.

### **Publish programme communication documents**

Updated partner toolkits, the Child Rights Impact Assessment, and the Sustainability Plan will be completed and published on the Child Friendly Nottingham website. Making these resources accessible will help partners embed children's rights and sustain future action.

### **Strategic Embedding**

Child Friendly Nottingham is being built into the new Council Plan, shaping priorities for the coming years. ChalleNGe and It's In Nottingham have also committed to child-friendly work and secured funding. Through the Child Friendly Creative City programme, ChalleNGe will continue embedding children's rights across the city, helping ensure the work lasts beyond the current team.

### **Implementation Design Guide for Broad Marsh**

Dr Laura Alvarez is developing a Design Quality Framework and a design guide informed by conversations with children. This will be presented to Homes England, the Broad Marsh developer, and is expected to carry the same status as other required community engagement plans, securing children's input in future city centre development.

# EDUCATION AND LEARNING



## EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

There are major challenges facing the city's children. Children's education is a priority for Nottingham City Council however educational attainment runs below that of the neighbouring boroughs and of England.

Our Education and Learning Badge was designed to recognise and showcase Nottingham's culturally rich communities, children, and young people. We set out to explicitly address challenges faced by diverse BAME communities, SEND and local authority looked after children and disabled children who fair worse in education. Children and young people from these communities who have a range of abilities and backgrounds, helped co-design, and take part in activities to support learning and deliver a foundation for future development, in schools, colleges, community learning settings, in businesses, cultural and creative venues and public organisations.

We were told during our Discovery Phase engagement that young people feel pressure around their futures, and they feel that there are limited opportunities in terms of FE and practical experiences: "We all will need to get a job, and education and learning will help you get a better job and make good money. Education is good for careers, It is good to learn from the past, Helps us follow our dreams and be responsible".



### Badge Outcomes

- Celebrating culture and diversity (Children and young people are enabled to use their imagination and creativity to celebrate diversity and their cultural heritage)
- Learning and flourishing (Children and young people feel confident to create and access learning, skills, and training opportunities within the city, which enable them to learn new things, flourish and be guided and supported by trusted adults)
- Active learners and champions for children and young people voices (Children and young people will be empowered to be active learners and champions for all children and young people's voices)

### Delivery Partners

- Children and Young People
- ChalleNGe, Nottingham's Cultural Education Partnership
- Key Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT):
  - Archway Learning Trust
  - Greenwood Academy Trust
  - Nottingham Schools Trust
  - Raleigh Education Trust
  - Nottingham Futures
  - Nottingham Trent University (NTU)
  - University of Nottingham (UoN)



# EDUCATION AND LEARNING



## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### Delivery of the Cultural Offer

The Cultural Offer is a citywide programme delivered through schools and local cultural organisations to ensure children in Nottingham can access high-quality cultural and creative opportunities. It aims to guarantee that every child, regardless of age, setting, disability, or refugee status, can take part in the cultural life of the city, reflecting their right to participate fully. Working with schools and cultural providers, a shared calendar and programme of activities has been developed, supported by the Cultural Rucksack framework and the Cultural Guarantee. A key achievement of the Cultural Guarantee was a pledge for refugee access, encouraging organisations to sign a charter of good practice to ensure cultural accessibility for refugee and asylum-seeking children.

**Cultural Rucksack Planner**

September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31



The Cultural Rucksack has helped cultural providers and ChalleNge arts partners embed child-friendly principles into their practice, leading to high levels of participation across the city.

Building on this progress, ChalleNge secured £655,000 from Arts Council England and Nottingham Trent University for a three-year Place Partnership programme (2025–2028) with 22 partners, bringing total investment to £1.5 million for arts and creative opportunities for children and young people, championing youth voice and co-creation.

### The Include Programme

The Include Programme was a targeted initiative supporting secondary pupils at highest risk of permanent exclusion, including those with repeated fixed-term suspensions. Working initially with four secondary schools, the programme identified 60 pupils most at risk and focused support on the after-school period, when vulnerability to anti-social or criminal behaviour is greatest.

Pupils were matched with adult mentors from community organisations for one-to-one support, alongside access to after-school sporting, cultural, and creative activities. The programme aimed to help pupils remain in education and move into further education, work, or training.

The programme achieved strong results: only two of the 60 pupils were permanently excluded in the following 12 months, a significant reduction compared with previous high-risk cohorts. The model is now being embedded into the city's new Inclusion Strategy, Thinking Differently, ensuring it is sustained and expanded in future.



# EDUCATION AND LEARNING



## Thinking Differently Programme

The Thinking Differently Programme is a major piece of developing work focused on offering alternative, meaningful pathways for young people failed by the traditional academic route. The program has developed into a private, public, and voluntary partnership that includes business leaders, schools, health and charitable trusts. It originated from the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) and the Police and Crime Commissioner, who identified the connection between exclusion from school and subsequent involvement in criminality.

The programme's core framework centres on volunteering and mentoring as a model for skills development. It aims to support young people who are struggling within traditional academic and alternative provision models. Young people will receive experience, training, or work placement rewards in return for their volunteering contribution.

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This model aims to create a "virtuous circle" by exposing young people to opportunities that broaden their aspirations, specifically targeting young people who typically lack the opportunities taken for granted by others. It seeks to offer alternative, meaningful pathways, where giving to society leads to society giving back.

The multi-sectoral and independent nature of the partnership provides a strong structural basis for sustained innovation and delivery. The programme has the buy in of senior school leaders and MAT CEOs, which signals its potential to sustainably address systemic issues over the next few years.

## CHALLENGES

### Governance fragmentation

Central government policies over the last 15 years have changed and fragmented the governance arrangements and influence that local authorities have within the education sector. Schools are now much more autonomous publicly funded bodies each with their own priorities and accountability structures, over which the local council's influence has waned. Within Nottingham there are 19 different secondary schools and Multi-Academy Trusts, as well as numerous primary schools, FE Colleges, and independent schools.

This fragmentation makes it challenging to agree upon and deliver a unified strategy for all children and schools in the city, especially since the local authority can no longer just issue direct commands as it once could. A more collaborative and partnership approach is needed, but this also takes time to develop and presents challenges in getting everybody to agree a single way forwards.

# EDUCATION AND LEARNING



## **Insufficient core funding**

The funding available to deliver core educational activities was insufficient, leading to continuous resource challenges and difficulty funding non-statutory but important programmes. Financial constraints necessitated making difficult prioritisation decisions, such as being unable to afford to fund the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools programme for all local authority schools because money had to be put aside to cover a deficit.

The council recognised that it could not deliver the strategic vision on its own. To meet these challenges focus shifted away from the Council delivering programmes, and towards working with partners who were willing to engage and find alternative delivery models.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

### **Independent governance and partnership accountability**

We worked to build a culture of peer accountability among secondary and primary school leaders. Establishing a Partnership Board for MAT CEOs and senior leaders, which was independently chaired by Nottingham Trent University, rather than a council politician.

Previous council-chaired boards had lacked traction, we learned that educational leaders respond better to being held to account by their peers. This independent, non-political structure helped secure buy-in, building a partnership ethos and ensuring strategic alignment among autonomous trusts.

The independent chairing and Partnership Board had a galvanising effect, enabling peer challenge, and agreement on a common strategy and set of expectations for city children, which was more effective than previous council-led improvement boards.



## **NEXT STEPS**

### **Sustaining and further developing the Cultural Offer**

Sustainability of the co-produced Cultural Offer relies on both financial security and ensuring the foundational child-friendly principles remain embedded in cultural providers' daily practice.

Financial sustainability has been supported through securing half a million pounds of funding from the Arts Council via ChalleNGe.

The sustainability of the child-friendly principles will be supported by embedding them into practice, and building pledges and charters with cultural providers, ensuring they construct their future programmes around a child's rights-based approach.

# HEALTHY

## EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

Children and young people from disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods suffer from poor mental health and access to services. Child Friendly Nottingham sought to target health inequalities in these communities amongst children and young people.

Our cross-sector partnership engaged with children and young people to identify solutions and opportunities to address the wider causes of poor mental and physical health. We enabled a diverse range of children and young people, reflective of Nottingham's population, to get involved in co-designing the solutions and services.

Children took a wider view of health with many commenting that there are not enough activities to support their general health and being active helps improve mental health. Young people linked healthy diets with healthy and active lives.

We were told during our Discovery Phase engagement that young people want to "Look after ourselves and our emotional health. Poor health leads on to anti-social behaviour and crime, poor eating leads to other problems, poor health will impact on jobs and family life".



### Badge Outcomes

- Mental health and wellbeing solutions (Children and young people are aware of what mental health and wellbeing support is available and are able to access local services. Local Health and Care Organisations and Children and Young people working close together to identify gaps in mental health and wellbeing support; collaboration and co-design enables children and young people in Nottingham to suggest solutions for these gaps)
- Support good mental health (Timely support for children and young people with identified mental health need and preventative action to maintain good mental wellbeing)
- Understand health needs and support healthier lives (Nottingham will have a better understanding of children and young people's health needs and preventative health improvement initiatives that support children and young people in Nottingham to live healthier lives)

### Delivery Partners

- Children And Young People With Lived Experience
- Healthy Visiting
- Local CYP Mental Health and CAMHS Services
- Local Smoking and Vaping Cessation Services
- Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)
- MH:2K Programme Partners
- NottAlone Partnership
- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board
- Nottingham City Council Healthy Schools Team
- Public Health and Health Scrutiny
- Schools, Colleges and Early Years Settings
- School Nursing Services
- Sports and Community Organisations
- Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations

# HEALTHY

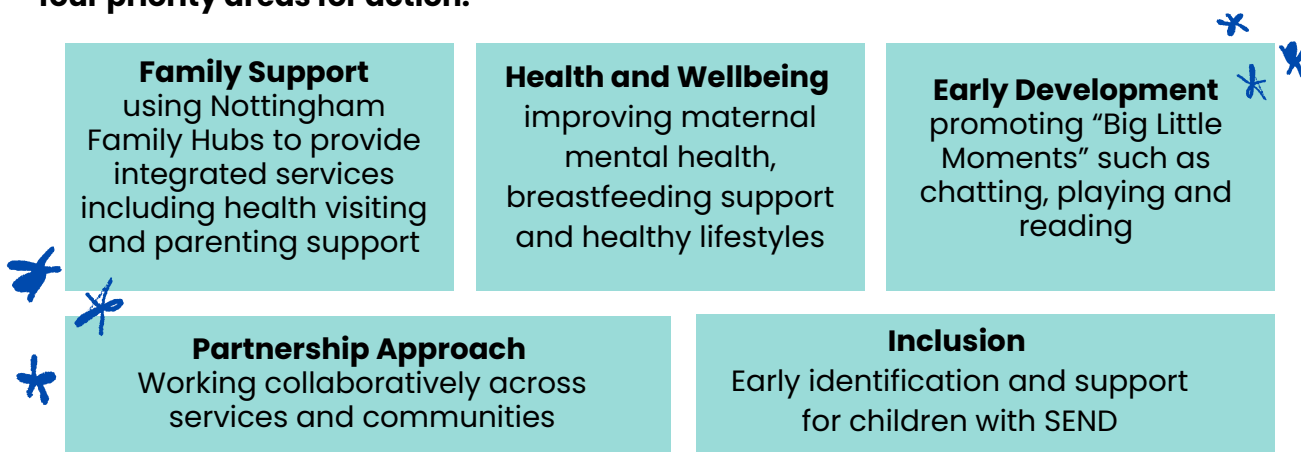


## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

### Strategy Development, System Alignment, and Service Change

MH:2K – Leaders Unlocked is a coproduction programme that empowers young people to shape mental health issues through a Citizen Researcher model. MH:2K has played a central role in informing local service transformation, with young people directly contributing to data collection, analysis and recommendations.

Findings from engagement and audits informed the development of a NottAlone Strategy for youth mental health engagement. Children and young people identified **four priority areas for action**.



Children and young people contributed their lived experience, barriers to access, and gaps in provision to the Health Equity Audit, helping to highlight inequity in local mental health services. Their insight has informed local strategies, service specifications, and the CYP Mental Health Local Transformation Plan, and their involvement is now embedded within local mental health systems.

### Nottingham City Best Start Strategy

We developed our first Nottingham City Best Start Strategy by engaging with people across Nottingham, including children. This engagement helped identify our **five priority areas**???. During half-term activities in libraries, we spoke to parents, caregivers, and children about their experiences and what matters to them. Children spoke about feeling safe and happy, playing and learning together, how much they like to play in the park, use their scooters to get to school, and how much their families mean to them.



The Best Start Strategy is specific in its use of language to identify whether babies, infants, or children are being discussed, recognising that each has different needs. The strategy ensures they are at the heart of each priority, with every priority beginning with the voice of the child to show what it practically means for babies, infants, and children in Nottingham. These statements are based on what children told us during the Best Start Strategy engagement and the Child Friendly Nottingham programme.



## **NottAlone: local co-designed mental health information**

Following the award-winning co-production of the NottAlone website in 2022, children and young people led a recent audit to improve its accessibility, clarity, and relevance. This work strengthened the site's information and age-specific content, expanded advice and self-help tools, and broadened coverage of topics such as anxiety, depression, self-harm, and eating disorders. As a result, NottAlone has gained greater recognition and seen increased website traffic.

## **NottAlone**

**It's OK not to be OK**



## **Suicide prevention listening exercise**

Children and young people, including those at risk of self-harm or suicide, took part in structured listening activity. Their insights informed targeted communications to reduce stigma, improve awareness, and encourage help-seeking, ensuring suicide-prevention messaging on the NottAlone website reflects their language and lived realities.

## **School Pupil Health and Wellbeing Survey**

Children and young people completed baseline and follow-up surveys across primary and secondary schools, providing valuable insight into lived experience, behaviours, and emerging health needs. The survey created a consistent, citywide picture of physical and emotional wellbeing and highlighted differences between age groups, settings, and communities. Findings informed local health reports, a practical toolkit to support interpretation, and tailored guidance to help schools identify priorities and develop action plans, enabling more confident and consistent responses to need.

## **Healthy Schools Charter and Achieve Well**

Children and young people's experiences and feedback directly shaped the Healthy Schools Charter and the expansion of the Achieve Well programme. Their insight informed priorities and criteria, ensuring initiatives focused on what matters most to pupils, including Eating and Moving for Good Health, and supported schools to embed health and wellbeing as a strategic, whole-school commitment.

## **Family-Based Healthy Lifestyle Support**

A co-designed, family-based healthy lifestyle service was implemented across community and school settings, ensuring provision is accessible and responsive to family needs. Engagement with children and families helped shape how and where support is delivered, enabling services to address barriers to participation and support sustainable behaviour change. This approach strengthened whole-family engagement and reinforced the importance of supportive environments in promoting healthier lifestyles.



## Vaping attitudes, prevention and support

Focus groups with children and young people explored attitudes, influences, and misconceptions around vaping, giving a clearer picture of why it appeals and where prevention messages were not landing. Their insight shaped new prevention messaging, with children and young people helping design age-appropriate, credible communications now used in schools and wider public campaigns.

School smoking-prevention offers were strengthened to include explicit discussion of vaping, and a pilot adolescent vaping-cessation service was launched to provide targeted support. Together, these developments have improved early intervention and ensured consistent, citywide smoke-free messaging for children, young people, and families.

## CHALLENGES

### Engaging on sensitive Mental Health areas

Stigma around mental health, self-harm, and suicide still makes open discussion difficult. Engagement highlighted how language, messaging, and trusted relationships influence whether young people seek help. Youth-led communications have strengthened this, but it's still challenging.

### Service access and capacity

Complex mental health pathways remain hard for young people to navigate, highlighting the need for clearer systems and better signposting. Persistent inequalities in access reinforce the importance of equity-focused design. Capacity and resource pressures also slow progress, requiring careful prioritisation and delivery.

### Family and peer influences

Understanding how family and peers shape behaviour highlights the need for whole-family approaches and peer-led messaging in promoting healthy lifestyles and smoking prevention. Growing awareness of vaping reinforces the importance of clear, consistent education that reflects lived experience, and insight into peer behaviour and marketing has strengthened the focus on youth-informed, credible communications.

### Ensuring lived experience meaningfully influences service design

Engaging families facing multiple barriers has shown the value of flexible, accessible, and trusted approaches tailored to different needs. Working with partners ensured alignment with delivery activity and strategy timelines, while consistent engagement with diverse families and children across Nottingham supported clear communication and shared messaging.



## LESSONS LEARNED

### Whole-family approaches

Sustained behaviour change relies on engaging the whole family, as home environments strongly shape children's outcomes. Parents' and children's voices are central to co-designing effective 0–19 services, supported by joined-up, system-wide collaboration.

### Data-driven action

Using clear, accessible data helps schools identify priorities and act with confidence. Tools such as the school health toolkit, alongside ongoing support and partnership working, help embed health and wellbeing alongside other pressures.

### The power of lived experience

Youth voice is essential for understanding the wider determinants of health and ensuring messages feel credible. Pupil voice and youth-led engagement shape more accurate understanding of needs and more effective responses.

### Strategic alignment

Sustainable policy change depends on aligning work with organisational priorities and commissioning cycles. Early engagement builds shared understanding and ensures learning continues to inform future action, even when implementation is phased.

### Implementing transformation plans

Progressing the NottAlone Strategy, the refreshed CYP Mental Health Local Transformation Plan (endorsed Nov 2025), and the Health Equity Subgroup will strengthen timely support and early intervention.



### Embedding participation in health

Shifting youth engagement from project-based activity to standard practice will embed children and young people's participation across Best Start and school health initiatives.

### Scaling and evaluating pilots

Evaluating the vaping-cessation pilot will inform future commissioning, while expanding Healthy Start Champion training will strengthen support across all family-facing settings.

### Ongoing monitoring

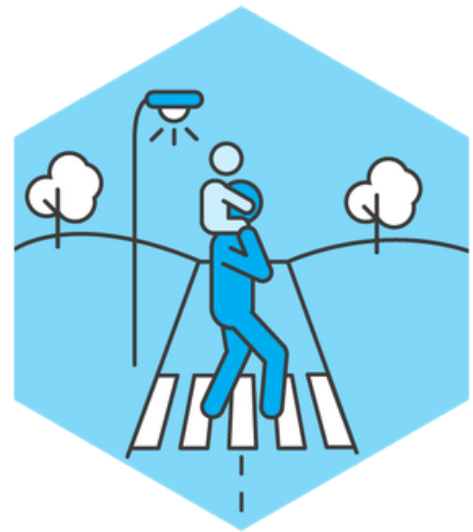
Continuing regular children's health and wellbeing surveys to track trends and reduce health inequalities through targeted, place-based activity.

# SAFE AND SECURE

## EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

Children and young people in disadvantaged Nottingham neighbourhoods, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic children, looked-after children, and care leavers, told us they often do not feel safe in their communities. During the Discovery Phase, children said they do not feel safe in parks, when crossing roads on the way to school, and older young people raised concerns about their relationships with the police. Crime and community safety are real worries in the most disadvantaged areas, where levels of crime are higher and more children live. As one young person said, "If we had a safe and secure city... more people would move around the city and visit the city."

Children and young people should feel safe, respected, and free from discrimination or harm in their neighbourhoods, the city centre, and when travelling. Many young people do not have positive relationships with public bodies, including the council and uniformed services, and there is a lack of trust. This Badge aimed to address that gap in trust, particularly between young people and these services.



### Badge Outcomes

- Children and young people feel confident and safe in their communities, including parks, neighbourhoods, and their journeys to and from school.
- Nottingham city centre is welcoming, engaging, and safe for families, young children, and teenagers.
- Children and young people feel safe online, understand risks, know how to manage them, and can recognise how new technologies may affect their safety.



### Delivery Partners

- Children and Young People
- Alternative Education Providers
- Businesses in Nottingham City Centre
- Community and Voluntary Organisations
- Ending Youth Violence Network
- It's In Nottingham Foundation
- Notts Police
- Nottingham College
- Nottingham Trent University (NTU)
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- Transport Police
- University of Nottingham (UoN)
- Violence Reduction Partnership

# SAFE AND SECURE



## IMPACT AND HIGHLIGHTS

### **Training of Neighbourhood Safety Officers**

We provided Child Rights in Practice Training to 100% of Neighbourhood Safety Officers. This supported their ongoing engagement with children and young people and had a positive impact on local community and neighbourhood relations. We are confident that this will also produce long term benefits in the management and prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Retention of Purple Flag status**

Nottingham retained our prestigious Purple Flag status, an international accreditation that recognises our city centre as a safe, vibrant, and diverse place. The award recognised strong partnerships on a number of safety initiatives between It's In Nottingham, the Police, Council, Violence Reduction Partnership, the two universities, and a range of stakeholders and local businesses. This provides assurance that the city centre in Nottingham is safe for all people, including children and young people.

### **Partnership engagement and consistency of leadership**

Circumstance also led to mixed levels of partner engagement in the early development. This Badge was initially jointly led by a senior police officer and a senior Council Community Safety officer, both of whom were subsequently moved away due to focus on serious crimes in the city. The continued turnover of Badge Leads throughout the delivery period caused challenges in partner engagement and delivery due to inconsistent leadership and focus.

## NEXT STEPS

### **The It's In Nottingham Foundation**

Delivery of their 5 year strategic plan and the vision for a child friendly city centre will ensure that Safe and Secure remains a top priority for the city over the next few years.

### **Local planning and development**

Work to embed children's voices within the statutory Local Plan, as well as developing a Design Quality Framework for the city, ensures that CYP views will be to the fore on all planning developments for improving safety and belonging in the city.

### **Transport**

The safety of children and young people on Nottingham's public transport continues to be a priority area for the future. Children and young people will continue to be involved in initiatives to make public transport both safe and welcoming.

### **C&YP research**

We will continue to implement research led by children and young people. We will work with the two local universities and the City Data Hub to ensure that it is published and shared widely, so that it can be acted upon.

### **Ask 4 Allie**

There will be further consideration of the Ask 4 Allie initiative, assessing the resources required to make it practically deliverable and inclusive of children's concerns.

# SUSTAINABILITY

## OUR PLAN: 2026-2029

### OUR VISION

Building a sustainable child friendly city founded upon the youth, diversity, and talent of our residents. Nottingham is England's youngest city, with 39% of the population under 24 years old and 20% under 15 years old. As we move beyond our initial action plan toward UNICEF Recognition in March 2026, we are committed to a future where every child and young person is heard, healthy, feels safe, belongs, is valued, and is prepared for the future.

### OUR APPROACH

A Culture of Children's Rights and delivery through a Child Rights-Based Approach (CRBA). We are creating a culture that actively integrates the voices of children into planning, service delivery, and commercial activity. Over the next three years, our Sustainability Plan will ensure that the 7 principles of CRBA frame our decision-making, interactions, and service design across the city.

## PARTNERSHIPS & GOVERNANCE

This plan represents a city-wide commitment. It is led by Nottingham City Council in collaboration with key cross-sector partners, including:

- The **"It's in Nottingham" Foundation** (Business & Commerce)
- **ChalleNGe / Nottingham Trent University / University of Nottingham** (Culture & Education)
- **Nottinghamshire Police & Violence Reduction Partnership** (Safety)
- **Voluntary and Community Sector** (Community)

Strategic direction and decision making will be provided by the CFN Strategy/Oversight Group, with progress monitored through the council's corporate frameworks. An annual report will be submitted to UNICEF UK, ensuring accountability and continued momentum.

## OUR COLLECTIVE GOAL

To create a culture which integrates the voices of children in planning, service delivery, sporting, cultural and commercial activity.

# SUSTAINABILITY

## OUR PRIORITY AREAS

- 1 Child Rights Education**

We aim to build a workforce that consistently understands and applies children's rights. This means creating a shared culture where children's rights guide everyday decisions, service design, and interactions across the city.
- 2 A Child Friendly Creative City**

We want every child and young person to have meaningful access to arts and culture. By strengthening creative opportunities across Nottingham, we aim to nurture confidence, imagination, and a sense of belonging in the city's cultural life.
- 3 Children's Voice**

Children and young people should influence the decisions that shape their lives. This priority ensures their views are routinely gathered, respected, and embedded into planning, policy, and democratic processes across Nottingham.
- 4 Thinking Differently and Collective Impact**

Creating a child friendly city requires long-term collaboration. This priority brings together public, private, and voluntary sectors around shared goals, building a coordinated approach that delivers lasting social impact for children.
- 5 Equal and Included**

We want Nottingham to be a place where every child feels safe, valued, healthy, and able to thrive. This priority focuses on strengthening inclusion so that all children, including those with SEND, experience belonging and have a genuine role in shaping the support they receive.



# SUSTAINABILITY

## KEY ACTIONS

### 1 Child Rights Education

- Roll out mandatory **Child Rights e-learning** for City Council staff and partners.
- **Implement a "Train the Trainer" model** to create experts within directorates.
- **Embed the 7 principles of the Child Rights-Based Approach** into service delivery, design, and evaluation.

### 2 Child Friendly Creative City

- **Culture Rucksack:** Expanding access to arts for schools, including Alternative Provision and home-schooled children.
- **Loud and Clear:** Creating a youth-led cultural offer.
- **Nature Connections:** Integrating the arts with Forest School provision and nature-based provision.

### 3 Children's Voice

- **Perception Surveys:** Conducting an annual survey (building on a baseline of 1,100+ responses) to track children's views and perceptions.
- **Child Friendly Planning:** Giving children a direct voice in urban design and placemaking.
- **Democracy:** Establishing a new Local Young People's Assembly and a SEND Assembly.

### 4 Thinking Differently and Collective Impact

- **Business Alliance:** The "It's in Nottingham" Foundation acts as the backbone organisation, embedding child rights into the business community (2026–2031 business plan).
- **Common Goals:** Aligning behind goals like "Safe and Secure" and "Physical Health" to deliver Collective Impact Model.
- **Consultation:** Regular "World Children's Day" events where businesses listen to youth views on transport, safety, and activities

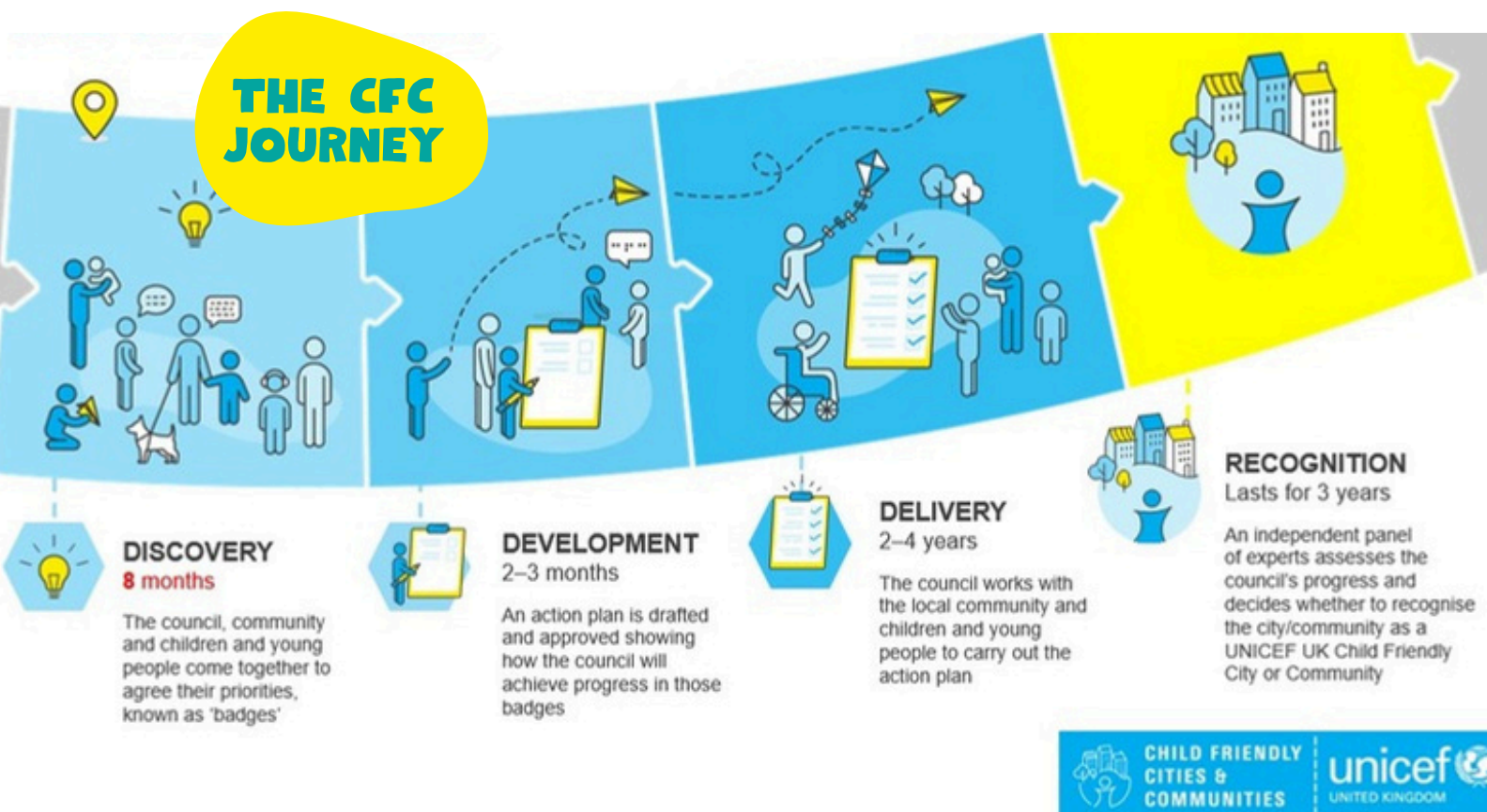


### 5 Equal and Included

- **Inclusion Charter:** Developing a city-wide definition of inclusion and an Inclusion Charter.
- **Include Service:** Launching a new service to improve primary-to-secondary transitions, reduce permanent exclusions and increase re-integration into mainstream schools.
- **SEND Participation:** Ensuring children with SEND actively shape the education, health, and social care services they use through co-production and representation.

# CONCLUSION

This may be the conclusion of this book, but it is far from the conclusion of Nottingham's journey to become a child friendly city. We have reached the point where Nottingham City Council and the city's many partners must now demonstrate that this ambition is real. We have followed the UNICEF UK pathway to reach this stage, and the challenge ahead is to show through action that we have listened to the more than 15,000 children and young people who have taken part so far.



Thanks must go to the schools, youth clubs, the college, alternative education providers, home educators, universities, and the many agencies and volunteers who have given their time. The work is not over. The next phase requires collective leadership to make child friendliness part of everyday practice. It is now your turn to carry the torch.

Children and young people have reminded us throughout this journey that they are the future of Nottingham. It is now our responsibility to show, through our decisions and actions, that their voices genuinely shape the city they will inherit.

The Child Friendly Nottingham website contains tools, resources, and survey findings that can support this work. Please continue to use them and encourage children and young people to take part in future surveys. The past three years have seen the largest engagement of children and young people in Nottingham's history, and this will continue as the city moves forward on its child friendly journey.

Be kind, be child friendly, respect and promote children's rights.

Child Friendly  
Nottingham Team x



# NEXT ENSURING A CHILD FRIENDLY NOTTINGHAM FOR THE FUTURE

Our journey has brought us to a point where we understand far more about what children in the city need. We have listened to their priorities, learned from the organisations that support them, and discovered how to bring these voices together so that children are included in the decisions that affect their lives.

The next step is making sure this work continues long after the project ends. To support long-term change, we are transforming our website into a permanent home for the knowledge, tools, and insights gathered throughout this process. This will include a resource library designed to help organisations understand what it means to be child friendly and how they can embed those principles into their everyday practice. Alongside this, we are introducing a Child Friendly Assessment Checklist. This self-assessment allows organisations and businesses to reflect on their suitability as child friendly partners. Those who meet the criteria will receive a Child Friendly badge that can be used across their promotional materials to demonstrate their commitment to children and young people in Nottingham.

This is how we ensure the legacy of the project continues. The tools are in place, the learning is captured, and the pathway is clear for new organisations to join the movement and keep the momentum alive.

## Now it is your turn.

Visit [childfriendlynottingham.org.uk](http://childfriendlynottingham.org.uk) to explore the resources and find out whether your organisation is ready to become part of the child friendly Nottingham movement.



# OUR PARTNERS





# THANK YOU

Nottingham's Children and Young People

Small Steps Big Changes / Nottingham City Care Partnership

CFN Sponsors – Cheryl Barnard, Colin Parr and Catherine Underwood  
CFN Badge Leads and the CFN Strategic Oversight Group  
CFN Champions From Across the City  
CFN City Wide Partners

Nottingham's Schools, Nottingham College and Alternative Provisions  
Voluntary and Community Organisations  
Nottingham's Universities – Nottingham Trent University and University of Nottingham  
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