

CHILD FRIENDLY DEVON TASK GROUP

CHILDREN'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
JUNE 2022

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The Task Group's aim was to explore and understand the benefits of creating a vision of 'Child Friendly Devon', including:

- To learn how other local authorities have created Child Friendly local areas and the benefits that this approach has brought.
- To listen to local leaders, partners and children and young people and ensure that their voices are reflected in the vision of 'Child Friendly Devon'.
- To set out the initial steps needed for Devon to turn the vision into a reality.

WHAT DOES CHILD FRIENDLY MEAN?

A 'child friendly' county means putting children and young people at the centre of all what Devon does. This is about ensuring that the voice of the child is part of everything the Council and the County does, including anything new to ensure it is driven by children and young people.

As a County Council, this means that in every decision made, across all services, considers the impact on children, young people and families. As a County, this means we need to listen to children and young people's voice, needs and priorities and ensure they are an integral part of decision making, investments, policies, programmes, actions and services.

WHAT IS CHILD FRIENDLY DEVON?

As part of the Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the Council has prioritised making Devon the best place to grow up: "We want every child in Devon to have the best outcomes, to live an independent and healthy life and to achieve their full potential".

The vision is an organisational wide commitment across the Council to ensure that the voice of children and young people is at the heart of decision making and how the Council operates.



WHY DO WE NEED A CHILD FRIENDLY DEVON?

Child Friendly Devon is part of our wider system changes in Devon to ensure the County builds a sustainable future for children and young people, where they are at the centre of all the County does.

- 14.4% (c. 20,000) of children living in Devon aged under 16 are living in relative low-income families.
- 1 in 8 children in Devon are living in poverty with the highest area being the Forches area, Barnstaple (33.3%).
- Devon's Primary and Secondary attainment gaps are above the national average.
- Devon is one of the least socially mobile counties in the United Kingdom, being ranked 2nd worst out of 35 areas for upward occupational mobility.

Child Friendly Devon is a part of the Council's response to our Ofsted rating and our improvement journey. It is the Council's ambition to be an 'Outstanding' local authority. The Child Friendly Devon vision forms a wider transformation programme of work to transform Devon, as a county, as the best place to grow up where children and young people are at the centre of the County and what the Council does.

EVIDENCE GATHERING

The Task Group met with witnesses on Wednesday 20th April, Tuesday 10th May and Wednesday 11th May 2022 via Teams.

The task group heard from 20 witnesses in these sessions from a range of local authority officers, youth sector organisations, communities organisations, third sector organisations and Members of Youth Parliament (MYP). The Task Group also received written contributions from 4 other local authorities.



BENEFITS OF CHILD FRIENDLY AREAS

The task group received evidence from local authorities who have set up similar child friendly visions and those who have worked with UNICEF UK.

Some of these benefits to the local areas have been:

- **Leeds:** A reduction in the number of looked after children, a reduction in childhood obesity in Leeds, an increase in foster carers, over 900 businesses signed up to their ambassador network and thousands of pounds worth of donations, gifts, devices and event tickets via the enrichment programme.
- **Liverpool:** Additional investments and funding, improved youth engagement, a wide range of training and events and improved collaboration and information sharing with local universities.
- **Wokingham:** Allowing children and young people and partners to be equal partners in developing their community.
- **UNICEF UK:** The creation of a common framework across the local services and partners, mainstreaming children's rights and improved collaboration.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Members of the Task Group endorse:
 - Child Friendly Devon as the Council's aim to make Devon the best place to grow up and want to see the vision embedded across the County.
 - Our partnership working with Leeds City Council but would like to see the vision adopt elements and embed learning from the UNICEF programme to enhance Child Friendly Devon.
2. The principles that the task group has developed to be adopted as the core Principles of Child Friendly Devon and all subsequent strategies developed with reference to them.
3. All Members of the Council are to see themselves as Child Friendly Devon Member Ambassadors and use their role to champion children and young people and to identify possible Ambassadors in their divisions.
4. The Committee asks the Cabinet Member to have a clear strategy to communicate the intentions and approach of Child Friendly Devon including:
 - A Child Friendly Devon Declaration as part of the vision's launch,
 - A short, easily understandable series of infographics to help communicate the vision and its aims to partners and children and young people.
 - A dedicated website for Child Friendly Devon and children and young people including a rolling list of the signatories of the declaration and ambassadors.
5. To build on the work of the task group, the Committee will actively support the Cabinet Member's roundtable discussions with partners and stakeholders to ensure their views are part of the vision.

BENEFITS OF CHILD FRIENDLY DEVON

Some of the expected benefits of Child Friendly Devon include:

- By helping families and providing them with the right support at the right time, Devon will reduce the number of children ending up in care.
- Reduction in long term demand on the NHS in Devon.
- Schools being able to focus on learning rather than having to plug gaps in support services.
- Child friendly local businesses will create opportunities and independence for young people
- Increase our number of foster carers and provide more children with a loving home and new opportunities.
- Devon will attract the best professionals in teaching, social care, health care and the wider children's workforce to work in Devon.
- Devon will grow our communities and create a sustainable economy where families work, live and spend locally.

PRINCIPLES OF CHILD FRIENDLY DEVON

- At the heart of the vision, we must guarantee that everything we do improves the lives of children, young people and families in Devon.
- Children and young people should be encouraged to go as far as their talents can take them.

Improved outcomes for children and young people



- Child Friendly Devon needs all of us to work together in order to succeed and embed the vision across both the public sector, private sector and third sector.

Partnership working



- The voice, views and lived experience of children, young people and families are embedded in all we do and central to decision making.
- Children and young people's concerns are not only listened to but acted on.

Listening to children and young people



- Investment in a Child Friendly Devon 'team' and resources to lead the vision on a day-to-day basis, engage with children and young people and develop the vision's brand.

Resources



- All elected Members, as community leaders, to engage with Child Friendly Devon and champion children and young people in their local areas.
- All elected Members must consider children and young people in the decision making process.

Role of elected Members



- A network of Child Friendly Devon Ambassadors from across the public and private sectors to drive forward the vision, promote the vision and provide opportunities for children and young people.

Ambassador Network



The Committee asked for initial progress of the vision, progress against the strategic plan and progress against the recommendations be reported back to Committee by June 2023 via a Child Friendly Devon Annual Report.

The Task Group's Members were Councillors Rob Hannaford (Chair), Philip Sanders (Vice Chair), Su Aves, Phil Bullivant, Christine Channon, George Gribble, Jonathan Hawkins, Frank Letch, Lois Samuel, Margaret Squires and Jeffrey Wilton-Love.