

Children's Scrutiny Committee

Child Friendly Devon Task Group

June 2022

1. Recommendations

1.1 The Child Friendly Devon Task Group ask the Children's Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet to endorse and take action on the report and recommendations below; with a report on the initial progress of the vision, progress against the strategic plan and progress against the recommendations no later than in twelve months via a Child Friendly Devon Annual Report (by June 2023).

Recommendation	Agency	Timeframe
<p>1. Members of the Task Group endorse:</p> <p>a) 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.</p> <p>b) 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.</p>	Cabinet Member	From now
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved outcomes for children and young people • Partnership working • Listening to children and young people • Resources • Role of elected Members • Ambassador Network 	Cabinet Member	Within 6 months
<p>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.</p>	All Members	From now
<p>4. The Committee asks the Cabinet Member to have a clear strategy to communicate the intentions and approach of Child Friendly Devon including:</p> <p>a) A Child Friendly Devon Declaration as part of the vision's launch</p> <p>b) A short, easily understandable series of infographics to help communicate the vision and it's aims to partners and children and young people.</p> <p>c) A dedicated website for Child Friendly Devon and children and young people including a rolling list of the signatories of the declaration and ambassadors.</p>	Cabinet Member	Within 3 months
<p>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.</p>	Children's Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Member	From now

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



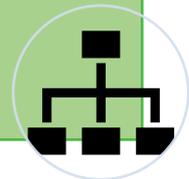
- The voice, views and lived experience of children, young people and families are embedded in all we do and central to decision making.
- Children and young people's concerns are not only listened to but acted on.

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



2. Introduction

- 2.1 Devon County Council's Children's Services were judged by Ofsted to be 'Inadequate' in January 2020. Since then, through the Improvement Partnership, the Improvement Plan has led on improving the areas identified by Ofsted and subsequent monitoring and focused visits have recognised the improvements that have been made. As the Council's improvement journey progresses, there is a need to move away from fixing problems in isolation to addressing the wider system in Devon and looking to drive improvements that result in improving outcomes and aspirations for children and young people.
- 2.2 Child Friendly Devon forms part of the Council's ambition to be an Outstanding rated authority for its Children's Services, but will also ensure the wider system around children and young people will also be outstanding.
- 2.3 As part of the improvement journey, Devon entered a Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP) with Leeds City Council's Leeds Relational Practice Centre. Leeds have experience in improving from an Inadequate to Outstanding rating, based around a vision of putting children at the centre of everything the Council does. Their vision, "Child Friendly Leeds" is now in its 10th year.
- 2.4 Devon is taking the lessons learnt by Leeds on best practice and system wide solutions to form part of a strategic aim to make Devon the best county to grow up in, creating a '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" (Devon County Council, 2022). Child Friendly Devon, as a vision, is Devon's response to transform how Councils and services in Devon consider children and young people.
- 2.5 Members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee have had an interest in the Child Friendly Devon vision since it's first mention by the Cabinet Member and Chief Officer in the Autumn of 2022. As such, Officers from Leeds City Council were invited to a Children's Standing Overview Group meeting in December 2021. In that meeting, Councillors heard about the Child Friendly Leeds vision and were enthusiastic about the system wide transformation and wanted to ensure that learning was embedded here in Devon. The Committee felt they could add value to Child Friendly Devon via a short task group as an initial piece of work for the vision to set out the first steps of the vision and speak to some of our partners to help guide the vision. It was originally envisaged as a spotlight review when suggested by Members in a Committee meeting in January 2022, but was broadened to a short task group in order to speak to more witnesses and collect more evidence for the task group's eventual recommendations.
- 2.6 The task group was initiated to ensure the Children's Scrutiny Committee, in both its policy development role and its role in scrutinising the delivery of Council's strategic plan, had an opportunity to explore the vision. The task group was initiated to explore how Devon can initially turn the vision into a reality, ensure Members understand the benefits of Child Friendly Devon and recommend the first steps the Council and Members need to take.

3. Scope of the Review

- 3.1 The Task Group met with witnesses on Wednesday 20th April, Tuesday 10th May and Wednesday 11th May 2022 with the aims:
- 3.2 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 or Family 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.
- 3.3 The task group heard from 20 witnesses in these sessions and received written contributions from 4 other local authorities (details of these can be seen in section 14).

4. Child Friendly Devon

- 4.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 makes specific reference to making a Child Friendly Devon, and aims to:
- Ensure children and young people have the best possible start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing.
 - Promote high standards in schools and help to address any areas of weakness.
 - Continue to close the attainment gap for vulnerable groups and ensure children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
 - Make sure there are more apprenticeships and better access to employment and learning, including digital skills.
 - Improve children and young people's mental health.
 - Understand and support children and young people where their mental health is suffering (Devon County Council, 2022).
- 4.2 As part of the vision, The Council's aim is to make sure that, even before birth, children and families have the right support in their own community and that every child has access to a good education and is encouraged to aim high. Families need to know that when they need help and support, this is available from a range of options in the community and that they find it easy to access the right people at the right time.
- 4.3 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. The vision is ambitious and different direction for the Council but it shows Devon's commitment to children and families.



- 4.4 The Child Friendly Devon vision 'brand' will have a soft launch over the summer of 2022 to get feedback from families, before a formal launch of the vision in the second half of 2022. This is to ensure the branding and intention of the vision is out there to stimulate conversations and action. It will also give the intention of the vision to children and young people and give them a visual brand to identify with for the Council's ambitions.

What does 'child friendly' mean?

As we heard from the range of witnesses, a 'child friendly' city, county or local area 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.

5. Why do we need a Child Friendly Devon?

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 In Devon, there are:
- 14.4% (c. 20,000) of children living in Devon aged under 16 are living in relative low-income families.
 - 1 in 8 children are living in poverty – ranging from 1.1% in Teignmouth Road, Dawlish to 33.3% in the Forches area, Barnstaple (Devon County Council, 2022).
- 5.3 The Child Welfare Inequalities Project found that in England children in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods are over 10 times more likely to be the subject of a child protection plan and or be in foster or residential care compared to the 10% least deprived neighbourhoods (Bywaters, 2020).
- 5.4 Children who are from disadvantaged backgrounds are limited at school and at work. Overall, poorer pupils in the South West are the furthest behind at the end of primary and secondary schools. For example, Devon's primary attainment gap is 10.8 months, this is above the national average of 9.3 months, and 20.8 months for secondary schools, compared to the average of 18.1 months (Sim & Major, 2022).
- 5.5 In addition, Devon is one of the least socially mobile counties in the United Kingdom, with Devon ranking 2nd worst out of 35 areas for upward occupational mobility (Sim & Major, 2022). Children living in more deprived communities, boys, and pupils with English as a second language are still at risk of achieving poorer educational outcomes. Research evidence shows that education and health are closely linked.

While measures of health are generally good for Devon's young people, hospital admissions for children and young people are relatively higher for mental health conditions, self-harm and injuries, compared to other areas. This gap is even wider for vulnerable groups such as disadvantaged and looked after children. Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically (Devon County Council, 2022).

- 5.6 The data above shows that the Council needs to think outside of 'Children's Services' and to the entire economic and social system in Devon to ensure that children's needs are met and outcomes for children are as best as they can be. The associated impacts of poverty on life chances, healthcare, education, lifespan on children and young people is a driver of Child Friendly Devon, and part of the aim is to use social and economic regeneration to support children and focus in on their needs.
- 5.7 Furthermore, Devon is still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For some children and young people, the pandemic has been a significant percentage of their lives. For some, it's all they will have known in their living memory. Because of the pandemic, the network of child and young person-centred community assets and opportunities that many of us would have taken for granted in our youth have fallen away.
- 5.8 It is our responsibility to ensure that the Council responds to this, ensuring that Devon bounces back and seizes opportunities to level up. The Council needs to focus on our children and young people as our future workforce, communities, and part of our future economic growth to transform Devon into a prosperous, child friendly place to live and grow up.
- 5.9 Child Friendly Devon is a part of our response to our Ofsted rating and our improvement journey. It is the Council's ambition over time of being a 'Good' and then an 'Outstanding' local authority for children's services and the improvement journey is ongoing within Children's Services to do this. 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 what all the Council does.

6. What are the benefits of Child Friendly Devon?

- 6.1 The aim of putting children and young people at the centre of what the Council does will have wide ranging benefits across many different sectors. Some of these known benefits the task group has learnt from other 'child friendly' areas while some are expected. Child Friendly Devon will include a shared vision that all partners work towards to achieve and a common language on the aims and goals. Child friendly areas have the voice of children and young people embedded in their decision making and this ensures that children and young people are equal partners when making decisions and ensuring services meet their needs more effectively. In addition, the partnership working across local areas improves relationships between the private and public sector and different parts of the public sector.
- 6.2 Specifically, 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. Children's Services aim to reduce the number of children in care by 10% over the next 2 years.

- By ensuring children's health is a priority, there will be a reduction in long term demand on the NHS in Devon.
- Our child friendly communities and support for children and families, will mean schools will focus on learning rather than having to plug gaps in support services. As a result, Devon's already very good levels of school's attendance will increase.
- Child friendly local businesses will create opportunities and independence for young people and reduce the need for young people to feel they have to move out of Devon to have opportunities.
- Devon will increase our number of foster carers and provide more children with a loving home and new opportunities by ensuring fostering and adoption friendly policies.
- Child Friendly 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.

6.3 Child Friendly Devon also fits with Devon's restorative practice approach, known as Restorative Devon. A key part of restorative practice is high support and high challenge and working with children and families in a strengths-based way to encourage parental responsibility.

7. Learning from other Local Authorities and areas

7.1 As part of the research on exploring the benefits of Child Friendly Devon, the task group sought the views of other Local Authorities who have already created similar programmes and initiatives.

7.2 The task group sought the views and experiences of Leeds City Council because of their Child Friendly Leeds initiative and their work already ongoing with Devon. In addition, the task group sought the views of UNICEF who run a global Child Friendly City/Community Initiative and work with a number of local authorities across the UK to hear about the benefits the cities they work with have gained through their work.

Leeds City Council – Child Friendly Leeds

7.3 As part our Ofsted Improvement Journey, Leeds City Council have been working alongside us as our Partners in Practice. One of Leeds' great achievements over the past 10 years has been to inspire the whole city as part of their 'Child Friendly Leeds' programme There are clear differences between Leeds and Devon, in terms of geography and population, but the principles and the ambition is the same.

7.4 Like Devon, Leeds City Council has also been on an improvement journey, receiving an "Inadequate" rating from Ofsted in 2011. In addition, like Devon, Leeds' vision was for Leeds to be a child friendly city and a great city to grow up in where children and young people get a lot of care and support. Leeds formed a partnership approach across the whole council, local businesses, health, third sector and the retail sector. In addition, schools are seen as the heart of the communities and the Council



actively engage with schools and school children as much as possible. Leeds estimate there are over 75,000 people in Leeds who are part of the wider children's workforce including teachers, social workers, health visitors, doctors and bus drivers and have worked to embed Child Friendly Leeds across all sectors.

7.5 Child Friendly Leeds has led to some clear benefits and outcomes for children and young people, including:

- A reduction in the number of looked after children. The number of looked after children peaked in 2012 at 1475 and a strategy focusing on prevention, early intervention, improved practice and focusing on keeping children with their birth families led to a reduction to 1278 in May 2017 and external residential placements halving from 110 to 50. There has been a slow increase since December 2018 in the numerical figure, the rate per 10,000 remained stable at 78.5. The COVID-19 Pandemic and unaccompanied child refugees have been a factor in this increase. However, there are 158 less children in care now than in 2012 (Child Friendly Leeds, 2022).
- A reduction in childhood obesity. Through partnership working with health, the level of obesity in reception children fell from 9.4% to 8.8% which is now well below similar cities (9.8%) and the average for England (9.4%). The reduction was seen in both deprived and affluent areas and equates to over 600 fewer children being classed as obese (Child Friendly Leeds, 2022).
- Fostering recruitment and retention. Through their ambassador network, Child Friendly Leeds have been successful in attracting partners to offer opportunities and experiences to children in foster care, kinship care and subject to special guardian orders. Overall, since 2012, over 100 fosterers have started to foster to Leeds, supported by Child Friendly Leeds and providing stability to placements (Child Friendly Leeds, 2022).
- The Child Friendly Leeds Ambassador Network. This started in 2012 and currently has over 900 businesses, third sector organisations, schools and individuals who have signed up to be ambassadors. All of the ambassadors make contributions to the city and use the resources of their local area for help and support. Examples of this support includes apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and gifting trees for children in poverty. Ambassadors include Leeds United, Leeds Rhinos, Universities, Shopping centres/retail and construction companies. Other ambassadors also include local MPs and high-profile local celebrities or sports personalities such as Hillary Benn MP and Nicola Adams.
- Child Friendly Leeds' Enrichment programme. This programme gives children and young people opportunities by working with the Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors. The 2019 programme received £72,366 in donations from partners in both projects and tickets. 25 projects were offered, and 1012 tickets given out to 17 events. 621 gifts were given to children at a value of £6000. In 2020/21, 4360 children and young people benefitted from donations despite the pandemic meaning that most events were cancelled. 2550 Christmas gifts were given to children at a value of £26,000. Excluding Christmas, other gifts include 1565 easter eggs, 3 pushchairs, 78 baby clothes, 113 books, 50 craft boxes and 1 laptop at a total value of £29,975.

7.6 Child Friendly Devon has been directly inspired by Child Friendly Leeds and the benefits that have been realised. Devon was particularly inspired by Leeds' transformation of the city to improve the lives of children and young people. Some of these other benefits include improving social capital and engaging and optimising the corporate social responsibilities of local businesses and organisations.

UNICEF UK – Child Friendly Cities and Communities

7.7 UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities and Communities initiative is a global initiative to embed children's rights in local authorities and local areas. Any local authority or settlement is eligible to apply join the programme and UNICEF work directing with the local authority and its partners to look at how services are delivered and how children grow up and experience life in the local area. The programme's aim is to create cities and communities where all children have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.



- 7.8 Globally, the programme is part of an initiative in nearly 50 countries, reaching 30 million children. In the UK, the programme is implemented differently across different areas by working with local council's particular needs and local factors. There are 9 Candidates cities in the UK with Manchester joining in 2022.
- 7.9 According to UNICEF, a child friendly city/community is a place where the local council and their partners have committed to advance children's rights and have worked with UNICEF to put them into practice. In addition, it is a place that has demonstrated how more children feel safe, heard and cared for and are able to flourish as a result.
- 7.10 Some of the benefits that local authorities have seen as part of the UNICEF programme have been:
- The creation of a common framework and language across services and partners. UNICEF state through their research and their programme, they have done the thinking already on embedding children's rights in practice.
 - Improved collaborative working to highlight existing good practice and identify gaps in an objective way
 - Tailored expert training, capacity building, technical assistance and mentoring. This element is what local authorities have told UNICEF they value the most.
 - To be part of a global, high-profile network of communities committed to children's rights including learning exchanges with others from around the world.
 - To be able to mainstream children's rights across the local area.
- 7.11 In addition to hearing from the Programme Director, the task group also asked some of the cities that UNICEF work with for their views and received written evidence from a number of them (Bradford, Liverpool, London Borough of Redbridge and Wokingham). The written evidence from these local authorities has been added into the report in appropriate places.
- 7.12 While some had just joined the programme and had yet to realise the benefits, Liverpool City Council had seen some real benefits since joining, including:

- Additional funding streams and investments in the local authority to deliver projects relating to the Child Friendly City project.
- Improved youth engagement across the city and a network of youth participation officers.
- A wide range of events, training and courses to promote Child Friendly Cities including asset mapping, early years and children's rights.
- Improved collaboration and expertise sharing with local universities, who provide additional research capacity.

7.13 Leeds is a predominately urban area and UNICEF UK have only worked with urban local authorities so far, and as such the Council would need to take their learning and understand it in a way that would work in a rural County such as Devon. A Child Friendly Devon will be a different challenge to predominately urban areas because of the physical geography, availability of services and transport connections in Devon. In the future, Devon can lead on advising rural areas how to follow our example and build child friendly rural areas.

8. Listening to and learning from children, young people and local partners

8.1 In addition to hearing from other local authorities, the task group sought the views of a range of others and partners (children and young people, local business organisations and local third sector organisations) to ensure their voice was heard in this report, our recommendations, and the initial stages of Child Friendly Devon. All of these will be critical to Child Friendly Devon going forward.

Children and young people

8.2 The task group asked children and young people about what it is like to grow up in Devon and what 'Child Friendly' meant to them. The task group asked our local Members of Youth Parliament and their deputies about growing up in Devon and what Child Friendly Devon meant to them.

8.3 Our Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) discussed what it's like to grow up in Devon, what makes Devon great and what they think of Child Friendly Devon.

8.4 MYP told the task group they love living in Devon because of the open space and access to the countryside, moorlands and coastal areas. They told the task group that they cherished these areas, and they make Devon a special place to live.

8.5 Through the Make Your Mark Survey and a consultation ran through SPACE Youth Services, children and young people were able to indicate their main priorities. Devon's results for these surveys is being built into a Devon 'Manifesto' of what children and young people



want to change and focus on in Devon. Some of the top issues in Devon from the Make Your Mark Survey include: the environment; jobs, money and homes; poverty; education and learning and health and wellbeing (Make Your Mark, 2022). MYP told us that the environment, climate change and transport were key areas for young people in Devon, because they valued Devon's open spaces and access to these spaces.

- 8.6 SPACE's consultation with 126 young people aged 11-16 called "What's it like to live round here?", found that "young people on the whole are happy in Devon, with the spaces they live in and notice and enjoy the natural beauty they have on their doorstep", however young people told the consultation they are limited to what they can have access to because of the pandemic, transport costs or a lack of opportunity (SPACE Youth Services, 2022). Children and young people told the consultation they want more opportunities to experience things in their local areas to allow interests to grow and develop their identities (SPACE Youth Services, 2022).
- 8.7 In terms of a Child Friendly Devon, our MYPs told us that Child Friendly Devon must involve children and young people from the beginning and work with them. There needs to be co-production of ideas between young people and adults, where both are treated as equal partners. There should be a pyramid of methods that children and young people could engage with, with MYP at the top. They felt that a logo or a brand would not just be enough, and the Council should ensure it is listening to children and young people regularly and not just making empty promises.
- 8.8 Child Friendly Devon needs to show it is listening to children and young people and our MYP felt that they will know this when they see the Council acting on their concerns, showing awareness of children and young people, and actively promoting children and young people in their communications.
- 8.9 MYP felt that if a Child Friendly Devon shows children and young people it acts on their concerns, it will engage more children and young people and boost civic pride in Devon amongst young people.
- 8.10 MYP also told us that Child Friendly Devon should consider incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular Article 12 (Right to be heard) as a key value in order to show the Council's commitment and intent to be a children's rights respecting Council. In addition, the Council should focus on the areas that children and young people care about by ensuring the Devon 'Manifesto' is implemented.

Communities and Third Sector

- 8.11 The task group met with representatives of our third sector, youth organisations and Devon-wide communities organisations to hear from them about Child Friendly Devon and their views on how the Council can work with them.
- 8.12 Witnesses told the task group of the importance of how the Council listens to young people and how the Council ensures it can genuinely listen to young people rather than just "tell us what you think". The Council needs to ensure that young people can actively participate and should invest in ensuring that everyone from frontline workers to Elected Members can listen and show they are listening. It is important for us to be inclusive to reach all children, especially those who would not normally engage with

the Council. In addition, listening to children and young people needs to be "bottom up" in a Child Friendly Devon to ensure the Council knows what children and young people want. Witnesses told the task group that working with schools would be important as a common way to hear from young people across the County.

- 8.13 Witnesses spoke about the role of sport to engage communities and bring a sense of belonging to young people. Child Friendly Devon should need to engage with sports and clubs as part of the wider services for young people.
- 8.14 Witnesses told the task group about the importance of Youth Councils to ensure a sense of belonging. These are both the formal Devon Youth Council network and some of the other informal youth councils such as Young Devon Council, SPACE 9th Hub and Young People's Progress Group. This would get children and young people engaged in their communities, local decision making, working together, looking at what is around them and making proposals to their local councillors for change. A previous example of this in Devon was a 'Youth' Scrutiny Panel where young people would question Members, but this ceased some time ago.
- 8.15 In terms of local government partners, witnesses told the task group that although they have no direct responsibilities in this area, our local town and parishes councils would make great partners because of their responsibilities in wider determinates of health. Local town and parish councils have a role in access to open spaces, play parks, community buildings and hold small events which involve children and young people.
- 8.16 Witnesses told the task group there is scope for potential partnerships that could be formed between the local authority, town and parish councils and the voluntary sector to deliver parts of the Child Friendly Devon. In particular, engaged local town and parish councils can use their percept or there is apply for various pots of funding to deliver services. Witnesses felt that signposting or giving more information to local town and parish councils on specific grants or monies would be beneficial.

Business

- 8.17 The task group received evidence from the business community to hear the experiences of local businesses and what our Child Friendly Devon can to do support Devon's local economy.
- 8.18 The task group recognised that businesses across Devon are integral partners in Child Friendly Devon because many form part of the wider children's workforce and their role in employing young people, training young people and the wider support services to children.
- 8.19 For example, bus drivers who see children every day can recognise the signs of and raise safeguarding concerns to the local authority. This is an example of seeing children and young people not just as the responsibility of one Council or one service, but to transform the wider system in Devon for all partners to put children first.
- 8.20 Child Friendly Devon and future partners should help to ensure children and young people have experiences in the workplace and build the skills to be a part of the future workforce. The Council can use organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses to match local businesses with young people who want work experience, internships or apprenticeships.

- 8.21 Child Friendly Devon should encourage children and young people to be ambitious, and to have aspirations. It should show young people they are valued in whatever they choose to do. Members spoke about the need to ensure children are encouraged to go as far as their talents can take them and encourage businesses and schools to talk together about opportunities for children and young people. This is something that was evidenced in the SPACE Youth Consultation, where young people wanted opportunities to experience more in their local areas. Local businesses will be key partners in allowing children and young people to have opportunities and learn new skills.

9. Principles of Child Friendly Devon - What should a Child Friendly Devon look like?

- 9.1 After hearing from the range of witnesses and partners, the task group have grouped some of the key themes of advice that witnesses imparted with Members that the Council can take forward in consideration in building a Child Friendly Devon.
- 9.2 Child Friendly Devon is a vision that aims to transform Devon into a county that puts children and young people first. All the witnesses and local authorities the task group heard from re-iterated the idea that building a Child Friendly area/community is a long-term ambition and will not happen overnight. It is a project that will evolve and grow and may take several years to realise the benefits.



Improved outcomes for children and young people

- 9.3 Witnesses told the task group that central to the vision is ensuring that outcomes for our children, young people and their families are improved and that Child Friendly Devon makes a difference to the people of Devon.
- 9.4 As listed in section 5, The Council's Strategic Plan details some of the aims and goals and some of the proposed benefits of Child Friendly Devon were presented to the Task Group. Some of these include better health opportunities, attendance at school and improved opportunities.
- 9.5 Members are aware that the specific measures of success for Child Friendly Devon are to be determined at the time of publication of this report. The Strategic Plan and annual action plans give some details of the measurables on that the Council wants to achieve in this financial year, such as a reduction of CAMHS referrals, a reduction in suicide of young people and more young people entering a vocational pathway (Devon County Council, 2022) In due course, those measures and long term measures can be used to check progress on the vision. Some of these will be quantitative measures such as numbers of children in care or number of ambassadors but some will be qualitative such as how effective our partnership working is or if children and young people feel listened to.
- 9.6 The task group feel that children and young people should be encouraged to have aspirations to fulfil their potential and thrive in life. Children and young people from across Devon must feel that growing up in Devon is not a hinderance to their future potential or opportunities, but an advantage.

- 9.7 Of course, this is not just about school age children, but children and young people in their broadest sense. Starting with those not yet born, new-born to early years, school age and young adults should be able to feel the benefit of a Child Friendly Devon.



Partnership working

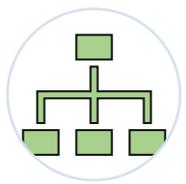
- 9.8 The task group heard from witnesses that one of most important pieces of advice to consider was to ensure that the programme is partnership led. All the local authorities that submitted evidence told us of the importance for the programme to be embedded in both the public and private sector. Witnesses spoke of it being “essential” and “central” to their programme. Witnesses also told us that they welcomed the Child Friendly Devon vision and wanted to work with us as partners.
- 9.9 The task group has sought the views of some of our potential partners such as youth organisations, community organisations in the third sector, local government and the business community to ask them about Child Friendly Devon, what they felt it should include and how the Council can work with partners. The task group did not speak to every potential partner or sector, but tried to include a range of potential partners to collect some key themes.
- 9.10 As the Upper Tier Authority in a two-tier local government system, Devon County Council traditionally leads on children, young people and education in the County. However, in order to make Child Friendly Devon a success the Council needs to work with a wide range of our partners including (but not limited to): District Councils, Town and Parish Councils, Schools, Colleges, Higher and Further Education, Health, Police, local communities, voluntary sector, sports clubs and local businesses to ensure the vision is embraced and embedded.
- 9.11 Initially, the Council may have to lead in forming and building these partnerships in order to drive the vision or direct partners to specific aims. The Council will also have to spend time explaining the vision, its benefits and persuading partners to buy into the vision. In time, all of our partners will need to work together and ensure they take responsibility for ensuring Child Friendly Devon is delivered.
- 9.12 The importance of a partnership approach is to embed the vision across the County and to work together to achieve shared goals for example in health or education. Our partners in the private sector need to be utilised in order to help the project and to offer opportunities to children and young people.



Listening to children and young people

- 9.13 To ensure that Child Friendly Devon truly meets the needs of Devon's children and young people and creates the best place to grow up, listening to children and young people is fundamental.
- 9.14 The views of children and young people and their lived experiences need to be embedded to ensure they are part of the decision-making process and central to everything the Council does. This would incorporate Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, which states that every child has a right to express their views in all matters affecting them and have their views considered and taken seriously (United Nations, 1989).

- 9.15 Not only does Child Friendly Devon need to listen with children and young people, but the Council and our partners also needs to ensure it listens to what they are telling us and show that the Council is acting on what matters to them. This is what our MYP and some the third sector witnesses told us they would want to see from Child Friendly Devon.
- 9.16 The Council currently have different avenues to engage with children and young people, largely through the Participation team. Our Devon Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) and the Devon Youth Council Network should be utilised to correlate the views of young people and those views are embedded with decision makers. Cities like Leeds have gone further with a Child Mayor, an influential Youth Council and Youth Voice Summits to ensure that children and young people have a range of opportunities to ensure their voices are heard. As such, consideration should be given to how the Council ensures children and young people's voices are heard, and if our current avenues need reviewing to ensure they are appropriate and impactful.
- 9.17 In addition, as the heart of our communities, our schools and education facilities are crucial in listening to children and young people, understanding the local area's needs and inspiring children and young people's involvement in future projects. The importance of working with schools was explored with Leeds, our MYP and third sector organisations.



Resources

- 9.18 It is important that Child Friendly Devon is well supported and well-resourced within the Council. This includes a range of staff in different roles and resources devoted to communications and developing the brand.
- 9.19 The witnesses the task group heard from all came from local authorities that had invested in a specific project team devoted to delivering child friendly projects. While each local authority had committed different levels of resource, each local authority had invested in a 'Child Friendly' team. For example, Leeds City Council have a Child Friendly Leeds team of 4 staff plus a voice and influence team of 3 staff. Wokingham Borough Council currently have 2 staff working on their UNICEF bid. Bradford City Council estimate their investment in people in at minimum £150,000 per annum but did not specify how many people this included. On a practical level, the Council must invest in a 'team' for Child Friendly Devon who will be responsible for the day-to-day work of the project and for the Council to show their commitment to Child Friendly Devon. This would not only include an investment in staff, but ensuring there are resources available to deliver the vision such as office space, an events budget and promotional and marking resources.
- 9.20 Consideration should be given to a future Child Friendly Devon team and where they are best placed within the Council's structure and services in order to get buy in from across the partnership and get traction from partners.
- 9.21 There should also be the resources in place to launch the Child Friendly Devon brand at the start of the vision with a recognisable logo that children can relate to. SPACE's consultation found that young people see value in small signs that support demographic or community events (SPACE Youth Services, 2022). One part of Child

Friendly Devon's branding be a logo that young people can instantly recognise and know what it means.

- 9.22 Our MYP told us that a logo is not enough, and the Council must ensure that children and young people know their concerns are being acted on. Currently, the Council's Participation Team work to engage with our children and young people. If Child Friendly Devon results in an increase in engagement projects with children and young people and wider partners, it should be expected that additional resources and capacity are invested in this team to meet their expanded role.
- 9.23 The Council may also need to ensure part of its communications with communities and partners is about signposting and directing them to information that will help their own Child Friendly initiatives such as grant funding and events or opportunities that have been put on for young people.
- 9.24 In addition, should the Council at some point in the future wish to join the UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities/Communities Initiative, then the Council would need to invest £30-45,000 in an annual fee in join the programme.



Role of elected Members

- 9.25 All Members have an important role to play in the foundations and future success of Child Friendly Devon. As community leaders and public figures, it's important that Members engage with their communities, speaking to families, children and young people, schools, community centres, youth centres, local businesses to champion children and young people. Initially, this is to get the word out about Child Friendly Devon, understand what services or support in their divisions already exist or where there are gaps in services.
- 9.26 All Members should become Child Friendly Devon Ambassadors and use their role to identify and encourage potential ambassadors in their divisions
- 9.27 Members of the Devon County Council are also encouraged to provide information to their District, Town and Parish Councils and community groups and also feedback their views to the County Council. The Council, currently, is in a fortunate position where more than half of our current Members are Members of the County Council and Members of a District, Borough or City Council or a Town/Parish council, and can provide a common thread through all tiers of local government.
- 9.28 Members across all Councils should consider the impact of decisions on children and young people and ensure that the voice of children and young people are embedded in decision making, strategies, policies and services across Devon.
- 9.29 It is important for there to be a Lead Member to be lead the project. For Child Friendly Devon, the programme will be led by Devon County Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools which will provide an appropriate, accountable Member for the delivery of the programme. The Cabinet Member is committed to delivering the vision as his priority.
- 9.30 Members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee have a role in holding the Cabinet Member to account for Child Friendly Devon and ensuring that the vision is delivered.

The Children's Scrutiny Committee will continue to act as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet Member and expects to be involved in the coming years in the design and delivery of the vision.



Ambassador Network

9.31 The successes of Leeds' ambassador network demonstrate the value of these individuals to achieving the principle aims. Volunteers from the public and private sector can practically contribute to achieving the vision and provide opportunities for children and young people. The nine hundred Child Friendly Leeds Ambassadors have helped to provide donations, tickets to events, rooms to use in buildings and even apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. A poignant example is Ambassadors in Leeds donating sanitary products to schools across the city to ensure that children and young people could learn without the worries of period poverty. Developing ambassadors demonstrates the value of securing a community-led approach to support young people.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The task was initiated to investigate different approaches to Child Friendly Devon and for Members to set the direction of the vision and policy development of Child Friendly Devon.
- 10.2 The task group wanted to ensure that the Council understood what 'Child Friendly Devon' meant before undertaking the work and that Members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee had bought into the vision and were able to champion Child Friendly Devon for years to come.
- 10.3 Members of the task group welcome and support the Council's aim to be the best place for children to grow up and look forward to working with the Cabinet Member and all partners to achieve the vision.
- 10.4 Members recognised the significant benefits realised from partnership working with Leeds as our Partners in Practice. Members would like to see the service adopt elements and embed learning from the UNICEF programme to enhance the Child Friendly Devon offer. For example, a greater focus on the rights of the child and article 12.
- 10.5 The task group wanted to conclude at pace with this report to allow the Council to embed the principles and recommendations, and to publish this report around the time of the branding being consulted on. The task group would have liked to gather more evidence and speak to more witnesses such as schools, health partners, business representatives, local employers and more children and young people. The Committee will build on this task group, with the Cabinet Member, to engage with more partners to allow them to contribute to the vision. Details of this is listed in Appendix 1.
- 10.6 Child Friendly Devon represents an opportunity for a transformational project of not just the Council's Children's Services, but the wider county of Devon to put children and young people at the heart of the County. The task group have proposed the core principles that should sit at the heart of the vision. Whilst the task group appreciate

that culture and momentum building to support these bold ambitions will take time, they are optimistic about the benefits realised for young people in Devon.

- 10.7 Even by holding this task group and the witness sessions, the task group has already made organisations to think about Child Friendly Devon. For example, in their upcoming audit of local halls and community buildings Devon Communities Together will add in section about what local areas are offering for children and young people.
- 10.8 This task group and the work already ongoing is a starting point and represent an opportunity for the Council to lead and create the conditions for other people to act. Child Friendly Devon will need continued support from all Members, communities and partners for years to come to succeed. The task group welcomes the future opportunities for Members to influence its growth both in the recommendations of the task group, and as the vision develops.

11. Membership

- 11.1 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.

12. Contact

- 12.1 For all enquiries about this report or its contents please contact: Charlie Fisher (Scrutiny Officer) – charlie.fisher@devon.gov.uk or 01392 383691

13. Witnesses

- 13.1 The task group heard testimony from a number of witnesses and would like to express sincere thanks to the following people for their contribution and the information shared.

Janet Fraser	Deputy Chief Officer - Head of Children’s Health and Wellbeing	Devon County Council
Victoria Bendle	Senior Policy and Executive Support Officer	Devon County Council
Debbie Raymond	Restorative Practice Lead	Devon County Council
Sara Cretney	Head of Organisational Change	Devon County Council
Tony Parker	Head of Communications and Media	Devon County Council
Sue Rombold	Former Chief Officer, Partnerships	(formerly) Leeds City Council.
Naomi Danquah	Programme Director	Child Friendly Cities and Communities, UNICEF UK
Andrew Moreman	Chief Executive Officer	Young Devon
Kev Henman	Chief Executive Officer	SPACE Youth Services
Nora Corkery	Chief Executive Officer	Devon Communities Together

Cara Stobart	County Officer	Devon Association of Local Councils
Sue Wilkinson	Devon Development Manager	Federation of Small Businesses
Elizabeth Williams	Senior Participation Officer	Devon County Council
7 Members and Deputies	Devon's Members of Youth Parliament and Deputy Members of Youth Parliament for South Hams and Teignbridge; Mid and East; North, West and Torridge and Exeter.	
Councillor Andrew Leadbetter	Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools	Devon County Council.

13.2 Written contributions were also submitted from Bradford City Council, Liverpool City Council, London Borough of Redbridge and Wokingham Borough Council.

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Appendix 1

Suggested Next Steps

As stated under 10.5, the task group worked at pace to report back to Committee in order for the Council to begin to embed the learning of this report.

The task group and Children's Scrutiny would like to continue the work of hearing from partners and stakeholders and continuing to feed back to the Cabinet Member, alongside his own work.

Some of the suggested additional stakeholders are listed below:

Stakeholder	Suggested timescale (assume by the end of 2022 if not listed)
Children and young people in our care	
Care leavers	
Primary school age children	
Secondary school age children	
Members of Youth Parliament and Deputies	After the publication of the Devon Manifesto
Devon Youth Council	After the publication of the Devon Manifesto
Children's Centres	
Youth Clubs/Organisations	
Devon Communities Together	After their audit of village halls and community halls
Additional business representatives and organisations	
Local education facilities	

The Committee will use the learning from these next steps to report back to the Cabinet Member and as part of a future item to Committee.