

Report of: the Director of Children and Families	
Report to: Executive Board	
Date: 12 th February 2020	a Bre
Subject: Child Friendly Leeds Annual Report	child friendly Leeds
Are specific electoral wards affected?	🗌 Yes 🛛 No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	
Has consultation been carried out?	🗌 Yes 🛛 No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	🗌 Yes 🛛 No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	🛛 Yes 🗌 No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	🗌 Yes 🛛 No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

Summary

1. Main issues

Since 2012, Leeds has had an ambition to be the best city for children and young people to grow up in. Now embedded within the inclusive growth strategy, the Child Friendly Leeds (CFL) ambition is currently in its 7th year of existence.

- 2. Best Council Plan Implications (click here for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)
 - The contents of this report have implications for a number of best council plan priorities, in particular:
 - Making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
 - Tackling poverty, helping everyone to benefit from the economy to their full potential

3. Resource Implications

• This report does not have any resource implications.

Recommendations

Members of Executive Board are invited to:

- a. support the progress that has been made since 2012 on the ambition for Leeds to be a Child Friendly City
- b. support the work that has been developed which supports the role and remit of the corporate parenting board in terms of enriching the lives of children and young people in care and care leavers
- c. support the work of the Child Friendly Leeds team and the focus of the team on achieving our Child Friendly ambitions
- d. endorse the partnership approach being adopted by the CFL team and its partners to enhancing the life experiences of children in care and care leavers through the development of an 'enrichment offer'
- e. consider the attached Enrichment Newsletter in order to gain a more in depth understanding of the offer as it evolves
- f. support the broader impact that the development of the ambition has had on our capacity to make progress in terms of children and families services obsessions and priorities as expressed in the Children and Young People's Plan

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update and inform the Executive Board about the key areas of work currently being undertaken by the team and to highlight the contribution this is making to:
 - a) achieving the ambition for Leeds to be a child friendly city
 - b) improving outcomes for children and young people in terms of our obsessions and priorities
 - c) harnessing the commonwealth of the city through the growth and development of the ambassador network
 - d) actively pursuing and developing new partnership opportunities
 - e) combatting the isolation, financial challenges and poverty of opportunity that may be experienced by children and young people in fostering, kinship and special guardianship placements and care leavers through the development of enrichment work
- 1.2 Through the above, the Child Friendly ambition is also making a contribution to achieving strategic priorities set out in the Children and Young People's Plan, the Inclusive Growth Strategy and our corporate parenting duty.

2. Main issues

2.1 Business engagement and growth of the ambassador network

From the outset of the CFL ambition there has been a central aim to harness 'the commonwealth of the city' into what has become the CFL ambassador network. With Leeds's thriving business economy and significant academic and third sectors it has been possible to reach out and develop the ambassador network to the point where we now have over 900 businesses, organisations and individuals signed up. All those who sign up, make pledges in terms of how they are going to support delivery of the '12 Wishes' (see appendix 1) that were initially established in consultation with children and young people back in 2012.

Engagement with the ambassadors takes place primarily through a regular calendar of events throughout the year. Topics for events are chosen based on their strategic impact on children and young people and the potential they offer partners to support better outcomes. Over the last few years ambassador events have included:

- a) The city centre projects a joint production with City Development and the Voice, Influence and Change (VIC) team in children and families services to make Leeds city centre a more child friendly place. This project recently won a Public Service Award from the National Leadership Forum
- b) **Care leavers** bringing together major employers and third sector organisations to support the development of opportunities around education, employment and training for this group of young people
- c) **SEND** this event brought together business ambassadors and young people to showcase employment opportunities via the Supported Internship scheme for young people with a learning disability or additional needs
- d) **Vulnerable learners –** bringing together third sector partners, school colleagues and businesses to provide support
- e) **3As strategy** engaging with ambassadors to encourage sign up as school governors, support the Year of Reading (working with Children and Families and Library Services) and get involved in early help/best start through the '50 Things Before You're 5' app
- f) Child poverty this event brought together a wide cross section of partners to look at the Thrive Strategy and issues including holiday hunger, period poverty and school uniform recycling etc.
- a) Skills fit for the digital age part of the Leeds Digital festival, we brought together STEM (Science Technology Engineering Maths) and careers teachers from schools and digital businesses in Leeds to learn about the huge variety of career pathways available in the rapidly expanding digital sector in Leeds.

Events generally take place at one of our partner organisations who welcome the opportunity to showcase their facilities and (where relevant) the young people they are working with as this provides them with a great opportunity to engage with a wide cross section of businesses and partners who may want to support them in a variety of ways.

Already in the planning stages for 2020, we are proposing to hold ambassador events focusing on:

- a) **Climate emergency** in line with council policy following on from the Youth Voice Summit being held on 12 February 2020 we plan to share the outputs of this with our ambassadors to drive forward city wide engagement with this key priority
- b) Skills fit for the digital age 2020 building on the success of the 2019 event, we plan to host a twilight event during the Leeds Digital Festival to further promote and explore the potential for Leeds young people to work within the highly buoyant Leeds digital sector
- c) **Leeds 2023** The voice of children and young people is a core pillar of the Leeds 2023 strategy. In this event we will seek to engage our ambassadors with the emerging plans and start to harness potential ideas around involvement

Ambassador events have many benefits, the key ones being:

- a) Potential for engaging with partners around strategic city wide priorities and their impact on children and young people
- b) Opportunities to share ideas, perspectives and plans
- c) Networking opportunities for partners an opportunity for partners to meet face to face and build their own relationships
- d) Promoting the wider CFL ambition through social media channels CFL has 11,800 followers on Twitter and ambassador events always attract a lot of 'traffic'
- e) Growing wider partnership support in terms of our obsessions and priorities

In addition to the ambassador events, engagement with individual organisations who are interested in CFL is on-going throughout the year. As awareness of the CFL ambition has grown, it's fair to say that we are now in a position where many organisations have heard of it and approach the CFL team to learn more and sign up as ambassadors.

2.2 Enrichment work

A key development since the inception of the CFL ambition is the work we undertake with partners to offer a wide range of opportunities to children and young people in care, kinship care, under special guardianship orders, care leavers and their children (corporate grand parenting). Whilst many children in care have access to the same opportunities as other children through their fostering arrangements, it is also the case that some children and young people in these groups can experience financial hardship as well as a poverty of opportunity and aspiration. A cross section of the diverse range of enrichment opportunities is demonstrated in the attached CFL Enrichment Newsletter Autumn 2019 (**appendix 2**).

All of the organisations we work with to develop the enrichment offer are CFL ambassadors and in this way we are able to create a 'golden thread' between the high level strategic ambition and the opportunities that can be offered to children, young people and their families and carers.

The enrichment offer largely comprises of the following:

- a) Ticket offers we regularly receive free tickets from partners. This year these have included First Direct Arena, Leeds Rhinos, Leeds United Football Club, first direct bank, Leeds Town Hall, Bradford Literature Festival, Total Warrior and BARC Harewood Hill climb. These are distributed through the fostering networks and the care leavers' service. One of the stand out offers this year was 400 tickets to the various matches of the Cricket World Cup from the International Cricket Council (ICC), in conjunction with City Development see appendix 2 for feedback. The ticket offers have a significant value which this year to date we have valued at £30,000.
- b) Projects some CFL ambassadors work with children and young people as part of their core functions. Increasingly they reach out to us making significant offers of activities which support the children, young people and their families previously referred to. Stand out examples this year include:
 - i. The Outward Bound Trust (OBT) 6 care experienced young people successfully completed the OBT's 19 day 'Skills For Life' programme in locations as diverse as north west Scotland, Cumbria and Wales learning a variety of life and team work skills on this challenging course. The places which cost £1700 each were 75% funded by the OBT and 25% funded though accessing the Looked After Children Fund managed by Leeds Community Foundation. 5 other care experienced young people took part in similar or shorter courses (7 days).
 - ii. The water scouts 10 teenagers, 5 of whom were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People, attended an adventure fun day hosted by Central Yorkshire Scouts at their Aldwalk site on the River Ouse. The young people took part in various activities including kayaking, canoeing, raft skills and swimming. The day ended with a barbeque and saw the two groups getting to know one another and working together as a team. A minibus and volunteer driver was also provided to transport the group from and back to Leeds.

- iii. Beaver fun day 8 children from foster and kinship families attended a full day of adventure and fun at the Central Yorkshire Scouts Bramhope site. They took part in a wide range of activities including: climbing, low ropes, games, arts and crafts, skill building and inflatables. The day ended with a campfire, hotdogs and a mass sing. The children were able to mix freely with other Beaver packs, ask questions and learn about the organisation. As a follow up, all children who attended were offered the opportunity to join their local Beaver pack and have a free trial session if they wished.
- iv. Green Guardians 6 Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers took part in a show and tell walk around Malham village with CFL staff. They were guided by Aaron Bailey, a tutor for the Field Studies Council. He showed the young people important landmarks, told them some local folklore stories and talked about the natural history, and fauna and flora. As well as making new friends, seeing a new part of Yorkshire and getting out in the countryside, they even had the chance to eat nettles in the wild!
- v. Skelton Grange Environment Centre the centre applied for funding from the Fairhurst Fund and through this were able to offer 8 bespoke days to both Leeds Fostering Team and CFL Enrichment. So far a day for children and young people with SEND has taken place, which saw a mixed age group explore and get up close to nature with activities that included den building, pond dipping, starting a fire using a fire steel and cooking popcorn on an open fire. 11 young people and their carers took part and skills learnt included much around socialising and interacting with new peers. In addition to this, their carers were able to form their own WhatsApp group which they felt would support them to feel less isolated.
- vi. **Play in a Day** is an annual project offered by Harrogate Theatre and the Grammar School at Leeds (GSAL). 10 children took part and enjoyed a creative day themed around Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. GSAL provided a brilliant venue, amazing snacks and buffet lunch, and a gift bag including the above book for every young person who took part. The group from foster and kinship families struggled at first with improvisation and engagement but everyone managed to take part in the performance for carers and family at the end of the day.
- vii. **Think Like a Pony (TLAP)** 5 children in foster and kinship care took part in an intensive 4 day project based around therapeutic horsemanship working with staff and rescued ponies from TLAP. The children noticeably changed in terms of their behaviour and responsiveness over the course of the 4 days and everyone took great pride in 'showing off' the skills they had learnt on the last day to their carers, which included behaving calmly and confidently around their pony, riding independently around and through an obstacle

course and responding appropriately to how their pony was feeling whilst they were together.

viii. Sunday Social – in partnership with Health for All and the care leavers' service, CFL enrichment has been supporting the running of a Sunday lunch club for care leavers. Sunday can be a lonely and isolating day for care leavers and it is hoped that as part of the Care Leaver strategic plan to address loneliness and isolation, this initiative can be rolled out across the city in due course.

In total **972 tickets have been offered to** young people enabling them to participate in events and opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise had at **an estimated value of £43,137.**

In terms of projects, **368 places over 23 projects with partners with an estimated total of £28,254** have been offered through our partnerships which are particularly beneficial because our partners can access funding that the council is unable to.

Events – in addition to the above projects we offer a number of events throughout the year with a variety of our partners including Total Warrior who offer us places in their Junior Warrior event annually; St Johns Centre, Trinity Leeds and White Rose Shopping Centre who run fantastic Christmas parties (complete with food, games, presents and Santa Claus) for children in foster and kinship care; and Health For All who jointly partner with ourselves and Social Care to run a Sunday Social for our care leavers to come together and enjoy a communal Sunday lunch.

Detailed feedback from children, young people and families participating in these events can be found at **appendix 3**.

Education, Employment and Training opportunities – over the last 18 months there has been much discussion with CFL ambassador organisations, including: Forging Futures, Engie, Balfour Beatty, the Leeds Law Society and within the council itself, looking at the potential to offer care experienced young people employability, training and employment opportunities. Our vision is for the council itself to be the 'family business' and for our partners to join us in that aspiration. The CFL team are working with the care leaver's service and the EET sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Operational Group to look at how these offers can be operationalised and this work is currently on-going.

Gifts – each year a number of partners approach us to provide gifts to children in care and care leavers' children. Through their generosity we are able to provide a range of bespoke Christmas gifts again to children who would in all likelihood receive far less were it not for these arrangements. Current and past partners include CEG, Park Square Barristers, first direct bank and GRAHAM (construction).

To summarise, enrichment work has become one of the natural 'spin offs' of the CFL ambition and we believe from our interactions with other local authorities, that it is in fact quite unique. It has become a way of taking relationships with some of our

ambassadors to 'the next level' in terms of developing and offering opportunities to children and young people that enhance their life chances and experiences. It has a significant monetary value but beyond that, it demonstrates how our work with our ambassadors is tangibly making Leeds a more child and young person friendly city.

2.3 Child Friendly Leeds fund

The Child Friendly Leeds fund was established in July 2017 to follow on from the existing Children Looked After Fund which was supported by salary sacrifice from each of the Council's directors. There is currently £4000 in the Children Looked After Fund and £6000 in the Child Friendly Leeds fund. A promotional film has been developed to support investment in the fund which can be viewed here https://youtu.be/h6OCRuW7Ml8

Work is on-going to identify a seed funder for the Child Friendly Leeds fund but this is proving challenging in the current economic climate with many companies having to cut back on the cash giving aspects of their CSR commitments. Going forward we plan to continue our search for a seed funder from within the existing Child Friendly Leeds ambassador network, hold a major fund raising event with one of our partners and their wider business network and reach out to our ambassadors asking them to make the Child Friendly Leeds fund their charity of the year. This approach has already met with some success as we are currently the charity of the year for the Leeds Law Society.

2.4 Other major CFL initiatives

Now in its 7th year, the most recent annual **CFL awards** ceremony took place on 6 February 2020 at the City Varieties. Now a much loved and well established part of the annual CFL calendar, not only are the CFL awards fantastic fun, they are also completely produced and delivered by young people. They are also a key way in which we raise the profile of the CFL ambition and acknowledge the wonderful contributions that children, young people, adults, businesses, the third sector and other partner organisations are offering to help make Leeds a Child Friendly City.

2019 also saw the second **CFL Live** event that took place in Millennium Square on 7 August to link in with National Play Day. Over two separate sessions, approximately 3000, 0 - 11 children and their families joined in a whole host of fun activities and were entertained by Mr. Bloom & His Band, a 'Greatest Showman' circus performance, a family rave with Boomchikkaboom, compered by the brilliant Alex Winters and Heart Yorkshire.

Between 2 - 9 November in partnership with Baby Week Leeds the NHS the CCG and Leeds community health care CFL supported and promoted the 4th annual Baby Week on the theme of making connections, bonding, healthy brains and wellbeing for all. The purpose of this initiative is to bring sectors and services together to promote the best start in life.

Internal partnerships continue to grow and develop with CFL working closely with the Voice, Influence and Change (VIC) team, ArtForms, Libraries, Museums and Galleries, Active Leeds and City Development.

Finally in support of the directorate's commitment to sector led improvement the CFL team have contributed to a number of LRPC events where we have shared our child friendly journey in order to support more localities in their journey to becoming more child friendly. As a result of this we are also in the process of establishing a Child Friendly Learning Community as a forum for those who have attended our events to share information about the progress they are making, the challenges they are facing and seek support.

3 Child Friendly Leeds – enabling progress in children's outcomes

As well as providing a vehicle for working with partners to deliver the range of projects and events outlined above, Child Friendly Leeds helps with our work to achieve our wider ambitions for children and young people in Leeds.

Child Friendly Leeds adds value and makes a difference by helping engage and involve a wide range of partners in business, public services, the voluntary sector and the wider community around our shared priorities. This can be through formal support through the ambassador network or on day to day help with a wide range of initiatives and joint working in neighbourhoods across Leeds. Building and maintaining wide support through Child Friendly Leeds for Leeds to be a Child Friendly City is crucial for building and maintaining that engagement and making changes that would not be possible if the Children and Families Directorate tried to work on its own.

The examples below illustrate some of the important areas of work where Child Friendly Leeds has helped make a difference:

3.1 Looked after children

In Leeds the number of looked after children peaked in 2012 at a figure of 1475. A strategy was implemented that focused on prevention and early intervention, improved practice and a focus on maintaining children and young people within their birth families wherever possible as the evidence was clear that this delivered better outcomes for children. Children and Families invested in a number of evidence based approaches including Multi Systemic Therapy, Family Group Conferencing and maintained and developed Children's Centre Provision.

As a result the number of looked after children had reduced to 1278 by May 2017 and the number of young people in external residential placements had halved from 110 to 50. This represents a reduction in the proportion of children looked after from 95 per ten thousand (nearly 1 in 100 children) to 78.6 per ten thousand. These figures remained relatively stable until December 2018. However, as a result of the increasing child population the rate per ten thousand had reduced to 76.9.

Since December 2018 there has been a slow increase in the number of looked after children. The current number of looked after children in Leeds is 1320. However, the rate per ten thousand is 78.5 – the same as it was in May 2017. Over the same

period the rate per ten thousand figure for statistical neighbours has risen from 78.5 to 88 and nationally from 59 to 65.

The Director of Children and Families will bring a more detailed report in relation looked after children to Executive Board in March 2020.

3.2 Childhood obesity

The Child Friendly Leeds approach has helped in another key area – reducing childhood obesity, through work to help promote closer partnership working and promote involvement and enthusiasm across the city. The Child Friendly Leeds team has done a range of work on child development and health, e.g. has actively supported delivery of Baby Week as already mentioned under section 2 of this report. With a focus on infant mental health and best start this initiative plays a key role in supporting wider work for healthy foundations for all children at the start of life.

Due to the strength of local partnerships and support for the shared values and priorities of Child Friendly Leeds, the city has been able to take a systemic approach in integrating the work of health visitors and school nurses alongside a suite of supporting services from Children's Centres (LCC), Infant Mental Health Service (CaHMS) and the Health and Wellbeing Service. This has ensured enhanced services for families under 5, providing an evidence based offer that has seen significant impact on obesity figures in Leeds and in reducing the need for children under 5 to become looked after.

As has previously been reported, Leeds is bucking the trend in child obesity with rates among reception aged children declining significantly since 2009, while similar cities and England have shown no change. Research highlights that the reduction in obesity has been primarily among the most disadvantaged children in the city.

The data show obesity levels fell from 9.4% to 8.8% in reception children, while levels remained unchanged in similar cities (9.8%-9.8%), and for England as a whole (9.5%-9.4%). The drop primarily affected the most deprived children in the Leeds, with levels falling from 11.5%-10.5%. Affluent children benefited too. 9,675 children aged 4-5 were measured in 2016/17, and the drop in obesity equates to over 600 fewer children being obese in the most recent school year for which statistics were available.

Around 60 HENRY programmes were delivered by our Leeds Children Centres last year. Just over 600 families took part in either the group programme or one to one support during the same period. This will increase to 90 groups in 2020/2021. Over 1400 Leeds Early Years practitioners from the public, voluntary and private sectors have now been trained in the HENRY approach.

3.3 Fostering recruitment and retention

As demonstrated in section 2 of this report, Child Friendly Leeds has been highly successful in attracting a wide range of offers from our partners seeking to extend a variety of opportunities and experiences to our children in foster care, kinship care and subject to special guardianship orders.

The Fostering Service itself has a significant target to increase the number of Leeds foster carers for our children and young people and has an offer that focuses specifically on the recruitment and retention of potential and existing foster carers.

We believe that the wider Child Friendly Leeds offer provides significant additionality to the range of groups identified above which not only attracts people to foster for Leeds but also has the potential to support placement stability. In addition to this it is important to note that to date (since 2012), at least 100 fosterers working for independent fostering agencies have started to Foster for Leeds.

Our offer is inherently about supporting children and their foster families to enjoy themselves together in safe and nurturing environments thereby helping children and families build and maintain healthy relationships which may support healthy attachment and stability.

The consistent message of all of the above is that partnership working as enabled and expressed through the Child Friendly Leeds ambition is now part of the 'DNA' of how Leeds is seeking to improve outcomes for children and young people and that agencies, organisations and businesses across the city have a key role in achieving this.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

The 12 wishes referred to in **appendix 1** were developed as a result of extensive consultation with children and young people in 2012 and remain one of the key documents supporting our CFL ambitions.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

For many children and young people, being in care is a protective factor. Whilst being in care or being a care leaver are not a protected characteristic, this report acknowledges that children and young people in these categories can experience a poverty of opportunity and aspiration. The report has described the many ways in which the work of CFL including the enrichment work seeks to ensure that children and young people in these groups are supported to have a diverse range of opportunities which will enable them to develop strong skills for life helping them as they move forward into adulthood.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

Climate Emergency

Addressing issues around climate emergency is undoubtedly a major priority for children and young people in the city and going forward this will be a key element of what will ensure that Leeds is a Child Friendly City. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

"Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality healthcare, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment"

In relation to this there is a wider range of engagement work being undertaken through the Voice and Influence team which reflects the fact that in the 2019 British Youth Council "Make your Mark" ballot, "protect the environment " was voted as the top issue locally and nationally; 825,903 UK young people voted with 48% for protecting environment.

In Leeds 11,734 young people voted with 44% choosing the environment as the highest priority issue from the ten available.

Following this and the local declaration of a climate emergency in March 2019 the Voice and Influence Team have:

- Supported Leeds Youth Council to set up a campaign group on climate for 2020/21
- Planned 3 x Youth Voice Summit events on the theme of climate emergency (12 February for high schools, 24 March for youth groups, 22 April for primary schools). The February event has 17 schools and over 100 students attending and will feature a workshop with the Councils' "Climate Emergency Advisory Committee" (CEAC)
- Delivered with the Leeds Youth Council a two hour workshop on climate change with the Children and Families Trust Board 28/1/2020
- Worked and continue to work with young people and elected members to produce guidance for schools and students
- Been facilitating the involvement of young people at the April 2020 meeting of the CEAC
- Been actively promoting the citywide "Climate Conversation" survey to our networks of young people and youth groups including hosting a focus group workshop with the Leeds Youth Council in October 2019

The Voice and Influence team have also worked in partnership to ensure the 2020 "Golden Owls" citywide film competition for children and young people is themed on the climate emergency and uses the same five thematic areas as the wider citywide public engagement work on climate.

Child Friendly Leeds works with a range of partners some of whom have an environmental focus. We are working with them to develop the Child Friendly Leeds/enrichment offer to ensure that our target groups have access to a range of climate emergency and environmental learning experiences.

In addition to this Child Friendly Leeds will be holding an ambassador event on the subject of climate emergency in 2020.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

The report demonstrates that as a result of the developing CFL partnership, there is a quantifiable financial benefit in terms of the opportunities and offers made to young people as demonstrated in the newsletter at **appendix 2**.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

This report is subject to call-in.

4.6 Risk management

There are no risks arising out of the contents of this report.

5 Conclusions

In conclusion it is clear from this report that the Child Friendly Leeds ambition is going from strength to strength and as a result of the development of partnership working an increasing number of offers and opportunities are being made available to children, young people and care leavers, thereby supporting achievement of the best council plan and the inclusive growth strategy.

6 Recommendations

Members of Executive Board are invited to:

- a) support the progress that has been made since 2012 on the ambition for Leeds to be a Child Friendly City
- b) support the work that has been developed which supports the role and remit of the corporate parenting board in terms of enriching the lives of children and young people in care and care leavers
- c) support the work of the Child Friendly Leeds team and the focus of the team on achieving our Child Friendly ambitions
- d) endorse the partnership approach being adopted by the CFL team and its partners to enhancing the life experiences of children in care and care leavers through the development of an 'enrichment offer'
- e) consider the attached Enrichment Newsletter in order to gain a more in depth understanding of the offer as it evolves
- f) support the broader impact that the development of the ambition has had on our capacity to make progress in terms of children and families services obsessions and priorities as expressed in the Children and Young People's Plan

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.