

# Vocal

VCSE forums facilitated by  
Salford CVS

Vocal Children, Young  
People & Families Forum



**Date:** Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**Time:** 2.00pm – 4.00pm

**Venue:** Elm Bank Events & Conference Centre

**Number of people registered:** 17

**Salford CVS staff present:** Gill Bruder (chair), Helen O'Brien (minutes), Andy Mossop (facilitator), Joe Kendal (facilitator)

**The theme for this forum meeting:** Child Friendly City

Gill Bruder welcomed everyone and explained the purpose of the Forum meeting. The meeting will cover what Child Friendly City involves and how the VCSE sector can link in with Salford Council to support this.

### **UNICEF Child Friendly City**

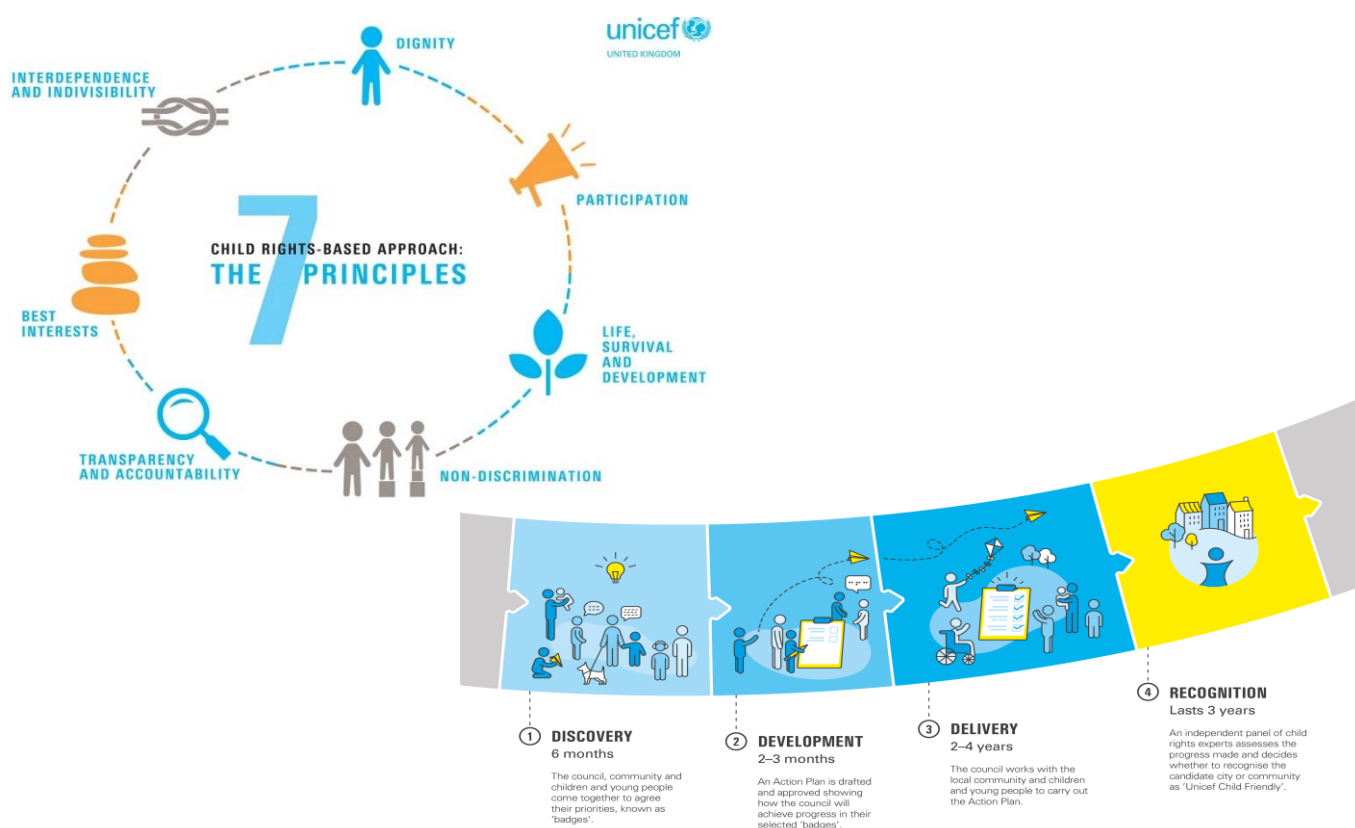
Becky Bibby, Interim Director of Children's Services from Salford City Council shared a presentation on Salford's ambitions to become a UNICEF Child Friendly City. Becky stated that this is not about Salford Council driving the agenda, it is about the whole city of Salford becoming a Child Friendly City.

Child Friendly Cities and Communities is a UNICEF UK programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice. It is a formal accreditation process. This is an intense process and therefore some cities in the UK, such as Leeds, have decided to become a Child Friendly City without accreditation. Salford have chosen to go through with accreditation, working with the Council and partnerships to put children's rights into practice.

The programme aims to create cities and communities in the UK where all children have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives. These are things that happen daily but being a Child Friendly City means demonstrating what impact that has had on children and young people's lives. This creates cities and communities across the UK where all children can live in a place that matters to them. No two cities are the same and this will be dedicated what matters to children and young people in Salford.

Child Friendly City is a structured, supported, and a rigorous programme which won't be achieved overnight. It is to ensure that children feel safe, heard, cared for and able to flourish. It is about the children of Salford feeling heard, what is being done about it and how the city collectively makes that difference.

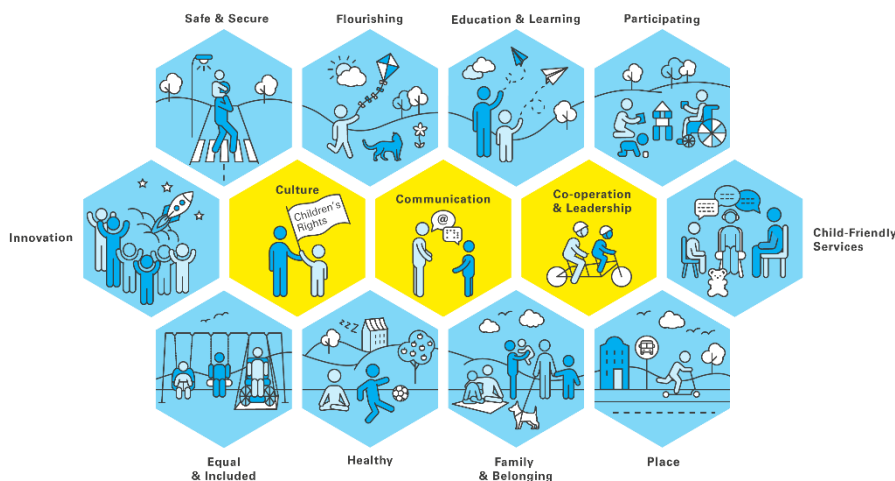
UNICEF has set out a seven-principles approach. The evidence behind these principles is what the city must collectively work through. It is about children having dignity, having active participation and listening, ensuring life survival and development, experiencing non-discrimination, transparency and accountability with what children are saying / asking for, having a child's best interests at the heart of it, and interdependence and indivisibility of the whole city.



The programme stages are set out in a timeline that UNICEF has created. Salford is currently in the discovery stage. The process will have a 2-4 year delivery period. This programme needs to be sustainable and will be embedded in Salford Council's corporate plan and in the mayoral priorities.

Salford submitted an expression of interest to UNICEF and will now formally enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) showing Salford's commitment to becoming a Child Friendly City.

UNICEF’s framing of the programme and the beginning of accreditation is through ‘badges’. The badges are ways of showing how children are supported in certain areas. Those highlighted yellow in the image below are the ‘foundation badges’, which need to be secured before other badges around them are approached. The foundation badges are **culture, communication, and cooperation and leadership**.



## Culture

What is the culture around listening and supporting children and young people?

## Communication

What is the communication, what is being heard and what is being said back?

What’s the accountability?

## Cooperation and leadership

What does cooperation and leadership look like across the system? What does collective leadership with partners look like? What does the journey look like working together?

Salford have had to submit governance to show how the programme will be operated. Salford Council have shown operations from the City Mayor / Cabinet level as it is part of the Mayoral Manifesto and the Council’s corporate plan. The operation plan shows that there is dedicated resource for the programme, despite it being already embedded in all Council work, particularly in Children’s Services. The challenge is getting commitment from Council partners as well as partners across the city. This isn’t a Children’s Services project; it sits across the whole of the City Council. This is done via a steering committee made up of membership from the City Council, Michelle Warburton from Salford CVS - who is leading from a VCSE perspective and feeding back into the Vocal Forums, businesses, education, health, police, and youth representatives.

Becky suggested that an area for further exploration is with younger children, as the voice of children and babies is not currently an area with strong relationships.

Under the steering committee is a project group and workstreams. The workstreams link back into the 'foundation badges' - culture, communication, and cooperation and leadership.

Salford Council are starting to think about the identity of children and young people and what they imagine a Child Friendly City would look like. There will be some branding done to collectively show commitment from the Council and partners. This branding will be developed through children and young people. Salford Council is also thinking about the best way to communicate with people, to ensure that they are listened to, and feel involved in the process. The culture badge links in with the voice and influence strand, which is an important starting point. There are already good models of practice across the city for listening to the voices of young people. This may need to be thought about more widely for babies and children.

A round table event was held at Salford Community Stadium at the start of this process, which was led by young people. They used the event to talk about what was important to them and what they wanted from a Child Friendly City. Salford Council asked the partners, professionals and businesses who attended the event to make some pledges. This will be used as a starting point and as accountability. These pledges will be shared at a later date.

A piece of work was done around the Family Hubs along with Salford CVS, where families and children were approached in different communities to help shape the Family Hubs into something that they wanted. Salford Council wants to explore a similar approach to understanding more about the needs and asks for a Child Friendly City.

## **Q&A**

The attendees were invited to ask questions or give comments.

**Q – Parvin, Yaran NW** - We provide talking therapy for adults who use English as a second language. We've trained and are now ready to work with children. However, we are a bit reluctant to do this as other groups receive money to work with children and then send them to our group, where we don't receive extra funding to deliver. We're fed up with this. When you talk about culture, communication and the wellbeing of children, you're talking about children who come to this country with trauma, or their trauma comes from moving to this country and they need support. We can manage this but if there isn't a budget dedicated to this project, how will we be able to support it? We don't want to open our doors and turn people away - if there was a budget, we'd like to be part of this project.

**A - Becky** – We don't have a lot of money; there's not a dedicated budget to this at the moment. Some of the resourcing we've done has meant moving people across from existing jobs because they do want dedicated resource. There's a conversation we need to have through engagement on how we support organisations to do it, whether through resource, support of budget etc There is no pot of money sat for

Child Friendly City. We don't know what the discovery phase is going to bring out. It could bring out conversations around how do we resource a particular community, or how to resource sending young people out to have conversations etc.

**Q – Joe, Salford CVS** – What do you think will be different in Salford at the end of the project? Are you in a position where you can envision outcomes?

**A - Becky** – We wouldn't be true to the requirements of a Child Friendly City if I say what we envision for children, young people, and families. There are examples out there nationally – Leeds, despite not being UNICEF accredited, have got businesses involved, safe space ambassadors with stickers in their windows. I don't know what it will look like for Salford but that's part of our discovery and development phase. It's about how we are truly listening to what it means for the city through honest discussion and open dialogue. We need to explore the art of possibility with children and young people.

**Becky** - Regarding budget, maybe we need to go back and have conversations with businesses and see if they can help support things such as branding or become ambassadors for different aspects. How do we engage with partners / key anchors in the city for leverage - funding or resources?

**Q – Gill, Salford CVS** – what age groups are you looking at?

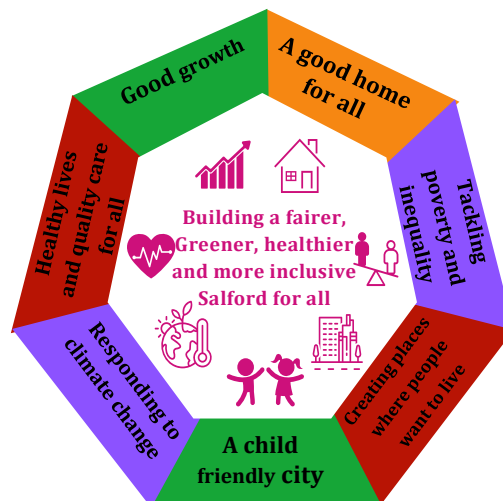
**A – Becky** – The age range is 0-25 years. Youth wise – Tim Rumley works closely in collecting the youth voice through the work the Youth Services do, including developing a new group with young people with SEND. We know that schools do a lot of engagement with younger, primary aged children. With an Early Years background, I know we need to work on getting more voices from babies and young children. We need to connect the evidence together to start to build the picture.

**Q – David, BASIC** – We don't have a budget for Child Friendly City but what is the children's budget for the city?

**A - Becky** – I don't have those figures to hand. It is a conversation we're collectively having. At the moment, we don't have a dedicated pot of money for Child Friendly City. There is a conversation back out to partners and the Council around what children and young people are expressing they need, and thinking through how investment is spent. There will be challenging conversations, and it is all part of the discovery phase. It can't be reliant on the Council delivering this programme on its own, in order to deliver we need to resource – through funding, people etc. We're not saying everyone has to do everything for free. Today we're pitching the need for support from the VCSE sector to do this, and we need to understand what that looks like.

## Voice and Influence Strategy

Katie Kelleher, Head of Service for Early Help and School Readiness for Salford City Council shared a presentation on the Voice and Influence Strategy.



It is important to work out the best way to engage with children and young people to establish what a Child Friendly City will look like. It is just as important to talk to partners and those engaging in the programme to understand what a Child Friendly City means to children and young people.

When thinking about what the UNICEF foundation badges - culture, communication, and cooperation and leadership – it needs to be considered what this means. Is it looking at education and learning, place, family and belonging, being safe and secure?

Katie explained that as part of the discovery phase, the programme needed to review the way engagement took place with children and young people. As a city, a commitment needs to be made to ensure that children and young people in Salford have a voice and can influence the work that is done with them.

During the last few months, Salford Council has worked with schools to bring in the voice of children to co-develop a Voice and Influence Strategy. This will also help to set out and develop the engagement with children and young people for the UNICEF Child Friendly City programme.

The full draft Strategy will be shared with this Vocal Forum, and Salford Council are keen to receive any feedback or comments to help shape the Strategy.

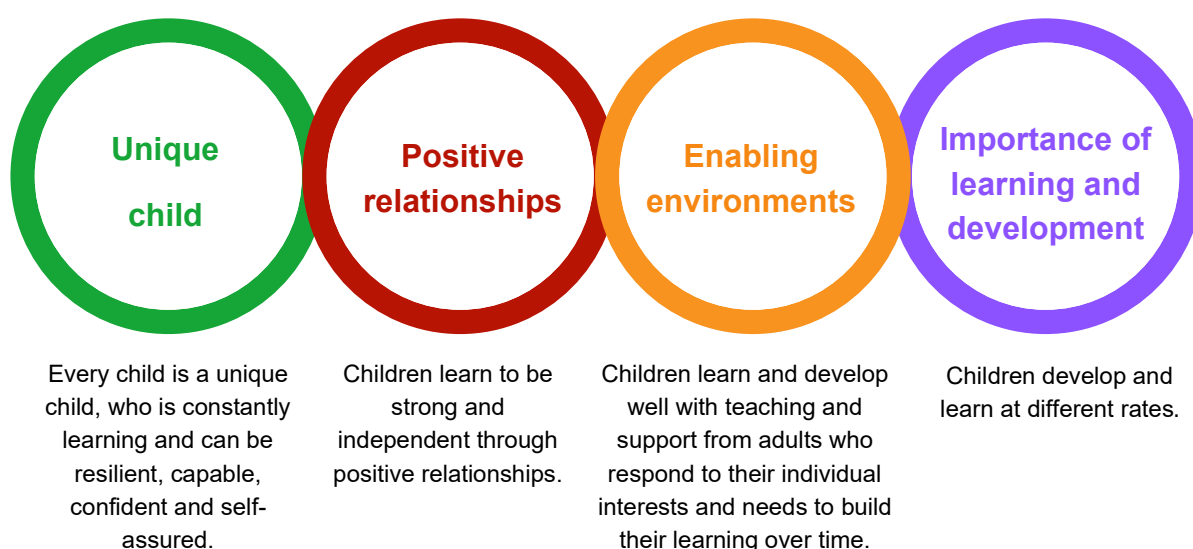
The Voice and Influence Strategy has been positioned in the context of the Child Friendly City, delivering the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. This is committing to the rights of children and young people to be heard and to influence what matters to them.



As a City Council, Salford have aligned the Voice and Influence Strategy with their core values:

- Empowerment
- Participation
- Education
- Equality

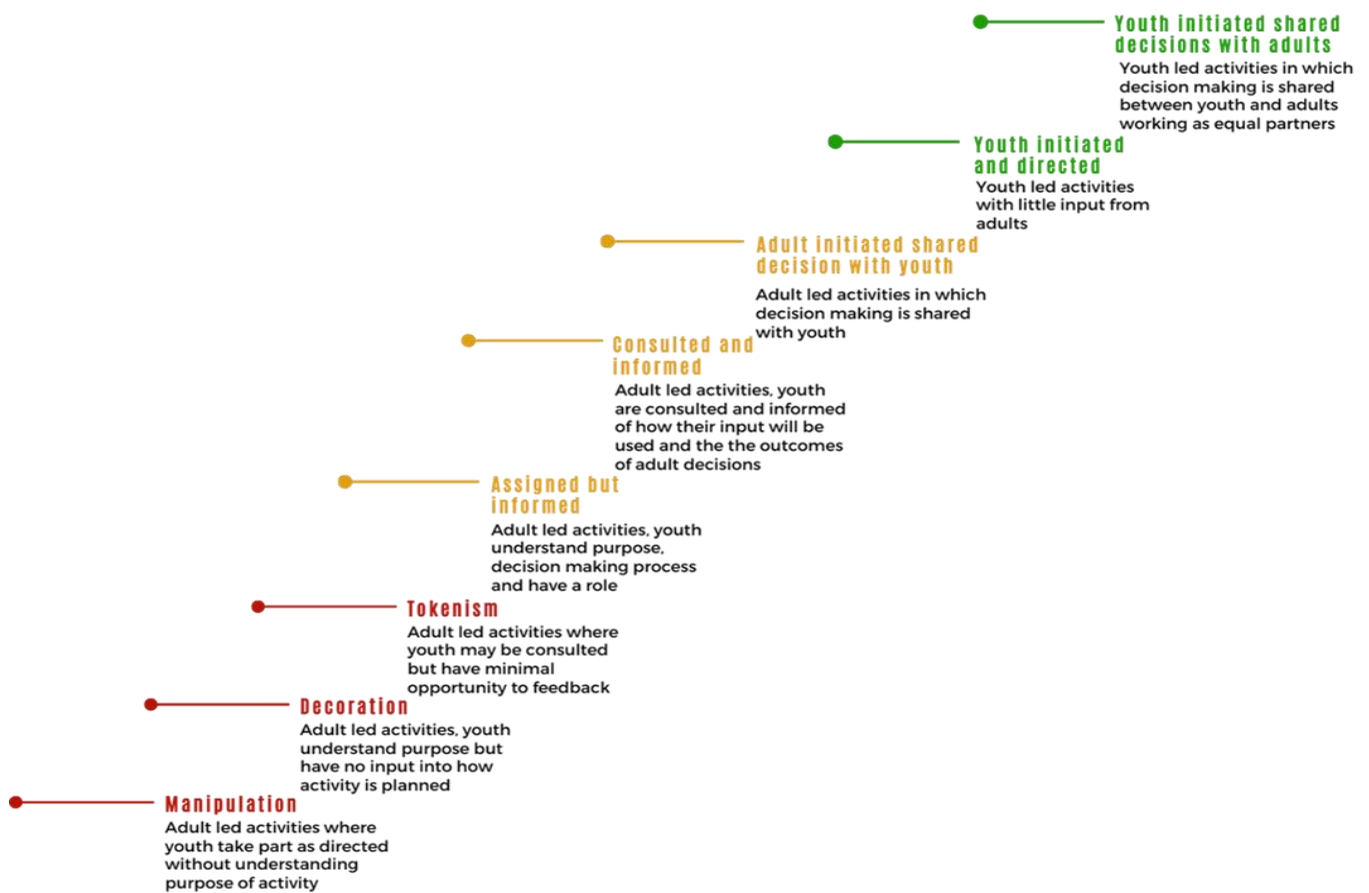
Everything that Salford Council do is already underpinned by the core principles with children aged 0-25 years. The principles emphasise that every child is unique, children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships, they learn and develop well in enabling environments, and the importance of learning and development.



A lot of engagement work with children and young people is already happening. The Council decided to map this work, study the impact it is having, and look at emerging aspirations. This can give an idea on what good engagement and participation can look like with children and young people in Salford.

The ladder of participation reflects gradients of contribution - from negative participation, such as adult led activities where youths take part as directed without understanding the purpose of the activity, up to the best outcomes, such as youth led activities where decision making is shared with youth and adults working as partners.

Salford Council are considering a framework which can be wrapped around the ladder of participation to ensure confidence in moving through the ladder. Practically, not everything that is done needs to be fully co-produced with young people and adults, but there is space for good, meaningful engagement and consultation. Another thing to consider is the response to the the population of young people changing and the need to be continuously moving up and down the ladder of participation as young people grow and develop.



Salford Council have adopted the Lundy Model of participation. Lundy’s model is a way of explaining the overarching commitment to voice and influence and the rights of children and young people into simple messages.



**Space**

Young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.

**Voice**

Young people must be facilitated to express their view.

**Audience**

The view must be listened to.

**Influence**

The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

**Impact**

What happens as a result of hearing children and young people’s voices.

Salford Council have started to use the Lundy model to baseline how effective they are being with creating safe spaces, encouraging children and young people to have a



voice, how they are listening, how they are enabling influence, and how they are able to have impact and the difference it has made. This has been used as an exercise across different services such as the Youth Council, the SEND Youth Council, and other youth groups. Baselineing the work that has already been done will help to identify any gaps. The Council are also starting to talk to schools about how they can use the model to understand the work that they do with children and young people. This may also be of interest to VCSE organisations who may want to use this model, along with Council support, to see where they sit with, or strengthen, the way that they work with children and young people.

Once further work has been done to develop the Voice and Influence Strategy, the Council has set out a commitment to co-develop a tool kit to support people in using the Strategy in the work that they do with children and young people. They are interested to know what appetite there is for organisations to work with them on this.

The Child Friendly City isn't a City Council commitment, it is a whole city commitment and this Voice and Influence Strategy, and tool kit, is part of that. The Council's aspiration over the next few months is to have another children and young people led event to continue the conversation and start to form what some of the priorities will look like for the Child Friendly City.

The Voice and Influence Strategy is looking to launch in April. Currently, it is still in draft form and is open to consultation.

**For further information and comments during consultation please contact:**  
[clare.hopton@salford.gov.uk](mailto:clare.hopton@salford.gov.uk)

## Q&A

The attendees were invited to ask questions or give comments.

**Q – Gill, Salford CVS** – When you're engaging schools, is that colleges and the university too as their needs are different?

**A - Becky** – Yes. A lot of work we've currently been doing has been in secondary school and some primary schools, we've not really gone beyond that. However, through the Child Friendly City steering groups we have representation from colleges and the university, and that is where we want to harness that. The Strategy is currently sitting with that school age but there is a real commitment to capture more across the whole age range. The model is as open as it can be and isn't prescriptive so that it can adapt to different communities.

**Q – Gill, Salford CVS** – Are you engaging with children at risk / in care?

**A - Becky** – Yes, we're using existing forums. Further consultation on the draft Strategy will also ensure that we are engaging with all children and young people.

**Q – Parvin, Yaran NW** – Do you have any speciality in racism?

**A - Becky** – This is something we need to explore. We need to ensure that we are having conversations so we can talk to diverse communities and asking organisations to help us.

**Parvin** - Trust is an issue including trusting Council and people don't want to engage.

**Becky** – Events are being organised through people already in the community rather than the Council. The Council can be invited along but do not host the events to try and break down barriers. It is important to not lose these significant voices.

**Q – David, BASIC** – I accept every neighbourhood is different, but they all have pockets of poverty. Does Salford Council have ambition to create equality across Salford with some budgets that they already have? For example, the Council do a pledge and then ask what other people are going to, e.g. free school meals right across Salford is a big pledge which puts children on the right path to enable them to learn, improve their health etc. I'm looking at organisations working with Salford Council to ask the Council for a big pledge by reorganising your budgets and give us one big thing that you're going to do with that will inspire cooperation from companies, corporates, charities and communities.

**A - Becky** – Something that came out of the original engagement with young people was spaces, parks etc. The first pledge then is about getting environment and parks right. There are themes coming through this, but we are still in the early days. These are the conversations we need to be having. There's realism in that I can't say yes to free school meals, or that we will do every park up, but these are the honest conversations we need to have. However, this has got to be coming from children and young people, that this is what matters to them, and with input from the professionals working with them.

### **Discussion**

The attendees were asked to split into groups to discuss the following questions:

- What are the needs of children and young people within the city?
- How can the VCSE sector support the Child Friendly City Voice and Influence Strategy?

### **Feedback from discussion**

The group fed back their discussion points.

## What are the needs of children and young people within the city?

### Group one

- Safe space to be themselves without pressure of daily life
- Feeling safe on the streets (street lighting, CCTV) – hate crime, racism
- Basics – food, clothing
- Better mental health services
- Counselling services available in schools
- More facilities in the community use – for free
- Better use of pitches / sports facilities – protected time for young people to use for free
- Promoting sports available to boys and girls
- More sports for girls – better promotion
- More out of hours services – evening/weekends
- Safe travel
- Free travel for secondary school children
- Facilities for disabled children / young people
- Neurodiverse children / young people – peer support, more services

### Group two

- Nutrition – free school meals, invest in the earliest years. Marmot report etc
- Safeguarding – communities coming together to reiterate the importance of childhood
- Spaces and things to do – mental distance and geographical distances
- The Council / Local Authority / NHS have a cohort of children and young people, the VCSE sector has a cohort. There isn't a cohort that no one knows!
- Inclusion – racism, disability, minorities, majorities? Lack of enfranchisement
- Work and skills – don't have good positive work experience

### Group three

- Safe, clean, green spaces
- Healthy, nutritious food
- Fun!
- Ambitions / open mindedness / possibility – through role models, through participation and inclusion
- “Culture capital” - important role for community groups / VCSE sector

### Group four

- Education
  - more resources e.g. specialist staff
  - curriculum to meet the needs of all children e.g. BME
  - more schools
  - adequate SEN, early years, primary / secondary provision
  - language barriers – need better communication to help families navigate the complex systems

- Safety
  - In the streets
  - Children safe with helmets
  - More lights in parks
- Safe and free places to socialise – preventing anti-social behaviour
- Healthy free / low cost food / early years free school meals
- Exercise / physical activity / hobbies – free
- Mental health support services
- Free travel for children across the city

## **How can the VCSE sector support the Child Friendly City Voice and Influence Strategy?**

### Group one

- Mental health counsellors disseminating the information they get from young people
- Communication – can share information to grass root organisations
- Do sessions at local groups to share information / get out and about in the community
- Engage the young people to attend where services are currently being delivered
- Sector has access to organisations that Salford City Council don't
- Arrange engagement sessions in diverse communities / all areas of the city
- Accreditation / incentive for people / groups to engage
- Support the development of the tool kit / feed in
- Be involved once the strategy is finished – involved in action plan / delivery
- Examples of good practice from VCSE organisations

### Group two

- A guarantee to follow up – clients engage, engage, engage but we struggle to bring impact back to those clients
- Micro – small VCSE organisations mentoring programme. For example, a person wants to start a food group and CVS helps them to start a food group and then links them into larger food groups
- The VCSE is the master of identity, geography etc

### Group three

- Engaging children on their own terms in environments they feel comfortable
- Partnerships – VCSE / Salford City Council / private sector / between VCSE organisations
- Advocacy / awareness raising – having conversations about Child Friendly City wherever possible

### Group four

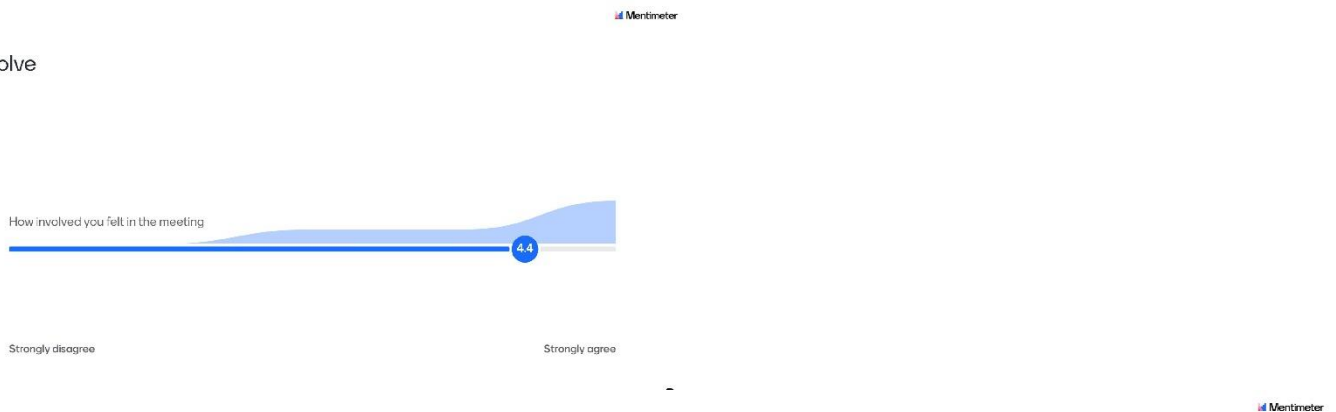
- Engagement with local community – police / access to children and young people, they trust us!

- Safe places for kids to learn, socialise, do activities, exercise
- Life skills – giving a sense of ownership over community, feeling hopeful and useful
- Options for free activities – sport that isn't just football, access to information about what is available. My City – wide information network?

## Mentimeter evaluation

The attendees were asked to give feedback on the Forum meeting.

### Involve



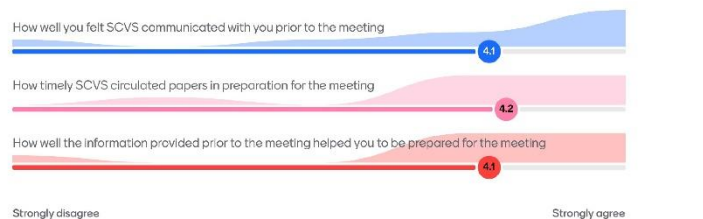
### Collaborate



### Influence



### Communication & Information



What difference has attending this Vocal Forum made to you/your organisation?

- Great to be engaged on the plans
- It was a really positive and enlightening experience
- Gained views of other organisations
- Food for thought
- Useful to hear from VCSE Sector
- Exchange information
- Personally I am excited to find out the interest in become a child friendly city. This meeting has give me some food for thought.



Are there any pressing issues you feel this Forum should be sharing with decision makers from public bodies?

- Limited funding and stretched capacity
- How to make the forum more diverse and encourage local groups to be part of shaping the strategy

