

Vocal

VCSE forums facilitated by
Salford CVS

Vocal Children, Young
People & Families Forum



Date: Wednesday 8th May 2024

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Venue: Eccles Gateway

Number of people registered: 16

Salford CVS staff present: Michelle Warburton (chair), Helen O'Brien (minutes), Noah Mellor (facilitator)

The theme for this forum meeting: Child Friendly City

Michelle Warburton welcomed everyone and asked the attendees to introduce themselves.

The purpose of this meeting was to understand the ambition for Salford to become a UNICEF Child Friendly City. Due to the expense of the process, it is unlikely that Salford will officially register. However, Salford will remain as a city with aspirations to work together to meet the criteria.

Introduction to UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative UK

Child Friendly City is an initiative led by UNICEF UK, which was launched on 20th November 2017 on World Children's Day. It is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The initiative aims to profoundly change the way local governments work with, and for, children and young people.

A Child Friendly City follows these guiding principles:

- non-discrimination - where the rights of all children and young people are respected without any discrimination
- the best interest of the child or young person in primary decisions which may affect them - with government and local authorities, ensuring the protection necessary for a child's welfare
- the government committing to ensure the inherent right to life, survival and development of children
- respect the views of the child or young person – ensuring that the voice and opinions of children and young people are taken into account in relation to any decisions that affect them

A Child Friendly City is a place where children and young people can express their opinions and influence decisions that affect them. It provides a fair chance in life, regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability. It further enables children to meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves. It encourages a good start in life and for children to grow up healthy and cared for whilst participating in family, cultural activities, community, city and social life. It ensures that children live in a safe, secure and clean environment with access to green spaces. A Child Friendly City also means that children are protected from exploitation, violence and abuse.



Salford City Council aspirations for a Child Friendly City

The speaker from Salford City Council was not available for this meeting. Michelle explained that the City Mayor is keen on developing a Child Friendly City. A lot of the local strategies contain some of the same headings and ambitions within them. This suggests that the local authority want to work towards some of the Child Friendly City principles. The registration to become a UNICEF Child Friendly City is a lengthy and expensive process, so it is unclear if the local authority will officially register.

Currently, there is only one UNICEF Child Friendly City in the UK, located in Cardiff. However, many others are going through the process including Manchester and Liverpool in the North West.

To register formally, the local authority must conduct consultations with children and young people about what they feel their priorities are under the UNICEF guiding principles. A plan is then developed and is then signed off by UNICEF UK. The local authority and their partners would then work together to implement the whole plan and approach.

Discussion

The attendees were invited to split into groups to discuss the following questions.

What is in place already that makes Salford a Child Friendly City

- Strengths in the city – Strong VCSE organisation representation
- Organisations doing partnership work
- Greenspaces being developed
- Intergenerational work
- Strong relationships with police and PCSOs
- Peer support for parents and carers
- Strong supportive communities
- Fun day events
- Social eating
- Start Well to Age Well
- Salford Youth Service
- Family Hubs
- Supporting up to 25 years, anyone with SEND
- VCSE sector groups supporting children, young people and families
- Advocacy for children in care
- Social prescribing – Wellbeing Matters
- Early Start scheme
- Wishing Tree Project – view of children and families
- Cultural opportunities – Lowry, Salford Art Gallery, SCL culture, Arts Culture and Place partnership
- The Bridge
- Early Help
- Listening Hub
- Multi-agencies
- Safeguarding partnership
- Transport

What more needs to be done?

- Accountability
- Joint working/collaboration
- Information sharing
- Education system not up to date with training
- Longevity of services in VCSE sector
- Funding
- Map of services in Salford – child friendly/accessible information
- Green spaces – safety
- CYP not feeling safe in schools
- Youth Nexus – Children, young people representation
- Vocal Reps attending meeting
- Interactive things to appeal to young people QR codes etc
- Promotion of services – physical health/activities

- Free activities and accessibility
- Barriers to participation
- Young people mental health services – capacity
- Neurodiversity – waiting lists
- Covid-19 in children’s development and strain on services
- Stigma in community
- Building resilience with young people to continue supporting positive experience
- Lack of support for working people with lack of affordability to support families
- Communication between organisations – how do we link in what others are doing
- Need for physical activity
- Connecting capacity to groups that need it the most

What can the VCSE sector do with Salford City Council to create a Child Friendly Salford?

Priorities:

- Mental health
- Access to support e.g. of physical activities & affording to pay the subs
- Service capacity in our sector and public sector – demand increased post covid
- Transport – our pass, any flexibility on age? Is it child friendly and safe?
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Public sector collaboration:

Mental health

- Better peer support networks
- Intergenerational work in VCSE – replicating family model of family living close by
- Social time – families don’t eat together anymore
- Ask parents to attend children’s sessions – beneficial for parents/carers to do so as helps to interact, develop social skills, peer support to blur the edges and offer informal support
- More awareness of physical activities – disconnection of parents, schools and organisations
- Mental health for parent support – reducing fear/develop understanding of social services. Culture of judging parents

Access to support

- Equipment/kit exchange – swap shops in communities
- Awareness as the professional supporting the family to signpost to low cost options
- Sponsorship/donations

Service capacity

- More use of volunteers
- Share volunteers? Have someone doing the recruitment/volunteer management who can share with other organisations. It will give additional support to smaller organisations who don't have capacity to recruit volunteers
- Children and young people passport – more children/young people volunteers. Break down barriers of this – insurance barriers, lobby insurance companies?

Transport

- Community transport, volunteer driver service, VCSE answer?
- Sharing vehicles with VCSE organisations?
- Tram/trains draw on funding
- Add trams onto the “Our Pass”
- Volunteer drivers – minibuses - MIDAS training, escort training, insurance
- Map minibuses for one off events for VCSE groups – who owns it and when it's free to use
- Mo-bikes, electric bikes – use the cycle routes

How do we involve children and young people in setting priorities for a Child Friendly Salford?

- Liaise with groups dealing with children and young people
- Consultations as a requirement for funding bids – organisations are used to talking to them in groups
- Listening Hub?
- Bee survey through schools – look at what already is being said and align it with Child Friendly Cities
- Look at what is being said and act on it
- Realistic cross section of different backgrounds to create a real picture of what is needed/how they feel
- VCSE design services with communities
- Parity of esteem for VCSE

Summing up and next steps

The report from this meeting will be shared with Vocal Leaders. As this meeting discussed Child Friendly City, the report will also be shared with the City Mayor and the VCSE lead in the local authority.

The Child Friendly City theme will link in with the Vocal Children, Young People & Families Forums for the entire year including play and leisure, health and wellbeing, and safeguarding.

Further comment:

During the meeting, Micky Dacks from I4YPC expressed concerns that as a Vocal member, he is unaware of who the Vocal Representatives are for Children and Young People. He felt that the Vocal Representatives should attend the Forum meetings to provide feedback from the city's strategic partnership and hear the views of Vocal members. He felt frustrated that there was a lack of action after attending strategic meetings and questioned what gets done in Salford.

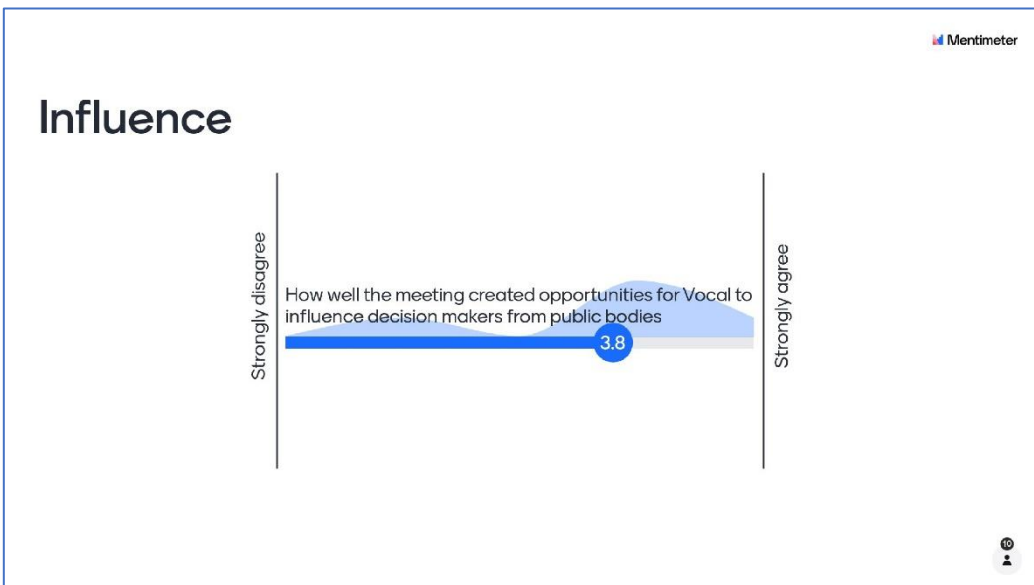
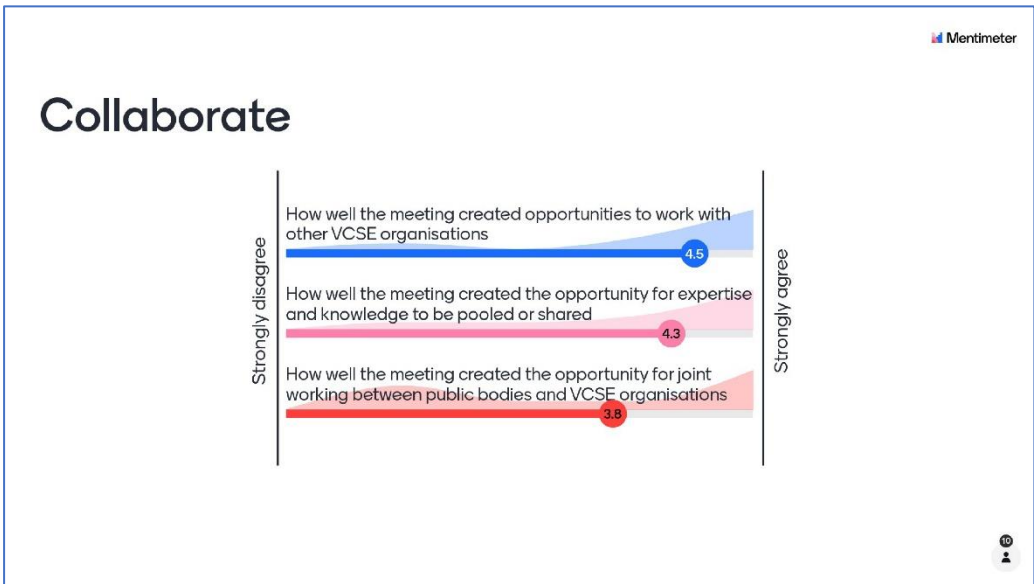
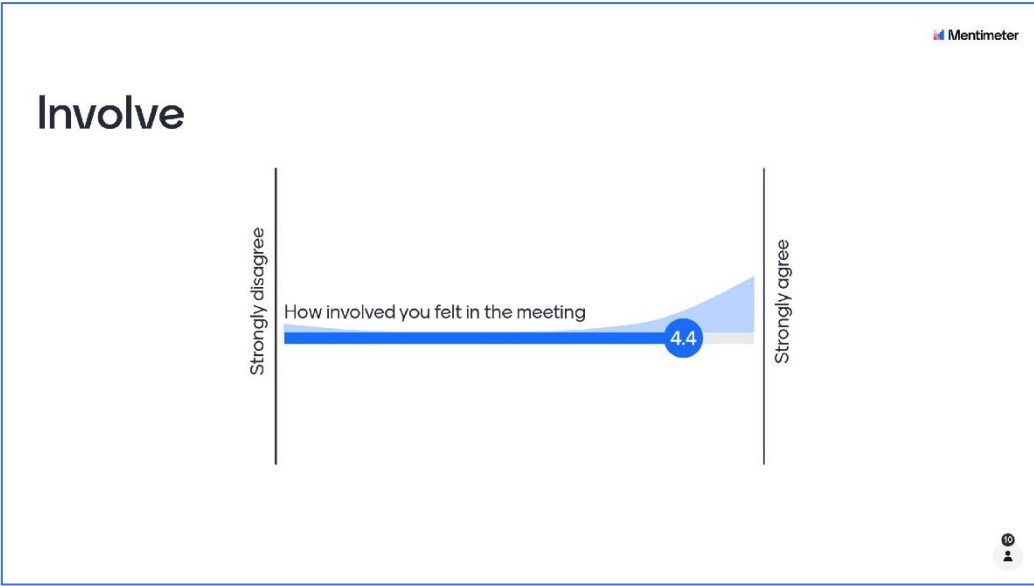
Micky added that if the Vocal Representatives are not present in meetings, or make themselves available, that they should be de-selected. He felt that due to the lack of representation at this meeting, there was no point remaining for the whole session and decided to leave.

Paul Newbould from Patricroft Community Group wanted to add a comment. Paul said that there is so much that organisations can point to that is hard and isn't working and is easy to point fingers. The people who do have responsibility do need to be accountable and we do need to say things about that. However, organisations are used to working in their own areas and following their own model of good principles. Organisations have to accept that life is complex but you live and feed off success when working with children and young people and when things don't work you have to keep going because of your commitment. Paul added it is important to draw on the positives that are working and share that with various groups and put it into good practice, hoping that it benefits children and young people. Paul ended by saying that he is looking forward to finding out more.

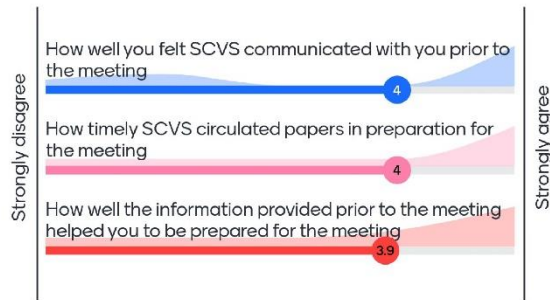
Since this meeting, Salford CVS have made the decision to ensure that future Vocal Forum agendas include an item for reps feedback and opportunities for VCSE organisations to raise issues to their Vocal Representatives. If the Vocal Representatives are not available to attend a Forum meeting, the feedback will be shared in writing with the forum members and any issues will be recorded and sent directly to their representatives.

Mentimeter

The participants were invited to share feedback via Mentimeter.
85% of attendees responded



Communication & Information



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

Have a more understanding as to what is happening and what's not happening in Salford.

By continuing this theme throughout the year we are able to consistently think of ways to implement and gather views from CYP to influence change.

Meeting up with different Organisations and seeing what they can offer/support with. Also discussing views and sharing ideas for solutions

I am aware of Salford CVS input on becoming a child friendly city. I have been given the opportunity to meet other professionals from different organisations.

It helped me realise the depth and extent of good practice within my group, sounds arrogant, but that was a surprising realisation. Great to meet, good networking opportunity.

It's connected me with other people who are trying to achieve the same things as me. It's helped to share my voice with people who make decisions. It's been great to hear what other had to say.



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

An understanding as to what is happening and what is not happening in Salford

No

Need a Map of local services, need a map of community transport/minibuses. Use vcse orgs to gather cup voices.

To understand the council's position in regard to becoming a child friendly city.

It would be useful to have decision makers in the room to discuss some of this with them directly.

