

THEORY OF CHANGE

Child Friendly Cities & Communities
April 2025

UNICEF.UK/CFC

United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK)
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UNITED KINGDOM



ABOUT OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Child Friendly Cities and Communities (CFC) is a UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) programme that works with councils and local partners to put children's rights into practice across the UK.

Our Theory of Change explains how the programme intends to achieve and contribute to lasting change in cities and communities. This is supported by a review of available evidence. More information about the programme is available at unicef.uk/cfc.

Child Friendly Cities and Communities has a Theory of Change which was developed in 2017. We have undertaken a process to update this drawing on our evolving understanding of the programme as it has developed, our engagement with children and young people, and gathering feedback from other stakeholders such as participating councils and their partners, colleagues from the global UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative and UNICEF UK colleagues.



Children in Sandwell share their ideas for making their community child friendly.

CONTEXT

GLOBAL

UNICEF is named within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to provide expert advice and assistance on children's rights (Article 45). UNICEF works with governments, partners and other UN agencies to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals deliver results for every child. UNICEF UK has a mandate to advocate for and promote the rights of children.

Child Friendly Cities and Communities is part of the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, a global UNICEF initiative launched in 1996 by UNICEF and UN-Habitat to act on the resolution passed during the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to make cities liveable places for all. The Child Friendly Cities Initiative also acts as a network that brings together local government and other stakeholders – health and care services, educators, police and youth justice, voluntary organisations, academia, media, the private sector and most importantly children and young people themselves - to realise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at a local level. The programme is an engagement strategy which contributes to the goals in UNICEF's Subnational and Local Governance Programming Framework [1].

Globally and in the UK the programme aims to address the fact that often there is a gap between the rights and entitlements set out in the UNCRC and the lived experience of children and young people. The rationale for the programme is premised on an understanding that by implementing a structured child rights-based approach to public services, local decision-making will be rooted in putting children's rights first and will contribute to better outcomes for children.

NATIONAL

Child Friendly Cities & Communities (CFC) is one of three UNICEF UK initiatives in the UK. It works in partnership with local councils and their partners to achieve change for children in the UK. Collectively, UNICEF UK programmes work towards our goal to achieve impact for children by influencing and supporting the transformation of systems and services for children across health, education and local communities that directly improve the outcomes and life chances of children in the UK. The work supports our strategic outcomes to champion children's rights in the UK and around the world, elevate children's voices and support their active participation.[2]

UNICEF UK has adopted a particular child rights-based approach grounded in the UNCRC which has the following characteristics:

- It serves as a practical framework for working with and for children.
- Rights provide the lens through which all actions affecting children should be rooted, reviewed and resolved.

- It requires knowledge and awareness of children's rights by adults as well as children and young people.
- It promotes and strengthens the relationship between children as rights holders and governments and services as duty bearers. Children are empowered to know about and claim their rights and duty bearers are accountable for ensuring that children experience their rights.

CFC is a three-to-five-year, long-term structured place and strengths-based transformation programme which aims to support a child rights-based approach becoming the main organising framework for policy and practice in a city or community. Using the UNCRC the programme works with political leaders, frontline staff, children and families to transform and strengthen local systems and services.

Children are particularly dependent on public services and support (health and social care, education and public spaces, for example) and can be impacted disproportionately when these are affected by reductions in public spending in general, or in specific policy areas affecting their rights in particular. [3,4,5]. UNICEF UK envisions public services throughout the UK in which child rights are fully embedded, where children's rights are safeguarded, championed and fully recognised and realised.

The programme aims to support culture, and systems change to create communities where children's outcomes are improved, and where every child enjoys their rights, enjoys their childhood, and feels safe, listened to, respected, valued and included.

HOW IT WORKS

WHAT WE DO

Child Friendly Cities and Communities is a partnership that sees UNICEF UK, councils, local organisations, and children and young people work collaboratively to advance children's rights. Together, we embark on a long-term programme rooted in the strengths that already exist within the partnership, and which takes into account local needs and context.

We aim to achieve change for children at a local level through a mix of formal training, ongoing action learning, organisational development and ongoing bespoke expertise, support and guidance from child rights specialists at UNICEF UK. Our work contributes to change for children by supporting and facilitating understanding and practice related to realising children's rights across local public services.

Three priorities (called 'badges') are chosen from a possible ten, and children and young people have an equal say in the decision. In each of these priority areas, a child rights-based approach is embedded into the way decisions are made and services are delivered. Children and young people continue to play a highly active role throughout the programme. Progress

is reviewed regularly by the partnership, with planning and delivery taking place iteratively so that the ripples of impact expand in depth and breadth across a city or community.

Recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly City or Community is a global acknowledgement of how far children's rights have been progressed. Thanks to the networks that have been established, the expertise/knowledge that has been developed, and the ways of working that have been adopted across the whole local partnership, children's rights continue to be advanced after recognition has been achieved.

GOALS

The goals for the programme are:

Healthy, safe, sustainable, and inclusive cities and communities where children's rights are advanced and every child and young person can flourish.

The approach the programme takes to change is focussed on UNICEF's Social Ecological Model [64] and is:

- place-based (addressing and involving children and young people's individual development and well-being at a community level)
- systems-strengthening (focusing on both policy and systems, practice and wider culture and society)
- strengths-based (building on existing good practice, recognising local community expertise and children and young people's assets, families and care givers),
- focussed on capacity-building (increasing knowledge and understanding of children's rights among practitioners and policymakers to create an enabling environment).

To achieve this, the programme works to collectively advance the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and embed a child rights-based approach locally via the following activities:

- Councils and their partners receive training from UNICEF UK on children's rights and how to take a child rights-based approach, on Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA), and on how to meaningfully engage children and young people in local governance and decision-making. Councils are upskilled to continue delivering training beyond the duration of the programme.
- UNICEF UK works with councils and partners to train children and young people about their rights.
- Councils and their partners receive expert support and guidance from UNICEF UK to transform existing culture into one which upholds and promotes children's rights at every level.

- UNICEF UK, councils and local partners collectively gather evidence and disaggregate data to identify inequalities and ensure the needs of all children – particularly those who are vulnerable or at risk of being marginalised – are addressed.
- Councils join UNICEF's national and global community of practice of child-friendly cities and communities which offer mutual support, knowledge exchange, resources sharing and opportunities to make connections.

BADGES

There are a broad range of children's rights set out in the UNCRC and local councils in the UK have similarly wide-ranging responsibilities. As such local councils work with children and other local stakeholders to prioritise a set of 'badges' to focus their work on for the duration of their participation in the programme. There are three mandatory foundational badges: Culture, Communication and Co-operation and Leadership and ten thematic badges from which councils prioritise three: Safe & Secure, Flourishing, Education & Learning, Participating, Child-Friendly Services, Place, Family & Belonging, Healthy, Equal & Included and Innovation. In practice, this means that the work of candidate child friendly cities or communities can look different, some prioritising work on tackling mental health and ensuring services are child-friendly, others prioritising creating free or affordable safe spaces where children can play. There is also overlap across badges.

This Theory of Change focusses on articulating the change the programme seeks to make through the three core badges: Culture, Communication and Leadership and Cooperation, although it also touches on the additional badges of Equal & Included, Participating and Child-Friendly Services.

THE CFC JOURNEY

The programme centres around a four-stage journey:

Discovery – this involves: ensuring safeguarding arrangements are in place, completing a baseline study to support monitoring and evaluation, announcing the partnership and developing a communications plan, ensuring local participation and engagement teams understand the programme, establishing a governance structure and agreeing locally, drawing on evidence and children's priorities - three thematic badges.

Development – the development phase takes two to three months and begins with the agreed badge choices and ends with an agreed action plan being in place.

Delivery – the delivery phase takes two to four years beginning with an approved action plan and ending with measurable progress against badges.

Recognition – recognition demonstrates a council and its partners have successfully established themselves on a child rights journey, acknowledging there is always more work to do before children's rights are fully respected and realised. In order to maintain status as a UNICEF Child Friendly City or Community, submission of evidence of sustained progress at the end of the initial three-year recognition period is needed.

UNDERSTANDING CHANGE IN A CHILD-FRIENDLY CITY OR COMMUNITY

CFC focusses on transformational change by **influencing and supporting systems and services for children** across local communities that directly improve the outcomes and life chances of children in the UK.

Our Theory of Change outlines three levels of change that take place:

- **Outputs** - Building knowledge, capacities and awareness of child rights and a child rights-based approach among individual adult duty bearers, organisations and local systems and children
- **Outcomes** - Changes in action and practice among individual adult duty bearers, organisations and local systems and children
- **Results and impacts** - Changes for children, duty bearers, organisations, and systems

1. BUILDING CHILD RIGHTS CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF A CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Councils and their local partners work to build the capacity of adult duty bearers and organisations to **know about children's rights and a child rights-based approach and its relevance and benefits for every aspect of their work**.

Adult duty bearers learn about the origins of the UNCRC and **know and understand what a child rights-based approach** looks like and their **responsibilities as duty bearers**. For example, adults know about the guiding principles of non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests of the child (Article 3), the right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and the right to be heard (Article 12) and the seven principles of a CRBA, including the Interdependence & Indivisibility principle. Duty bearers know how to embed **meaningful, accessible, and child-friendly mechanisms for participation and youth governance**.

Duty bearers learn about and know how to uphold **equity, inclusion and anti-racism** in their work from a child rights perspective aligned to Article 2 Non-discrimination. Adult duty bearers, especially leaders, learn and understand what ensuring a **child rights-based approach to governance and decision-making** looks like. For example, through Youth

Councils and the application of Child Rights Impact Assessments to all new initiatives. A council and its partners understand, and value child rights informed approaches to **monitoring, evidence and evaluation including the need for disaggregated data.**

Through training, guidance, sharing of expertise and experience a council and its partners understand and value the benefit of taking a child rights-based approach to all its work, encompassing internal and external cooperation and partnership, multi-agency working, governance, policymaking, communications, resource allocation and budgeting. Awareness of children's rights also grows in the wider local system – beyond duty bearers working in the council, to partner organisations, families, carers and children and young people.

Children learn about their **rights** and how to take part in **local decision making**. Children understand where to go for **information, support and services**.

2. PUTTING RIGHTS INTO ACTION AND PRACTICE

Individual adult duty bearers:

Communicating about children's rights, the UNCRC and a child rights-based approach is an important aspect of putting rights into action. Adult duty bearers **use the language of child-rights and a child rights-based approach in all their work** and in doing so **role model and advocate** these on a daily basis.

Over time adult duty bearers work **confidently and sensitively alongside children using practice informed by child rights as a framework** for their work. Adult duty bearers have policies, processes and a work culture in place which means that they are **accountable to every child in all matters affecting them** and that a primary focus is **protecting children from discrimination and harm**.

Organisations as duty bearers:

Meaningful participation is a key feature of a Child Friendly City or Community, and a child-friendly place will **make decisions that are informed by children and young people, through participation and youth governance mechanisms that align with children's evolving capacities and agency** with a particular focus on engaging the most disadvantaged.

A gradual broadening and deepening of practice so that it is sustainable in an organisation and wider community is a key feature of a Child Friendly City or Community. A **child rights-based approach to training and evaluation** will be embedded to support this. Training becomes a self-sustaining activity underpinning the continual development and sustainability of the programme beyond the Recognition process in a positive feedback loop.

The non-discrimination principle is a vital part of a child rights-based approach, and a child-friendly place will focus on ensuring **equity, inclusion and anti-racism through a child rights lens routinely informs the design and delivery of strategies, policies, information, services and support** across a city or community.

Culture, cooperation and leadership are foundational to the programme and a child-friendly community will prioritise and centre **a child rights-based approach to internal and external partnerships, joint-planning and multi-agency coordination**. For example,

a Joint Commissioning Framework's key performance indicators would include child-rights focussed outcomes, joint monitoring of trends relevant for children's outcomes and joint planning around resource allocation.

Over time, duty bearing organisations will **routinely use child rights-informed frameworks and tools across local governance, decision-making, planning, commissioning and delivery of services and support**. For example, the use of Child Rights Impact Assessments, child budgets/participatory budgeting involving children, and child participation frameworks will be part of business as usual, supporting planning, commissioning, delivery and decision-making.

Duty bearing organisations will **use a child rights-based approach to gather and evaluate evidence (and disaggregate data) to inform learning, improvement, programmes and policy**. The programme will support strengthening of **disaggregated data and evidence generation** on the situation of children at a local level to continually feed into priorities for the programme¹. Like training, this outcome becomes a self-sustaining activity underpinning the sustainability of the programme beyond the Recognition process in a positive feedback loop.

Over time, adult duty bearers and organisational cultures supporting child rights and enabling a child rights-based approach, through robust networks, relationships and knowledge, mean that children and young people in a community are better able to: **access equitable, inclusive and anti-racist information, support and services** that meet their needs, **take part in local decision making, hold duty bearers to account** when their rights are not respected, **enjoy their rights** in their community and be **active citizens influencing** their local community. Over time **power will be shared between duty bearers and children and young people**.

3. IMPACTS: CHANGES FOR CHILDREN

CFC takes a long-term, place and strengths-based approach to our goal to realise children's rights in local communities. The multi-agency context in which the programme operates – spanning the work of councils, their private and community-sector partners and other public services like health and social care, education, policing and youth justice, as well as the time frame for the programme mean that determining the difference CFC specifically makes to systems and the change it contributes to in conditions and outcomes for children is complex and challenging to establish. CFC is one of a range of initiatives and factors within a council and local public service delivery context that can impact on children and contribute towards change for them. Evaluating impact or results is therefore complex.

Our Theory of Change explains how we think becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City or Community can help contribute to a range of impacts for children, in the first instance via changes to local duty-bearing organisations and systems.

Our theory suggests that the organisational and systems changes which CFC can contribute can also contribute to children **enjoying their childhoods, feeling safe, listened to, respected, valued, welcome, included and with a sense of belonging to their local community**. Our theory suggests that CFC can also contribute to changes in conditions for children in a city or community, through **provision of child-friendly affordable, accessible**

opportunities for play, public spaces, culture and leisure, a clean environment and fair, inclusive and accessible services.

Our theory suggests that CFC and the work happening under specific badges can contribute to a range of positive outcomes for children in the longer term and aims to contribute to the evidence base for the programme by providing a framework for future evaluation.

CFC IMPACT: WHAT DOES EXISTING EVIDENCE TELL US?

“Every child will feel free and have the opportunity to do anything as nothing will be hindering them.” - Child in CFC Candidate City

This section summarises the available evidence about the outcomes and impact of CFC, and the global UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative, for children as well as wider evidence from similar long-term, place-based programmes. It primarily draws from wider literature around child rights, child rights-based and place-based approaches as well as impact studies and reports from across the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, and emerging anecdotal evidence, that supports the links we make in our Theory of Change between changes made in duty-bearing local public services, organisations and systems and changes on different children’s outcomes in areas like health, educational, social and emotional wellbeing, equity and inclusion and longer-term social benefits.

Embedding a child rights-based approach through long term, place-based programming...

Child Friendly Cities & Communities works in partnership with local councils and partners – as duty bearers, to embed a child rights-based approach across all their work. Local councils have extensive responsibilities and powers that impact on the environment and services children encounter. The relationship between human rights and key public services, such as health, planning and social care, is fundamental [7]. A child rights-based approach requires local authorities to embed the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in decision-making and establishes a shared language and culture of children’s rights across the local council, partner agencies and the wider community.

Place-based approaches have emerged over the past decades as important for supporting population level changes around outcomes of the kinds CFC aims to achieve for children [8]. Long-term, place-based programming addresses social issues and challenges with complex change pathways; like embedding child rights-based approaches to help realise children’s rights and improve outcomes for children across a city or community. The CFC programme aims to create an **enabling environment** at a **community-level** to improve children’s outcomes.

...leads to changes in culture, practice, and policy...

One of the primary ways in which CFC aims to create change for children and young people is by transforming local government and public services to be more inclusive of children’s needs and interests. CFC does this through a mix of advice, guidance, training to support child rights-informed partnership and planning.

Research in nine cities across seven countries, including the UK, finds cities and communities participating in CFC involve children and young people more often and engage them to a greater extent in their **decision and policy-making processes**. Offering children and young people a wider range of **opportunities to be involved in local decision and policy-making** processes and supporting them to **raise concerns or issues about matters affecting them**, contribute to children and young people being better able to participate as active citizens [7].

Emerging evidence from the CFC programme in Spain, Germany and Switzerland and Liechtenstein, among others, suggest that the programme can positively contribute to **strengthening local systems** by supporting advances in coordination and alliance between local government departments, and between local government and other local actors in support of children's rights [9, 10, 11]. Independent research has shown an increased **cooperation in the creation of child- and youth-based policies within cities and communities** [7].

Furthermore, in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, advanced CFC municipalities reported **increased budgets for child-centred policies** [11]. Emerging evidence from CFC in other countries suggests that the programme can contribute to changes in **resource allocation** to focus on children; **culture change** within local duty bearing organisations to focus on children and young people as citizens with their own rights, and an **increase in investment in children and young people**. For example, an evaluation of the CF programme in Spain found an increase in the budget for Local Childhood Action Plans, which grows by 1.4 % each additional year that a local entity remains part of the CFC programme [9]. There is also evidence around the rate of return for investment in CFC which suggests that the programme can be highly effective in some national contexts in raising children's issues, mobilising, and leveraging **local investment**, especially in decentralized or devolved contexts [12].

And, anecdotally, for adult duty bearers, taking part in the process of developing a Child Rights Impact Assessment in itself affects the way they regard children's policy and children and young people's place in society [13].

...that contribute to changes in children's lives

By contributing to changes in culture, practice and policy and ensuring that **meaningful participation** is at the core of the work of local councils and their partners, CFC can contribute to **children feeling listened to, respected and valued** in their communities. In support of this, studies have shown that young people's participation in the planning and design of child-friendly public spaces increases children and young people's perception on them being **listened to and heard** by their city and on their contributions in changes in their community [14]. Through inclusion in participatory practices and opportunities to experience other cultures and religious events in their local area, young people also developed a greater **sense of belonging and inclusion within their communities** [14].

In addition, studies show that where participation is meaningful, it can improve children's sense of agency, resilience, self-esteem, problem solving, sense of control, **overall wellbeing** as well as supporting knowledge and skill development, self-advocacy, and confidence and motivation [15,16, 17, 18,19]. A study exploring the relationship between children's knowledge and perceptions about their rights and subjective well-being in a

sample of 8-, 10- and 12-year-olds in 18 countries finds that children reporting that they knew their rights, knew about the UNCRC, or thought that adults respected their rights show **significantly higher subjective wellbeing** scores than those reporting otherwise [20].

Furthermore, it has been shown that participating in public service development and community engagement can foster children and young people's sense of connectedness and belonging, leading to improved **mental wellbeing and social competence** [21, 22]. Factors such as perceived neighbourhood safety and the general surrounding natural and built environment have also been previously recognised to have a significant role in **early child's health, mental health outcomes and overall development** [23, 24, 25].

For children, **being listened to** is important as a sign that they are a **valued** population group, and it also encourages them to grow up into active and engaged adults [26]. An impact report from Cardiff, the first city in the UK to be recognised by UNICEF as a Child Friendly City [27] shows that 91 % of children and young people engaged in formal participatory mechanisms feel like they have the necessary skills and opportunities to be able to influence policy and actions at least sometimes. Such enhanced skills have the potential to contribute to their long-term involvement as **active citizens**. Wider literature shows that all forms of civic engagement during late adolescence and early adulthood are positively linked to outcomes in their transition to adulthood, including better academic achievement and future socioeconomic status [28].

Engaging young people in civic activities has positive impacts not only for the individual but also the wider community. For example, a cost analysis on the benefit of a co-produced health promotion initiative with adolescents shows that this approach is not only efficient, producing **relevant savings**, but also potentially making available more than 3,000 hours of professionals' time [29].

CFC can also contribute to the extent to which children and young people feel **safe** in their communities. Between 2019 and 2022, the number of children in Cardiff said that they felt "safe" in their neighbourhood increased from 83% to 87% [27]. The evaluation of the CFC programme in Spain finds a positive correlation between the time a city has been involved in the programme and the percentage of children and young people reporting they feel safe in public spaces [9].

CFC aims to **reduce inequalities** in children's outcomes. For example, taking a similar approach to CFC, a place-based programme in Belfast has shown that strong youth engagement processes can strengthen **social inclusion** of children, which over time can contribute to their mental and social well-being and have the greatest impact on children from **disadvantaged backgrounds** [30]. Rights-based approaches have been linked with improved protection and support for **vulnerable or marginalised populations**, including children [31].

By creating **child-friendly changes across services**, and advocating for the importance of the UNCRC, the CFC programme can be linked to improved outcomes including in education settings. In Cardiff, the CFC programme had a focus on education and supported local schools to become part of the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Programme. By recognition as a Child Friendly City, three-quarters (76%) of primary school pupils in Cardiff attend a Rights Respecting school [27]. Strong evidence has shown that pupils attending

Rights Respecting schools feel positively at school and about themselves, enjoy school and are more engaged in their learning and school life [32]. Additionally, a national outcomes review in Scotland suggested that the recognition of children's rights in educational settings may lead to improved educational experiences and outcomes [19].

The process of becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City or Community itself is considered as an important vehicle for making sustained improvements in terms of child-friendliness [11], enabling participating cities and communities to contribute to **children enjoying their childhoods**. This is highlighted in the experiences of communities in Switzerland and Germany [10,11], where the reported impact of the CFC programme becomes more profound over time. Children in these cities and communities rated their cities as more child-friendly, and cities working towards 'child-friendliness' for a longer period reported observed improvements in the extent to which children were considered by adult decision-makers - with visible improvements in their living conditions and the overall child-friendliness of their communities [11]. Places and neighbourhoods that meet children's needs also support other age groups and contribute to creating and **regenerating sustainable neighbourhoods** [30].

There is less evidence on the specific contribution of CFC to impacts for children related to the provision of, and accessing of, child-rights informed accessible play, culture and leisure locally. However, anecdotally in the UK CFC candidate cities and communities are applying child rights-based approaches to directly influence things like advocating for provision and design of initiatives like School Streets and Active Travel plans as well as the design of play areas, community and health hub spaces and other regeneration activities. Similarly, there is currently limited evidence of the contribution of CFC to work to ensure a clean environment and clear air locally. Given the timeframes for these initiatives, we anticipate emerging outcome and impact evidence in the future.

RELEVANT EVIDENCE FROM COMPARABLE PLACE-BASED PROGRAMMING

More broadly, and relevant for the CFC programme, is emerging evidence around the contribution of similar place-based approaches to a range of targeted and population level outcomes. In the UK, local level evidence from the National Lottery Community Fund's Better Start programme – which aims to improve child development outcomes for children through place-based programming - suggests that place-based approaches can contribute to a change across a range of outcomes [33].

Furthermore, a review of seven place-based approaches in the UK context in areas of work involving or relevant to youth violence (including strengthening communities, reducing poverty and supporting vulnerable young people and children in the early years as well as specific focus on reducing youth violence) shows that there is emerging evidence of perceived positive impact of these approaches on individuals' mental health and wellbeing, strength and quality of relationships, and educational attainment. The review also draws attention to the emerging **systems change** resulting from place-based approaches, including changes in increased community infrastructure and connectivity, influencing local service provision, increased funding, increased community-led action and change, and **cultural change** [34].

Similarly, a National Literacy Trust literature review shows that place-based programmes have been found to be effective in engaging disadvantaged people in programmes and services by creating new services and activities, raising awareness of existing services, tailoring activities to specific groups, and ensuring services meet people's needs in a more joined up way [35].

An OECD paper on Wellbeing and Inequalities highlights the role of place-based child-friendly initiatives in supporting issues which go beyond individual specific behaviours and outcomes and their role as resource efficient policy options which can help identify, prioritise and address particular community-identified needs [36]. The paper demonstrates the importance of local neighbourhoods, and the opportunity place-based initiatives – like CFC – provide, for children's wellbeing and outcomes.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE EVIDENCE BASE

The current academic and policy literature agrees that determining the impact of child rights and child rights-based approaches on a range of child outcomes is complex and challenging to establish, and that new methodologies to assess the realisation of rights are needed [37]. Similarly, there is a need beyond the CFC programme for more systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of place-based policies on children's outcomes [38, 39]. That said, wider evidence suggests that increases in national and local government policies and resources, directed at children – of the kinds advocated for through CFC and a child rights-based approach – improve child health and wellbeing. Similarly, children's health and wellbeing and other outcomes are affected by a range of place-based factors – local services, the natural and built environment, housing, transport, playgrounds, pollution, social relationships, safety and participation – all of which our Theory of Change suggest can be positively influenced by the activities undertaken through the Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme.

READING OUR THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM

The Theory of Change diagram visually explains and communicates our vision for change in a Child Friendly City or Community. It sits at a programme level. It is broadly aligned to the three core badges and aims to encompass outcomes identified in candidate cities' or communities' CFC Action Plans used as part of the progress review and recognition process, and decided locally.

The Theory of Change is best read from left to right.

- **Activities** describe what UNICEF UK, local councils and partners do. Collectively advancing the UNCRC and embedding child rights-based approaches throughout local systems.
- The first levels of changes on the left of the diagram are the **outputs** that the programme activities intend to achieve, through building children, adult duty bearers and organisations' capacities – their **understanding and knowledge of children rights**.

- The middle level of the diagram shows **outcomes**, both short and longer term. These are **changes in actions and practice** that contribute to creating a Child Friendly City or Community and changes for children and young people. CFC is a place-based programme and many of the things shown in these separate boxes are interrelated. Outcomes are specific to children, to adult duty bearers and to organisations. Some outcomes go on to become activities in a virtuous feedback loop, deepening and broadening local systems. Some outcomes are about changes in practice which positively change conditions for children.
- To the right of the diagram are the **impacts** or **changes for children** which the CFC programme intends to contribute to. CFC is one part of a range of factors: service provision, support, programmes, initiatives in a community and regionally and nationally, which can affect change for children.

The outputs and outcomes are shown in different boxes for children as rights holders and adults as duty bearers. Duty bearers can be primary (those employed by or acting on behalf of the state to directly deliver or oversee provision for children and young people) and secondary (those adults with a non-statutory role in children's lives, including volunteers, extended family members and to an extent, parents and carers although these are also rights holders under the UNCRC) as well as individual and organisational.

The Theory of Change relates to a local council and / or multi-agency setting at local government level.

UNICEF UK aims to support every child and young person from 0 to 18 years old, especially the most excluded. The changes for children that we present in this Theory of Change can reflect the different and evolving capacities of children. Each of the changes can apply at different levels depending on individual children's needs and evolving capacities.

Our Theory of Change uses UNICEF definitions for outputs, outcomes and impact from the Results Based Management Handbook: Working together for children (UNICEF 2017). It builds on our previous CFC theory of change (UNICEF UK 2017).

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