

CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES & COMMUNITIES

A global Unicef initiative

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

The Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme welcomes expressions of interest from councils who are ambitious in their local vision for children and young people and ready to pioneer a high-profile initiative over a minimum three-year partnership with Unicef UK. In order to join the programme, councils must be able to demonstrate political and strategic commitment to embedding children's rights across the city/community, and be willing to work collaboratively and creatively with Unicef UK, local partners and children and young people to achieve this. Unicef UK will work with councils to develop a realistic action plan and sustain momentum throughout the journey.

If you're interested in working with us, we invite you to submit a formal expression of interest outlining your reasons for wanting to join the programme and evidencing how you meet the participation criteria. Full participation criteria are below, and a formal expression of interest form accompanies this document. We will be in touch shortly after your submission to arrange a discussion before making a decision.

Formal expressions of interests are currently to be submitted by invitation only following earlier discussion with the Child Friendly Cities & Communities team at Unicef UK.

CRITERIA

Before joining the programme it's important that both Unicef UK and the council are confident that the city or community is ready to implement an ambitious child rights programme of change. We therefore ask interested councils to confirm the following:

1. MOTIVATION AND READINESS

Is this the right time for your council and the wider city/community to join the programme?

Enthusiasm to join the programme should be backed up by a readiness to implement an ambitious local programme of work. Councils will be required to benchmark local child rights outcomes, identify strengths and gaps and develop and implement new child-centred approaches and/or build on and scale existing ones. All of this will be done in collaboration with local partners, children and young people and with training and support from Unicef UK. It will require leadership, governance, imagination, sustained effort and a pioneering spirit from across the city/community. Reflecting on the full participation criteria should help councils decide whether the city/community is 'implementation ready'.

2. VISION

Do you have a clear vision of what you hope to achieve for children and young people through participation in the programme?

Child Friendly Cities & Communities seeks to realise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – a comprehensive human rights treaty which sets out a vision of childhood underpinned by dignity, equality, safety and participation – at the local level. Embedding children’s rights in the planning, design and delivery of local services requires a long term commitment to change, and a readiness to involve children as partners and key stakeholders.

3. COMMITMENT TO CHILD-CENTRED PRACTICE

Can you build on a pre-existing commitment to child rights and child-centred practice?

Our programme is strengths-based. This means highlighting and building on existing good practice, as well as identifying gaps and developing new ways of working. There are many existing programmes, initiatives and embedded ways of working – from small-scale local projects to national schemes and models – that chime with a child rights-based approach. Some examples are ‘asset-based approaches’, ‘restorative practice’ and ‘co-production’. We want to ensure local authorities’ participation in the programme helps them break new ground, while maximising the impact of existing or planned initiatives.

4. A MEANINGFUL COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION

Are you committed to enabling children’s ongoing, meaningful participation and forging new ways of supporting children and young people’s involvement in local decision-making?

Central to adopting a child rights-based approach is a requirement that children be seen as capable, resourceful and competent individuals and that they are supported – through enabling structures and processes – to play an active role in shaping local services. We see this as an iterative and collaborative process; working in partnership to build on existing good practice, while identifying and tackling barriers that may prevent children and young people from participating in the life of their community. Special attention should be paid to supporting children who find it harder to have a say in matters that affect them.

5. COMMITMENT TO LEARNING AND REFLECTION

Are you prepared to take part in a learning programme which requires reflection, experimentation and ongoing data collection and monitoring?

One of the goals of the programme is to grow the evidence base in support of child rights in practice. We are committed to continuous learning and reflective practice. Throughout the delivery of the programme we’ll be working with in-house and external evaluation partners to capture data, collect evidence and measure the impact the

programme is having on local outcomes for children. We'll enthusiastically welcome the involvement of local research partners such as universities or consultancies.

6. COMMITMENT AT ALL LEVELS AND CROSS-COUNCIL BUY-IN

Is there political commitment to the programme as well as commitment from across the wider council?

Successful participation in the programme requires sustained commitment at all levels: from elected members through directors and heads of key services, to team leaders and frontline staff. As well as confirming that there is cabinet level support for the work, councils are asked to designate at least six "champions" whose role it will be to raise the profile of the programme and promote the work that takes place over its lifetime. Two champions must be political, while the remaining champions should represent an influential cross-cutting profile of the council. Champions should come together on a regular basis to ensure effective coordination of the programme.

7. GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

Will there be a robust, transparent and accountable local governance and coordination structure in place to implement the programme?

In order to effectively manage, monitor and reflect on progress, it's vital to coordinate and regularly review programme activities. We'll need to know that this has been given serious and sensible thought ahead of commencing programme activities so we'll ask for a named coordinator(s) and evidence that this person(s) will be supported by robust coordination and governance structures. This could be an existing multi-agency group, partnership board or scrutiny committee. Or it could be a brand new group bringing together programme champions who then report to an established committee.

8. PLACE-BASED APPROACH

Will you take an inclusive, collaborative, community-wide approach in your delivery of the programme?

In order to flourish, children and young people rely on a wide range of services – statutory, voluntary and private – which is why we ask councils to take a whole community approach and reach out to key local partners, organisations and agencies to successfully implement the programme. This might include Clinical Commissioning Groups, Councils for Voluntary Services, the police, the local media etc. We'll need to know that local partners will play a substantial role in the ideation, development and delivery of the programme. You may also consider the role of the local partners in the governance of the work (see criteria 6 and 7).

9. COSTS AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Can you commit to paying the direct programme fees and ensure there are adequate resources available locally to implement the programme over three years?

Programme fees: Unicef UK charges an annual fee (subject to review in 2019). Unicef UK is a registered charity operating on a not-for-profit basis. All income raised contributes to the administration of the programme and the delivery of services.

Indirect costs: In addition to the programme fee, councils may incur indirect costs resulting from local coordination of the programme. Indirect costs are not prescribed but could include, for example, the creation of a dedicated post or a part-time secondment, provision of training venues, releasing staff for training and planning activities, producing awareness-raising materials and outreach events etc.

10. STANDARDS

Can you explain how joining the programme will contribute to improving local standards and outcomes?

While participation in the programme comes with the opportunity to obtain international recognition as a "Child Friendly City" or "Child Friendly Community", Unicef is not an inspectorate like Ofsted or the Care and Social Services Inspectorate. We welcome interest from and will work with councils regardless of their current inspection outcome if they are able to make a very strong case that they are ready, but we will never recognise a council with a poor or inadequate inspection outcome as 'Child Friendly'. It's therefore important that applying councils are confident that this is the right time to join the programme (see criteria 1) and are able to explain how joining the programme will contribute to and complement existing improvement plans. We'll also expect the council to engage in honest dialogue with Unicef UK about this from the outset. Councils joining the programme with a poor or inadequate outcome may take longer to gain 'Child Friendly' status, but it is our strong belief that the full adoption of a child rights-based approach will lead to improved services for children and young people.

11. YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Can you identify what support you might need from Unicef UK to ensure success in the programme?

The Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme is collaborative by design. The success of the programme is dependent on ongoing dialogue and co-operation between Unicef UK and councils, including local delivery partners (see criteria 8) and children and young people (see criteria 4). We'd like to have a good understanding of your particular local needs and how you would best like us to support you throughout your programme journey.