

Southampton's Children
and Young People's
**Participation
Strategic Plan
2022-2027**

Join us and make a difference
to children and their families



southampton.gov.uk



Children
& Learning
Making a difference



SOUTHAMPTON
CITY COUNCIL



Our vision

“We want all children and young people in Southampton to have a good start in life, live safely, be healthy and happy and go on to have successful opportunities in adulthood.”

Our focus and approach:

Child Friendly Southampton

Southampton's vision is to become a Child Friendly City starting in 2021 and working towards the goal of accreditation with UNICEF UK by 2024/25. Our values as a Child Friendly City are to:

Be Inclusive – by becoming a participative city in which children experience meaningful engagement in the design, delivery and place shaping of Southampton;

Listen – by implementing a participation framework for children within Southampton City Council's democratic processes within which consultation with children takes place;

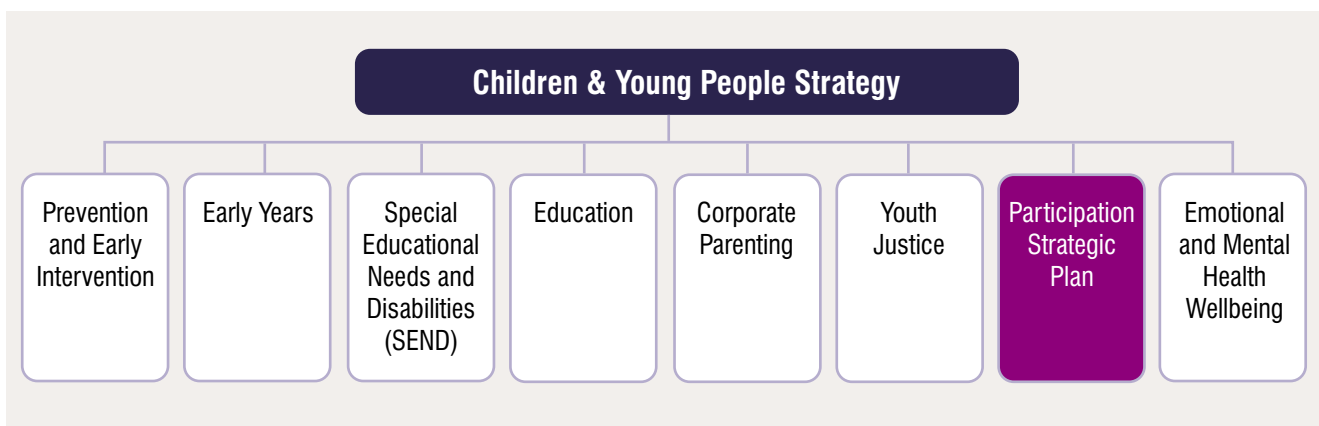
Learn - by ensuring all strategy and policy is informed by the active engagement of children, with new strategic commitments expressed in child friendly terms to support children's inclusion and participation in civic policy creation.

Raising living standards and confronting deprivation

Southampton is a relatively deprived city, with children and young people disproportionately affected. About one in five children are in low-income families and can experience poor housing, family debt and financial anxiety, and food insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an exacerbation of deprivation and inequalities. This plan contributes to a robust strategy which will steer local services in their work to raise living standards and confront deprivation.

Southampton Children and Young People's Strategy 2022 – 27

Southampton's overarching Children and Young People's Strategy is underpinned by eight strategic plans, alongside a range of service delivery and improvement plans.



FOUR KEY PRIORITIES

This Children and Young People Strategy has four key priorities:-



Each underpinning strategy or action plan supports the achievement of these priorities either directly or indirectly through service specific goals and actions.

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

The overarching principles that we are working to and which you will see in this plan are:

Early intervention, prevention, and inclusion

We will invest in prevention, working with schools and communities to identify needs and deliver services as early as possible, to meet needs at the right time, in the right place and in the right way. We will promote educational inclusion and focus on preparing children for transitions and independence.

Relationship based work

We will build and sustain relationships of trust to build on successes, strengthen the quality of practice and make change together with: All children, young people, families and carers; Each other; Schools and colleges; Partners (health, police, voluntary and cultural sectors) and local communities.

Locality working

We will bring our services closer to the communities they serve by changing how and where we work. We will use local knowledge and intelligence (e.g. data and feedback) to ensure communities can access the services they need from us and partners, closer to home.

A skilled and stable workforce

We will build and develop confident, multi-skilled teams and future leaders through a strong learning and development offer and “high support, high challenge” culture, enabling more consistent relationships with children, families, schools and partners.

Child Friendly Southampton

Southampton has been working to become a Child Friendly City since adopting restorative practice in 2017.



Southampton City Council | Participation Strategic Plan

Southampton's vision is to become a Child Friendly City starting in 2021 and achieve recognition as a UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Child Friendly City by 2024/25. Our values as a Child Friendly City are to:

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Child Friendly Southampton

In 2021, Southampton City Council and partner organisations jointly agreed at Corporate Parenting to make this a reality by joining the UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme. The city has been accepted onto the programme and will work with UNICEF UK until at least 2024 to achieve recognition as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City.

UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities and Communities

UNICEF UK works with local authorities who aspire to become Child Friendly Cities and Communities by ensuring that children's rights are put into practice.

The programme aims to create cities and communities in the UK where all children – whether they are living in care, using a children's centre, or simply visiting their local library – having meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.

They provide training based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and support councils, their partners, children and young people, as they work together on an ambitious three-to-five-year journey towards international recognition as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City or Community.

In Southampton, regardless of our success at achieving UNICEF UK recognition or not, the city aspires to become a Child Friendly City with exemplars of good practice involving children in the design, review and implementation of policy in transport, public health, culture and heritage, as well as communities' teams.

What is Participation?

Participation is a two-way communication, working together with children and young people to achieve better outcomes. This means co-production of:

- **policies and strategies**
- **developing and evaluating of services**
- **involvement in recruitment**
- **improving processes**
- **publicity**

Our participation strategy has been designed to engage with children, young people and adults up to the age of 25.

Difference between Participation and Consultation?

CONSULTATION (DONE FOR):



Here is a mug design for the council, children and young people would be typically asked:

- What do you like about the mug?
- What do you dislike?
- How would you improve it?

PARTICIPATION (DONE WITH):



Here is a blank mug for the council, this can now be produced together with children and young people. The design boundaries are set at the beginning:

- Council logo must remain
- Only 4 colours can be used
- Not all ideas can be used but a reason will be given why not

Whether it is programme planning, service design, evaluation, research, recruiting a new member of staff, writing a policy or strategy or supporting an individual child or young person it should be co-produced. Participation also refers to children and young people's participation in their local community, their interaction with space, opportunities to play and enablers that support travel and healthy lifestyles.

Involvement of children and young people can bring about significant improvement in performance, improve the quality of services utilised by children and young people as well as create communities that are healthier and safer for children and young people as active citizens.

Types of Participation:

It is important to ask children and young people for their views before making any decisions that may affect them.

There are 3 key areas to engaging children and young people in decisions:

- **Individual or collective voice of children and young people:**

Communicating with individual or groups of children and young people where services are provided, accounting for their age and understanding, before decisions which affect them are made. This should be followed up by ensuring an explanation to them of how and why decisions are made. This includes discussions with young people in a case work context, such as for example IRO's and social workers. It also means ensuring services respond to information shared by children and young people in surveys, with mechanisms provided to ensure actions that have been taken that they do not like can be challenged or reviewed. Collective voice includes the Youth Council and Junior Neighbourhood Wardens.

- **Equalities for children and young people:**

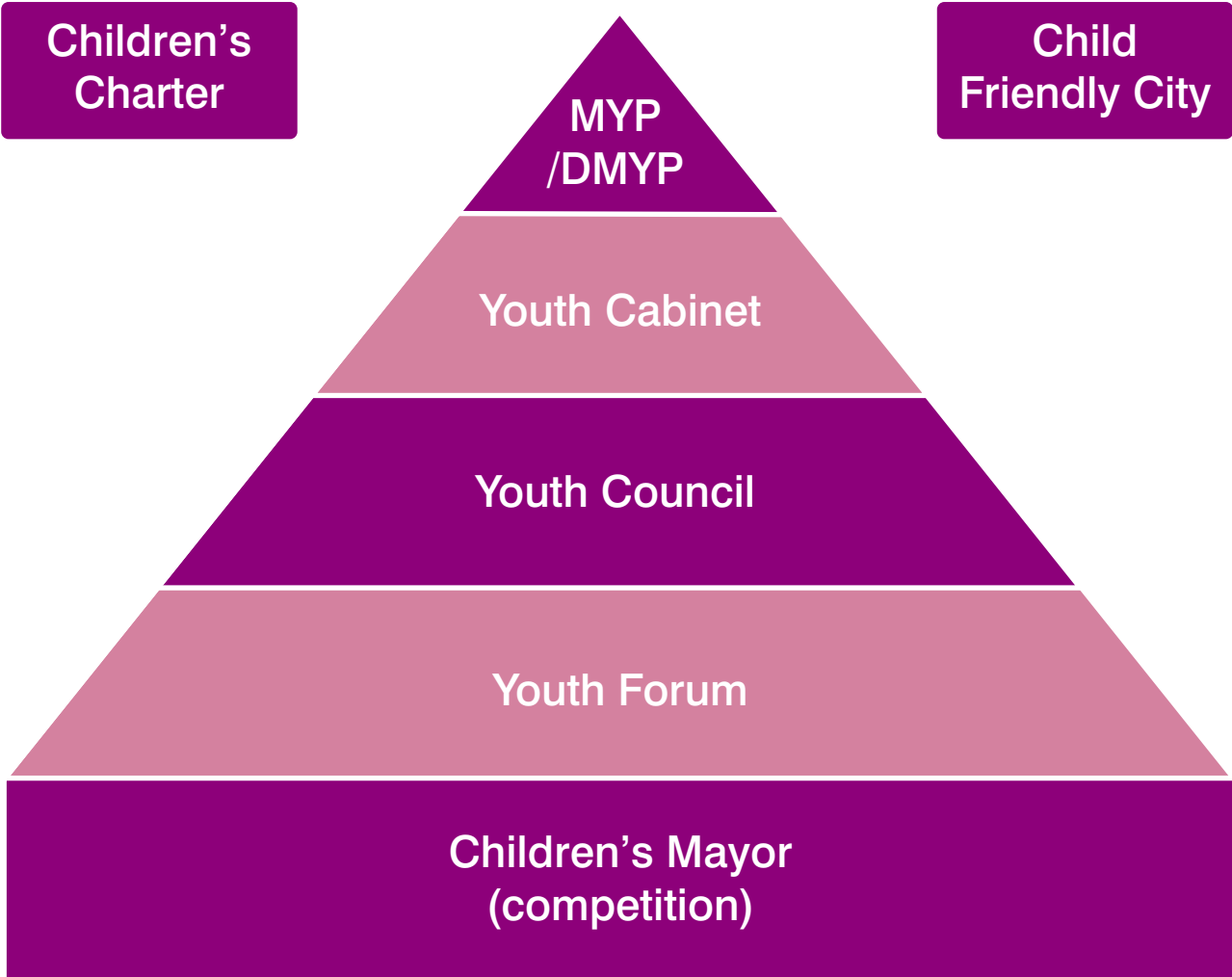
Overcoming equalities targeting and engaging with children and young people with needs or the most marginalised, who are affected by possible developments or changes before any decisions are taken. For example: if you were developing services for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) then you would approach those organisations/services that work with and support children and young people with SEND including the voluntary/community sector to ensure that their voice can be collected. Other initiatives such as changes to the design of safe walking routes around schools, the impact of crime or transport infrastructure must similarly ensure that the voices of the most marginalised children or those with specialist needs are accounted for. This includes utilising forums such as Southampton Voices Unite, the SEND forum, school councils and Southampton Youth Forum to gauge the opinions and feelings of children and young people affected by change. Particular effort should be taken to ensure that children and young people who do not access school or take part in traditional forms of participation can get involved such as for example children who are home schooled, children placed out of area or children who are involved in the criminal justice system.

- **Surveys involving children and young people:**

A paper or online questionnaire. Care needs to be taken to design forms which are short and simple, easy to complete and accessible using child friendly questions and asking only questions that have value to young people. It is not enough to be seen to want to collect the views of children and young people; the experience of asking them must be valuable in and of itself. This might mean providing different versions of the same survey such as in different languages, BSL or for the visually impaired; provided pictorially or through story telling for early years. They must be easy to read, communicated in print and not assumed to be better provided digitally which many children and young people do not have access to.

The survey should itself be designed with children and young people to ensure all questions are necessary, avoid using leading, biased and double questions and pilot it before it is officially launched. This includes Make Your Mark and BrightSpots.

Participation and Representation within Local Government Structure for Southampton:



You said, we did

It is important to evidence the impact on the:

- **Individual voice** - what difference this has made to their outcomes
- **Collective voice** - how this has improved or changed the service or organisation
- **Surveys** - how the findings have improved current services or to plan future services

Here is an example of a way of tracking a 'you said, we did':

Step 1

What did you ask children and young people?

- What issues in the Make Your Mark consultation do you think is a priority for young people in Southampton?
- Discussed results with a group of young people representing young people

Step 2

What did they say?

- Southampton young people highlighted the issue with knife crime in Southampton.
- Many did not know the rules and believed everyone was carrying a knife, those involved in knife crime referenced this as to why they would carry.

Step 3

What did you do about what they said?

- Recorded what they said and used this to place bids to run fearless workshops across Southampton schools.
- Had honest discussion in assemblies explaining what are the truths of knife crime in Southampton
- Fed into local plans and the Violence Reduction Unit

Step 4

How did you feedback to them?

- Presentation of what they asked and what we did sent round to school settings explaining what has happened and how to get involved

What are the priorities in Southampton?

Child Friendly Services:

- Ensuring children's perspectives shape services and that their rights are always considered
- Ensuring that we are good parents to our looked after children, listening to and acting upon their views

Child Friendly Council and partners:

- Fulfilling our corporate parenting responsibilities for looked after children and care leavers
- Ensuring that children are involved in the recruitment, induction and training of staff
- Children and young people are consulted through our strengthened participation forums and other engagement activity.
- Celebrating the rights of children and participation with our Children's Mayor, Member of Youth Parliament and Youth Council.

Child Friendly City:

- Working with UNICEF UK to achieve Child Friendly City accreditation no later than 2025
- Ensuring that children and young people are central to Southampton's City of Culture Bid
- Launching our corporate Inclusion and Diversion Pledge

Young people priorities:

Priorities of young people will be taken from different types of participation, using the three methods individual and collective, equalities and surveys. Young people currently want Southampton City Council to:

- Improve opportunities to engage young people
- Focus on keeping them safe and provide local youth service provision



What are we doing now?

Southampton Voices Unite	A group of looked after children who meet fortnightly to share their experience and work co-productively to improve the care experience.
Help Us Move on	A youth advocacy service that has challenged SCC to improve its systems of support and communications regards pathways to employment and accommodation. This has led to SCC adopting the Youth Employment Charter as a result with joint work underway to improve local accommodation for vulnerable young people who are at risk.
Southampton Youth Forum	A group of young people aged 11-25 who actively engage with council and city business, helping to represent Southampton's young people.
Member of Youth Parliament	An elected Member of Youth Parliament who engages with civic business and represents the city on a national stage
Southampton Voices Unite Seniors	A group of care leavers who help guide and discuss on issues relating to being in the care system.
Youth Offending Service: Have Your Say	Youth Offending Teams will host regular opportunities for those engaged with the service to feedback on all aspects of their plans and involvement.
Green Youth Assembly	In the 2019 Make Your Mark, young people voted Protecting the Environment as their number one issue. Consequently, SCC hosted the youth assembly made up of secondary schools to hear their views on our current work, and listen to their suggestions of where we need to improve. This led to a task being set to create a green project within their school.
Joint Neighbourhood Wardens	The scheme is designed to encourage children aged 7-12 to engage in community activities, projects and events across Southampton. We will support them to develop a sense of pride and respect in their local neighbourhood and promote a positive image of children in the community.
Connecting Cultures:	A ground-breaking new project, led by University of Southampton with a large consortium of cultural organisations and child-focused services, that explores the question of how Southampton's thriving Cultural Quarter can enrich the lives of children and young people as a future creative hub.
Child Friendly Streets	Sustrans work with students, parents and carers and residents to review issues and opportunities collaboratively, co-designing interventions to make the street more child-friendly and improve air quality, helping students recreate the designs for new crossings and activity trails and also providing an opportunity for participatory activity.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO IMPROVE?

Priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How will we achieve this?	How will we know that we are successful?
Child Friendly City	Become a Child Friendly City Accredited through UNICEF UK	Submitting our Expression of interest to UNICEF UK	A Child Friendly City by 2025
Child Friendly Council	A representative city-wide Youth Council	In the initial stages of setting up with schools and colleges	A fully functional youth council helping to scrutinise and forward young people's voice from across the city
Child Friendly Services	Involve children who are looked after and care leavers in the design and delivery of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young recruiters: who will take part in interviewing and selection of new staff • Young advisors: who will scrutinise practice improvements with the service • Young inspectors: who will evaluate the quality of experiences of children and young people across the whole council 	When the three bullet point areas are fully functional and influencing services for young people
Child Friendly Council	Electing a Children's Mayor	Primary schools have been sent the details and asked to confirm participation	An elected Children's Mayor by May 2022 – creating an annual sustainable program in Southampton
Child Friendly Council	SEND Forum	A small group of young people meeting to discuss SEND specific items, helping to increase the voice of our SEND young people	Have an established group and process for including SEND groups with the city's participation activity
Child Friendly Council	Young people involvement in interview panels	Involvement of young people in interviews by offering young people the opportunities and creating a template	A process of involving young people in all appropriate interview panels, with a selection of young people engaged to widen the voice
Child Friendly Council	Council wide induction for all staff around child friendly and our children	Currently, outside of children's services there is no induction or information on Child Friendly and our role as a corporate parent. Working with young people to achieve this and implement the training across the council using current learning and development methods	Have an induction section focused on what Child Friendly and being a corporate parent means for all council staff
Young People Priorities	A webpage or website designed for young people	Currently there is no webpage/website specifically for young people that highlights their rights and activity they can get involved with. Officers will be engaging young people on what they need and want	Have a webpage/website dedicated to young people where they can access opportunities, rights and information.
Child Friendly Services	Care Leavers Guarantee	Officers and Southampton Voices Unite currently working together to identify and implement what they need when leaving care	When our care leavers and looked after children sign off our guarantee

Appendix – Statutory Participation

Children in Need

‘The voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews’ (Sept, 2010) thematic report of Ofsted’s evaluation of serious case reviews, highlights five main messages with respect to the voice of the child:

1. The child was not seen often enough by the professionals involved, or was never asked their views and feelings
2. Agencies did not listen to adults (such as advocates or teachers) who tried to speak up on behalf of the child and who had important information to give
3. Parents (or carers) stopped professionals from seeing and listening to the child
4. Workers paid too much attention to the needs of the parents, and not enough on the needs of the child
5. Agencies did not understand well enough what was going on to protect the child

The Munro Report (2011) makes it clear that to maintain focus on the quality of help being given to children and young people, professionals need to pay close attention to the views and experiences of those receiving services and the professionals who help them.

Munro recommends that the new inspection framework should examine the child’s journey from needing to receiving help, explore how the rights, wishes, feelings and experiences of children and young people inform and shape the provision of services, and look at the effectiveness of the help provided to children, young people and their families. It also tells us that the child protection system should be child-centred, recognising children and young people as individuals with rights, including their right to participate in major decisions about them in line with their age and maturity.



Services involved with helping children and families need to monitor what impact they are having. They can only improve if they have a good understanding (through, for example, collecting feedback from children and families) of what contribution, if any, they are making to children’s safety and welfare. This is particularly important in terms of checking whether services are having a negative impact on children and families.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) guidance recommends the development of local protocols to actively involve children in the child protection system. In order to keep the child in focus during the child protection process, professionals should:

- Develop a direct relationship with the child
- Gather information from the child about his or her needs or situation
- Elicit the child’s wishes and feelings

Working Together (2013) states that effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area should be underpinned by a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

Children in Care

The Children Act 1975 required a LA to ascertain and give due consideration to the wishes and feelings of the child, having regard to his age and understanding, in reaching any decision relating to a child in their care, (Section 59.1). The Children Act 1989 reiterated this and applied it to decision making before a child was looked after (Section 22.4), as well as requiring the courts to have regard to the wishes and feelings of the child (Section 1.3). It also added a duty to consider complaints and representations from children in care and children in need (Section 26.3).

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 added a duty to provide assistance by way of advocacy services to those making representations (Section 119). At a policy level, the Children and Young People's Plan (England) Regulations 2005, made under the Children Act 2004 s.17, requires local authorities to prepare children and young people's plans, and to consult children, relevant young persons and bodies representing

the duty of the LA to take reasonable steps to continue to keep pathway plans under regular review.

The principles to consider when drawing up a Pathway Plan are:

- Young people will be involved in drawing up their plans
- Plans will be reviewed every 6 months and include reports from all professionals/agencies involved in providing services to the young person, although they may not all attend the review, depending on the wishes of the young person
- They should be developed by the young person, any agreed family member, the carers and any other appropriate parties

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

SEND Reform is a part of the Children and Families Act 2014 which aims to improve the system by giving more importance to the views,



use different methods of communication such as the Picture Exchange Communication System.

Southampton's Participation Officer for Children and Young People to help shape their service.

Youth Council and other youth leadership

Along with the Duty to Consult there is also the Representation of the People Act 1983 which looks at ways of promoting high levels of registration to support democracy and engagement in civic life. The Representation of the People Act 1983 places a duty on each Electoral Registration Officer to maintain a complete and accurate register and promote registration within under-represented groups to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to take part and support democracy in civic life.

In 2013 the Cabinet Office identified students and young people (under 35) as one of the groups that are least likely to be registered to vote. Youth Councils provide an established and proven method for bringing young people together for discussion and co-production around issues that affect their lives, while other youth leadership programmes, such as UK Youth Parliament, Youth Mayors and young inspector schemes enable LAs to respond to locality-specific demand for further engagement opportunities and involvement in democratic culture.

Youth Offending Service

Although there is not a national statutory requirement for participation within youth justice article 12 of the United Nations Committee Rights of the Child clearly stating that children and young people's views should be sought in all matters affecting them.

The Southampton Youth Offending Service hold regular Have Your Say days with the young people in their service and involve

What are our Commitments?

At the beginning of 2021 Southampton Voices Unite, the representative forum for children who are looked after, worked hard to negotiate commitments with Southampton City Council as to what they would like to see from them as Corporate Parents. Six commitments were agreed and launched in Love Our Children week in September 2021. All heads of service and service managers signed up to the commitments.

Be there for me
whatever mood
I am in

Help me to
understand why
I am in care

Help to keep me safe
and to understand what
safe relationships look
and feel like

Help me succeed
at school

Help me to
understand and put
into practice my rights
and responsibilities

Help me to
understand why
leading a healthy life
is important to me



Non-Statutory Participation in other services





