Engaging with Children to create Child Friendly Places for Northern Ireland

Chris Karelse - Belfast Healthy Cities
Rights
Taking Action for Child Friendly Places

- inter-sectoral action plan;

- Engaging and Empowering Children; Creating Healthier Places and Supportive Environments; Tools for Child Centred Spatial Planning and Design;

- 7000 children and families were directly engaged with.
Planning my City (2014)
Belfast school survey (2014)

- working group including Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB), Belfast City Council, Belfast City Centre Management, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, DOE, DSD, NIHE, National Children’s Bureau, PSNI, PlayBoard and PLACE;

- pupils surveyed included Primary 4, Primary 7, and Years 8 and 10 in the Secondary Schools.
Shaping Healthier Neighbourhoods for Children (2011-14)

- class-based sessions exploring the topic of healthy environments;

- 400 children aged 8-11;

- walk in the local neighbourhood, Photovoice method, and a final imagining session to share ideas, prioritise and visualise an agreed proposal;

- Events where children present their ideas directly to senior policy and local government decision makers.
Healthy Places, Healthy Children (2015- )

- Supported by NIHE, PHA and Education Authority and endorsed by RTPI;

- Stage 2 (children aged 8-11) teaching resource;

- integrated into the *World Around Us* curriculum - and supports delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum on cross curricular skills (critical thinking, teamwork and problem solving);

- piloted with over 30 schools in Northern Ireland and beyond.
Available online at www.belfasthealthycities.com/hphc
Findings:

- access to **green and open space** that enables children to play and socialise with a degree of independence;

- a strong concern for **cleanliness**;

- better provision for **walking and cycling** and better **traffic management**, including traffic calming and reduced traffic;
- Encourage **personal development** and **skills** among children, including knowledge and awareness of their rights and responsibilities;
- Changes in **perception** of children and young people and their abilities, aspirations and needs;
- Empowers children and young people as **members of civil society** to hold organisations, institutions and governments to account;
- Encourage a **sense of ownership** of place and personal achievement amongst children;
- Different perspective offered by children and young people can lead to **creative solutions**;
- More **effective service delivery**;
- Enhances **organisational credibility**, reputation and governance;
- To make work **more fun**, energising and multidimensional!
“Our girls are so excited to see their plans come to life. It has allowed them to open their minds to the career they may not have considered before. The Healthy Cities programme was enjoyed thoroughly by both staff and pupils and we would really recommend this resource!”

“Healthy cities was a fantastic opportunity for our students to engage in their local area and share their opinions on how to improve it. Keeping them involved in every step of the process gives them a sense of ownership to the proposal we put forward and presenting it makes them feel like their voices are being heard.”
Next steps?

- Place Standard Tool;
- Jointly developed by Scottish Government, NHS Health Scotland and Architecture & Design Scotland;
- 14 themes;
- Visual representation of strengths and weaknesses of a place;
- Children’s version due in early 2020.