

About

Children in Scotland's Voices Forums bring together the diverse knowledge, skills and experience of our members to seek solutions for the most pressing issues affecting children in Scotland today.

Our March 2022 Voices Forum focused on 'Child-friendly Spaces and Communities'. The session included presentations from Naomi Danquah (Unicef UK) about their Child-Friendly Cities & Communities initiative, and Irene Beautyman (Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland) about Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and 20-minute neighbourhoods.

Attendees also discussed the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) draft which the Scottish Government is currently consulting on.

Key themes discussed and identified

Children in Scotland members felt it was important for everyone in communities, including children, young people and families, to be actively involved in planning and designing their local spaces and facilities. Attendees felt there should be a stronger emphasis on the importance of co-design approaches in the 'six qualities of successful places' list referenced in the NPF4 draft.

Attendees were happy to see people being placed at the centre of planning and wellbeing being prioritised over economic growth. These concepts are key to NPF4, there were however concerns about how this will work in practice.

The importance of natural spaces was highlighted, but so was the necessity for creative, well-designed urban spaces. Flexible and adaptable dual-use spaces are required to provide for different age groups, and to support intergenerational connection.

More 'free play' opportunities for children are required in community spaces.

Organisations told us that in many communities, groups of older children and young people (especially teenagers) find they lack spaces and activities that support their needs. Groups of older children and young people are often stigmatised for hanging around and are blamed for rubbish and graffiti.

The affordability and accessibility of community facilities and resources is a key issue. For example, people need safe, affordable, good-quality housing and local shops must provide options for affordable, healthy eating.

Next Steps

Children in Scotland will share members' views as part of our response to the National Planning Framework 4 consultation and the Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments Regulations consultation. The session will also feed into our wider influencing and campaigning work around our 'Place, Space and Community' Manifesto theme.