

A Call to Action: Shaping Healthier Places for Children in Belfast

Consultation Document

www.belfasthealthycities.com



**Making life better,
together**

Belfast Strategic Partnership

Key messages

A good place for children is a good place for everyone.

This 'Call to Action' is based on comprehensive engagement with children and calls on stakeholders in Belfast to respond to the issues identified by the children

What is Place?

Place comprises of the environment in which we live, shop, work, learn and play; the people that inhabit these spaces and the quality of the life that comes from the interaction of people and their surroundings. It means **our** cities, **our** towns and our neighbourhoods, and includes **buildings; public space** and **landscape**.

Why is Place important for children's health?

Because place has a significant impact on our health and wellbeing. **Successful places** give children a sense of belonging, a sense of identity and a sense of community.

Positive places can be the critical factor in determining whether children's lifestyles are active and healthy. Supportive places enable children to walk or cycle to school, play outdoors, mix with people of different ages and incomes, and observe nature.

Young children spend most of their time in **their local surroundings** and their development is more affected by the environment in which they live compared to older children.

Not everyone enjoys **equal access** to a good quality environment. There **is** a clear link between place, health inequalities and health outcomes.

Poor quality surroundings can have a negative impact on children's health. Place, if properly designed and managed, is an **asset** which can **create the conditions** for children's health to flourish.

Does Child Friendly Place have a role in Belfast?

Yes! Almost **one in five** people in Belfast are aged 13 or under.

Engaging with children is essential - it allows children to **shape their neighbourhoods** and encourages them to be active and **participate in decision making** processes as adults.

Our **vision** is defined by local children. It is a Belfast where quality places **positively benefit children's health**, and enrich their lives through **increased human connectedness** with **access to good quality green space**, safe streets and places for children to **play outdoors**.

The **public sector** has a key role in **delivering good places** for children. A mapping exercise undertaken with a range of voluntary and public sector organizations in Belfast identified limited action or programmes on children and place.

This **Call to Action** seeks to begin a conversation about creating good quality child friendly places in neighbourhoods across the city.



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The vision for Belfast is to be:

- A city where children are valued community members and their ideas and perspectives are actively gathered, considered and contribute to decision making to create healthy places.
- A city that promotes connectedness, where children and their families feel safe, have freedom of movement, access to open and greenspace and opportunities for play and imagination.
- An equitable city where all children have access to a supportive built environment that promotes their healthy development regardless of their family's income.

Children in Belfast have identified the following priorities in relation to the built environment:

- **Greenspace:** Greenspaces should be good quality, well maintained spaces where children can spend time with friends and family. Children value green space and recognise that it is important in terms of social interaction, pride in the local neighbourhood and opportunities for play and physical activity.
- **Open space:** Open spaces should be safe spaces where children can play and spend time with friends. Play parks are welcome but small open good quality spaces close to children's homes are also welcome.
- **Clean & safe environments:** Children see clean environments as essential to making their neighbourhoods more pleasant and attractive to live in. They are also aware of how others view the areas in which they live and are concerned about dog fouling, broken glass and graffiti.
- **Liveable & connected communities:** Vacant houses should be occupied and derelict land used for children and community activities. Connected communities support independence.
- **Reduced traffic:** Roads should be safer with less cars and increased traffic calming. Traffic has an impact on where children play, walk and cycle. Children recognise the effects of heavy traffic, including congested streets and parking difficulties, noise and air pollution.



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Having read the full consultation document please consider the following questions:

1. Is the overall approach appropriate? Is the vision clear and relevant?
2. Do you agree with the three broad themes within the Call to Action?
3. Will the Call to Action help to address place inequalities experienced by children across Belfast?
4. Is the evidence clear and well linked to the indicative actions?
5. The priority areas are identified by children across Belfast. What additional issues and perspectives are you aware of?
6. In relation to the indicative actions, will these begin to respond to children's priorities?
7. Is your organisation able to contribute to developing actions?

We want your views

The purpose of this consultation process is to:

- identify stakeholders' perspective on child friendly places,
- respond to the issues raised by children and
- identify organisations who can take action to create good quality child friendly places

What happens next?

Following consultation, the next step will be to develop a strategic approach. This will include an action plan aimed at responding to both the children's priorities and key issues identified during the consultation process.

The consultation document can be accessed at

www.belfasthealthycities.com/shaping-healthier-places-children.

An online questionnaire can also be completed through this link.

Alternatively, a paper copy can be requested from Belfast Healthy Cities office.

For further information, please contact Laura McDonald at

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The closing date for all responses is

Friday 26 June 2015



