Children's Voices: A Charter for Belfast

This Charter is based on priorities identified by 400 Primary School Children through the 'Shaping Healthier Neighbourhoods for Children' programme.

Children in Belfast envisage a city where they can have fun and play with other children in a safe environment.

They want their communities and public realm to be clean, attractive, green and of a high standard

providing a positive living experience for all.

Green Space

Children want more green space in their areas and neighbourhoods where they live. These green spaces should be good quality, well maintained spaces where they 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.

Priorities identified by children:

✿ Children should have easy access to nature and green spaces within walking distance from homes.

✿ Green space should be attractive to children- clean, free from litter and physical hazards and located to provide informal surveillance so that children feel safe.

✿ More green space should be created. In neighbourhoods lacking in this provision this could be achieved using green verges or temporary use of space awaiting development.

Open Space

Children report feeling unwelcome in particular areas of their neighbourhoods and feel they are often seen as a nuisance by adults. Children want safe spaces where they can play and spend time with friends. This does not have to be a play park, although parks are welcome.

Priorities identified by children:

✿ Children should have opportunities for free leisure and recreation, through play areas which include street furniture and other design elements that facilitate unstructured play.

✿ Parks should have features that will promote use by families with children - tea and coffee kiosks for adults, places to sit, toilet facilities and a well maintained network of paths.

Clean and Safe Environments

Children want clean environments and see this as essential to making their neighbourhoods more pleasant and attractive to live in. Children notice the quality of their environment and are aware of how others view the areas that they live in. Children are concerned about dog fouling, broken glass and graffiti.

Priorities identified by children:

❀ Frequent and efficient street cleansing is needed to keep streets and footpaths clean and attractive.

❀ Investment is needed in actions to increase civic pride in the area - community clean up days and initiatives that engage local people, such as community gardens.

❀ Safety by design should be a key principle in planning and regeneration to discourage vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

Liveable Communities

Children want derelict land to be used and vacant houses to be lived in. Children want to be able go to local shops or visit friends on their own.

Priorities identified by children:

❀ Disused and derelict land, houses and other buildings should be taken back into use to make neighbourhoods look more attractive and to try to combat anti-social behaviour.

❀ Communities need to be more connected, walkable and safe – this should be addressed through regeneration and future planning.

❀ Parks, open spaces and schools should be accessible by foot or by bike.

Traffic

Children want safer roads with less cars and more traffic calming in their neighbourhoods. Children report that traffic can have an impact on where they go, in terms of places to play, walking and cycling, and how safe they feel. They recognise the effects of heavy traffic such as congested streets and parking difficulties, noise and air pollution.

Priorities identified by children:

❀ More traffic calming in built up areas through lower speed limits Identifying alternatives to private cars so that children feel safe to walk, cycle or play in their area.

❀ Improving safety by identifying alternatives to on street parking and promoting responsible driver behaviour in particular at crossings.

❀ Less traffic in the city to reduce air pollution and decrease noise.

Belfast
A World Health Organization
Healthy City

Healthy Cities 21st Century