



20 June 2016

SCHOOL PUPILS LOOKING FOR CHILD FRIENDLY PLAY SPACES

Belfast Healthy Cities, a World Health Organisation project in Northern Ireland, today gave local children a voice on the development of Child Friendly spaces, and more than 250 primary school pupils took the opportunity to set out their priorities and question local decision makers.

The 'Children's Places, Children's Voices' event in Belfast City Hall also featured teachers and school pupils from Greece as well as policy experts from GB and Northern Ireland.

Children from across 11 primary schools presented their views on what makes a child friendly space to a panel made up of councillors, planners and other statutory representatives. NI Commissioner for Children and Young People Koulla Yiasouma addressed the event as did senior Belfast City Council officials and Professor Lamine Mahdjoubi of the University of West of England.

The event was aimed at elected representatives, senior decision makers in local government and health, as well as voluntary and community sector professionals.

Belfast Healthy Cities Chief Executive Joan Devlin said it was important to give children their voice.

"Our team have worked with schools and with other partnership agencies to produce a Child Friendly Places Action Plan and the Healthy Places, Healthy Children, Key Stage 2 Teaching Resource, which were both launched here today.

"Children are very aware of what they want from a child friendly and a safe environment and it is entirely appropriate that they presented their own views and priorities today. City Hall was certainly noisy today as local children made their voices heard. We will continue to work with schools and with young children as we strive to secure a city which meets the needs of all its citizens."

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Koulla Yiasouma welcomed the event,

"I want to congratulate the 11 schools who piloted the Healthy Places, Healthy Children Key Stage 2 Resource, and also the 3,000 children and families who took part in the Action Plan consultation. I believe it is essential that children and young people are given the opportunity to have a real and meaningful say in decisions that affect them. I particularly welcome the involvement of primary pupils, as the focus is often on older young people, with the views of younger children not taken into account.

"I also want to acknowledge the good participation and engagement to date by Belfast Healthy Cities and its supporting agencies. Well done to everyone, and I want to encourage you to continue on the journey of developing a Child Friendly City."

Belfast High Sherrif Alderman Jim Rodgers said,

“I strongly believe our young people hold our city’s creativity and vibrancy in their hands. By engaging children in decisions that impact upon them and their local environment, we gain opportunities to learn from children, and gain a unique and valuable local knowledge that can help inform policies and decisions. I am encouraged by the findings from these resources, and I hope that we can all put these to good use, securing a future for the youth of today that is both happy and healthy.”

ENDS

Contact

Brendan

028

9026

7072

/

077

673

932

Mulgrew

52

brendan.mulgrew@mwadvocate.com