



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report:

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Report of: *Meredith Dixon-Teasdale, Strategic Director of Children’s Services*

Report to: *Education, Children and Family Policy Committee*

Date of Decision: *19.12.2023*

Subject: *Development of a Belonging Framework*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2479				
Has appropriate consultation taken place? This report outlines the approach that will be taken to coproduce the Belonging Framework.	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Purpose of Report:

This paper sets out a proposal to develop a Belonging Framework and use it to drive change - so that everything we do is focussed on developing and deepening children and young people’s sense of belonging.

Belonging is the sense of being somewhere you can be confident that you can be safe in your identity: a feeling of being at home in a place. It is about having a secure relationship with, or connections within, a particular group of people.

Children and young people’s views will lead the development of our Belonging Framework and will be at the heart of all we do.

We are deliberately not framing our work on belonging as an individual/single new strategy. Instead, we are describing it as a **framework**, so that other parts of the council and other organisations can review and “attach” their contribution to it.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Education, Children and Families Policy Committee:

1. Agree that Sheffield City Council develops a Belonging Framework in coproduction with children and young people, families, and stakeholders.
2. Notes the intention of the Belonging Framework is to provide an overarching vision to drive change – so that everything we do is focussed on developing or deepening children and young people’s sense of belonging.
3. Notes the engagement planned with children and young people to inform the development of the framework.
4. Notes that the development of the framework will be an iterative process as we gain the views of children and young people in ways that work best for them, and review and refine the framework and next steps based on this.
5. Notes the intention for a continued conversation with the Committee about belonging, including a further draft presented at the Committee meeting in Spring 2024.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

1. Appendix 1 - Draft Belonging Framework
2. Appendix 2 - EIA

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Kayleigh Inman
		Legal: Nadine Wynter
		Equalities & Consultation: Bashir Khan
		Climate: Kathryn Warrington
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>		
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Meredith Dixon-Teasdale</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Cllr Dawn Dale</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Andrew Jones</i> <i>Joe Horobin</i>	Job Title: <i>Director of Education and Skills</i> <i>Director of Integrated Commissioning</i>
	Date: <i>1.12.2023</i>	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Our proposal is to coproduce a Belonging Framework with children and young people to drive change – so that everything we do is focussed on developing or deepening children and young people’s sense and experience of belonging. We want the Belonging Framework to become an overarching guide for all work in Children’s Services and further afield in the future. To this end, we intend to talk, with children and young people, to partners including schools, settings, community partners and the voluntary sector.
- 1.2 Our aspiration is that **every child in Sheffield feels they belong and they have a place where they can grow and become who they want to be.**
- 1.3 We want Sheffield to be a place where children and young people:
- feel that they belong in a loving family.
 - have a stable home.
 - feel they belong in their local school.
 - contribute and engage in their local community.
 - are valued in their local community.
 - know their voices are heard and responded to.
- 1.4 We want Sheffield, as a city, to celebrate its growing young population and ensure that children and young people are key to ensuring the city remains a diverse and dynamic place to live and work.
- 1.5 Belonging is a basic human need. It develops a child’s ability to build trust and have confidence in others. Research¹ shows the impact belonging can have. With regards to belonging at school, it has demonstrated:
- Children and young people who have a sense of belonging in school tend to be happier and more confident and perform better academically.
 - A child or young person’s sense of belonging to school is a rich and substantial protective factor against mental health problems such as stress, depression and anxiety.
 - Addressing a sense of school belonging has been found to close the achievement gap by between 50 and 60 per cent.
 - School belonging in adolescence can have a protective effect in adulthood.
- 1.6 Belonging has been identified as the largest known correlate with depression in adolescence.
- 1.7 Currently, we do not have a single strategic framework to ensure we remain child-centred and family focussed – and put the journey of the child at the

¹ Compassionate Leadership for School Belonging 2022, Kathryn Riley; Chapter 3, Section 4, The importance of school belonging – by Kelly-Ann Allen.

heart of what we do, not process.

1.8 Our Belonging Framework will be developed in coproduction with children, young people, families, and stakeholders. It will be an iterative process and will be informed in particular by what children and young people tell us.

1.9 The broader aims of the framework are to:

- Enable the voice of children and young people to be heard and to allow this voice to help shape our policies as we develop them.
- Encourage healthy debate and discussion with our colleagues, teams, service and partners around the concept of belonging and how we can successfully implement this, beginning with children and young people.
- Establish connections with other teams / services within the authority to look at whether they are already actively promoting the concept of belonging for children and young people – and if so, how are they doing this?
- Develop a common language between services that allow us to have a child-centred focus in everything that we do.

1.10 We will use the framework to:

- Provide clear aims and objectives that align with what children and young people tell us.
- Guide our future strategies and commissioning intentions.
- Ensure the way we work is joined up and works together.

1.11 Initial views are that our Belonging Framework should include:

- A set of coproduced principles we should apply in all contexts.
- Commissioning intentions.

1.12 **Draft principles to apply in all contexts** (please note these will be further developed through engagement):

1. We will consider children and young people's belonging in all decisions.
2. We will listen to children and young people's views to understand their wants and needs – and ensure all decisions are informed by this.
3. We will take a strength-based approach and move from process to relationship.
4. We will build on commonalities and celebrate difference.
5. We will consider the needs of different groups of children and young people including those of different races and ethnicities, with care experience and children with a disability.
6. We will think how the language we use would feel to a child, young person, parent, grandparent, or carer if they were reading or hearing it. How easy would it be to understand. Keep concise and simple.

1.13 **Four themes**

We propose that the Belonging Framework overarches four key themes:

- Belonging in a Family
- Belonging at School
- Belonging in your Community
- Belonging in Sheffield

1.14 We will begin by focusing on children's services in education/schools, social care, Children & Families early intervention and prevention services, and youth services.

1.15 As a council, though, we recognise that other services and teams have an impact on children's lives and, on their sense of belonging. For example, community work to encourage cohesion and community engagement impacts whole families, as do decisions about housing. Initiatives to support employment or the cost of living have wider impacts on family life and aspirations.

1.16 As we seek to establish and develop the Belonging Framework, we will talk to other council services and, in time, other organisations beyond the council, to ensure that the ambition of being a city of belonging becomes everybody's business.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

2.1 The Belonging Framework will cross-cut a number of the ambitions within the Corporate Plan, not least contributing to our aim of 'happy young people who have the start they need for the future they want'.

2.2 There is also a strong link with our aim of healthy lives and wellbeing for all.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1 As adults we have laid out what we think the Belonging Framework might encompass. However, we recognise that, to get it right, we must be led by children and young people.

3.2 Therefore co-producing with children and young people will be crucial. Throughout the development of the framework, and during its implementation, we will keep the voice of children and young people at the heart of our decisions. Their voice will be central to how we shape and amend the framework in future.

3.3 We need to hear what children and young people understand by belonging and to identify what helps them to feel like they do or do not belong. This will help identify what is most important to children and young people and how we will all judge and determine our future success.

- 3.4 We will review what children and young people have previously said which relates to Belonging and a sense of self.
- 3.5 Our engagement with children and young people will include the following group:
- Children who have been excluded from school.
 - Looked after children and care leavers.
 - Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
 - Children from ethnic minority groups and backgrounds.
 - Children who are LGBTQ+.
- 3.6 We understand that multiple experiences, identities and inequalities can overlap, interact and compound a person's disadvantage - intersectionality - and we will be mindful of this throughout our engagement with children and young people.
- 3.7 Our approaches will be developed working with colleagues across Education and Skills, Community Youth Services, and Children and Families.
- 3.8 We have begun conversations with various stakeholders across the council to start pulling together ideas about belonging and how it applies to their areas. We have also begun reviewing what children and young people have said previously that relates to belonging and we are working with colleagues in Children's Services to create a consultation plan for children and young people over the next few weeks and months.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Decisions need to consider the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

4.1.2 This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4.1.3 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

4.1.4 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and highlights

with this framework we will be better able to engage with children and young people, cutting across various characteristics. Specific work should have a positive impact and because it is cutting across several cohorts of young people.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 The Council's commitment to the proposed Belonging Framework will assist it to meet its duties towards children and young people under various pieces of legislation as set out below.

4.3.2 These duties include the responsibility to provide education for children of compulsory school age who have been permanently excluded from school and are not yet enrolled in another school or receiving appropriate education elsewhere.

4.3.3 In terms of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the Council is required to offer support under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, which includes the participation of children, their parents and young people in decision making.

4.3.4 For children in care, the Council is responsible for ensuring their welfare, including making decisions about care planning and placements under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989.

4.3.5 The Council is also required to offer support to children who are from people from ethnic minority backgrounds or LGBTQ+ under equality laws.

4.3.6 For the general child population, the Council has a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need within its area.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 We have considered climate impacts as part of the framework and there are none to be considered at present. In future our hope is for less travel as children go to school locally and Children Looked After and their social workers have less distance to travel.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The alternative option is not to develop a Belonging Framework.

5.2 We do not recommend this given the importance a sense and experience of belonging brings to children and young people.

5.3 When children and young people feel a sense of belonging and sense of

pride in their families, their peers, and their communities, they can be emotionally strong, self-assured, and able to deal with challenges and difficulties. This creates an important foundation for their learning and development. Positive messages about their families, backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, and languages help children and young people to develop pride in who they are. These messages also give them confidence to voice their views and opinions, to make choices, and to help shape their own learning, development and future.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 A belonging framework will ensure that everything we do is focussed on developing or deepening children and young people's sense of belonging. It will be designed so that other parts of the council and other organisations can review and "attach" their contribution to belonging to the framework.
- 6.2 Outcomes for the Belonging Framework will have a qualitative rather than quantitative focus. They will be developed iteratively through the process of coproduction. These outcomes may relate to individual experience, happiness, fulfilment, purpose, stability and will relate back to our vision, however we will be led by what children and young people tell us.

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