

Children's project leaves a lasting legacy

The Children's Forum, a project ran by the Partnership Council charity based in Radford, Nottingham, has sadly come to an end due to lack of funding but the project has left a lasting legacy in the shape of the Parks Assessment Toolkit - giving local children the chance to have their say in how parks, playgrounds and open spaces are developed in the city.

The Children's Forum was set up 10 years ago to give primary school children a voice in how children's services are planned and delivered in Nottingham.

Over the years, the forum regularly brought children together with decision-makers such as Nottingham City Council to make sure that children could influence how their parks, playgrounds and open spaces were developed. For example, children from the forum helped to design the new 'Pirate Park' on the Forest Recreation Ground, Gregory Boulevard, which opened in July this year.

The Parks Assessment Toolkit was developed by the Children's Forum and local primary schools to secure children's ongoing involvement in the development of local parks.

The toolkit includes lesson plans and teaching resources so that schools can get children involved as part of the school curriculum.

In addition, the Parks Assessment Toolkit is also being used by park rangers and playworkers from Nottingham City Council to involve local children in the development of parks, playgrounds and open spaces, now and in the future.

Initiatives such as the Parks Assessment Toolkit enabled the Children's Forum to actively support learning in schools and through children's schoolwork, to help children influence the development and delivery of children's services. Plus the forum helped children to become involved in local decision-making and community life from a very young age.

The Children's Forum has supported many children over the years in a variety of ways.

Ruth Greenberg, Chief Officer of the Partnership Council explains:

"The Children's Forum was unique in that it gave primary school children a voice and a way to influence the decisions that are made on their behalf by adults - which was very empowering.

It's very sad that we've been unable to find funding to continue the Children's Forum and we're still hopeful of finding a funder in the future, so that we can continue the work done by the Forum. In the meantime, the work we've done with local schools and children should hopefully continue to benefit the whole community."

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Here are just a few highlights from the Children's Forum:

ASC Awards for Sustainable Communities

The Children's Forum beat 194 community projects across the UK to win a prestigious government award in the 'Creating the Future: ASC Awards for Sustainable Communities' award finals - for its work with young people. The national awards aim to recognise and reward initiatives that contribute to making towns and cities better places to live and work.

A voice of the future

Former Children's Forum member, Faiza Qhersh, was one of only 25 children chosen nationally to sit on the government's Children and Youth Board.

Children's Forum Grants Panel

The Children's Forum Grants Panel was comprised entirely of primary school aged children. The children were given grant money to award to local children's projects and they decided exactly where and how the grant money was spent.

Children's Forum Film Club

The Children's Forum also ran a film club every school term, giving children the chance to write, produce, direct and star in their very own films.

To date, the Children's Forum Film Club has produced four films, all of which have been premiered at Nottingham cinemas and shown to children, their families and teachers, plus local MPs, councillors and service providers. After School Activities

The Children's Forum has provided many after-school activities for children over the years - including cookery, martial arts, street dance, trampolining, swimming, football and basketball.

Ruth concludes:

"The recession and the increased demand for services provided by the voluntary and community sector has meant that funding from sources such as the Government is really over-stretched at the moment and we understand that. However, it's still very sad that a project like the Children's Forum can't find funding to continue its work. As the highlights above show, the Children's Forum has made a real and lasting difference to children's lives."

**To find out more please contact Ruth Greenberg on 0115 970 8200
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