



Developing a child friendly city centre



How can we make Leeds city centre a better place for children and families?

Introduction

Here in Leeds we are rising to the challenge of making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in. Leeds City Council and Child Friendly Leeds are working in partnership with businesses and organisations across the city with the goal of creating a fantastic, child friendly city centre for children, young people and their families to enjoy.



But what do children and young people want from their city centre? In March 2017 we asked children and young people aged 4 - 18 (25 with additional needs) to enter our 'child friendly city centre competition'. The competition enabled us to build on what we already know from the "12 wishes", which were created by listening to the voices and views of children and young people early on in the development of the Child Friendly Leeds vision.

Our judging panels, which included young people, Leeds city councillors and architects, picked 10 winners and these ideas were presented to businesses and organisations at the Child Friendly Leeds ambassador event in July 2017. Winners also received some amazing prizes including vouchers for Trinity Leeds and White Rose Shopping Centre and tickets to Tropical World and the First Direct Arena!

What about the grown-ups? Lots of children come into the city centre with a grown-up, so we wanted to make sure we got their ideas too. We created a questionnaire for parents and carers to complete, which asked for their opinions and ideas on what is currently working well from their perspective for children and families in the city centre and how it could be improved. We received 42 completed questionnaires, which were entered into a prize draw to win Tropical World tickets and shopping vouchers to thank parents and carers for their time.

We asked children, young people, parents and carers to think about the following five categories when entering the competition or completing the questionnaire, which are all linked to the 12 wishes:

Travel: how can we make getting into and around the city centre easier and better for children, young people and families?

Safety: what can we do to make sure children and young people are safe from harm in the city centre?

Events and activities: what events and activities would children and young people like to take part in, in the city centre?

People: how can we make sure children and young people are treated fairly and with respect by others in the city centre?

Built environment: what could we build or create to make Leeds city centre welcoming and safe, with friendly places for children and young people to go to, play and have fun?

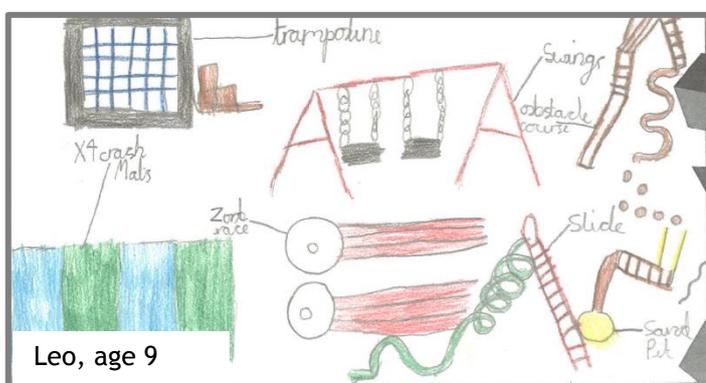
In this booklet we have tried to capture the exciting, creative and challenging ideas and feedback we received from those who entered the competition and completed the questionnaire. We hope that people who are planning to build in, host events in and develop the city centre will use this booklet to help them make their contribution to Leeds city centre a child friendly one!

Built environment

What could we build or create to make Leeds city centre welcoming and safe, with places to go, play and have fun?

What do children and young people want?

There were lots of big ideas in this category! Many children and young people told us that there is little for them to do in the city centre whilst their parents and carers are shopping - but they had plenty of solutions...



- Parks, gardens and outdoor play
There was a huge demand for more outdoor play space and we received lots of imaginative ideas for different types of parks and play areas. Some entrants wanted a traditional style of park with slides, swings and climbing frames. Others wanted mazes, water features, space ships, giant dinosaurs, swimming pools, hammocks and climbing walls. A number of children had creative ideas around building parks from recycled materials such as old tyres.
- Togetherness
Alongside play parks, lots of entrants wanted more gardens and green space for reading, relaxing and having picnics. There was a recurring theme of peacefulness, faith and cultural cohesion with a number of ideas focusing on how these gardens could bring together people of different backgrounds to learn about one another's culture and share experiences.
- Indoor play space
Lots of entries focused on indoor play space too. Many children and young people wanted a city centre youth club with varying activities

dependent on age group. For the younger entrants, many ideas were around play areas with slides and ball pits. The older entrants wanted free Wi-Fi, spaces to chill out with friends, computer games and pool tables.



- **Accessibility and inclusivity**
Lots of children and young people explored ways to make their ideas accessible and inclusive. This included having a range of activities for all age groups and ensuring people with disabilities could participate. There were also specific ideas around improving access across the city centre for wheelchair users and having gender neutral toilet facilities.
- **Statues, sculptures and art**
Ideas included statues of the Queen and famous people from Leeds. Lots of entrants wanted art work to be displayed around the city centre to make it more appealing, many specifically asking for art work of children and young people from across the city to be put on show!

What did parents and carers tell us?

Many parents told us that they regularly go to the City Museum, the Royal Armouries, Trinity Leeds, the Art Gallery, Millennium Square and Park Square.

Over one third of the parents and carers said that Leeds would be better with more space for children to play - parks, soft play areas and green spaces.

A number of parents also wanted better baby changing facilities and more toilets.

Events & activities

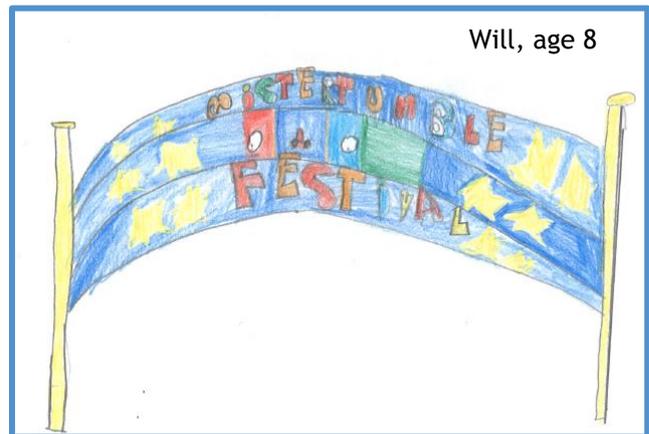
What events and activities would children and young people like in the city centre?

What do children and young people want?

The children and young people who entered our competition had lots of ideas around events and activities. Key to all of these ideas was that children and young people could access these events and activities for little or no cost. There were lots of ideas about having:

- Festivals and parties

Millennium Square was mentioned over and over again as the venue of choice! Ideas for festivals ranged from a bug festival where children can learn about the importance of bees and other insects to a Mr Tumble sign language festival, music festivals and a celebration event of traditional fashions from the many cultures within Leeds.



- Entertainment and performers

Lots of entrants had ideas around outdoor performances and entertainment, including stages where children and young people can show off their talents, outdoor cinemas and shows, street performers and appearances from some popular film and TV characters.

- Sports, games and competitions

It was great to see so many entries in this category with many of our children and young people wanting to get active in the city centre. Ideas included: ice skating, roller disco, mini athletics, archery, football, running tracks, horse riding and a zero gravity experience. Many of these ideas came with a competitive element too.

- Educational activities
The children and young people of Leeds are eager to learn! Lots of entrants focused on the opportunity to learn in the city centre. There were calls for more libraries, art galleries, new museum exhibitions focused on the history of Leeds, science fairs, giant telescopes, cookery classes and zoos.
- Fun fairs
Many of the entrants were inspired by the City Beach and Ice Cube at Millennium Square. There were lots of ideas involving sand pits, BBQs, bouncy castles, face painting and fairground rides. The common theme was that all these activities should be free as not all children and families can afford to join in!
- Arts and crafts
Entrants were calling for more opportunities to get arty in Leeds. Lots of these ideas involved drawing and painting, seasonal craft activities such as decorating Easter eggs and even learning to do (temporary!) tattooing.
- Activity bus
Some entrants liked the idea of having a youth bus where young people could take part in a range of activities. A number of older young people wanted to bring back the Friday night youth bus.

What did parents and carers tell us?

Lots of parents and carers told us that their children enjoy these events, activities and places to go:

- City beach (1/3 of those asked mentioned this)
- Ice skating
- German Christmas market
- West Yorkshire Playhouse
- Skyride (now HSBC City Ride)
- Breeze
- Central Library
- City Museum
- Cinemas
- The water taxis (Leeds Dock)
- Leeds Art Gallery
- St Patrick's Day parade
- Food Festival
- Light Night

The majority of parents and carers were overall very pleased with what's on offer. Many simply said that they just want more of the same and as many free events and activities as possible!

Travel

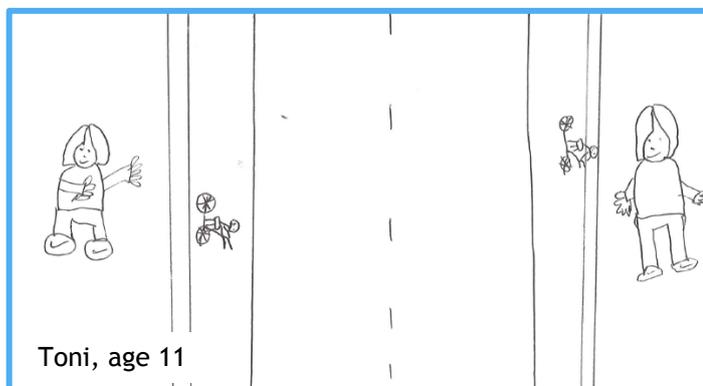
How can we make getting into and around the city centre easier and better for children, young people and families?

What do children and young people want?

A number of the competition entries which focused on travel wanted better transport links into and around the city centre. This included ideas such as better connected train lines from areas like Ilkley and Menston into the city centre, as well as easier travel around the city centre including an underground system, bike hire, trams and improved cycle paths.

Other ideas included

- tour bus style trips around the city centre, specifically for children and their families and if possible, on a banana shaped bus;
- better wheelchair access;
- cheaper parking;
- travellators for quicker travel on foot; and
- getting rid of rush hour!



What did parents and carers tell us?

There was some positive feedback around travelling by bus into Leeds City Centre. A number of parents said that buses were frequent.

Travel by bus could be improved by:

- More space for prams
- Frequent buses on all routes
- Cleaner buses

- Extended bus lanes
- Lower fares or family rates
- Safer seats for children
- Understanding drivers i.e. waiting for the pram to be in place with the brakes on before setting off

Other parents and carers said that they travel into the city centre by train. One parent said that their children enjoy this experience and others said that the train is a cheap option compared with the bus or paying for parking.

Some suggestions to improve train travel were:

- Better train links into the city centre
- Help getting on and off trains with a pram
- Greater speed and availability of lifts in train stations

Lots of parents and carers said that travelling into the city centre was most convenient by car, but many fed back that parking is very expensive. Some said that they avoid the city centre altogether due to parking costs.

They recommended:

- Cheaper parking
- Larger car parking spaces/more parent and child spaces

Safety

What can we do to make sure children and young people are safe and free from harm in the city centre?

What do children and young people want?

Road safety was a recurring theme in the competition entries. This included safer walking routes, away from busy roads and less traffic.

A number of children also wanted more police patrols and better CCTV to ensure we are protected from criminal activity.



What did parents and carers tell us?

Parents and carers fed back that children and families are currently being kept safe by:

- Lots of pedestrian crossings
- Traffic free areas such as Briggate and Millennium Square
- Visible CCTV cameras
- Good police presence
- Leeds BID Welcome Ambassadors

They felt safety could be improved by:

- Less traffic and more pedestrianised areas
- More visible policing
- Reduced street drinking

What next?

Best council

Being a child friendly city is a huge priority for Leeds City Council (LCC) and this is incorporated into the Best Council Plan. In addition to this ambition, LCC is striving for all residents and visitors to be satisfied with and able to take full advantage of what is on offer in the city centre.

Backed up by a cultural strategy and an events strategy, and involving all of Leeds' diverse communities, the focus will be on creating a successful and welcoming city centre.

This will involve reducing traffic and becoming more pedestrian friendly, providing low cost events to encourage community participation and creating an improved public realm - all of which reflects the ideas of the competition entrants!



Harneeka, age 10

Ella, age 9

Heather, age 10

Chelsy, age 17

Get involved

Leeds City Council and the Child Friendly Leeds team are now working in collaboration with businesses and organisations across Leeds to deliver the 10 winning competition ideas.

To keep up to date with our progress or to get involved with making the ideas a reality visit www.childfriendlyleeds.co.uk or email the team at childfriendlyleeds@gov.uk.

Are you delivering a project or planning an event in the city centre? Children and young people have told us what they want from their city centre so we can help you to make this a real success for both them and you. If you want to find out more, get in touch (details as above) and we'll be happy to share more of their fantastic ideas with you.