CHILDREN’S VOICES
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Introduction to Child Friendly SA
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UNICEF Australia Foreword

I am pleased to endorse the Child Friendly South Australia Children’s Voices Connecting Communities and Implementation Guide, a tool to support local governments and community organisations to be child friendly in South Australia.

Child Friendly initiatives and frameworks support local governments and communities to give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and create strong communities that meet the needs of children. UNICEF defines a child friendly city/community as a local system of good governance committed to fulfilling children’s rights.

The leadership of the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD), and founding partners in Gawler, Campbelltown and Onkaparinga have applied this concept here in South Australia developing a guide to that allows local governments and community partners to incrementally improve their participation and service with children.

This both improves the experience of children in their community, but also allows local governments and community organisations to draw on the unique wisdom and contribution children can make to build and strengthen community. UNICEF Australia is pleased to have been able to place emphasis in Child Friendly South Australia on ensuring children experiencing vulnerability are supported to be included in decision making and overcome barriers they may experience to inclusion. In turn, there is great opportunity for government and community to benefit from the knowledge, wisdom and strength of children from diverse cultural and social experiences.

UNICEF Australia is proud to have been a partner in the development of this guide and its implementation across the three pilot communities. We are delighted Child Friendly South Australia Children’s Voices Connecting Communities and Implementation Guide will be available for use by councils and communities across Australia. Its implementation will assist local authorities to build community and place the rights, views and priorities of children at the centre of shaping policy, practice, delivery of services and decision making.

Tony Stuart
Chief Executive
September 2016
Acknowledgements

The Child Friendly SA initiative was initiated by the Rt. Hon. Jay Weatherill in 2009. The work to develop the implementation guide and Child Friendly SA framework was led by the Child Development and Wellbeing team in the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD).

The team would like to thank

The implementation process for Child Friendly SA is informed by the Results Based Accountability™ (RBA) framework developed by Mark Friedman and explained in his book Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough.

The team is very grateful to the original Child Friendly SA steering group (see list of membership over the page) and members of the Child Friendly SA pilot communities in Campbelltown, Gawler and Onkaparinga for all their support, expertise and commitment.

UNICEF Australia and the Local Government Association of South Australia were also a partner to DECD in the design phase and supported the development of the pilot initiative.

The team would also like to thank Barbra Cooper, Project Manager, Child Friendly SA and Principal Policy Advisor, DECD for leading the Child Friendly SA initiative, developing and piloting the Child Friendly SA Framework and resource guides.

Professor Pauline Harris, the de Lissa Chair, Early Childhood (Research), for her expertise, commitment and inspirational support for the Child Friendly SA initiative; in particular for her research supporting children’s active voices and participation. Child Friendly SA is informed by the leading edge Children’s Voices project (Harris & Manatakis, 2013a) that began in 2010 and involved the SA government’s engagement with 350 children across 11 state regions to inform the review of its state strategic plan (Harris & Manatakis, 2013b). The project ignited interest in and informed ways for authentically engaging with children’s voices to understand what is important to children in their communities.

UNICEF Australia, in particular Tara Broughan and Aivee Robinson, for the partnership, expertise and dedication provided to the Child Friendly SA initiative.

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The Local Government Association of South Australia for the commitment given to the memorandum of understanding on the Child Friendly SA initiative, and for the guidance and dedication provided by their representatives on the Child Friendly SA steering group.
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1. Introduction to Child Friendly South Australia

There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way it treats its children. – Nelson Mandela

The term ‘child friendly’ has a much deeper meaning than might be expected. It is not just about providing baby change facilities and asking for children’s views on play equipment, although both are important.

The Child Friendly SA (CFSA) initiative is about providing ways for children to meaningfully engage with their community. It is about supporting all children to be the best they can be and encourage them to engage actively in their communities. It is about valuing children’s perspectives, as contributing community members and working in partnership with communities to support, consider and include the most vulnerable children.

It is a factor to consider when, for example, local councils are planning a new initiative. Child friendly can support local councils to include children and understand how well they are faring on meeting the needs of their youngest stakeholders.

‘Child friendly’ has become a commonplace description in recent history and conjures up a variety of images and ideas ranging in complexity and depth.

First and foremost, the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative is about implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter referred to as the Convention) at a local level. It is about making children’s rights and responsibilities part of everyday community life.

This booklet is now 1 of 2 self-guided planning documents that may assist councils and communities to create a better world for young South Australians. See the partner document Child Friendly SA Implementation Guide.

The main incentives for adopting these principles are that, firstly, there is great potential for children and young people in your area to improve their health, education and development outcomes. Secondly, you will be helping South Australia to uphold the UN Convention. These factors combined will help to create a stronger future for South Australia as a broader community.

Worldwide, the Child Friendly Cities framework is adapted for meaningful application in diverse cultures and contexts. However, universal principles of the Convention underpin the framework. Child friendly usually considers urban design, natural environments, independent mobility, health and wellbeing, open spaces and recreation, children’s participation and educational outcomes.

In South Australia, we have developed 6 CFSA community goals (aspirational conditions of wellbeing) that have been linked directly to the Convention. They are designed to improve outcomes for children and young people across South Australia.
The implementation of the CFSA framework will be unique to the context of the communities involved, particularly in relation to what the children in those communities are telling us.

A Child Friendly community will be a place where ‘the physical and social environment … allows children to feel a sense of belonging, to be respected and valued, and to have opportunities to become increasingly independent’ (Malone 2006).

South Australia is the first Australian jurisdiction to make such a large scale commitment to becoming child friendly, so the CFSA initiative is unique in its breadth. The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative is based on the local protection, promotion and fulfilment of child rights.

Due to our commitment to children and young people, the CFSA initiative is ambitious. It is founded on the idea of a network of child friendly communities (cities) linking together so that all local governments and communities in South Australia, and their young constituents are included in a child friendly vision.

To flourish in their lives as global citizens, children need healthy, safe, connected and inclusive communities, seamless and responsive social services, opportunities to create and be influenced by the creative arts and culture, and educational and employment opportunities that meet their diverse needs.
1.1 Child Friendly SA principles

CFSA is grounded in the Convention. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention were adopted in 1959 and 1989 respectively, on Universal Children’s Day.

The Convention protects children’s rights by setting standards in health care, education and legal, civil and social services. In general, the Convention affirms that children everywhere have the right to survival, to develop to the fullest, to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation, and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

The Convention has 54 articles and is based on 4 key principles (outlined below), all of which have influenced the development of the CFSA initiative.

1.2 The 4 key principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Non-discrimination

Children should not be discriminated against because of race, colour, gender, language, religion, national, social or ethnic origin, or because of any political or other opinion; because of their caste, property or birth status; or because they are living with a disability.

The best interests of the child

The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in the development of laws and actions affecting children.

Survival, development and protection

The authorities in each country must protect children and help ensure their full development – physically, spiritually, morally and socially.

Participation

Children have a right to have their say in decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.
1.3 UNICEF Australia and child friendly initiatives

A child friendly city is the embodiment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the local level, where children’s rights are reflected in policies, laws, programs and budgets. In a child friendly city, children are active agents; their voices and opinions are taken into consideration and influence decision making processes.¹

UNICEF Child Friendly Cities initiatives aim to provide a framework supports local governments and communities to give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and create strong communities that meet the needs of children. Child-friendly cities/communities can help build the social and economic conditions for strong families and connected communities. These conditions are important for ensuring that parents/ caregivers have access to the resources they need to meet the needs of their children.

CFSA is guided by these frameworks, and the first guide to be adapted for the Australian context. Becoming child friendly is a process of continuous improvement and incremental reform for councils, governments and organisations.

Child-friendly cities/communities are places where children can:

- influence decisions about their city/community
- express their opinions on the city/community
- participate in family, cultural, city/community and social life
- be safe and protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- meet friends and have places and spaces to play and enjoy themselves
- have green spaces for plants and animals
- live in a clean, unpolluted environment
- be an equal citizen, with access to every service regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or ability.

¹ www.unicef.org/crc/index_30160.html

Ensuring we reach all children
2. Ensuring we reach all children

The Australian Child Rights Taskforce, co-convened by UNICEF Australia, is responsible for the civil society report on the protection, promotion and fulfilment of the rights in the Children’s Convention in Australia. Through this process, particular groups of children are identified as experiencing greater structural, social and cultural barriers to the fulfilment of their rights due to entrenched discrimination, poverty and social exclusion.

For local governments and community organisations engaged in Child Friendly Cities initiatives, this is particularly important. Local governments and community organisations have a unique opportunity to improve the community experience of diverse groups, address specific barriers children experience at a local level, and to provide opportunities for children experiencing vulnerability to increase their participation and community influence.

Children experiencing vulnerability have the most to gain from Child Friendly initiatives. They also have greater challenges to overcome in order to participate and benefit. For this reason, particular, targeted effort is required to ensure the accessible community participation for all children.

In turn, there is great opportunity for government and community to benefit from the knowledge, wisdom and strength of children from diverse cultural and social experiences.

While each local community has unique constituencies and children requiring prioritisation, nationally the following children are consistently identified as at increased risk of experiencing vulnerability, and should be considered in Child Friendly initiatives:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children seeking asylum or with refugee status
- children with disability
- children who are or have been in out-of-home-care
- children who are or have experienced homelessness
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background
- children living in poverty
- children living in single headed households
- LGBTI children and young people
- children who have contact with child protection and juvenile justice systems
- children living in rural or remote areas

Reference:
Why become more child friendly?
3 Why become more child friendly?

3.1 International and domestic legal obligations
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Public accountability requirements in the Local Government Act for strategic and social planning and asset management for the quarter of the community under the age of 18
- State public health plan – South Australia: A Better Place to Live
- Child protection legislative requirements – child-safe environments.

3.2 Strategic framework and data
- Memorandum of understanding between the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) and DECD
- LGA Strategic Plan priorities 2012-2015
- South Australian Government priorities (Every chance for every child, Vibrant cities, Safe communities, Healthy neighbourhoods)
- School curriculum framework
- Nature Play SA
- National Early Years Learning Framework
- Australian Early Development Census
- Middle Years Development Instrument.

3.3 Child Friendly SA benefits to communities
The CFSA model will benefit whole communities, not just children.

Economic benefits

Return on investment
Investment in children and young people has a high rate of economic return. Cost-benefit research has shown that future savings are made for communities through a reduction in young people dropping out of school or having to repeat academic years. Research has also demonstrated that children who have quality experiences in their early childhood years tend to advance to higher education, obtain employment, have higher earnings as well as savings, and are less likely to be on public assistance and commit crimes.

Recognised researcher, the late Dr Clyde Hertzman, demonstrated that for every dollar spent in the early years, society saves between $4 to $8 in many other areas including health and crime prevention. The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis has also released the following statement,

*Recent studies suggest that one critical form of education, early childhood development..., is grossly under-funded. However, if properly funded and managed, investment in ECD yields an extraordinary return, far exceeding the return on most investments, private or public….. in the future any proposed economic development list should have early childhood development at the top.*

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4 The State Government has 7 priorities for South Australia’s future. These priorities have been identified as areas where the most difference can be made to the lives of everyday working people. Child Friendly SA supports 4 of these priorities which are listed in the paragraph above.

A better place to live – social benefits

Improved neighbourhood design

Children are vulnerable to environmental stress, and their physical, emotional and mental needs should underpin planning priorities. Families’ geographical locations, housing and proximity to services, schools and play spaces are all influenced by the local community and planning authorities.

As Stanley and colleagues note (2005), ‘Putting children in the centre of community planning would mean that we should look at our existing communities and at all proposed development and ask: “Have we planned these to be the best for children and young people, to enable them to grow up in the best possible circumstances?” (Stanley, Richardson and Prior 2005:184-185).

However, it is recognised that generally ‘... most people who care about child development know nothing about design, and most people who design know nothing about child development...’ (Hart in Shell 1994:80). It is therefore crucial that a ‘joined up’ approach is undertaken to design built environments with children’s physical, social, intellectual and emotional development the central consideration.

Neighbourhood design, including the positioning of homes, schools, businesses, parks and pavements within a neighbourhood can influence the rates of physical activity undertaken by its inhabitants. Proximity of local services, the design of roads and pathways, and the need (or not) to negotiate main roads all impact on the amount of walking, cycling and physical activity undertaken in a community, particularly by its children.

Crime prevention

It has been shown that children involved in early childhood programs had significantly fewer arrests than those not involved in early childhood programs. For further information, and additional benefits, see details of the Highscope Perry Preschool Study.

Increased liveability

‘A child friendly city is a people-friendly city’. The most liveable cities are those that work for residents of all ages. The features of a city that make it the safest, healthiest and most accommodating for its most vulnerable citizens can also make it exceptionally more liveable for everyone.

The elements of making a city or region truly liveable are ideals and conveniences for most of us but essential for the wellbeing of vulnerable citizens, such as the elderly and children. Addressing the needs of these groups can help a city or region to reach exemplary liveability for everyone.

Several new initiatives are addressing urban liveability as they relate to the needs of vulnerable populations (children in particular), and include providing access to green open space, safe streetscapes and public transportation, clean public bathrooms, and safe places to rest.

Benefits to children

Improved child development outcomes

CFSA provides a way of mobilising communities to work together to improve demonstrable outcomes for children and young people in areas of health, wellbeing, education, safety, play and active participation.

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6 ‘A Child Friendly city is a people friendly city’ is identified as one of 5 rationale for the UNESCO ‘Growing Up in Cities Project’ – see www.unesco.org/most/guic/guicmain.htm
Increased child safety

Evidence suggests that children are less vulnerable if they are visible and have a voice. Children who are encouraged to express their views are less vulnerable to abuse and better able to contribute towards their own protection. Conversely, an insistence on passive obedience renders children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Improved family wellbeing

The family environment of a young child is a major predictor of their future cognitive and socio-emotional abilities, as well their health outcomes (including experience of obesity) and future involvement in crime. CFSA will contribute to creating positive family environments. This will not only likely result in improved child development outcomes but improved wellbeing of entire communities.

Improved brain development

Parents and professionals who care for and work with children and families know that the nurture and care of a young child makes a real difference – in fact, the benefits last a lifetime. Research into brain development confirms that every aspect of a child’s early life shapes the way a child learns and grows; and most of a child’s brain development takes place in the first few years of life. The neurological structures laid down in early childhood determine how children see themselves, build relationships and interact with others, acquire language, learn new skills, and respond to challenges, risks and opportunities in life.

Benefits to organisations

- **Credibility** – assurance to the community that the council/organisation’s commitment to children meets internationally accepted standards
- **Improved communication** with children and their families, schools and early years settings, service providers for children and the wider community
- **Improved consumer/citizen confidence.**
- **Specific children-focused standards** that emphasise an integrated and individualised approach
- **Enhanced culture of quality** – opportunity for continuous improvement within council/organisation process
- **Improved accountability to funding sources**, statutory reporting requirements, and the community
- **Improved resource management techniques** that are efficient, cost-effective, and based on outcomes and consumer satisfaction
- **Evidence of quality** of programs and services that receive funding
- **Marketing tool** for promoting the council and community eg attracting tourism or inward investment.

7 Gerison Lansdown Can you hear me? The right of young children to participate in decisions affecting them.
How communities can support the development of young South Australians
Today the exponential growth in knowledge in the neurosciences and biological sciences has shown us how brain development in the early years can set trajectories that affect health (physical and mental), learning and behaviour for life. – Mustard 2007

We start by looking at the ‘whole child’ and by considering the child in the context of their family and community. Positive child development means focusing on a child’s physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth, right through to the age of 18. We don’t put a child’s mental and physical health, their playtime and learning into separate boxes owned by different agencies because it is impossible to point to just one thing that holds the key to the early years.

By starting with the whole child and connecting all aspects of a child’s life, we collectively support every child’s positive development.

Starting early and making connections between families, services and communities makes good sense for every child. Positive and nourishing early experiences help children to make the most of the potential that they are born with.

It also makes sense for all South Australia communities to work together to support child development outcomes because damaging early experiences can affect a child’s ability to realise their full potential, which in turn impacts on community life. For example, poverty, neglect and lack of intellectual stimulation in the early years may lead to poor mental health and wellbeing, unemployment, substance abuse and crime in later years. Indeed, multiple negative experiences can lead to increased likelihood of chronic health conditions including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, renal disease and depression in later life.

A child’s wellbeing is highly dependent on the strengths and resilience present in their families and communities, so it is vital that all communities can see their place in working together to support children’s development across South Australia.
4.1 Encouraging physical activity and good nutrition

There are many benefits to be gained from physical activity and good nutrition, both from a health and wellbeing perspective.

Physical activity and good nutrition help to reduce health risks, particularly those related to cardiovascular disease, health problems associated with being overweight, high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes, in addition to protecting against some forms of cancer and strengthening the muscular skeletal system.

Physical activity also improves children’s psychosocial wellbeing by reducing symptoms of depression, stress and anxiety, and through improvements in self-confidence, self-esteem, energy levels, sleep quality and ability to concentrate.

Good nutrition is important in supporting the rapid growth and development that occurs during childhood. For young children, diet is largely determined by their parents; however, children take a greater responsibility for their own food choices as they grow older. It is therefore important to establish healthy eating patterns at young ages.\(^8\)

Children who are socially, economically and geographically disadvantaged are at an increased risk of ill health, including conditions related to being overweight or obese. These children may not have the same opportunities for good health as other children in terms of access to fresh fruit and vegetables, and are less likely to be physically active. In South Australia, approximately 15% of children at age 4 are overweight and approximately 5% are obese.

An important component of a healthy lifestyle is participation in activities for which exercise is not the primary goal. Incidental physical activities such as an errand to buy groceries or a walk to school play an important role in energy expenditure, and can be influenced by neighbourhood design.

The most universal opportunity for incidental physical activity among children is in getting to and from school, either walking or riding a bike. Closer proximity to school also provides the opportunity for use of school grounds for physical activity after school hours. Research has shown that provision of an open (supervised) schoolyard leads to increased levels of physical activity and less time spent watching television or playing video games.

The factors that work against these incidental physical activities are:

- danger from traffic
- perceived attractiveness of the neighbourhood
- safety concerns of parents
- lack of after-hours programs in schools
- lack of park areas within a child’s neighbourhood.

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4.2 The role of schools in a child friendly approach

The school is a significant environment in the lives of its students. A child friendly school ensures every child an environment that is safe and enabling.

Teachers are the single most important factor in creating an effective and inclusive classroom.

A child friendly school recognises, encourages and supports children’s growing capacities as learners by providing a school culture, teaching behaviours and curriculum content that are focused on learning and the learner.

Schools must work to remove barriers for participation and engagement of families. Schools must work to build positive connections with parents and families to become child friendly.

Child friendly schools aim to develop a learning environment in which children are motivated and able to learn. Staff members are friendly and welcoming to children, and attend to all their health and safety needs.

Benefits to schools

UNICEF has identified 8 reasons why teaching children about child rights is vital and relevant to everyday school life.

Develops intercultural understanding

Global education provides an appreciation of Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and the ability to relate to and communicate across cultures. Teaching students about the world and other cultures increases social and cultural awareness, breaks down stereotypes, enables a broader view of the world, and strengthens children’s identity. Global education prepares young people to understand and interact within a culturally diverse and globally interconnected world.

Builds social skills

Education about social justice and human rights allows students to understand the importance of treating people equitably and the responsibilities we all have to protect the rights of others. Learning about child rights supports listening skills, respect, empathy and anti-bullying behaviours.

Develops ethical understanding

Technologies bring local and distant communities into classrooms, exposing students to knowledge and global concerns as never before. Complex issues require responses that take account of ethical considerations such as human rights and responsibilities and global justice. Ethical understanding assists students in becoming confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

Supports Australian Curriculum

Global education on child rights directly aligns with Australian civics and citizenship curriculum learning areas of humanities and social sciences and health, as well as fostering personal and social capabilities and ethical and inter-cultural understanding. Education on child rights is also supported in the Australian Curriculum Early Years Learning Framework for educating children birth to 5 years, which highlights the critical principle of ‘respect for diversity’ with a main learning outcome of ‘children are connected with and contribute to their world’.

Motivates student learning

Connecting classroom knowledge with situations outside the classroom creates personal meaning and significance. As such, teaching child rights can influence a child’s predisposition to lifelong learning, which is significant to each child’s life and motivates deeper knowledge and understanding.

Creates a safer school

Teaching children about their rights can reduce exclusion and bullying, improve teacher/student relationships, and make for more mature, responsible students. It positively affects the relationships, teaching approaches, attitudes and behaviour of everyone at a school. It also provides children with the opportunity to model these rights and responsibilities within their peer groups and the wider community, creating a rights-respecting ethos in schools and the community.

Children realise their rights

By recognising their own rights, children become aware of how they should be treated by others and how to stand up for these rights. Children gain an appreciation of rights that are met, and view their life from a global perspective.

Empowers students to become active citizens

Teaching children about the universality of children’s rights and the extent to which these are denied helps to build a socially responsible generation. Meeting all children’s rights in our lifetime is a real possibility. It is critical then to educate children as the future leaders of our society. Students learn to take responsibility for their actions, respect and value diversity, and see themselves as global citizens who can contribute to a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.
4.3 Whole-of-community support for families

Both the quality and quantity of the labor force are not keeping pace with the demands of the skill-based economy – Heckman.

Social and economic inequality can contribute to differential outcomes for children. The UK Millennium Cohort Study, a large-scale study of children born in the year 2000, found that gaps in vocabulary scores and behaviour by family background were substantial. At ages three and five, children from disadvantaged backgrounds were more than a year behind children from the most advantaged groups (Hansen, Joshi and Dex 2010:167).

As identified by Stanley and colleagues (2005), ‘some parents are better attuned and equipped for parenting than others’. They also note that parents need a variety of supports at different times, ‘hence social and material support within our communities is a prime necessity’ (Stanley Richardson and Prior 2005:183).

Parents should not be alone in providing the resources and care needed by a growing child. Communities, including extended family and neighbourhoods, can play a vital role in supporting parents to provide the optimum environment at the important stages of their child’s life.
4.4 Encouraging active participation of children and young people

How to encourage

Experiences of relationships and participation in communities contribute to children’s belonging, being and becoming. From birth children experience living and learning with others in a range of communities. These might include families, local communities or early childhood settings. Having a positive sense of identity and experiencing respectful, responsive relationships strengthens children’s interest and skills in being and becoming active contributors to their world. – Council of Australian Governments 2009.9

Central to a philosophy of respect for the rights of children to be listened to and taken seriously is a commitment to valuing children as people now. This challenges the view that the early years are merely a preparation for adulthood or a precursor to formal education. This recognises that young children:

- have a unique insight into their experiences and perspectives
- can communicate their views and experiences
- can actively influence and interact with the world around them
- are able to construct and interpret meaning in their lives (Lansdown 2005).

Within any given culture, children’s capacities to participate effectively are directly influenced by:

- the level of adult support provided
- the respect with which they are treated
- the trust and confidence invested in them
- the opportunity to take increasing levels of responsibility.

Children will acquire competence in direct relation to the scope available to them to exercise agency over their own lives. The most effective preparation for a sense of self-efficacy is to achieve a goal for oneself.

Respecting the rights of young children to be heard necessitates a preparedness to create the space to listen to their views in ways appropriate to them – through music, movement, dance, sport, storytelling, role play, drawing, painting, photography, hobbies, community and family activities, as well as through more conventional dialogue. This requires the provision of time, adults willing to listen, and the provision of environments in which children feel safe and comfortable.

The right of children to be listened to must be understood as extending to take what they have to say seriously. Even when it is not possible to act on children’s concerns, they are entitled to an explanation of what consideration was given to them and why it cannot be implemented.

Participation is ‘the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives’ (Hart 1992:5). Healthy democracies depend on citizens believing that they can influence outcomes and make a difference.

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Ways to encourage active participation

We need to take time to think about why and how we are doing child participation before rushing ahead on the one hand and at the same time we need to be ‘brave’ enough to try it, trusting that we will learn as we go along, particularly if we listen to the children and young people involved – Bray and Clacherly, 2009

Actively engaging, listening to and responding to the views and needs of children and young people is at the heart of the CFSA approach. However, despite significant enthusiasm for this process coming from participants in CFSA pilot projects, there is also a general sense of nervousness around exactly how to do it.

Consulting with children is more than a one-off event. It involves sustained engagement over time. Further, what occurs before and after the consultations is as important as the consultations themselves. Accordingly, Professor Pauline Harris and Harry Manatakis co-authored an implementation guide, Children’s Voices: Tools and Resources for Children’s Participation as Valued Citizens and Learners (0-8 years). The guide is organised around six key stages that were undertaken in the process of consulting with children:

- planning and preparing the consultations
- providing professional development workshops
- implementing the consultations
- documenting the consultations
- analysing, synthesising and reporting children’s messages
- tracking update and consequence of children’s messages.

Through whatever means children use to communicate, it is children’s voices that matter when consulting with them on matters that affect them. In the Children’s Voices implementation guide, ‘children’s voices’ are defined as their ‘expression of their meaning through talk, and other ways as well, such as visual arts, dance, movement, song, music, poetry, photography, drawing, drama, writing…’. In this context, it is important to avoid imposing adult frames of reference or put words in children’s mouths. As anyone who has had the privilege of really tuning into children knows, children are insightful human beings. To listen to a child with all our senses and understanding is to wholly encounter the child in all their fullness of being and richness of thought.

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10 Pauline, p. 8 – Professor Pauline Harris and Harry Manatakis, Children’s Voices: Tools and Resources for Children’s Participation as Valued Citizens and Learners (0-8 years).
Collective impact – working together to improve outcomes for all children in South Australia
CFSA is founded on finding a place for every level of governance (state government, local government, community organisations, NGOs, community members) in working together to support outcomes for children – even outcomes that may not fall neatly within specific jurisdictions.

This is not about shifting responsibility but about building on existing partnership arrangements between state and local government, schools, NGOs, community members and children. It is about recognising opportunities to increase dialogue and focus on innovative and collaborative solutions.

Many organisations already have targets or priorities relating to child development outcomes, which may in some instances overlap. CFSA provides an opportunity to work on joint solutions that benefit all and can result in more effective use of resources. For example, increasing literacy levels or reducing truancy rates is not the specific responsibility of local government, but local government can implement initiatives that contribute to both areas and at the same time support local strategic directions.

The African proverb ‘It takes a whole village to raise a child’ has been overused, but it sits at the heart of CFSA. Perhaps the quote should be extended to recognise that whilst collective effort is needed to support children, there are numerous benefits to the whole community from doing so.
Demonstrating that Child Friendly SA will improve outcomes for children
6. Demonstrating that Child Friendly SA will improve outcomes for children

6.1 What are we trying to do?

We are trying to make children's rights become part of everyday life in communities through a focus on the 6 community goals and conditions of wellbeing designed to uphold the Convention (as outlined in the next section).

We are also aiming to ensure children’s authentic participation is included in community decision-making, meaning that it is sustainably embedded in local culture and is a continuing practice rather than be seen as a one-off ‘special event’.

CFSA is also about making sure people really understand what ‘children’s rights’ are. By doing all of these things, CFSA aims to make a significant contribution to improved child development outcomes in South Australia, especially for the most vulnerable children in our communities.

State, local government and many non-government organisations are already committed to supporting and enhancing child development outcomes and the wellbeing of the wider community. State and local government are also committed to support and uphold children’s rights as set out in the Convention.

There is also a groundswell of recognition that children's participation in local and state decision-making needs to be improved.

In total there are 54 articles covered in the Convention, setting out children’s rights. There are already many different approaches and partners involved in supporting child development outcomes at a state and community level.

6.2 Bringing it all together

CFSA offers a way of bringing it together. The CFSA model encourages child friendly communities to be developed at the grassroots level.

The CFSA framework enables us to be confident that any action taken for children will be supporting the local implementation of children’s rights and will contribute towards improving outcomes for children and young people in South Australia.
The 6 Child Friendly SA community goals
7. The 6 Child Friendly SA community goals

There are 6 CFSA community goals that every CFSA community needs to work towards. The community goals outline the conditions of wellbeing that will support better outcomes for children and young people in every community.

The 6 community goals/conditions of wellbeing provide a way of organising all 54 articles in the Convention into priorities for action.
Results Based Accountability™

8

Results Based Accountability™

Child Friendly SA Results Based Accountability™

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Collective impact
Demonstrating outcomes
Community goals
Results Based Accountability™
UNICEF Australia
8. Results Based Accountability™

8.1 Why base CFSA on Results Based Accountability™?

Every child is different. Every community is different. If we really want to make a difference for children we need to base local action on local needs. This, however, makes a ‘one size fits all model’ for measuring outcomes at best inaccurate and out of context, and at worst impossible.

This is where RBA™ approach to CFSA. RBA™ provides a comprehensive framework for measuring the impact that CFSA will have on local outcomes for children whilst offering flexibility to adapt to the differing needs and contexts throughout South Australia.

As such, an RBA™ approach to CFSA offers a potential model for all industrialised nations where finding a set of ‘one size fits all’ indicators is not feasible because the needs and contexts of countries around the world are so different.

8.2 What is Results Based Accountability™?

RBA™ is being embraced across a broad spectrum of social and community organisations in South Australia – from state government departments, to local governments, large NGOs and small independent community groups. It is a framework that can be used to apply discipline to our passion and see real change and positive results for children and young people. This process can be used at both a population and performance level.

With regards to CFSA, Population Accountability supports the community partnership planning process that is needed to ensure a cohesive and mutually reinforcing approach to becoming child friendly. Performance Accountability is useful as a way of self-monitoring and measuring the performance of both the local child friendly steering group and the programs and activities of each partner involved.

RBA™ is being used extensively by communities around the world to achieve social outcomes.

Explicit examples of how communities could use RBA™ to implement CFSA are provided at key stages throughout the Child Friendly SA Implementation Guide.

Many of the templates created for CFSA are based on RBA™ templates. RBA™ is explained in depth in Trying Hard is Not Good Enough by Mark Friedman, as well as at www.raguide.org and www.resultsaccountability.com.

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11 Friedman, M 2005, Trying hard is not good enough, Trafford Publications, Oxford.
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Child friendly cities planning
9. Child friendly cities planning

In the initial design stages, DECD and UNICEF Australia developed stages of implementation.

9.1 What is involved?

Stages of implementation

1. Planning stage – demonstration of an active commitment to becoming more child friendly and evaluation of community profile

At this stage it is expected that communities can demonstrate the following:

- Governance structures are in place
- Key stakeholders, including children are engaged
- CFSA community profile is developed (based on the 6 CFSA community goals) that describes the lives of children and identifies those experiencing vulnerability or at increased risk of exclusion in the community (refer to page 10)
- CFSA community plan is developed and includes population indicators that support the 6 CFSA community goals identified and baselines developed. The community plan must include specific actions for the children at most risk in the community (refer to page 10)
- A performance plan is developed for the local steering group, with evidence of involvement of children and young people.
2. Implementation stage – demonstration of action, progress and practice of a child friendly approach

At this stage it is expected that communities can demonstrate the following:

- performance plans are developed for actions/programs identified in the CFSA community plan
- new approaches have been trialled
- there is evidence of a focus on the continuous improvement of the existing programs contributing to the community plan
- there is evidence of a focus on ‘turning the curve’ on CFSA indicators including evidence of activity responding to at least 2 of the children at increased risk of vulnerability in the community (refer to page 10)
- there is evidence of improvement to governance, policy and practice to council and/or organisational systems
- there is evidence of participation and endorsement from a diverse group of local children and young people.

3. Embedding stage – demonstration of clear evidence of improved results for children at a population level and system reform

In addition to the previous stages, it is expected that communities are able to demonstrate the following:

- evidence of significant and wide-ranging impact of the CFSA projects and processes on and processes at council and community level
- clear evidence (based on data) of improved results for children at the population level
- successful pilot projects, processes and models are mainstreamed
- partners and/or stakeholders long-term commitments to the CFSA principles and goals are re-established
- evidence of a solid culture of continuous improvement and commitment
- there is evidence of significant improvement to governance, policy and practice to council and/or organisational systems
- there is evidence that participation has been mainstreamed with various, ongoing mechanisms for children to actively participate and inform decisions made with local government
- there is evidence that children at risk of vulnerability are representative in the mechanisms for participation
- there is evidence of endorsement from local children and young people
- evidence of applicants having worked with other communities interested in adopting a child friendly approach.
The next step

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The next step
10. The next step

If you are interested in becoming a Child Friendly SA community, please refer to the Child Friendly SA Implementation Guide: A Step-by-Step Self-assessment Guide to Becoming Child Friendly.
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Introduction

Reaching children
Becoming Child Friendly
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The next step