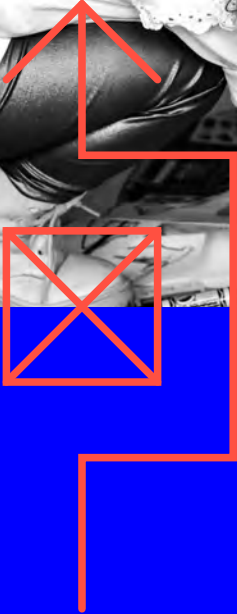


Dublin City Council Urban 95 Pilot Initiative



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Introduction

This Report offers an overview of an important initiative which was undertaken by Dublin City Council during 2023 to 2024, which was primarily intended to explore the unique experiences of young children and their caregivers, of and in the city of Dublin. It provides a historical context for how children's needs, rights and priorities have become more of a focus of planning and design, as well as a detailed summary and description of the various components of the Urban 95 project. The Report is intended to provoke and promote further consideration of the value and validity of incorporating the perspectives and participation of young children, across the Council's work and activities.



Contents↑

Focusing on Children in Urban Planning and Design.



William H. Whyte's seminal publication "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces"¹ reflects a philosophy developed in America during the 1970's, through the Street Life Project in New York. Among other elements, this project examined city spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, to conclude that children do not just play in the street because of a lack of playgrounds, but that they actually like to play on their streets.

Later, an international movement for child-friendly cities which started to emerge in the 1990's, coincided with a societal trend towards recognising children's unique identity within society, shifting the focus towards children's rights and participation, in the context of urban planning and design.

Developing strategies to improve cities for babies, toddlers and their caregivers has since become the goal of projects in locations worldwide, where municipal leaders have committed to more actively exploring the needs and activities of young children, primarily to inform and improve access and participation for this cohort of the population. It is now an established principle that cities that are designed to be more accessible to vulnerable populations including young children, are in fact more enjoyable and equitable for everyone.

Children's Rights

Integral to the rationale for building better cities², are the principles that young children have the right to live safely and healthily; that their views should be heard and respected, and that they should be able to access and participate in play, as well as other physical, cultural and creative activities. ➤

¹— William H. Whyte (1980) The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces. Project for Public Spaces, New York.

²— Bernard van Leer Foundation (2017).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child³ (UNCRC) provides that when adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children and do what is in the best interests of children (in Article 3); that children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them and that adults should listen and take children's views seriously (Article 12).

Article 24 of the UNCRC states that children have a right to a clean environment to stay healthy and safe, and Article 31 states that every child has the right to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities.⁴

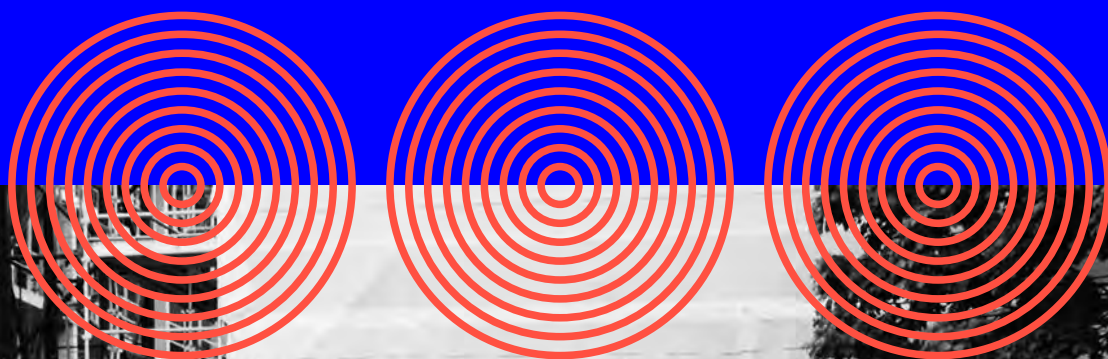
General Comment No.26 is the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's authoritative guidance on how children's rights are impacted by the environmental crisis which points to what governments must do to uphold these rights, in order to ensure that children live in a clean, healthy and sustainable world. Process oriented urban development involves children's participation in coalition building and the co-production of child-responsive urban settings. Therefore, taking an affirmative stance to respect children's rights, requires local authorities to engage in child-responsive urban planning, recognising that cities are not only drivers of prosperity, but also of inequity, which has a spatial dimension. In contrast, positioning children as unseen as unheard within this integral process increases their vulnerability and powerlessness as a group within society.

³— Convention on the rights of the child (1989) Treaty no. 27531. United Nations Treaty Series, 1577, pp. 3-178.

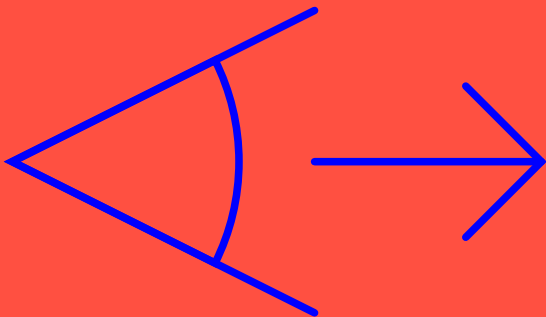
⁴— www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention

126,214

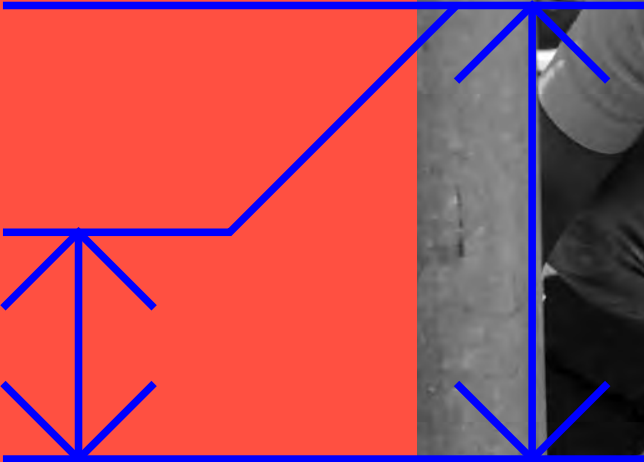
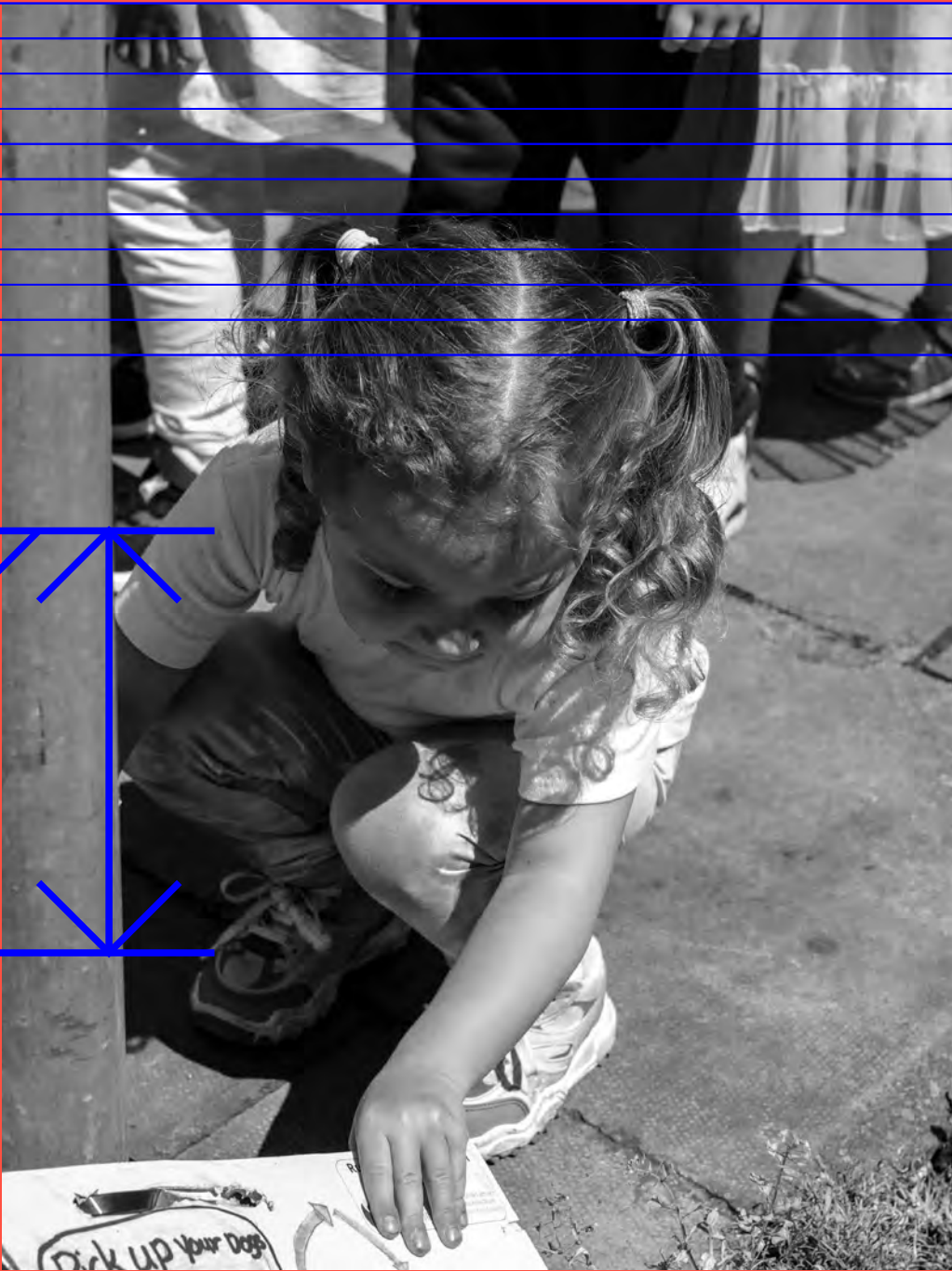
According to Census 2022, there are 126,214 families in Dublin City, with an average number of children per family, of 1.113.



Contents↑



What is Urban95?



What is Urban95?

The Urban95 Strategy, led by the Bernard van Leer charitable foundation, aims to challenge and enrich discourses on child-friendly cities, by highlighting the specific needs of very young children from the physical perspective of the average height of a 3-year-old child, which is 95 centimetres.

According to the Urban95 Manifesto, an Urban95 city is a place where babies, toddlers and the people who care for them are seen, heard, counted and considered; Caregivers are given the time and respect they need to provide vital care and support; Vulnerable families receive the extra support they need to thrive; City agencies work together, and with the community, to support families with small children; Public spaces prompt singing, conversation and play. Shared streets are dedicated to cleaner, safer and fairer modes of transportation; Children's routes help families travel safely and comfortably wherever they wish to go; Early years services are located within a fifteen minutes' walk from where families live; Neighbourhoods bridge cultural divides and provide spaces for socialising; Clean air, pure water and refreshing nature surround and nurture every resident.⁵

The Urban95 Academy

Created jointly by LSE Cities at the London School of Economics and the Van Leer Foundation, the Urban95 Academy is a funded executive education programme for municipal leaders worldwide, which involves seven weeks of learning, through comprehensive online modules for participants to complete at their own pace. In addition, there are weekly live Zoom sessions hosted by LSE Academic staff and guest lecturers.⁶ ↘

⁵— www.vanleerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/U95-Manifesto-English.pdf

⁶—www.urban95academy.org

At the end of seven weeks, participants are asked to submit an action strategy assignment, to address a local challenge. Based on this assignment and their overall participation in the course, ten cities are then invited to attend a week-long residence week in London for intensive workshops, site visits, networking events, and lectures, to further refine their proposal.

Dublin City Council's Urban95 Delegation

In early 2023, three representatives from DCC completed the online course with the Urban95 Academy, through which they developed a written project proposal. This group included Councillor Cat O'Driscoll (Social Democrats), Liz Coman, Assistant Arts Officer, Dublin City Arts Office and Debbie Clarke, DCC Play Officer.

Their original proposal was primarily focused on creating pop-up play opportunities within Dublin city and facilitating traffic free spaces, to enable creative participatory activities to take place, for young children and their caregivers.

Having initially not been selected to participate in the next stage, a Dublin City Council group was subsequently invited to attend the Urban95 Residency Week, in July 2023, to engage with other groups, and reflect on their plans. The composition of the DCC delegation changed for this phase, as the role of the Play Officer was discontinued and officer was then moved to a new role. The group who attended the residency comprised Councillor Cat O'Driscoll, Liz Coman and DCC Landscape Architect, Fionnuala Collins.

As well as the participants from Dublin, those attending the residency week represented cities from a broad range of geographical locations, including Boa Vista ➤

(in Brazil), Jabalpur (in central India), Canoas (in Brazil), Kobierzyce (in south western Poland), Celaya (in Mexico), Palaio (in Greece), Faliro (in Greece), Pristina (in Kosovo), Irbid (in the north of Jordan), and Seattle (in Washington, U.S.A.), which created an eclectic mix of perspectives.

The attendees received specialist support, from working with experts, including Simon Battisti, an architect and teacher who leads Qendra Marrëdhënie (QM), a nonprofit urban research and action group.

QM provides technical assistance and design services to local governments and institutions such as parent councils, student bodies, residents committees, to promote equity and well-being,⁷ focussing on the play and mobility needs of young children and their caregivers, supported through the Global Designing Cities Initiative (GDCI).⁸

The Urban95 Pilot Plan

The original plan devised by the DCC group for the Urban95 Pilot Initiative was intended to deliver several broad actions and outcomes, including scoping the needs of babies, toddlers, and caregivers in Dublin City and identifying a network of stakeholders and experts; Plotting a sustainable programme for the city and determining a charter, which would reflect the principles of the Urban95 Manifesto.⁹

During the residency week, the plan for the pilot phase evolved which included the Arts element of Dublin's Urban 95 initial proposal. This is generally regarded as a highly innovative, if not unique aspect of the Dublin Urban95 plan. ↘

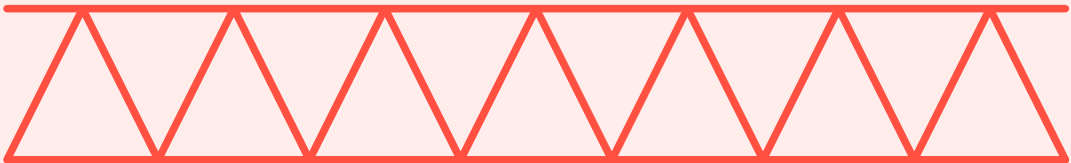
⁷—www.qendra-m.org/en

⁸—www.globaldesigningcities.org/update/gdcis-streets-for-kids-program-helps-create-tirana-albanias-first-school-zone/

⁹—www.vanleerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/U95-Manifesto-English.pdf

The overall goals were refined to focus on building an information base by conducting a city-wide stakeholder survey, together with engaging Artists to explore the vision for the project, around the theme of ‘nurturing joy.’ It was also planned to hold events to share the learning from the initiative, with a view to continuing on from the pilot phase, by designing a longer-term strategy drawing on the Urban95 philosophy.

Following the participation of the DCC group in the residency programme, the plan for the Urban95 Pilot received a funding allocation of 50,000 euro from Dublin City Council and the Department of Culture, Recreation and Economic Services set up a cross-departmental Steering Group, to build awareness of the experiences of babies, toddlers and their caregivers in Dublin city within DCC, and to oversee the key elements of the Dublin City 2024 pilot programme. The Steering Group is chaired by Mary MacSweeney Executive Manager of Culture, Recreation and Economic Services in DCC. Together with Councillor Cat O’Driscoll, membership of this group represents the Arts Office, and the DCC Sports Office, which includes the Dublin City Sports and Wellbeing Partnership.

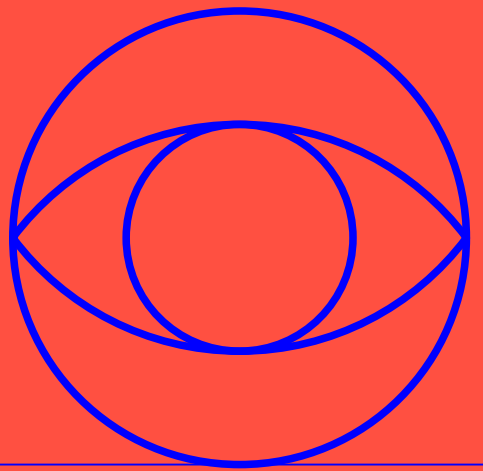


6,967

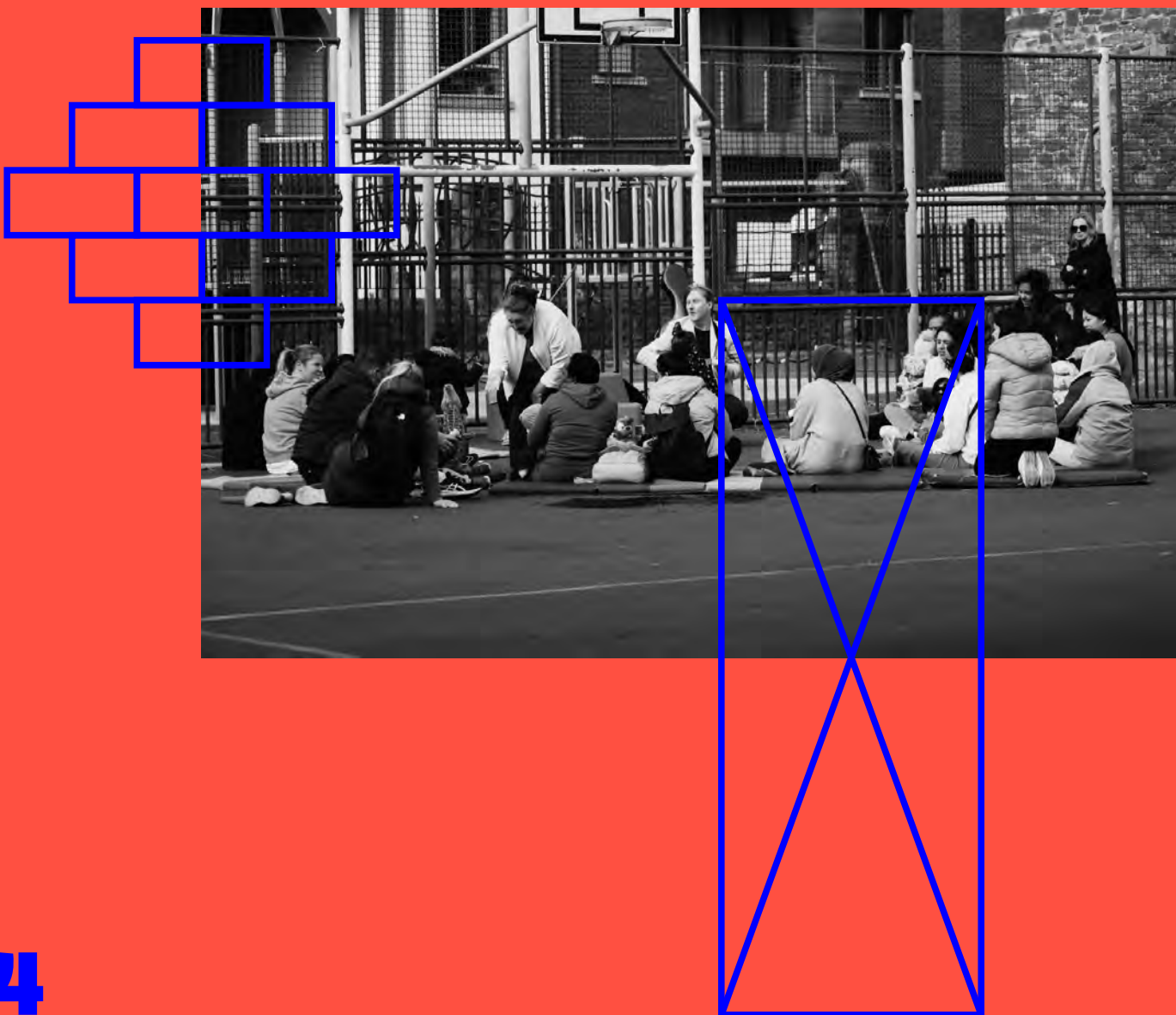
6,967 births were registered in Dublin City in 2022, which represents the highest number in the country.



Contents ↑



Key Components of the Urban95 Pilot Initiative



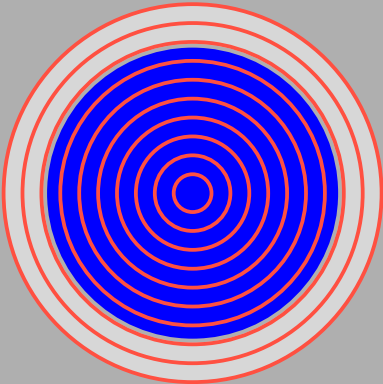
Stakeholder Survey

Delve Research¹⁰ conducted a city-wide survey on behalf of DCC, to explore the experiences of young children and their caregivers, in the city. The survey, which was conducted in quarter one of 2024, received 1,024 respondents from the Your Dublin, Your Voice opinion panel, supplemented by 760 additional responses, which were generated by circulating the survey link to relevant organisations and groups.

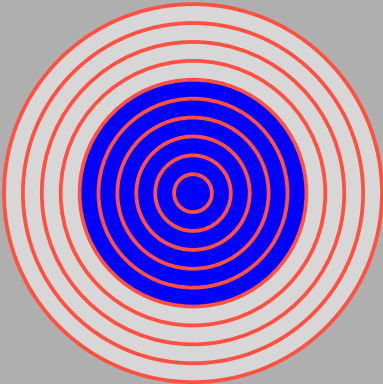
These stakeholder groups were identified in a scoping process aimed at ensuring the involvement of as many caregivers of the toddler age group as possible. In total, 1,066 respondents identified as current caregivers to babies and toddlers, or as having been so within the last five years.

Figure—1

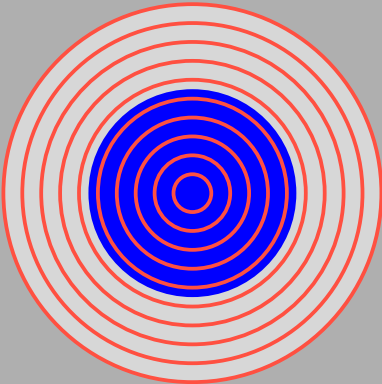
What are your main ways of moving around Dublin City with a baby and / or toddler?



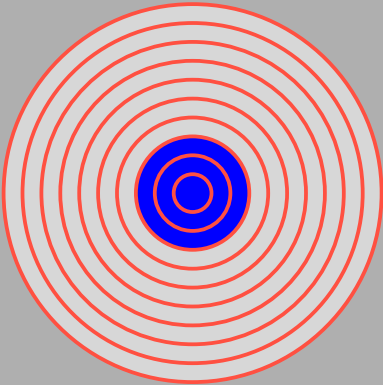
Walking/Wheeling=78%



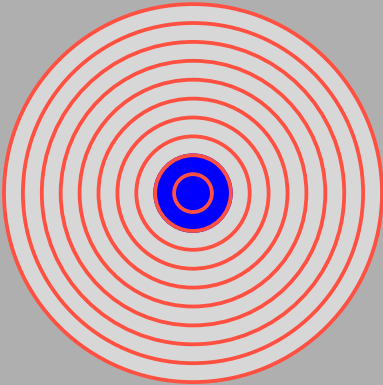
by Car=60%



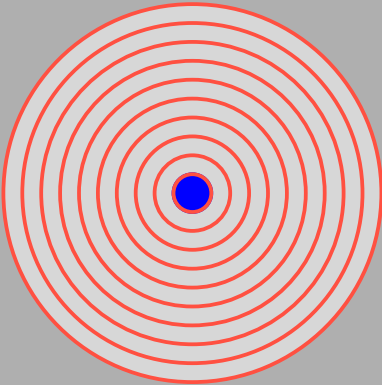
by Bus=55%



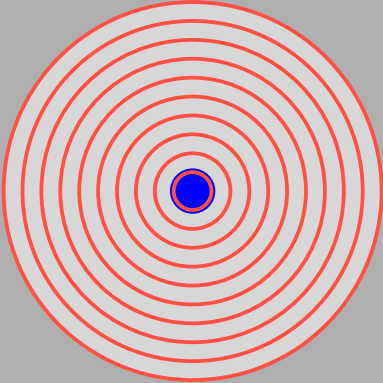
by Luas=30%



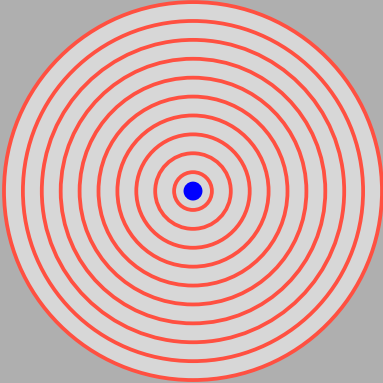
by Train or DART=21%



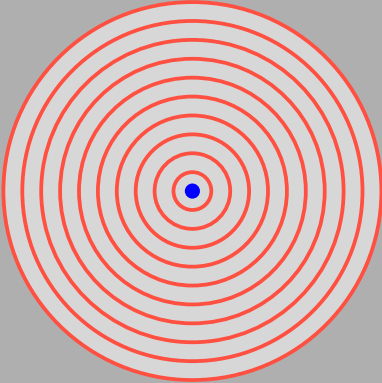
by Bi-Cycle=11%



by Taxi=6%



by Cargo Bike=4%



by E-Bike=1%

Findings

The survey responses offer excellent insights into the ways in which young children and their caregivers experience the city of Dublin. The full range of analysis is available within the documentation compiled by the Research company.¹¹ The following key findings are among the wide variety of interesting data which emerged:

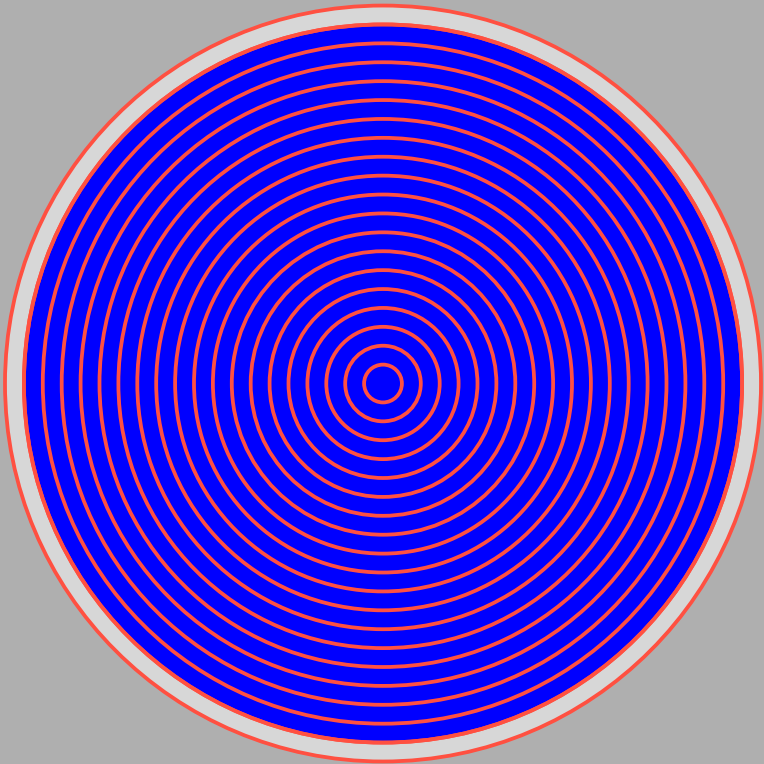
-
- The average time carers spend with a baby and toddler in Dublin city, is 1.5 hours.
-
- 81% of caregivers reported encountering challenges with footpaths, while moving around Dublin city with a baby and/or toddler, compared with 65% of other carers.
-
- 77% of baby and toddler caregivers cited ‘dog poo’ as a frequent issue on footpaths, compared with 54% of non-toddler/baby caregivers.
-
- 75% of toddler/baby caregivers reported “vehicles parked on the footpath” as the obstacle most often encountered.
-
- 68% of caregivers, reported a lack of suitable areas for toddlers to explore nature, within parks and playgrounds.
-
- In assessing a child’s readiness for independent travel through the city, 95% of survey respondents ranked the safety of the neighbourhood, as the most important factor to take into consideration.¹²

¹¹—Economic Development Office Dublin City Council can be contacted at: research@dublincity.ie

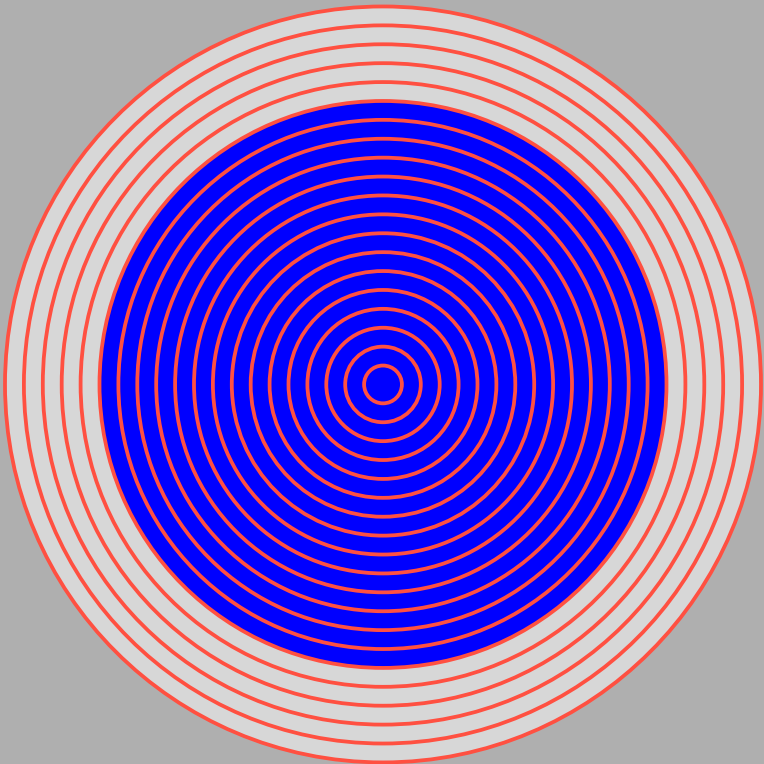
¹²—The average age suggested for when children should travel independently, across all respondents, was 10.8 years

Key Findings

In assessing a child’s readiness for independent travel through the city, 95% of survey respondents ranked the safety of the neighbourhood, as the most important factor to take into consideration.

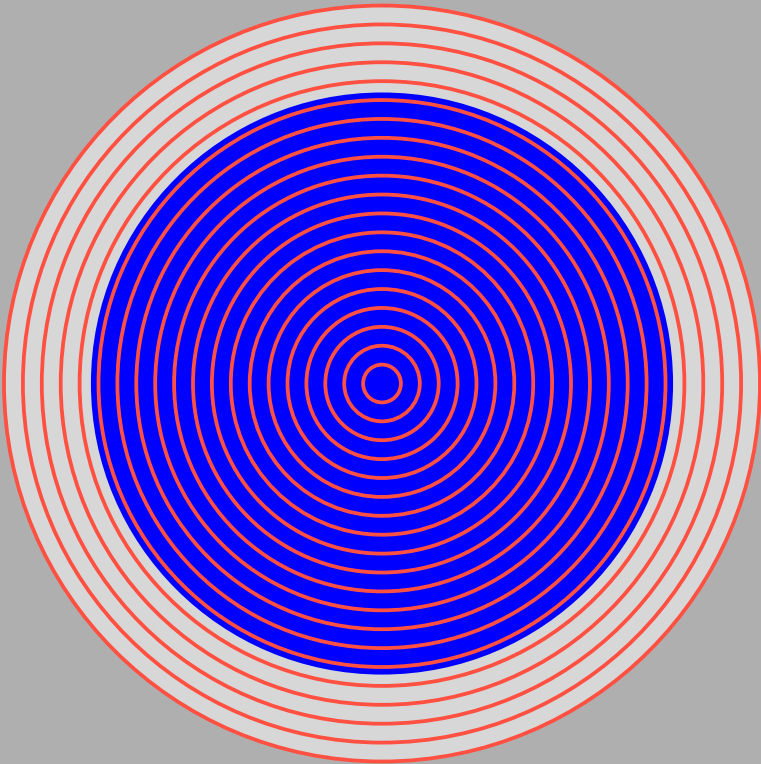


75% of toddler/baby caregivers reported “vehicles parked on the footpath” as the obstacle most often encountered.

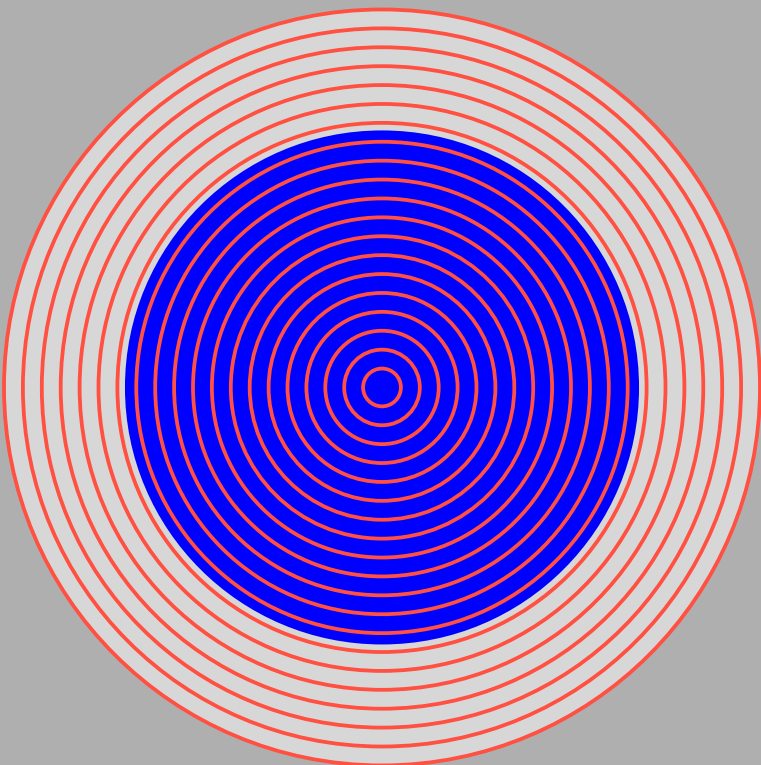


Key Findings

77% of baby and toddler caregivers cited ‘dog poo’ as a frequent issue on footpaths, compared with 54% of non-toddler/baby caregivers.



68% of caregivers, reported a lack of suitable areas for toddlers to explore nature, within parks and playgrounds.



Additional Feedback from Respondents

The Research company reported a higher than usual level of engagement by caregivers in response to an invitation to make additional comments and suggestions. These comments offer extremely valuable insights into the difficulties and challenges for those caring for babies and toddlers in the city, as well as suggestions for improvements.

-
- Challenges include “cracked paths, people being utterly oblivious to blocking paths” and “having to walk further to get to pedestrian lights to cross the road”.
-
- “It is not always possible to able to rely on public transport as “buses only take one wheelchair and one or two buggies, so I sometimes can’t get on the bus.”
-
- “Dog poo is a massive problem in our area and litter is just everywhere...makes it difficult with a buggy or child who wants to walk.”
-
- “The city only really works with the toddler in the buggy and that’s not manageable for more than an hour or so. They need to get out and be themselves but that’s just not doable really in a busy urban set up, unless it’s pedestrianised and off the main streets.”
-
- “I avoid going to the center of the city as it can be dangerous, unacceptable with a baby, dirty, and entertaining my child is almost impossible.”
-

-
- “It is definitely more challenging and more tiring to move around Dublin City with a toddler as I am constantly trying to navigate the city terrain, while being as safe as possible”.
-
- “I find it really difficult to find spaces to breastfeed. I am new to breastfeeding and not yet comfortable with doing it in public, even though I know it's natural and beautiful, I worry what others think.”
-
- “...you are not always sure to get a place on the bus if there is another pram user. Therefore, I use the car more for longer distances. I tend to spend less time in town in general and go to fewer places when in there.”
-

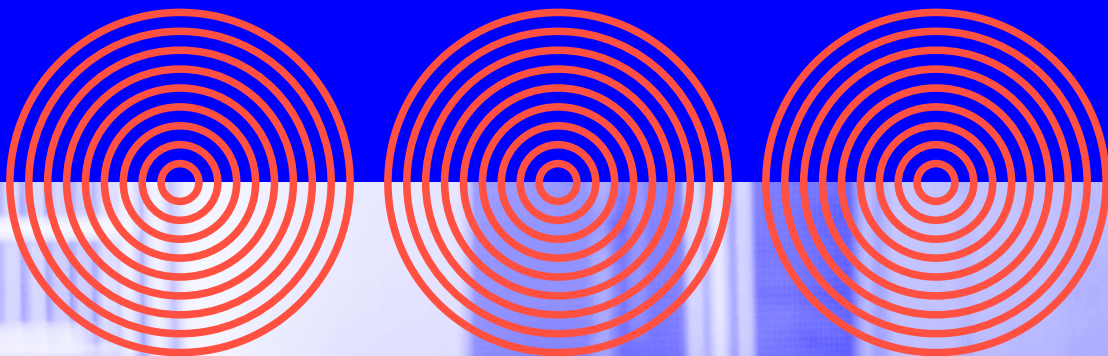
Arts Projects

The Arts Office in DCC decided to engage in a nomination process, ostensibly to build awareness of Urban 95 among artists, which would assist to get their feedback on the Urban95 pilot and indicate what might be their chosen approach, to capturing the voices and stories of babies, toddlers and their caregivers, based on their experiences of moving through Dublin city.

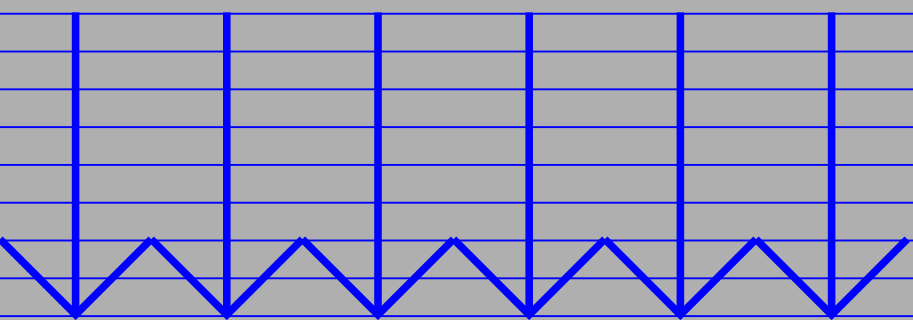
Given the limitations of both budget and time, the Arts Office elected to invite proposals from a group of internal individuals and external organisations, with an existing track record of working with very young children, and artists who have an established practice in early childhood arts, within the Dublin City Council Administrative Areas. Five established Artists were selected to engage in the Urban95 projects. ↘

10.8 Years

Average appropriate age for independent travel suggested by Delve survey respondents.



Helen Barry



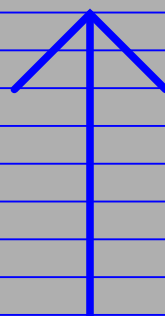
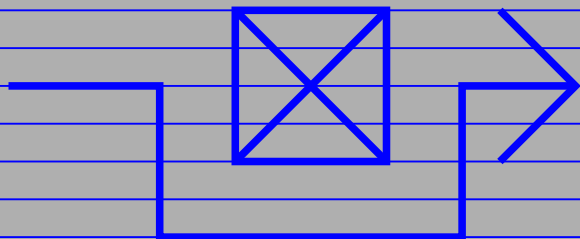
Helen Barry—Sculptunes in the Park

Helen Barry, Early Years Artist and Inventor, created Sculptunes in the Park, in partnership with the Hugh Lane Gallery, in Dublin 1. Sculptunes are a series of interactive sound installations that are made with and for children. They offer a child-led engagement that encourages the child to be curious as they play, poke and push the different elements of each piece. Each interaction has a cause and effect demonstrating to children that they have an impact on the world around them. Sculptunes best demonstrates where the synergy between artist-led engagement and early years methodologies supports the growth and development of the young child.





Michelle Browne



Michelle Browne

Artist Michelle Browne curated two projects for the Urban95 initiative.

Buggy Assault Course

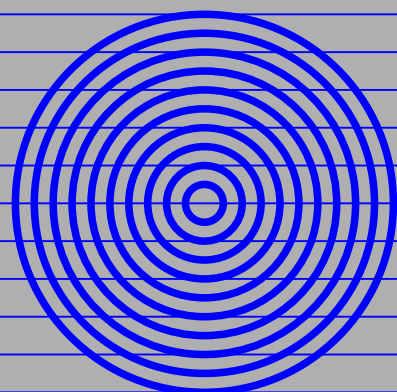
A Buggy assault course, which is based on William H. Whyte's notion of the "skilled pedestrian," enabled participants to directly experience the challenges of navigating an urban space with a buggy, which was weighted to reflect the size of a toddler.

Listening to the City

This project involved three writers who composed essays, from the perspective of carers of young children traversing Dublin city. These pieces were created as audio essays, which were geolocated, to connect to specific areas within Dublin City, and downloadable as podcasts through the Acast app.¹³ The locations featured include, Mountjoy Square, Drumcondra, the corner of Pearse Street and Erne Street Upper, and the route from the Ha'penny Bridge to Stephen's Green playground. The themes which were chosen by the three writers included the experiences of moving through the city, after giving birth (Sophie White), walking with a ten-year-old as well as a buggy (Shane Hegarty) and the challenges of spending time with small children in the city streets, when a 'home' space is not always safely or fully available (Melatu Uche Okorie).

¹³— www.shows.acast.com/listening-to-the-city-ii

Lucy Hill

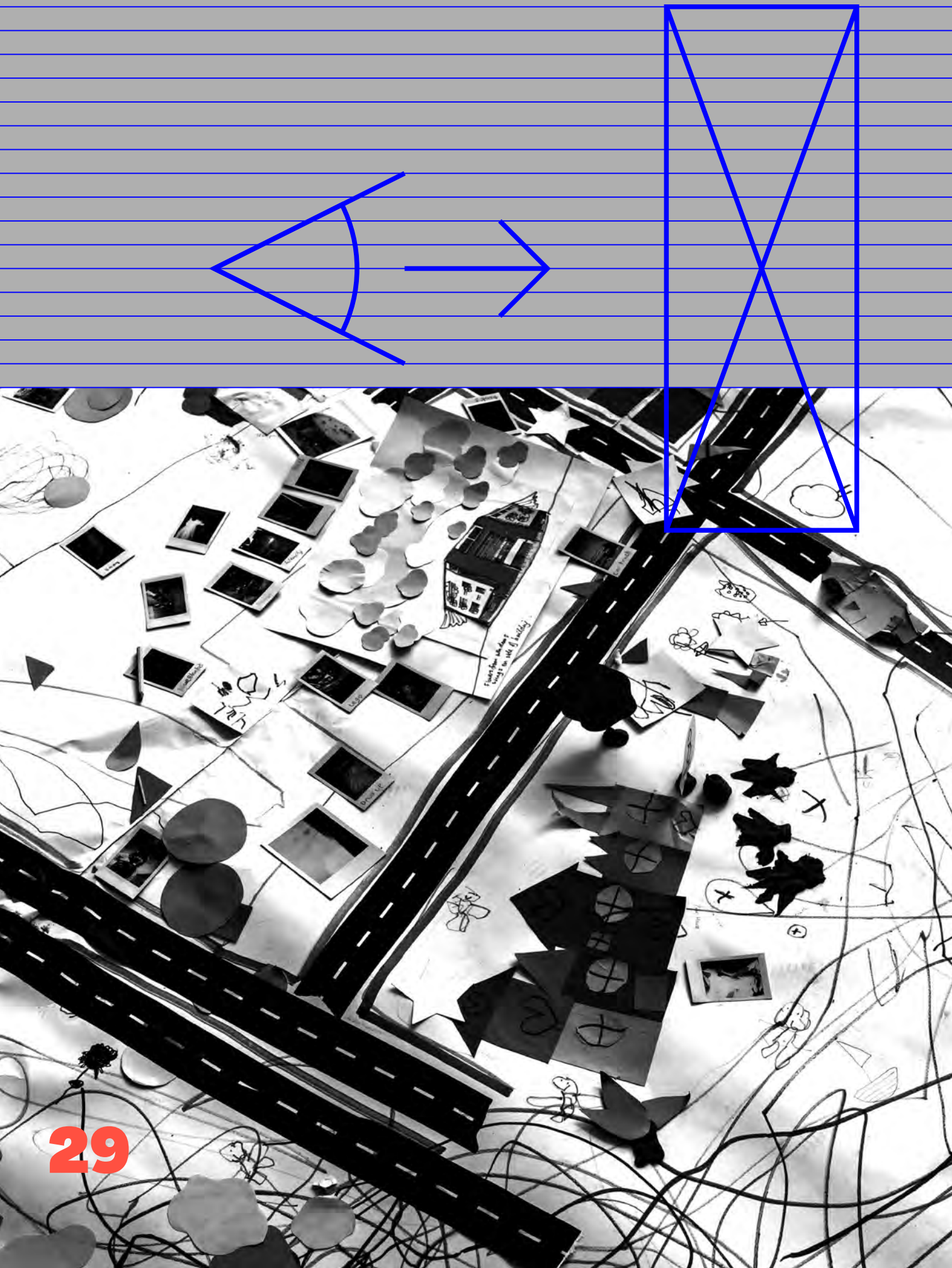


Lucy Hill — Archive of Loved Stuff

Artist Lucy Hill created an Archive of Loved Stuff using arts-based research methods including photography and drawing. Lucy met with two baby and toddler groups, two city center libraries, and two creches, to chat about the babies' and toddlers' attachments to comfort objects, asking, what will they not leave home without, and what do they carry with them to help them feel secure. The children's comfort objects were photographed using a specially designed portable 'photo booth', and the series of images contributed to an 'archive'.



Orla Kelly



Orla Kelly — Mapping My City

Artist Orla Kelly, along with two photographers, engaged with a group twelve children aged 3 to 4 years, and their pre-school educators, to map their immediate environment, through the Mapping My City project. Three workshops were held with the young children, within their school environment, and outside, on the neighbouring streets, where most of the children live, to facilitate them to explore their local area.

The children's exploration of the streets, led to some interesting conversations about the significance of the areas in which they play, the location of homes of the children themselves, or people they love, and specific features on the streets, which particularly captured the children's imagination. Gloucester Street has lots of "witches' hats (traffic cones), broken witches' broomsticks, doors where zombies hide, a circle filled with circles, a tiger, and a curious red square". It also has "some dog poo and lots of broken glass". Gardiner Street is called the big street or the big hill and, on the corner, near the lights, there is a "garden of flowers". From here you can see the moon and planets at night. and there is a giant puddle and a skate park here. Central to the map made by the children, is the school building, where they attend pre-school. The final illustration has portraits of everyone who was involved, alongside information and photos of things that they love to play with, which were taken with a polaroid camera and placed on the map. The surrounding streets were depicted according to how the children view them and the important features were drawn in by the children themselves.



Eamon Sweeney



Eamon Sweeney — Lullabies Outdoors

Lullabies Outdoors was a six week programme which sought to move the successful Lullabies early years/ family music programme outdoors at Hill St Family Resource Centre in Dublin 1, where the project had successfully taken place in 2023 and again in 2024. It engaged a new cohort of participant families who are engaged with the Family Resource Centre, and numbered 18 nationalities within the group. It was led by Eamon Sweeney with a small number of supporting musicians and took place in September and October 2024 on Wednesday mornings.



Seminar

As part of the International Literature Festival Dublin, a public seminar Growing Together: Building Better Cities for Early Years, was held on 17th May 2024, to share and explore the principles, plans and processes from the DCC pilot Urban95 Initiative with a public audience, and to examine how best to shape the future of Dublin city, for the benefit of babies, toddlers and their families.

Keynote Speaker: Simon Battisti

Simon spoke about his experience of implementing the school streets project in Tirana, in Albania. He described the significant increase in car ownership, from 2005 to 2015, and how this has affected the ways that children and their caregivers use the city.

Simon emphasised the reality of children in cities being more vulnerable to air pollution and noise pollution, as well as the effects of stress on caregivers trying to navigate city spaces. Climate change also has very specific negative implications for children, given that by 2050, almost every child in the world – nearly 2.2 billion children – will be exposed to frequent heat waves. For children, greater heat can cause sleep disruption, rapid dehydration and less opportunity to spend time outside. This necessitates special consideration in designing and planning city spaces, to offer more protection for young children.

Presentation by Delve Research

A detailed PowerPoint presentation was made, to share the outcomes from the city-wide survey of caregivers of babies and toddlers in Dublin city, emphasising the key findings and highlighting the main issues identified by Respondents.

Reflections on Dublin City, from Babies, Toddlers, and Caregivers

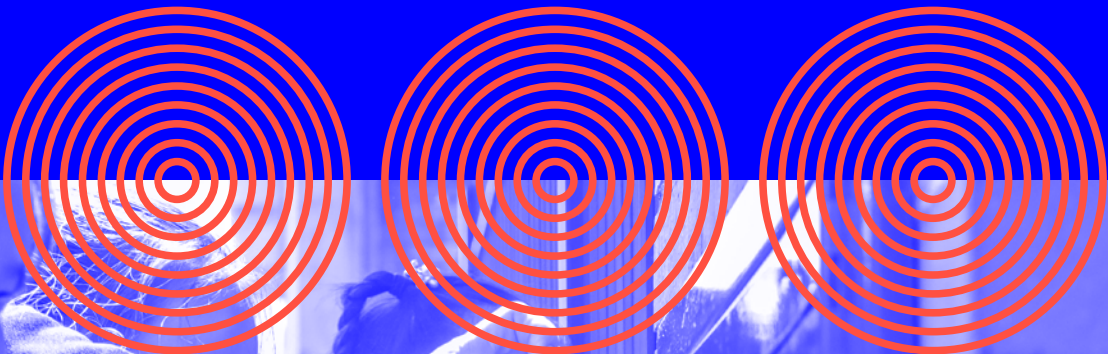
Each of the Artists involved in the Initiative presented their projects, using multimedia and first-person accounts. Michelle Browne introduced the writer Sophie White, to read her written piece of work, for Listening to The City; Lucy Hill presented Images from the Archive of Loved Stuff. Helen Barry's presentation on Sculptunes in the Park, included a video, and Orla Kelly shared her images from the Mapping My City project.

Panel and Audience Discussions

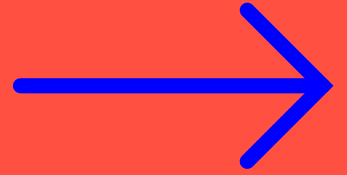
Panellists discussed how Dublin currently facilitates babies, toddlers and their caregivers and how the city could be improved. Jennifer McGrath, Senior Executive Engineer - Road Safety & Micro Mobility Section; Deirdre Prince - Executive Parks Superintendent, Parks and Landscape Services and Sabrina Dekker - Climate Action Co-Ordinator shared insights and projects around how their work connects with babies, toddlers and caregivers. A closing discussion focused on Building a Better City - Creating a manifesto for a toddler friendly Dublin. Facilitated by Councillor Cat O'Driscoll, these conversations are seen as a starting point for mapping out a draft manifesto for Dublin City, to inform future goals and strategies for building a better city. Following on from the seminar, a DCC group was invited to attend the Placemaking in Europe Week in Rotterdam, to co-create and present a session on the theme Child-Centric Urban Innovation: Transforming Cities and Spaces for Younger Users.

3,000

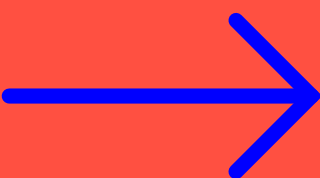
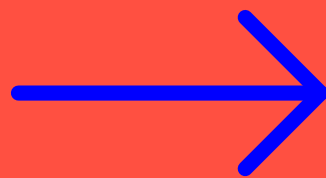
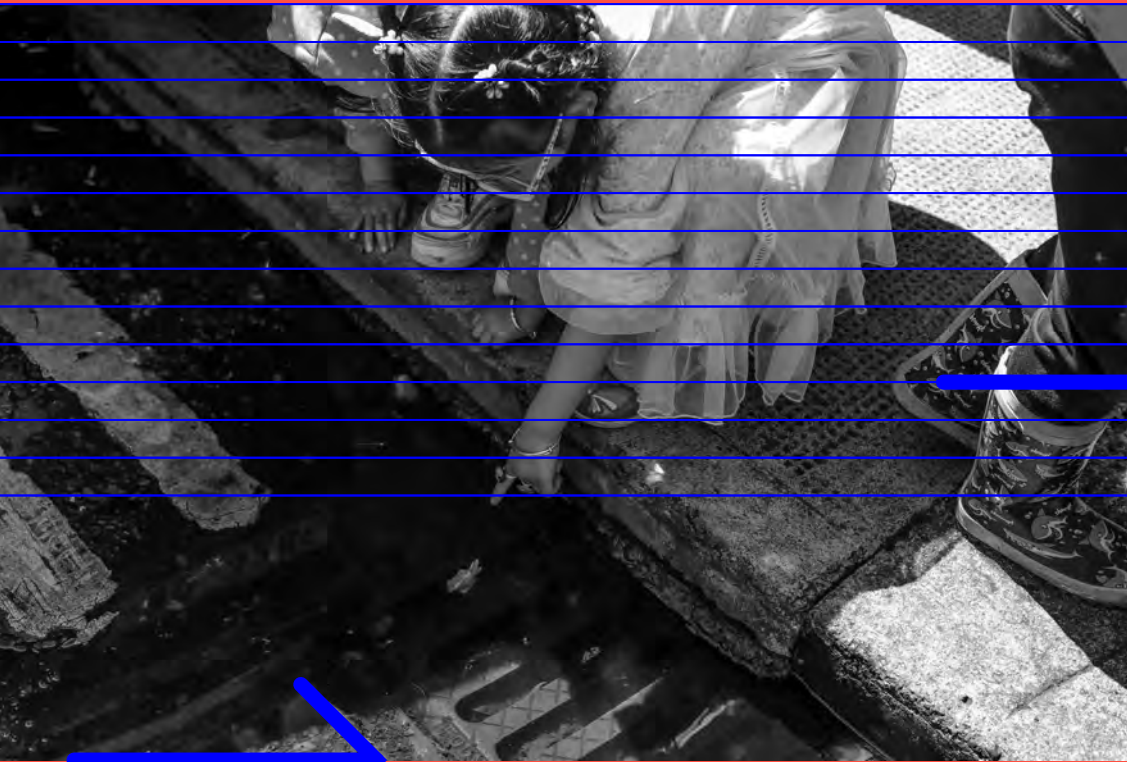
There are approximately 3,000 children under 4 years of age in Dublin City, representing around 5% of the city's population.



Contents



Where To From Here?



Where To From Here?

Having benefited from their participation in the Urban95 Academy and residency, those involved on behalf of Dublin City Council have commissioned this Report primarily to share the outputs with a wider audience and facilitate reflection on the implementation of the pilot plan. To inform a plan for future developments, it will be necessary to consider what actions and activities may be both possible and beneficial for Dublin City to deliver on next.

Addressing the needs of young children and their caregivers on urban streets and within city spaces, realistically requires complementarity between design, planning and policy. Building on outcomes achieved to date, discussions on the future of Urban95, could usefully draw further on the analysis of responses to the stakeholder survey, as well as making meaningful connections with existing policies, research and strategies. Reviewing previous and current initiatives, could also assist in building a shared vision among key stakeholders and prospective partners. This is fundamental to a consideration of what specific goals are to be prioritised, and how these can be achieved.

Policy, Strategy and Research

Within Dublin City Council, there are several policies and strategies, which are directly or indirectly relevant to the Urban95 principles, and which could be further explored, in the next phase of the initiative, to determine whether meaningful connections can be created, to enable explicit collaboration and effective implementation in practice. ↘

These include the Play Strategy,¹⁴ the Arts Plan,¹⁵ the City Development Plan,¹⁶ the Local Economic and Community Plan,¹⁷ Climate Change Action Plan for 2019-2024.¹⁸

The Active Cities Strategy, which is currently being rolled out in Dublin City, is also pertinent, as the mission of Active Cities is to create opportunities for citizens to lead healthier lifestyles in the context of sport and physical activity. There is an emphasis on creating increased opportunities for people with a disability, or those who are economically, socially or educationally disadvantaged, to become more active.¹⁹

Research which has been recently undertaken may provide an additional evidence base, through which to understand the perspectives of young children and their caregivers, on play and recreation in the city.²⁰ The scoping of potential stakeholders in the Early Childhood sector, which took place to inform the city-wide survey, will serve as a useful reference for exploring potential alliances within this sector, to enable future Urban95 planning and development.

14— www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2022-10/Play%20Strategy%202022.pdf

15— www.dublincityartsoffice.ie/content/files/ArtsPlan.pdf

16— www.dublincity.ie/residential/planning/strategic-planning/dublin-city-development-plan/development-plan-2022-2028

17— www.dublincity.ie/dublin-city-development-plan-2016-2022/2-vision-and-core-strategy/22-core-strategy/2241-local-economic-and-community-plan

18— www.dublincity.ie/residential/environment/dublin-city-councils-climate-change-action-plan

19— www.dcswhub.ie/active-cities

20— Dublin City University and Maynooth University (2023) Playing on the Edge! Play Preferences and Provision in Dublin City Urban Neighbourhoods: Perspectives from Caregivers, Children and Parents.

Previous and Current Initiatives

There are some examples, within and across the broader Dublin area, of where a focus has been taken, on examining and addressing the needs of children in the urban context. Learning from other projects and initiatives, which are currently or have previously taken place in, Ireland and other locations, could enrich understandings, to inform future developments and explore potential partnerships.

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- A number of examples of innovative public space design and pop-up street activities were provided in the original Urban 95 proposal. This includes projects which have taken place in Montpelier Road Linear Park, Fade Street, Sherriff Street and Crumlin. Such spaces may be worthy of expansion and replication.
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- Previous innovations in the Arts sphere, have involved a range of artists and arts organisations who have been supported by Dublin City Council to work with themes of public space and placemaking, through which young children and their caregivers have been meaningfully engaged in artistic practices, connected to their neighbourhoods.²¹
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- Elsewhere, the Fingal County Council School Streets initiative²² was designed to improve the safety and well-being of pupils attending two primary schools in Malahide. The project, which was run on a pilot basis in 2019, transformed the space around schools into a car-free, ↘

²¹— Open Spaces Research and Commissions; Project 20/20 at The LAB Gallery and Liberty Park and the Exploring and Thinking Partnership

²²— www.smartdublin.ie/school-streets-improving-safety-and-wellbeing-for-primary-school-pupils/

pedestrian and cycling zone, to create a safer, cleaner and more environmentally friendly space outside the school.

- A Playful City, is a non-profit organisation based in Dublin 2, which was developed in 2017, and which works in the public and private sectors, to provide insights, briefs and solutions, to create more playful, healthy and inclusive places.²³
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- Informally, some neighbourhood-led initiatives, are attempting to create opportunities for children to play freely together on their own streets, by closing a street to traffic at an agreed time. This includes the D7 Play Streets initiative which aims to give children in Dublin 7, “the experience of street play and greater independence that a lot of older Irish people enjoyed when they were growing up”.²⁴
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Building a Shared Vision

Fundamental to ensuring that urban landscapes are suitable, safe and interesting for children, is setting a focus on improved and independent mobility and quality public spaces, as key goals and outcomes. This has implications for the city’s physical infrastructure, as well as policies, programs, and overall priorities, which need to align with agreed core principles. ↘

²³— www.aplayfulcity.com/

²⁴— www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2024/0718/1391134-d7-play-streets-dublin-ireland/

To initiate a process of vision-building, there are several specific actions which are seen as crucial to addressing key challenges and contributing to an ongoing process of improving and redesigning urban spaces.²⁵

- Prioritising children in policies
- Thinking from the perspective of 95cm
- Disincentivising private vehicles
- Increasing transit reliability
- Building wide and accessible footpaths
- Adding spaces for play and learning
- Providing safe cycling facilities
- Improving pedestrian crossings
- Lowering speeds by design
- Adding trees and landscaping

Consideration of these principles could offer a useful starting point for further engagement with key stakeholders, both internal and external, to agree priorities and inform collaborative approaches. Building a shared vision is likely to be an essential ingredient of the next phase, in order to build a practice of purposefully protecting and explicitly respecting the needs and rights of young children, when delivering on the mission of the local authority, across functions and departments.

Options and Opportunities

To inform the next phase of the Urban95 work, several ideas and recommended actions have emerged through individual discussions:

Community Consultation

To explore neighbourhood level implementation of specific projects, it is suggested that focused consultations with key stakeholders within selected communities, is an essential step to achieving ‘buy-in’ and planning at community level. This could be achieved by holding town hall style meetings in several areas, which are designated as potential spaces for collaboration, exploration and experimentation. From such consultations, the scope could be narrowed down to select one area for initial implementation, where there is a demonstratable commitment to the proposals being made. Work undertaken in this way could provide designated ‘demonstration projects’ through which to promote and highlight the success of initiatives undertaken in the context of Urban95.

Climate Action Committee

It has been suggested that the objectives of Urban95 align very well with those of the Climate Action Committee in DCC, with whom it may be opportune and beneficial to create a meaningful partnership, particularly when examining how to address the impact of traffic and other factors within the city, which are so relevant to the needs and rights of young children.²⁶

Partnerships and Collaborations

Identifying and creating potential partnerships and collaborations in other countries, counties and Councils, may also provide beneficial to a discussion on any future options and opportunities, which could build on the successes of the Urban95 Pilot project.

26— Climate Neutral Dublin 2030 – Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029: <https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/environment/dublin-city-councils-climate-change-action-plan/dublin-city-council-climate-action-plan-2024-2029>

Conclusion

This Report has focused on the Urban 95 pilot initiative which took place in Dublin City Council from 2023 to 2024. It has described the core components of this innovative project, and endeavoured to offer some analysis of the potential for extending and sharing the achievements of the project to date, by building on the engagement with international experts and homegrown innovations, drawing further on the valuable data which was gathered, as well as appreciating the creative outputs, which reflect and amplify the voices and experiences of young children within Dublin city.



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Michelle Browne

Over the last 15 years Michelle has created a number of works that have highlighted different voices of the city, drawing on their unique experience of Dublin. Examples include, Nama Taxi tours, a live tour of the city by a taxi driver looking at the impact of the financial crash on the built environment of the city; Risk a performative work that looked at the role of entrepreneurship and risk taking in society and Listening to the City I for Velocity Cycling Conference Dublin 2019 which looked at the experience of different city users on wheels, from a commuting cyclist to a wheelchair user to a competitive cyclist.

Helen Barry

Helen Barry is a visual artist, inventor, early years arts practitioner and classically trained dancer. Helen's practice is collaborative and the early year child is her ideal co-creator. Helen's ambition is to create interactive artworks and experiences with and for early years audiences that stimulate curiosity, agency and independent learning and play.

Helen has been awarded several bursaries and commissions for her work with early years children from The Arts Council, the Four Dublin Local Authorities and Creative Ireland. The National Concert Hall is supporting her development of 'Sculptunes'. She is currently working on 'High Expectations' a year-long early

years residency in partnership with The Hugh Lane Gallery, Ozanam House and the NEIC (North East Inner City). Her most recent co-creation ‘Two More Sleeps’ was commissioned by Creative Ireland for Cruinniú na nÓg 2024 opens tomorrow Saturday 18th in dlr Lexicon as part of ‘Room To Explore’ an interactive exhibition for early years children aged 0 to 5 years.

Lucy Hill

Lucy Hill is a visual artist, arts facilitator, and academic. She was awarded her PhD in art education from NCAD in 2021. Her Ph.D. project has an early year's visual arts focus and was runner-up in the Peter Lang Young Scholars publication award. She is an Assistant Professor of Visual Art Education at Dublin City University in the School of Arts Education and Movement. She was the inaugural Early Years Artist in Residence at The Ark in 2018 and has exhibited her visual art widely and has been awarded three public art commissions.

Órla Kelly

Órla Kelly is a visual artist, creative educationalist and arts manager with a specific practice that focuses on working with and for early years children, aiming to stimulate and scaffold the naturally creative, poetic, philosophical and curious intelligences of the young child.

She is the director of Early Childhood Creativity, an initiative that promotes creative thinking, exploration and activity in early years children and their parents through her own work and the synergy of a variety of arts organisations and independent artists working in theatre, music and across the visual arts.

Eamon Sweeney

Dr Eamon Sweeney is a widely-experienced musician with a specialty in working with early years. He regularly provides workshops, performances and classes for institutions such as the ARK Children's Cultural Centre, Music Generation, and various local authorities and statutory bodies throughout the country. One of Eamon's most recent early years projects is a specially-designed concert experience for under-1-year olds and their adults – BabyLovesMusic.

Eamon teaches and performs extensively in a variety of genres and styles, including giving broadcasts, lectures and seminars in Ireland and abroad. He is committed to the provision of Community Music, Early Years Music, and Music in Healthcare Settings, works with the Royal Irish Academy of Music, CDETB, KWETB, and is regularly supported by The Arts Council. He is an artistic director of Alchemy Music in Wicklow – a music-in-the-community initiative.

Credits

Urban95 Mentor: Simon Battisti

‘Your Dublin, Your Voice’: Delve Research led by Danny Sheahan

Early Childhood Researcher and Report Writer: Emma Byrne

Artists: Michelle Browne, Helen Barry, Orla Kelly, Eamon Sweeney, Lucy Hill, Sophie White, Shane Hegarty, Melatu Uche Okorie, Liadh Connolly

Dublin City Council Steering Group: Cllr Cat O’Driscoll, Mary MacSweeney, Liz Coman, Carmel O’Callaghan, Fionnuala Collins, Deborah Clarke

Stakeholder Organisations: The Ark Cultural Centre for Children, Common Ground, Inchicore, FGU Family Resource Centre Creche, Preschool and parent and toddler playgroup, Pearse Street Library, Holy Child Pre-School, Hill Street Family Resource Centre, Oznam House Resource Centre, International Literature Festival Dublin, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, Creative Hubs/Children’s Arts In Libraries Programme, Axis Arts Centre, NEIC Community Arts Programme

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Photography: Louis Haugh Photography and Fennell Photography

Graphic Design of Digital Report: Distinctive Repetition

