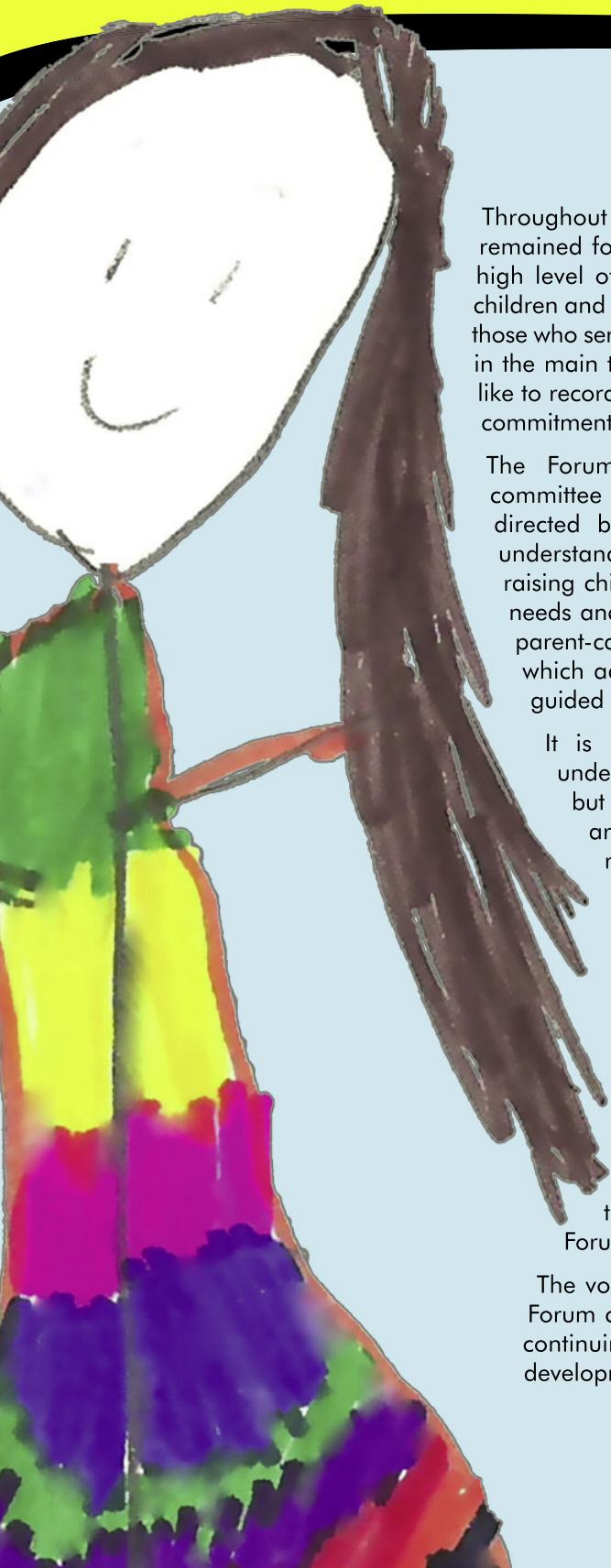


Highland Children's Forum

Representing Children and Young People in Need in Highland

ANNUAL REPORT 2012 2013



Foreword

Throughout another very busy year the Forum's staff has remained focussed on their respective work plans and their high level of productivity continues to impress the voice of children and young people with additional support needs upon those who serve them throughout the Highlands. The comments in the main text are a great testament to their efforts and I'd like to record the Committee's thanks for their dedication and commitment.

The Forum's founders insisted that the management committee should be parent-carer led. Our work being directed by a mix of carers who access services and understand at first hand both the joys and challenges of raising children and young people with additional support needs and of interested professionals is vital. In addition, parent-carers bring life experience and professional skills which add further value and enhance how the staff are guided and supported.

It is increasingly difficult to find parent-carers to undertake such unpaid work, not just with the Forum but across the voluntary sector. Is this a sign that carers are under more pressure because of their caring responsibilities, or is it their need, desire or ability to gain employment that is reducing their capacity to engage with voluntary groups? The Forum has the advantage of a membership that is scattered across Highland giving us a strength when we are looking at how children and young people are truly supported in all localities but a challenge when it comes to facilitating members to serve on the Management Committee. In the year ahead the Forum will have to experiment with the use of digital technologies to allow the voices we need to hear to remain integral to the management of the Forum.

The voice we seek to represent is being heard but the Forum continues to be focussed on making that voice a continuing major driver in policy and practice development.

ISABEL PATERSON
CHAIR

Listening to children and young people - Speaking to policy makers

LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Disability Awareness

- Following on from last year's success with their podcast at the Festival of Politics and the film made in collaboration with the Scottish Parliament Media Centre a group of 4 young people with various additional support needs successfully progressed their Disability Awareness campaign by producing a pack of resource materials. Initially sent to all Highland secondary schools, it was enthusiastically championed by the Health and Wellbeing curriculum group and has been uploaded to GLOW, the virtual learning environment, where it will be accessible to all Highland teachers and pupils. The Resource Pack, shown at the January meeting of the Adult and Children's Services Committee in the Highland Council chamber, has also been requested for use in Lincolnshire and Eire. The film and podcast have also been used to support Disability Awareness workshops at Highland Youth Voice conference.

Inclusion

- Inclusion has been the subject of the majority of consultation time this year. This is a major consultation looking at young people's inclusion in all community settings and is a follow on from the Forum's consultation report in 2005. The Consultation Lead has visited 17 primary and 3 secondary schools, 1 Further Education college and 1 special school across 3 diverse areas of Highland, working with 515 children and young people in 18 groups. 24 providers, 2 parent groups, 7 parents, and 9 individual young people with a range of needs have also taken part. The report is underway and should be published in early summer 2013.

Play Highland

- The Forum has continued its interest in children's play and the Consultation Lead has worked on the Improvement group and facilitated a workshop at the Play Highland Seminar.

Consultation Workshop

- The Consultation Lead developed a 3 hour Consultation Induction Course as an introduction for organisations feeling less than confident to fulfil their obligation to have regard for the views of their young service –users.

Preparatory work has also been done on two projects that will get underway in early summer 2013, these are:

Public Health Consultation

- The NHS Director of Public Health's annual report in 2013 is concentrating on Children and Young People's health and wellbeing, the perception of the health services that they receive and their view of the direction in which progress needs to go. The Consultation Lead is working with 4 groups of young people to ensure that the view of young people with additional needs is represented.

Digit Evaluation

- HCF has been asked to evaluate the DIGIT project (Dornoch, Invergordon and Golspie In Transition). This involves consulting past attendees, staff members, current attendees and employment/training destinations.

Comments:

"I used two of HCF's reports of consultations with Highland parents, when I spoke yesterday (3rd October 2012) at the launch of the National Parenting Strategy.

I used 'It's about Empathy and Intuition' and the 'Young Parent's Recipe for Parenthood'. Both were very well received, and the subject of a number of tweets after the conference. The reports reflected many of the other messages at the event, and did so in a powerful and articulate way.

Thanks, as ever, to HCF, for the benefit we get from our partnership - which once again is helping Scotland."

*Bill Alexander, Director of Health & Social Care,
The Highland Council*

"This is a really helpful report, which once again makes everything real and motivates me to want to improve things."

*Gillian McCreath, NHS Highland Board Member
commenting on Transition Baseline report re-circulated
to the Adult and Children's Services Committee*

"Many thanks for sending the link to the Highland (Children's) Forum. It is wonderful to see such innovative and exciting work taking place at the local level. We will certainly include this work in the review."

*Emma Davidson, Centre for Research on Families and
Relationships, University of Edinburgh in response to the
submission of our reports for evidence to inform the
report on children and young peoples' experience of the
implementation of the UNCRC*

Recipe for Young Parenthood

"Your report will also be used and referenced in the on-going work to produce a Highland parent support framework."

Julia Nelson, Health Development Officer - Early Years, Childcare & Early Education Service, Highland Council

"Thank you for sending us your report. The information contained within is really interesting, and illuminating.

I've forwarded it to my colleague in the inequalities team who was collecting examples of best practice in maternity care and I am sure that they will find it useful.

We would also like to include a link to the report within our website for Early Years Professionals."

*Kat Hasler, Senior Programme Officer - Maternal and Child Health Early Years Children and Families Team
NHS Health Scotland*

SPEAKING TO POLICY MAKERS

- The Forum has used its access to key policy makers and to practice development meetings to take the testimony of children and young people and of their parents and carers into where decisions are made and change is started. The briefings prepared by the Forum on Council papers were shared with politicians of all parties and the points that we have raised have regularly appeared in Council debates. The Forum also delivers a news analysis roughly weekly to politicians, policy makers, managers and members.
- During the year the Forum has lobbied the Highland Council on specific issues such as the implementation of changes in classroom support in Caithness and on its continuing worries about the changes in the Children's Services' Budgets which it believes will lead to a decline in services. The Forum has also been active in investigating NHS Highland issues including Paediatric Services in Lochaber and Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.

"I believe a vital component of HCF work is their scrutiny of our Children's Services delivery. HCF carry out this essential work with integrity, dedication and always from a child centred approach.

That in turn most definitely commands our attention, respect and action".

Cllr Linda Munro, The Highland Council's Children's Champion.

Comments:

"I can't thank you enough for all your hard work (and under such time constraints).

As a family we have been fretting about these cuts since we heard about them at X's transition meeting at the end of June, so it's hard to express just how much your help means to us."

"...thanks SO much for this! You are a breath of fresh air, indeed. :) I'm very grateful to you for acting so quickly on this problem and look forward to helping to find some solutions."

Parent carers' responses to HCF's lobbying over cuts in support in Caithness.

"Good news - doggedness pays off sometimes..."

Councillor Bren Gormley – SNP Fort William & Ardnamurchan response to the Forum's lobbying of NHS Highland over Community Paediatric provision in Lochaber

"As always very detailed and informative, super impressive work you are doing. Lots of things in this I am pleased to read."

Claire Collins Children & Families Support Worker Sigh Action in response to the Forum's briefing papers before the January 2013 Adult and Children's Services Committee

"Pretty impressive the work that you are all doing. Thank you for keeping me on the mailing list."

Scott Rae, Homeless Prevention Officer, Highland Council in response to the "weekly" news bulletin

Highland Children's Forum

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Full details of the Forum's activities, constitution and financing can be obtained from it's website:

www.highlandchildrensforum.org

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9 Carsegate Road North
Inverness
IV3 8DU

Scottish Charity SC031945

Illustrations are the work of children involved in the 2012 Inclusion consultation

Representing Children and Young People in Need in Highland

Highland Children's Forum is a parent carer founded and led charity that is committed to working to have the voice of children and young people with additional support needs of all kinds heard and appropriately acted on by those who design and deliver services.



THE FORUM HAS THE FOLLOWING VISION, MISSION AND AMBITION

Vision

Highland Children's Forum believes that a truly inclusive society is one where all members are valued equally and their views are sought and acted upon appropriately.

Mission

To contribute to the provision of the highest possible standards of services in the Highlands for the benefit of children in need and their families.

To work in partnership to develop the most effective methods of consultation with children in need and their families that allow them to express their views on their lives and how services affect them.

To encourage service providers to reflect upon these opinions and adjust their services accordingly.

Ambition

To see services in Highland resourced and structured to maximise the potential of children in need and their families.

To see service providers automatically incorporate the views of children in need and their families at every level of their design, development and delivery of services.

HIGHLAND CHILDREN'S FORUM COMMITTEE

During the year the following members served on the Forum's Management Committee:

Isabel Paterson
Chair

Katie Adam
Rebecca Huxtable – Smith
Treasurer

Christian Maclean
Clare Dyker
Tena Mitchell
Laura Farquhar
Colm Black
Isobel Grigor
Mark Goodwill

STAFF

Calum Munro
Policy Lead

Celia Baxter
Consultation Lead

