



## **Highland Children and Young People's Forum Bulletin June 20**

### **Welcome to Highland Children and Young People's June bulletin.**

Save the date:

HCYPF Annual General Meeting will be held on Zoom on 16th July from 13.00 – 13.30 followed by break out Zoom rooms to discuss current issues with young people from Inspire Highland.

Please contact Gillian [policy@HCYPF.org](mailto:policy@HCYPF.org) if you wish to attend. The Forum is open to new membership and is seeking new board members at this time. If you would like to become a member please contact Gillian [policy@HCYPF.org](mailto:policy@HCYPF.org)

If you would like to learn more about the work of the Forum, please check out our website and social media:

[www.HCYPF.org](http://www.HCYPF.org)

Facebook: Highland Children's Forum

Twitter: HChildrensForum

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The Forum continues to seek opportunities to work with The Highland Council and NHS Highland to ensure children and young people's lived experience is at the forefront of the crisis response and policy development. The day job of holding services to account for their response to children's rights and children's wellbeing continues, in very challenging circumstances. The Forum petitioned Councillors to protect Pupil Equity Funds (PEF) and await an announcement from the Scottish Government and Highland Council that PEF will remain a ring fenced budget.

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## Coronavirus and Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

The Forum's March bulletin identified potential "unintended consequences" of lockdown and sadly the negative impact on some children and families has now become evident.

The Highland Council brought together a list of vulnerable children and young people and staff make sure that, as much as is possible, these children are contacted at least weekly. In a few cases, this is visual contact not just virtual contact.

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### **There will be vulnerable children falling through that safety net**

- Some families were just about coping with previous support networks but may now be vulnerable
- Loss of support for families with children with ASN
- Welfare checks on all children seem to depend on the school
- No one seems to be checking on preschool children's welfare
- The mental health of all children will have been impacted, many will need mental health support
- Families may have been thrust into financial difficulty, possibly with debt issues
- Family relationships may be struggling; domestic abuse rates are reportedly higher
- The role of young carers will have increased for many

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### **The attainment gap is widening into a chasm, with any recent gains likely to have been lost**

- Poverty may mean that some families have limited internet access, hardware access or parental capacity to support online learning.
  - Some children are apparently not engaging with online learning at all.
  - Children with Additional Support Needs may not have access to suitable support for learning.
  - If there are growing stresses at home this will not be conducive to learning.
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## Some children have thrived out of school

We have heard of children who have been able to come off medication for ADHD or of mute children who have started to speak once the pressure of school was removed. Planning the transition back into school for these children will need to be done very carefully through personal planning with the child and family.

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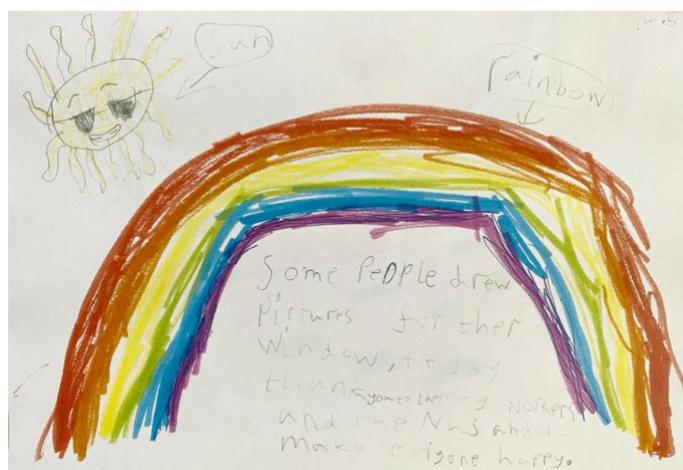
## This leaves a difficult quandary:

There is a risk to the wellbeing and educational outcomes of children and young people the longer they are out of school, but there is still a coronavirus risk and no simple solution to offering school with social distancing still in place.

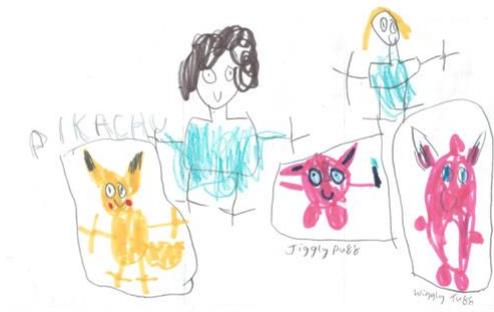
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## Ideas or recommendations from the Forum:

- How wide is inequality chasm? Ask teachers to estimate the growing gap
  - Identify children who will need additional support, including all those already identified as ASN.
  - Plan tuition or one to one additional support for children who have fallen behind.
  - Highland had more volunteers than opportunities: could some be checked & trained as learning mentors?
  - Develop peer support for wellbeing: understanding how stress affects mental health & how to support friends
  - [The Compassionate and Connected Classroom](#) is a resource that could help
  - Increase outdoor learning – improve mental health and make social distancing easier.
  - Maybe a shorter school day and smaller classes would enable better learning? Is someone measuring this?
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## Letters from Lockdown



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This time has been called “unprecedented” and it will be a time that future children will learn about in history lessons. The Forum launched its Letter from Lockdown competition in March, asking children and young people to write to future children about what their experience of lockdown was like. The response has been amazing, with over 160 children and young people (from 3-16) entering so far.

Children and young people were invited to respond by email, Facebook or WhatsApp and entries have included letters, stories, online books, poems, drawings, photos, videos, collages, performance, a scroll. The contributions have been funny, warm, sad and hopeful, expressing the range of emotions most of us are experiencing.

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### ***The competition is open to entries until the end of June.***

It will be judged in July by Maree Todd MSP and Minister for Children and Young People.

Winners will be announced in August.

The first prize for each age group will be the choice of an outing for four to one from a range of Highland activities to be enjoyed when the lockdown is over.

Second prize for each age group will be a voucher.

The prize monies have been donated in memory of Audrey Bowie, 1930-2018, who was evacuated to America during the Second World War and who knew the experience of a global threat disrupting childhood.

As well as producing an archive for future generations, the letters will be analysed for a report about children’s views of lockdown.



## Inspire Highland

Inspire Highland has moved online. The move to Zoom has proved very popular with the young people. Meetings can be more frequent, a bigger group of young people can be involved and smaller groups are made possible too. A digital participation strategy is planned which may be able to offer membership of Inspire Highland to a wider geographical membership. There are plans to develop a group for younger children. The Inspire Highland logo, designed by the members, has now been emblazoned on sweatshirts for the young people. The work of Inspire Highland continues with sound recording, discussions on current issues, accessibility issues and many more topics as identified by the young people. Check out their work on Facebook: Highland Children's Forum

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## Rare Resources Roadshow Follow Up Events

**Rare Resources Roadshow** - Supporting Professionals working with families living with rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions in Highland

Wednesday 1 July 2020 (1-2pm)

Join Genetic Alliance UK, Highland Children's Forum and CHIP+ for a virtual information session to find out more about rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions.

This session will:

- Provide information on rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions

- Introduce the Rare Resources Toolkit – an information and resource toolkit for families living with rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions and the professionals that support them.
- Showcase the work of third sector support services in Highland

This one-hour session is free to attend and all attendees will receive a copy of the Rare Resources Professional Toolkit.

For further information and to register to attend, please contact [natalie@geneticalliance.org.uk](mailto:natalie@geneticalliance.org.uk)

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**Rare Resources Roadshow** - Virtual Get Together for families living with

rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions in Highland

Wednesday 8 July 2020 (1-2pm)

Join Genetic Alliance UK, Highland Children's Forum and CHIP+ for a virtual get together all about rare, genetic and undiagnosed conditions.

This informal Get Together will provide families living in Highland with an opportunity:

- to meet other families in Highland living with a rare, genetic or undiagnosed condition
- to discuss the current Covid-19 situation and the impact it has had on your family
- to ask questions about information, support and services available in Highland and across Scotland
- to hear from local support organisations about the services they provide

This one-hour session is free to attend and all attendees will receive a copy of the Rare Resources Toolkit, a guide for families with a child or young person with a rare, genetic and undiagnosed condition.

For further information and to register to attend, please contact [natalie@geneticalliance.org.uk](mailto:natalie@geneticalliance.org.uk)

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## Digital Design Project

The digital design project (in partnership with UHI Digital Health and Day1 Mentoring) continues and it is hoped to carry out further participation online until social distancing reduces.

Participation already undertaken has taught us a lot about the way young people interact digitally and the potential benefits they would

look for in a digital wellbeing product. We have learned that one platform is probably not enough, the variety of ways young people would interact with such a tool may mean that the platform developed connects with other Apps that children and young people already use but with the specific aim of supporting wellbeing. We have learned from co-design with young people that, whatever the platform – or configuration of platforms – comes out of the process it will have a clear function: to provide a safe, non-judgemental and confidential virtual space that young people feel comfortable enough to tell their stories and engage with when they feel most in need.

So watch this space for more news.

There is still time for a young person (aged 11-18) who might be interested in this project to become involved. Please contact Gillian: [policy@HCYPF.org](mailto:policy@HCYPF.org) or 07789680812

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## **Highland Young Ambassadors for Inclusion Project**

While this project has been put on hold since the beginning of lockdown, there has never been a more important time to ask children and young people about what builds inclusion in their schools.

The Forum will seek to negotiate with The Highland Council about how best to deliver this project in the coming academic year.

So watch this space for more news.

There is still time for a young person (aged 11-18) who might be interested in this project to become involved. Please contact Gillian: [policy@HCYPF.org](mailto:policy@HCYPF.org) or 07789680812

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