



Highland
Children's
Forum

Highland Children's Bulletin

October 2018



Highland Children Forum's News

The new committee for Highland Children's Forum is forging ahead with plans to take HCF forward over the next few years. The current situation with the Highland Council Redesign Board is that HCF is likely to lose its Service Level Agreement from March 2019. While this is not the outcome we had hoped for, we recognise the challenge of delivering services with ongoing austerity, and can understand the need to protect frontline services. Working closely with Children and Highland Information Point Plus (CHIP+) we know there are families close to crisis holding on to what feels like the last support available. These services must be protected.

This does not mean the work of HCF is done. The Redesign Process did not involve children and families in spite of the significant impact that is likely to result from drastically reducing funding to some services and losing others altogether. HCF will continue to lobby the Public Sector for meaningful involvement of children and families at all levels of decision making.

HCF is planning to model an active participation approach, working directly with children and young people to shape the HCF work plan and empowering them to influence both policy and practice in a much more direct way moving forward.

HCF is changing its constitutional form to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, as agreed by resolution at the Annual General Meeting. The new constitution will be made available on the website and sent out to members three weeks in advance of the Special General Meeting on 10th December 12.00 to 14.00.

If you would like to become a member of Highland Children's Forum to support its work through this next phase, please complete the [membership form](#).



Third Sector Children and Families Services Group

The Highland Council Redesign Board has developed a Redesign Proposal that involves a considerable reduction of budget to third sector organisations who receive a Service Level Agreement to deliver services to children and families. The paper will be presented to the Full Highland Council Committee on 25th October.

Since the Christie Commission Report in 2011 through to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the direction of travel for the public sector is to off-set austerity by working with people from a community level up: enabling all the additional voluntary and goodwill capacity that communities and the third sector can offer. The current Redesign Proposal has not sought to work with communities and the third sector as part of the process of seeking best value.

Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) have hosted a number of meetings with the organisations listed in the proposal, as the "Children and Families Services Group" (C&FSG).

The group understand that with ongoing austerity there are budgetary pressures for the Highland Council. The third sector will need to accept some of these reductions. However, the current Redesign Proposal shows no understanding of the value of current work provided nor the potential impact of the reductions.

A Counter Proposal

The Policy Lead has worked with C&FSG and HTSI to challenge the lack of consultation and to develop a counter proposal of partnership working. This would enable the proposed budget reductions to be managed in a way that could mitigate against some of the negative impact on children and families. The

group have secured verbal commitment that the Counter Proposal will be noted when the Redesign Paper goes to the Full Council meeting and that the Redesign Board will consult with affected services before implementation.

The C&FSG will seek to ensure this consultation process involves: listening to children and families; collaboration between organisations to reduce duplication and to improve efficiency and managing the cuts over a period of time that will allow organisations to secure external funding to ensure vital services are maintained.

The Policy Lead has secured the opportunity for the C&FSG to provide a six-monthly collaborative report about the work delivered by the C&FSG towards the outcomes and priorities of For Highland's Children Service Plan. This should ensure the value of the work of these services is better understood going into the future.



Consultation Work

The [Sexual Health and Relationship Education \(SHARE\) for Additional Support Needs \(2018\)](#) report has now been published and is available on the website. The mainstream survey about SHARE will be published by the end of the year. The Consultation Lead has been supporting others in participation, working with Health and Happiness and Highlife Highland.

The Consultation Lead is currently focussed on developing the participation programmes for Highland Children's Forum going forward. This has involved consideration of different funding options to replace the Service Level Agreement.

Policy Work



The Policy Lead had the opportunity to present at the Holyrood Magazine Conference on "Getting it Right for Disabled Children and their Families" in September about how to listen to children with a range of learning and communication challenges and enabling that voice to make a difference to policy development and practice. The work of the Forum over the last fourteen years provided a varied number of examples to demonstrate both how to listen to non-verbal children with complex needs and how the voice of children can influence policy and practice. It was encouraging to hear of how our work over the years has been valued nationally. This provided the opportunity to gain quotes from academics and policy developers about our work to refer to in future funding applications.

The Policy Lead is supporting the young members of our committee in contributing to the Youth Work Strategy Development and also to the Participation Strategy development in Highland. The Forum was able to host a consultation event for NHS Highland to seek to improve participation in the development of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and other health services.

At the request of Council Officers, the Policy Lead has contributed to the Care, Learning and Development Inspection and to the Scottish Government Appreciative Enquiry. There is now a Third Sector Representational Pathway to ensure that voluntary sector representatives with a seat at various public sector committees or groups will be democratically elected by HTSI members in the future. The Policy Lead is one of the nominees for both the Care, Learning and Housing Committee and the Leadership Group, having represented the voluntary sector on both these groups since coming into post in 2014.]



Funding

Highland Children's Forum has developed a funding strategy to go forward over the next few years. This includes the option of developing a Social Enterprise to support the work of the Forum. We would be keen to Co-opt someone with business experience on to the committee to provide business expertise and advice going forward. If you have relevant experience and would be interested in supporting our work, please contact policy@highlandchildrensforum.org

Part of the funding strategy is also to seek donations from individuals and corporations who would like to support our work. If you would like to make a regular or occasional contribution, please contact policy@highlandchildrensforum.org