



FOREWORD

Highland Children's Forum (HCF) has continued its work of listening to children and young people, seeking to ensure that their voice leads to change in policy and practice. Our Annual Evaluation in October 2017 gave us renewed clarity that HCF should increase the participation of children and young people in the strategic direction and practical operations of Highland Children's Forum, and also promote good quality participation more widely across Highland. More recently we held a Workshop to consider how best Highland Children's Forum can take this agenda forward, and also to review our strengths and the skills and expertise our staff have, to potentially offer services and training to other organisations.

At the same time, we are considering changing our charitable status to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Two resolutions will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting proposing that HCF becomes a SCIO, and secondly proposing a change to our constitution to allow this to take place.

Emma Thomas, Consultation Lead along with Maggie Hume who was employed as Consultation worker for a year, published the "Not in Full Time Education" 2018 Report. The recommendations from the report point to a need for a more consistent approach to working with children and young people across Highland who are not in full time education.

Emma continues with the consultation on "Sexual Health and Relationships" (SHARE) in Highland schools. Already the SHARE programme for children and young people with Additional Support Needs Report is in draft form, whilst the data for mainstream pupils is at the analysis stage.

Gillian Newman, Policy Lead, continues to represent children and young people with additional support needs through attendance at numerous groups within Highland Council and NHS Highland. Gillian works alongside and provides support and guidance to a large variety of groups of parents, community groups, and helped in the preparation

of key advice papers for professionals.

Gillian has continued to lobby elected officials on behalf of children and young people with additional support needs to protect public services and support the early intervention often offered by local voluntary sector organisations.

The Management Committee is grateful for the ongoing support from the Highland Council for the Service Level Agreement (SLA) that allows us to continue this work. However, we await the outcome of the Highland Council Redesign Board to learn of any impact on our Service Level Agreement and future funding. We are also very grateful to New Start Highland for offering HCF excellent office space within its headquarters in Carsegate Road.

I wish to record my appreciation of the dedicated and committed members of the Management Committee. They add significant value beyond the monetary funding provided by the Highland Council by giving freely of their time and talents to further the work of HCF. This support allows the staff to progress the work of HCF to a very high standard.

Highland Children's Forum is at a key moment in its work. It faces considerable external challenges particularly regarding funding, and also recognises the need to be a major driver in promoting the participation of children and young people. However committee members and staff see this very much as the stimulus for HCF to be at the forefront in Highland, leading new developments and improving collaboration and partnership working.

Highland Children's Forum has the credibility across Highland to continue enabling children and young people facing challenges to be actively engaged in participation in service design, development and delivery.

Donnie Macleod
Chair

ANNUAL REPORT 2017 / 2018

Listening to children and young people - Speaking to policy makers

Committee Matters

HCF has a committee of 6 full members (one member is a shared position) and one Co-opted member, Sarah Fowler, Chief Officer for Children in Highland Information Point. Office bearers are: Chair, Donnie Macleod; Vice Chair, Heather Duncan and Minute Secretary, Judith Hope. Three people were co-opted on during the year to replace people standing down from the committee. Currently there is a paid book keeper acting as Treasurer on behalf of the committee.

"I felt a lot of teachers were just there to do a job - they didn't know or understand the pupils, didn't know you personally."

A service evaluation was carried out in September and a Development Plan drawn up in October. The main focus of the development plan is to increase the participation of children and young people in the strategic direction and practical operations of Highland Children's Forum and to promote good quality participation.

The Management Committee propose that Highland Children's Forum should become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). A resolution to this end will be tabled at the Annual General Meeting. As this process requires updating the constitution, this is an exciting opportunity to redesign with greater focus on the direct participation of children and young people with Additional Support Needs.

The 2018-2019 development plan, minutes of committee meetings and other relevant committee papers are available on the website.

Staffing

Emma Thomas continues as the Consultation Lead and Gillian Newman continues in the role of Policy Lead. With the completion of "Not in Full Time Education Report" 2018, the Project Worker, Maggie Hume, completed her contract and moved on.

Activity Report – Listening to Children

Sexual health and relationships (SHARE)

Evaluation: The project included two consultations: a survey to evaluate the mainstream SHARE programme and a qualitative consultation to evaluate the SHARE programme for young people with Additional Support Needs. The final reports should be available for publication by autumn 2018.

Not in full time education (NIFTE) Consultation:

The three reports (from young people, parents and professionals), and a Briefing Paper, are now available from the website. The recommendations from the reports suggest that the Highland Practice Model policy and guidance would deliver what children and young people need to make the most of education. However, the experience of children and young people would suggest that where staff practice is inconsistent, difficulties arise.

The previous report "Moving On – Life After School" report (2016) on transitions had also demonstrated that many of the recommendations from young people would be met if there were consistent practice of current policy.

The need for children and young people to be able to influence practice as well as policy is one of the change drivers that the Forum will consider going forward.

Promoting Participation

The Consultation Lead has been involved in promoting participation of children and young people with additional support needs in schools. This has involved support for Pupil Councils, Equality and Diversity groups and involvement in the Rights Respecting Schools programme.

"You feel like you don't want to let some of the teachers down because they help you, care about what happens to you."

A proposed participation document has been developed for the Children's Health Commissioner for young people's participation in Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.

Local Community Partnerships, tasked with drawing up local Children's Plans, are required to engage with children and young people, including those who have additional support needs. The Forum's staff aim to work alongside Community Planning Partnerships to ensure the participation of children and young people in local planning and service development.

"Teachers need to understand the discomfort they cause. Not all teachers knew my personal circumstances and I think they should have, they would maybe be friendly, they need to smile at kids! Not be so stern."

Highland Children's Forum has been delighted to see that the priorities for the Year of Young People 2018 in Highland is participation, equality and diversity. This is an exciting opportunity for the Forum to further promote participation of children and young people with additional support needs.

Activity Report – Speaking with Policy Makers

The Policy Lead as voluntary sector adviser, has attended the following meetings and working groups:

- o The People Committee (now Care, Learning and Housing Committee)
- o The Leadership Group
- o Improvement Groups (Mental Health, Highland Practice Model, Additional Support Needs, Young Carers and Play)
- o Promoting Positive Relationships

"Just like Mr X. Really fair, he's nice. Encourages you to do work. He tries so hard to get me to behave. He doesn't have to help me but he does. He likes me."

The Policy Lead sits on the Joint Monitoring Committee and the Joint Disability Team Project Board, the CHAMPS Board and has contributed to the development of the Child Protection Guidance and Toolkit for Voluntary Organisations/Community Groups and the Promoting Positive Relationships Policy review. The Policy Lead was involved in the organisation and planning of the annual Play Highland Event, which this year focused on inclusion and equality.

Partnership Working in Support of Participation

The Policy Lead continues to work closely with the Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) and other third sector children's services to promote participation and improve partnership working. The current funding pressures and potential impact of the Highland Council Redesign Board has highlighted the need for voluntary sector organisations to work together and demonstrate best value for public money through: the specialism and expertise that has been developed; by attracting external funding; demonstrating the added value of voluntary contributions and the wider community benefits services deliver.

HCF Bulletins

The HCF Bulletin has a gradually increasing readership and receives positive responses from people across sectors. Subscribers have responded well to the new format on SWAY, which can be read on smart phones, tablets or laptops.

"Hire people who are qualified to be a guidance teacher who know emotion. Know how to deal with people, go on a course to understand how people feel."

Lobbying Activity

The Policy Lead has lobbied Councillors about the importance of protecting services for children and young people with additional support needs despite budget pressures. A positive response was received from several Councillors who shared the concerns and recognition that families moving towards greater crisis were likely to lead to even greater budgetary pressures.

HCF Internal Activity

The Year of Young People 2018 has brought the need for participation tools under the spotlight. There are continued requests for the participation tools developed by the Forum with Scottish Government funding; the need to refresh and update the participation tools is apparent.



Highland
Children's
Forum

VISION

That children and young people facing challenges are given opportunities to talk about their lives and that their views are listened to, respected and acted upon.

MISSION

To enable children and young people facing challenges to have their voices heard. To represent them by influencing positive change in policy and practice which leads to better outcomes.

AMBITION

Children and young people facing challenges are actively engaged in influencing service design, delivery and development.

HIGHLAND CHILDREN'S FORUM COMMITTEE

Donnie Macleod
Heather Duncan
Judith & Stephen Hope
Anne Watmough
Kirsty Hunter
Rebecca Nicholson

Chair
Vice Chair
Minute Secretary



CO-OPTED

Sarah Fowler
Rebecca Raynes
Clair Nichols
Linda Munro

STAFF

Gillian Newman
Emma Thomas

Policy Lead
Consultation Lead

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ONLINE PRESENCE

Full details of HCF activities, constitution, policies and finances are available from the website:

www.highlandchildrensforum.org



Highland Children's Forum



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