

# Highland Children's Forum

July 2016



## Highland Children's Forum Consultation Work

### **Transitions Consultation - moving on from school**

The direct consultation phase of the Transitions Consultation has recently finished - 64 young people took part and 3 parent carers.

I am now at the very start of analysing all the information around key themes, including: what's important to you in your life; hopes and dreams; help and support; information; planning/child's plan meetings; choice; preparation and family and friends.

I hope that this initial phase of analysis will be completed during the summer holidays and then a draft report available by early autumn.

### **New Consultation Brief - Children and Young People Not in Full-time Education**

The issue of young people of school age who are not in full time education has been raised recently with HCF through the Children's Disability Service, professionals and parents and young people.

From August we will be developing a brief with the aim of consulting with 30 children and young people of school age not in full-time education, with their parent carers and with professionals.

We are just at the very start of the planning process so any ideas, suggestions or comments would be hugely welcomed.

If you would like to take part in this consultation or help us develop the brief, please email me: [consultation@highlandchildrensforum.org](mailto:consultation@highlandchildrensforum.org), phone: 07789 680811 or leave a private Facebook message: [www.highlandchildrensforum.org](http://www.highlandchildrensforum.org)

### **Peer consultants**

Over the summer I hope to write a draft funding application to the Big Lottery Investing in Ideas fund to explore the idea, need and possible benefits of developing a peer consultants project where by young people undertake consultation with other young people.

## Highland Children's Forum Policy Work

HCF held its Annual General Meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Becky Huxtable Smith, who has been our treasurer for many years, stood down from the committee. Her enormous contribution to the work of HCF was acknowledged. Mike Haycox also stood down. The rest of the committee were re-elected and the two spaces were taken up by the election of Alasdair Christie and Pamela Sutherland. The office bearers this year are: Donnie Macleod as Chair Person, Heather Duncan as Vice Chair, Mark Boulton as Treasurer and Judith Hope as Minute Secretary.

After the formal business of the AGM, we were delighted to hear from three young people who have taken part in the consultation on transition in to adult services. The young people each presented their story in a refreshing and interesting way sharing some of the challenges and successes they had experienced.

The HCF [Annual Report](#) can be found on the website.

HCF welcomes the Scottish Government role of the Named Person. The principle of early intervention to prevent escalation of need is supported by children and young people (Ideas about Sadness HCF 2010). The role of the Named Person and also that of Lead Professional is not always well understood (My Child's Plan: My Views HCF 2014). The Highland Practice Model is continuously under review and we would welcome any testimony from children, young people or their parents, which would contribute to that improvement process.

## New School Week

HCF is aware that the new school week half-day Friday may present child care challenges for families whose children have additional support needs. We would be interested to hear from affected families in schools already using the new timetable, or those about to. [policy@highlandchildrensforum.org](mailto:policy@highlandchildrensforum.org)

## Update on FHC4 Improvement Groups

HCF Policy Lead sits on a number of the "For Highland's Children" Improvement Groups. This is a brief update on what is going on in some of those groups.

**Mental Health Improvement Group:** HCF has often represented the views of children, young people and their families about the challenges they experience in the wait for a service from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). We can report real progress in terms of reducing waiting list times for CAMHS at the Phoenix Centre and work is ongoing to enable those who require inpatient treatment to be treated nearer to home. The role of Primary Mental Health Worker has been developed to improve early intervention and better understanding of mental health issues in schools.

**Additional Support Needs Improvement Group:** The group is using the 'Plan, Do, Study, Act' improvement cycle tool to consider part-time attendance at schools. This is an important focus for improvement across Highland at this time and the focus of one of HCF's consultation next year.

**Young Carer (YC) Improvement Group:** This group carried out a self-evaluation in April and has noted improvement in terms of: awareness raising; YC identification and support; demand for training. Moving forward the plan is to improve: consistency across Highland; access to confidential pastoral care; support at times of transition or when child/young person is at risk and access to CAMHS if required.

**Play Improvement Group:** The play improvement, also called [Play Highland](#) has a new website and has recently launched the latest [Highland Play Strategy](#). Community Guidance about developing play and leisure space is under development. HCF supported a recent community consultation on play in Ullapool.

## EU Referendum Result

The [Third Force News](#) carries some responses from third sector organisations about the potential impact of the EU referendum result. HCF is concerned with the effects on our constituents if austerity continues to reduce funds available for additional support. Human Rights and Children's Rights were ensured under the EU but these may now be up for debate. Families and services are already facing real challenges under current budget reductions. We will continue to listen and represent the views of children and young people and their families about how their needs are being met.

## Autism Spectrum Disorder and Teacher Training

HCF was delighted to read [an article](#) about a decision taken in England and Wales, to ensure that training on autism becomes a core topic in all teacher training. This decision has not yet been taken in Scotland. Since the first HCF report on Inclusion in 2005, HCF has argued that inclusion cannot be achieved without compulsory training on inclusion. That early report, described particular challenges for young people with autism spectrum disorders because of some of the sensory and social issues that can be present in a mainstream classroom. HCF has been in contact with National Autistic Society (NAS) in Highland about this welcome decision being made in Scotland too. We will keep you posted.

## Partners in Policy Making

In Control Scotland offer a "[Partners in Policy Making](#)" leadership training programme to the parents of children/young people with disability (under age 18) to provide parent carers with the skills and confidence to advocate for improved policy and services. The next course is in September. Only 40 spaces are available so please contact In Control Scotland if you would like to take part. [june.d@in-controlscotland.org.uk](mailto:june.d@in-controlscotland.org.uk)

## Child Poverty

The recent [Socio-economic rights in the UK report \(2016\)](#) from the Equality and Human Rights Commission raises concerns about the impact of welfare reform on families affected by disability and suggests that Scotland's new tax and welfare powers could be used to reduce inequality. Please let us know if you have been adversely affected by the changes in benefit system.

### Highland Children's Forum

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