

# Highland Children's Forum

November 2016



## Highland Children's Forum Consultation Work

Children and Young People Not in Fulltime Education (NIFTE): Emma Thomas and Maggie Hume, joining our staff team as Consultation Project Worker for this project, are now actively networking, developing tools and systems to support this exciting consultation.

The aim of this consultation is to develop an understanding of the factors affecting children and young people's (CYP) engagement in full-time education. It will seek to identify areas for development as well as best practice and share this to inform future policy and practice within Highland and across Scotland.

For the purposes of this consultation the phrase 'not in full time education' will be used to describe the following groups: CYP who are consistently absent from school; CYP who are home educated; CYP who are part-time educated in main stream or additional support settings.

This project is beginning this month and will report in September 2017. If you are interested in finding out more or better still if you have links to children, young people and parents/carers who may be willing to talk to us then please don't hesitate to get in touch, we'd be delighted to hear your thoughts and ideas. An information leaflet designed specifically for children and young people is available and can be accessed via our website over the next couple of weeks or simply drop us an email.

The Transitions Consultation is currently being desk-top published into the summary version (the full report is almost complete too). The summary report will be published once the young people who took part in the consultation have had a chance to check and sign off the report. Hopefully this will be early in the New Year.

The next main consultation will be around Sex and Relationship Education (SRE). The brief is still to be defined fully but it is likely it will be an evaluation of the Sexual Health and Relationship Education (SHARE) programme, which is an educational resource for use by school staff to support learning about Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood for young people 13 – 16 years old. The consultation will also focus on the SRE delivered to young people with additional support needs in special education schools and school Additional Support Needs (ASN) bases.

The consultations with both children and young people and staff who deliver SHARE (or SHARE for ASN) will take place from February to June next year.

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## Highland Children's Forum Policy Work

Highland Children's Forum's annual evaluation and development planning took place in October. The evaluation recognised that HCF seeks to enable the voice of children and young people experiencing challenges to be heard by policy makers and others, but the level of influence those voices then have on policy development and service improvement is less evident. HCF recognised this in its development plan. HCF will seek to increase the influence of the children and young people's voices at all meetings. It will also share more information in the bulletin about what it is doing to influence policy development and service improvement. Over the next year, HCF will also maintain a focus on the inequality that child poverty engenders across the wellbeing indicators (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included).

HCF continues to use testimony from its consultation reports to influence local and national policy development.

HCF has shared views gathered in ["My Child's Plan: My Views"](#) (HCF2014) with a Scottish Government official reviewing information sharing and the Getting It Right for Every Child policy in light of the [Supreme Judgement 2016](#)

In consideration of recommendations from HCF report:

["Self-Directed Support: getting the best value for Highland"](#) (HCF 2015) HCF has shared views with Audit Scotland as well as contributing to Highland Children's Services decisions about balancing maintenance of traditional services against increased uptake of Self-Directed Support. The Duke of Edinburgh peer support pilot, set up in direct response to what young people said in the report, now has three peer support pairs.

The consultation toolbox, developed by HCF with Scottish Government funding in 2008, had been removed from the HCF website as it was out of date. In response to demand, some of the favourite tools have been reinstated. The interactive My World Triangle and My Transitions Guide tools have remained popular. These tools are currently unavailable due to a change in the hosting server. HCF will seek resources to develop the toolbox to meet current demands. It would be very helpful to know if you found the interactive or other tools useful.

## Improvement Group Updates

**Play Improvement Group:** The annual play event is being organised for **12<sup>th</sup> March 2017** on the day of the Family Fun Run and half-marathon in Inverness. Check out [Play Highland](#) website and @PlayHighland for all the latest news. The Community Guidance for Developing Inspiring and Sustainable Community Spaces for Play should be completed soon. HCF has worked with the Highland Third Sector Interface to draw up the Community Engagement section of the guidance.

**Mental Health Improvement Group (MHIG):** The Primary Mental Health Worker (PMHW) Standards and Quality Report was presented. The report describes workforce development, work with younger children and working with children and young people who are Looked After and Accommodated (LAAC), already a focus for the MHIG. This report recognised the need for good mental health information being available to young people, something HCF and Children in Highland Information Point (CHIP) will continue to discuss with Children Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

**Additional Support Needs Improvement Group (ASNIG):** The ASNIG is currently focussing on those children and young people who are not in full time education (an HCF consultation topic this year). ASNIG has split into subgroups to evaluate current practice regarding identification of these young people, assessment and interventions and partnership working. Members considered the impact of not being in full time education against each of the wellbeing indicators (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included). Every area of a child's wellbeing was potentially impacted in some way.

## Community Empowerment, Community Partnerships, Community Engagement

No one can doubt the financial pressure on public bodies at the current time, nor can one doubt that the squeeze is likely to worsen in the foreseeable future. Across Highland there have been cuts in some public services already and a reduction in public funding to a number of voluntary services.

With every threat comes opportunity, a chance to do things differently. Along with the austerity measures, there has been an increasing move towards ever more local decision making. The voluntary sector and informal voluntary capacity within local communities will be of significant value in any local improvement planning. This is of particular interest to Highland Children's Forum whose aim is to enable the voices of some of the most vulnerable in our society, children and young people with additional support needs, to contribute to service and policy development.

[Community Partnerships](#) in 9 local areas in Highland will have the task of developing: Children's Service Plans; Adult Service Plans; Community Learning and Development Plans. There are five public agencies who will take a rotating chair of Community Partnerships: The Highland Council; NHS Highland; Police Scotland; Highland and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The [Highland Third Sector Interface](#) will be actively involved and will be encouraging the voluntary sector in each area to contribute to the local planning process.

[Community Empowerment](#) (Scotland) Act 2015 provides a legislative framework to allow communities to have stronger voices in local planning and for community bodies to take on community ownership of land and buildings or community delivery of services. A main focus of the legislation is to develop local responses to address inequalities.

Community Engagement is central to this process. There are [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) that make clear that engagement is to be effective, efficient and fair, leading to shared decision-making, shared action and support for community-led action. The effectiveness of Community Engagement will matter to the success of local plans in recognising local priorities, building on current community assets/capacity and ultimately addressing inequalities to enable better outcomes across our communities.

Whether your community is trying to: save its youth club; develop inclusive play space; provide better employment opportunities; clean up empty buildings; address loneliness or anything else, getting involved will matter.

Highland Third Sector Interface held a very interesting seminar: "Redesigning for Community Action" on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November. This was attended by people across sectors. Lots of imaginative ideas were exchanged and explored about how community engagement and local service planning could be developed.

If you would like to get involved, if you want to find out more, if you think that voluntary organisations can work better together: please contact Highland Third Sector Interface [info@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:info@highlandtsi.org.uk) or contact HCF at: [policy@highlandchildrensforum.org](mailto:policy@highlandchildrensforum.org)

## National News:

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has published a report on whether the UK benefit changes since 2010 are in breach of the UNCRPD. The report finds: *"the Committee considers that there is reliable evidence that the threshold of grave or systematic violations of the rights of persons with disabilities has been met in the State party."* UNCRPD (2016) page 20

The report makes clear that the various changes to the benefit system, including Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment, will unfairly have a compound negative impact on people affected by disability, which puts the UK government in breach of the UNCRPD.

[A report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies \(2016\)](#) suggests that there will be a 50% increase in relative child poverty in the UK by 2020. [Child Poverty Action Group](#) in Scotland report an increase in child poverty in Scotland, the figure in 2014/15 being 22%.  
Child poverty, especially in families affected by disability, is increasing.

## Regional News:

[In a report](#) on the Northern Alliance Emerging Literacy programme, there is recognition that the pre-literacy skills of pre-school children can be a predictor of the attainment gap across life outcomes. The Emerging Literacy programme is an exciting approach to narrowing the attainment gap where Allied Health Professionals and teachers have worked together to produce a range of resources. Check it out: [Highland literacy blog](#) and [Bumps to Bairns](#)

The Highland Council Education, Children and Adult Service (ECAS) decisions on grant cuts to the voluntary sector, including youth organisations, was delayed until 18<sup>th</sup> November. While accepting the budget pressures on The Highland Council, HCF lobbied members to consider the added value of voluntary sector youth work. HCF are pleased that there will be ongoing discussions with Youth Highland to consider their support in the future.

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Young people from Youth Highland produced a [video clip](#) to show the value of voluntary sector youth work.

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