

Highland Children's Forum

September 2016



Highland Children's Forum Consultation Work

The Transitions Consultation, looking at young people's experiences of moving on from school and/or children's services, is nearly completed and a draft report is planned for the end of September.

There were 63 participants, aged 14 – 18, 32 males, 29 females, 1 young person who identified as gender fluid and 1 young person as transgender. A wide range of support needs were represented (some YP identified with more than one additional support need):

23 young people who identified as being on the autistic spectrum

21 with a learning disability

10 with mental health problems

8 young carers

10 young people with a hearing impairment or sight impairment

A key message emerging suggests those professionals who were person-centred were valued more highly:

'When I was having a really bad time the depute sorted for me to get a shorter timetable even through it was only for 2 weeks.'

* 52 young people said that what was positive about moving on from school was about being more independent and becoming an adult:

'... being independent and not having to worry about other people and just focus on myself and what I want' Young carer

* In response to the question 'what's not good about leaving school?' missing friends was listed top, mentioned by 15 young people:

'I think just leaving people behind that I know and my friends and family. Just having someone to speak to.'

* In terms of who was a positive source of help and support, school staff were the most frequently mentioned group with 43 listings.

Coming soon: HCF are self-funding a consultation exploring the experiences and views of children and young people who are **Not in Full Time Education** (NIFTE) as this issue has been raised to HCF by professionals, in HCF consultations with young people and parents and it is a priority of the Additional Support Needs Improvement Group. The consultation will run from September 2016 – August 2017 and aims to consult with 30 children and young people, their parent carers and professionals. If anyone is interested in this consultation **please contact Emma Thomas: email: consultation@highlandchildrensforum.org or mobile: 07789 680811**

Highland Children's Forum Policy Work

HCF Toolbox: Due to requests from others, time was given over the quieter summer period to review the material from the "Listen to Us" involvement toolbox, which HCF had developed with Scottish Government funding in 2008. When the website had been renewed last summer, this was not restored as it had become out of date. Consequently, a smaller updated toolbox is now available on the website. The toolbox will continue to be developed as time allows. If you have activities or information to include or would like particular tools reinstated, please let us know.

HCF has not had any feedback from young people or parents about the half-day Friday. Please feel free to send positive comments as well as share with us any challenges it presents. Otherwise HCF will assume that this has not proved to be an issue for people.

HCF continues to work with The Highland Council, Duke of Edinburgh, Young Scot and the Children's Disability Service to respond to recommendations from children and young people in HCF Reports.

Issues we currently have under consideration, [please contribute](#) your views:

1. Proportionate and appropriate information sharing in consideration of the Supreme Court Judgement on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
2. Sexual health awareness for young people with learning and or social and communication issues: our next consultation under the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with The Highland Council.
3. Children and young people not in full time education. This is also a current consultation, not under the SLA.
4. Young people with additional support needs and the judicial system.
5. Child poverty and the equality gap across social, health and education outcomes.
6. Accessibility of schools and out of school activities. The new Accessibility Strategy is being published by THC before the end of the year. We will include a link in the next bulletin.
7. HCF continues to work with THC in the development of Self-Directed Support for children, young people and their families as a follow on from the [HCF Self-Directed Support](#) report. If you have an interest in how this develops please get in touch.

Please contact Gillian Newman: 07789680812 or email: policy@highlandchildrensforum.org

Update on FHC4 Improvement Groups and Other Groups

Mental Health Improvement Group: HCF will be accompanying a young person to an NHS Highland CAMHS consultation event. Mental health remains high on the Scottish Government's agenda with Maureen Watt being appointed as Scottish Minister for Mental Health. The MHIG has a current focus on Learning Disability and neurodevelopment, with transitions identified as a future focus. The group are carrying out self-evaluation against the quality indicator of "how well does the service meet the needs of our stakeholders."

Young Carers Improvement Group: Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers Group has developed a [Social Skills Training pack](#) with lesson plans and other resources. It is an excellent piece of work, developed with the young people. [Connecting Young Carers](#) also tabled the new "EPIC" (Equal Partners in Care) booklet. Awareness raising about the role of young carers continues to be a priority of the improvement group. A visual representation was tabled of the recent Highland lifestyle survey section about young carers who make up approximately 10% of respondents and some details of the young carer role: the average daily amount of time spent caring for a family member is 3 hours. The fully published version of the Lifestyle Survey is not yet available online.

Play Improvement Group: The next Play Event is being planned for March 2017. It is hoped it will provide an opportunity to investigate [Street Play](#) one Saturday in Inverness. A resource pack will be produced for use in other local areas. The Highland Community Guidance for Developing Spaces for Play should be completed and available to community councils, local planners, voluntary sector organisations and other interested parties soon.

Highland Practice Model Improvement Group: The HPMIG is seeking the views of young people about information sharing and the role of Named Person. If you are a young person who would like to take part, please contact:

policy@highlandchildrensforum.org

John Swinney, as Deputy First Minister, has taken responsibility for taking the Named Person policy forward. HCF was involved in the development of the Named Person role as part of the Highland Pathfinder Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) team. HCF has always been clear about the central importance of the voice of the child and also of partnership with parents in GIRFEC. HCF will continue to contribute to the debate about consensual dialogue with children and families and appropriate, proportionate information sharing in the best interests of children and young people.

As Education Minister, John Swinney is proposing that education decisions should be devolved to schools and communities. While HCF welcomes the move to greater local participation in education decisions, the effectiveness of those decisions will be dependent on the resources and support provided for teachers and schools.

HCF also welcomes the appointment of a Minister for Mental Health as this has been an area of great concern given the increased demand for mental health services by children and young people.

Current Scottish Government Consultations:

[Consultation on a Child Poverty Bill for Scotland](#): deadline 30th September 2016

[Social Security in Scotland](#): deadline 27th October

[Statutory Guidance: Standards in Scotland's Schools](#): deadline 11th November 2016

[Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve excellence and equity in education](#): deadline 6th January 2017

Highland Children's Forum Annual Evaluation

It is that time of year when Highland Children's Forum reviews its performance and looks at the development plan for next year. Please let us know your views on our work: we want to know what we do well and what we could do better. Please send comments on the usefulness of the bulletin and any other views to: policy@highlandchildrensforum.org

Highland Third Sector Connections:

The Policy Lead continues to work with the Highland Third Sector Interface and other third sector organisations to improve networking and information sharing. With the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act and the move to local children service plans this will be ever more important.

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