

Highland Children's Forum Bulletin February 2019



Highland Children's Forum News

Highland Children's Forum (HCF) is delighted that our new "Youth Action Group" has come together and is already both gelling as a group and getting to grips with influencing both Highland Children's Forum and policy development in Highland. Other ready-made groups in Highland are showing an interest in being involved. Work now begins to develop a Children's Action Group too.

The Forum has begun the process of applying to set up as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This requires a change of name and the name of "Highland Children and Young People's Forum" will be adopted. This will require a change in our logo, website and social media sites: we will keep you updated.

Highland Children and Young People's Forum (HCYPF) has opted for the two-tier version of SCIO. This means that we will have a Board of Charity Trustees who will answer to the wider membership. All current members of HCF will be invited to become members of HCYPF. A list of membership names will be held by Office of Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). HCYPF will also have a third tier of membership, for children and young people under 25. The Children and Young People's Action Groups will engage with this younger membership.

The Highland Council Redesign Board process continues and HCF has recently had confirmation that we will receive one more year of funding.

This will hopefully give us the space and time to identify alternative sources of funding. HCF Policy Lead continues to work closely with other organisations to seek to protect vital services to children and families in spite of the impending cuts from public sector funding.

Highland Children's Forum continues to work toward improved participation of children and young people with additional support needs across Highland, promoting the development of participation tools, strategies and approaches in the Highland Council, NHS Highland, Joint Transitions Team, Community Partnerships, Highlife Highland, Voluntary Youth Network and other third sector organisations.

If you would like to join Highland Children's Forum, or subscribe/unsubscribe to the bulletin please contact Gillian Newman, Policy Lead: policy@highlandchildrensforum.org



Highland Third Sector Children's Forum

Another forum is born, or at least has evolved from previous groupings. This Forum is hosted and run by Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) and is for any HTSI member group working with children, young people and their families.

The new Highland Council Chief Executive, Donna Manson, was invited to attend the first meeting of the group. Ms. Manson spoke of her personal interest and support of the third sector and her recognition that they can often work with families who are disengaged from public services. She also recognised the additionality that comes from the third sector in the grant funding they can bring in to Highland.

A report "[Highland Third Sector Children and Families Services Group](#)" was tabled at the Care Learning and Housing Committee in January 2019. The report was compiled from the contributions of 12 third sector organisations and sought to demonstrate how third sector organisations are providing value for Highland Council in delivering their priorities. [The presentation](#) that accompanied the report (agenda item 13) heard from HCF Policy Lead, Care And Learning Alliance Chief Executive, a parent carer and the testimony of a young person. The response from committee members was very encouraging, with recognition of the value of working in partnership with the third sector.



Consultation Work

The Consultation Lead has been very busy setting up and facilitating the Young People's Action Group, who have now met three times. The young people have discussed the following issues:

- Why young people need a voice
- What language they want to use to define themselves/the group
- The barriers and challenges facing young people with ASN
- Solutions to overcoming these barriers
- The aim of the group
- Council funding cuts
- Scottish Government website consultation on disability, young people and sexual health

The group is now a member of the Scottish Government's Disabled Children and Young People's Advisory Group.

HCF has been consulting with other organisations who work with children and young people with ASN to see if there would be value in a shared forum/structure/network that would be pan-Highland and pan-support need to allow their collective voice to raise issues of concern and to influence policy and practice.

Work towards setting up a Children's Action/Advisory Group is beginning, but at a pace that will allow some of the young people from the Young People Action Group to be actively involved.

The CL presented to a national seminar on the recently published consultation report on [Sexual Health and Relationship Education for ASN](#).

So the quotes underlined the importance of talking to ALL young people about this, particularly those with specific needs."

Senior Learning and Development Officer for Sexual Health with Glasgow City Council said:

"I ... used ... quotes from your report ...when I was delivering a one day RSHPE course for staff working with young people with additional support needs. Some of the quotes were particularly useful in helping participants understand how some young people with ASN may view their own body/sex/reproduction. We talk a lot in our courses about the importance

of correct language and removing any sense of shame in one's body and how this can help young people as they move forward into new and various types of relationships. So the quotes underlined the importance of talking to ALL young people about this, particularly those with specific needs."

The work of the Consultation Lead is becoming more focussed on promoting participation than delivering consultations. Part of HCF's own redesign process will enable the young people to review the job descriptions and titles of the two staff members as we go forward beyond a Service Level Agreement.



Policy Work

Much of the PL work over the last three months has been in addressing the implications of the Highland Council Redesign Board report. Minimising the potential negative impact of the proposed cuts on services to vulnerable children and families remains our top policy priority.

HCF was delighted to hear that Direct Childcare have been able to secure a rescue package from One Parent Families Scotland's Flexible Childcare Service. The human and financial cost of making staff redundant just before Christmas and then seeking their re-employment in the new year could have been avoided if the Highland Council had provided earlier clarity about the funding situation in the redesign process.

The partnership approach HCF and other organisations are seeking with the Highland Council is to develop good dialogue that allows organisations who will lose part or all of their Service Level Agreement to have time to seek potential external partners and funding.

In other areas of work, the PL, along with our young committee members, is working with others on the Youth Work Strategy. The PL has supported Highlife Highland in the development of their Inclusion Policy. Work is ongoing with Child and Adolescent Mental Health service to look at information and support to young people and their families when admitted through A&E after a mental health crisis.

PL is a Third Sector Representative at the Care, Learning and Housing Committee and Leadership Group and is a member of five improvement groups, (ASN; Play; Highland Practice Model; Mental Health; Youth Work). PL also sits on the Keeping Children Safe group, Joint Monitoring Committee and attends CHAMPS board meetings.



Food Security

In the last bulletin families living in poverty was mentioned. This is a major issue across the country and in particular in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out. A founding member of Highland Children's Forum, Lindsay Graham, has been the Child Food Poverty Advisor to the UK Government having carried out [research on food security](#) and in particular holiday hunger, when free school meals are not available.

The Scottish Government is now consulting on developing Scotland as a "[Good Food Nation](#)". This is in recognition that the priorities of environmentally sustainable food production, food security for those in poverty and a healthier diet overall are essential to Scotland going forward.

The consultation closing date is 29th March 2019

[Katy Kitchingham](#) is the Highland & Islands Foodbank Network Area Manager for the Trussell Trust. Please contact her for more information about local foodbanks and ways you can help.

Here are two background articles, published in November 2018 by the Holyrood Magazine:

[Poverty Commission recommends extra cash for poor families during school holidays](#)

[More than 14,500 children given free meals during school holidays to help combat 'holiday hunger'](#)



Other National News

UN Committee against Torture and the Together Scotland Response
In April 2019, the UN Committee against Torture will be reviewing the UK. Together Scotland will submit a report focused on the List of Issues, below, that the UN Committee published in 2016.

The List of Issues includes:

- Prisons, policing and intelligence services
- Health and social care
- Violence and abuse against women, minorities and children
- Asylum and migration
- Legislative, administrative and judicial procedures

There will be a workshop on 6th March at Kintail House Inverness to discuss a Highland response to Together Scotland. If you would like to attend, please contact: policy@highlandchildrensforum.org

[A Social Enterprise has launched in Edinburgh](#) that seeks to offer employment to people on the Autistic Spectrum with the skills to be IT consultants. It is great to see recognition of the great skills and benefits there can be to being neuro-atypical.

[The Lancet have published findings](#) about social media screen time and its impact on young people's mental health.

Rod Grant, Head Master of Clifton Hall School Edinburgh suggests Scotland needs [a new educational model](#), which is about creating learners not evidencing pre-determined outcomes.