

Highland Children's Forum Bulletin June 2019



Highland Children's Forum News

Highland Children's Forum (HCF) is holding its Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 2nd July at Smithton Church. Any members or other interested people are invited to attend.

There will be lunch at 12.00, the business of the AGM at 13.00 and following that, a presentation from some of the young people who make up our "Inspire Highland", details below.

This is an exciting year for HCF as we move forward to new territory, becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation and in moving from consultation to participation with children and young people. Our funding is also undergoing change as the previous Service Level Agreement will come to an end in March 2020.

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

Book a place at our AGM

Become a member of HCF at this exciting time

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Or as a member of HCF:

Volunteer for HCF

Stand for election to the next committee



Engagement with Children and Young People

Inspire Highland

The Consultation Lead has been meeting with young people who are keen to be involved with HCF to directly influence our work and to contribute to our aim of improving services. Three groups meet currently and together have agreed the title "[Inspire Highland](#)". They are already actively involved in shaping services and developing training video clips. Some of the group have already presented to the Additional Support Needs Improvement Group in Highland and have plans to meet with the Principle of Inverness College. The groups are laising with Highland Youth Parliament, contributing to the annual conference later in the month. Plans to begin a children's group are under way.

Sexual Health and Relationship Education

Highland Children's Forum was commissioned by Highland Council to undertake a service evaluation of the school sexual health and relationship education (SHARE programme) to find out if the current provision meets the needs of young people in Highland. Three separate, but linked, consultations took place: with young people in ASN Departments and Special Education; young people in mainstream schools and with school staff delivering SHARE. [The reports](#) have contributed to the national review of SHARE and HCF will continue to work with the Highland Council and NHS Highland in seeing the key messages from the reports contributing to change in practice so that sexual health and relationship education is consistent across Highland, is updated and improved, includes topics identified by young people as important to them such as LGBT+ issues, porn/sexting and unplanned pregnancy. Teachers need ongoing training and professional development to meet the current needs and in particular on how to diversify sexual health and relationship education for young people with additional support needs.

Fortrose Academy

Sessions were delivered to 100 pupils in Fortrose Academy on children's rights, in partnership with 6th form pupils. The pupils produced a Young People's Charter detailing how they wished to be treated by adults within the school, including:

- o Adults should remember we have rights.
- o Adults should understand our abilities and disabilities.
- o Teachers should treat us as equals.
- o Adults should not share things that others don't need to know.
- o We need to be treated well and with respect.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services

In liaison with SPEAK (Stigma Prevention through Education, Advocacy and Knowledge) HCF has been working with the manager of the CAMHS service in Highland to build participation. Three young people will be supported to be involved in recruitment of professionals to the service. Young people are working with CAMHS to design information to help children, young people and their parents at a time of mental health crisis.



Policy Work

Transformational Change in Highland Education is the new approach to education improvement that was first presented to the Highland Council Care Learning and Housing Committee in March 2019. The proposed changes involve some recognition of things that HCF has long sought such as whole school ethos and improved inclusion. However, the significant budget reduction to the Additional Support Needs service and the redeployment of ASN staff caused HCF concern. There had been no engagement with children and young people with additional support needs, nor their parents, in the development of the proposals. The proposed timescale of three years to deliver inclusive schools seemed overly optimistic given that has been the direction of travel for three decades and has not yet succeeded.

[HCF produced a briefing](#) on its interpretation of the Highland Council proposals and sent it to all Highland Councillors.

In response, the PL was invited to meet John Finlayson, (Chair of Care, Learning and Housing); Linda Munro, (Vice Chair), Donna Manson, (Chief Executive), James Vance, (Interim Head of Education); Karen Ralston (Interim Head of Children's Services) and Sandra Harrington (Head of Early Years). Jaci Douglas, (Chief Executive of Care and Learning Alliance and also Third Sector Representative to Care, Learning and Housing Committee) accompanied the Policy Lead to this meeting.

The meeting provided some reassurance about future plans to engage with children, young people and their parents.

The meeting provided some reassurance about future plans to engage with children, young people and their parents. There was also a commitment to improvement to ensure more consistency in delivering Getting it Right for Every Child with a focus on improved attainment and inclusion. Whole school development planning and training options were seen as key to delivering improved inclusion. Schools have been placed in

“Families” with similar schools to collaborate, sharing good practice and learning from one another.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, the Transformational Change programme will be a standing item on the agenda of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee. There will be no external or independent evaluation although HMI and Education Scotland are involved.

A presentation of the Transformational Change in Highland Education programme can be seen on [Highland Council's webcasts](#).

HCF will remain vigilant in terms of monitoring the change process for children and young people with additional support needs, as indicated in the section below.



Evaluation and Monitoring of Transformational Change in Highland Education

The rationale for the substantial change in Highland Education is based on the Local Government Benchmark Framework (LGBF) and national comparisons. The [HCF briefing](#) seeks to explore that data, in particular data that is not comparable between Local Authorities, for example the way the number of children with ASN is recorded.

HCF also feels that while Highland does not score as well as expected on attainment, it exceeds expectations with regard to positive destinations post-school. This more positive outcome is not mentioned in the Transformational Change programme. LGBF will be used as the performance criteria for measuring progress during the Transformation Programme. HCF is concerned that a narrow focus on attainment might detract from a focus on the wellbeing and development of a range of life skills for young people who will not attain at national exam level.

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Different learning styles mean that some young people will never be good at exams, but may excel at practical learning or other learning style. That is surely what Personal Learning Planning is all about. It is so important that those who have different styles of learning or who have different levels of learning ability are not in any way missed out because they will not be successful in written examinations.

HCF will therefore be seeking evidence as the proposal goes forward of progress towards all four capacities:

- Successful Learners
- Confident Individuals
- Responsible Citizens

- Effective Contributors

HCF continues to work with other partners to seek funding to enable young people to develop a new digital tool that empowers children and young people to develop their Personal Learning Plan and contribute to any Child's Plan, identifying for themselves their aims and progress towards these. This tool may provide a qualitative way of identifying progress across the wellbeing indicators and four capacities.



Highland Young Ambassadors for Inclusion Framework

HCF is in discussion with the Highland Council about the development of a Highland "[Young Ambassadors for Inclusion](#)" Framework, to ensure that the voices of children and young people are embedded in the self-evaluation and improvement processes of the Family Groupings of schools.

This will involve recruiting and training children and young people with additional support needs in the Children's Rights, the principles of participation and the practical approach to an improvement cycle. This will be piloted in a few schools next year with the hope that a framework can be developed for adoption across Highland in the future.

Watch this space to find out about the development of this framework.



HCF Thoughts on the Sturrock Report

The Sturrock Report into allegations of a culture of bullying in NHS Highland was published last month.

Sturrock presented an interesting report that did find evidence to support the allegations, but was also focussed on seeking collaboration to move forward. These are lessons from which every organisation can benefit.

These are some key points HCF thought well made:

- A focus on [service user outcomes] through quality and performance initiatives [must be] matched in all situations by care for those delivering the services. The two are inseparable.
- Financial targets will only work well if people are thriving. Human dignity is an infinite resource; public finance is not. The way to optimise fiscal resources is to draw upon and acknowledge the goodwill that exists.
- A change of heart, as well as mind, will be the biggest challenge. This must be demonstrated by leadership from the top: humility;

authenticity; vulnerability; openness; courage; responsibility; accountability; self-discipline.

- Real compassion in and towards the workforce is an investment, an example perhaps of preventative spend.
- This is a journey. It will be better to focus on how to travel than on a hoped-for end point.
- Greatest leadership challenge: help people under pressure to feel valued; rebuild relationships; enable people to thrive; give people responsibility.
- Change is not easy. Growth cannot happen without pain.
- Assume....nearly everyone is trying their best.... there is a positive intention behind most behaviour.
- Unrealistic or unachievable expectations... may have an adverse effect on the people charged with delivering them, leading to dysfunction and low morale.
- If leadership can be inspiring, visionary, energetic and attractive, people will deliver more. The converse is also true.
- Not just about a "no blame" culture – but one reflecting a "just" culture, where the difference between acceptable and unacceptable is understood.
- Urgent need to collaborate.... based on a deeper and wider understanding of shared interests that all people to cooperate more effectively and efficiently to find solutions.
- Conversation is needed with general public and employees about realistic expectations ... and the financial reality.