

# Highland Children's Forum

Listening to children – speaking with policy makers

## Annual General Meeting Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015 12 noon – 2pm Smithton Free Church, Inverness

**Members Present:**

Frances Nixseaman (Acting Chair)  
 Becky Huxtable-Smith (Treasurer)  
 Anne Watmough  
 Kirsty Hunter  
 Clare Dyker  
 Christian MacLean  
 Isobel Grigor  
 Isabel Paterson  
 Alison Footitt  
 Heather Duncan  
 Mark Boulton  
 Judith Hope  
 Mike Haycox  
 Clare Collins

**In Attendance:**

Gillian Newman, HCF  
 Anne Ross, HCF  
 Cllr. Linda Munro , Outgoing Children's Champion  
 Shaun Finlayson, Highland Youth Convener  
 Bill Alexander, Director of Health & Social Care

Item	Action										
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies for absence:</b>            Frances welcomed all the members and those in attendance to the meeting and noted apologies form the following:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Alistair Christie</td> <td>Bernadette Cairns</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kate Stephen</td> <td>Jaci Douglas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dave Thomson MSP</td> <td>Barrie Forbes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sue Miller</td> <td>Calum Munro</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Donnie MacLeod</td> <td>Ann Watmough</td> </tr> </table>	Alistair Christie	Bernadette Cairns	Kate Stephen	Jaci Douglas	Dave Thomson MSP	Barrie Forbes	Sue Miller	Calum Munro	Donnie MacLeod	Ann Watmough
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Donnie MacLeod	Ann Watmough										
2.	<p><b>Minutes of the previous AGM</b>            The Minutes of the 2013/14 Annual General Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014 in The Pines Centre, Drummond Road, Inverness were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by Frances Nixseaman and seconded by Christian MacLean.</p>										
3.	<p><b>Chair's Annual Report – (attached)</b></p>										
4.	<p><b>Financial Report (attached)</b>            Becky spoke to the accounts, which were accepted as an accurate record and proposed by Isabel Paterson and seconded by Clare Dyker.</p>										

<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Election of Committee Members</b></p> <p>Gillian explained the nominations' and co-options' process. Nominations for committee membership had been received for the following:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Ann Watmough</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Kirsty Hunter</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Becky Huxtable-Smith</td> <td>Donnie Macleod</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clare Dyker</td> <td>Mark Boulton</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Christian MacLean</td> <td>Mike Haycox.</td> </tr> </table> <p>Heather Duncan and Judith and Stephen Hope (job-sharing the role) were co-opted onto the committee.</p> <p>Grateful thanks was extended to Isobel Grigor, as she steps down, for her contribution to the MCM in past years.</p> <p>The new committee was proposed by Isobel Grigor and seconded by Christian MacLean.</p> <p>This concluded the business part of the meeting</p>	Ann Watmough	Kirsty Hunter	Becky Huxtable-Smith	Donnie Macleod	Clare Dyker	Mark Boulton	Christian MacLean	Mike Haycox.
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Becky Huxtable-Smith	Donnie Macleod								
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## Appendix 1: Chair's Report

Frances spoke to her report.

This year we have said farewell to Tracy Anderson, Consultation Lead and Calum Munro, Policy lead. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank them for all their hard work and commitment.

During Tracy's time at HCF, she carried out the consultation [My Child's Plan: My Views](#), which was commissioned by The Highland Council. The final report was published at the end of 2014. It is an **independent** assessment of the planning, professional involvement and outcomes of a Child's Plan according to the children, young people and their parents/carers who participated. It is almost 25 years since the UK signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and since January 1992 all government policies and practices have had to comply with the convention. One major step towards that shift was the Children (Scotland) Act in 1995 where one of the three main themes "*the child's views should be taken into account where major decisions are to be made about his or her future*" was cross cutting throughout. Essentially outcomes are what matters – what difference does a Child's Plan make to the child? In this report, you will find different views and perspectives, along with recommendations from participants which are well worth noting. In this adult centric world, we must all continue to push for children and young people to be involved in decisions about their future as meaningfully as is possible.

Calum worked as Policy Lead for the past ten years, with absolute dedication and an unshakeable belief in the voice of children and young people. He has used their views to contribute to positive change and ongoing developments in children's services across Highland. Working alongside the policy makers, he was always keen to highlight good practice whilst never wavering from uncomfortable truths, if that represented the views of children and young people. He would challenge any policy or practice that did not reflect their views but always with respect and professional integrity. Calum will be enjoying an extremely busy retirement, continuing his voluntary work for communities in Highland. He is one of the founders of the Highland Cross which has, so far, raised over £3.8 million for Highland charities and an active Red Cross volunteer and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

Looking ahead, we are delighted to welcome back Gillian Newman, as our policy lead and welcome to Anne Ross as our consultation lead. HCF have just finished a consultation with parents/carers/CYP on Self Directed Support and how it should develop to suit their needs with four options being proposed but also an opportunity for new ideas to be considered. The project had very tight time scales. 17 CYP 11 parents/carers participated. There were positive outcomes for participants in being consulted – one lad said "That was great it was like therapy". The CYP focus was on what makes their lives better – focussing on positives. Parents looked

at the complexities of SDS and the 4 options with case studies to demonstrate application. It was complicated and still misunderstood by many. In some instances - parents/carers have been misinformed by professionals who themselves don't understand SDS. Other professionals have understood SDS and how to best use it and encouraged parents to use it creatively and make it fit their needs. Training for professionals on SDS is essential.

We will also be looking at what themes the forum should be investigating and reporting on in the coming year. Recurring issues across Highland identified by children, young people, their parents or carers will be our priority. Young people are currently helping the Forum become more accessible by developing the website and our presence in social media. This is ongoing and will be greatly aided by a 12 week digital internship funded by SCVO, a vacancy which is still open.

A look at the work of the forum and the amount done in limited hours by two dedicated staff:

#### **Consultation**

Encompassing: contacting and explaining the latest consultation to gatekeepers in order to reach potential participants; encouraging and supporting participants; drawing together reports; publishing them in accessible formats. Currently, Anne is working on a consultation looking at various alternative approaches The Highland Council is considering in order to manage the social care budget as it moves over to Self-Directed Support. So far, 17 children and young people and around 10 parent carers have been involved.

#### **Information**

A regular bulletin; maintaining and updating the website and currently looking to develop HCF's social media profile. To this end, a successful application was made to SCVO's Digital Internship programme and HCF has two potential applicants for this 12 week post.

#### **Admin**

There is a fair bit of admin involved in preparation of and follow up to Management Committee meetings, AGM and in ensuring all is in place to meet Service Level Agreement. From time to time there is also work around recruitment and HR.

As this can be quite time consuming for staff and take away from their core roles, there is a feeling that perhaps we need to look at how we can get admin support eg could a couple of hours be re-allocated from the current posts?

#### **Finance**

On behalf of HCF, I would like to thank Becky for the huge amount of work she does as our Treasurer and for her commitment to the organisation .

#### **Policy**

There are several strands that Gillian, as Policy Lead, is focussing on: Third Sector evaluation; taking forward recommendations; collective advocacy role; SDS brokerage; framework for participation. There are also other issues brought to HCF by its constituents eg around sexual health and relationships, which she then takes forward. Gillian is also exploring the possibility of a My Plan App to enable children and young people to better own their Child's Plan. This follows on from the Child's Plan consultation undertaken by Tracy Anderson, the previous Consultation Lead.

**Meetings and Networking** are an ongoing feature of both roles.

**Communication.** HCF has been finding that group communication amongst committee members is perhaps not the best way to communicate. And so need to find a more useful way to do so. One suggestion to ensure more efficient and effective communication could be through having Committee members linked to one strand (above) each and to be able to communicate about that when required with Anne or Gillian between MCM either by phone or email.

Lastly, a warm welcome to new committee members and may I advise them to set dates as soon as possible for MCM over the coming year and equally importantly, to claim expenses. Committee members are asked to give their time but not their money. It is also extremely useful for funders as they need to know true cost.

## **Appendix 2: Annual Accounts**

# OSCR

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator

## Independent examiner's report on the accounts v2

Report to the trustees/members of **Highland children's Forum.**  
 Charity name

Registered charity number **SC 031945**  
 On the accounts of the charity for the period

Period start date: Day **1** Month **4** Year **2014** to Day **31** Month **3** Year **2015**  
 Period end date

Set out on pages (remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**  
 The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) 2005 Act and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

**Basis of independent examiner's statement**  
 My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

**Independent examiner's statement**  
 In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention [other than that disclosed on the attached page\*]

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: *[Signature]* Date: **22/3/2015**  
 Name: **PAUL ALEXANDER GILSON**

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):  
 Address: **ISLAS VIEW  
 MARLBORGH  
 DUNDEE DV78 6E**

\*Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply. If the words do apply, set out those matters which have come to your attention on the following page



Highland Childrens Forum 2014/15

Accounts Breakdown

	Annual Running Costs	Consultations/ Projects Reserve	Liabilities Reserve	Total
<b>Opening Balance 1st April 2014</b>	£ -	£ 38,487.29	£ 25,493.43	<u>£ 63,980.72</u>
<b>Income 2014/15</b>				
Council Funding	£ 48,286.00			£ 48,286.00
Additional Council Funding	£ 2,300.00			£ 2,300.00
Grants/Donations	£ -			£ -
Increase reserve (Note 1)			£ 5,810.57	
	<u>£ 50,586.00</u>	£ -	£ 5,810.57	<u>£ 50,586.00</u>
<b>Expenditure 2014/15</b>				
Staff Costs	£ 36,933.45			£ 36,933.45
Staff Expenses	£ 1,794.20			£ 1,794.20
Committee Costs	£ 919.29			£ 919.29
Membership Costs	£ 515.30			£ 515.30
Office Costs	£ 1,000.00			£ 1,000.00
Telephones and IT	£ 1,405.42			£ 1,405.42
Printing	£ 507.80			£ 507.80
Postages	£ 393.97			£ 393.97
Stationary	£ 99.95			£ 99.95
Consultation Event Costs	£ 43.86			£ 43.86
Insurance	£ 493.90			£ 493.90
Accountant	£ 211.25			£ 211.25
Contingency	£ -			£ -
Increase reserve (Note 1)		£ 5,810.57		
	<u>£ 44,318.39</u>	£ 5,810.57	£ -	<u>£ 44,318.39</u>
<b>Balance at 31st March 2015</b>	<b>£ 6,237.16</b>	<b>£ 32,676.72</b>	<b>£ 31,304.00</b>	<b><u>£ 70,248.33</u></b>

Note 1

Reserve Liabilities Account increased to be 1/4 of SLA figure to cover 3 months basic costs, plus redundancy payments for two staff at 10 years service, plus cost of any projects being undertaken from Projects Reserve Budget at 25% as for SLA

Highland Childrens Forum 2014/15

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2015

2014/15

Current Assets	£ -
Bank	£ 70,248.33
Debtors	£ -
Current Liabilities	£ -
Creditors	£ -
Net Assets	<u>£ 70,248.33</u>
Reserves	£ -
Balance Brought Forward	£ 63,980.72
Surplus/Deficit for Period	£ 6,267.61
Balance Carried Forward	<u>£ 70,248.33</u>

Treasurer: Rebecca Huxtable-Smith

Signed *[Signature]* Dated 22/05/15

Independent Examiners Report

I have checked the enclosed accounts and find them to be accurate.

Name *JAMES ALEXANDER GILCAL*

Signed *[Signature]* Dated 22/5/15

### **Appendix 3: Speaker Shaun Finlayson**

Frances welcomed Shaun Finlayson, outgoing Highland Youth Convener to talk about his role as Youth Convener, how he has found it and some of the issues he has come across and worked on during his year in the role as well as ideas for future consultations by HCF. Shaun's talk is transcribed below:

The role of Youth Convener is there to provide a full time, consistent link between all of the young people in Highland and the elected members and staff at the Highland Council. They meet regularly with both elected members and key decision makers from The Highland Council.

The Youth Convener leads on the Highland Youth Parliament and also the Executive Committee. The Parliament is made up of over 100 young people and the Executive Committee is made up of 16 young people chosen from peers in their local areas to take on a more in depth role.

Youth Convener also sits on various groups such as Police Advisory Group, Equalities Committee at HIE, Patient's Council for example.

The Youth Convener also has a vote on the Education, Children and Adult Services committee and full speaking rights at all other council meetings.

I feel that the existence of this role shows that Highland Council take youth engagement seriously and are committed to listening to young people's views.

So when I started my time in this role in September last year, I set out to work on a few key areas which I felt were important for young people in Highlands. These were Health, both physical and mental, Education and employment, Apprenticeships, Transport, Promoting The Highlands and Youth Engagement. I've done work on all of these issues in one way or another throughout my time in post and I've seen great progress.

I've maintained close links with SPEAK (Stigma Prevention through Education, Advocacy and Knowledge), the youth wing of HUG (Highland Users Group). We've done presentations for MHOs (Mental Health Officers) and PMHWs (Primary Mental Health Workers) to raise the issues that are important to young people with mental health problems. I've also spoken about the challenges in terms of access to services and confidentiality in rural areas at district partnerships and local area forum meetings.

I have been part of a transitions group with the NHS looking at how we can make the process of going from children's services into adult services as smooth as possible while still tailoring the experience to suit an individual's needs.

I've raised the issue of transport and held meetings with transport officers from the council.

I worked hard to raise the issue of PSE (Personal and Social Education) resources as the feedback we got from HYP members was that they were often out of date and didn't touch on relevant topics. The input that members gave to this helped create a highland wide 'bank' of resources which can be accessed through GLOW by teachers across Highland.

I worked closely with staff in the council around the issue of apprenticeships and positive destinations for young people. It's vital that we let people know that getting A grades and going off to University isn't the only option out there and that going on to college or starting an

apprenticeship is just as good a pathway. I believe that the council are working hard on this and there are some great examples of partnership work in Highland between schools and businesses.

I've ensured that the social media presence of the Youth Convener has been good, with regular updates and information being sent out.

I've engaged with so many young people through the HYP. It's great to meet so many young people who are interested and passionate about the issues that are important to them in their local area and also important to all young people across Highland.

I was asked to bring some ideas today about what would be good for future consultation. I've summarised a couple key areas that came out of the conference last week.

The idea of peer support and peer mentoring was brought up regularly at conference, with young people interested in learning more about how to support a friend who is struggling, particularly with regards to their mental health.

Young people expressed a desire to work closely in their areas with services such as Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs and Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Highland.

The idea of an improvement group made up of young people which links into the Council's schools improvement group is going to be taken forward and explored.

The structure of youth forums has changed following a vote at conference. Each High School catchment area will now have its own Youth Forum and they can link up and meet as an area if time and logistics allow this to be a possibility. We have many young people going back to their areas engaged and energised to make change happen.

#### **Questions from members:**

**Q:** The idea of peer support brought up at the conference – is there a group looking at it?

**A:** there is a group looking at it and will probably do an online consultation.

The point was also made about peer "buddying", which is slightly different i.e. to have someone to go to things with.

**Q:** Did young people have input into the bank of PSE resources on GLOW?

**A:** It was influenced by young people as they felt they were not getting what they needed from PSE.

**Q:** On the issue of inclusion of young people with physical or sensory challenges, what would Shaun like to see changed?

**A:** Shaun does not want to force inclusion but feels that, for example the Youth Parliament can go further on this issue and also that Youth Development Officers could be looking at who is on the fringes and encouraging and building up their confidence. He feels it should start in the community and build up from there.

**Q:** How does Shaun feel it has changed him?

**A:** He feels he has a much better grasp of what the Council and partner agencies do and confidence that Highland has much more to offer young people e.g. in opportunities to gain skills, and to retain them in Highland. It has also changed what he wants to go on and do after this year.

**Q:** Does Shaun feel there was greater involvement after the Referendum and the lowering of the voting age?

**A:** Absolutely! Young people are still talking and actively engaged. He feels more young people are happy to be engaged and it is now almost stranger if they are not so – a complete contrast to when he was 15 and becoming politically active and engaged. He now sees a lot of 15 and 16 year olds engaged positively in politics.

**Q:** Could Shaun be outspoken and say what he wanted to say?

**A:** There were some restrictions however, he feels there is some need to safeguard the young person in the role.

Frances thanked Shaun for his excellent and extremely informative talk and welcomed Linda Munro, the outgoing Children's Champion to reflect on her time as Children's Champion, how she found it and any issues she wished to highlight to HCF

#### **Appendix 4: Speaker Linda Munro**

Linda began by giving a brief background to the role of Children's Champion and how it has changed from several Champions to now one position, which she has held for the past 8 years. The Children's Champion has a seat on all 13 Improvement Groups and contributes to the live document of For Highland's Children. Her role is to work with all groupings in the Council Chamber i.e. to work corporately, not politically. Linda has thoroughly enjoyed her 8 years in the role and described it as "the best job in The Highland Council".

She paid recognition to the volunteer committee in HCF and the value of all they do and paid tribute to the other hundreds of people across Highland who give similarly to "make things a little better".

She also recognised the Councillors who have supported and continue to support Children's Services in Highland e.g. by finding funding from elsewhere to maintain the ASN budget.

She stated that, though she will no longer be in the role of Children's Champion, she will continue to be involved in that area and she thanked everyone for allowing and supporting her to do what she has done in the role. Looking to the future, she will be offering to meet with the new Champion to hand over information on networks, do introductions, etc. as that had taken up a lot of her time when she started.

Looking back, Linda feels Highland is a long way from where it was in terms of listening to, respecting and hearing children and young people although there is still a long way to go. She referred to the consultation carried out through Bernadette Cairns with young people with ASN in transition where they looked at what was being done well/ wrong/could be better. What had struck Linda was how reasonable the 'asks' of young people were e.g. to be heard, for policies to be applied consistently. These, she feels, are all fixable. She recognised the efforts of Bernadette and her team and Councillors in protecting as far as possible ASN, when demand outstrips resources.

Linda wished HCF well and emphasised she is still around and to contact her if she can be of use.

#### **Questions from members:**

**Q:** Regarding transitions – has heard nightmare stories of young people’s transitions however the reality for their young person has not been as bad except for their SDS budget, which has a 70% cut coming in Adult Services

**A:** There is ongoing work on transitions planned over the next 3 years with Bernadette Cairns looking at, amongst other things, Level 4 needs and how appropriate support can be sustained as well as at destinations. Linda is also looking with the Transitions Group at jobs and employment options.

**Q:** Regarding transition with young people with mental health issues – their young person fell into a hole as college would not talk to the parents only the young person, which was not helpful to them nor their parents. As a result, the college opportunity fell apart and now the young person is on an Activity Agreement although they had really enjoyed college when they could cope with it.

**A:** Acknowledged that would have been very difficult for the parents and young person. Also acknowledged that Activity Agreements are great, especially for young people who struggle to engage. Young people spoken to have said they get a lot out of it.

**Q:** Who is the new Children’s Champion?

**A:** This is not yet known