

Highland Children's Forum
9 Carsegate Road North
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**Highland
Children's
Forum**

Committee Members' Information Leaflet

**Listening to Children and Young People – Speaking
with Policy Makers**

Scottish Charity SC031945

Highland Children's Forum

Representing Children and Young People in Need in the Highlands

Welcome!

Highland Children's Forum is a registered charity incorporated in 2000, created by the parent carers of children with additional support needs. The Forum aims to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard in the design and provision of services in the area. The Forum concentrates its activities on developing ways to hear the voice of children in need and to relay this to policy makers. It seeks to influence changes in policy to bring about better outcomes for children and young people.

How to get in touch

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Highland Children's Forum

Highland Children's Forum is a voluntary association and a Scottish Charity and we operate under Charity Number SC031945.

To help guide us in our work the Forum has Vision, Mission and Ambition statements and a set of constitutional objectives.

Vision

That children and young people facing challenges are given opportunities to talk about their lives and that their views are listened to, respected and acted upon.

Mission

To enable children and young people facing challenges to have their voices heard. To represent them by influencing positive change in policy and practice which leads to better outcomes.

Ambition

Children and young people facing challenges are actively engaged in influencing service design, delivery and development.

The Forum seeks to achieve its constitutional objectives by:

- Representing and enabling the expression of the views and needs of children 0—21.
- Incorporating the views of families and carers.
- Sharing relevant information and experiences.
- Representing the interest of individuals and member organisations in a co-ordinated way to agencies for the purpose of general consultation and in specific joint future planning of service provision.
- Identifying common concerns and tasking appropriate action as agreed by members of the group (this will not include representing individual members in specific disputes).
- Seeking funding to promote any of the above objectives and related development work.

Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members (courtesy of www.scvo.org.uk)

The role of the voluntary management committee is leadership...

Leadership means setting the vision for the organisation and running it in a way that will achieve these aims. There are many different tasks associated with this role and many different ways that it can be fulfilled. Rarely will the committee undertake this role totally alone without help or support but it is important for committee members to be clear that they are in charge of their organisation and they are ultimately responsible in law (i.e. legally liable) for what it does.

Committee members must understand what they are responsible for. In a situation of uncertainty it is imperative to seek advice to enable management committee members to make a fully informed decision.

The committee should make sure that:

- the organisation is clear in its purpose and direction (strategic planning is recommended)
- all decisions taken are in line with and safeguard the ideals and purpose of the organisation as laid out in its founding statement or constitution
- assets are safeguarded and used efficiently for those for whom the organisation exists
- the organisation fulfils all its legal obligations
- the organisation is effectively managed, operates efficiently and works within its policies and budgets, any relevant good practice guidance and the law
- the organisation is accountable financially and in other ways
- there is a proper procedure for the recruitment and supervision of staff
- the Committee itself is representative and functions effectively.”

Highland Children's Forum's Management Committee

Our constitution states a minimum of 5 Management Committee members are required and the committee can reach a maximum of 9 members.

Elections to the Management Committee are held annually at the Annual General Meeting, usually in June. Vacancies on the Committee can be filled by any member of HCF. HCF members who wish to be on the committee can be nominated by another HCF member. Sometimes individuals with particular skills and experiences may be approached and asked if they would be willing to serve on the committee.

The Management Committee meets with staff every 6–8 weeks on a Tuesday from 11.30 – 13.30. Venue is usually at Newstart Office or The Pines.

This meeting looks at the overall finance and operation of the Forum. It receives the regular Treasurer's report and information from staff on their activities. It may be asked to develop Forum policy on topics or meet with key policy makers or managers from services.

Minutes are taken by a secretary. These are then distributed for approval and to confirm what actions have been agreed at the meeting.

Each committee member has a unique combination of perspective, skills and experience which are valued by the Forum. Your opinion is important and every committee member has an equal say. It is vital that all Committee members are involved in all decision making. There are times, inevitably, when it is not possible to reach a consensus on certain issues. Committee members should feel able to agree or disagree, remembering that their own knowledge and experience is important to the process. At such a time we need to hear what has been proposed and consider as many perspectives on the topic as possible. As a result of discussion a proposal may be amended or we may proceed to vote YES or NO. We all have to be able to accept the majority vote.

You should feel able to take ideas or issues to the Committee.

There is a monthly team meeting with staff which may include the Chairperson or Vice Chair and/or Treasurer. This meeting looks at how the overall staff work plan is progressing.

As part of the governance structure individual committee members have opportunities to work closely with staff on specific projects that may be of interest to them or may work in a mentoring capacity when this is required.

Committee members will receive regular email updates from staff regarding their activity and will on occasion be required to consider work proposals between management meetings.

The Management Committee also meets once a year with staff when the focus is on team-building and development planning.

Chair of Management Committee Role Description

Role Summary The role of the Chair is to provide leadership and direction to the committee. The Chair's aim is to enable the board to fulfil their responsibilities for the overall governance and strategic direction of the organisation. The Chair will ensure that the organisation complies with its governing document, charity law and any other relevant legislation or regulations and to make sure that the organisation pursues its objects as defined in its governing document.

The Chair's role is also to work in partnership with the paid staff and support the employees, helping them achieve the aims of the organisation; and to optimise the relationship between the committee and the staff. In addition to the general responsibilities of a committee member the Chair has a number of tasks specific to their role.

Main Responsibilities of the Chair

- providing leadership for the board of trustees in their role of setting the strategy and policy of the organisation
- planning the annual cycle of committee meetings and set the agendas
- chairing and facilitating the committee meetings
- giving directions to committee policy making
- monitoring that decisions taken at committee meetings are implemented
- representing the organisation at appropriate events, meetings or functions
- acting as a spokesperson for the organisation where appropriate

Qualities of a Chair

- commitment to the organisation
 - leadership ability
 - integrity, strategic vision and good/independent judgement
 - a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to their duties as Chair and trustee
 - ability to take decisions for the good of the organisation
 - good, independent judgement
 - good communication skills
 - tact and diplomacy
 - willingness to speak one's mind and listen to the views of others
 - an ability to work effectively as a member of a team
 - understanding of the legal responsibilities and liabilities of a trustee
- Desirable experience

- prior experience of committee/trustee work
- knowledge of the type of work undertaken by the organisation
- a wider involvement with the voluntary sector

General Responsibilities of a Committee Member

In addition to the responsibilities already outlined, the Chair has the following general responsibilities:

- ensure the organisation applies its resources exclusively in pursuing its objectives
 - contribute actively to the committee's role in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets
 - safeguard the good name and values of the organisation
 - declare any conflict of interest while carrying out the duties of a trustee
 - be collectively responsible for the actions of the organisation
 - ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation
 - ensure the financial stability of the organisation and the proper investment of the organisation's funds
 - protect and manage the property of the organisation
 - attend meetings and read papers in advance of meetings
 - attend sub-committee meetings as appropriate
 - participate in other tasks as they arise from time to time, such as interviewing new staff, helping with fundraising
 - keep informed about the activities of the organisation and wider issues which affect its work
- In addition to the duties of all trustees, each trustee should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the board of trustees reach sound decisions. This will involve scrutinising committee papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, and providing advice and guidance requested by the committee on new initiatives or other issues relevant to the area of the organisation's work in which the committee member has special expertise.