

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
ADULT & CHILDREN SERVICES COMMITTEE

21 August 2013

Agenda Item	18.
Report No	ACS/78/13

Delivery of role of 'Champions'

Report by Director of Health & Social Care

Summary

The report reviews the first year of the role of Champions in the current Council Administration.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Highland Council agreed to appoint a Champions' Co-ordinator and Children's Champion as one of its senior member posts, at its meeting on 31 May 2012. The Role Description is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 21 June 2012, the Adult and Children's Services Committee agreed to establish Champions for Older People & Adults, and for Carers.
- 1.3 It was also agreed that the nominated Champions for Older People & Adults and Carers, together with the Champions' Co-ordinator and Children's Champion, take up the three positions for elected members on the NHS Highland Health & Social Care Committee.
- 1.4 Further, at the meeting of the Adult and Children's Services Committee on 7 November 2012, it was agreed to appoint a Lead Member for Transitions between children and adult services, to engage with officers of the Council and NHS Highland on these matters, and to liaise with young people and families.
- 1.5 These roles are presently filled by the following elected members:
 - Champions' Co-ordinator and Children's Champion – Cllr. Linda Munro
 - Older People & Adults Champion - Cllr Kate Stephen
 - Carers Champion - Cllr Bren Gormley
 - Transitions Lead – Cllr Graham MacKenzie.

2 Carrying out the Champion's Role

- 2.1 At the 21 June Adult & Children's Services Committee, it was stated that it was intended to consider the roles and responsibilities of Champions with regard to the various strategic agendas.
- 2.2 The following senior members were subsequently nominated onto Safer Highland planning groups:
 - Adult Support & Protection – Cllr Kate Stephen
 - Alcohol & Drugs Partnership – Cllr Liz MacDonald
 - Child Protection – Cllr Linda Munro
 - Violence against Women – Cllr Linda Munro

- Youth Justice – Cllr Graham MacKenzie

- 2.3 In addition, further to discussion with senior members of the Committee and at two dedicated seminars, members' involvement was agreed for the other *For Highland's Children 4* strategic groups.
- 2.4 The Champions' Co-ordinator and Children's Champion role, recognises the focused approach required to these activities as part of the lead agency approach to integrated health and social care services – highlighting both the importance of children's services within the Council, but also the strategic approach to the commissioning of adult services from NHS Highland.
- 2.5 The three Champions are members of the NHS Highland Health and Social Care Committee. The Co-ordinator ensures that they are informed and supported in this role, and that account is taken of the experience and perceptions of other Highland Council members on NHS Highland governance groups.
- 2.6 The Champions for Older People & Adults and Carers indicate that it has been necessary and helpful to have a formal link between the leadership of the council and the three champions, and that it has been useful to be kept aware of other strategic discussions with NHS Highland, about the contributions that they might be able to make as champions, and also to be supported to work collaboratively.
- 2.7 These two Champions and the Transitions Lead have been involved throughout the year in various key strategic planning groups and processes, have linked with service user groups and representatives, and have advocated on behalf of various interests.
- 2.8 Each of the Champions, indicate that they view their key role as being to ensure that the 'voice' of the groups that they represent is heard in all council business. They have been involved in contributing to a range of Council meetings, groups and processes – going beyond the specific areas of health and social care. They have sought to use every relevant and appropriate opportunity to ensure consideration of the needs and issues of these groups in the council business they are involved with.
- 2.9 Officers continue to value this role. They believe that it provides a useful focal point for engagement with members, as well as a safeguard to ensure that wider stakeholder interests are being taken account of in service delivery and development.
- 2.10 Representatives of the various stakeholder groups also indicate that they welcome the role. They state that it serves as a helpful contact point within the Council, to raise awareness of issues, ask questions or promote an initiative or service that may be of benefit to service users.
- 2.11 The Children's Champion has been involved in a range of specific activity over the year, including:
- Member of *For Highland's Children 4* Leadership Group, ensuring strategic planning is fulfilling the Council's expectations, and that there

is member involvement in the various processes.

- Member of Looked after Children Improvement Group, and liaising with other members and senior officers to ensure that Highland Council is fulfilling its responsibilities as corporate parent.
- Member of the Violence against Women Strategy Group.
- Member of the Additional Support Needs and Disability Improvement Group. This has also involved regular meetings with senior officers in disability services, about the Council's performance and service developments, and involvement in the review of Additional Support Needs. These discussions led to a series of further meetings with children (and their parents) who are not in full-time education regarding specialist provision and ASN support.
- Member of Young Carers Improvement Group.
- Member of the Play Improvement Group.
- Member of Family Nurse Partnership Project Board, also participating in the extensive awareness training for senior officers of NHS Highland and Highland Council.
- Attendance at the School Meals Stakeholder Group.
- Attending meetings with foster carers, including a training session, where she met with carers, took account of their views of the service. This led to further consideration of issues in relation to education and health support for looked after and accommodated children.
- Chair of the North Childcare & Family Resource Partnership. Regular linkage with senior officers on early years issues and implementation of the Early Years Collaborative stretch aims.
- Assisting Youth Voice Executive Members to be engaged in discussions with officers about service delivery and service planning
- Ensuring members are kept informed and engaged in ongoing discussions about local issues concerning children and young people.
- As a member of the CPE committee, raising specific issues relating to children and young people.

3 Implications arising from Report

- 3.1 The Champion's role provides a focus for various issues within the Council, in relation to key groups of services users. It has been recognised that they help ensure that equality issues are properly taken account of in Council decision-making.
- 3.2 There no resource, legal, equality or climate change implications with regard to this report.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note and comment on the content of this report.

Bill Alexander
Director of Health & Social Care

Date: 9 August 2013

ROLE DESCRIPTION – CHAMPIONS' CO-ORDINATOR AND CHILDREN'S CHAMPION

Key Purpose/Role

- Promote an understanding and recognition of issues that are important to children and their families, across strategic and governance forums of Highland Council and partner agencies;
- Ensure that particular account is taken of the needs of children who are in need or vulnerable for any reasons, including looked after children, for whom the Council has corporate parenting responsibilities;
- Demonstrate Highland Council's commitment to continued implementation of the key national and local policy drivers, *Getting it right for every child*, the Early Years Framework and Curriculum for Excellence;
- Engage with children and young people, to ensure that they are clear about the commitment given by Highland Council to children's issues;
- Be the spokesperson for the Highland Council on matters relating to children's interests, issues, needs and rights; and
- The Children's Champion will also provide a co-ordinating and support role for all other Champions appointed by the Highland Council.

Key Tasks/Responsibilities

- Liaise with the Youth Convener and officers to ensure that the activities of the Youth Convener, Youth Voice, Youth Forums and Pupil Councils are supported, and that they are taken account of in strategic, governance and decision-making processes.
- Liaise with Scotland's Children's Commissioner on behalf of the Council, to 'promote children's rights, give children and young people a voice and help change things for the better'.
- Liaise with senior officers to ensure appropriate attention is paid to the delivery and monitoring of Council priorities that will impact on the lives of children and families, and in the development, implementation and monitoring of the *For Highland Children Plan*.
- Liaise with 'Who Cares? Scotland' with senior officers, to help provide a voice for Highland's looked after children, promoting and protect their rights, ensuring an effective advocacy service, and ensuring that looked after children are involved in decision-making about their lives and service developments.
- Ensure that Highland's corporate parenting responsibilities are taken account of in strategic, governance and decision-making processes.
- Represent the Highland Council at partnership and national forums that consider issues that are important to Highland's children and their families, and relate to their interests, issues, needs and rights.
- Liaise with young people and their families approaching transition children to adult services, helping to ensure these transitions are managed more seamlessly, and that all agencies are working in partnership
- Liaise with children and young people with disabilities, and their families and careers, and ensuring that their issues are given high priority within the Council.

- Liaise with children and young people who are young carers, and their families, and ensuring that Council services provide the necessary support, as part of the delivery of Highland's Young Carers Strategy.
- Liaise with Area Children's Services Manager about local partnership activities and funding decisions for early years services.
- Liaise with NHS Highland, with regard to the services it provides for children – in maternity services, combined child health and acute care.
- Work alongside the Chief Executive and senior officers, including in strategic and governance forums, to ensure good linkage between officers and all of the Council's Champions.
- Provide support and co-ordination for the activities of the various Champions.