

## The Highland Community Planning Partnership

Chief Officers' Group – 26 March 2015

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	COG 10/15

### Champions Board

The Scottish Government developed a national strategy for Looked After Children 'These are our Bairns'. which promotes the engagement of young people in the process of defining policy and developing services that impact on their lives.

Following visits to Dundee Champions Board and conversation with Who Cares? Scotland the following development is recommended for Highland Council Area and Care Experienced young people.

### Remit

The purpose of the board is to champion the needs of care experienced young people. To provide resources and guidance to give them every opportunity to improve their outcomes in every way we can in line with identified priorities. Identified needs may be individual or impact on a large group of young people but they will not relate to private issues.

The board remit is to provide a platform for looked after children to engage with their corporate parent and make their needs known and discuss ways of resolving them. An improvement plan should be developed, this will give a basis for planning, however it will be an organic plan that will develop and change over time.

This improvement plan will link with and will help shape and contribute to the Looked after children improvement plan as part of For Highlands Children improvement process.

Current issues include the development of a one stop shop/skills academy for Care Experienced young people, 24/7 support for T&A YP, peer mentoring service, family firm, accommodation options, educational provision and a young person engagement strategy.

### Membership

The Board should bring together Chief Officers, Elected Members, young people and their supporters to discuss and make decisions on an agenda set by the young people.

It is essential that it is officers that can make decisions and can ensure tasks agreed are carried out, are members of the board and the Chief Executive or equivalent from another service, chairs the Board.

The Board will be grounded in Highland's very strong approach to supporting care experienced children and young people, and there should be an expectation that directors and heads of service from across the broad spectrum of services sign up and commit to improved outcomes to these young people. The Board is an extension

of that commitment and these officials should prioritise the time in their diaries to attend the meetings.

The Board, with young person representation, goes a long way to firmly establishing the development of a "participation strategy" to support children making their views known.

## **Process**

The Young People's Participation Group (YPPG) will plan a workshop to develop the LAC improvement plan. The workshop will include members of the Young People's Participation Group and the proposed professional members of the Board. A date needs to be set for this workshop. The workshop will be from 10:00 to 14:00.

The Workshop, designed by members of the Young People's Participation Group (YPPG) will be fun and interactive, and focused on developing Champions Board Priorities within the Looked After Children improvement plan.

Set dates of Board meetings. These dates and times should initially be 2 monthly and moving to quarterly once the board is well established. The timing of the meetings should be twilight 5pm to 7pm initially.

Set up dates of YPPG to canvas care experienced young people and support each other to identify issues and improvements.

Set up small working groups of YPPG members and Priority Lead (allocated by Chief Officer) to receive formal updates of progress of set tasks.

This process typically will occur between Champions Board meetings and will ensure a close dialogue between the Champions and the YPPG and includes:

- Writing up the comments & opinions of the LAC Workshop participants
- Sending the summarised comments to the Priority Lead
- Meeting between Priority Lead, YPPG and/or Support Group to get formal updates on progress

Through an ongoing Youth Engagement Strategy share the updates with the wider care experienced fraternity of young people, carers, and officers and use the ongoing progress to focus on proactive next steps

It is essential to use the arts and other alternative approaches to provide a different mind-set that will assist the ongoing development of the Champions Board and educational materials the YPPG may wish to produce to develop their voice.

## **Training and Development**

The establishment of the Board necessitates some very complex and detailed planning involving all key stakeholders across integrated children's services. One of the most significant elements is training and support to the Elected Members, Senior

Officers from the Local Authority, NHS, Police, Voluntary Sector and Young People. Some of this training has already come from 'Who Cares Scotland' and they will be involved in the Board and subsequent training.

The Board should embody and embrace an approach to partnership working which breaks the mould of what normally would be the 'usual suspects' perceived by many to have responsibility for care experienced children and young people.

The young people would like to encourage the active involvement of many different partners including Teachers, Social Workers, Youth Workers, Housing Officers, Police Officers, Health Practitioners, Panel Members, Foster Carers, Finance Officers, Arts etc.....

What is essential is the real involvement of a number of very different organisations and people, the interconnected nature of the strategies employed to bring more care experienced young people into a creative dialogue that's purpose is to lever tangible improvements in our care provisioning.

It needs to be a process that ensures a mutually beneficial conversation that is producing real impact in the LAC care system:

### **YPPG**

The Young Peoples Participation Group called the: life changes group is well established in Highland. This group is facilitated by Who Cares? Scotland. The young people employed through Family Firm by the Care & Learning Service will co facilitate this group and link to the wider care experiences fraternity. This group will also provide the support to the young people who will be members of the Board.

### **Purpose**

- The personalisation, the humanisation of the care system – not simply a name on a page or a statistic on screen, but someone real with feelings.
- To find new approaches, and not settle for the status quo. make the system more accountable, more responsive, and more able to meet the presenting needs of the children and young people in its care.
- To connect the impact of policies and decisions to real young people, and The involvement of organisations not directly involved with care provisioning
- The Champions Board approach truly puts young people at the heart of decision-making.

### **Possible Impacts**

- The process will be intense and dynamic, and could lead to a significant improvement in self-esteem and confidence for many of those individual young people involved.
- Young people feel more in control of their lives and future, listened to, valued and respected
- It should lead to a better shared understanding by all including corporate parents of some of the issues as they affect children and young people who are care experienced.
- It could lead to improved outcomes for Highland's care experienced children & young people.

## **Young People's views and expectations of the Champions Board**

We asked the young people about the size of the board and if they had any concerns talking to the chief officers and who should attend?

- Young people would like to build relationships with the chief officers and professionals that will be on the Champions Board. If they have an issue to bring they would like to know a face and have a relationship with that person.
- The young people acknowledged that professionals like to leave meetings with a list of things to do, but they were clear that they could look at inviting specific officers for specific agenda items once relationships were built.
- Young people are not concerned about the status of the chief officers and professionals on the board or talking to them. The young people's view: it will be more difficult for the chief officers and professionals than for them as they will be out of their comfort zone.
- Young people were clear that this was not a political process so only wanted elected members that were interested in helping them improve outcomes.
- The young people expect to be listened to, clear reasoning for and against proposals and tight timescales for the turnaround of agreed proposals.
- If timescales are not met they want proper reasons for delays.
- They want to be treated with respect as they are the experts and have the real knowledge base about care experienced young people.

## **Recommendations**

- A Champions Board is set up that initially involves chief officers from the corporate parenting family, operational managers, three Elected Members, including the Children's Champion and the chair of the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee, and supporters.
- Once relationships have been developed then it may be possible to invite officers based on the agenda.
- The board will be jointly chaired by a young person and a chief officer. The Agenda will be set by the young people
- A date is set for the introduction workshop
- Dates are set for the board meetings - twilight
- An application is made to Life Changes Trust for funding of a full time post to support the Champions Board and assist the young people in the development of training and information materials for young people, professionals and the public.

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