

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	EDU/07/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Education Committee

Date: 20 May 2021

Report Title: Children and Young People Summer of Hope Programme

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 Scottish Government has announced £20m nationally to support a 'summer of play' as part of Covid-19 recovery, and of that £15m is to be allocated to Local Authorities (the other £5m being directed towards national partners including Play Scotland, sportscotland and Education Scotland). The details of the allocation of the £15m have been agreed between Cosla and Scottish Government for the Highlands. This report seeks agreement from Committee to agree the summer programme which will be within the envelope of expected funding to be allocated by Scottish Government and with Officer delegation to manage and deliver the programme within the available funding, once confirmed. At this time any financial commitments entered into would relate only to 2021, and the funding available in year, as at this point the programme is a COVID response and not a recurring commitment.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i) agree to the delivery of a 2021 summer of hope programme and outcomes as described within the report, within the expected funding envelope of £500,000 from Scottish Government, and with detailed finalisation of the programme and implementation to be assigned to officers; and
- ii) agree to the principles set out in section 4 of this report to support the readiness for learning of children and young people.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There are additional resources to be provided by the Scottish Government to support this work as described above. Key partners are also contributing to the ambition of this programme as a priority for our young people.

3.2 **Legal** - Health and Wellbeing is one of the three main strands of Curriculum for Excellence and as such there is a duty on all local Authorities in Scotland to address this area of work for all children and young people.

3.2.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 stresses the importance of everyone involved with a child taking responsibility for their wellbeing, and ensuring they work together to enable the child to reach their full potential.

3.2.2 The UNCRC (United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child) sets out the specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential, including rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard. In relation to children's rights, an impact assessment has shown that the following UNCRC articles are of particular note:



- Article 2 – No discrimination
- Article 3- Best interests of the child
- Article 6- Life, survival and development
- Article 12- Respect for children's views
- Article 31- Rest, play, culture, arts

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - The specific challenges of equity, poverty and rurality will be a focus for ensuring successful outcomes for our children and young people. (See Global Goals below).



3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - There are no implications specifically related to climate change. Travel will be limited; partners will have a shared understanding of the need to reduce waste and manage waste responsibly. (See Global Goals below)



3.5 **Risk** - Where partner agencies are delivering activities, safeguarding will be supported through ensuring all staff are PVG checked and qualified as necessary, have appropriate insurance, are registered with appropriate body, practise appropriate Covid-19 mitigation procedures and have robust recording for track and trace purposes.

3.6 **Gaelic** - Gaelic speaking staff will be engaged where possible to support children and young people. Officers will work with partners such as Community Learning Partnerships, Fèisean nan Gàidheal to support access to Gaelic arts and culture in summer experiences.

4. Introduction / Context

4.1 Aims - why is this project necessary?

COVID-19 has impacted on important developmental milestones for socialisation and wellbeing for some children and young people across The Highland Council area. Officers are planning for activities over the summer to build and sustain improved wellbeing and engagement which will help make readiness for learning more accessible for children and young people in August 2021.

4.2 Aims - who is it for?

Officers will work with schools and multi-agency partners to identify priority children and young people from nursery to secondary who would benefit most from access to playful, creative and engaging experiences over the summer to maintain their wellbeing and to mitigate food hunger. They may live in low-income households meaning they may not have access to the paid-for activities available to other families, they may have additional support needs, they may have experienced declining mental health or have been disadvantaged socially or developmentally due to lockdowns. As a result, there may have been a negative impact on their wellbeing and/or engagement with learning. It is important that a non-judgemental approach is taken as the Council is in a position whereby the harms of COVID are unclear and a data informed approach at this moment in time is not available. Any child could be considered to benefit from the opportunities this programme presents.

4.3 Transition refers to the process of coping with change at any time in a child's life. Positive, planned transition experiences can be particularly important and supportive for pupils who find change difficult to manage, for those who experience generational and/or situational disadvantage, for those with poor mental health and pupils who require additional support with their learning who specifically need support with change. Transition activities, in their broadest sense, are an early intervention strategy to help pupils from nursery to secondary attain the resilience needed to build positive connections with unfamiliar settings, peers and staff. These early relationship connections are essential in building access to learning through improved cognitive and emotional regulation and readiness to engage. 71% of ASGs who responded to a recent questionnaire report that current S1 pupils found transition into secondary more difficult than usual. 86% report that, as a result, it took pupils longer to build positive relationships with peers. 71% report that it took many of current S1 longer than usual to meet positive behaviour expectations.

4.4 Connecting with partners - how?

Consultation has taken place across ASGs and with individual schools across Highland to identify partners with whom schools already have positive connections. In collaboration with learners, schools and partners across communities, officers will plan for experiences to reflect the unique cultural and economic profile of each area. Shared aims and outcomes around measuring impact, equity, quality and sustainability for communities will be built into the project and consistent across partners. There will be clear messaging to partners on the UNCRC articles and Global Goals noted and on the need to promote the rights of the child at all times ensuring dignity, safety and confidentiality.

4.5 Session 2019-20 ended without P7 pupils fully benefiting from this essential early intervention. Virtual transitions were challenging between primary and secondary. However, 100% of ASG returns agreed an in-person peer transition experience would support a positive S1 transition for current P7 pupils. 84% of ASGs who responded believe it would be a positive experience for some senior leavers without positive

destinations to support this project in a leadership capacity. This additional concept means that our senior phase students will be able to gain some leadership qualifications as they support the programme.

4.6 Engagement: Connecting with partners - how will opportunity be offered across The Highland Council?

A way forward for our children and young people in the current challenging circumstances could be to provide experiences intended to address the negative impacts associated with extended periods of isolation and lack of participation in normal activities caused by the pandemic. These experiences will improve readiness to learn on return to school creating the conditions where more pupils have experienced what they need to thrive and achieve. The programme has been developed to ensure that across every ASG there will be opportunities for children and young people. It is important to note that the success of the offer is the inclusion of key partners and the involvement of listening to school staff and young people as to the opportunities that they believe will enhance wellbeing prior to schools return in August. Officers will work with partners to support them to provide inclusive outdoor summer activities for priority children and young people at venues across Highland. Activities will be creative, active and playful in nature. Access to food to help mitigate holiday hunger will be included. The offer in each area will not be identical but every effort will be made to meet more of the specific needs of more pupils in each area.

4.6.1 Officers have gathered consultation data from 22 ASGs across Highland, from pupils from 11 schools across Highland and from every school individually. This consultation has provided rich place-specific data around what our children and young people need in each context. This will allow officers and partners to plan as bespoke a package as possible in each area with the aim of being able to measure a positive impact on individual pupils. Officers will consult with partners to create a shared rationale with consistent outcome measures. Schools will liaise with parents of priority pupils to share the offer for their children. Where possible, partners will consult with pupils to empower them to co-construct the experiences on offer. There will not be personnel to make a full-time offer for pupils, but the intention is to be enough to reassure families and schools that our priority pupils will stay connected at some point with partners over the summer to support wellbeing.

4.6.2 **Eden Court-** 7 proposed venues around Highland- Ullapool, Skye, Dornoch, Thurso Fort William, Lochaline and Inverness.

Youth Highland- 8 proposed venues across Highland- Thurso, Wick, Ainess, Merkinch, Tain, Balintore, Grantown, Fort William

Highlife Highland- at various venues across The Highland Council area and particularly where the activities above will not be available.

Health and Life Sciences Centre UHI- family learning and engagement sessions around innovative health science being developed in the Highlands at various venues across the Highland Council area

In areas where partners noted above cannot provide service, officers will build equity by working with schools to identify **community place-based partners** who can provide inclusive outdoor summer activities for priority children and young people.

CALA – at various venues across The Highland Council area.

Partners through Highland Third Sector Interface - at various venues across The Highland Council area.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal - at various venues across The Highland Council area.

5. Universal developments for future impact sustainability

5.1 The support offered to priority pupils over the summer is a necessary mitigation of immediate and obvious Covid harms. To build on this short-term solution, what will be needed is prolonged support to give this generation of pupils a chance to prepare for the future they will face. The pandemic is a significant world/historical event. Preparation for the unpredictable future our young people will be facing calls for a support package that is dynamic, creative and as unique as the world of work they may enter. We should build opportunities for them to re-balance and grow into responsible and adaptable citizens. Financial impact for a recession generation can last well into their working lives and it will be an important investment in their future for our young people to experience learning opportunities that will build the resilience and respect they need to prepare for these challenges.

5.2 Officers and Head Teachers would advocate for a cumulative project which will help our young people identify their personal values, come to understand the values of others and some of the reasons why differences in those values can lead to misunderstanding and conflict. There is an opportunity to work with young people on their core values at this exceptional time and this would seem the ideal time to explore a wider set of societal values. By putting in place an authority-wide opportunity for this exploration, there is the potential to support this generation, through a values-based leadership programme, to build the skills needed to successfully navigate the currently unknown impacts of a recession.

5.3 **Columba 1400** to support delivery of a sector-leading, equitable wellbeing/values based leadership programme for P7-S2 pupils in Highland. Delivered virtually, the programme will be co-constructed with primary and secondary staff and will leave a legacy for the children and young people of The Highland Council. As teaching staff will be present for the virtual sessions, this gives an opportunity for a wide-ranging section of school staff to experience the Columba1400 programme alongside our pupils.

5.4 **The Outward Bound Trust** - delivery of an equitable wellbeing/values-based outdoor learning experience for all current P7 pupils in Highland. Outcomes will be measured through pupils becoming familiar with the values of the receiving secondary school.

Every P7 pupil in Highland will experience an outdoor learning session. This will go some way to replace the residential trip milestone that they will have been looking forward to as an entitlement throughout their primary years.

Activities will not mean P7 cohorts can come together at the secondary as in previous years, but it will mean that all new S1s will have a consistent experience which they can relate to and discuss thereby building positive connections and relationships. Secondary schools can use the experience as a focal point for discussion and inquiry-based learning when the cohort starts S1. A positive team-building/bonding experience.

6. Next Steps

6.1 All partners will be recording impact using the same criteria to measure and evaluate. This will allow officers to capture the impact of the aims of the project on pupil and family engagement. This data will allow us to enhance any future offer by building on the successful approaches to embed them universally. Officers will map stake holder engagement to ensure new partnerships are acknowledged and existing ones are strengthened.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

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