

Agenda Item	7.
Report No	EDU/08/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Education Committee

Date: 20 May 2021

Report Title: Caithness Cares Progress Report

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of this report to is provide an update on the progress to date on the Caithness Cares Project and to identify next steps, both for Caithness and for Highland wide communities with regards to mental health and well-being for children, young people and families.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- i) the successful engagement and inclusion of children and young people and Community partners in Caithness Cares;
- ii) the development of a practice model for universal mental health approaches in Caithness in tiers 1 and 2;
- iii) that The Highland Council will now work with partners in Caithness to create a structure that will enable the localised enhancement and re-design of services, including appropriate out of hours services as required in the local context ie create a tiered framework of service delivery and intervention from universal to targeted and legislative in Caithness ie tiers 3 and above; and
- iv) agree that the Strategic 5 year development plan agreed at the February Education Committee be brought back to the Education and Health and Social Care Committees in September with details of roll out across the Highlands linked to the national recurring funding grants that will be available.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource** - There are additional resources provided by the Scottish Government to support this work. An initial £178,000 was allocated to the Caithness Pathfinder in November 2020. A grant award letter of £534,000 has been awarded to The Highland Council by the Scottish Government in response to children and young people's mental health and wellbeing issues arising as a result of the pandemic. These resources were referred to in the 12th November 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Services for

Children, Young People and Families impacted by Covid' Committee Report and the 11th December 'Caithness Mental Wellbeing Pathfinder Project' Committee Report.

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 across the curriculum in all schools. 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. The UNCRC [UNCRC \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) implementation design phase which will develop the guidance, training and investment needed to make these rights real in practice, before the law commences in 6 months' time. This legislation provides both preventative methods for protecting child rights, as well as strong accountability measures.

3.2.1 In relation to children's rights, an impact assessment has shown that the following articles are of particular note:

- Article 6 – All children have the right of life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.
- Article 12 - All children have the right to express their views and have these taken into account in matters affecting them.
- Article 19 – Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 24 – Children have the right to good quality healthcare and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy.
- Article 28 - Every child has the right to an education.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - Planned engagement and pilot work will support better outcomes and take cognisance of the specific challenges of equity, poverty and rurality. A follow-up progress report will be available at the September Education committee to determine next steps. The method of communication with communities requires to be designed in inclusive ways and responsive to the unique context of the local area.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - There are no implications specifically related to climate change. The meetings can now be held virtually which is more inclusive and training is being delivered remotely and will continue to do so. This reduces the need to drive to venues in the future.

3.5 **Risk** - As documented in the November report, many young people and their families have already been impacted by Covid. The Highland Council, in partnership with community and third sector organisations and with statutory partners within the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), have been bringing organisations and volunteers together to address new and emergent issues as well as completing an urgent review of what is already in place for mental health and wellbeing. This work is already underway in Caithness (see Appendix 1) and the next step is to ensure a partnership approach for overseeing service re-design based on the needs of the community. There is a risk that the project will not deliver if there is not a commitment from all partners to whole system review, this will be a major priority in the next few months. Services need to be flexible and adaptive to ensure creative solutions are sought that are responsive and sensitive to the local context.

- 3.6 **Gaelic** - Materials generated through the pilot should be made available in Gaelic and can be accessed for translation. It would be beneficial to have a Gaelic speaker connected to the project this will form part of the next step process.

4. Introduction/Context

- 4.1 As noted in the November 2020 Committee paper on the Whole Systems Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing, supporting mental health and wellbeing in our communities is a high priority. This high priority comes at a pertinent time for our communities, and involves a systems review in relation to the revised [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#), the need to implement [The Promise](#), the [UNCRC \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) which provides both preventative methods for protecting child rights, as well as strong accountability measures. There are also concerns about drug and alcohol use in communities and the impact of Covid on mental health and wellbeing. This report provides an account of the early work undertaken in Caithness since January 2021 in order to Provide an approach that can be adopted as the strategy is rolled out across the Highlands. The Caithness Cares concept enables the Caithness Community to collaborate with statutory bodies to improve services and identify gaps in provision to aid good mental health and wellbeing. The early stage of the project is based on a needs analysis whilst running short-term pilot work in parallel to help those services already in place. The long-term plan is to facilitate community empowerment and enable the community ‘to support public service providers to work together and with local communities via [community planning](#) to shape and deliver better services’ (Community Empowerment Bill, 2015) whilst working within the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework which notes ‘How community mental health and wellbeing supports and services are constructed will vary according to local structures and the needs identified by children, young people and their families in each local area.’
- 4.2 As previously detailed in the November mental health and wellbeing report, previous Highland wide surveys from children and young people, and a range of data sources across areas, indicate that there are varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing across schools and communities, and there are gaps in services for more specialist interventions. Each area of Highland is unique, and the gaps in services and experiences of children and young people needs to be understood from within the lived experience of the child or young person. Due to the need for an in-depth understanding of the whole picture, the following steps were undertaken to develop and embed the Caithness Cares project.
- 4.3 The process of developing the concept of Caithness Cares followed on from the stakeholder events held in November 2020. In January 2021 the Caithness Pathfinder was incorporated into the current remit of a Highland Council Officer from Education. This decision to incorporate an interim role into the education and learning directorate made an immediate impact. A project lead from the Education Officer’s immediate team, with a remit for wellbeing, supported the Officer of Education with the project due to the scale of the remit and project. The key to this approach was to recognise the importance of universal services as the foundation layer in a whole system tiered approach to mental health and wellbeing with the goal of adopting a more preventative approach.

4.4 Step 2 involved creating a Project Board for the Caithness Pathfinder and establishing five workstreams to take forward the recommendations identified in the initial stakeholder event held in 2020. The recommendation of an appointment of a Community Link Officer in the recommendations section of this paper, should support the overview of the Project Board. The Project Board was working under the overarching principles specified in the Scottish Government grant funding letter, and from the initial stakeholder events held in 2020.

4.4.1 These principles were:

- To enable hope, dreams, entitlement and purpose for the young people and their families to hold onto; and where Caithness is a place they can live, thrive, and access opportunities.
- Fundamental to the pathfinder being successful is the need to engage, listen and coproduce solutions with young people. Pivotal to achieving this will be how we will increase capacity to reach people who have previously not been consulted.
- Overall a dual approach to delivering services was agreed: 1) Respond to immediate crisis situations, and 2) Preventative (longer term). There were differing views around where the balance should lie and whether work should progress in parallel or start by responding to the immediate crisis.
- While there was support for a community-led approach this does not replace the statutory responsibilities of various agencies. Given some of the recruitment challenges across mental health specialities this will need to drive new approaches and innovative thinking. It was also recognised appropriate support for professionals to support young people is required.
- The main objectives of the Grant are the delivery of new and enhanced community-based services for children, young people and their families and carers where delivery is guided by the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework and informed by its underpinning values and principles.
- Partnerships will work with children, young people and families in their communities to develop support and services which build on the existing effective supports and structures where appropriate and increase the opportunities to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing, covering an age range of 5-24 and if care experienced up to 26.
- Children and young people themselves should lead the thinking around how this looks locally and be key in measuring the impact of these.

4.5 Five Workstreams were established through the Project Board – these names originated from the initial stakeholder event where various workstreams and cross-cutting principles emerged. The workstreams were named Education, Youth, Community, Crisis and Recovery and Family. A Chair was identified for each of the five groups. Terms of reference were created by each group based on the overarching principles. The core ethos of the project was defined as: Young people at its heart – voice of young people is critical in shaping services that are inclusive and relevant, not ‘done to’ but leading. Develop skills and empower young people to grow and learn and become ambassadors for the programme within their own community via peer-to-peer support and ‘pay back’.

4.6 The sub-groups committed to three projects running in parallel. One activity was to undertake robust engagement activities with children and young people across Caithness to understand what they need for their wellbeing. Although statistics can tell us the ‘what’ they cannot tell us the ‘why’. The second activity was to roll out a range of training activities in the Caithness area. The Wick Associated Schools Group

collaborated with colleagues from *Who Cares? Scotland* supporting the schools through:

- raising staff awareness of The Promise and Community of School (Initial meeting with guidance team at Wick High 29.04.21);
- providing input for PSE lessons and assemblies; and
- developing and providing advocacy for individual care experience young people.

4.6.1 Further activities which were undertaken across Caithness included training led by The Highland Council Psychological Services and were free for anyone in Caithness. On completion of the three courses: Mental Health Awareness, Suicide Awareness and Trauma Informed, participants received a Caithness Cares certificate and sticker to display in shops, businesses, and community facilities which would indicate to young people that there is someone who is trained to support them and signpost them to further help. The 'Teenage Brain' training was delivered to all staff at Dounreay to help understanding of brain development in teenagers when working with young staff, apprentices and their own teenagers. Further courses with free access to all in Caithness taking place during April and May were: Promoting Positive Behaviour, Emotional Literacy and Child Protection. Suicide Intervention and Prevention training was delivered to all in the recovery group to assist them in their new roles working in collaboration with Police Scotland. Both Wick and Thurso ASG joined The Icelandic Model pilot along with Golspie, Dornoch and Tain ASGs. The Icelandic pilot was funded through Highland Drugs and Alcohol Partnership and The Highland Council is one of five local authorities taking part in Scotland. The programme is being led in collaboration with Planet Youth and Winning Scotland.

The third activity was to run pilot work to respond to immediate crisis points in the community and short-term action plans and funding bids were submitted for this work. Nine funding bids were accepted in March 2021 and funding released into the community for both engagement work and short-term pilot work.

4.6.2 Examples included:

- A street work project which aimed to ensure young people have access to trained street workers who can engage with them in their own comfort zones, who can also sign post them on to activities and other services.
- A recovery community project which aimed to deliver learning sessions which are run so that people with real lived experiences (especially Drugs and Alcohol) are shared with the Police Service and other emergency services.
- A Homestart project which would ensure early intervention and support for families, parents, and carers to provide practical help and build resilience and self-esteem.
- A Custody Links project which would establish a collaboration between the Highland Custody Link Project and the Caithness Listening Ear project. This project aimed to deliver meaningful outcomes, for individuals with experience of custody, at a local level in Caithness.
- A bespoke 2-18 Personal and Social Education Programme for all children and young people in Caithness.

4.7 Engagement work was agreed through the workstreams and working in partnership with Educational Psychology and Highland Children and Young People's Forum. Data collection was designed in a variety of creative ways to enable authentic conversations across communities. Data was then returned to the Educational Psychology Services for a thematic analysis to be undertaken. When used alongside the statistical data, this will inform the long-term service re-design in Caithness.

4.8 The milestones ([Appendix 1](#)) provide a timeline of activities to enable other areas across Highland to follow a similar process, although also adapted to suit the local context. The article '[The Icelandic Model of Preventing Adolescent Substance use](#)' (Kristjansson, Mann & Sigfusson et al., 2020) is associated background reading which illustrates the first step of the process of change. The Caithness Pathfinder is now at a stage where a Community Link Officer is required to drive forward the long-term action plan through the Community Planning Partnership. The recommendations will enable the next stage of implementation.

5. Mental Health and Wellbeing strategic plan for expansion beyond Caithness.

5.1 The excellent community growth and capacity model being developed in Caithness must now provide insight into how the Strategy for Community and Family Mental and Health and Wellbeing will be expanded across all our Highland Communities. A clear rationale, funding model and data informed strategy will be evolved taking a CPP strategic approach with partners to ensure that the community capacity along with statutory responsibilities are signposted in a tiered approach which is preventative in nature and clear about service delivery, interventions and expectations from all partners.

5.2 This work will be jointly led by Education and Learning and Health and Social Care with links to partners in Communities and Place. The strategic framework will be arrived at by August 2021 and reported to respective Committees in the September reporting cycle. It is also hoped by then that post-Covid additional funding streams linked to the Covid harms and the national strategy of mental health and wellbeing will be clear.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

Date: 30 April 2021

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Caithness Cares Milestones

APPENDIX 1 - CAITHNESS CARES MILESTONES

