

Agenda Item	9
Report No	HCW-05-22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Date: 10 February 2022

Report Title: Appointment of Older People's Champions

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper is a report further to the motion before Council on 8th December 2021 when it was agreed that the Council ought to appoint Older People's Champions with a role and remit to be agreed.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the contents of this report and approve the proposed role and remit of a pilot establishing Older People's Champions for Highland Council;
- ii. **Resolve that** three Councillors be appointed as champions once the forthcoming local elections have taken place.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - There are no specific resource issues arising out of the contents of this report. The Older People's Champions will be elected members and training will be provided in-house by Council employees. There will be no additional resource implications during the pilot period. However, the review and assessment process will consider any resource impacts/issues and identify any implications if the pilot was to be extended or Champions to be permanently established
- 3.2 Legal - No arising issues.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)
No arising issues although the appointment of champions will play a role in terms of ongoing engagement with our local communities.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

No arising issues.

3.5 Risk

No arising issues.

3.6 Gaelic

No arising issues.

4. Background

Overview

4.1 At the meeting of the Highland Council on 10 December 2021 a motion in the following terms was agreed:-

Older People's Champion

The Council recognises and values the contributions that older people play in our society.

We are therefore seeking Council support for Age Scotland and the Scottish Older People's Assembly's (SOPA) campaign for every local authority in Scotland to establish the role of Older People's Champion and to appoint three Councillors to the position across Highlands.

An Older People's Champion is a Councillor who acts as a link between the Council and older people in the local area. Age Scotland and SOPA also want to see a network of Older People's Champions from across Scotland, who will be a voice for older people at local and national level, work together on shared challenges and collectively influence for change. It would be beneficial if our area were represented.

With a growing older population, it is vital that local decision-making meets the needs of older people and that Councillors have a better understanding of these. Local authorities, health and social care partnerships and the Third Sector are responsible for providing and supporting so many services upon which older people rely – such as public transport, social care provision, housing, planning, and communities. As many local authority budgets are under pressure, older people need someone specifically tasked with representing and supporting their interests and finding out what they need from local decisionmakers. There is no budgetary implication attached to this role.

We believe the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland's older people has only strengthened the need for an Older People's Champion here.

We hope that Highland Council can support this campaign and will establish the role of an Older People's Champion for our Council. We propose that a report be taken to the February 2022 HSCW Committee. There, the number of appointment(s) will be considered together with the role and remit and how the Older People's Champion(s) will engage across HC services, also with partners in NHS Highland and the third sector.

4.2 It is understood that this motion has arisen as a result of work carried out by Age Scotland who believe that every one of Scotland's 32 local authorities should appoint a Councillor as an Older People's Champion. Age Scotland are working with the Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) on a joint campaign to make this happen and to date it is understood that 19 local authorities have appointed champions to carry out this role. The Highland Council has agreed to do likewise.

4.3 With a growing older population, it is important that local decision-making in Scotland meets the needs of older people.

The Scottish Government has a dedicated Minister for Older People and Age Scotland think councils should have a role focusing on older people. The Council at their meeting on 10 December supported that approach. There is also a clear role for such champions to have an involvement with NHS Highland given the lead agency model in place in Highland and the involvement of the elderly with health services more generally.

An Older People's Champion is an ambassadorial role, held by an elected Councillor. Their job is to be a link between the council and older people in the local area.

Older People's Champions identify the issues impacting people locally. They are the face of the council for older people and amplify their voices within the council chamber.

5. The Role of the Older People's Champion

5.1 It is anticipated that the following issues are key in terms of fulfilling the role:-

- Acting as role models
- Being advocates for the views and needs of the elderly
- Providing information and advice to their relatives and carers
- Recognising and celebrating good practice
- Challenging poor practice or blocks in the system
- Committed to attending in-house training and educational sessions (including cascading this information to colleagues),

The role of Older People's Champion can be extensive and have a meaningful impact and influence across Highlands. It is intended that Champions gather opinions and insights from every corner of the organisation, then funnel them to the appropriate people who can act decisively.

Key also will be engagement with NHS Highland in terms of their role in delivering adult social care and it is also likely that there will be an interface with community planning work.

It should be noted that the Council agreed in September 2020 that the Chair of this Committee should be the political champion in terms of Adult Protection and as such her attendance is now an important part of that Committee which meets quarterly and considers issues in relation to Adult Support and Protection. Engagement with the Chair in that respect is likely to be important.

- 5.2 It is recognised that adult social care will be an important part of the role. Discussions are ongoing with NHS Highland in terms of how delivery of that element of the role can be facilitated and how the role can be supported.
- 5.3 There will however be a need for input into other elements of council business. It is thought that there is likely to be a need for input in relation to issues of housing and also welfare – as it is important to note that the need to champion older people should not be limited to health and social care. It is necessary to recognise that old age does not necessarily lead to the need for a health and social care service and a vulnerability in that respect, and as such in considering nominations it is necessary to accept that there is an array of other council services where the needs of older people can properly be championed.
- 5.4 It is necessary that any appointed champion has a set role and remit as failing that there may be a risk of the older adults' champion being tokenistic if a defined role and remit is not agreed.
- 5.5 Age Scotland describe the role and remit in the following terms:-

An Older People's Champion is a Councillor within a local authority who is tasked with working to ensure that older people's voices are heard (in terms of Highland this ought to extend to engagement with NHS Highland).

Broadly, Older People's Champions raise awareness of issues affecting local older people and work to seek solutions on their behalf. They act as a link between the council and older people in the local area, ensuring their needs are considered in the planning and delivery of policies and services.

Their responsibilities might include:

- ensuring older people's perspectives are understood in every policy area
- collecting and feeding back on older people's concerns to the council
- leading on council campaigns around older people's issues
- helping to communicate council policy to older people and the wider community
- acting as the council's spokesperson on issues relating to older people
- linking up with other council Champions where appropriate – eg the Veterans Champion
- participating in focus groups and other events
- attending relevant local and national meetings
- working with local organisations, community groups and other stakeholders

The role is apolitical, with a focus on representing the voices of older people from across the local area. We do not anticipate there to be any budgetary implications attached to the role.

Experience of the issues faced by older people would be beneficial but the ability to empathise and represent the views of others is more important. The Champion does not need to be an older person themselves.

6. The plan for Highland Council's Champions

- 6.1 Each Champion will require to give a commitment to this role, and they will be supported in this in terms of training and development, and mentoring.

Each Champion will identify an area of particular interest within their role. An example of this could be the delivery of mental health services or more general issues such as housing. This will help define the role remit and influence the role can have. Training sessions will be provided once the Champions are appointed to give the Champions more in-depth understanding of specific themes. The Champions will be encouraged to work together and support one another in order to fulfil their role.

- 6.2 There should be a pilot period of one year after appointment of the Champions and at the end of that period the pilot will be reviewed and assessed. An update will be provided to Committee in August 2023. This will allow both the practicalities of the role to be examined, alongside the impact it has had. Any barriers or issues can be clearly identified and an assessment made to consider whether the Older People's Champion roles should be continued, in what capacity, and whether any additional resource requirements are appropriate.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Health and Social Care

Date: 28 January 2022

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