

<i>item:</i>	4
<i>report:</i>	CYP02/10

FOR HIGHLAND'S CHILDREN 3 – UPDATE AND PERFORMANCE by Innis Mitchell

Summary

This report provides an update on FHC3 detailing progress on the following:

- Printing and distribution arrangements for the Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan For Highland's Children 3 2009 – 2012
- Upgrade and redesign of the Highland Integrated Children's Services FHC website.
- Trialling new consultation processes to support each multi-agency strategic plan
- Ensuring robust Equality Impact Assessment processes across Integrated Children's Services in Highland.

1. Printing and distribution arrangements

- 1.1 The JCCYP Seminar on 5th October 2009 provided the final consultation on the draft of FHC3.
- 1.2 Work has now been completed in gathering and amending all inputs from the eighteen multi-agency strategic groups.
- 1.3 All other sections of FHC3 have reached a final stage and the Highland Council graphic designer is preparing the document for printing.
- 1.4 It is anticipated that printing will be completed by the end of January 2010 and distribution will proceed in February 2010. It is proposed to print 2,500 copies at a cost of £3,800. This is £6,000 less than the cost of printing 1,500 copies of FHC2.

2. Upgrade and redesign of the FHC website

- 2.1 Plans for a new website have been revised now that a database for the monitoring and reporting function can be provided through a new Highland Council provision. Monitoring progress of over 400 separate Actions in FHC2 was a major success but a difficult and laborious task using an excel spreadsheet system. Using a database for this process will provide greater efficiency and significantly improved the range of reports available. This includes the potential to provide progress reports on sub groups of actions such as promoting equality (see below in this report) and other cross cutting service issues.

- 2.2 As a new website is now not required for the provision of a data base facility it is proposed that the existing FHC website is upgraded and redesigned. This revised plan will result in reduced expenditure.
- 2.3 Outline planning has taken place to improve the accessibility of the website with clearer signposting to distinct information sections. It is hoped that a short-life working group will take the redesigning forward in the new year.
- 2.4 Improvements are also planned for the monitoring and regular updating of the new Key Outcomes in FHC3. While this will take time to be operational the existing data collection and presentation structure will be maintained.

3. New consultation processes

- 3.1 Progress has been made in implementing the innovative schedule of consultation for each strategic group in FHC3. A number of formal arrangements have been made with Highland Youth Voice to provide opportunities for consultation with young people.
- 3.2 The Education, Culture and Sport Service used the second annual SPICE event in September 2009 to consult with young people on the Curriculum for Excellence and other important service aims.
- 3.3 Highland Childrens Forum have also started a major consultation which has involved contacting a large number of families who have experience of services to participate in structured investigative interviews.
- 3.4 The Child Protection Strategy Group worked with Magnus Monaghan the Youth Convener to consult with young people at the Highland Youth Voice event held in Badaguish on 21st November 2009.
- 3.5 Planning is in hand between the Youth Convener and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health group to consult with young people at the forthcoming Highland Youth Voice event on 30th January 2010.
- 3.6 The Early years Strategy group will seek opportunities for consultation with both Highland Youth Voice and Highland Children's Forum between January and March 2010.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 Public bodies have a legal requirement to assess their policies, strategies, functions and practices, for any possible negative impact on race, disability and gender equality. An Equality Impact Assessment

(EQIA) is a process of analysing a proposed or existing service, strategy, policy, or project. The aim is to identify any effect or likely effect on different groups within the community and to ensure that policies help to promote equality. There is an increasing commitment to extending EQIAs to include the other equality areas and to consider the potential impact of policies in respect of all equality strands.

- 4.2 FHC3 is a high level plan based on individual service plans and cross service multi-agency strategies. Our approach to assessing FHC3 will consider the positive, as well as potential negative implications for equality.
- 4.3 It is suggested that each strategic group be responsible for providing a more specific service focussed and detailed EQIA.
- 4.4 The range of strategic plans will not benefit all groups in equal measures and some will more obviously address particular areas of equality. However, we recognise the need to think about what potential effects there could be on other areas of equality. This is consistent with a single equality approach if services are to be effective in promoting equality and challenging unfair discrimination in all its guises.
- 4.5 In anticipation of a new single equality duty we recognise the shift from the early focus on ethnicity, disability and gender equality to take more account of sexual orientation, religion and belief and now age. In addition to the equality of opportunity, there is also an emphasis on Human Rights; socio economic status and the effects of Violence against Women in denying a right to freedom from violence and abuse for children, young people and adults.
- 4.6 While the primary responsibility for addressing equality lies with individual services a complementary and overarching equality assessment of FHC3 will add value and this is summarised below. The assessment identifies key commitments in FHC3 against a wide range of equality issues and focuses on service activities which actively promote equality.

5. FHC 3 – Equality Impact Assessment Findings

- 5.1 Promoting equality and closing gaps in opportunity is implicit in a significant number of service aims in FHC3: an indicative sample includes:
 - Overcoming health inequalities through actions and service targets which support mothers and babies throughout pregnancy and birth.
 - Specific commitments to raise educational achievement of the lowest achieving pupils.
 - Ensuring every pupil not in fulltime education is supported on a multi-agency basis under GIRFEC principles.
 - Measures to reduce the amount of homelessness and improve the quality of services to those experiencing homelessness.

- 5.2 The service objectives and actions in FHC3 cover all aspects of children's services from universal to highly targeted services. Promoting equality is important in all service areas and is most readily identified in the service aims of those strategic groups which represent the interests of very specific vulnerable groups such as;
- Disability
 - Looked After Children
 - Young Carers
 - Violence Against Women
 - Gypsy Travellers
 - Pupil Support and Inclusion
- 5.3 A small number of examples of Improvement Objectives from FHC3 highlights the range of equality issues specifically addressed in Highland's Integrated Children's Plan:
- Ensure services respect and reflect diversity
 - Establish a one-stop Children's Rights service for Looked After Children
 - Improve Gypsy/Travellers access to, and experience of, services by making improvements to meet their needs; breaking down service barriers and engaging with Gypsy/Travellers.
 - Services for children and young people will be responsive to and accessible to the needs of young people and children affected by disability, by ensuring their policies support equality of opportunity and, by implementing their disability equality duties.
 - All children with disabilities who require it will receive assessment of their additional support needs and the support necessary to sustain them at school, in their family and in the community.
 - For children with Sensory needs, ensure that access to services is equitable throughout the Highland area.
- 5.4 Finally it is instructive to summarise the evidence of policies and strategies in FHC3 which safeguard or promote service improvement across the range of equality strands – Race, Religion, and Disability etc.
- 5.5 From the above it can be seen that key vulnerable groups are supported such as Disability, Children with Additional Support Needs and Looked After Children etc. In many cases vulnerable groups also reflect the affects of Poverty.
- 5.6 Gender issues and diversity are addressed in the Curriculum for Excellence in schools, in the work of the Violence Against Women group and in the service aims for Young Carers and Looked After Children.

- 5.7 Religion is respected in all services and particularly in Health policies, in the Curriculum for Excellence and in Permanence planning for Looked After Children.
- 5.8 Ethnicity is addressed in Education by focussing on improving the educational achievement of ethnic and minority groups and in the Highland plan to promote Gaelic.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The above assessment of equality issues is an overview. Evidence of strengths and weaknesses need to be matched with more service specific EQIAs. However it is reasonable to conclude that FHC3 does not impact negatively on equality issues. Indeed there is significant evidence that service aims actively promote equality and will help to close gaps in opportunity for children, young people and families in Highland.

Recommendations

The committee is asked to agree the:

- Arrangements and costs for printing and distribution of the FHC3
- Upgrading and redesign of the website.

And to note progress in the schedule for consultation

The Committee is also asked to approve the findings of the EQIA and consider the requirement for supporting EQIAs on each strategic plan.

Innis Mitchell

Children's Planning Officer

