

Agenda Item	8
Report No	HCW-17-21

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

**Date:** 11 August 2021

**Report Title:** Children's Champions

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer – Health and Social Care

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Within Children's Services, there has been, and will continue to be, considerably change via both legislation and national guidance. Added to this, is the impact of Covid. All of these have added complexities that we need to address and respond to.
- 1.2 As Corporate Parents, we all have responsibility to improve life chances for our looked after children and young people. Working alongside our Youth Convenor (and the implementation of the Children's Charter), we are aiming to maximise our efforts by building and improving connections between all of these crucial roles. Within this, our Children's Champions will very much be the voice of the children and young people.
- 1.3 Champions are individuals who are willing to work together and use their influence to promote the interests of their specific area – in this instance, children. At the heart of this, is their desire to see lives improved.
- 1.4 Highland Council has a strong history of creating and developing Champion roles within the organisation. At the heart of the Children's Champion role is the aim of promoting, liaising, and encouraging change so that children's needs are recognised and prioritised.
- 1.5 Each Children's Champion can play a critical role in helping to drive forward change by providing a voice which supports, sometimes challenges, but always promotes, the wellbeing and welfare of our children and young people.
- 1.6 The report proposes that 3 Children's Champions will be nominated to take forward this role. The impact of this will be assessed in April 2022.

## **2.**

### **Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the contents of the report; and
- ii. To formally agree to appoint 3 nominees, as identified by the Chair at today's meeting, into the Children's Champions posts – as part of the year pilot.

## **3. Implications**

- 3.1 **Resource:** The Children'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:** There are no legal implications as a result of this report.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island):** Champions will work alongside the community and partners, promoting and advocating needs and rights of all children and young people of The Highlands.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** There are no climate change implications as a result of this report.
- 3.5 **Risk:** The Champion's role is to work alongside services and partners to ensure that the needs and rights of children and young people are acknowledged and responded to.
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** There are no Gaelic implications as a result of this report.

#### **4. Champion's Role**

- 4.1 By acting as role models; being advocates for views and needs of children; providing information and advice to relatives and carers; recognise and celebrate good practice and challenge poor practice or blocks in the system; and be committed to attending in-house training and educational sessions (including cascading this information to colleagues), the role of Children's Champion can be far reaching but have a significant impact and influence across Highlands.
- 4.2 Very simply, Champions gather opinions and insights from every corner of the organization, then funnel them to the appropriate people who can act decisively. This is what we want to encourage and develop.

#### **5. The Pilot Plan**

- 5.1 3 Champions (elected members) being nominated and chosen from the subgroups, and formally agreed at the HSCW Committee.
- 5.2 Each Champion gives a commitment to this role, and we give a commitment to supporting them in this – via training and development, and mentoring – as well as an evaluation of the pilot at the end of April 2022.
- 5.3 Each Champion will identify an area of particular interest within their role. An example of this could be the mental health and wellbeing of our looked after children population. This will help define the role remit and influence it can have.
- 5.4 Training sessions are being planned for August/September to help give the Champions more in-depth understanding of specific themes.
- 5.5 There will be active promotion of these roles, with clear remit and rationale being articulated, so that all partners are aware, thus removing any barriers that may arise through lack of clarity or understanding.
- 5.6 The Champions will be encouraged to work together and support one another via a Champions Network.

#### **6. Review and Assessment**

- 6.1 The pilot period will be reviewed and assessed in April 2022. 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.
- 6.2 The above assessment will then help advise whether the Children's Champion roles should be continued, in what capacity, and with any additional resource requirements.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Health and Social Care

Date: 29 July 2021

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Background Papers: n/a