

Agenda Item	12
Report No	HSW/14/22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Date: 24 August 2022

Report Title: Appointment of Champions for Older People and Children

Report By: Executive Chief Officer - Health and Social Care

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 In August 2021, the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee formally agreed to appoint three nominees into the Children and Young People Champions posts as part of a one-year pilot.

Within the pilot plan each Champion gave a commitment to this role and the service gave a commitment to supporting them in this. Each Champion was to identify an area of particular interest within their role to help define the role remit and any influence they can have.

Subsequently in February 2022, the Committee agreed further to the motion before Council on 8th December 2021, that the Council ought to appoint Older People's Champions with a role and remit to be agreed. It was agreed that these appointments would be made after the local elections in May 2022.

- 1.2 This paper provides an update on the work to date and makes recommendations for the further development of the champions role for both Children and Adults.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the contents of this report and **approve** the future development planned to develop Older People's Champions and Children and Young People Champions for Highland Council.
- ii. **Appoint** three Councillors as Older People's Champions and **appoint** a further three Councillors as Champions for Children and Young People.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – Any specific resource issues arising out of the contents of this report will be carefully monitored. The Champions will be elected members and training will be provided in-house by Council employees and involvement of partner agencies. There is a commitment to reviewing and assessing this process to enable consideration of any resource impacts/issues that may arise and identify any implications.
- 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 In terms of Champions for Children and Young People three Champions were provided with the opportunity to undertake the Children and Young Persons Champion role for a period of one year from August 2021. The Champions were identified as individuals who were willing to work together and use their influence to promote the of children and young people.

The report presented the Health Social Care and Wellbeing Committee in August 2021 proposed that three Children and Young People Champions be nominated to take forward this role. The role is to act as role models; be advocates for views and needs of children and young people; provide information and advice to other elected members so that they can support their constituents, 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.

The Pilot Plan stated that training sessions were planned to help give the Champions more in-depth understanding of specific themes and that there would be active promotion of these roles, with clear remit and rationale being articulated. It was also agreed that the Champions should work together and support one another via a Champions Network.

It was also agreed that the pilot period be reviewed and assessed in April 2022 to allow both the practicalities of the role to be examined, alongside the impact it has had. This evaluation helped advise whether the Children and Young People Champion roles should be continued, in what capacity, and with any additional resource requirements.

It was noted by Committee in February 2022 that the progress in relation to the development of the role of Children's Champions had been limited and it was agreed that there ought to be further work done to develop that.

It is suggested that the development of both Champions for Children and Young People and those Champions for Adults should now be managed in tandem.

- 4.3 The role of Champions for both sectors is an ambassadorial role, held by elected Councillors. Their job is to be a link between the Council and "those sectors being championed" in Highland.

Within the Council chamber, these Champions will amplify the voices of those they are representing (ie young people and older people).

5. The Role of the Champions

- 5.1 Key also will be engagement with NHS Highland and other partners. For adults that will be in terms of their role in delivering adult social care and it is acknowledged that there will be an interface with community planning partnerships. There is also an interface with NHS Highland and other partners, including Highlife Highland for those champions appointed to represent the interests of children and young people.
- 5.2 Discussions will take place with NHS Highland and other partners 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 be a need for input into other Council services. There is likely to be a need for input in relation to issues of housing and welfare and it is important to note that the need to champion older people should not be limited to health and social care. Recognition that old age does not necessarily lead to the need for a health and social care service or vulnerability in that respect, and in considering nominations it is acknowledged that there is an array of other Council services where the needs of older people can properly be championed.

For those champions for children and young people there is a clear interface with education and learning and the aspirations outlined in the current integrated children's services plan 2021 – 23.

- 5.4 It is necessary that any appointed champion has a clear role and remit mitigating the risk of the champions being perceived as tokenistic.
- 5.5 For clarity, the role and remit is to act as role models; be advocates for views and needs of those being represented; provide information and advice to other elected members so that they can support their constituents; 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.

This approach is consistent with that suggested by Age Scotland for the champions for older people which has been noted and approved previously.

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

Experience of the issues faced would be beneficial but the ability to empathise and represent the views of others is more important.

6. The Plan for Highland Council's Champions

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

As a first step 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 or education. 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 (training sessions are being planned for December 2022). Finally, the Champions will be encouraged to work together and support one another in order to fulfil their role.

- 6.2 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, including comment on any additional resource requirements that have been assessed as necessary.
- 6.3 In order to progress and enhance the role of the champions during the next year it is recommended that once the Champions have been identified, and they have identified areas of particular interest, that:-
1. An officer with responsibility for supporting the champions be determined by the service.
 2. Regular meetings between Champions and officers be agreed to ensure that Champions are supported to undertake their role. This will include formal training dates.
 3. Information regarding activities the Champions have been involved in should be summarised to help inform and identify the impact the Champion roles are having.
 4. This role should be formally assessed in July 2023. Any issues can be identified with appropriate improvements put in place to help enhance the role and remit of the Champions.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Health and Social Care

Date: 18 July 2022

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