

Agenda Item	5
Report No	LA/12/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Lochaber Area Committee**

Date: **8th August 2023**

Report Title: **High Life Highland Youth Work in Lochaber**

Report By: **John Taylor – Area Youth Officer**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides an update to Elected Members about some of the projects that have been delivered by High Life Highland's Youth Service in Lochaber since April 2021 in each of the four Associated School Groups (ASG) areas
- 1.2 The Highland Youth Convenor also provides a brief update of her year in post

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to: note the report and presentations made by Area Youth Officer, Highland Youth Convenor and Youth Development Officers and it is recommended:
 - i. Advocate for and work alongside young people, support them through community-based activities and to participate democratically in matters affecting them
 - ii. Provide ongoing support of the Transport Initiative in Ardnamurchan
 - iii. Provide ongoing support to meet the demands of Youth Work in Fort William

3. Introduction

- 3.1 The High Life Highland (HLH) youth team works to its Operational Guidance, titled "*Learning for Life*". This has 4 main strands – Planning, Get Involved, Get Heard and Get On
- 3.2 Young people are encouraged and supported to get involved in a range of activities and programmes which complement the formal education and other community based learning in which they might be involved.
- 3.3 In doing so they become more confident, experience new things, make good decisions, speak up for what is right and make life better for others: these are the outcomes that young people said they wished to have from their involvement in youth work as stated in the Highland Youth Work Strategy 2019 - 2024
- 3.4 Young people have the support of their local Youth Development Officer (YDO), with further guidance and other learning offers from HLH officers responsible for Achievement and Skills, Participation, and Leadership

4. Fort William ASG

- 4.1 Detached Youth Work (Street Work) has been a feature of Fort William Youth Work for over 2 decades. It continued through all Scottish Government levels of COVID restrictions and to this day still provides a much-needed service to young people.
- 4.2 Prior to receiving external grant funding 1/3/2021 for 9 months through Youth Link Scotland; Youth Work Education Recovery Fund (YWETF), the service delivered 18 staff hours of detached youth work per week on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening centred in Fort William
- 4.3 During the YWETF period, an additional 2 Assistant Youth Workers were employed, delivery increased to 46 staffing hours per week and provided a service across Fort William Central, Plantation, Upper Achintore, Corpach and Caol on 6 days a week. The extra capacity within Street Work and increased contact time with young people and the wider community enabled project work to develop in partnership with Room 13 and Lochaber Environmental Group (Bike Kitchen), Lochaber High School and Youth Action Team
- 4.4 The project work that developed with partners from direct engagement with young people through Street Work, enabled 18 Dynamic Youth Awards to be achieved by young people at SCQF Level 3, with 87% of young people's self evaluation responses reporting improvements in their experiences and outcomes as a result of completing their challenges. 50% of this cohort of young people identified as having a protected characteristic.
- 4.5 Currently the service delivers 2 sessions of Street Work on a Friday and Saturday Evening in Fort William, equating to 10 staff hours per week.

- 4.6 Monday Night Football at Lochaber High School is a prevention and early intervention project that also developed from direct engagement with young people through Street Work. It's delivered in partnership with the Police and Youth Action Team, and recently supported by Fort William FC. The project is funded by Police Scotland and more recently Highland Alcohol and Dug Partnership, covering the cost of hiring the pitch and other planned activities. We regularly see approximately 40 young people at each session, which enhance the relationships between young people, Youth Work and Youth Action Team
- 4.7 Caol Community Field – a project that developed to utilise the green space outside of Caol Community Centre which was identified by young people during COVID, due to lack of usable local green space. A £35'000 grant from was secured from the Place Based Investment Fund, to provide multi-generational safe and usable green space in the community. This bid was led by the Local Youth Forum group and supported by Caol Regeneration Group, local elected members, HC Community Support Coordinator and members of the community.

5. Kinlochleven ASG

- 5.1 External funding enabled the service to take part in a pilot project as a partner with Ewen's Room - Wellbeing Champions Project, from November 2021 – March 2022. The concept was to train local young people to become Wellbeing Champions in their community, to raise awareness for themselves in dealing with mental fitness and supporting them to share those skills with other young people.
- 5.2 Young People from Kinlochleven who took part in the pilot project were invited to Highland Youth Parliament Conference 2022 to share their experience of the Wellbeing Champions project. The young people presented to their peers, Area feedback sessions took place which enabled other young people from across Highland and Aberdeen to discuss the Wellbeing champions initiative and how they might use this concept within their communities.
- 5.3 An aspect of the project was developing a physical Toolbox, which contained practical items (affirmation cards, slime, blowing bubbles) to support young people in their own wellbeing and provide an opening to develop conversations with their peers, allowing young people to connect with each other around positive mental health. These toolboxes are available in locations across the school campus and with community workers.
- 5.4 The Playpark has been a recent addition to the village and underwent an upgrade thanks to a huge amount of work done by residents. The residents formed a Playpark Committee to develop this initiative with funding for the works from Highland Council. Young people who attend Kinlochleven Youth Forum were supported by the Youth Development Officer to attend Playpark Committee meetings and site visits, along with leading on the equipment consultation, so they could choose what equipment they'd like the funds spent on. After a long period of hard work, one of the green spaces was upgraded in June 23'.

6.

Mallaig ASG

- 6.1 Recently Service delivery in Mallaig has been challenging.
- 6.2 The Youth Development Officer (YDO) has been on long term sickness absence. Since returning to work there have been challenges re-establishing service delivery, including the loss of the office space within the school for the YDO's use. The office space provided a secure base and opportunities for engagement as the YDO was visible during the school day and could be easily contacted by young people.
- 6.3 Due to the introduction of Lets charges to use school facilities during the evenings, the times of the youth club were brought forward to immediately after the school day finished, in order to take advantage of the free let period, However it became clear that this didn't work for young people:- there was a significant drop in numbers of young people attending Youth Club sessions
- 6.4 The Service is aware of informal discussions with a community led organisation about Youth Provision in Mallaig, however no onward discussions have taken place.

7.

Ardnamurchan

- 7.1 There have been recent challenges in retaining YDOs in Ardnamurchan:- the current YDO has been in post since November 2022
- 7.2 It costs £24'000 per annum to provide buses for the Sunart Centre and the after-school activities for 40 weeks per year. The provision is funded by HLH Youth Service, HLH Facilities and Àrainn Shuaineirt Management Committee: these all contribute financially to the Sunart Centre Community Transport Initiative, which also receives £5,900 grant funding from Highland Community Transport Initiative. This £5,900 grant funding is due to end in March 2024.
The Community Transport Initiative is a vital service that enables young people to connect socially after school and get involved in a range of activities and programmes which complements their formal education.

8.

Highland Youth Convenor

- 8.1 During her term as Highland Youth Convener, Caitlyn Munro has been busy engaging with groups of young people across Highland, promoting the role of Youth Convener. She planned a roadshow, which stretched across Highland and visited all 9 community planning partnership areas. This included a visit to Ardnamurchan High School, engaging with groups of young people and talking to them about any issues they face in their area.
- 8.2 As well as attending various events for young people, Caitlyn worked with the Highland Youth Parliament (HYP) Exec to plan this year's Annual Conference. The focus was on Education, a topic that young people wanted to discuss. The event was well attended by young people from all over Highland and the feedback was very positive. Caitlyn has utilised social media throughout the year by using Facebook and Instagram to share and promote her work. Posting photos and sharing updates has allowed young people to be more engaged with the Youth Convener.

9

Summary

- 9.1 This paper gives a view of a range of Service provision in each Associated School Group across Lochaber and some of the challenges that are encountered.
- 9.2 While we are always seeking ways to increase capacity through external funding opportunities and partnership working, since April 2023 the Service has seen a real terms reduction in Fort William, of Assistant Youth Worker hours by a third
- 9.3 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) ranks Fort William in the top 20% of the most deprived areas in Scotland and the 19th most deprived datazone in Highland. Health, crime and education inequalities are the biggest contributors to deprivation in Fort William. This can support our understanding of deprivation and the targeting of policies and funding in this area.

Designation:

Date:

Author:

Background Papers:

Appendices