

Agenda Item	8
Report No	HCW-05-25

Committee: Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Date: 5 February 2025

Report Title: Highland Children and Young People's Participation Strategy

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide assurance on the progress being made to deliver the outcomes outlined within the children's services planning partnerships integrated children's services plan 2023 – 2026 [here](#) and the commitment to develop a Children and Young Person Participation Strategy within the first year of the plan.
- 1.2 The Children and Young People's Participation Strategy can be found [here](#).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note and comment on the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – The intention is to deliver the strategy within existing resource. Further resource implications may be identified within the duration of the strategy.
- 3.2 Legal –The strategy will have a focus on meeting the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as at 7.1.
- 3.3 Risk – None
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - None
- 3.5 Gaelic – None

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment – Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken in March 2024. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there is only positive impact to the work of the participation strategy Members are asked to consider the summary set out in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3	Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
	Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Young People – <i>Positive</i>• Children affected by disability – <i>Positive</i>• Older adults – <i>no impact</i>
	Socio-economic	<i>Positive</i>
	Human Rights	<i>Positive</i>
	Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive</i>
	Island and Mainland Rural	<i>Minor differences with mitigations identified</i>
	Climate Change	<i>no impact</i>
	Data Rights	<i>No significant change to current processing</i>

5. Integrated Children's Service Planning

5.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Part 3), outlines the need to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by ensuring that local planning and delivery of services is integrated, focused on securing quality and value through preventative approaches, and dedicated to safeguarding, supporting and promoting child wellbeing. It aims to ensure that any action to meet need is taken at the earliest appropriate time and that, where appropriate, this is taken to prevent need arising.

5.2 Section 8 of the Act requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a Children's Services Plan for the area of the local authority, in respect of each three-year period.

5.3 The current plan outlines our priorities for improving outcomes for Highland's Children. It articulates where partnership working improves outcomes for

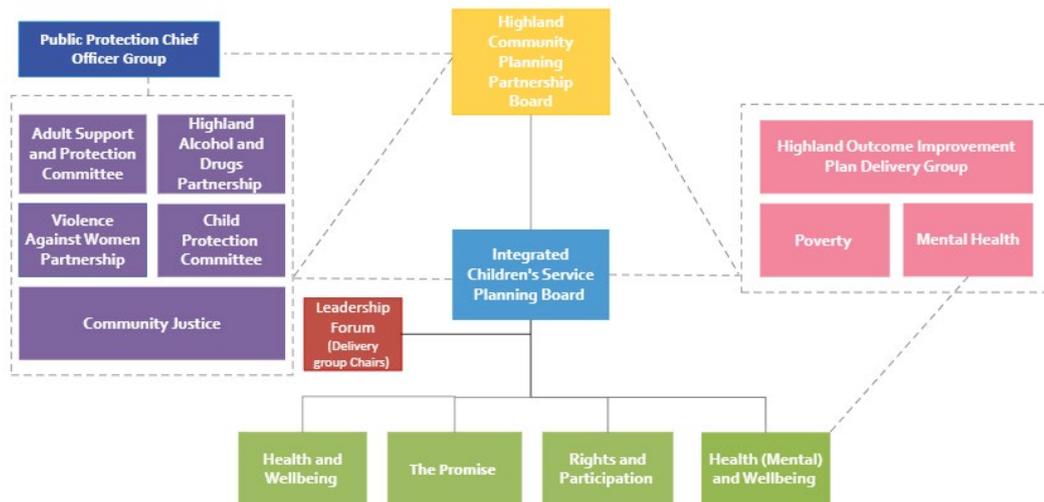
children, young people and their families acknowledging that individual services have their own plans.

5.4 Within the plan, partnership priorities for improvement are set around the following themes:

- Health and wellbeing
- Poverty
- Children’s rights and participation
- Child protection
- Corporate parenting
- Drugs and alcohol

6. Governance

6.1 The Integrated Children’s Services Planning Board provides oversight to the on-going work of the plan. This group has broad membership, including lead officers from The Highland Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland, and Third Sector organisations. The Board reports to the Community Planning Partnership Board with additional reporting to Highland Council, NHS Highland Board and the Joint Monitoring Committee.



7. Children and Young People Participation Strategy Overview

7.1 Our vision is of a Highland in which all children and young people feel that they can meaningfully participate in decision making processes and influence change in their own lives and in wider society. This strategy is supported by the Children’s Rights and Participation Improvement Group, which is one of six strategic improvement groups that support the Integrated Children’s Services Planning Board to deliver the Integrated Highland Children’s Service Plan 2023 - 2026. As a Highland-wide partnership we have a strong commitment to improving the participation of children and young people through:

- Keeping the Promise.
- Aligning practice with the values and principles of Getting It Right for Every Child.
- Developing and embedding holistic whole family support.
- Incorporating the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 across all our statutory and commissioned services. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), states that children and young people have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.
- The commitment to upholding the Voice of the Infant Pledge.

8. Strategy Development

8.1 The participation strategy was commissioned by the Highland Integrated Children's Services Board (ICSB) in January 2023. A steering group was created with both adult and young people representatives from a range of statutory and third sector services and organisations and from across a wide spectrum of operational and strategic roles.

8.2 There was a commitment from steering group members that our children and young people's participation strategy could not be developed without the participation of children and young people and the steering group established an engagement plan to ensure the strategy was codesigned with children and young people from across Highland. In total, over 800 children and young people between the ages of 4 and 26, from all nine of the Community Partnership areas in Highland.

8.3 The Children and Young People's Participation strategy, in line with the Equality Act 2010 has been developed to address inequality and support practitioners to consider how to reach every child or young person. Research relating to the conceptualisation of Article 12, has a focus on the 'agency' of children and young people. "All voices matter, we have a right to be heard, disabled and queer voices are often ignored so we have to fight harder to be heard; it would be nice to not fight so hard for once" It was essential to include the 'voices' of babies and infants and to understand how best to do this. Further considering the factors around 'agency' and how best we support this requires us to consider the voice of babies and young children. This strategy has been developed to bring an awareness of existing valuable resources such as the Voice of the Infant: Best Practice Guidelines and Infant Pledge and the Consulting our Youngest Children Toolkit to an increasing number of professionals from all backgrounds across the partnership in Highland.

8.4 The key themes of this engagement are detailed below. Six key themes were identified through the thematic analysis of the data collected from the survey and engagement sessions. Each of these themes has sub-themes which will also support the recommendations laid out in this strategy.

Theme 1 - Ask us to be involved

Theme 2 - Value and respect our views

Theme 3 - Develop our confidence and skills

Theme 4 - Provide support and safety

Theme 5 - We have lots of views about our futures

Theme 6 - Together we can ALL make change

9. Implementation

- 9.1 Having developed the participation strategy, the Rights and Participation improvement group are now entering the implementation phase of this work. The implementation of this strategy will create structures and processes through which professionals can access support and guidance around positively supporting meaningful participation.
- 9.2 The participation of children and young people may not be viewed as a core element of professional practice across all areas of work. This strategy views all children and young people as citizens and community members with a right to have agency in all areas of life which affect them.
- 9.3 As evidenced by what children and young people have told us, they are keen to play a part in decision making across our systems. Across our partnership in Highland, we require to have a clear understanding of how to enable the meaningful participation of children and young people within practice.
- 9.4 Implementation of this strategy will be achieved through innovation utilising existing resource within the partnership with greater collaboration and 'joining up' of the work of professionals across all sectors.
- 9.5 The Rights and Participation Improvement Group have oversight of the Implementation of the Strategy. A Rights and Participation Website has been developed and provides the opportunity for children and young people to have their voice heard within a designated area of the site ([here](#)).
- 9.6 Further implementation activity includes:
- Ongoing roll out, promotion and support of the Strategy
 - Involving Children and Young people in all areas of ongoing implementation
 - Developing additional accessible versions of the CYP Participation Strategy
 - Development of a Children and Young People Forum for the Integrated Children's Service Board
 - Creation of a 'Participation Plan on a Page'
 - Planning for and implementing 'Community of Practice' sessions
 - Development of support tools and training.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 7 January 2025

Author: Ian Kyle, Chair, Integrated Children's Services Planning Board

Background Papers:

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Children and Young People Participation Strategy.

06c - Appendix 3 Integrated Impact Screening Summary

The screening highlighted overall positive impacts as a result of the development and implementation of the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy.

Equality, Poverty and Human Rights

The screening specifically notes the potential for positive impact on children and young people and children's rights, as a result of the approach to delivering the outcomes.

There will be positive impact on children and young people across Highland as a result of the C&YP Participation Strategy. The participation strategy calls for staff across all services to ensure that participation opportunities are open to all and references the protected characteristics of the equalities act in doing so.

There are no negative impacts identified through the successful implementation of the Children and Young People Participation Strategy.

Children's Rights

The screening specifically notes the positive impact on children's rights, there should be a direct impact on children and young people as a result of the strategy. The main purpose of the participation strategy is to support practitioners to enact Article 12 across all areas of business that directly or indirectly affect children and young people.

The strategy should support practitioners to understand what children and young people have asked for in terms of participation, and how to do this, using the Lundy Model.

The strategy will ask all practitioners to consider how children will be either directly or indirectly affected by changes that are being made, and to include them in decision making regarding this.

It means that practitioners will be encouraged to hear the voice of the child on all matters that affect them.

The Lundy Model uses four inter-related concepts (space, voice, audience and influence) to uphold article 12. This means that C&YP will be supported to be heard, they will be supported to develop skills and confidence which foster participation, information must be relevant, age appropriate and accessible to all, children and young people can choose what to participate in and can opt out at any time and they should be able to express what it is they are interested in changing and we should listen to this and feedback to them on the process as well as the outcomes.

This will also take into account Article 2, 4, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 42.

Island and Rural

No Impact

Climate Change

No Impact