

Forging Connections

Summary Report – Wednesday 25 March 2015

“It was great to get out and network and share information. Bring on the partnership working.”



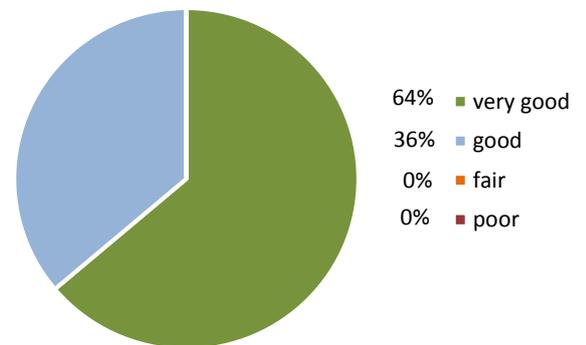
Things you liked about the event

A great opportunity to network with other third sector organisations and to find out what others are doing.

The event was very interesting, informative, excellent, effective, and useful.

You would like to see more events like this.

Overall, the event was



Attendance on the day:

73 people attended representing the third and statutory sector children’s services across Fife.

Things we can improve for next time:

Less speeches and more opportunity to talk in groups.
Speakers stick to time and ensure everyone can hear.
Better use of facilities for people with sensory impairments.

“Very informative, excellent use of time, fantastic mix of attendees.”

“Good opportunity to network, so no need to change format – keep them going!”

“Very interesting – made me think about how I can get more involved personally and as part of an organisation.”

Summary Report from the Voluntary Sector Children's Services Forum Networking Event

'FORGING CONNECTIONS'

25 March 2015

Our networking event, held at the Rothes Halls on the morning of March 25 was a huge success. 75 children and young people's volunteers, staff and managers from the third and statutory sector enjoyed a morning of networking and information sharing. The Hall was buzzing with conversations around the opportunities and challenges coming from the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and Fife's new Children's Service Plan 2014-17.

Speakers

Our keynote speakers included Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, who highlighted the importance of children's rights and the impact of these on their wellbeing but he acknowledged that legislation can only take us so far and implementation is the key. He stated that behaviour changes because of the value and investment we place on children and young people and quoted Eleanor Roosevelt:-

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

Dougie Dunlop, Head of Service for Children and Families and Criminal Justice for Fife Council spoke of the value of the Third Sector and its fundamental role in supporting the 'named person' for every child in Fife, and how it is vital to get a balance between targeted provision and early intervention.

Cllr Willie Campbell, Fife's Early Years' Ambassador reminded us of how important it is to get it right at the very beginning - pre-conception. He quoted Winston Churchill:- *"There is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies."*

All of the speakers shared their thoughts and aspirations for the way forward for the Third Sector and how opportunities are arising for us to become more involved in providing vital services and supporting the allocated named person for children.

Questions and comments from the floor to the panel speakers included subjects such as national involvement for the Third Sector – the panel recognised that there is a need to be involved at local level and the importance of having the right people in the right places, but also acknowledged how difficult it is to get a true representation of the sector at strategic level. There are challenges around trust and communication between agencies. Local Community Planning Partnerships vary across localities and the sector needs a strong voice on each one. Further comments included 'stop treating the symptom and start treating the person'; 'we are responding to a deficit but how do we respond and utilise our current assets in the community building their capacity and resilience?'

Discussion questions summary of responses:-

Question One: What are the new opportunities for children and young people in Fife?

- Children's and families' website
- Children's commissioner for health
- Is there an opportunity to have a link (champion) as a representative from the Third Sector to sit independently (no bias) on the different groups to allow for greater information sharing?
- Going back to talk about healthy eating, outdoor play, wellbeing – back to basics
- Opportunities to build on the balance between children's rights, responsibilities, needs and wants
- To build on volunteering
- Promote examples of good practice – partnership working
- Change - what it is we are measuring to affect policy
- Employability opportunities - transition stages
- Create posts to reach young people earlier and develop work to engage with young people who are disengaged.

Question Two: What will the challenges/constraints be for the third sector in delivering these opportunities?

- Joining up the different areas of Fife
- Making information accessible
- We are all out there in competition and vying for own funding
- The balance between early years and 16+ college students, unemployment, employment opportunities
- The amount of systems, procedures, paperwork, too much for actual case
- The fear of being blamed for something going wrong
- Feeding back our experience to affect council procedure which will have a bigger impact
- What will we measure? How can we measure partnership working so it can affect policy and procedure and demonstrate success
- Third Sector being able to fit into the council structures on a Fife wide basis, reps being able to represent effectively and having an awareness of who is delivering what service in the area.

Question Three: What role can VSCSF play in supporting third sector organisations?

- Gate keepers of the information
- Networking events
- Learning from each other and sharing good practice
- By bringing it all together through a co-ordinated approach with no ties
- They could make it more formalised by having someone to share the information who sits outside the structures
- Some clarity around 'membership' of the group
- Useful to have more open forums like today
- Fife Voluntary Action to host a website with VSCSF perspective - Facebook page
- E-mail children services bulletin like the employability bulletin and the health and social care
- Get the section on the website set up and post minutes on it.

Summary of Discussion Session Priorities

Feedback from breakout sessions was primarily around information sharing and communication; knowing what we all do across the sector and having regular events like 'Forging Connections' to be able to network throughout the sector. It is vital to share information with partners and have a good understanding of what we all do to identify gaps and avoid duplication.

Stronger more united and informed voice from the sector, developing the VSCS Forum as a vehicle for this. Starting small and building on opportunities; sharing best practice and resources. Celebrating success and the value of the Third Sector.

Helen Rorrison from Fife Voluntary Action summed the morning up with a simple ABCD model

Action – there are 17 voluntary sector representatives currently sitting on existing strategic and operational groups, however, the VSCS Forum requires a mandate from the sector to ensure that this can be appropriately resourced.

Behaviour - changes in behaviour across all communities and all sectors is required to offer the best for our children and young people. It is vital that the family nurture approach is embedded into all practice, bringing in specialisms when necessary to support families.

Children – The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 puts children's rights and current evidence of needs at the heart of what we do and through collaboration this can be achieved.

Diversity - If ever there was a need to demonstrate diversity within the voluntary sector it is now; this has never been more evident than in the discussions that have taken place here today - there are some amazing projects and incredibly important pieces of work taking place already so we do, with collaboration, have the potential to get it right for children and young people in Fife.

The event was part of the re-launch of the Voluntary Sector Children's Services Forum in Fife. Fife Voluntary Action is committed to supporting the Forum to widen its remit. This will enable Third Sector Early Years and Children and Young People's services to communicate and share information more effectively ensuring that there is a fair and robust representation of the Third Sector at a strategic level in Fife.

Next Steps

- Developing robust methods for communicating to the wider voluntary sector with all members taking responsibility for passing on useful information and to update the VSCS Forum page and the FVA e-bulletin.
- Ensuring the right people are representing the Forum at a strategic level by ensuring the correct representatives are sitting on the appropriate groups and reviewing this regularly.
- Holding regular meetings and events throughout the year. Including an annual event for the wider sector and regular thematic breakfast meetings for the Forum to share and network.