

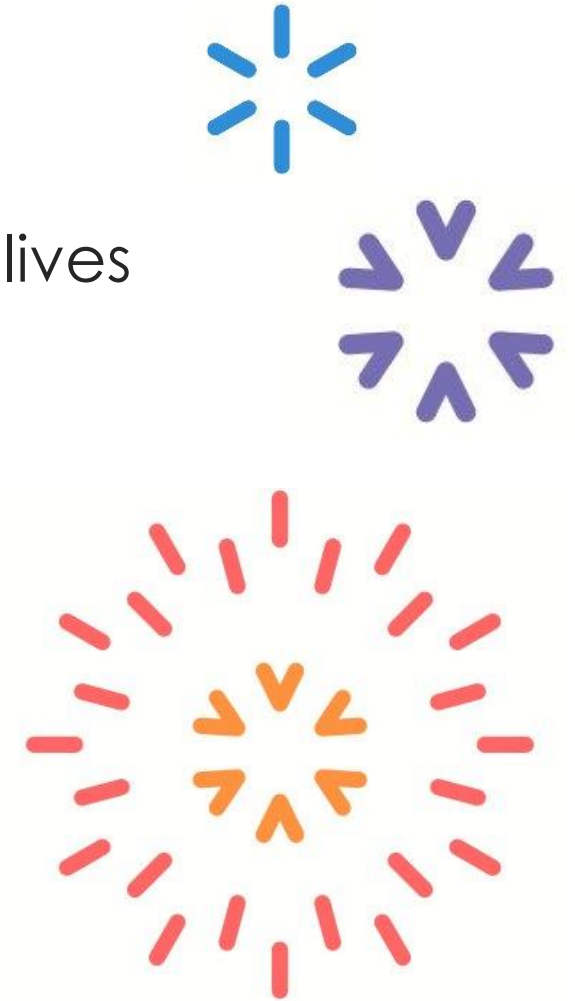


## Supporting The Third Sector (STTS) Project

Exploring the role of the third sector  
in Children's Services Planning

# About Children in Scotland

- National children's charity working to improve children's lives
- Work is rooted in children's rights
- Supporting participation of children and young people
- Policy work – campaigning and influencing
- Delivering services – Enquire, Resolve, My Rights My Say
- Supporting the workforce – learning and events



# About the Supporting the Third Sector (STTS) Project



- Supporting third sector interfaces (TSIs) and the wider third sector to play a meaningful and influential role in both local and national planning and decision-making to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families.
- Our ambition is that the third sector is fully integrated with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and contributes to the strategic planning of local children and family services as equal partners.
- Funded by the Scottish Government and hosted by Children in Scotland.





# STTS Survey 2024: Exploring the role of the third sector in Children's Services Planning

- Designed to understand the extent of third sector involvement in Children's Services Planning arrangements in Children's Services Planning Partnerships
- Ran for just over five weeks, from 30 October until 6 December 2024
- 67 responses in total – 48 were completed fully enough to be included in the analysis
- We received responses from 20/32 local authority areas, plus four respondents who operated in more than one geographical area or at a national level





## Findings/Conclusions

**The importance of a strong, well-funded TSI, including having a dedicated role for children's services, in the quality and scope of work that can be achieved.**

*“Strong feedback from both statutory and third sector partners that TSI dedicated role has improved communication across sectors and increased third sector voice.”*

*“Staff are continually outside the ‘window of tolerance’ that supports workforce wellbeing. There are 26 fields of children’s services policies, and it is a challenge for one part-time staff member to prioritise”*

*“Unsure if connections are strong enough yet to continue without the TSI link to facilitate and share information cross sectors. Concerned that if post not re-funded strong work so far will be lost!”*



## Findings/Conclusions

**Building and maintaining relationships across the children's sector including between TSIs, the wider third sector and statutory partners is essential to positive and meaningful collaborative working.**

- Involvement in workstreams, working groups, networks and strategic groups.
- Assuming clear roles within the partnership such as chair or vice chair with regular meetings.
- Funding Barriers – Staff capacity and turnover.
- Poor communication and organisation, decisions made prior to consultation.

*“High turnover of staff in strategic/leadership positions alongside staff absence, has led to a disconnect and potentially a lack of understanding regarding the role, values and potential of the third sector to contribute as more than providers i.e. to be invited in to planning as partners.”*



## Findings/Conclusions

**Local commissioning arrangements continue to present barriers to local collaboration between partners in CSP and delivery, with complex processes, respondents concern about exclusion of third sector partners in discussions and mistrust between the third sector and statutory partners as key issues.**

- Negative past experiences with partners resulting in mistrust.
- Third sector not involved in discussions, and it can be difficult to understand the local authority processes if not involved.
- Non-commissioned services were seen not to be involved in children's services planning, compared to commissioned services who are more likely to have solid relationships with commissioners and were regarded as valuable partners.

*“This year, as Community Mental Health and Whole Family Wellbeing policies and funds are acting as drivers, collaborative practice across sector is beginning to happen. This is another major development area in next few years.”*



## Findings/Conclusions

Data collection and sharing continues to be a challenge across localities resulting in valuable evidence and experience from the third sector not being recorded and included in strategic decisions.

*“We have opportunities to contribute but more importance is put on data provided by statutory partners, and they have better support systems to gather this.”*

*“We have struggled to find a measuring tool suited to gather the wide variation of data collated by the third sector into one format. [The local authority] do value the outcomes of the work carried out but work still needs to be done to capture the full outcomes and value of the third sector.”*

# Recommendations

- Children's Services Planning Partnerships should continue to review third sector participation in key tasks over the three-year CSP cycle and identify where this could be strengthened.
- CSPPs should consider using the 'How Good is our Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning? Self-evaluation Tool'.
- The third sector must be a meaningful partner in the discussions and the development of new Children's Services Plans for 2026-2029 with a clear plan of how they could engage with the third sector and involve TSIs in developing these engagement plans.
- Children's Services Planning Strategic Leads and TSIs should work together to ensure effective and meaningful representation of the third sector in planning and delivering groups and processes.

# Recommendations

- Appropriate funding for TSIs is needed to ensure they have the capacity to engage fully with local CSP and delivery processes. In particular, this includes ringfenced funding for a dedicated Children, Young People and Families Officer or similar role.
- Further consideration must be given as to how the third sector can be supported to effectively manage and share data to inform and improve local CSP processes, including the planning, delivery and evaluation of activity.
- Local commissioning processes should be reviewed to ensure ethical processes are in place that support collaboration between organisations and focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.
- Further work should be undertaken to support local areas to identify ways to improve, build and maintain relationships between third sector and statutory partners.



# Locality Work & Report

## Aim:

- Provide Intensive support to three areas to implement the 'How good is our third sector participation in Children's Services planning' self-evaluation tool.
- Support these areas to assess current processes surrounding Children's Service planning collaboratively and outcomes focused.
- Take the learning from this support and create a learning report to share with other localities across Scotland.

## Who we worked with:

- Aberdeenshire,
- Dumfries and Galloway,
- and Glasgow





## What is the HGIO Tool

- “How Good Is Our Third Sector Participation In Children’s Services Planning?” Self-evaluation Tool
- A self-evaluation tool for understanding how well third sector partners are involved in local children’s services planning
- Intended to support partners to work collectively to improve outcomes for children, young people and families
- It provides a structured approach to discussions within CSPP’s which considers third sector roles in key strategic tasks
- The tool is closely aligned with key duties and responsibilities in Children’s Services Planning Legislation





## How does the HGIO Tool work?

- As described, it is a **self-evaluation** tool – it is for CSPP's to work on collectively and consider the involvement of third sector
- Requires a range of voices to work effectively, ultimately there is a need for buy in from partners across the CSPP
- It is partnership based and collaborative
- It should be holistic and adapted to your setting – it is not intended to be prescriptive
- It is designed to be an ongoing source of support, monitoring and evaluation – it should not be seen as a one off



# Quality indicators: challenge questions

2. Children's Services Planning: Strategic planning and delivery of services		
Themes	Challenge questions	Features of highly effective practice
<p><b>2.1 Participation of the third sector</b></p> <p>Third sector participation at different levels within local CSP arrangements</p> <p>Third sector participation is evident at different stages of the planning process</p> <p>Analysis and evaluation of data and intelligence</p>	<p>To what extent does the third sector participate at <b>all levels</b> of local children's services planning arrangements (leadership, strategic management, service delivery, frontline practice)?</p> <p>To what extent are third sector partners involved throughout <b>key stages and tasks</b> over the children's services planning cycle?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding local population needs of children, young people and families</li> <li>• Agreeing strategic priorities</li> <li>• Scoping services and identifying gaps</li> <li>• Preparing and consulting with the third sector and communities on the Children's Services Plan</li> <li>• Resourcing and budget decisions</li> <li>• Joint strategic commissioning</li> <li>• Service planning and design</li> <li>• Reviewing the Children's Services Plan</li> <li>• Demonstrating increased shift in resources to prevention and early intervention.</li> </ul>	<p>Third sector partners are fully involved in the preparation, consultation, decision-making and review of our children's services plan.</p> <p>Through co-ordination, facilitation and representation, a large variety of third sector organisations are involved in children's services planning processes and key tasks, including big and small; commissioned and non-commissioned services.</p> <p>Good quality third sector data and information is used by the CSPP to identify local needs.</p> <p>Service mapping includes third sector services (commissioned and non-commissioned) to understand and make best use of locally available resources and identify gaps in service provision.</p> <p>We have a whole-systems approach which includes third sector services and supports a joined-up approach between services, including at key points of transition.</p> <p>The third sector is involved in financial discussions and decision-making, and the CSPP explores opportunities to access additional funding via third sector partners.</p> <p>We have a robust and innovative approach to joint commissioning which enables collaboration with third sector partners.</p> <p>We share ownership of reviewing our Children's Services Plan.</p>



# Locality Work & Report

## Key Learning:

- The toolkit supported localities to identify good practice and areas for development
- The toolkit helped individuals and organisations to build new relationships and strengthen existing relationships to support improvement
- The toolkit supported a collaborative and structured approach to assessing third sector participation in children's services planning
- The toolkit generated buy-in to the children's services planning process by supporting meaningful engagement
- The toolkit's holistic, adaptable approach allows it to be tailored to the needs of the user – but a clear purpose is required to have impact.

# Discussion

1. How do you think the survey report findings relate to third sector participation in children's services planning in Falkirk?
  - Did any of the recommendations stand out as particularly relevant?
2. How can we as the third sector begin the process of addressing some of the challenges in Falkirk?



# Contact Us

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