



**Supporting the  
Third Sector Project**



# **Supporting The Third Sector (STTS) Project Survey 2023: Third Sector Participation in Children's Services Planning**

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## Summary

Children in Scotland's Supporting The Third Sector (STTS) Project supports third sector partners to become more demonstrably involved in local and national planning and decision-making aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

This report presents the findings from the 2023 STTS Project survey, which was designed to understand the extent of third sector involvement in Children's Services Planning (CSP) arrangements in the 30 Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) across Scotland.

## Participants

The survey ran for three weeks, between 8 June and 30 June 2023. We received 47 usable responses to the survey from 22 different local authority areas (66% of all local authority areas). We had 29 respondents from urban areas and 12 respondents from rural areas. Forty-five responses were received from the third sector, with one respondent from a Local Authority Health and Social Care Partnership and one respondent who partially completed the survey from a local authority. The STTS Project Team was able to augment the survey data through use of a snapshot data collection exercise with Children's Services Planning Strategic Leads Network members. We collected 23 responses on the online platform Menti using questions adapted from the original survey.

## Findings

The experiences of respondents were mixed and varied considerably across the country.

- Most respondents recognised that the third sector was involved to some extent in Children's Services Planning in their area, although the nature and extent of this varied considerably.
- Respondents to the Strategic Leads Network Menti questions were more positive about the extent of third sector involvement than STTS survey respondents were, indicating that there may be some difference in perspective on this topic between sectors as well as across different CSPP authority areas.
- There were mechanisms in place in many areas to support the broader views of the third sector to be heard, including local third sector forums for example.
- Only one third (14; 33%) of respondents indicated that their local TSI had a dedicated children and families officer in their team.
- More than half of survey respondents (55%) felt that there was not a large variety of third sector partners involved in Children's Services Planning arrangements at present.
- Local commissioning arrangements were not seen to support local collaboration between Children's Services Planning partners.

Overall, we conclude from this survey evidence that, while some good practice exists, there is still some way to go to ensure that the third sector role is playing a full and meaningful role in children's services planning across Scotland.

In terms of findings in relation to the STTS Project itself, it was clear that:

- While some survey respondents were engaging in STTS Project activities and opportunities, many were not and further awareness raising of these could be beneficial.
- Respondents felt that the project could provide the most value through supporting third sector partners' understanding of key policies relevant to children, young people and families and enabling their participation in policy development.
- There was a wide variety of policy topics of relevance to respondents, with family support, participation and child poverty being the most popular.

## Recommendations

In response to the findings from the survey, we make the following recommendations:

- Children's services planning partnerships should continue to review third sector participation in key tasks over each three-year Children's Services Planning cycle and identify where this could be strengthened. The *How Good is our Third Sector participation in Children's Services Planning? Self-evaluation* tool provides a useful framework to support local improvement conversations.
- Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) should continue to highlight opportunities for wider local third sector partners to contribute to local children's services planning, and support their participation where possible.
- Funding for Third Sector Interfaces should take into account adequate resourcing arrangements to ensure they and their members have the capacity to fully engage with children's services planning locally.
- The STTS Project should continue to support TSIs and their members to actively contribute to children's services planning through:
  - Raising awareness of national policies relating to children, young people and families.
  - Support TSIs and their members to be heard in, and influence policy development processes.
  - Providing tools, resources and capacity-building support to aid CSP.
  - Sharing findings and learning from local areas to support the roll out of good practice.
  - Rerun this survey annually to assess progress and change over time.



## 1. Background

Children in Scotland's Supporting The Third Sector (STTS) Project supports third sector partners to become more demonstrably involved in local and national planning and decision-making aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people and families. This involves strengthening local governance, delivery and support structures with clear paths for effective participation of the third sector locally; specifically, through a line of sight to improving the local Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and their members' contribution to relevant engagement on policies, decision-making and strategic planning/reporting requirements.

The purpose of this survey was to understand the extent of third sector involvement in Children's Services Planning (CSP) arrangements in the 30 Children's Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) across Scotland. Our aim was to provide a robust Scotland-wide picture of third sector engagement and planning at a local and national level. This was done with the intention of understanding the areas of strength in relation to participation and engagement of the sector and areas for further development.



## 2. Methodology

The survey was based on questions from the self-evaluation tool: *How Good is our Third Sector participation in Children's Services Planning?* This was co-developed between the STTS Project and the Children's Services Planning Strategic Leads Network as a useful resource to aid local self-evaluation by CSPPs. It allows them to consider all aspects of collaboration with the third sector across different key tasks and duties over each three-year CSP cycle in order to support improvement activity focussed on the quality and demonstrate impact of services for children, young people and families.

The survey ran for three weeks, between 8 June and 30 June 2023. It was targeted at Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), local and national third sector organisations, and CSP Strategic Leads. The survey was structured with consideration of the categories present in the HGIO tool and the questions were based on specific statements of good practice provided within the tool. This was then enhanced by adding the option for respondents to provide further comment on their answers through open ended questions at the end of each section. The survey also contained questions based on the feedback from consultation with our internal groups, the TSI Network Reference group and the TSI Network Commissioning Working Group.

Overall, the survey received 72 responses in total. Of these 72 responses, 47 were completed fully enough to be included in the analysis (44 were fully completed and three were partially completed) and 25 responses were excluded for not containing usable data.



We received responses from 22 different local authority areas (66% of all local authority areas). Four of the respondents operated in more than one geographical area, or at a national level. There were 10 local authority areas from which there were no responses.

In terms of who completed the survey, we received responses from those in the role of Chief Executive Officer (15), Service Manager (12), Development Officer (6), Frontline Worker/Practitioners (5), Strategic Manager (4), and Director or Head of Service (1). In addition, three respondents used the 'Other' option to specify their role; these were Manager/Practitioner, Partnership Development Lead, and Project Manager. One respondent chose not to answer this question.

We had 29 respondents from urban areas and 12 respondents from rural areas. To determine whether areas were classified as rural or urban we used the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020 which was published in May 2022.<sup>1</sup> In different sections of this report, we look at the differences in urban and rural distinctions where relevant or noteworthy.

The survey targeted Third Sector Interfaces, local and national third sector organisations, and CSP Strategic Leads. However, of the 47 usable responses, 45 were received from the third sector, with one respondent from a local authority Health and Social Care Partnership and one respondent who partially completed the survey from a Local Authority. The third sector respondents identified their organisations as the following: Third Sector Interfaces, community organisations, local third sector organisations, and national third sector organisations.

In a meeting of the national Children's Services Planning Strategic Leads Network (CSP SLN) in June 2023, the STTS Project Team was able to augment the survey data through use of a snapshot data collection exercise with its members. We collected 23 responses on the online platform Menti using questions adapted from the original survey. The data has been included in this report to allow for some comparison with the original survey data. The CSP SLN comprises CSP Strategic Leads representing the 30 CSPPs across Scotland, key Scottish Government policy teams relevant to the wellbeing of children, young people and families, some national statutory and third sector organisations, and TSI network representatives. Within these questions the CSP SLN respondents were not asked to specify their job role and, as such, distinctions are not made.

The following report is divided into the same categories and sections as the survey, beginning with section 4 that focuses on questions relating to the participation of the third sector, followed by section 5 which concentrates on the third sector's representation in local Children's Services Planning arrangements/structure. Section 6 focuses on the Menti answers from the Strategic Leads Network and section 7 includes the feedback regarding the STTS Project itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (May 2022) 'Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification 2020' Accessed at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2022/05/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2020/documents/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2020/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2020/govscot%3Adocument/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2020.pdf>



### 3. Limitations

There are several limitations to this survey that should be noted when considering the findings within this report. It is acknowledged that the findings do not represent the full range of views of the third sector and other strategic partners involved in the delivery of Children's Services Planning duties. Moreover, it is also recognised that, although the survey was shared and promoted to TSIs, local and national third sector organisations, and CSP Strategic Leads, the responses were predominantly from those working in the third sector and highlight their perspectives and experiences of Children's Services Planning. Due to being unable to identify Strategic Leads Network respondents' job roles, we cannot determine in the report the number of responses within the network which come from Strategic Leads, members of the statutory sector, or third sector representatives. However, what has been identified throughout this report remains an important contribution to the discussion surrounding third sector involvement in Children's Services Planning arrangements and will further inform the STTS Project moving forward.

An aim of this research was to establish a Scotland-wide picture of third sector engagement and planning at a local and national level. While the survey responses did not include every local authority area in Scotland, the survey did receive responses from more than two thirds of local authority areas (22 of 32) with some variation between rural and urban areas.

We kept survey responses anonymous to encourage honest assessments of the current activity and experiences of each respondent. However, this does prevent the identification and analysis of distinctions between individual geographical areas, and being able to establish area-specific challenges and positive practice.



### 4. Participation of the third sector

Part 1 of the survey specifically focuses on the participation of the third sector in Children's Service Planning. This section has been split into two areas: consultation and resources, and finance decisions. The survey presented participants with a series of statements from the *How Good is our Third Sector participation in Children's Services Planning?* tool and asked them to answer how well they thought these statements related to their area of operation.

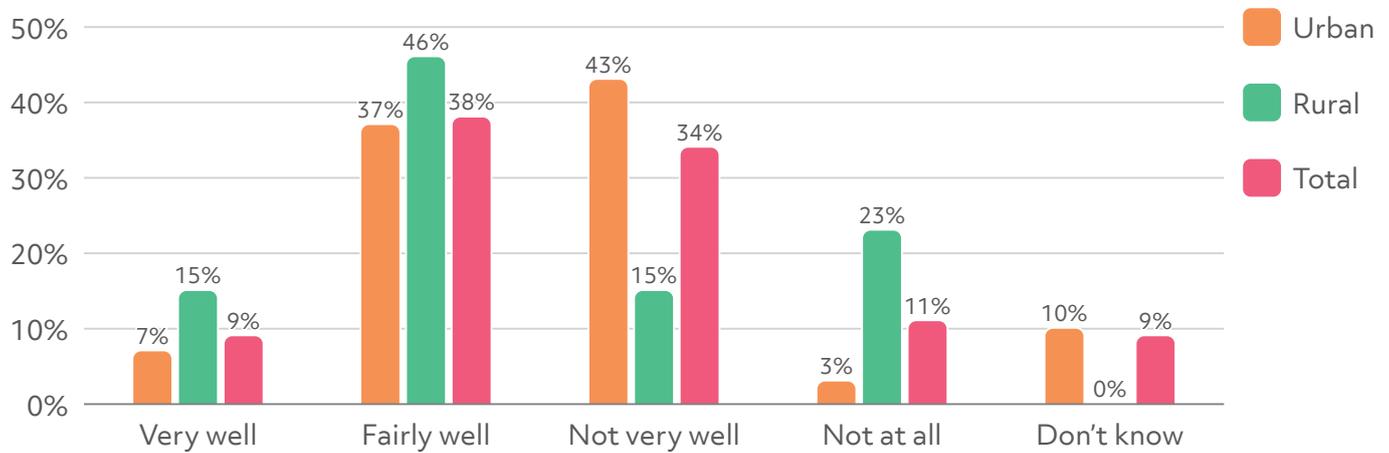


## 4.1 Consultation

### 4.1.1 Use of third sector data in planning



**Q4:** Third sector data has been used alongside statutory service data to identify needs and priorities for children, young people and families and inform collaborative improvement of children and young people's outcomes. (%)



The survey began by asking respondents to consider statements concerning consultation, using a scale of 'Very well', 'Fairly well', 'Not very well', 'Not at all' and 'Don't know'. The questions focused on the use of third sector data in identifying needs and priorities and the involvement of commissioned and non-commissioned services in the scoping/mapping and identifying of gaps for the CSPP. Respondents were then provided with an optional open-ended question to elaborate on their answers.

There were mixed views about the use of third sector data in informing and prioritising children and young people's outcomes. While overall 47% of respondents said that the use of third sector data worked well (38% responding 'Fairly well' and 9% responding 'Very well'), 45% of respondents did not find that this was the case (34% responding 'Not very well' and 11% responding 'Not at all'). Additionally, 9% of respondents said they had no knowledge of whether third sector data was used in this way.

These mixed views were also shown when comparing results for urban and rural areas. The survey found that in rural areas more than half (61%) of respondents stated that third sector data had been used effectively alongside statutory service data in identifying needs and priorities of children, young people and families. However rural areas had a higher percentage of respondents selecting 'Not at all' compared to urban areas. Urban areas were more mixed with 44% of responses suggesting that third sector data had been used well, whereas 46% of respondents felt otherwise. All respondents who answered 'Don't know' were from urban areas.

Giving respondents the opportunity to elaborate on these answers helped explain some of the reasons behind the results. Twenty-four respondents gave some additional information. Six respondents provided positive examples of consultation and opportunities to engage. This included having representatives on working groups, being invited to engage, and having opportunities to contribute and give feedback.

66 *“There was consultation on the Children’s Services Plan for the third sector and opportunities were given for organisations to feed in and respond to the plan.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“We have had representatives from the sector involved in a working group.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

Thirteen respondents mentioned at least one barrier to their ability to effectively share third sector data and contribute to the development of Children’s Services Plans and four respondents shared that third sector data was not used at all. Additionally, some respondents also felt that their involvement was tokenistic and that decisions had already been made before consultation with the third sector.

66 *“Data is collected from our organisation however the overarching plans and concepts are formulated well before our data is considered. The view of the statutory bodies takes precedence.”*

(Local third sector)

*“The local authority typically shares information when a decision has been made- and then consults on dissemination and engagement with implementation, rather than involving voluntary sector with the formulation of the plan.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

On occasions where the third sector has been consulted, three respondents shared that their feedback has been ignored or bypassed.

66 *“We have been present at meetings, but our feedback has been ignored despite identifying serious weaknesses on our local plan i.e., Equalities was very weak.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“(…) Within the partnership over the last year as the pandemic subsided NHS and council refocused on their own interests and the default position was to ignore the voluntary sector and even actively discourage them from speaking (…).”*

(Third Sector Interface)

Moreover, some respondents found that unrealistic and rushed timescales were often a barrier resulting in limited engagement, particularly due to the amount of time given to the third sector to complete certain tasks with deadlines at short notice.

66 *“There is still the need to improve timescales supporting third sector engagement – recognising that securing the voices of children, young people and families isn’t an ‘instant’ thing.”*

(National third sector organisation)

*“(…) The amount of time given to Children’s Services Plan development by the council and local authority was in practice limited, given competing priorities. Therefore, only a small group took part in substantive discussion (…).”*

(Third Sector Interface)

Additionally, limited resources and capacity were also highlighted as a challenge amongst respondents, impacting on the third sector’s ability to engage with the children, young people and families they support as part of an effective consultation and planning processes.

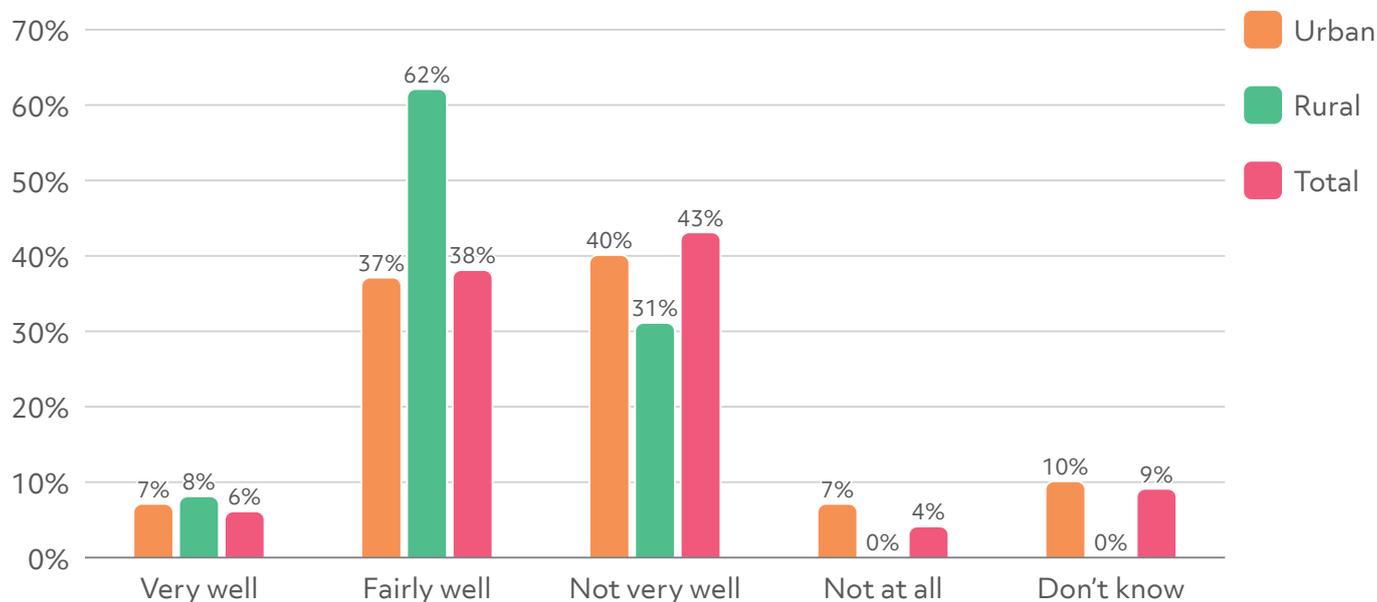
**66** *“The voluntary sector role is restricted given the limited investment by the local authority in children’s services representation in our city. It has remained at [the same level] a year for the last 6 years which equates to a large cut in real terms. Whereas in a comparable city the investment is currently [more than double the amount]. At the same time the national ambition to transform services has grown very substantially. More than 20 areas of Children’s Services Planning have been identified by the Children’s Partnership, so it is a challenge to engage meaningfully given the limited resource. As a consequence, there is a danger of collective ‘tick box’ practice that produces implementation gaps.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

#### 4.1.2 Third sector involvement in mapping services and identifying gaps

When asked whether commissioned and non-commissioned services were involved in the scoping/mapping and identifying of gaps to inform development of the Children’s Services Plan the results were also mixed. A small majority of overall responses (47%) were negative with 43% stating ‘Not very well’, whereas 45% of overall responses were positive with 38% stating ‘Fairly well’.

**Q5:** In developing new three-year Children’s Services Plans, commissioned and non-commissioned services are involved in the scoping/mapping and identifying of gaps for the CSPP. (%)



A total of 70% of respondents from rural areas were satisfied that to some extent commissioned and non-commissioned services were involved in identifying gaps and scoping/mapping in developing new three-year Children’s Services Plans. Urban areas however saw 44% of satisfied responses compared to 40% who believed the current system did not work very well. Moreover 7% of respondents from urban areas answered ‘Not at all’.

The feedback from question 6, which received 24 responses, also provides some insights on consultation and data sharing with commissioned and non-commissioned services. One respondent highlighted positive practice where data from both commissioned and non-commissioned services was used.

**66** *“The JSNA had great data from 3rd sector commissioned and non. It was an excellent piece of work supported by NHS (...).”*

(Local third sector)

However, it was highlighted within the feedback that in some areas, while commissioned services had some inclusion in the scoping/mapping and identifying of gaps for the CSPP, non-commissioned services were sometimes not involved in these conversations.

**66** *“We were not directly consulted on the most recent Children’s Services Plan, although there were some general opportunities to input and feedback on proposals. The council are currently preparing to put commissioned services back out to tender later this year. They have been holding discussions with providers of commissioned services on the development of an alliance model and there has been some discussion on gaps in service, but really not much. To my knowledge there have been no discussions with representatives of non-commissioned services.”*

(Local third sector)

*“Non-commissioned services are not always consulted.”*

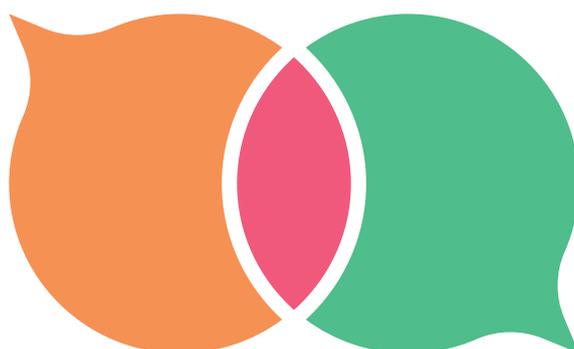
(Regional third sector organisation)

## 4.2 Resources and finance decisions

The next section of the survey focused on resources and finance decisions.

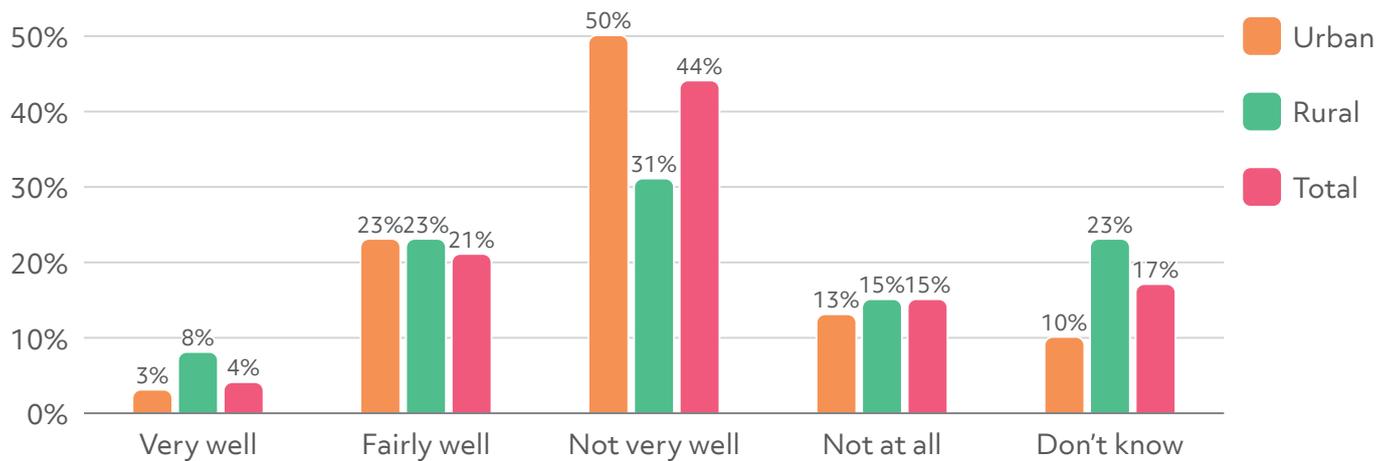
### 4.2.1 Collaboration through commissioning

When asked how well joint commissioning processes encouraged collaboration and joined up working, the majority of respondents (44%) answered that the current joint process in their area did not work very well. This was followed by ‘Fairly well’ at 21% and ‘Don’t know’ at 17%; when compared with the other statements presented in this survey, this question received the largest number of responses for ‘Don’t know’. In total, 59% of respondents found that the process did not work well, compared to 25% saying it worked well.





**Q7:** How well does the joint strategic commissioning process encourage collaboration and joined up working across relevant CSPP partners to ensure best use of individual and collective resources?



Responses from urban areas were heavily weighted towards thinking the process did not work well, with 63% of respondents indicating that the process does not work 'Very well' (50%) or 'Not at all' (13%). Of the 26% of urban respondents who said the process works well, only 3% said it works 'Very well' while 23% opted for 'Fairly well'. While rural respondents also answered more negatively, they were more mixed in their answers with 45% answering that the process does not work very well (31%) or 'Not at all' (15%) while 31% said the process works 'Fairly well' (23%) or 'Very well' (8%).

#### 4.2.2 Third sector involvement in resource discussions

Participants were asked in an open-ended question how the third sector was involved in resource discussions and decision-making. Forty-two respondents took the opportunity to expand on their answers. Within this feedback, six respondents presented examples of positive involvement. The examples that were given included third sector representatives being invited to the CSPPs' strategic meetings and their inclusion on relevant boards and working groups, and the establishment of working groups which include third sector representation that have a focus on joint commissioning.

**66** *"The TSI CEO is now part of the Children's Services Executive Group which should allow for improved TS involvement in resource discussions."*

(Third Sector Interface)

*"Representatives from our Voluntary Sector Children's Services Forum attend Children Services strategic and operational meetings."*

(Third Sector Interface)

*"Third sector are on our CSPP and also part of our CSP priority thematic groups so have the opportunity take part in these discussions and as such are part of the decision-making process."*

(Local Authority)

*"A Joint Commissioning Working Group has been established in Spring 23. It has chosen to follow the approach model of a neighbouring authority. It is focused solely on those*

***funds that are designated for CSPP such as Whole Family Wellbeing Funds. It is too early to say how effective the group will be. The TSI Chief Officer attends the group.***

(Third Sector Interface)

This representation however can sometimes be limited. One respondent questioned whether information was always fed back to the wider third sector from local third sector representatives who attended these groups.

***“I know TSI have seats at different levels and have reps in place however both don’t report back to wider groupings. There is a wide range of locality planning structures, numerous forums and then splinter groups seem to exist but it is not drawn back to one location to share information (...).”***

(Local Authority Health and Social Care Partnership)

Furthermore, some respondents felt that this representation was mainly larger organisations who had more capacity to be involved, leaving smaller organisations out of the conversation, and reliance on the same representatives on a number of groups.

***“The bigger and more well-known organisations at times may have involvement, but smaller organisations are often overlooked and not consulted.”***

(Local third sector)

Moreover, the responses received for this question provided further insights into why respondents felt overwhelmingly that the financial decision-making was not working well and also highlighted similar barriers and challenges identified earlier in the survey. Out of 42 respondents that answered this question, seven disclosed they did not know how the third sector was involved in any resource discussions and decision-making. Meanwhile 12 respondents explicitly stated that they are not involved, with many highlighting that they are rather just informed of the funding decisions and what resources are available.

***“The current commissioning arrangements for children’s services, based on time/value competitive tendering, do not encourage collaboration.”***

(Third Sector Interface)

***“Unless we hear of an opportunity we are very often forgotten about or not included in discussions.”***

(National third sector organisation)

***“We don’t have a say as such, just get informed re our funding.”***

(Regional third sector organisation)

***“Our organisation is told what the resources are and that we should work within these budgets even when the money allocated to the specific service delivery has been directed towards shoring up statutory and unconnected posts.”***

(Local third sector organisation)

Other respondents shared that although they have representation or are involved in some capacity the decisions were often already made and in some cases with no time to allow for feedback and changes due to deadlines and time constraints.

66 *“TSI on CSSP where decisions are often already made by the time they come to the meeting or deadlines do not allow leeway for changes as papers already prepared for upcoming meetings (...) or Scottish Government deadlines for reporting need to be met.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“WWF plan. Local authority changed the plan when it was implemented in March 22 without prior communication or consultation and presented the voluntary sector with a fait accompli.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

Other respondents described that they felt like they were an afterthought in decision-making or actively ignored altogether.

66 *“We are ignored and the lead officer on the Children’s Strategic Group (CSG) has refused to place budget items and resources discussions on the agenda.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

### 4.2.3 Multi-agency forums

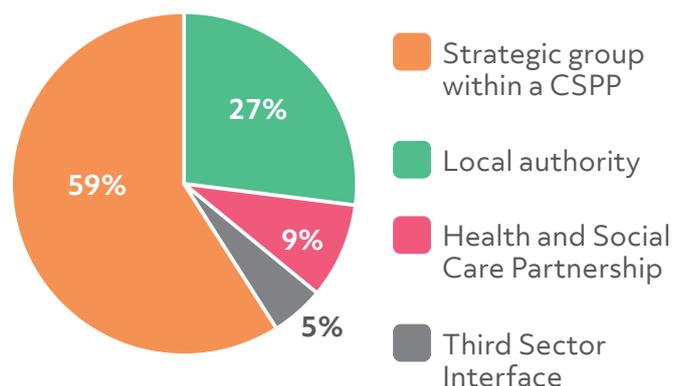
The last question in this section, Question 9, asked respondents within their CSPP area, which multi-agency forum within local CSP arrangements makes decisions on the allocation and use of Scottish Government funds that have a collaborative purpose.

Twenty two out of 47 respondents (47%) were able to give a specific answer to this question, whereas just over half of respondents (51%), answered that they did not know who made these decisions. One identified that this was something currently being discussed.

Of the 22 who were able to answer this question, six respondents (27%) believed it to be the local authority (as opposed to a multi-agency forum), two respondents (9%) listed a Health and Social Care Partnership, one (5%) responded with their local Third Sector Interface, and 13 (59%) stated a specific strategic group which formed part of their CSPP’s local CSP arrangements.

From the 13 who answered citing a CSP strategic group, three respondents (23%) explicitly stated that the third sector was not involved, one other (8%) said there was a TSI representative included on a panel, while the others (69%) did not elaborate on who specifically was involved. It must be noted that not all respondents were confident in their answers and were not always clear on the specifics regarding decision-making in their answer and this should be considered when looking at these results.

 **Q9:** Within your CSPP area, which multi-agency forum within local CSPP arrangements makes decisions on the allocation and use of Scottish Government funds that have a collaborative purpose? (Excluding Do not know and Other). (%)





## 5. Third sector representation in CSP planning arrangements

Part 2 of the survey specifically focused on third sector representation and involvement in Children's Services Planning. This section has been split into two areas beginning with a section on roles and expectations which asked questions that focused on the level of representation of the third sector within Children's Services Planning arrangements and what that representation looks like. This is followed by a section focused on support and resources which asked questions that highlighted respondents' views on resources, communication with the wider third sector, and awareness of who represents them.

### 5.1 Roles and expectations

The next section of the survey focused on resources and finance decisions.

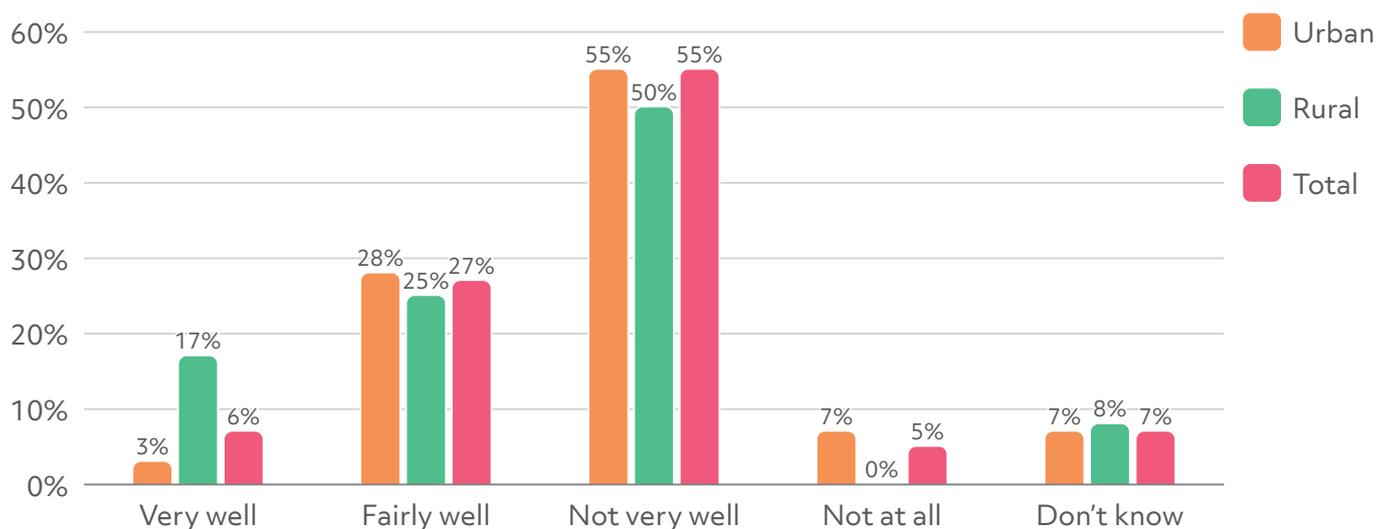
#### 5.1.1 Variety of third sector representation

Respondents were asked how well their area of operation involved a variety of third sector organisations within local Children's Services Planning arrangements through co-ordination, facilitation, and representation. More than half of respondents (55%) answered 'Not very well' with 5% saying 'Not at all'. This is compared with the combined positive answers of 34%, with 'Fairly well' receiving 27%, and 'Very well' receiving 7%.

When comparing rural and urban responses the chart shows similar answers, with 'Not very well' at 50% or over for both groups.



**Q10:** Through co-ordination, facilitation and representation, a large variety of third sector organisations are involved in Children's Service Planning arrangements. (%)



Question 13 gave respondents the option to elaborate on their answers within the Roles and Expectations section of the survey, with 21 respondents providing additional information. One of the main themes that arose was that respondents felt there was a reliance on 'well known' faces and bigger organisations when it came to representation of the third sector, and therefore potentially a failure to consider the views and input of smaller organisations and miss the potential of new approaches. This is further often

attributed to lack of capacity or resources making it difficult for smaller organisations to be able to be involved and attend meetings.

66 “[Area of operation] is a small area, only a small number of larger 3rd sector organisations, smaller organisations don’t have capacity/resources to attend a number of meetings. Tends to be the same people represented at different meetings.”

(Local third sector)

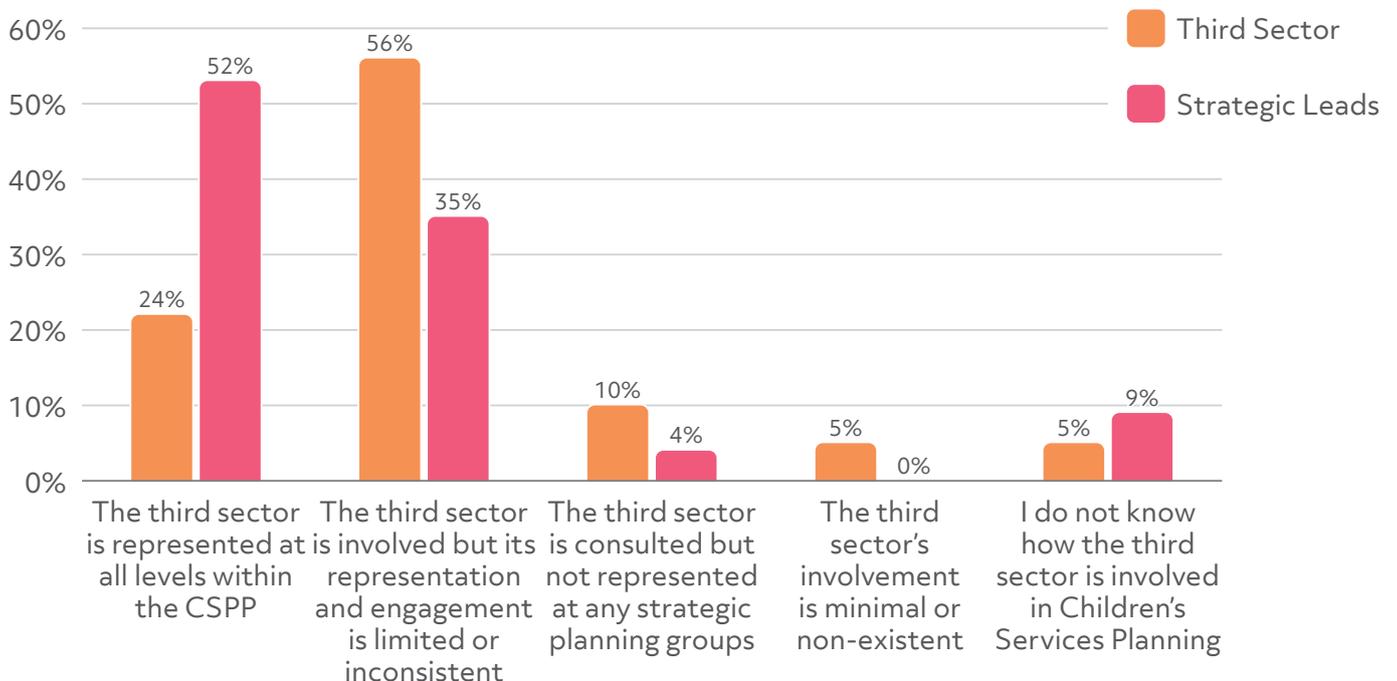
“We currently have [Third Sector Interface] representing third sector, but I do not feel they are getting a true reflection across the board of third sector organisations, especially smaller organisations who have limited resources and staff to attend meetings.”

(Local third sector)

### 5.1.2 Third sector representation at different levels

We asked respondents to choose a statement that best described the extent to which the third sector is represented at different levels in the local Children’s Services Planning approach in their area of operation. This question was also asked at the Children’s Services Planning Strategic Leads Network (CSP SLN) meeting conducted by a member of the STTS Project Team using Menti. As a result, we can compare responses from those who are predominantly from the third sector with those that answered at the CSP SLN meeting.

**Q11:** To what extent is the third sector represented at different levels of the CSPP? (%)



Comparing the results from the survey and the results from Menti shows that the majority of the CSP SLN participants (52%) believed that the third sector was represented at all levels within the CSPP, which is significantly different than the third sector group’s response (24% for the same option). The majority of the third sector respondents (56%) believe that ‘The third sector is involved but its representation and engagement is limited or inconsistent’ compared to 35% of the CSP SLN.

STTS Project survey participants had the opportunity to elaborate on their answer via an optional open-ended question; with 21 respondents doing so. Prominent themes highlighted in the feedback included capacity, resources, and time constraints. Respondents identified that these restrictions hindered their ability to be actively engaged at all levels of the CSPP. They identified in particular that without the resources and staff to coordinate and support representation, the third sector is prevented from being able to participate fully within Children's Services Planning arrangements.

66 *"As a TSI we have very limited resource to coordinate and support third sector representation and involvement within CSPP groups and structures. (...)."*

(Third Sector Interface)

*"The TSI provide representation but there is limited capacity and organisations would welcome earlier opportunity to contribute as per the challenges highlighted in previous comments."*

(Third sector organisation)

*"As we do not get specific resource to support this work strand, we focus our efforts on keeping third sector members connected through forums and networks where they can feed back to one another. (...) Lack of a dedicated resource does mean that capacity can be limited from a TSI perspective, and from the perspectives of key third sector organisations, to be able to participate fully across CPP groups and structures as would be necessary to mean the third sector can be fully involved."*

(Third Sector Interface)

Three of the respondents also shared that they felt that the third sector was not listened to and therefore did not feel like a valued member in terms of parity of esteem with statutory Children's Services Planning partners.

66 *"The voluntary sector coordinating organisation is somewhat overwhelmed due to the fact that the local authority does not treat it as a respected partner but is able to withhold critical information and change commitments made without communication or consultation. This is the reality of the powerlessness of the voluntary sector in CSPP."*

(Third Sector Interface)

However, four respondents shared positive experiences occurring within their area of operation of wider third sector involvement including the success of forums, representation on working groups, and effective information sharing.

66 *"As the Third Sector Interface we host a network for CVS [community and voluntary sector] organisations working directly with children, young people and families. This is recognised within [area of operation] Planning Structures and operates as a subgroup of the Integrated Children's Services Group which also feeds into the Children's Services Partnership Board."*

(Third Sector Interface)

*"We have a Citywide forum for third sector organisations who work with children and families and networks for specific issues that reflect HSCP strategic groups. Reps for*

**strategic groups are nominated through the networks. However, there are third sector reps on a wide range of other groups – and not all of them are well known.”**

(Third sector organisation)

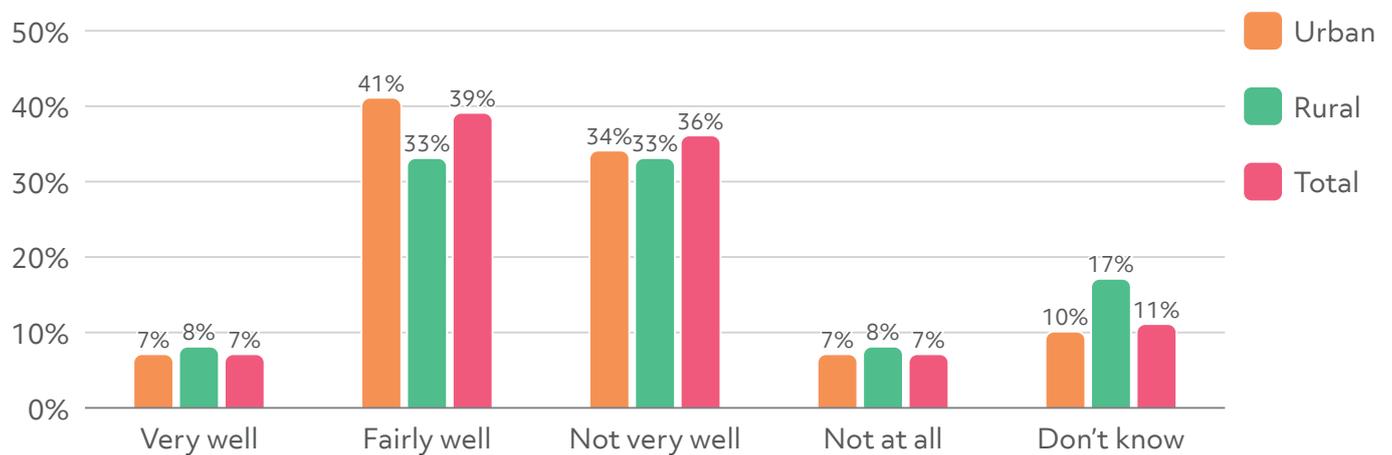
**“I could easily find the answer out via [Third Sector Interface] at any time.”**

(Local third sector)

### 5.1.3 Representatives

When the respondents were asked how well third sector organisations are aware of who represents them across different local CSP groups which form part of local CSP arrangements, and what routes exist to contribute via their representatives, views were somewhat divided. Forty-six percent of respondents felt positive that third sector organisations were clear who represented them, while 43% of respondents felt otherwise.

 **Q12:** Third sector organisations are clear who represents them across local CSPP groups/structures and know the routes to contribute via their representatives. (%)



Respondents located in rural areas were equally split between ‘Fairly well’ and ‘Not very well’ at 33% each. Whereas respondents located in urban areas leaned slightly more to ‘Fairly well’ (41%) compared to ‘Not very well’ (34%). This comparison shows that both urban and rural areas shared the same trend in terms of which answers were most and least popular.

Moreover, when analysing the 21 responses made via the open-ended elaborate question for this section, respondents mentioned that there were issues of information sharing from representatives to the wider third sector, and further issues in the identity of these representatives not being well known in their relevant areas. Additionally, there are mentions of attendance issues which provide difficulty with regards to information sharing, thus hindering the wider third sector’s involvement in Children’s Services Planning arrangements.

**“They have seats at all the group either for TSI representation or reps but not consistently attended and they don’t share information on representatives have no feedback point to others and the current lack of attendance in the forums means no share of information at all as reps don’t report back and share in any other way.”**

(Local authority Health and Social Care Partnership)

***“There are reps but often people don’t take the time to find out who they are or how to influence them.”***

(Local third sector)

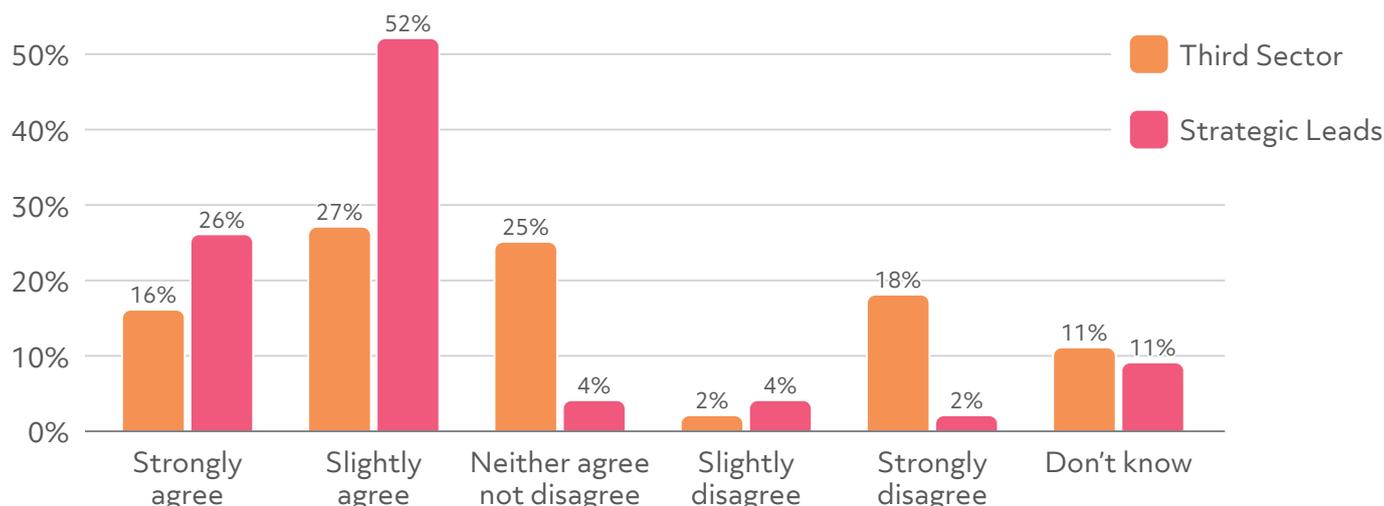
***“We have the Voluntary Sector Children’s Services Forum and limited services attend. New worker employed to oversee this and hopefully it will improve.”***

(Local third sector)

### 5.1.4 Expectations of third sector

Participants were asked to rank how much they agreed with the statement: there is a shared understanding and reasonable expectation of the role of TSIs and the third sector representatives within the CSPP. The available options were ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Slightly agree’, ‘Neither agree nor disagree’, ‘Slightly disagree’, ‘Strongly disagree’, and ‘Don’t know’. This question was also asked and presented at a Children’s Services Planning Strategic Leads Network (CSP SLN) Meeting conducted by a member of the STTS Project Team using Menti, and as such we can compare these answers with those given by the third sector respondents.

 **Q14:** There is a shared understanding and reasonable expectation of the role of Third Sector Interfaces and the third sector representatives within the CSPP. (%)



The results for this question show that the CSP SLN respondents who agreed (78%) heavily outweighed those who did not (6%). Third sector respondents, although still mostly agreed (43%, compared with 20% who disagreed), were much more likely to say they ‘Neither agree nor disagree’ (25%) than Strategic Leads (4%).

This shows that there may be a disconnect in how the third sector and CSP Strategic Leads view the expectations placed upon the role of TSIs and representatives. When given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers through an optional open-ended question, which was answered by 23 respondents, third sector respondents felt that local authorities in particular do not have a shared understanding of the third sector’s role within the CSPP as a whole – a theme that has been further highlighted in previous answers.

***66 “The Chief Officer concerned does not understand how the third sector can contribute.”***

(Third Sector Interface)

***“The system works well, but statutory officers may not value your contribution.”***

(Local third sector)

***“There is a forum in place, but the Council does not appear to be interested in any views expressed on behalf of the sector.”***

(Local third sector)

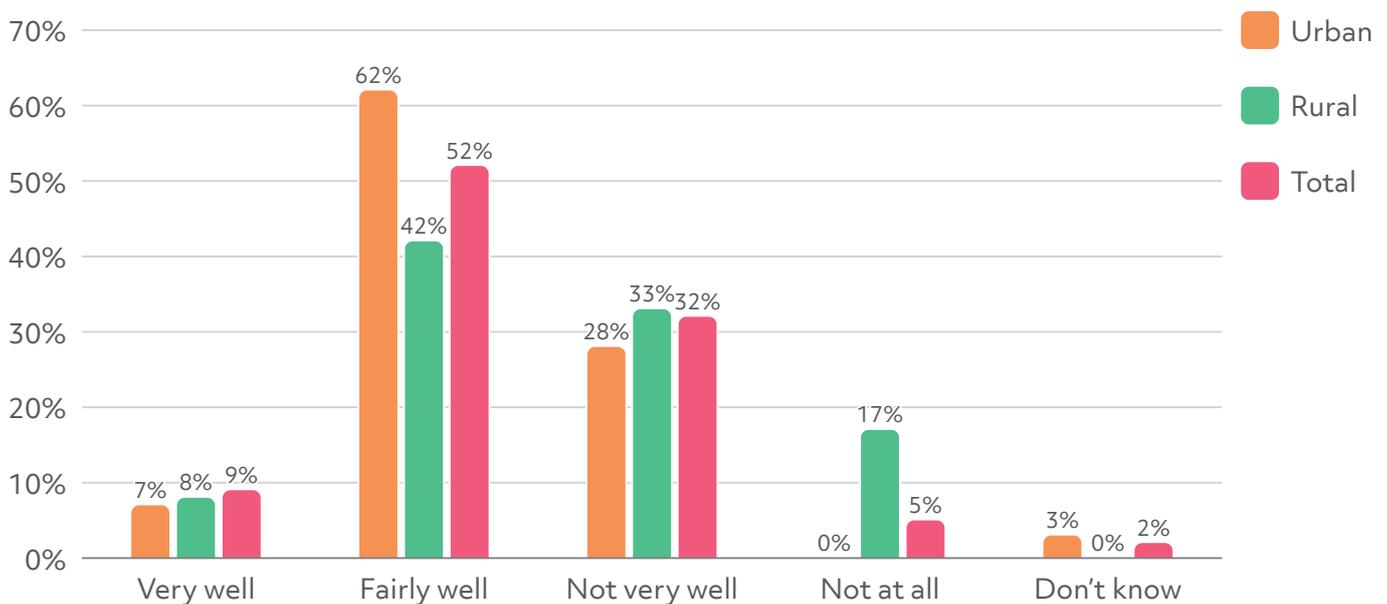
### 5.1.5 Wider engagement with third sector

Respondents were asked, regarding their local area, if there was a transparent and effective system in place to enable the broader third sector’s views to be properly represented – such as a local third sector forum.

The results for this question were positive with more than half (52%) of respondents answering they had a system in place that worked ‘Fairly well’ with a further 9% stating that it worked ‘Very well’. However, 32% of respondents said the system did not work very well with a further 5% saying it did not work at all. Two percent of respondents answered that they did not know.



**Q15:** There is a transparent and effective system in place (e.g. a local third sector network/forum) to enable the broader sector views to be properly represented in all CSP planning processes. (%)



Urban respondents were more likely to be positive about the system in place, with 69% answering this way (62% saying ‘Fairly well’ and 7% saying ‘Very well’). Twenty-eight percent of urban respondents said the system did not work very well. By comparison, rural respondents were equally split with 50% positive responses (42% for ‘Fairly well’ and 8% for ‘Very well’) and 50% negative responses (33% for ‘Not very well’ and 17% ‘Not at all’).

Respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers to provide more detail or their reasoning, with 23 providing additional information. A number of respondents mentioned issues with data sharing, providing examples either of too much information being shared in an unorganised way causing the process to be

overwhelming, or information only being shared in a top-down manner. In both cases this led to confusing or insufficient feedback.

**66** *“There is a third sector forum which is currently under review as the TSI and the organisations feel a lot of information is shared in a top-down manner.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“There are many emails and sometimes confusion on what you are completing feedback for. The effort is well placed just might need to be tighter strategically from comms.”*

(Local third sector)

*“No, views are not being shared, not being fed back and information is not being shared via TSI in the opposite direction. Its failing and no longer worth sending our own representative to, we prioritise other meetings ahead of it.”*

(Local authority Health and Social Care Partnership)

Furthermore, as mentioned above two respondents highlighted having a limited connection with the TSI which has led to lower expectations and involvement and to third sector organisations prioritising elsewhere, particularly if they are already struggling with capacity and resources; a barrier mentioned many times in previous and future questions.

**66** *“Connection with the TSI is minimal with a low expectation of any positive outcomes from being involved.”*

(Local third sector)

In addition, many respondents cited a lack of resources as a major challenge in having a transparent and effective system in place. In some cases, there was already an acceptable system in place, but funding and resource cuts have meant this is no longer viable and organisations have had to adapt by changing priorities, cutting back and merging their focus on children, young people and families into wider remits.

**66** *“There is no resource [for] this work strand, therefore we focus on providing forum meetings, supporting third sector liaison/ reps through guidance they have agreed, and we also take part where possible and where most likely to have a greater impact in helping keep third sector connected and up to date.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“The system is breaking down this year due to the local authority withdrawing communication and consultation post pandemic. At the same time policy demands are increasing on an exhausted voluntary sector workforce that is experiencing real term cuts. Therefore, there is a need for voluntary sector to reduce commitments and refocus on narrower goals.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

Additionally, attendance issues were another reason that third sector staff feel that their views may not be properly represented across all aspects of the CSP planning and delivery cycle. The responses below show a mix of attendance issues on multiple levels and as such could contribute to limited discussion and involvement of the third sector. While some respondents reported other CSPP partners not attending local

forums regularly, other respondents also identified attendance problems in terms of third sector organisations attending the local forums. It could be inferred that such attendance problems could be attributed to capacity or communication problems.

**66** *“The local 3rd sector forum has extended an open invitation to the CSP [governance group] to speak with the wider sector. They have accepted that invitation several times but there isn’t regular attendance by [other] CSPP members.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“We have an established CYP forum but recently this has had limited attendance.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“Those who choose to engage, do so – those who don’t, don’t.”*

(Local third sector)

However, respondents also provided some positive examples of having successful and valuable local third sector forums which see a range of views being included and represented. As mentioned, there are also areas that previously had successful forums that have recently begun to struggle.

**66** *“We facilitate the Voluntary Sector Children’s Services Forum which has been meeting regularly since before 2010.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“The HSCP provides funding for the Children’s Services team in the TSI. The Citywide Forum, which is supported by the TSI, provides over 100 reps through a transparent process to ensure that there is a broad spectrum of views.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“In my experience this is a mixed picture. We had a very effective third sector forum focused on children and young people but due to funding cuts this is no longer functioning. I’m aware that there are other forums facilitated by the TSI (I’m a member of the Mental Health Forum) and this seems to work reasonably effectively.”*

(Local third sector)

## 5.2 Support and resources

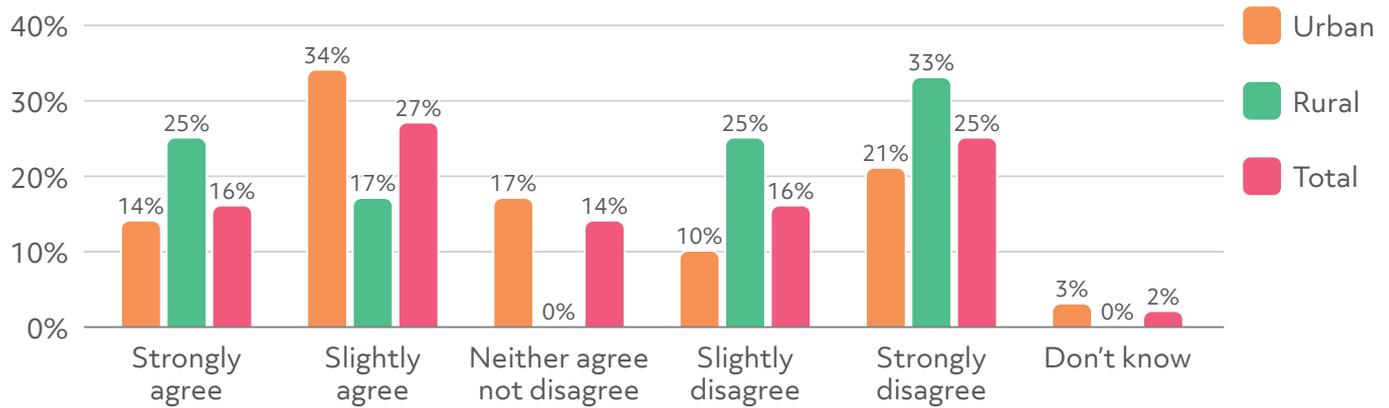
The following section of the survey focused on support and resources.

### 5.2.1 Third sector resourcing

The first question in this section asked respondents to consider if their local Third Sector Interface is adequately resourced to co-ordinate representation from the sector and provide necessary support to representatives, using a scale of ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Slightly agree’, ‘Neither agree nor disagree’, ‘Slightly disagree’, ‘Strongly disagree’, and ‘Don’t know’. This produced a varied result with only a 2% (1 person) difference between ‘Slightly agree’ (27%) and ‘Strongly disagree’ (25%). Furthermore, ‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Slightly disagree’ both received 16%. Overall, this meant that agree had 43% while disagree had 41%, thus also having only a 2% difference (1 person).



**Q17:** The local Third Sector Interface (TSI) is adequately resourced to co-ordinate representation from the sector and provide necessary support to representatives. (%)



When considering differences between rural and urban areas we can see some differences. Urban areas were more likely to answer 'Slightly agree' (34%) compared to rural areas (17%), however still had 21% for 'Strongly disagree'. Moreover, rural areas were more likely to disagree overall at 58%, with the majority being 'Strongly disagree' (33%). However rural areas did have the same number of respondents for both 'Slightly disagree' and 'Strongly agree' (25%).

When given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers, eight out of 20 respondents identified problems of time constraints and described resource and capacity restrictions. Respondents shared that limited funding prevents the third sector from having the capacity to effectively carry out its role or to go beyond core functions.

**66** *"We get very limited funding from Scot Gov and none from the local council to provide anything over and above core activities. There is not easy access to anyone and TSI are not included."*

(Third Sector Interface)

*"There are many strategic and layers of meetings with limited time to consult and actually deliver outcomes. Funding from Scottish Government does not allow for additional capacity to be built within the organisation."*

(Third Sector Interface)

*"Capacity required to genuinely involve across policy areas. Tends to end with only small group involved of CSPP members."*

(Local third sector)

However, one respondent shared they felt their local Third Sector Interface was adequately resourced, and that issues of information sharing and attendance were the biggest issue for their area.

**66** *"(...) I believe TSI seems to be adequately resourced and staffed but not consistently attending on our behalf, reps not reporting back, I'm not aware of a reporting mechanism in place that supports this and then cascade information."*

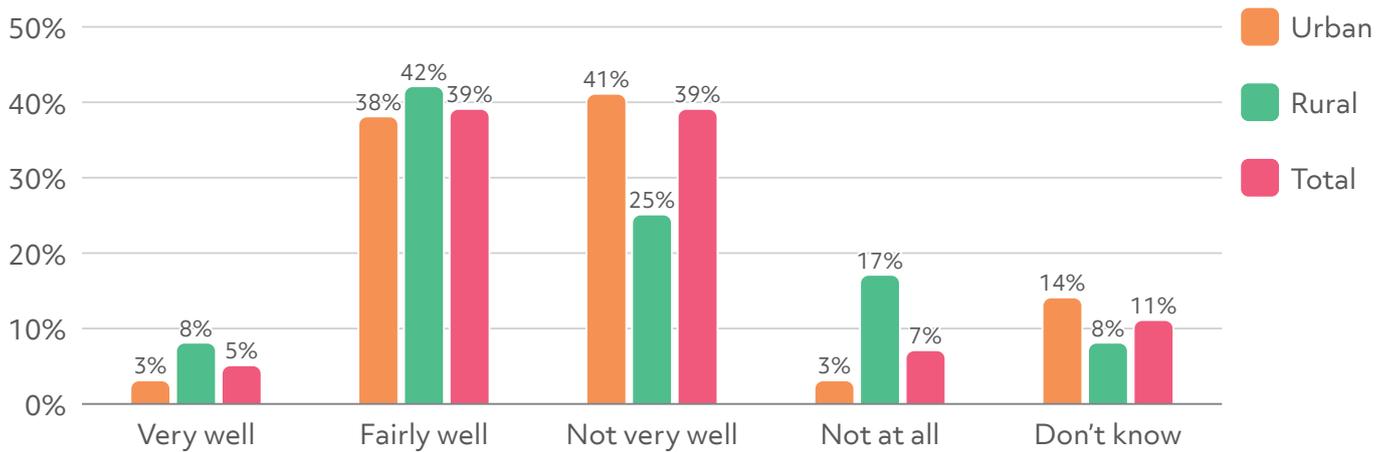
(Local Authority Health and Social Care Partnership)

### 5.2.2 Communication

In addition to asking respondents about TSIs being adequately resourced, the survey further asked respondents whether there was good communication with the wider third sector and easy access to clear information about their local Children’s Services Plan and local children’s services planning arrangements with opportunities to participate in key tasks across each three-year cycle. The results show a tie between works ‘Fairly Well’ and does not work very well at 39%.



**Q18:** There is good communication with the wider third sector and easy access to clear information about the Children’s Services Plan and local CSPP arrangements with opportunities to participate in processes across each three-year cycle. (%)



Results between urban and rural areas were mixed, with rural respondents slightly more pleased with the communication with the wider third sector. Fifty percent of rural respondents answered positively, with 42% saying ‘Fairly well’ and 8% ‘Very well’. 42% percent of rural respondents felt that communication did not work very well (25%) or ‘Not at all’ (17%). This is compared to urban respondents who were more likely to be negative, albeit with a more even split, with 41% positive responses (38% answering ‘Fairly well’ and 3% ‘Very well’), and 44% negative (41% ‘Not very well’ and 3% ‘Not at all’).

Additionally, 20 respondents provided feedback in question 19 and identified issues of communication, specifically highlighting problems of sharing information. This was identified as a problem with the local authority and Third Sector Interfaces.

**66** *“It hasn’t been possible to get public sector partners to share the draft version with the wider third sector. This is because they do not want it being held up from the real decision makers at CPP committee level. However, that can at times feel frustrating, as the third sector is invited and expected to contribute work and data towards the plan, but can’t see the final outcome, although the plan itself has gone live and financial decisions regarding carrying out the plan have also already been made. So, that doesn’t quite stack up. On the other hand, everyone works hard at building relationships so that we can all across sectors work as well as possible together, despite the challenges of the whole CPP structure and system as it currently stands.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

***“I believe TSI seems to be adequately resourced and staffed but not consistently attending on our behalf, reps not reporting back, I’m not aware of a reporting mechanism in place that supports this and then cascade information.”***

(Local Authority Health and Social Care Partnership)

***“The TSI communicates well with the sector but does not seem to be well received by Council.”***

(Local third sector)

It was further highlighted, as mentioned previously, that problems surrounding time constraints prevent effective communication and therefore engagement. Some respondents explained that they are not given enough time to engage or engage effectively. One respondent felt that the communication was there for those that wanted to access it.

**66** ***“The communication is there for those who want it.”***

(Local third sector)

***“There was wide consultation for the last Children’s Service plan, with a number of meetings are ways for people to express their views. This time, the production of the plan has been rushed, with little time for consultation.”***

(Third Sector Interface)

***“Often asked for contributions at the last minute. Earlier engagement would be welcomed.”***

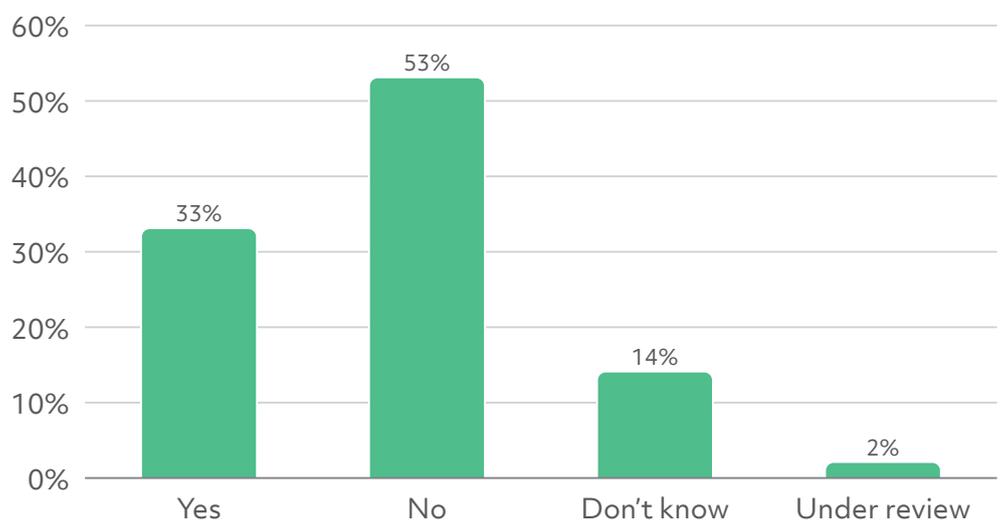
(Third Sector Interface)

### 5.2.3 Dedicated children and families role

The survey asked respondents whether their area’s TSI had a dedicated children and families officer or similar role. Of the 43 respondents who answered this question, 23 (53%) informed us that their areas TSI does not have a dedicated children and families officer or similar role. In contrast, 14 (33%) respondents informed us that their area’s TSI does have such a role. The remaining six (14%) respondents answered that they do not know, and one respondent answered that this was currently under review.



**Q20:** Does your area’s Third Sector Interface (TSI) have a dedicated children and families officer or a similar role? Please say if you do not know. (%)



Amongst the respondents who answered no, eight provided reasons why this is currently the case. Four respondents answered that they have an officer with responsibility for children and families within their wider role, though protecting this element of their role could be a struggle.

**66** *“No. The [facilitators] remit covers all age ranges and specialities. Involvement with so many workstreams can leave the post holder overstretched.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“Someone has this within their role and is very committed, but they don’t have enough resources.”*

(Local third sector)

*“Mixed picture regarding this, I believe not officially but appears to be associated with one staff member who has gone from full time to part time for the organisation. I have not seen anyone else step into the space with them or appearing to be supporting that role now it has substantially less hours associated with it. I don’t think they can keep up with the role anymore.”*

(Local authority Health and Social Care Partnership)

Four respondents mentioned that funding limitations prevented having a dedicated children and families officer or similar role within their organisation.

**66** *“No. [Third Sector Interface] has started a conversation with statutory partners about the use of WFWF monies to recruit a dedicated CYP worker, however we are led to believe all monies for this year have been allocated.”*

(Third Sector Interface)

*“In the past this was a role funded by the council, but funding ended several years ago. There is a new role focused on the implementation of The Promise.”*

(Local third sector)

*“No, due to limited resources, we use sector reps for their expertise.”*

(Local third sector)



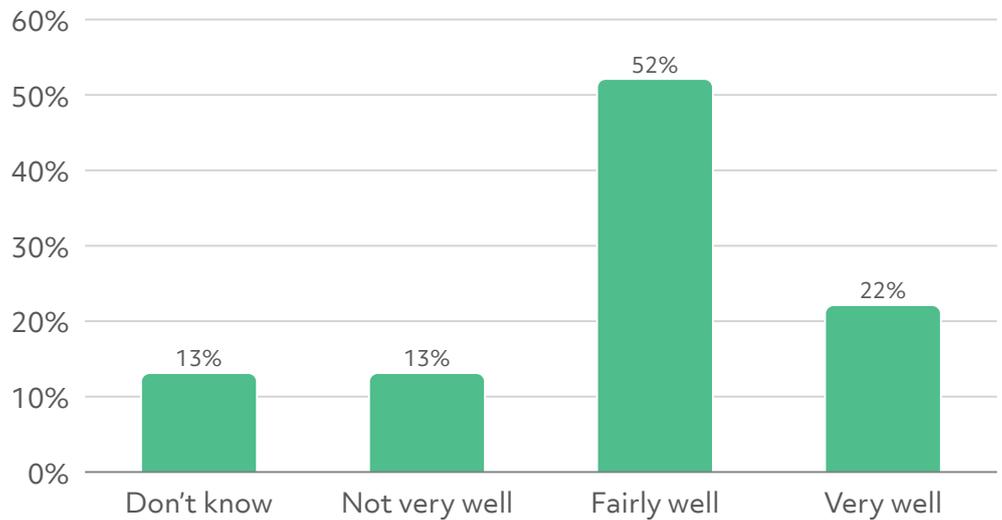
## 6. Strategic Leads Menti results

As mentioned previously the Strategic Leads Network were also asked four questions based on this survey during a presentation at a Children’s Services Planning Strategic Leads Network meeting. Two of these questions have been analysed in previous sections (4.1.2 and 4.1.4). The remaining questions that were posed to the CSP SLN included how well they believed the third sector is involved in Children’s Services Planning in their area and an open question asking what they believed would support meaningful third sector engagement in Children’s Services Planning in their area.

**6.1** Respondents were asked how well they believed the third sector is involved in Children’s Services Planning in their area of operation. More than half (52%) of respondents believed the third sector to be fairly well involved, with a further 22% believing that this is done ‘Very well’. An even number of respondents (13%) believed that the third sector was not involved very well or did not know how the third sector is involved.



How well would you say the third sector is involved in Children’s Services Planning in your area? (%)



**6.2** The Children’s Services Planning Strategic Leads Network was given an open-ended question that asked what would support meaningful third sector engagement in Children’s Services Planning in their local area, from which 18 responses were collected.

Nine respondents from the Menti survey suggested that TSIs should be included and participate more actively in strategic Children’s Services Planning with suggestions of different ways this could be achieved such as the third sector becoming active within the local governance forum and participating in the meetings, power sharing and workshop activity with third sector representatives.

**66** *“Increased offer of capacity from TSI.”*

(Strategic Lead Network member)

*“Third sector taking strategic leadership for elements of the CSP.”*

(Strategic Lead Network member)

*“Power sharing.”*

(Strategic Lead Network member)

*“Being involved in all elements of service planning. Active members of our forums.”*

(Strategic Lead Network member)

*“Better TSI engagement in planning partnership, appreciate capacity can be a challenge.”*

(Strategic Lead Network member)

*“The TSI participating in partnership meetings.”*

(Strategic Lead Network member)

***“Regular workshop activity including third sector reps.”***

(Strategic Lead Network member)

***“Participation in Strategic planning.”***

(Strategic Lead Network member)

***“Perhaps we should consider third sector inclusion and participation in these sessions in future.”***

(Strategic Lead Network member)

One respondent felt that there is already meaningful engagement and that due to the number of organisations involved it is understandable that not all third sector organisations are going to feel directly involved.

***66 “They already have meaningful engagement. Sometimes it’s hard when there are so many organisations involved for everyone to feel involved.”***

(Strategic Lead Network member)

While another respondent believed that meaningful engagement was currently improving.

***66 “This is in development and improving – relationship building is key and utilising current structures better both from TSI and [other CSP partners] viewpoints will further improve this.”***

(Strategic Lead Network member)



## **7. The Supporting the Third Sector Project (TSI/Third Sector only)**

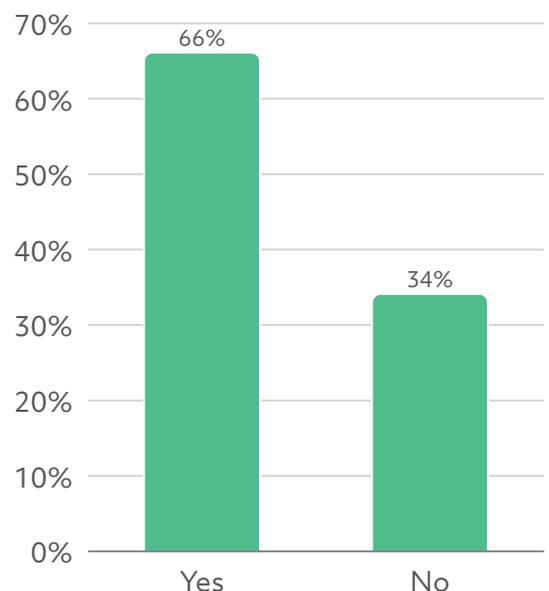
The last part of this survey focused specifically on the STTS Project itself. The aim of this section was to gather an understanding of what things the respondents would like the project to focus on over the coming year and of how many of the respondents were aware of what activities the project currently delivers such as facilitating the TSI Children’s Services Network meetings and producing the newsletter.

### **7.1 TSI Children Services networking events**

#### **7.1.1**

When asked, 66% of respondents answered that they were aware of TSI Children Services networking events held last year, with 34% answering that they were not.

 Were you aware of TSI Children Services networking events held last year? (%)

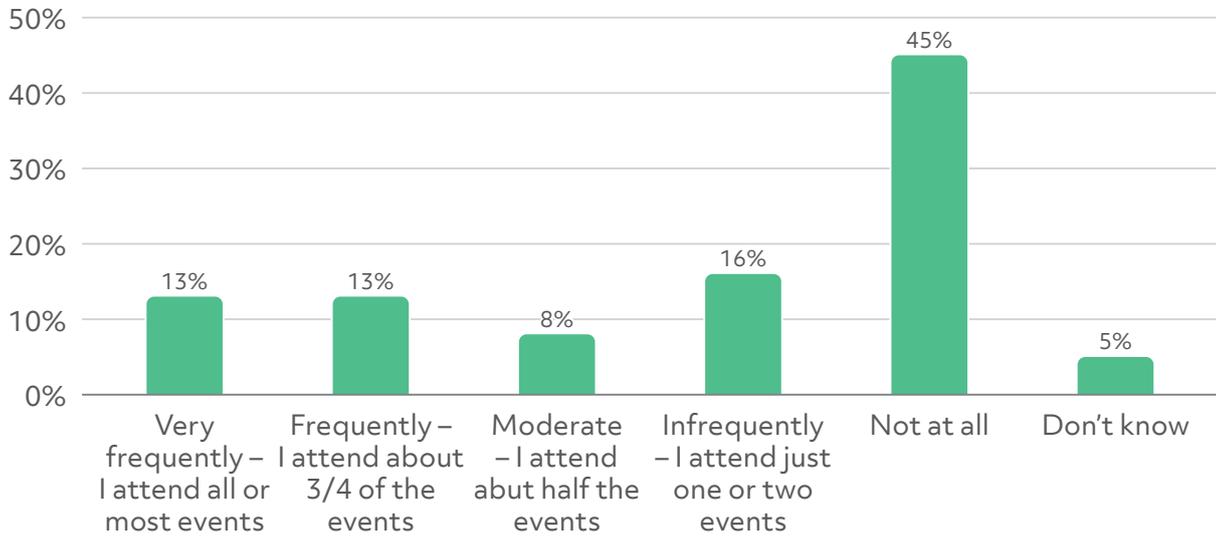


### 7.1.2

The majority of respondents (50%) have attended a TSI Children Services events last year in some capacity. Compared to 45% of respondents who stated they had not.



How often did you attend TSI Children Services networking events last year? (%)



### 7.1.3

Respondents shared examples of what makes these events helpful to them, with 16 responses received. This included having a shared space that gave the ability to have peer support, sharing information and knowledge and given the opportunity to network with others across Scotland. Others highlighted the choice of speakers has been beneficial for them, gaining more insight into the relationship between the third sector and the local authority and also having more direct contact with the Scottish Government.

**“Being able to share, talk through challenges and learn.”**

**“Opportunities to network and share ideas with other TSIs. Speakers from Scottish Government to update on issues and plans.”**

**“The willingness of participants to be honest about the challenges they face.”**

**“Information sharing, Informative speakers, national overview, dedicated to thematic area, dedicated support available upon request.”**

## 7.2 Newsletter

### 7.2.1

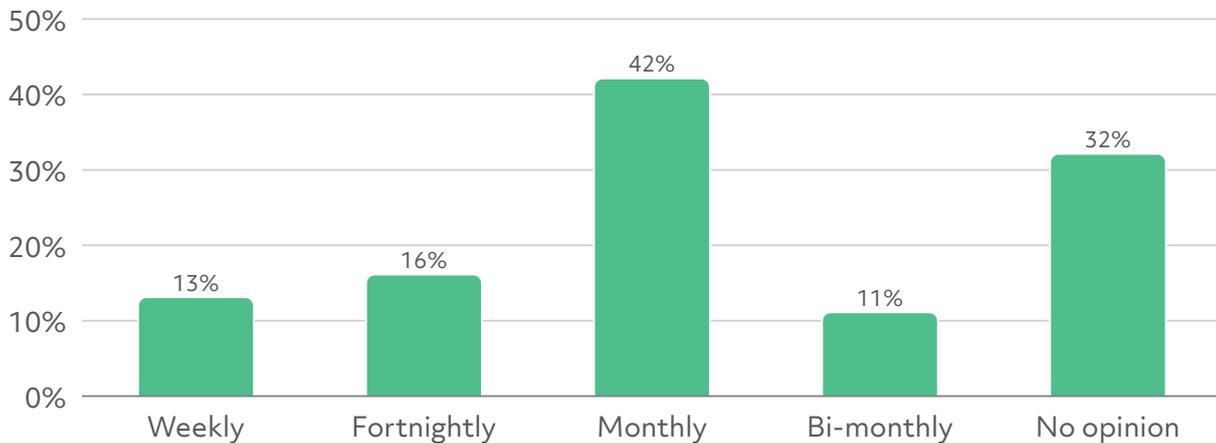
The survey also asked respondents about the content the STTS Project newsletter that is produced fortnightly and sought views on what should be included to make it a more helpful resource to the third sector, with 16 respondents completing this question. The feedback was positive with 5 respondents highlighting their happiness with the current content.

Other third sector respondents recommended the following:

- Flagging policy milestones
- More funding/policy information
- Examples of good practice from different CSPP areas/case studies
- How funding challenges have been overcome
- More information on Whole Family Wellbeing Funding, Children’s Community Mental Health Wellbeing Fund, Commissioning, and The Promise.

Respondents were also asked about the frequency of the newsletter which currently is produced fortnightly. The majority of respondents (42%) preferred the newsletter to be produced monthly. Followed by 32% who shared that they held no opinion. Of the remaining respondents 16% opted for the newsletter to continue fortnightly, whereas 11% chose bi-monthly.

 How often should we produce the newsletter? (%)



### 7.3 Policy areas

#### 7.3.1

The following question presented respondents with a list of policy areas and asked those respondents which areas were of interest to them. As can be seen in the chart below all areas presented were regarded as important areas of policy and therefore were of interest. The most popular policy areas for focus included family support (89%) followed by children and young people’s participation (82%).

More than 80% of third sector respondents identified the following areas as of most interest:

- Family Support (89%)
- Children and Young People’s Participation (82%).

More than 70% of respondents identified the following areas of most interest:

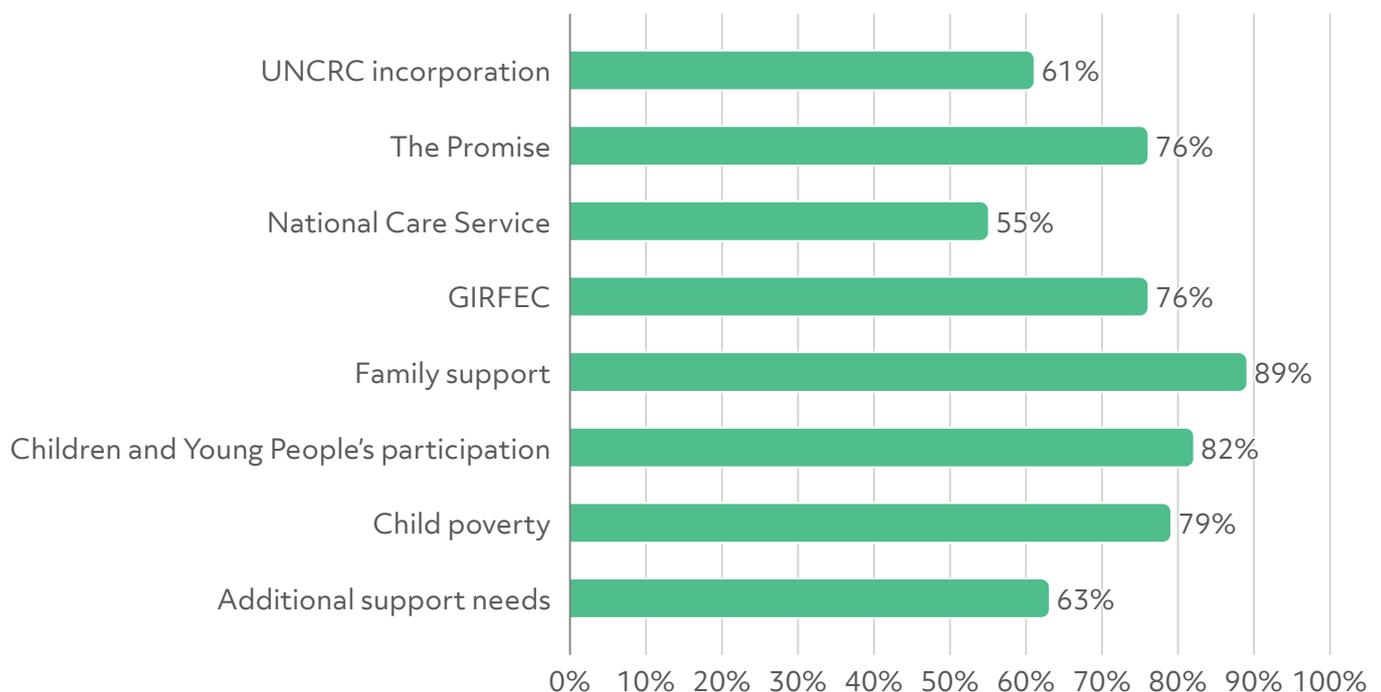
- Child Poverty (79%)
- GIRFEC (76%)
- The Promise (76%).

We also gave respondents the opportunity to answer with other examples that were not listed. These suggestions included:

- Youth Justice
- Kinship Care
- Young people/Children/Infant Mental Health and emotional wellbeing
- Child Protection
- Young Carers
- Drug and Alcohol use among children and young people
- Parental work to support change
- Children and Young people living in families with no recourse to public funds.



What policy areas are of most interest to you? Choose ALL that apply.



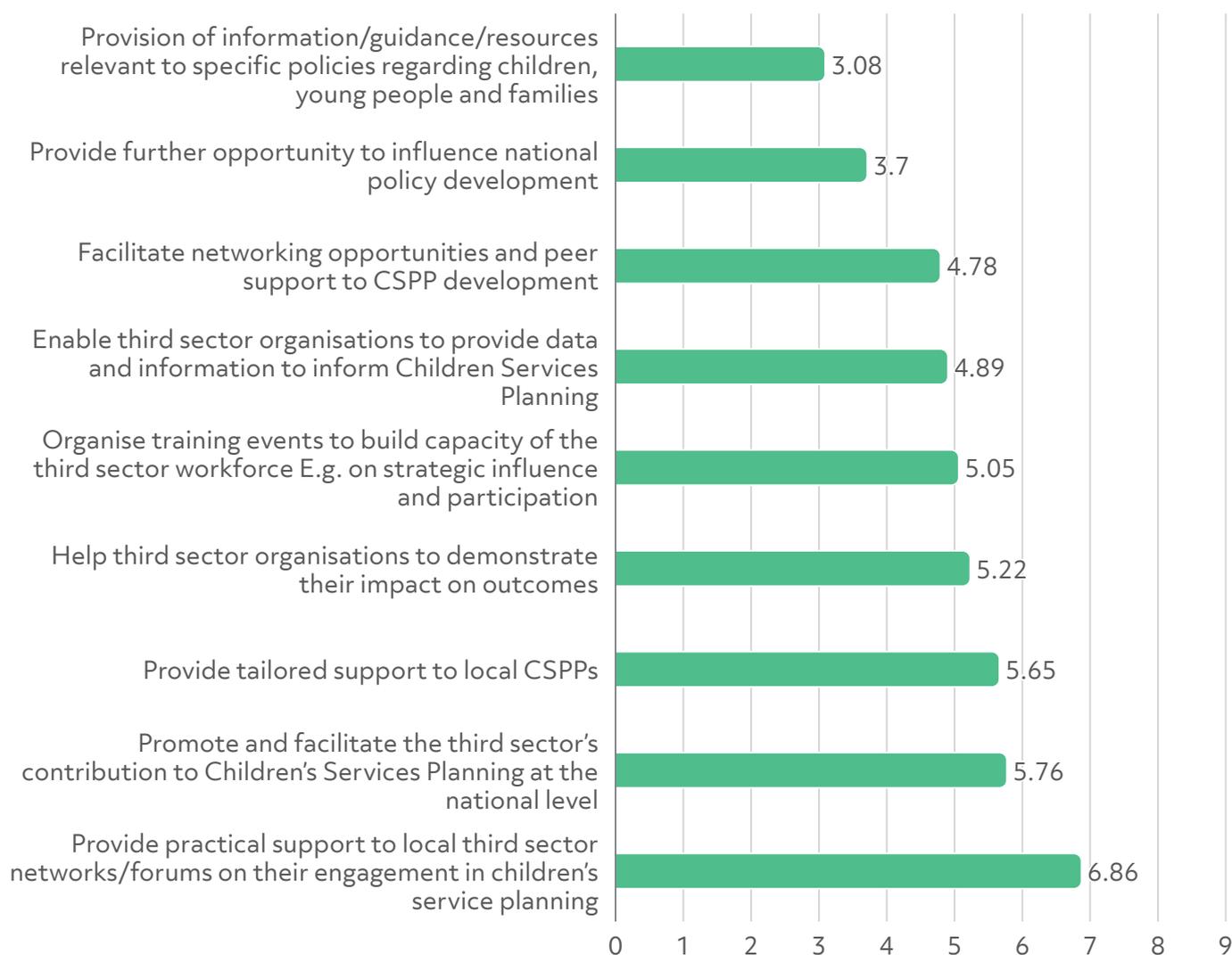
## 7.4 Further guidance and support

In addition to establishing policy areas of most interest, this research also aimed to identify how the STTS Project can best provide assistance to strengthen participation of the third sector in Children's Services Planning and CSP arrangements. A list of possible options was suggested to third sector participants, with an 'other' section provided to make recommendations. Third sector respondents were asked to rate the given options on a scale of most useful (1) to least useful (9).

As can be seen from the chart on page 32, the most preferred answer was the provision of information / resources relevant to specific policies regarding, children, young people and families, followed by provide opportunity to influence national policy development.



What further guidance and/or support is required to help strengthen participation of the third sector in Children’s Services Planning and CSPP arrangements? Please rank the following statements from most useful (1) to least useful (9) (Average)



There was feedback regarding the need to get things right on a local level before thinking on a national basis, thus it could be suggested that the STTS Project could have some focus on specific local areas for support such as their local forum.

**66 “We need to get it right locally before we can think nationally currently.”**

One respondent proposed focusing on the needs of the service user and their role in influencing decision-making.

**66 “Recognise the needs of the service user in influencing the decision making – where does the service user stand in all of this?”**

Other respondents identified specific areas of focus to advocate for such as resources for every CSPP area to have a dedicated Children and Young Person Services Role and through changes in accountability would be helpful.

**66 “Recognise the needs of the service user in influencing the decision-making – where does the service user stand in all of this?”**

*“Advocate for resource specifically to support third sector engagement e.g. a dedicated TSI children’s services role in every LA area.”*



## 8. Conclusions

This survey provides valuable evidence about the nature and extent of third sector involvement in Children’s Services Planning across Scotland and the role the STTS Project can play to support the third sector to be active partners in planning and policy development. We were pleased to receive responses from across Scotland with 22 CSPP areas represented. While the data does not capture the full picture of third sector involvement in Children’s Services Planning it provides a powerful snapshot of the current situation in 2023.

One striking feature of the data was the huge variety of responses to individual questions. It is clear that the experiences of respondents were mixed and varied considerably across the country, with some responses more positive than others. This makes drawing overall conclusions challenging. However a number of common themes did emerge;

- Most respondents recognised that the third sector was involved to some extent in Children’s Services Planning in their area, although the nature and extent of this varied considerably.
- Respondents to the Strategic Leads Network Menti questions were more positive about the extent of third sector involvement than STTS survey respondents were, indicating that there may be some difference in perspective on this topic between sectors as well as across different CSPP authority areas.
- There were mechanisms in place in many areas to support the broader views of the third sector to be heard, including local third sector forums for example.
- However, it was fairly rare for TSIs to have a dedicated children and families officer in their team (only 1/3 indicated they had specialist capacity).
- Furthermore, most survey respondents felt that there was not a large variety of third sector partners involved in Children’s Services Planning arrangements at present.
- Local commissioning arrangements were not seen to support local collaboration between Children’s Services Planning partners.

Overall, we conclude from this survey evidence that, while some good practice exists, there is still some way to go to ensure that the third sector role is playing a full and meaningful role in children’s services planning across Scotland.

In terms of findings in relation to the STTS Project itself, it was clear that:

- While some survey respondents were engaging in STTS Project activities and opportunities, many were not and further awareness raising of these could be beneficial.
- Respondents felt that the project could provide the most value through supporting third sector partners’ understanding of key policies relevant to children, young people and families and enabling their participation in policy development.

- There was a wide variety of policy topics of relevance to respondents, with family support, participation and child poverty being the most popular.



## 9. Recommendations

In response to the findings from the survey, we make the following recommendations;

- Children's Services Planning partnerships should continue to review third sector participation in key tasks over each 3-year Children's Services Planning cycle and identify where this could be strengthened. The *How Good is our Third Sector participation in Children's Services Planning? Self-evaluation* tool provides a useful framework to support local improvement conversations.
- Third Sector Interfaces should continue to highlight opportunities for wider local third sector partners to contribute to local Children's Services Planning, and support their participation where possible.
- Funding for Third Sector Interfaces should take into account adequate resourcing arrangements to ensure they and their members have the capacity to fully engage with Children's Services Planning locally.
- The STTS Project should continue to support TSIs and their members to actively contribute to Children's Services Planning through:
  - Raising awareness of national policies relating to children, young people and families.
  - Support TSIs and their members to be heard in, and influence policy development processes.
  - Providing tools, resources and capacity-building support to aid CSP.
  - Sharing findings and learning from local areas to support the roll out of good practice.
  - Rerun this survey annually to assess progress and change over time.



## Appendix A: STTS Survey (May) – SurveyMonkey Questions

**STTS Survey (May 2023): Annual survey of local Children's Services Planning arrangements to assess extent of TSI/third sector participation and associated needs**

### The Supporting The Third Sector Project (STTS)

Children in Scotland's Supporting The Third Sector (STTS) Project supports third sector partners to become more demonstrably involved in local and national planning and decision making aimed at improving outcomes for children, young people, and families. This involves strengthening local governance, delivery and support structures with clear paths for effective participation of the third sector locally. Specifically, through a line of sight to improving the local Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and their members' contribution to relevant engagement on policies, decision-making and strategic planning/reporting requirements.

To find out more about the STTS Project click here: [Children in Scotland](#)

### What is this survey about?

In this survey, we want to understand the extent of third sector involvement in Children's Services Planning arrangements in the 30 Children's Services Planning partnerships (CSPPs). We would like to provide a robust Scotland-wide picture of third sector engagement and planning at a local and national level. This will help us to understand the areas of strength in relation to participation and engagement of the sector and areas for further development.

This survey is based on the self-evaluation tool: *How Good is our Third Sector participation in Children's Services Planning*. This has been co-developed through the STTS Project and the Children's Services Planning Strategic Leads Network as a useful resource to aid local self-evaluation by CSPPs to consider all aspects of collaboration with the third sector to improve the quality and demonstrate impact of services for children and young people.

**The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.**

### Sharing survey results

The survey is anonymous but we have asked for details about your role and area so we can understand further the needs of the third sector. The STTS Project will use this information for planning this year and we will also share survey findings with Scottish Government policy teams and other key stakeholders.

### Who and when?

This survey is for Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), national and local third sector organisations who work with TSIs, and Children's Services Planning strategic leads in each CSPP, to reflect views of local CSPP partners.

**Closing Date: 30 June 2023**

## Follow up opportunities

We are interested in creating some case studies following on from the survey. Please let us know if you would be willing to contribute local practice examples to help us develop these.

### About you

#### 1. Type of organisation

Please choose one that best describes the type of organisation.

- Third Sector Interface
- National third sector organisation
- Regional third sector organisation
- Local third sector
- Community organisation
- Local authority Health and Social Care Partnership
- NHS
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

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#### 2. Area of operation

Please answer this questionnaire with reference to one/your main geographic area of operation only (using local authority boundaries)

#### OR

If you are a **national organisation** operating in more than one Local Authority area, you can either:

- Answer from a national perspective and tick 'national/more than one area' in the drop-down boxes, or
- Complete more than one survey, relating to each of the local authority areas that you would like to Comment on (i.e. if you wish to respond with reference to more than one local authority area, it will be necessary to complete another questionnaire).

Thank you.

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### 3. Job Role

Choose one that best describes your role.

- Chief Executive Officer
  - Director or Head of Service
  - Strategic Manager
  - Service Manager
  - Development Officer
  - Frontline worker/Practitioners
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other (please specify)
- 
- 

## STTS Survey (May 2023): Annual survey of local Children's Services Planning arrangements to assess extent of TSI/third sector participation and associated needs

### Part 1: Participation of the third sector

Focusing on the participation of the third sector in Children's Services Planning, please rate how well or otherwise you feel current arrangements work in your area of operation, using the scale below.

Please use the following scale, being: Very well; Fairly well; Not very well; Not at all; Don't know

#### Consultation

4. Third sector data has been used alongside statutory service data to identify needs and priorities for children, young people and families and inform collaborative improvement of children and young people's outcomes.

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Not very well
- Not at all
- Don't know

5. In developing new 3-year Children's Services Plans, commissioned and non commissioned services are involved in the scoping/mapping and identifying of gaps for the CSPP.

- Very well
- Fairly well

- Not very well
- Not at all
- Don't know

6. Please use the space below if you are able to elaborate on your answers.

### Resources and finance decisions

7. How well does the joint strategic commissioning process encourage collaboration and joined up working across relevant CSPP partners to ensure best use of individual and collective resources to safeguard, support and promote wellbeing of children, young people and families?

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Not very well
- Not at all
- Don't know

8. How is the third sector involved in resource discussions (E.g. budgets, assets, workforce) and decision-making?

Please say if you do not know.

9. Within your CSPP area, which multi-agency forum within local CSPP arrangements makes decisions on the allocation and use of Scottish Government funds that have a collaborative purpose? E.g. Whole Family Wellbeing Funding.

Please say if you do not know.

## STTS Survey (May 2023): Annual survey of local Children's Services Planning arrangements to assess extent of TSI/third sector participation and associated needs

### Part 2: Third sectors representation within the planning structure

Please now consider the representation of the third sector in Children's Services Planning.

#### Roles and Expectations

**10.** Through co-ordination, facilitation and representation, a large variety of third sector organisations are involved in Children's Service Planning arrangements.

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Not very well
- Not at all
- Don't know

**11.** To what extent is the third sector represented at different levels of the CSPP?

Please choose one statement below which you believe best describes the extent to which the third sector is represented in local Children's Services Planning in your area of operation E.g. thematic priority groups, strategic planning group, leadership/governance group, multi-agency practice/Learning and Development group.

- The third sector is represented at all levels within the CSPP
- The third sector is involved but its representation and engagement is limited or inconsistent
- The third sector is consulted with but not represented at any strategic planning groups
- The third sector's involvement is minimal or non-existent
- I do not know how the third sector is involved in Children's Services Planning

**12.** Third sector organisations are clear who represents them across local CSPP groups/structures and know the routes to contribute via their representatives.

- Works very well
- Works fairly well
- Does not work very well
- Does not work at all
- Don't know

**13.** Please use the space below if you are able to elaborate on your answer.

**14.** There is a shared understanding and reasonable expectation of the role of Third Sector Interfaces and the third sector representatives within the CSPP.

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**15.** There is a transparent and effective system in place (e.g. a local third sector network/forum) to enable the broader sector views to be properly represented in all CSP planning processes.

- Works very well
- Works fairly well
- Does not work very well
- Does not work at all
- Don't know

**16.** Please use the space below if you are able to elaborate on your answer.

### Support and Resources

**17.** The local Third Sector Interface (TSI) is adequately resourced to co-ordinate representation from the sector and provide necessary support to representatives.

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**18.** There is good communication with the wider third sector and easy access to clear information about the Children’s Services Plan and local CSPP arrangements with opportunities to participate in processes across each 3-year cycle.

- Works very well
- Works fairly well
- Does not work very well
- Does not work at all
- Don’t know

**19.** Please use the space below if you are able to elaborate on your answer.

**20.** Does your area’s Third Sector Interface (TSI) have a dedicated children and families officer or a similar role?

Please say if you do not know.

**STTS Survey (May 2023): Annual survey of local Children’s Services Planning arrangements to assess extent of TSI/third sector participation and associated needs**

**Part 3: The Supporting The Third Sector Project (TSI/Third Sector Only)**

This section asks about the STTS Project. Please leave these questions blank if they are not applicable.

**21.** Were you aware of TSI Children Services Networking Events held last year?

- Yes
- No

**22.** How often did you attend TSI Children Services Networking Events last year?

- Very frequently – I attended all or most events
- Frequently – I attended about 3/4 of the events
- Moderate – I attended about half the events
- Infrequently – I attended just one or two events
- Not at all
- Don’t know

**23.** What have you found helpful about the events you have attended?

Please skip if not applicable.

**24.** The STTS Project produces a fortnightly newsletter highlighting the latest policy, guidance, news, and events. What type of content would be helpful to see in future newsletters?

**25.** How often should we produce the newsletter?

- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Bi-monthly
- No opinion

**26.** What policy areas are of most interest to you?

Choose ALL that apply.

- Additional support needs
- Child poverty
- Children and Young People's participation
- Family support
- GIRFEC
- National Care Service
- The Promise
- UNCRC Incorporation

Other (please specify)

27. What further guidance and/or support is required to help strengthen participation of the third sector in Children's Services Planning and CSPP arrangements?

Please rank the following statements from most useful (1) to least useful (9):

- Provide tailored support to local CSPPs
- Provide practical support to local third sector networks/forums on their engagement in children's service planning
- Facilitate networking opportunities and peer support to CSPP development
- Organise training events to build capacity of the third sector workforce E.g. on strategic influence and participation
- Help third sector organisations to demonstrate their impact on outcomes
- Promote and facilitate the third sector's contribution to Children's Services Planning at the national level
- Provide further opportunity to influence national policy development
- Enable third sector organisations to provide data and information to inform Children Services Planning
- Provision of information/guidance/resources relevant to specific policies regarding children, young people and families

28. Other (Please write suggestions in box below)

29. Any other comments?

**STTS Survey (May 2023): Annual survey of local Children's Services Planning arrangements to assess extent of TSI/third sector participation and associated needs**

### Further contact

Responses to this survey will be anonymised. Provision of names and email addresses is optional. You are required to provide this information only if you would like to participate in the follow up case studies, receive notification of the findings, or if you would like to be included in future communications from Children in Scotland and/or STTS.

We will hold your data in accordance with our data protection policy and will only use it to contact you about STTS and Children in Scotland work.

Click here for further information: [childreninscotland.org.uk/privacy-policy/](https://childreninscotland.org.uk/privacy-policy/)

30. Name (optional)

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31. Email (optional)

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32. Are you happy for Children in Scotland and/or the STTS Project to keep in touch via email?

- Yes, I'd like to receive communications from both Children in Scotland and STTS
- Yes, only from the STTS, including this survey
- Yes, I'd like to receive communications from Children in Scotland only
- Yes, I'd like to receive communications about this survey only
- No, I'd prefer not to be contacted by either



## Appendix B: Strategic Leads Network meeting presentation questions

1. How well would you say the third sector is involved in Children's Services Planning in your area?

- Very well
- Fairly well
- Not very well
- Don't know

2. To what extent is the third sector represented at different levels of the CSPP?

- Represented at all levels within the CSPP
- Involved but its representation and engagement is limited or inconsistent
- Consulted with but represented at any strategic planning groups
- Involvement is minimal or non-existent
- Don't know

**3.** To what extent do you feel there is a shared understanding and reasonable expectation of the role of third sector representatives within the CSPP?

- Strongly agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**4.** What would help create meaningful third sector engagement in Children's Services Planning in your area?