



**Supporting the
Third Sector Project**

How good is our third sector participation in Children's Services Planning?

**Self-evaluation tool:
report on pilot sites**



Introduction

Self-evaluation for self-improvement has been a feature of improving services planning and delivery for many years. The “How Good” self-evaluation frameworks provide useful tools to help in the process of self-evaluation for settings to improve the quality of services for children and young people and aim for excellence.

This new framework, ‘How good is our third sector’s participation in Children’s Services Planning’, seeks to build on this positive response but takes a fresh look at developing needs, reflecting the increased capacity and capability created through strong collaboration with the third sector as a key partner within Children’s Services Planning Partnerships (CSPPs).

The following report provides case studies of two pilot areas, Inverclyde and South Ayrshire, where the How good is our third sector participation in children’s services self-evaluation tool was used by CSPPs alongside local third sector forums hosted by Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs). These pilots have provided valuable learning to take forward in expanding the tool’s use to other CSPPs across Scotland. However, further consideration should first be given in relation to practical changes needed for use of the tool, alongside creating the conditions for the third sector to participate in Children’s Services Planning fully and meaningfully.



Policy background

Both **Part 3 of the Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014** and the **Statutory Guidance on Part 3 (Children’s Services Planning) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** highlight the important role that the third sector plays within the local Children’s Services Planning process. Multiple roles for the third sector are defined including:

- The preparation of, and consultation on, the Children’s Services Plan, to ensure the plan is fully integrated and makes best use of all resources in the area to deliver on local priorities.
- Providing insight on the needs of the local population.
- Joining up with other local partners at every level to agree priorities and actions.
- Identifying all the links and key transition points between services.
- Representing the interests, views, concerns, and wishes of people who use, or are likely to use, any children’s or related services.
- Facilitating which services would be included in the Children’s Services Plan through an initial scoping exercise.
- Acting as the strategic group which is responsible for the development and delivery of the plan.
- Ensuring collaboration at every level. (i.e., strategic, operational, frontline).

The document, **Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families: Review of Children's Services Plans (2020-2023) and Strategic Engagement Activity (Scottish Government, 2022)** concludes that all plans included reference to the third sector. However, there was variation in the extent to which the third sector was integrated in the development of the plans' priorities and actions, use of data to identify needs, and in strategic planning and local delivery of services. Identified areas for further development included engagement with families, the wider community, and local workforce, including the third sector.

The Supporting the Third Sector (STTS) Project hosted an engagement session with third sector Children's Services Planning partners across Scotland in November 2022. Various challenges preventing the third sector participating in Children's Services Planning were identified. These challenges included the lack of sustainable and sufficient funding for the sector, limiting involvement in strategic planning. This impacted on staff participation within a CSPP role, including in relation to facilitating participation with children, young people, and families as identified in the statutory guidance.

Good relationships between CSPP partners were identified as a key factor in effective participation of the third sector. Leadership which values the role and understands the makeup of the sector is crucial; recognising that it is not one homogenous voice and acknowledging the breadth of the sector. National third sector organisations were highlighted as main contributors within planning processes due to their increased capacity. While there was acknowledgement of the excellent work these organisations deliver, it was felt that it did not fully represent the breadth of resources available locally.

The third sector has shown commitment, flexibility, and motivation regarding strategic involvement in the planning of children's services at a local and national level. However, there are structural barriers that make this commitment challenging. This report will identify these challenges and demonstrate how the use of the self-evaluation tool has helped to address these within two CSPPs. It will highlight opportunities which have arisen for early adopter CSPPs and establish recommendations in relation to future usage of the tool.



How good is our third sector participation in Children's Services Planning self-evaluation tool

The Scottish Government funds the STTS Project to support the third sector to strengthen its role in Children's Services Planning at both a local and national level. To achieve this, the project works very closely with a range of partners. The main partners are based within Scotland's TSIs.

The work of the project focuses on four key areas:

1. Building capacity and capability of the local third sector workforce, including TSIs, to influence and engage in strategic planning processes.

2. Supporting the TSIs to further develop their roles as facilitators and members of the local Children's Services Forums to act as representatives within local children's partnerships.
3. Developing effective mechanisms for a range of national policies and practice to be informed by the voices and experiences of local third sector organisations, including grassroots community groups.
4. Supporting local partnerships in developing processes which include third sector evidence during planning and reporting.

In partial fulfilment of the above outcomes, the project has developed a self-evaluation tool for CSPPs, to help them evaluate and identify improvement plans regarding their engagement with local third sector services. The tool is based on the How Good Is Our (HGIO) framework, which draws from the legislation and statutory guidance for Children's Services Planning to form the themes, quality indicators, challenge questions and features of highly effective practice.



Timeline

2021

A draft version of the STTS Project HGIO tool was developed by the STTS Project Manager in 2021. It was shared nationally through the Children's Services Planning Strategic Leads Network on several occasions, allowing for initial input and feedback. It was also discussed during visits to local TSI Children's Services Forums.

CSP Strategic Leads were asked to express an interest in trialling the tool in their CSPPs. Areas that showed initial interest included: Highland, Dumfries and Galloway, Moray, Fife, East, North and South Ayrshire. However, despite several promising initial conversations, not all these partnerships were able to provide opportunities to pilot the tool due to a shortage of capacity within partnership meetings, or a lack of ongoing communication.

2022

Through discussion at project meetings with the Strategy and GIRFEC Hub in the Children & Families Directorate at Scottish Government, it was agreed that the tool should be presented to the TSI Children's Services Network to generate interest and gauge usability of the tool. In January 2022, the tool was presented to the network, which resulted in interest from 13 attendees covering 11 CSPP areas.

Shortly following this presentation, South Ayrshire CSPP had reached the stage where they were able to begin piloting the tool. Furthermore, in February 2022, the STTS project presented the tool to two further CSPPs. Inverclyde CSPP agreed to take part in a pilot of the tool, becoming the second area to do so after South Ayrshire.



Pilot areas

Case studies from each CSPP involved in piloting the tool between 2021-22 are provided below.

Case study One: South Ayrshire Children's Services Planning Partnership

This case study has been produced to provide a progress update of piloting the tool in South Ayrshire covering the period Oct 2021-May 2022.

Background

The Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead for South Ayrshire CSPP contacted the STTS Project Manager to discuss the use of the tool. Following an initial discussion, it was agreed that South Ayrshire would pilot the tool. Contact was made with the local TSI Representative who was a member of the CSPP, facilitates the local third sector Children, Young People and Family Services Forum (CYPFS Forum), and was a member of the STTS TSI Network. A working group was set up to bring all three partners together.

In December 2021, the STTS Project Manager met with the CSP Strategic Lead in South Ayrshire, who additionally leads on the South Ayrshire Child Poverty Action Plan. A working group was established, comprised of the STTS Project Manager, the Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead and the TSI Representative. The TSI Representative had been in post since 2018 and had successfully established seven third sector provider forums, including the CYPFS Forum. The TSI Representative also attended partnership meetings including the CSPP. They had built up strong, positive relationships during this time and were a valued member of the CSPP in South Ayrshire.

All members of the working group were positive about this piece of work and felt the tool would provide a useful framework to support the CSPP in developing a deeper collaborative working relationship with the third sector in South Ayrshire. The Children's Services Planning and Child Poverty Lead was a new role, and it was felt that this new position had strengthened good working relationships between other key members of the CSPP and the TSI. This was characterised by mutual respect for the roles each has within improving outcomes for children, young people, and families.

The working group identified Theme 2 of the STTS Project HGIO tool (Children's Services strategic planning and delivery) as the focus area for an improvement plan. The challenge questions were discussed, and features of highly effective practice were sent to the CYPFS Forum and education and social work representatives within the CSPP for consideration. Three quality markers within Theme 2 were acknowledged:

- 2.1 Participation of the third sector
- 2.2 Third sector representation within the planning structure
- 2.3 Participation of the wider third sector and the community.

The CYPFS Forum was facilitated and managed by the TSI Representative and chaired by a strong third sector collective. Discussions were rich and meaningful with a high

level of peer support that extended out to the wider third sector across South Ayrshire. Invitations to attend were highly promoted to bring wider community representatives into the discussion through key topics and themes suggested by the forum members. The ethos of the forum was to 'harness the voice of the communities that they serve'. The CSPP investing in the voice of the sector will in turn invest in the voice of these communities too.

The working group and the CYPFS Forum provided feedback on the quality indicators and tool design as outlined below

- ***Participation of the third sector***

The working group agreed that regular meetings to provide updates for all partners and subgroups worked well for the third sector and other members of the CSPP. Additionally, several CYPFS Forum members identified positive relationships with the CSPP. This was mainly from commissioned services, while non-commissioned services were unable to comment on relationships as some have only ever met CSPP members when they had attended forums.

There was agreement from the CYPFS Forum that the wider CSPP values the reach of the third sector, but connections and relationships could be much tighter. Furthermore, some members also felt conversations with the CSPP could be richer leading to a true understanding of the value and breadth of the work of the sector. The forum further suggested that broader spaces for representation might lead to a richer partnership working model. Members also expressed that more input to the CYPFS Forum from service heads within the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) would improve participation and increase commissioning opportunities for all third sector providers within South Ayrshire. Opportunity for richer discussion on how the third sector would like to be involved and the expectations would also be valued.

The CYP (Scotland) Act 2014, Part 3 Statutory Guidance on Children's Services Planning establishes the third sector as an equal partner. However, this is not always translated in practice and can be strengthened. The focus of the tool on only the third sector in this pilot area did not support a collaborative approach. It was suggested that a workshop style approach with both the third sector and other members of the CSPP might have provided a more collaborative approach.

- ***Third sector representation within the planning structure***

The working group felt that the development and growth of third sector representation at other HSCP meetings was working well. It was hoped that moving forward this would result in a richer partnership relationship. It was agreed that more development work was needed to ensure the third sector is at the heart of influencing and decision-making.

Some members of the CYPFS Forum queried whether having two representatives coordinated via the TSI to attend the CSPP was enough to capture the breadth of work of the sector. The Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead in the working group agreed to address this by trialling themed meetings to reduce the already large meetings. Further consensus was agreed that it would be helpful for papers for CSPP meetings to be sent out within a timeframe that allows third sector representatives to prepare for the CSPP meetings.

The TSI Representative noted that discussions with the HSCP highlighted that more work could be done by the CSPP to include richer data from the third sector to influence and plan decision-making. The TSI Representative and lead from the HSCP agreed to discuss where this could be better supported. Both HSCP leads have also agreed to meet at points throughout the year to discuss data inputs from the sector.

As a result of these discussions, the TSI Representative and the Contracts and Commissioning Lead worked together and produced a data reporting template that was shared across the third sector. The third sector could choose to provide a varied range of data, including statistics and case studies to the TSI Representative and the Contracts and Commissioning Lead. Work to enable third sector data to be included in Children's Services Planning is ongoing in South Ayrshire.

- ***Participation of the wider third sector and the community***

Initial discussion by the CYPFS Forum identified the need for the governance structures within the CSPP to be published in the Children's Services Plan and on the local authority website. The CSPP agreed a mapping exercise should be undertaken with support from the TSI Representative to gain a better understanding of the wider third sector, including grassroots organisations and projects. This would then create a useful starting point for actions within the improvement plan to be taken forward and increase understanding of the rich value the sector brings to the communities they support.

Another noted area was regarding budgets and commissioning of services. The TSI representative, alongside other key CSPP members, agreed this was an area for improvement, however, factors outside of their control were at the root cause, including short-term or single year contracts. The Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead advised that a new role had been created within the HSCP which would take this issue forward.

Finally, the relationship between the CSPP and communities themselves was discussed. The CYPFS Forum members thought that to support the varying needs of communities in different localities across South Ayrshire, third sector organisations could be utilised more effectively. They are in a good position to gather information from communities about different needs in each area. Third sector organisations can be used to provide the voice of the communities they work alongside, creating improved relationships with other local CSPP members.

- ***Tool design***

Title of the tool

It was suggested that the title of the tool could be enhanced. At present it is long and lacks a level of clarity around its intended audience purpose. Questions were also raised as to how the tool could be perceived. For example, concern was raised that it could be interpreted as only measuring the quality of third sector participation.

Scoring approach of the tool

The "How Good" six-point scale is a tool for scoring the quality indicators, from unsatisfactory to excellent. It is mainly used by Education Scotland, local authorities, and other governing bodies for the purpose of national and/or local benchmarking across establishments. Measurement against the six-point scale for individual CSPPs

is not necessary, although they may choose to do so. It should be noted that when a grading is applied, it is for the whole quality indicator. Individual themes should not be graded.

In South Ayrshire, CYPFS forum members commented that they would need to have a better understanding of the grades within the scoring to provide a fair score. It was suggested that STTS should revisit the scoring within the tool and sense check it with other pilots. Within South Ayrshire, the working group agreed the scoring element would not be used.

Timing

Finally, it was recommended that the financial year end should be avoided for hosting discussions. There is a higher level of unease within third sector organisations at the start of each calendar year. This is due to the challenges around year-on-year funding. The sector is normally awaiting information about the commissioning of services at this time of year. There was consensus within the CYPFS Forum that the timing of the use of this tool is crucial in gathering authentic feedback.

Despite these initial discussions it was felt that the tool is a useful framework to benchmark where participation is working well and where areas could be improved if these are done collaboratively.

• Conclusion

There was a consensus that the use of the tool provided much learning. Going through the process of using the tool in South Ayrshire provided important reflective and learning opportunities. While the tool highlighted where practice could improve and where there is good work already embedded, it also provided the opportunity to have open and honest 'critical friend' discussions. This enabled the celebration of good working practices and provided the opportunity to improve equal partnership working across the CSPP.

However, consideration must be given to timing when using the tool, particularly for the third sector to be able to engage positively in the process. For example, learning around budgeting and commissioning decisions could improve participation. This will continue to dominate discussion for the third sector when short-term, single year funding is a feature of service delivery. The third sector is not involved in budgeting and commissioning, yet this tool did not provide the important opportunity for actions and improvements in this area. It is hoped the tool would be used in the future to begin that process and as a method to further enrich communication, collaboration, and connection across the CSPP in relation to the third sector.

This process also drew attention to the gaps in data from non-commissioned services that bring significant resource to South Ayrshire's children's sector. Including wider third sector data is an important consideration in relation to spending proposals within specific funding streams such as the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.

The tool provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress and the volume of work within the CSPP. South Ayrshire's Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead described this as a 'stock take moment' at a crucial time when the CSPP has many competing and pressing priorities to consider, such as COVID recovery and rising rates of fuel and food poverty affecting families.

The third sector workforce in South Ayrshire is in danger of burnout through lack of resource due to high levels of vacancies and diminished budgets across funding sources, with the ever-growing expectation of 'doing more with less'. Other members of the HSCP also have the same challenges. This impacts the partnership's ability to promote, engage and encourage participation with the sector.

However, when using this tool with the third sector, there was a shift in language from organisations that described their participation in planning as not always being validated to recognising themselves as third sector planning partners. Acknowledgement was given from all involved that the third sector values the input from both the TSI Representative and South Ayrshire's Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead to be actively involved in planning, participation and decision-making. South Ayrshire's Children's Services Planning Strategic Lead has also identified a clear plan to streamline meetings and bring in specific expertise depending on the agenda, which will further build on the work developed. An important aspect of this is having the opportunity to review meeting papers and agendas within a reasonable timeframe to enable active participation.

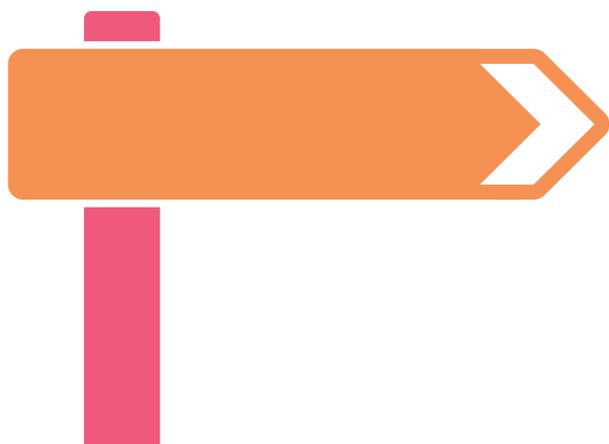
Understanding and managing expectations is crucial when building connections. Relationships have been recognised as the baseline of effective partnership working and shared learning, and the tool has provided the opportunity to reflect, assess and progress relationships between the third sector and the wider CSPP. This tool will continue to build on the positive relations already in place.

- **Next steps**

The use of this tool requires a collaborative approach, with the ability for all partners to view the process regarded as a positive move towards improvement. The tool could provide a framework to understand the input from all partners resulting in an improved local Children's Services Plan.

South Ayrshire CSPP has agreed to take forward the following:

- The TSI will support non-commissioned organisations to gather data and service user feedback with support from the CSPP.
- The TSI will target specific organisations to sit on strategic priority groups.
- Thematic CSPP meetings will be convened to streamline attendance.
- The CSPP will revisit the tool in the future and use interviews to further develop participation.
- The CSPP will continue to build and support growing positive relations between the third sector and other members of the CSPP as an equitable Children's Services Planning Partner.



Case study Two: Inverclyde Children's Services Planning Partnership

Background

In February 2022 the STTS Project Lead and the Partnership Facilitator from the TSI presented the self-evaluation tool to the chair of Inverclyde CSPP, and priority leads, outlining how the tool could contribute to an integrated approach to supporting children, young people, and families in Inverclyde. The priority leads recognised the potential benefits of utilising the tool and agreed to become a pilot site.

It was suggested that the TSI Partnership Facilitator would lead on the work with support from both the wider CSPP and the STTS Project. The TSI Partnership Facilitator post is funded by Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership to foster and promote partnership working between the local third sector and statutory partners, making them well-placed to support the pilot. Inverclyde values the role of the third sector organisations as CSPP partners and welcomed the opportunity to strengthen those relationships.

As in South Ayrshire, the group in Inverclyde also identified Area 2 of the tool as its focus. The Children's Services Strategic Planning and Delivery theme covers three quality indicators:

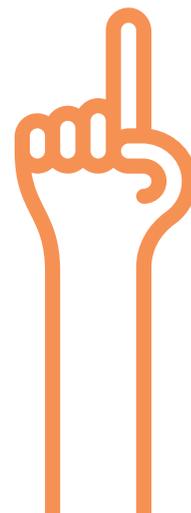
- 2.1 Participation of the third sector
- 2.2 Third sector's representation within the planning structure
- 2.3 Participation of the wider third sector and the community.

The pilot launched in May 2022 during a session of the Best Start in Life Network. The Network is hosted by the TSI and provides a space for third sector organisations and public sector partners that support children and families in Inverclyde to come together to enable cross-sectoral collaboration, knowledge exchange and partnership working.

The launch was attended by representatives from several third sector organisations, the Inverclyde CSPP Lead, the STTS Lead and staff from the TSI. The session began with a presentation about Inverclyde's 2019-2023 Children's Services Plan and an introduction to the How Good is Our Third Sector Involvement Self-Evaluation Tool. The intention for the session was to support the third sector's understanding of the pilot. However, the discussions focused on the value of partnership working recognising that meaningful collaboration must be underpinned by an understanding of partners in other sectors.

Agreed actions from that meeting included:

- During the summer of 2022 the TSI would conduct a mapping exercise of third sector organisations supporting local children, young people, and families.
- The Partnership Facilitator would schedule a meeting with the priority leads to discuss the tool and third sector involvement within each of the priorities.



A follow up discussion with the CSPP chair and priority leads in August 2022 acknowledged the challenges associated with coordinating multiple strategic leaders' diaries. The full pilot team was finally able to come together to discuss the self-evaluation tool in January 2023. The discussion included the chair of the CSPP, and priority leads who represented education, educational psychology, The Promise and children, families, and justice services within the HSCP.

The pilot team provided feedback on the quality indicators and learning from using the tool as outlined below.

- **Participation of the third sector**

The pilot team discussed the third sector's participation in the planning and delivery of services for children and families living in Inverclyde. Unsurprisingly, partnerships with national and larger local organisations were initially identified, which led to a discussion about the value other third sector organisations could bring.

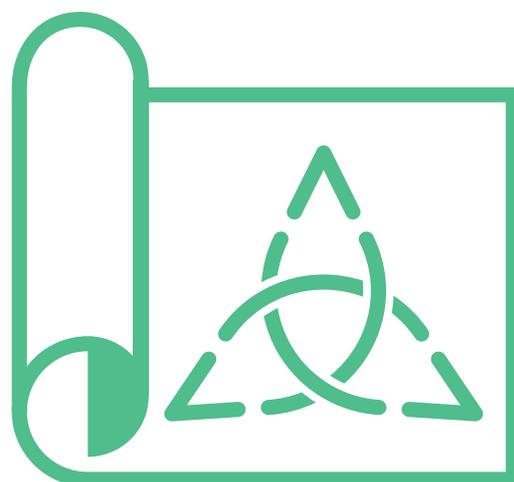
A resource developed from the TSI's mapping exercise was shared with the group, which categorises third sector organisations by the four priorities in the local Children's Services Plan. The resource also provides links to either the organisation's website or their page on Inverclyde Life, the local service directory. The priority leads welcomed the resource, acknowledging that it would make a positive contribution to CSPP planning processes and as a companion to future applications of the How Good is Our framework.

Furthermore, topics for the Best Start in Life Network meetings have been aligned with the priorities of the Children's Services Plan, with regular updates on the plan's progress now built into the meeting structure. The aim of restructuring the format of the network has been to increase both the third sector's understanding of the plan and its ability to contribute to its objectives.

- **Third sector's representation within the planning structure**

The pilot team highlighted that the TSI is the representative for the third sector within Inverclyde CSPP, but there is potential to create other opportunities for the sector to participate in the planning and delivery of services. It was suggested that consultation with third sector organisations could determine how it would like to be involved and what that role would entail.

There were some concerns that third sector organisations working with commissioning bodies to develop and plan services could present a conflict of interest. However, just as communities can both co-design and be in receipt of services, organisations from across the CSPP, including those within the third sector, can also co-design and deliver the services. The Best Start in Life Network was recommended as a platform for discussions around third sector involvement with the local planning structure, enabling the TSI to both support relationship-building across sectors and build its membership's capacity to make a positive contribution to local CSPP structures.



- **Participation of the wider third sector and the community**

As in South Ayrshire, information and data sharing was agreed as an area for improvement. Information from commissioned third sector organisations is quality assured and readily available. This is not necessarily the case for smaller organisations, despite their rich understanding of the communities they support. The Best Start in Life Network was again suggested as a platform for supporting organisations to understand how to collect relevant information and share it in a meaningful way.

The group also discussed the missed opportunities that come with lack of awareness about support available from the wider third sector and community. They described it as “you don’t know what you don’t know”. While those at a strategic level do not necessarily need to know everything that is available within the community, it is important for frontline workers to have that awareness and feed the information upward as required. Through effective cross-sectoral communication, frontline staff can also help keep the Best Start in Life Network mapping resource up-to-date and relevant.

- **Learning**

Relationships between the TSI and other members of Inverclyde CSPP has improved due to the HGIO work. The self-evaluation tool meetings facilitated by the STTS Project have provided an opportunity to introduce and familiarise key members of the Children’s Services Strategic Partnership with the TSI and wider third sector. Understanding expectations is a key aspect to building relationships, and it will be necessary for the public and the third sector to explore what they expect of partner organisations. Relationships provide the foundation of an integrated approach to supporting communities, and the self-evaluation tool process has had a positive impact on local relationships.

The self-evaluation tool has provided the TSI with the credibility to drive this work forward with the priority leads. Prior to the HGIO work, the TSI had limited involvement with the work of some of the priority leads. However, as a direct result of the collaborative nature of this work, other opportunities for partnership working developed. The credibility is extending to the wider third sector, with Inverclyde’s “stock take moment” occurring as a deeper understanding of where third sector organisations and community groups can add value to the work within the CSPP.

The third sector will require support from both the TSI and Inverclyde CSPP to increase its participation as planning partners. Although much of this work will initially happen within the Best Start in Life Network, it will be essential for other members of the CSPP to take an active role in helping these organisations to understand and adopt the priorities of the local Children’s Services Plan.

- **Conclusions**

- It is essential to improve relationships within Inverclyde CSPP by acknowledging the third sector as equitable CSPP partners. A system that values the differences and similarities between the sectors and how they complement each other provides more effective and connected support for children, young people, and families.

- CSPPs need a strong understanding of the role of the TSI and how they can support and increase the contribution local third sector organisations make in achieving the ambitions outlined in the Children’s Services Plan.
- Inverclyde’s Best Start in Life Network is a valuable resource that is available to all practitioners and service providers who work with children, young people, and their families. However, adapting the format of the network provided a platform to establish stronger links between third sector organisations and the Children’s Services Plan. The network will continue to evolve in response to the needs of practitioners, service providers and the people they support to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- The third sector mapping resource helped the wider CSPP to understand the potential within Inverclyde’s diverse third sector. The Best Start in Life membership will be responsible for maintaining the resource and keeping it up to date.
- Data collection and information sharing is key to collaboration and joint working. The TSI will work with Inverclyde CSPP as key member, alongside third sector organisations, to work together to utilise the rich data available more effectively within the community.
- The CSPP infrastructure can appear confusing, particularly in relation to where the TSI and wider third sector fit as a key partner. All partners should have a solid understanding of the full system which will enable them to recognise how their work contributes to the wider offer for children and families in Inverclyde.



Overall conclusions from pilot activity

The STTS project introduced the draft HGIO tool in 2021 and since then has been supporting CSPPs to pilot it in their areas. Eight areas expressed an initial interest in piloting the tool, however only two (South Ayrshire and Inverclyde) were able to do so in practice. Capacity, competing commitments and perceived tool complexity were given as reasons why further pilots did not happen. Nevertheless, even though pilot activity was limited, it has generated helpful learning that can be taken forward to support the tool’s further development and use. The STTS Project team is grateful to project teams in South Ayrshire and Inverclyde for their support with piloting the tool and willingness to share their findings openly and constructively.

Third sector

- Use of the tool was felt to strengthen relationships between the third sector and key local Children’s Services Planning Strategic Leads. Both areas stated the importance of relationship-building, with time invested in this considered worthwhile and meaningful.
- The wider CSPP values the reach of third sector into the community, but third sector voices could be more embedded in local CSPP governance and participation processes.
- The third sector is an equal partner in CSPPs, according to the CSP guidance. However, in practice, third sector partners’ experiences do not always reflect this guidance.

- The third sector needs to be involved in Children’s Services Planning from the beginning.
- The TSIs are important partners reflecting the voice of the third sector in CSPPs, however it should be recognised that the third sector is not a homogenous group. Therefore, external opportunities for engagement with the third sector is a valuable process, as reflected in use of this tool.
- There are gaps in data from non-commissioned services that bring significant resource to children’s services locally. Wider third sector data should be included in CSPP strategic planning, enabling small organisations to contribute valuable information to the Children’s Services Planning process.
- Third sector funding limits the capacity of the sector to engage in strategic planning in the CSPP. Moving forwards, participation of the sector in Children’s Services Planning should be funded.

Application of the tool

- Greater clarity about the audience for the tool is needed.
- The title of the tool needs reconsidered to enable greater participation.
- Further guidance for the scoring system is needed.
- The tool would be most effectively implemented from the beginning of the financial year when there is greater clarity around funding and staff capacity.
- The tool provided an opportunity to have an open and honest critical friend discussion, and it could be used in the future to enrich communication, collaboration and connection across the CSPP.



Overall conclusions from pilot activity

Third sector

- Third sector capacity issues should be recognised, and third sector representatives should be properly compensated for their time, to enhance their ability to meaningfully engage within CSPP planning processes.

Third sector engagement should be meaningful, sustained, and integrated into all planning processes. Third sector organisations have direct engagement with children, young people, and families across Scotland, and the value of this should continue to be recognised.

Application of the tool

- The tool needs to be simplified to enable all members of CSPPs to fully participate. Given the challenges of time and capacity within CSPPs, a more accessible version will help with wider uptake.

- Data mapping should be added to the STTS Project HGIO tool, to create a clearer picture of the third sector within respective HGIO implementation areas.
- Use of the STTS Project HGIO tool should continue to be encouraged and promoted, to support better relationships between the third sector and local Children's Services Planning governance groups to ensure that the third sector can be an effective and equitable Children's Services Planning Partner.



References

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- [Inverclyde Children's Services Plan](#)
- [South Ayrshire Children's Services Plan](#)



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