



Findings from Surveys and Interviews on Children's Services Planning

National Third Sector GIRFEC Project
July 2019

**getting
it right**
for every child



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National Third Sector GIRFEC Project

Report: Findings from Surveys and Interviews on Children's Services Planning February-April 2019

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Background

1. The National Third Sector GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) Project (NTSG project) has been managed by Children in Scotland since April 2019. The project is funded via a grant from the Scottish Government, currently in place until December 2019.
2. The NTSG project's workplan is based on three themes: *connecting, influencing and engaging*; within these, the three related high level outcomes are:
 - third sector organisations are supported to improve their capacity and capability to contribute fully to their local children's services plan
 - the third sector is an equal and valued partner in improving children's outcomes at national and local level
 - third sector organisations and the children, young people and families they serve are better engaged in service delivery and design.

Survey and Interviews

3. The NTSG project refined its workplan in December 2018, achieving stronger alignment with the national and local processes around children's services planning. The revised workplan, agreed with the Scottish Government in January, includes action to deliver a survey of third sector children's services organisations, on their experiences of children's services planning. The project later took a decision to also capture the views from a 50% sample of officers in Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs). These interviews would cover similar themes to the planned survey.
4. The stated outputs from the survey include identification of strengths, challenges and priorities; an analysis of the current capacity and capability of the third sector to contribute fully to children's services planning, and the development of a programme of activity and networking, local and national, that prioritises and addresses the challenges identified by the third sector.

Methodology

5. The draft survey was designed by officers in the NTSG project team and was finalised in light of comments received from a number of TSIs in the project's Reference Group and from members of the project's Steering Group. The survey¹ consists of 15 core questions (further questions collect administrative data) and the 'Survey Monkey' package was used to allow online completion by stakeholders. The project used two main approaches to advertise the survey: i) via a request to TSI Chief Executives to highlight it and to distribute it within local children's services networks, and ii) via Children in Scotland's 'Daily News' e-bulletin, with a circulation of more than 2,500 individuals.
6. The survey ran between 12th February and 15th March. It was targeted at third sector children's organisations across Scotland, particularly at those officers with a role in strategic planning.

It received 93 responses from third sector children's organisations, of which 58 were fully completed and could be analysed (others contained minimal data). 13 of the respondents operated in more than one area, or at a national level. The remaining 45 respondents operated within 23 local authority areas, leaving 10 local authority areas from which there were no respondents.

7. Face to face or telephone interviews were carried out in the same period, based on a semi-structured approach with a core set of questions² on aspects of children's services planning, that could be used flexibly. The initial proposal was to interview the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), given the TSIs' suggested (per Statutory Guidance³) roles in children's services planning. In practice, the interviews were completed by either the CEOs, or their nominees (e.g. lead officers for children's services activity). It should be noted that TSIs typically operate at a strategic level and are generally not direct providers of children's services, although they often organise networks of children's services providers. The NTSG project achieved its target of interviewing 16, or a 50% sample of the country's TSIs. A total of 27 Local Authority areas are represented through either the survey or interviews.⁴

Findings

8. The findings from both the survey and the interviews have been analysed by the NTSG project team and the information below aims to set out the high level observations from this analysis. It is acknowledged that the number of survey responses was not extensive, however, the responses contain valuable information and the NTSG project appreciates the time and effort given by the respondents. Given the size of the survey response, especially when broken down to individual geographic areas, further local discussion of the findings may be beneficial, to establish whether the information captured in the survey is consistent with the views of a wider range of local stakeholders.

¹ Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

² Appendix B: TSI Interview Question Set

³ [Statutory Guidance on Part 3: Children's Services Planning](#)

⁴ Appendix C: List of Local Authority areas participated in this research

9. It is also recognised that the findings are based on third sector perspectives and their experiences on children's services planning only. It would be beneficial to learn about statutory partners' perspective by considering these findings alongside the Children's Services Planning review. The added dimension would help develop a fuller understanding of the subject.

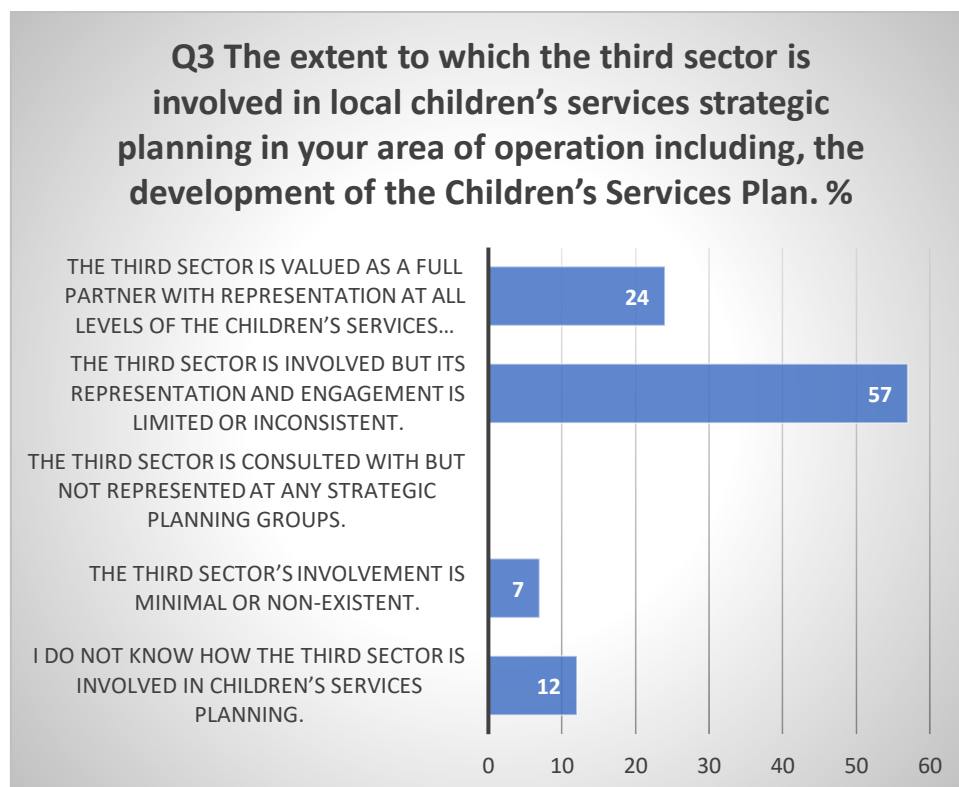
10. The information obtained through the interviews of TSI CEOs and other officers was generally more detailed than that captured through the survey questionnaire. Many similarities in findings were, however, revealed across both processes. The sections below present a high-level analysis of the data from the survey, followed by insights from the interviews under a number of themes.

Extent of Third Sector Involvement in Children's Services Planning

11. The survey opened with a general question asking respondents how they felt the third sector was involved in local children's services planning in their area of operation so far. The responses were overall positive with 57% of respondents selected that statement "the third sector is involved but its representation and engagement is limited or inconsistent" and a further 24% chose "the third sector is valued as a full partner with representation at all levels of the children's services" (see chart Q3 below)

Many TSIs echoed this in their interviews. They described their local partnership's commitment and aspiration for the third sector to become full partners; and one in which the relationship goes beyond consultation, to engagement. Some interviewees said that their local Children's Partnership regarded improving children and young people's outcomes as shared responsibilities, which include the third sector and communities.

"I think there's a desire to do that [involve the third sector in strategic planning]. And I think there's an understanding of the contribution that third sector make to children's services. There're always process and cultural barriers that seem to shift and change with staff change but on the whole, I would say we are regarded as significant partners in this work."



While the general responses are positive, there are areas where respondents (7%) felt the third sector's involvement is minimal or non-existent. It was suggested that elements such as the diversity and the capacity of the third sector might have presented challenges for full partnership working.

“The third sector is not a full partner and although this is difficult because of the sector’s diversity, it is essential to maintain this characteristic. Partnership requires the combination of different characteristics.”

“Engagement can be impacted by the capacity of 3rd sector” and that “Quite often it is down to key individuals involving the third sector rather than a transparent process to be represented or engaged. Quite often the third sector is not stated in the plan although they are delivering the services, recognition of their work is not always included.”

Interviews with TSIs also added that relationships were key to the effectiveness of the partnership. The significance of building relationships and developing shared understanding between sectors was sometimes underestimated. Interviewees reflected that staff turnover, change of officers' roles and partnership structures could have a negative impact on the established collaboration.

“Biggest challenge at present is the upheaval in the HSCP structure. [A large number of the] senior management team has changed in a 15-month period including the loss of [key leaders]. Also some considerable management level turnover e.g. lead nurse, health visiting leads etc.....The loss of experienced and knowledgeable staff and the loss of long-established relationships had a huge impact on the partnership.”

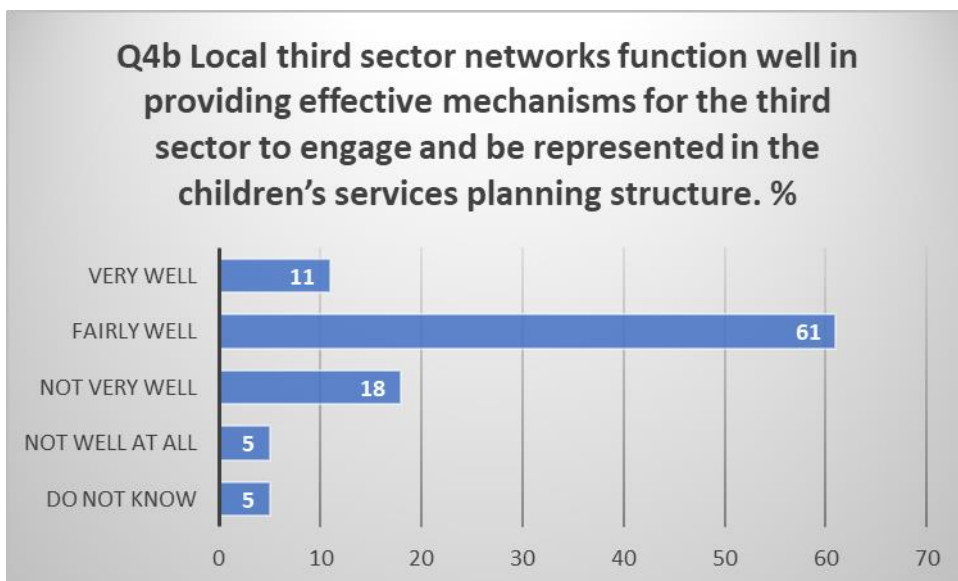
The survey and interviews continued to explore different aspects of the third sector's engagement in children's services planning in detail. The following sections look at the strengths and challenges regarding access to support for the third sector's participation; collaborative working to improve children's outcomes; procurement; the role of the TSIs, and embedding children and young people's voices in services planning.

Support for the Third Sector to participate in Children's Services Planning

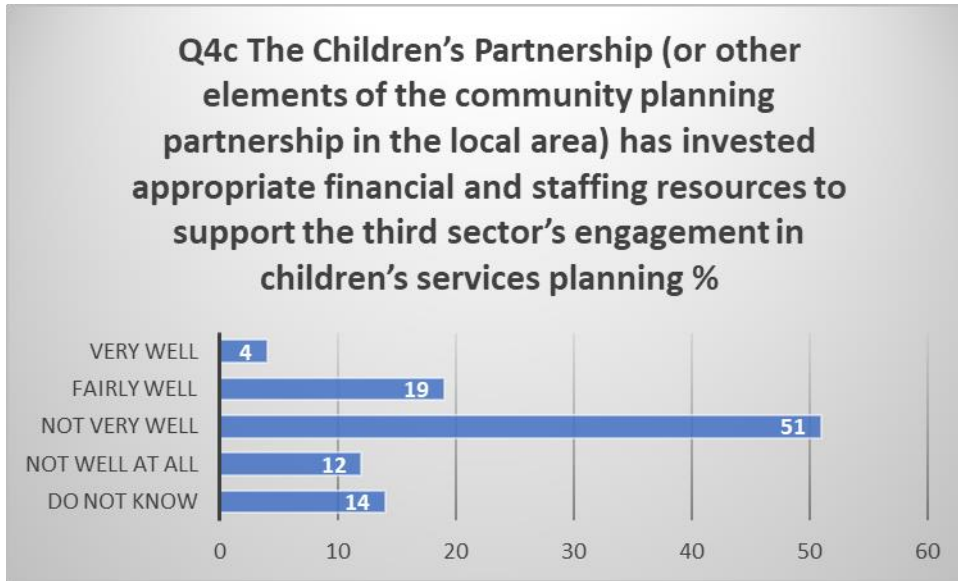
12. The survey asked respondents to assess different sources of support for the third sector in their participation in children's services planning. This includes Q4a support from the statutory partners (Local Government and Local Health Boards), Q4b support from local third sector networks, Q4c support from Community Planning structures (including the Children's Partnership) and Q4d support from Elected Members.



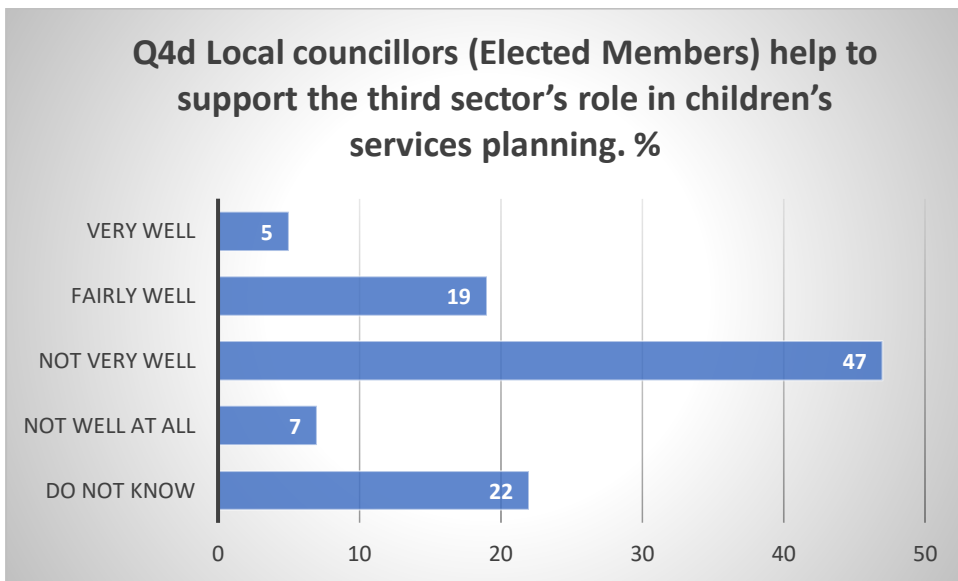
More than half (60%) of the respondents felt that statutory partners have helped to remove barriers for the third sector to participate in children's services planning and have provided practical support to encourage engagement from the third sector; while 33% felt statutory partners have not done well in this area (see chart Q4a above).



A majority of respondents (72%) reflected that their local third sector networks function well in providing effective mechanisms for the third sector to engage and be represented in the children's services planning structure (see chart Q4b above).



Two-thirds (63%) of respondents felt that there were insufficient financial and staffing resources invested to support the third sector's engagement in children's services planning; while 23% felt that this was well resourced in their area(s) (see chart Q4c above).



More than half (54%) of respondents said their local councillors could do more to help support the third sector's role in children's services planning; while nearly a quarter (24%) said their local elected members have been supportive (see chart Q4d above).

Strengths and Challenges

Q4a showed that respondents felt relatively positive about the statutory partners' effort to remove barriers to support third sector's engagement and Q4b showed respondents acknowledged that the local third sector networks provided an important mechanism for the third sector's involvement and representation. However, the question of the sustainability of this support when resources are limited was highlighted in both the survey and TSI interviews. This was reinforced

by the feedback to Q4c. Respondents reflected that there was not adequate funding and staff time invested to co-ordinate and to improve engagement activities.

“They stopped supporting the voluntary sector networks years ago, made it Council and officer-led and driven networks, so when funding dried up so did all the Networks.”

It was also highlighted that while it was crucial to engage third sector organisations as strategic partners, their participation at strategic level was not always financially supported. Some third sector organisations felt they had to prioritise service delivery over strategic work in order to fulfil their funding contract obligations. This has an impact on their capacity to engage with the third sector network as well as strategic services planning work.

“(name of local authority) is a small local authority and frequently suffers from meeting overload. Attempts in the past to maintain a third sector network have fallen foul of this, but an attempt to relaunch this is planned...”

“We need dedicated staffing to look at this [strategic work]. There is little capacity to be involved at strategic level...there is no additional time to be involved in groups when service delivery is priority.”

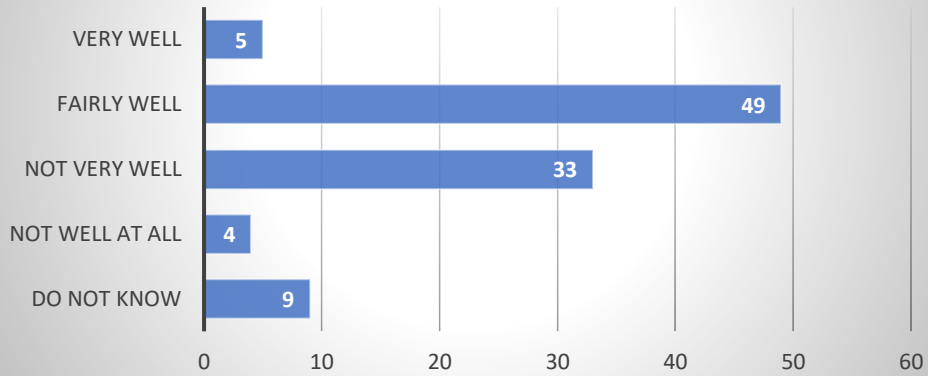
Under Q4d, survey respondents felt that local councillors could be more supportive of the third sector's role in children's services planning. TSI interviewees added that these could depend on individual councillor's knowledge of the sector. It was observed that when the councillor had a good understanding of the third sector or he/she had direct involvement with third sector organisations, they tend to be more supportive.

“Elected members here are really aware of the third sector. Again, it's about our size. The plus is, that they live in the community and their families are benefiting from third sector services.”

Working together to improve children's outcomes

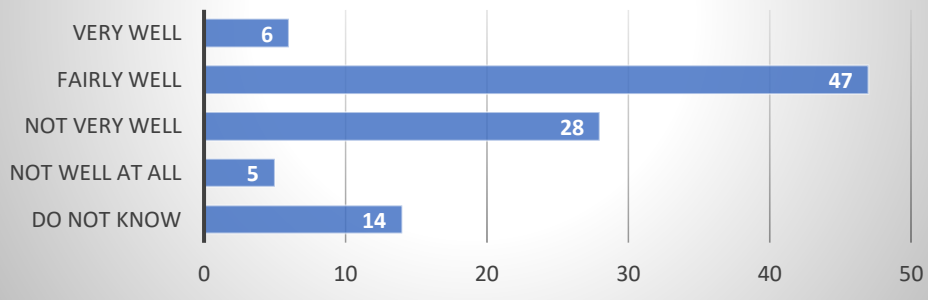
13. The survey asked respondents to assess different dimensions of partnership working to improve children's outcomes, including the range of partners involved and valued; the integration of children's services planning with other plans; collaborative leadership; use of third sector data and the culture of partnership working and respect.

Q5a A wide range of third sector organisations, national and local, are included and valued in the children's services planning process. %



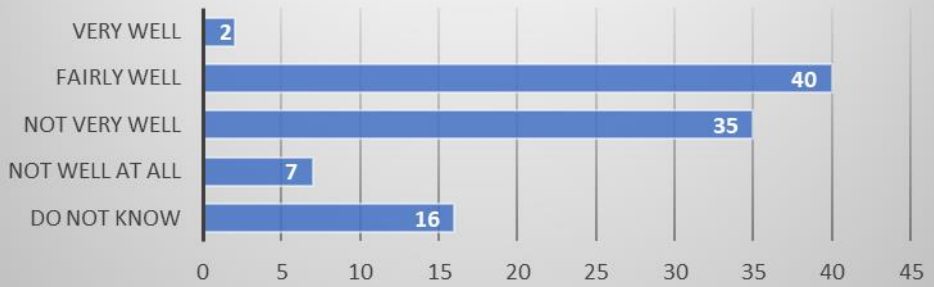
Just more than half (54%) of respondents felt that a wide range of third sector organisations were included and valued in children's services planning, while more than a third (37%) felt this was not the case.

Q5b The Children's Services Plan and its related planning processes are well integrated with other local partnership plans e.g. on adult health and social care, child poverty, housing, and health. %



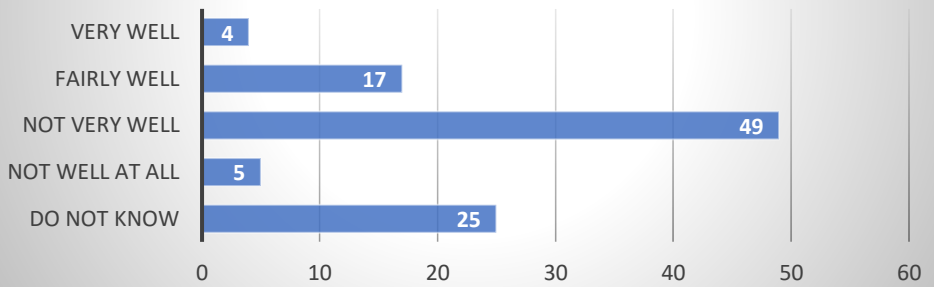
Again, slightly more than half (53%) of respondents felt that the children's services planning processes were well integrated with other local partnership plans, while a third (33%) felt otherwise.

Q5c The leadership of the local children’s services planning process is collaborative, with clearly defined roles for third sector partners which include involvement in decision making at all stages. %

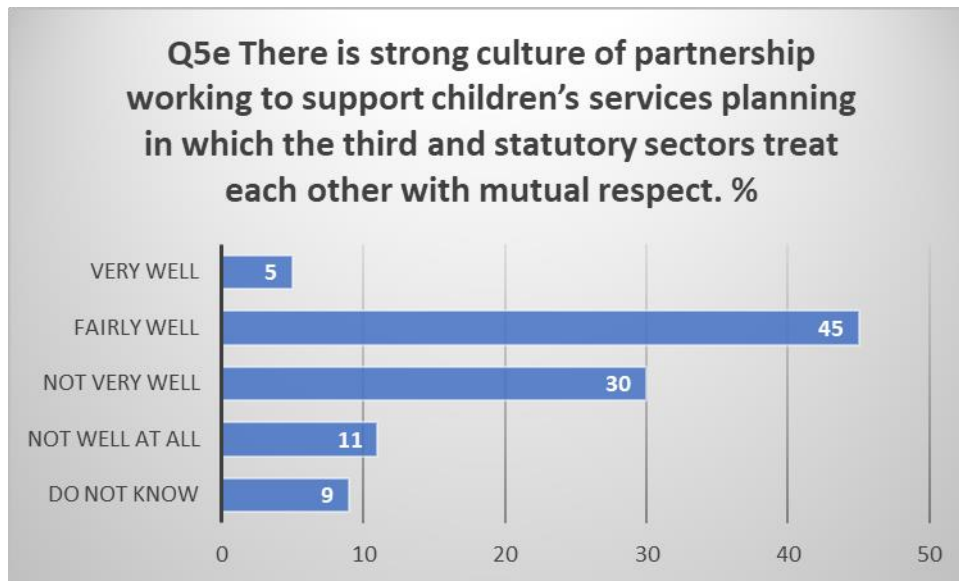


There were mixed views about the collaborative leadership and whether third sector partners have clearly defined roles in decision-making. Forty-two per cent of respondents felt the leadership was collaborative while the same number of respondents felt this was not the case.

Q5d Third sector data has been used alongside statutory data in identifying needs and priorities for children and young people, and in informing collaborative improvement of children and young people’s outcomes. %



When asked whether third sector data was used in identifying needs and priorities for children and young people, more than half (54%) of respondents said third sector data has not been well used while only 21% said otherwise. Another quarter (25%) said they had no knowledge whether third sector data was used or not.



When respondents were asked to reflect on the partnership working culture, the views were split. Half (50%) said they felt there was a positive culture of partnership working to support children's services planning while 41% said culture was not as strong as it could be.

Strengths and Challenges

Views on how well the partnership including the third sector works together to improve outcomes for children and young people varied across local authority areas.

“it varies in different local authorities - in some areas third sector is fully involved and in others less so”.

Range of third sector organisations included in strategic planning

While respondents felt that efforts were made to involve a wide range of third sector organisations in children's services planning, the different sizes and the types of services could be an influential factor to how much a third sector organisation is included or represented.

TSI interviewees added that, larger organisations often had more capacity, with dedicated staff who primarily focus on strategic work, while smaller organisations might not have this advantage. Some organisations, due to the services they provide, could not release staff to attend strategic meetings during business hours. As a result, they felt they might be unintentionally excluded from the strategic planning process.

“Representation should be made up of different sizes of organisations and number of service users.”

“I think this was progressing well but has lagged behind for some parts of the sector particularly out of school care.”

Integration with other local partnership plans

The feedback gathered from the survey and interviews confirmed how Children's Services Plans are integrated with other local plans including the Local Outcome Improvement Plans (also known as LOIPs) vary across Scotland. It was suggested that there could be better connections between Children's Services Plans and the Local Child Poverty Action Plan, for example.

Collaborative leadership

The views on collaborative leadership were also divided in the survey and in the TSI interviews. It was highlighted that the third sector was represented well at the priority groups (sometimes referred to as delivery groups) within most Children's Partnerships. However, these groups are not involved in decision-making. Although the TSI Chief Officer has a seat at the Integration Joint Board as a non-voting member, it was felt that the collaborative leadership could be furthered strengthened by proactively involving more third sector representatives in strategic decision making.

Third sector data

The research also highlighted that third sector data has not been adequately used to inform needs and priorities when developing and reporting on the Children's Services Plan.

“Recognition of third sector work is often omitted from detailed plans, emphasis in the plan is given to statutory provision and even when following this up and requesting recognition it is said to not be important to include and list third sector involvement.”

“The voluntary sector was not consulted and the ‘plan on the page’ has already been decided.”

Organisational culture

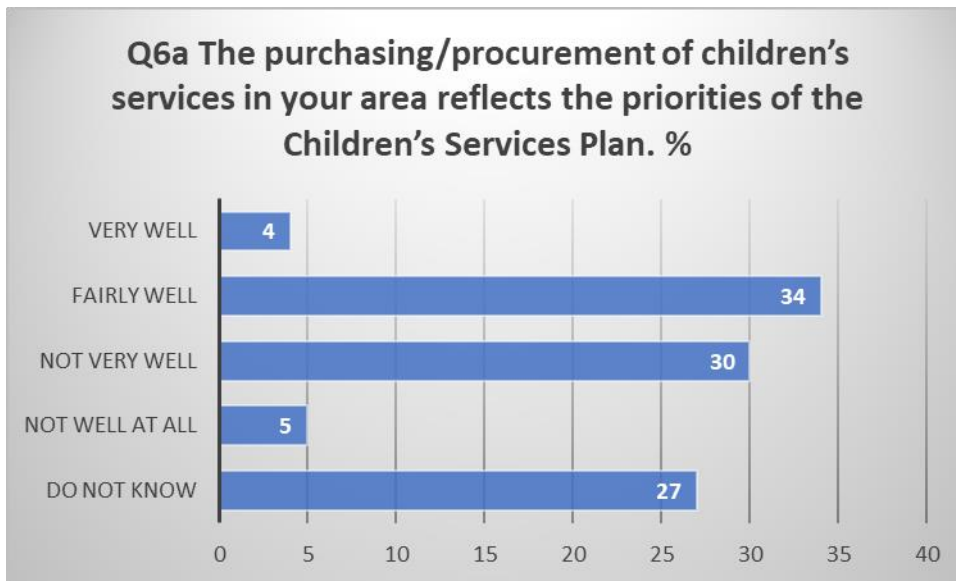
The question on organisational culture of collaborative working demonstrated again the inconsistency across Scotland. Respondents indicated that this could be down to leadership to individuals.

“Some of the planning leaders are excellent at hearing and valuing the views of the Third sector other play lip service and disregarded if the statutory services are challenged in their thinking and planning.”

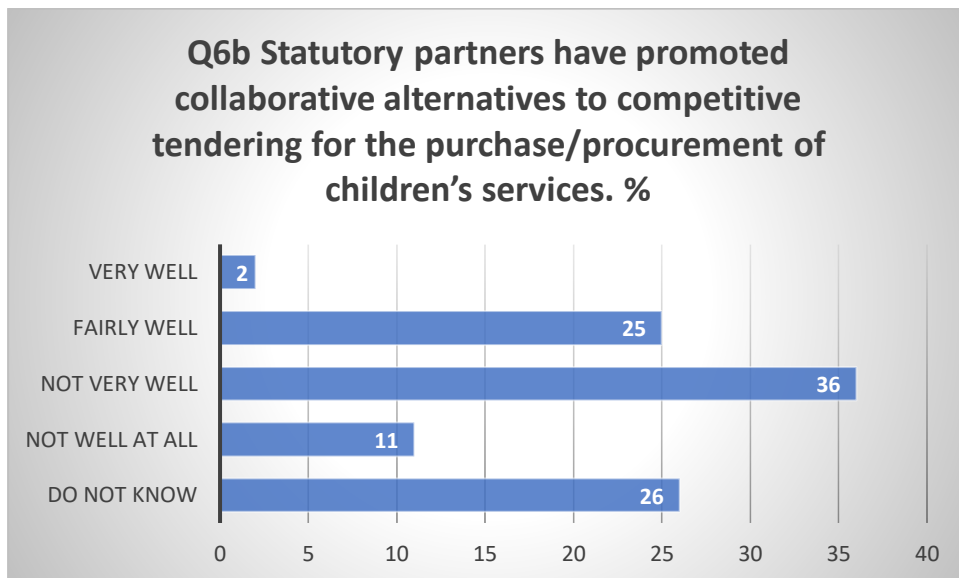
“.....Can be variable depending on personalities and perceptions.”

Purchasing / Procurement

14. The survey asked respondents to reflect on the local procurement arrangements for children's services. The questions focussed on how children's services were purchased or procured to reflect the priorities in the Children's Services Plan, and whether statutory partners have promoted collaborative alternatives to competitive tendering for the purchase of children's services.



The views of how well the purchase of children's services reflects the priorities in the local Children's Services Plan were evenly split. Thirty-eight per cent of the respondents felt positive about the current arrangements while 35% felt the procurement did not reflect the priorities. In addition to this observation, approximately a quarter (27%) of respondents said they do not know.



When asked about how well collaborative alternatives were promoted comparing to competitive tendering, almost half (47%) of respondents felt their statutory partners have not done well in this area. Twenty-seven per cent felt positive that their statutory partners have encouraged collaboration during the procurement process. Similar to the question above, 26% said they do not have sufficient knowledge to answer this question.

Strengths and Challenges

The above showed that how local procurement arrangements aligned with priorities and the extent procurement promoted partnership working differed

from one to another. In some areas, partners were encouraged to work together to develop strategies and commissioning framework for services; while in other areas, competitive tender was a preferred method to purchase services from non-statutory service providers.

“[The] Third sector is involved in developing the Family Support Strategy, including the commissioning framework. Discussions are taking place about developing consortia.....”

“In fact, the opposite is true. Services that have been delivered for 20+ years in partnership are now being put out to competitive tender.”

Aligning to priorities

Many respondents and interviewees sympathised that local authorities and NHS Health Boards are operating under great financial constraints. Meanwhile, they were concerned that statutory partners made decisions based on pure financial motives (i.e. make savings) and missed the opportunity to further improve outcomes for children and families through collaborative working.

“I was recently involved in a family services review for all family support services, undertaken by the local authority. I am still unclear as to the outcome apart from we all have to make cuts.”

They also observed that, due to budget cuts, some local authorities were under pressure to keep services in-house in order to protect internal employment. Such decision often undermined the existing partnership working and the values of partners have added.

“The local council has stopped all funding to youth work organisations and now propose to cut all funding to voluntary organisations delivering contracted services.”

“This is not promoted or challenged in our area, it is very much run as a council provision which is not to be challenged, with no support or invitation to tender. If anything the XXXX Council is very much taking more services off third sector and trying to run them themselves. Especially in relation to employability pathways and work with young people not in training, education or employment.....”

Under the subject of procurement, about a quarter of respondents felt they did not have adequate knowledge to comment. It highlighted the lack of information and the need to improve transparency of the local procurement approach and processes.

“There is still more to be done in terms of transparency and a whole systems approach. I believe that the will is there and the culture will change.”

“There has been very little information shared with third sector organisations about possible tendering / procurement of services. There is a sense that statutory services would rather keep services 'in house' than look at alternatives. I

know of situations where third sector organisations have requested to enter negotiations using participation requests and have been refused.”

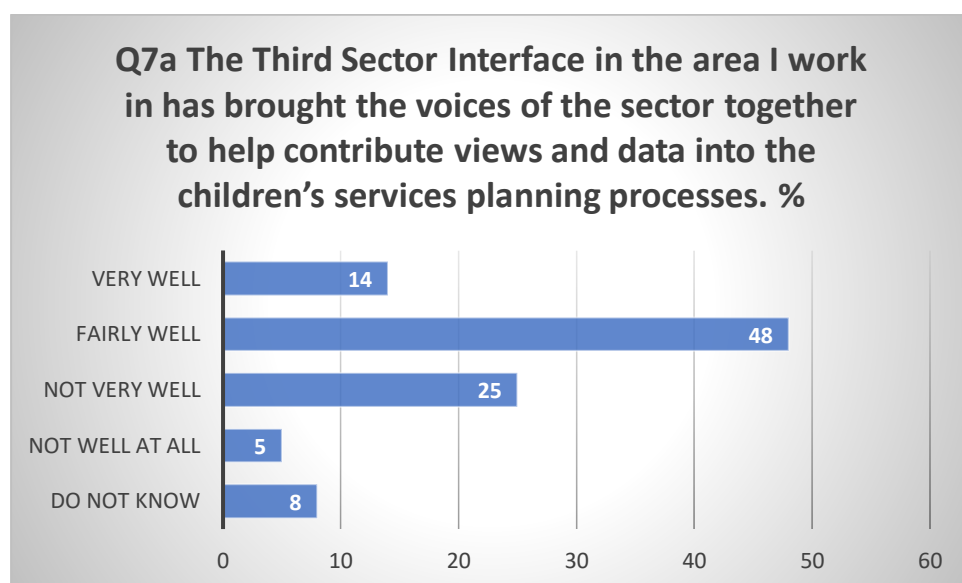
Procurement practice and collaboration

The TSI interviews also added that statutory partners could be more joined up when funding children's services. This helps to avoid duplication and make services planning more effective. An interviewee gave an example of how the planning and funding to mental health support services could be more joined up between the local authority and the NHS to achieve better outcomes.

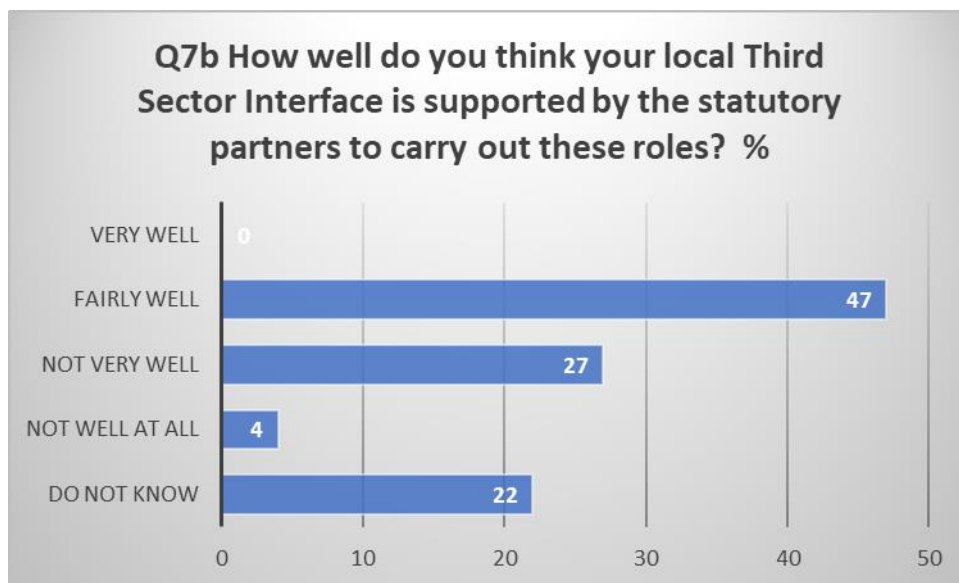
“One of the things that I was really proud of that the Children and Families Forum has managed to achieve is that... we highlighted two priorities within the planning session for the Forum. One was to improve Children and Young People's Mental Health and the second was Family and Nurture. ...we had a strong policy position and were able to take this to the Planning Partnership. We added to the wealth of evidence that [the Children's Services Plan] had to prioritise CYP mental health as one of the 3 improvement areas. This was very empowering for the C&F Forum.”

The Third Sector Interface Role in Children's Services Planning

15. The [Statutory Guidance for Part 3](#) of [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), in particular Section 10 and 14, makes reference to the roles of the Third Sector Interfaces. It describes the potential role the Third Sector Interface could play to facilitate a process where the third sector, including smaller groups, are supported to engage in the consultation and planning process. The survey asked respondents how they felt the TSI has brought the voices of the third sector together to help contribute views and data into the children's services planning processes; and how well the statutory partners have supported the TSI in fulfilling these roles.



Sixty-two per cent of respondents felt that Third Sector Interface (TSI) has done well to bring the sector together while 30% felt not so well.



Forty-seven per cent of respondents felt the statutory partners have supported the TSI well to carry out their roles described in the Statutory Guidance, while 31% felt otherwise and 22% said they did not know.

Strengths and Challenges

Brining the voices of third sector together

The majority of survey respondents and interviewees recognised the critical role that the TSI plays in children's services strategic planning. It was highlighted that the TSI helps to facilitate equal opportunities for all third sector organisations, regardless of their size, to be involved.

“Again due to the nature of XXXX (local authority area), many of the key third sector players are also around the table leaving the TSI role to be more of a supporting/enabling role, ensuring the right players are at the table and that smaller organisations receive information and have the chance to contribute.”

“Other third sector organisations in XXXX (local authority area) have been required to lead on this work to ensure children's and young people services have an opportunity to be represented in service plans. It is difficult to ensure the statutory partners take these collective voices seriously (or take note of them at all) without the support of the TSI.”

All TSIs interviewed said they gave support to a local third sector children's services network. The types of support they gave slightly varied from one area to another to respond to different local needs. This ranged from providing back office administrative support to representing the third sector at strategic groups.

“TSI provides invaluable back office/admin support.....”

“The Chief officers group supported by the TSI seems to be the driving force.....”

Some respondents reflect that because of this variation, the roles of TSIs in relation to children's services planning were not always clear and fully understood.

“Over the past 6 months this has disintegrated with concern as to the (TSI) board's understanding of requirement as they relate to 3rd sector involvement in children's services planning and GIRFEC implementation.”

“Have met the TSI rep once at a Third Sector Forum - had no idea of their work or presence before this meeting!”

Support from local statutory partners

In general, they felt positive about how well the TSI has brought the third sector together and contribute their views and data in children's services planning. However, the varying level of financial support TSIs receive to co-ordinate planning activities was highlighted in the research. Although all TSIs received funding from the Scottish Government, only a portion of TSIs received funding from local authorities exclusively for support their role within children's services planning. This influenced how much staffing resources TSI has invested specifically in this area. Those receiving local funding often had a dedicated staff member who had a particular remit in children's services strategic planning, while other TSIs have staff members whose remits cover a range of community planning themes including children's services. In general, respondents agreed that sufficient resources were required to support effective strategic engagement in children's services strategic planning. On the other hand, it was also pointed out that the TSI might not be totally impartial if they were reliant on funding from the local authorities.

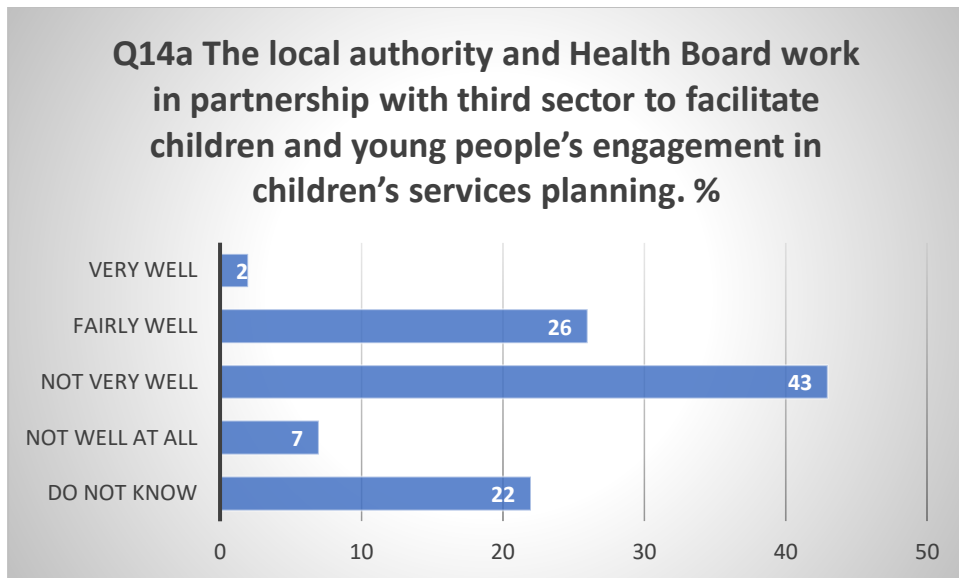
“In my view more could be done to resource this area. ...work needs to be done in this area with a dedicated person to pull this together in the TSI with clear support and communication at all levels of organisations.”

“I do think at times it is difficult for them to be impartial given they are reliant on funding from LA's there is a tension of not wanting to rock the boat.”

Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement

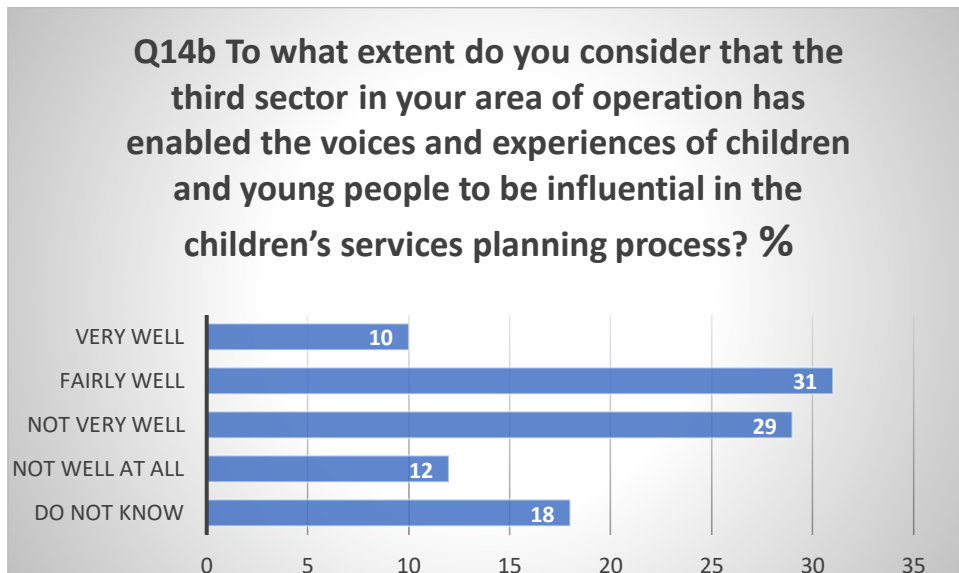
16. One of the key strands of the NTSG project focuses on how children's services planning could be strengthened by further embedding the voices of children, young people and their families, particularly via the support of the third sector. The survey asked respondents to consider how well or otherwise children and

young people's engagement in children's services planning is taking place in their area(s).



Half of respondents felt that statutory partners could have worked more collaboratively with the third sector to facilitate children and young people's engagement when planning services, while 22% said they did not have adequate knowledge to answer this question (see chart Q14a above).

“Organisations in the third sector still tend to run their own consultations and projects rather than share information and carry out consultations in partnership. We would gather more valuable data if we worked better in collaboration.”



When respondents were asked whether they felt the third sector has enabled children and young people's voices and experience to influence services planning, the views were divided. Forty-one per cent of respondents felt positive that the third sector had enabled children's voices to be influential, while an

equal number of respondents felt the opposite. Third sector respondents who felt they have not been able to influence services planning with children's voices, added that this was sometimes due to professional barriers in collaborative working. (see chart Q14b above)

"[the third sector] not being taken seriously by professionals, other services not accessing our projects due to a non-professional attitude."

To improve on partnership working, it was suggested that professional barriers should be removed; and partners should be encouraged to share learning and experiences across different sectors.

"Statutory sector needs to work more closely with the local third sector to share experience and learning."

Strengths

Respondents and interviewees give some examples of where they felt children and young people were engaged meaningfully and their voices were embedded during children's services strategic planning.

Many respondents felt good progress has been made to include children and young people's views in the Children's Services Plan.

"Good work has been undertaken locally in recent years."

"There is a children and young people's promise which all partners on the Community Planning Partnership have signed up to."

In some areas, respondents stressed that children and young people's voices were at the heart of the planning process. It was built into the system rather than an exercise in isolation.

"This has been done well and seems to be the first thing that is actioned rather than a token effort once a plan has been drafted."

"A sub-group has been set up to look at CYP participation in relation to children's services planning."

It was added that children and young people's participation has become a continual focus of services planning with good practice being embedded over time.

"Approaches vary from local authority to local authority and in some of the areas where we work there is a strong focus on participation and engagement of children and young people."

"I think there is a real change going on just now to include and involve young people in developing services, but this has only starting to happen in the last 6 months...."

More than one respondent suggested that the improvement was a result of resources invested to engage children and young people properly. This included having a dedicated post to plan, co-ordinate and deliver engagement activities.

“Youth engagement officer in place through lottery funding.”

“... good amount of engagement with children, young people and families. The council employed two participation officers for care experienced young people. They work with the champions’ board.”

Challenges

While there were strong indications that children and young people's engagement was improving, respondents shared their thoughts on the barriers that hindered effective participation and how they could be addressed to strengthen children's voices.

“More could be done to involve local children and young people in the process.”

Respondents felt that in some areas there was a lack of meaningful and innovative participation and engagement methods.

“Consultation and engagement methods have been a bit boring. It sometimes feels like young people may not be as open and honest with their answers as they might otherwise be.”

“I think that sometimes people's views are sought and then not taken account of - participation should be meaningful and people should feel that their opinion is valued and taken account of otherwise they won't take part.”

Feedback revealed that the majority of engagement was undertaken by Education, meaning there is a lack of representation of children and young people's voices from across the sectors in the planning process. There were concerns that the most vulnerable groups of children might have been unintentionally excluded.

“Education is the first port of call for engagement and therefore does not reach the children who have disengage from school”

It was suggested that third sector organisations, who provide direct support to vulnerable children, young people and their families, would be able to help facilitate the engagement. By working with the third sector, the Children's Services Plan could be better informed by including a wider representation of views, including those who do not normally engage with statutory services.

“There has been limited engagement of young people who access third sector services... [the engagement is] not necessarily representative of the wider demographic of young people in our region.”

“consultation with children does not reach the most vulnerable of children in our communities”

“...a voluntary organisation that seeks to give a voice to young people with disabilities has just had its funding withdrawn.”

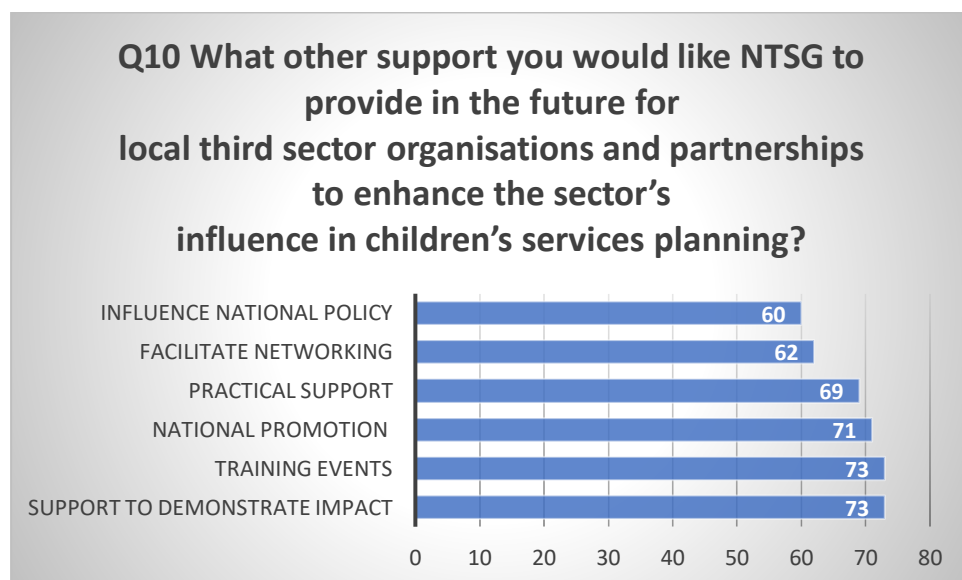
Another challenge identified from the research was the need for more collaboration. It was suggested that organisations, both statutory and voluntary, were confident in engaging children and young people to develop own services. However, it was felt that this information could be pulled together and could be very useful for strategic planning.

This corroborates with the responses when survey participants were asked how well they felt the statutory partners have worked in partnership with the third sector to facilitate children's engagement in children's services planning.

Support identified to improve strategic engagement

17. In addition to assessing current capacity and capability of the third sector to contribute fully to children's services planning, this research is also interested in the development of activities and practical support to help address challenges identified by the third sector.

In the survey, third sector participants were asked to identify what they would like NTSG to do to in the future for local third sector organisations and partnerships to enhance the sector's influence in children's services planning. A list of possible options was suggested to participants, with space available for making other recommendations.



More than 70% of respondents said they would like NTSG to;

- Help third sector organisations to demonstrate their impact 73%
- Organise training events to build capacity of the third sector workforce E.g. on strategic influence and participation 73%

- Promote third sector's contribution to children's services planning at national level. 71%

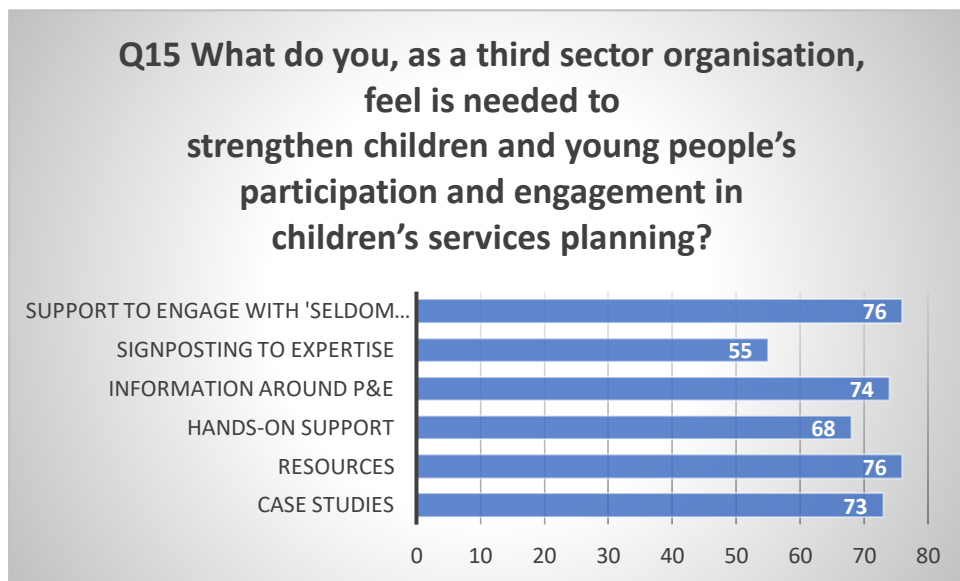
More than 60% said they would like NTSG to;

- Provide practical support to local third sector networks/forums in their engagement in children's services planning 69%
- Facilitate networking opportunities and peer support to third sector leaders 62%
- Provide opportunity to influence national policy development. 60%

Half of the respondents said they would like NTSG to advocate for the third sector at relevant national groups.

A few respondents added that it would be helpful to have improved guidance and guidelines that give clear description of the roles for the third sector, including the TSI, in children's services planning.

18. Similarly, third sector participants were asked to identify what they felt is needed to strengthen children and young people's participation and engagement in children's services planning. A list of possible options was suggested to participants, with spaces available for making other recommendations.



More than 70% of respondents voted on the following:

- Resources/toolkits/guidance on children and young people's participation and engagement 76%
- improved information on participation and engagement practice with particular groups of children and young people, for example those with additional support needs, or 'seldom heard' groups of children and young people 76%
- case studies/examples of best practice on children and young people's participation and engagement 73%

- information/knowledge on how to achieve continuous improvement in participation and engagement practice 73%

More than 50% of respondents identified that “hands-on practical support/training to third sector/other organisations” and “signposting to organisations with specialist expertise or resources” were also beneficial.

Other suggestions made via comments included:

“There is a need for practitioners in rural areas to see and share with practitioners from other areas. Understanding good practice is essential.”

“There is a need for basic level training and CPD in our region around working positively in partnership with young people.”

Conclusion

19. This report is informed by 58 responses from a national survey and 16 interviews with Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs), representing a total of 27 local authority areas. While the findings might not represent a full range of views of the third sector, it is worth emphasising that the emerging themes corroborate with the issues identified through the ongoing engagement between NTSG and children's services planning partners.
20. Although children's services planning practice varies from area to area, the overall feedback was positive. There is evidence that engagement with the third sector during the planning process has improved. Generally, the third sector feels more included at the delivery groups level, but for equal partnership across all sectors to be achieved, genuine collaborative leadership needs to become more deeply established.
21. The lack of capacity of both the third sector and the statutory sector to enable collaborative planning of children's services was highlighted throughout the survey. While there was a strong will to engage the third sector in children's services planning, the ambition was not matched with adequate resources to develop, co-ordinate and sustain partnership activities. This includes staff time and funding to commit to strategic work.
22. The local third sector network, often supported by Third Sector Interface, provides a platform where both national and local third sector organisations have equal opportunities to participate. It helps bring together the voice of the third sector and offers an effective channel for planning partners to communicate and engage with the third sector collectively.
23. Relationship was regarded as a key element in successful collaboration. Staff turnover and the changes in planning structure has had a negative impact on the continuity of partnership working. It often meant that partners had to invest

additional time and energy to re-building relationships and re-establishing a shared understanding.

24. The role of the Third Sector Interface (TSI) in relation to children's services planning was not always clearly described and fully understood by partners. The Statutory Guidance for the provision of children's services planning makes references to the potential role for Third Sector Interface. However, the extent to which Third Sector Interface carries out these roles might differ depending on local needs and the TSI's own capacity. This makes it difficult for partners to set expectations. Also, the inconsistency across Scotland might not be helpful, especially for those who are operating in more than one local authority area.
25. When planning and reviewing services for children, young people and families, third sector data was not fully considered and utilised. By including valuable data from services commissioned by non-statutory funding, planning partners could better understand the full picture of local needs and priorities.
26. The commissioning process and strategy differs from area to area. However, the current practice tends to encourage competitive tendering, rather than promoting collaborative alternatives. Also, funding offered by different planning partners were not as joined up as it could be. This sometimes leads to duplication and unfilled gaps.
27. Similarly, children and young people's engagement practice varies across the country. The voices of children and young people were well included when planning services at organisational level. However, it was not clear how their views and opinions were used to influence strategic planning. While there are some established mechanisms and good practice to involve children and young people in the planning process, for example Champions' Boards, it could be improved to include a wider representation of certain vulnerable groups such as disabled and BME children.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, it recommended that:

28. **The NTSG Project** continues to support the third sector to:
 - Support third sector leaders to share learning and good practice by facilitating networking and peer support opportunities
 - Build capacity by organising relevant training events and discussions around strategic influence and participation
 - Further develop local partnership by offering practical support to local third sector network
 - Influence national policy development when appropriate
 - Engage with elected members by brokering opportunities in partnership with COSLA and Improvement Services for example

- Promote their roles and contributions to children's services planning at national level by advocating on their behalf at national meetings and events
29. **The NTSG Project** strengthens the engagement of children and young people in children's services planning by:
- Producing and disseminating case studies on good practice
 - Collating resources and tools to support effective children and young people's participation
 - Delivering training and practical support to further embed children and young people's voices at strategic planning
30. **Local Children's Partnerships** improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning process by:
- 'De-cluttering' the landscape and joining up relevant policy areas such as Tackling Child Poverty and Raising Attainment
 - Investing sufficient resources to sustain partnership activities
 - Working with local Third Sector Interface and third sector network to develop engagement strategy to include a wide range of organisations
 - Considering the inclusion of third sector data when planning and reviewing children's services
 - Reviewing commissioning practice to encourage collaboration for better outcomes for children, young people and families
 - Working with third sector organisations to further embed the voices of every child and young person including those are most vulnerable.
31. **Third Sector Interfaces** continue to support the third sector to become equal partners within the Children's Partnership by:
- Facilitating effective and inclusive third sector infrastructure and participation mechanisms to enable deeper and wider involvement for the sector
 - Working with statutory partners to co-develop engagement strategy and to ensure third sector has a voice at all levels of children's services planning
 - Helping to develop leadership in the third sector and support third sector leaders in their participation to children's services planning
 - Promote the roles and contributions of the third sector to children's services planning at local level
 - Learning and sharing practice with other TSIs.
32. **The Scottish Government** supports local children's services planning process by:
- Assisting local partnerships to further develop collaborative leadership that includes the third sector and to share successful models and learning across Scotland
 - Reviewing current guidance to give clear description of the roles of third sector including Third Sector Interfaces in the context of children's services planning

- Considering the development of a reporting framework which provides local partnerships and organisations a pathway to attribute their work to improving children and young people's outcomes from a local to national level.

Next steps

The NTSG Project will not only use the data and information to further our work programme up to December 2019, but also use the recommendations to inform the proposal for the next stage of the NTSG Project.

At a national level, we will share the report with Scottish Government to feed into the wider review of Children's Services Planning. At a local level, we will share learning with children's partnerships to influence and support local services planning.

Appendix A – Survey

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

The National Third Sector GIRFEC Project (NTSG)

The [National Third Sector GIRFEC Project \(NTSG\)](#) has been managed by Children in Scotland since 2018 and aims to maximise the influence of local and national third sector organisations in children's services planning and delivery. Through providing information, engagement and learning opportunities for the sector, we support its voice as a core partner in the wider culture, systems and practice change needed to get it right for every child.

What is this survey about?

Over the coming months, the NTSG project is particularly interested in developing its current understanding of the third sector's progress in children's services planning as the strategic approach to improving children's outcomes. A report by the previous NTSG project helped to identify some [promising planning examples](#), based on fieldwork in 2017 when the first plans were published. The context of children's services planning, including the development of Children's Services Plans, lies in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the associated Statutory Guidance on Part 3 ([click here to read](#)). A further national round of Children's Services Plans is due for publication in 2020. The Plans are intended to be part of an ongoing planning cycle rather than an end point in themselves, with opportunities for the third sector to be involved in this cycle, working with local statutory and other partners to review, plan and help improve children's services and outcomes.

Sharing survey results

The NTSG Project would greatly appreciate your time and input in completing the following survey. Your feedback will help us to take stock on what has been working well in children's services planning, as well as identifying any challenges and areas for improvement. The survey responses will enable us to develop reports with findings and recommendations, which can be shared within the sector and with statutory partners, as part of the ongoing development of children's services planning. The survey may also help to identify where the NTSG project (and others) might further support and engage the sector to plan for children's improved outcomes. Summary findings will be shared externally, where appropriate – for example where there are implications for statutory partners. In these cases, individual responses would be anonymised in merged results. Survey respondents will receive a copy of the survey findings where we have your consent to keep in touch.

Who and when?

We welcome responses to this survey from partners in:

- Third Sector organisations (both national and local) who provide services to children, young people and their families.
- The survey will be closed at 12 noon on 28 February.

If you don't have time to complete the survey in one go, you can return to the survey and pick up where you left off and/or edit previous responses until you click the Done button (provided you are using the same computer/device).

Follow up opportunities

Finally, we would like to follow up the survey with more detailed work in a selection of geographic areas, to explore some of the themes. You will see a question about that at the end of the survey.

Any queries? Contact the NTSG team, [Louise Wright](#) and [Vicky Wan](#)

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

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 dropdown menu below, or
- complete more than one survey, each relating individually 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.

* 1. Area of operation (please select main one, or national/more than one area)

* 2. **Are you happy for Children in Scotland and/or the NTSG Project to keep in touch via email?**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I'd like to receive communications from both Children in Scotland and NTSG | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I'd like to receive communications about this survey only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, only from NTSG, including this survey | <input type="checkbox"/> No, I'd prefer not to be contacted by either |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I'd like to receive communications from Children in Scotland only | |

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

3. Part 1: Local children's services strategic planning

The Children and Young People's Act (Scotland) 2014 established a new children's services planning framework which places duties on local authorities and health boards to prepare a plan which will cover a 3-year period.

The Statutory Guidance for Part 3 of the Act, Section 10 85(i)(a) states that: in developing the Children's Services Plan the local authority and relevant health board must consult organisations which represent the interests of persons who use or are likely to use any children's service... this means any community groups and third sector organisations which seek to represent the views, concerns and wishes of current and/or potential service users.

General

3. Please choose one statement below which you believe best describes the extent to which the third sector is involved in local children's services strategic planning in your area of operation including, the development of the Children's Services Plan.

- The third sector is valued as a full partner with representation at all levels of the children's services planning processes locally, up to and including the Children's Partnership
- 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.
- 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.

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

Strengths and Challenges

Focusing on the engagement of the third sector in children's services strategic planning, please rate how well or otherwise you feel it works in your area of operation, under the areas outlined below.

4. Area 1: Support for the Third Sector to participate in children's services planning

4 – very well 3 – fairly well 2 – not very well 1 – not at all 0 – don't know

Statutory partners - the local authority and the health board – have taken action to remove barriers to third sector participation in children's services planning and have provided practical support to encourage engagement from the third sector.

Local third sector networks function well in providing effective mechanisms for the third sector to engage and be represented in the children's services planning structure.

The Children's Partnership (or other elements of the community planning partnership in the local area) has invested appropriate financial and staffing resources to support the third sector's engagement in children's services planning

4 – very well 3 – fairly well 2 – not very well 1 – not at all 0 – don't know

Local councillors (Elected Members) help to support the third sector's role in children's services planning.

Please use the space below if you are able to add further comments on the questions above about how the third sector is supported to engage in children's services planning, including any practical suggestions for how this might be improved.

5. Area 2: Working together to improve children's outcomes

4 – very well 3 – fairly well 2 – not very well 1 – not at all 0 – don't know

A wide range of third sector organisations, national and local, are included and valued in the children's services planning process.

The Children's Services Plan and its related planning processes are well integrated with other local partnership plans e.g. on adult health and social care, child poverty, housing, and health.

4 – very well 3 – fairly well 2 – not very well 1 – not at all 0 – don't know

The leadership of the local children's services planning process is collaborative, with clearly defined roles for third sector partners which include involvement in decision making at all stages.

Third sector data has been used alongside statutory data in identifying needs and priorities for children and young people, and in informing collaborative improvement of children and young people's outcomes.

There is strong culture of partnership working to support children's services planning in which the third and statutory sectors treat each other with mutual respect.

Please use the space below if you are able to add further comments on the questions above about how the third sector works with others to improve children's outcomes, including any practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

6. Area 3: Purchasing / Procurement

4 – very well 3 – fairly well 2 – not very well 1 – not at all 0 – don't know

The purchasing/procurement of children's services in your area reflects the priorities of the Children's Services Plan.

Statutory partners have promoted collaborative alternatives to competitive tendering for the purchase/procurement of children's services.

Please use the space below if you are able to add further comments on the questions above about how financial decisions on children's services are made to improve children's outcomes, including any practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

4.

The Third Sector Interface Role in Children's Services Planning

The [Statutory Guidance for Part 3 of Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#), in particular Section 10 and 14, makes references to the roles of the Third Sector Interfaces. It describes the potential role Third Sector Interface could play to facilitate a process where the third sector, including smaller groups, are supported to engage in the consultation and planning process. (Guidance 90 & 146).

7. Please rate how well or otherwise you feel it works in your area of operation, under the areas outlined below.

2 –
4 – 3 – not 1 – 0 –
very fairly very not don't
well well well at all know

The Third Sector Interface (also known as the TSI) in the area I work in has brought the voices of the sector together to help contribute views and data into the children's services planning processes.

Please use the space below if you are able to add further comments on the questions above about how the Third Sector Interface supports the third sector during the children's services planning processes, including any practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

How well do you think your local Third Sector Interface is supported by the statutory partners to carry out these roles?

Please use the space below if you are able to add further comments on the questions above about how the Third Sector Interface supports the third sector during the children's services planning processes, including any practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

Support & Guidance

8. What further guidance and support is required to help strengthen the engagement of the third sector in Children's Services Plans and planning? E.g. better statutory guidance, better local guidance, leadership, dedicated staff etc

9. The National Third Sector GIRFEC (NTSG) project currently delivers various types of support to the sector, including training, networking opportunities, policy information and hands-on support work. e.g. TSI networking events, training courses, newsletters etc

If you have engaged with NTSG in the past 10 months, what did you find useful? i.e. specific work you'd like NTSG continues to provide/or do more.

10. What other support you would like NTSG to provide in the future for local third sector organisations and partnerships to enhance the sector's influence in children's services planning?

Please tick ALL that apply

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide hands-on tailored support to local Children's Partnerships | <input type="checkbox"/> Promote third sector's contribution to children's services planning at national level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide practical support to local third sector networks/forums in their engagement in children's services planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Advocate for the third sector at relevant national groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate networking opportunities and peer support to third sector leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity to influence national policy development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organise training events to build capacity of the third sector workforce
E.g. on strategic influence and participation | <input type="checkbox"/> Help third sector organisations to demonstrate their impact |

Please give specific information related to any of your answers above.

Please also use this space to tell us about any other support you'd like the National Third Sector GIRFEC (NTSG) project to provide that is not mentioned above.

11. Who else could also provide support to local third sector children's organisations/networks? And what specific support could they provide?

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

5. Part 2 Children's and Young People's Participation and Engagement

12. Focusing on the engagement of children and young people in shaping children's services strategic planning, what has been working well? Please describe strengths and successes below e.g. is there a CYP engagement strategy, are there recognised participative methodologies in use, etc

13. Focusing on the engagement of children and young people in shaping children's services strategic planning, what has not worked so well? Please describe challenges and barriers.

14. Please rate how well or otherwise you feel it works in your area of operation, under the areas outlined below.

4 – very well 3 – fairly well 2 – not very well 1 – not at all 0 – don't know

<p>The local authority and Health Board work in partnership with third sector to facilitate children and young people engagement in children's services planning</p>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

To what extent do you consider that the third sector in your area of operation has enabled the voices and experiences of children and young people to be influential in the children's services planning process?

Please expand if possible, on the third sector's role in facilitating children and young people's engagement in the children's services planning processes, including any good examples, challenges and/or practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

15. What do you, as a third sector organisation, feel is needed to strengthen children and young people's participation and engagement in children's services planning?

Please tick ALL that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Case studies/examples of best practice on children and young people's participation and engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Information/knowledge on continuous improvement in participation and engagement practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resources/toolkits/guidance on children and young people's participation and engagement | <input type="checkbox"/> Signposting to organisations with specialist expertise or resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on practical support/training to third sector/other organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> Improved information on participation and engagement practice with particular groups of children and young people, for example those with additional support needs, or 'seldom heard' groups of children and young people |

Others, please specify:

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

6. Part 3: GIRFEC Practice

Children's services in Scotland are underpinned by Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), the policy set out by the Scottish Government to make sure children and young people can receive the right help, at the right time, from the right people. GIRFEC is a way for families to work in partnership with people who can support them including but not limited to teachers, doctors and nurses. In this section, we are going to ask you questions about how GIRFEC is embedded into your work practice.

16. Please indicate the extent to which you feel that the GIRFEC approach is adopted across children's services in your area of operation.

- The GIRFEC approach is embedded fully in the area and delivered consistently across the area's services
- GIRFEC values and principles are understood, but the practical delivery of GIRFEC varies
- There is limited understanding and delivery of the GIRFEC model
- Other (please explain below)
- Do not know

Please use the space below if you are able to add further comments on the questions above about how GIRFEC is put into practice across your area, including any barriers and challenges that prevent GIRFEC being delivered fully and practical suggestions on how this could be improved.

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

7. Part 4: Other comments

17. Please use this space to tell us if you have other comments/suggestions about any subject in this survey or anything that has not been covered in this survey.

Thank you

* 18. In order for us to gain a deeper understanding on certain issues in this survey, we plan to carry out selected follow-up activities such as interviews, focus groups or more detailed hands on support in certain areas. We would greatly appreciate your help with this.

Do you agree, in principle, to be contacted/invited to take part in follow up activities?

- Yes - please ensure you give your name and email address below
- No

Third Sector Engagement in Children's Services Planning

8. About you

Responses to this survey will be anonymised, but may be aggregated on an area basis. Provision of names and email addresses is optional. You are required to provide this information only if you would like to participate in any follow up activities, receive notification of the findings, or if you would like to be included in future communications from Children in Scotland and/or the NTSG Project.

19. Your name (optional)

20. Job Role

Choose one that best describes your role

- Chief Executive Officer
- Strategic Manager
- Service Manager
- Frontline worker/Practitioners

Other (Please specify)

21. E-mail (optional)

22. Organisation

* 23. **Type of organisation** (please choose one that best describes the type of organisation)

- Intermediary
- National third sector organisation
- Regional third sector organisation
- Local third sector / community organisation

Other (Please specify)

Appendix B – Interview question set

The Third Sector's Involvement in Children Services Planning – TSI Interviews

Semi-Structured Questionnaire – February 2019

General

- 1) In broad terms, what do you think about the extent to which the third sector is involved in local children's services strategic planning in (e.g. Edinburgh) including the development of the Children's Services Plan?

Prompts:

- Equal partners, Represented or Consultation only?
- At all levels or only at some levels?
- Minimal or Do not know?

- 2) In an overview, could you briefly describe how the third sector is involved in local children's services strategic planning in (e.g. Edinburgh)?

Prompts:

- *Is there a clear structure and mechanism to enable effective third sector representation? E.g functioning local third sector network*
- *Are there third sector representation in the partnership structure? At which levels?*

[Do you have an organisational chart that you can share?]

Strengths & Challenges

- 3) Focusing on the engagement of the third sector in children's services strategic planning, what do you think has been working well?
- 4) Again, focusing on the engagement of the third sector in children's services strategic planning, what do you think has been the challenges or barriers?

For both Q3 & Q4.

Prompts – may draw attention to these areas:

- *Local infrastructure to co-ordinate representation and communications*
- *Relationship and culture: Positive and trusting? Collaborative?*
- *Actions taken to remove barriers to third sector participation by partners*
- *Supported by Elected Members and IJB*
- *Staff capacity, funding and resources committed to support third sector's engagement*
- *Tension or competition between third sector organisations*
- *Understanding and knowledge of the third sector by partners*
- *Through representation, views and data from the third sector are used to inform Children Services Plan*

TSI's role in Children's Services Planning

- 5) Could you describe how does the TSI promote and support third sector's participation in the children's services planning process including the development of Children's Services Plan?
- 6) Are there any barriers/challenges that need to be addressed to enable TSI to play a fuller role in facilitating third sector's engagement in children's services planning?
- 7) The Statutory Guidance for Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 makes references to the roles of the TSI in children's services planning. How well do you think the TSI is supported by the statutory partners to carry out these roles?
- 8) In the coming months, the Scottish Government is planning a review of the Statutory Guidance for Part 3 of the Act. This presents an opportunity to strengthen the role of third sector. How could the Guidance be improved to support TSI and third sector in the children's services planning process?

Children and Young People's Engagement

- 9) How well do you think CYP are involved in the planning and delivery of services?

Support

- 10) What further guidance and support do you think will help strengthen third sector's engagement in children's services planning?
[Leadership, workforce development, practical guidance, dedicated staff, networking opportunities, peer learning etc]
- 11) What can the NTSG project do to further support TSIs, third sector organisations and local partnerships to enhance the sector's influence in children's services planning?

Additional Comments

- 12) Do you have any other points that you would like to add/anything I've missed?

Thanks

Thank interviewee and outline next steps, as we understand them. Remind them that they can email any further thoughts, links to relevant documents, etc to girfec@childreninscotland.org.uk

Appendix C – Respondents by Local Authority

Twenty-seven Local Authority areas are represented through either the survey or interviews:

1. Aberdeen City
2. Aberdeenshire
3. Angus
4. Argyll and Bute
5. Clackmannanshire
6. Dumfries and Galloway
7. East Ayrshire
8. East Dunbartonshire
9. City of Edinburgh
10. Falkirk
11. Fife
12. Glasgow City
13. Highland
14. Inverclyde
15. Midlothian
16. Moray
17. North Lanarkshire
18. Orkney Islands
19. Perth and Kinross
20. Renfrewshire
21. Scottish Borders
22. Shetland Islands
23. South Lanarkshire
24. Stirling
25. West Dunbartonshire
26. Western Isles
27. West Lothian