

# INVERCLYDE COUNCIL CITIZENS' PANEL NEWSLETTER

## SPRING 2018

Dear Panel Member

Welcome to the latest Citizens' Panel newsletter.

We were pleased with the response to the survey issued in Summer 2017. Sixty-five per cent of you completed a questionnaire and provided valuable feedback that we will use to improve services provided by the Council.



Topics in the Summer 2017 survey were:

- protection of vulnerable children and young people
- biodiversity and community food growing
- satisfaction with Council services.

The Spring 2018 questionnaire focuses on Inverclyde Council's Customer Services Centre; the Council's reputation; community safety; and alcohol. We look forward to receiving your completed survey.

### This newsletter outlines the key results from the Summer 2017 survey and our response to your feedback.

#### I. Protection of vulnerable children and young people

The first section of the survey comprised two parts: child protection and Corporate Parenting. We advised the Panel that we wanted to find out what they thought about services to protect children to help us improve those services.

Seventy per cent of Panel members told us they were confident that the relevant services in Inverclyde will protect children and young people and help them if they are at risk of harm. A similar number of respondents (71%) also said they were confident that the necessary action would be taken if they contacted an agency with a concern.

Panel members were then asked to indicate how important they felt a variety of factors were in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Most factors scored highly with the majority of Panel members agreeing that they are very important:

Professionals sharing information with each other	89%
Professionals working together to support children and families	85%
Professionals providing extra support to families where a child is at risk	79%
Listening to children and young people and taking their views into account when making decisions that affect them	74%
Friends, neighbours, carers, passers by etc reporting concerns about a child's well-being	67%

Only one factor scored lower (at 35%): Raising awareness through public campaigns, for example, using posters and leaflets.

The next question asked the Panel if they were aware of the Council's work to support looked after children and young people; 41% of respondents said they were aware of this work.

The penultimate question in this part of the survey asked respondents if they thought there was a lack of understanding and stigma attached to young people who are in care. Just over two thirds (68%) of Panel members think there is a lack of understanding and stigma attached to young people who are in care.

#### Corporate Parenting

We introduced this part of the questionnaire by advising that Corporate Parenting is the collective responsibility of the Council, our Elected Members (Councillors), employees and partner agencies to make Inverclyde the best place in Scotland for children and young people who are looked after and who are leaving care.

We also explained that the Inverclyde Corporate Parenting Group works together to listen to the views and experiences of looked after children and those leaving care, adding that work with the local community is also important to ensure that looked after children and young people live safely and, through education, leisure and access to work, grow up to be healthy, confident, responsible and able to contribute as effective citizens in the local area.

Respondents were asked to consider a number of factors and indicate how important they thought they were in safeguarding and promoting the welfare and wellbeing of looked after children and young people; the responses were:

Professionals working together	91%
Listening to children and young people and taking their views into account when making decisions that affect them	78%
Professionals providing extra support to families in their local neighbourhood	73%
Friends, neighbours, carers and local people having a supportive role	65%

Again, only one factor scored lower (at 38%): Raising awareness through public campaigns, for example, using posters and leaflets.

## Our response to your feedback

The Panel's responses provided valuable messages which will be used to inform communication and training around the needs of looked after children and young people, as well as the effectiveness of our Corporate Parenting planning.

A key issue that looked after children and care leavers often tell us about is the lack of understanding and stigma attached to being in care; more than two thirds (68%) of Panel members agreed with this. Focusing on how best we can safeguard and promote the welfare and wellbeing of looked after children and those leaving care, the majority

of respondents (91%) rated the need for professionals to work together and the need to listen to children and young people (78%) as being very important. Inverclyde's proposed "Champions' Board" approach to Corporate Parenting will be a key driver in enabling looked after children and care leavers to work with Corporate Parents in shaping and delivering services. Additionally, the Child Protection Committee recognised the potential need to promote the concept of a citizen's role in accessing "early help" and this shall be taken forward as a priority in 2018.

## 2. Biodiversity and community food growing

We introduced this part of the survey by explaining that biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat and that a high level of biodiversity is usually considered to be important and desirable. We went on to explain that, while some human activities have benefited biodiversity, many have resulted in its decline, adding that, today in Scotland, biodiversity is under pressure from climate change, development, habitat loss and pollution.

The first question in this section of the questionnaire asked Panel members how concerned they are about any potential loss of biodiversity in Scotland in general and in Inverclyde in particular and the responses were:

	% who are very or slightly concerned about any potential loss of biodiversity
Scotland	82%
Inverclyde	80%.

We introduced the second question by advising the Panel that bees and other insects such as butterflies rely on flowers for food. Insect numbers are declining globally and one way of helping is to plant wild flowers in towns and cities to create small areas known as urban meadows. When we asked how interested respondents would be in seeing urban meadows in Inverclyde, 87% said they would be interested in seeing urban meadows in the local area.

### Community food growing

At the beginning of this section of the questionnaire, we acknowledged that interest in "growing your own food" has increased in recent years. We advised the Panel that, as part of our duties under The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Council is required to prepare a Food Growing Strategy and identify land that may be used as allotment sites, together with other areas of Inverclyde that could be used by the local community for the cultivation of fruit, vegetables, herbs or flowers.

When Panel members were asked how interested they are in growing their own fruit, vegetables, herbs or flowers; 61% of respondents said they are interested in doing so.

We then asked respondents if there are any barriers to them growing their own produce and the top three responses were.

Lack of knowledge	45%
Lack of time	30%
Lack of a garden	29%

## Our response to your feedback

### Biodiversity

The Citizens' Panel responses to the questions about biodiversity show a substantial degree of concern relating to the environment. One relatively simple action that can be undertaken is the planting of pollinator-friendly species; this is currently a high profile concept in Scotland with the publication of The Pollinator Strategy for Scotland 2017/27.

### Community food growing

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places a duty on local authorities to produce a Food Growing Strategy, which can also include an Allotment Strategy. The responses from the Citizens' Panel offer some insight into perceived barriers to people growing their own food, chief among these being a lack of knowledge and a lack of time. This would suggest that any Food Growing Strategy should pursue a wider agenda than simply land supply, and should also encompass issues such as lifelong learning, inter-generational working, active lifestyles, sustainable communities and climate change adaptations. It is nevertheless encouraging to note that more than 60% of respondents expressed an interest in growing their own fruit, vegetables, herbs or flowers.

## 3. Satisfaction with Council services

The final section of the survey asked Panel members how satisfied they were with seven Council services: parks and open spaces; refuse collection; leisure services; libraries; local schools; the McLean Museum and Art Gallery; and social care or social work. Respondents were asked to answer the questions in this section only if they had used the service in the last 12 months.

Panel members' responses told us that their satisfaction with the seven Council services is generally high, with six of the seven services attracting a scoring of more than 70%.

## Our response to your feedback

Inverclyde Council is acutely aware of the importance of providing high quality services to local residents and visitors to the area, particularly with the aim of retaining and enhancing Inverclyde's population. It is therefore pleasing to note that the majority of Council services scored over 70% in terms of satisfaction.

Social care or social work services attracted the lowest satisfaction rating (53%); this may reflect the fact that respondents had not used this particular service in the last year and therefore responded to the question accordingly.