



To: Highland's Children's Forum's Children **Please Ask For:** Ms Dempster
Direct Line: 01463 702860
E Mail: harriet.dempster@highland.gov.uk
Your Ref:
Our Ref: HLD/WW/
Date: 3 October 2008

Dear Children's Forum Children

I just wanted to say a big 'Thank You' for your wonderful report 'Are We There Yet? A Way to Go'. It is not often that I enjoy reading Committee papers, but when I came to your report the other week in preparation for the Children's Committee, my experience was different.

The illustrated cover made me smile and want to start reading. The whole report was excellent, in that it was easy to read, yet informative. It was well evidenced with statistics and powerfully and beautifully illustrated with your words and drawings.

I have to say many of your drawings were so graphic and memorable, and to the point, it has really helped keep the messages you wanted to get across at the top of my mind. Thank you again and well done.

My job is Director of Social Work and Chief Social Work Officer for the Council. I have got special responsibilities for looking after children who can't be with their parents for whatever reason. This involves finding families who will care for children by making a space for them in their home and in their hearts.

The very positive comments about foster care included in the quotation on page 16 are really welcome. Getting feedback like this conveys to foster carers that they are valued and they are making a positive difference.

"How will we make sure we get enough good foster care for children who need it?", I hear you ask. Well, the good news is that the Council has just agreed to give more money - increasing to £420,000 - to enable an increase in foster care allowances and more support to relatives (kinship carers).

We are also committed to increasing support to children with disabilities and their families. The Council increased the financial support to Crossroads this year and some of that has gone directly to providing more short breaks.

We need to do more in this area to support carers, including young carers, which is why we are running workshops with staff to raise awareness and sensitivity to the issue. These workshops will hear directly from carers.

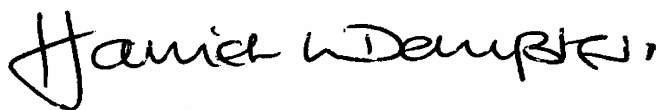
It is really positive to read that young people value out of school care and that children attending feel included and that no child felt excluded because of a disability. This is a great credit to the child care staff, mostly from the voluntary sector, who provide these services.

Your report highlights you would like more wrap-around care and that's what we hope to provide. We will do this by working with your parents and communities, harnessing the positive energy to get the best and most out of the resources available. I agree with the conclusion in your report 'Are We There Yet?' Not Quite' – there is always a way to go – but I want to assure you that in social work we are working hard to get there.

We do welcome your comments and progress chasing.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harriet L Dempster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'H' and 'D'.

Harriet L Dempster
Director of Social Work
Social Work Service