Children and Young People Empowered: Supporting Education Transitions

CO-PRODUCED WELCOME AUDIO STORYBOOK FOR EARLY YEARS/EARLY PRIMARY PUPILS MOVING TO HIGHLAND



CHANGE MAKERS & INFLUENCERS

OVERVIEW

This case study showcases how children and young people from Armed Forces families in Highland co-produced *"We're Moving to the Highlands of Scotland"*, a digital audio storybook designed to support younger children during transition. Guided by the Highland Children's Rights and Participation Strategy and Highland Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, the resource promotes belonging, wellbeing and inclusion. Developed in partnership with the Military Liaison Group (Education) and the Educational Psychology Service, the project enabled children to use their lived experience to create a meaningful resource that has been shared with professional audiences and promoted locally and nationally

The children and young people have said,

"The book might be helpful to people in the Army to help them not be scared and worried about moving"

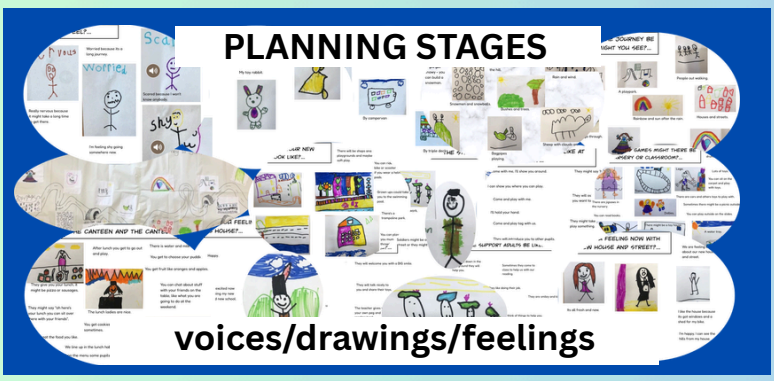
"Kids don't get as much information as adults do but if they get this book, they will get equal information"

"Some kids don't know how to handle emotions, and this book might help the whole family, the parents as well"

PARTICIPATION STRATEGY & APPROACH

The project was underpinned by a rights-based approach, with six pupils from Primary 3 to Primary 7 at Drakies Primary School, Inverness, actively leading the development of the resource. Drawing on their lived experience as children from Armed Forces families, they explored the challenges of relocation, considered how younger children may feel about moving, and reviewed website data to understand where families may be relocating from. They identified a need for a welcome resource for younger children and chose to create an audio storybook.

Through a co-creation process, the pupils worked with a representative from MLG (Education) and School SMT member, making decisions about the content, format and key messages. This resulted in the pupils creating an accessible resource that combines audio, text and visual elements to meet younger pupils stage of understanding - they were the authors, illustrators and narrators of the resource.



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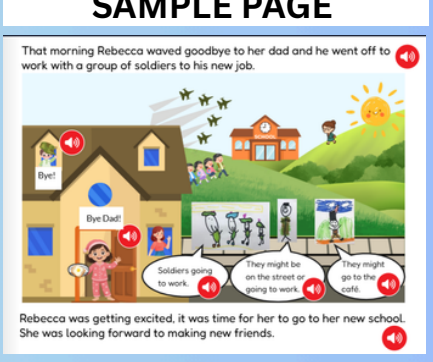

RESPONDING TO NEED & DEMAND

The project responded to an identified need for resources that support children from Armed Forces families during periods of transition. Website engagement data, combined with the lived experiences of participating pupils, highlighted the challenges younger children can face when relocating to a new school and community. The pupils recognised a gap in child-friendly transition resources for this age group and co-created an audio storybook to provide reassurance, promote belonging and support positive connected transitions into Highland.

"A story like this to help explain what it is like to move to the Highlands and what to expect will be hugely helpful in reducing the worries for young people Well done and a huge congratulations on what the pupils have achieved.'

IMPACT AND CHANGE

The project empowered children and young people from Armed Forces families to shape a resource based on their lived experience, ensuring the voices of children were central to its development. Through the co-creation process, participants developed confidence, communication skills and a sense of pride in making a positive difference for others.
The resulting audio storybook that supports younger children moving to Highland by promoting belonging, wellbeing and positive transitions. The resource has been shared with professionals across Highland and promoted locally and nationally, extending its impact beyond the original project.

"We wanted younger children moving here to feel welcome and know they are not alone."
(Pupil involved in the project)

KEY LEARNING AND REFLECTIONS

This project demonstrated the value of meaningful participation in creating resources that are relevant, accessible and shaped by lived experience. Involving children and young people from the outset ensured the resource reflected their priorities and experiences.
A key learning was that co-production leads to more authentic and impactful outcomes, while also building confidence, skills and a sense of ownership among participants. The project reinforced the importance of viewing children and young people as active partners in decision-making and change.



CHILDRENS RIGHTS APPROACH - RELFECTION

Embedding: Children's rights and participation were embedded throughout the project, from planning to delivery.
Equality and Non-Discrimination: The resource was designed to be accessible and inclusive, ensuring all children could engage in ways that met their needs.
Empowerment: Children used their lived experience to influence a resource that will support others during transition.
Participation: Children were active partners in decision-making, shaping the content, format and messages of the resource.
Accountability: Children's views directly informed the resource, demonstrating how their contributions led to meaningful action and change.

The children and young people are proud to share that this book has been ENDORSED BY:

READING FORCE - ***"What a wonderful way to welcome new arrivals to the Highlands! Happily endorsed by Reading Force, the shared reading charity for Armed Forces families".***

FORCES CHILDREN SCOTLAND - ***"I love how the voices of the children shine through in their writing, and brought to life with interactive elements. The illustrations by early years children are wonderful giving real insight into how they see and experience moving".***

FUTURE PLANS

The resource continues to be promoted through local and national networks to support Armed Forces families relocating to Highland and as an example of good practice for other Local Authorities to adopt. Future plans include gathering feedback and sharing this with the children and young people, exploring opportunities for further co-produced materials based on identified need, and continuing to embed meaningful participation in initiatives that support children and young people from Armed Forces families. The resource can be found in the Children's Rights and Participation and Enrolment sections of the Highland Armed Forces Families website.