



## **Preventing Substance Use Among Children and Young People**

***Empowering children and young people through prevention and education in school and beyond***

### **Speaker and Workshop Leader Biographies**

James Dunbar, Chair, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP)

James is the founding Chief Executive of New Start Highland. Growing up in rural Sutherland he saw at first-hand how important it is to create opportunities for people to enable them to realise their potential. James founded New Start Highland in 2000 and has spearheaded its growth from a single employee, to an organisation with over 100 employees delivering service in every area of Highland. New Start Highland delivers services including furniture recycling, housing support and community integration. New Start Highland operates a retail chain, as well as commercial removals and training businesses and an exciting new brand of high quality upcycled furniture. He is Chair of Social Enterprise Scotland and The Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership.

Ian Kyle, Children's Planning Manager, Highland Council

Having spent 30 years in early years and additional support needs education including 10 as a Head Teacher in Highland, Ian currently works as a senior manager in the Care and Learning Service of Highland Council. Within his role he leads on integrated service planning, performance and quality improvement. He has a service overview for child poverty and information sharing and is currently the council lead for Year of Young People 2018.

Ailsa Villegas, Health Development Officer, Highland Council

Ailsa has 12 years experience working in policy development at Highland Council. In her current role as Health Development Officer within the Care & Learning Service,

Organised by Kirsty Baird, Health Development Officer, Highland Council and  
Eve MacLeod, Health Improvement Specialist NHS Highland.  
Supported by HADP



Ailsa works to promote healthy living, equality, diversity and children's rights in Highland Schools. She develops guidance and delivers training to staff working with children and young people including teachers, youth workers, children support workers and school nurses. Ailsa works in partnership with NHS Highland on a number of health improvement issues including drugs and alcohol, food and nutrition, relationships and sexual health.

#### Kim Douglas and Leah Frewin, Youth Justice Practitioners, Youth Action Team

Kim has over 15 years experience of working with children and young people that have experienced difficulties, for varying reasons, in education and in social settings. Kim joined YAT in January 2017, having previously worked in Primary Education (Nurture Rooms), Residential Care and Outreach Autism Support.

Leah studied Applied Social Studies at university before leaving in 2013 to work with young people in residential settings all across Scotland. She started with the Youth Action Team in 2016, supporting young people aged 12 – 18 throughout the Highlands who have been using substances or are at risk of offending.

#### Rhiannon Elder, Participation Officer, Youth Highland

Rhiannon has been a Youth Worker for 8 years.

After studying Social Science in Inverness College, she started her work life in retail and worked as Assistant Manager in a sports outlet before becoming a Registered Childminder. Since starting her job as Participation Officer with Youth Highland in 2013 she has completed a PDA in Youth Work, Leadership and Train the Trainer course.

She is passionate about empowering young people to be actively involved in their communities. Her role at Youth Highland has enabled her to work alongside young people to develop projects which being about positive social change.

#### Heather McVeigh, Director, Mentor

Heather McVeigh is the Scotland Director of Mentor, a charity that promotes and delivers evidence-based substance use prevention among young people. Since setting up the Scotland office in 2008, she has overseen the delivery of a range of

interventions, including peer-based community projects, alcohol programmes in youth justice settings, and family support for kinship care families.

Ben Thurman, Policy and Research Officer, Mentor

Ben Thurman is Policy & Research Officer for Mentor Scotland. Over the past five years, he has led research projects investigating the support needs for kinship families in Scotland, evaluated the Choices for Life programme, and published research on the current state of drugs education in schools.

Debbie Stewart, Coordinator, HADP

Debbie Stewart is Coordinator for the Highland Alcohol & Drugs Partnership (HADP), whose purpose is to achieve improved outcomes for communities by preventing and reducing drug and alcohol related harm. As a multi-agency partnership, HADP is responsible for setting the overarching alcohol and drugs strategy for Highland.

Previously she worked as Training Coordinator for Alcohol Brief Interventions and was Manager for Management of Violence and Aggression, both with NHS Highland. Before moving to Highland, Debbie held a national remit as Training Officer with Scottish Training on Drugs and Alcohol (STRADA); a partnership between the University of Glasgow and Drugscope. Prior to this she worked as Fieldwork Development Offer with the Poverty Alliance. Debbie's professional training is in social work, community education and health research.