

# Healthy Influences - Community Led Health's contribution to Scottish policy

---

Edinburgh Training Centre, 4th June 2015.



We had a great day at our National Conference held in Edinburgh. The rooms were buzzing as CHEX network members and others with an interest in community led health came together to learn from each other and grow our influence. We were only sorry that we didn't have enough space for everyone who wanted to attend.

This article captures some of the highlights, images and actions from the day. You can also watch this video which summarises the day in 3 minutes.

## Chair's welcome

---

We were delighted that Susan McDonald, General Manager of [Active Communities](#) and longstanding CHEX Network member agreed to chair the event. Susan also co-ordinates Renfrewshire's Community Health and Wellbeing Network.

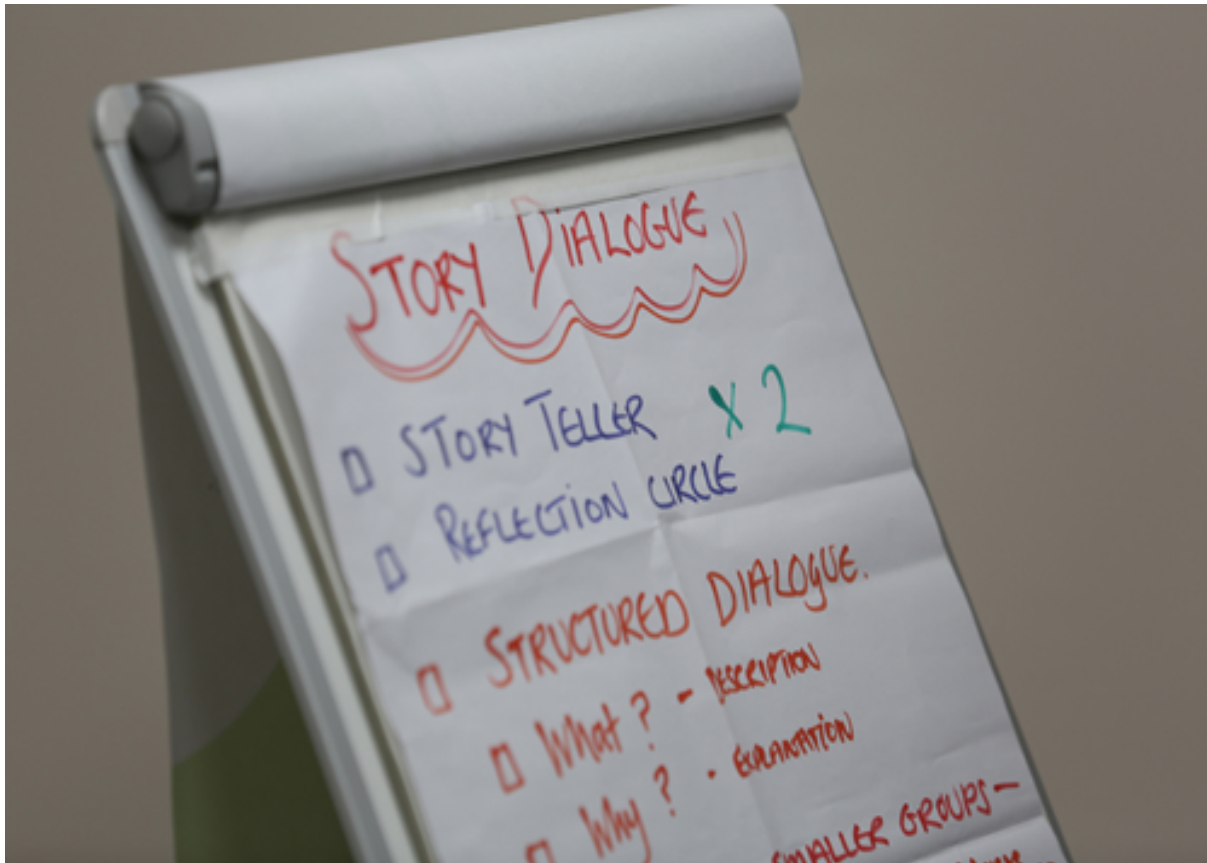
Susan welcomed everyone and got the energy levels up through some quick and fun networking. She explained our purpose which was to learn from each other's approaches and successes in community led health and to help increase our influence individually as organisations and collectively as a movement.



Susan told us that the conference was carefully planned, starting with feedback from [last year's event](#) followed by a survey of the whole network. Members volunteered to form a planning group who developed the aims of the conference and the idea of focusing on four key Scottish policies. Paul Gray, Chief Executive of NHS Scotland was contacted to update us on actions since his input last year and provided this statement.

## Story dialogue workshops

---



The morning session used the story dialogue method to focus on our contributions to key government policies. Policy makers told their 'story' of what they are trying to achieve by through 'their' policy. Community-led health organisations then shared the contributions they make to each policy.

We were delighted to hear both from policy makers working for the Scottish Government and Education Scotland and from colleagues who have taken time out from their fantastic Community-led Health work: [Step by Step Moray](#), [Link Up Women's Support Centre](#), [Voices for Change](#) and [Health Issues in the Community](#) Tutors.

The workshop structure helped us to hear from everyone taking part in an organised way, spreading learning from success and challenges and generating new knowledge and actions.

***“story dialogue was a really interesting perspective and generated great discussion”***

You can read more about each workshop here : [Health Inequalities Workshop](#) / [Curriculum for Excellence/ Health and Social Care](#) / [Food & Health](#)

## Universal Comedy

---



Lunch gave more opportunity for getting to know each other, after which we heard from comedian Gillian Grant, a 'graduate' of [Universal Comedy](#), a charity using comedy, workshops and training courses to help people recovering from mental ill health.



Gillian gave us a great laugh whilst recounting her own recovery journey and the challenges she still faces.



*“really enjoyed the Universal Comedy session, and the illustrator. All fantastic and different ways to engage with participants and brought the conference alive”*

## Presentations

---

After lunch, we had two short presentations, from CHEX’s own Andrew Paterson and from our Chair Susan McDonald.



After lunch, we had two short presentations, from CHEX’s own Andrew Paterson and from our Chair Susan McDonald.

Andrew set out the findings of CHEX’s [Healthy Influences](#) research, which found that community-led health organisations contributed to local and national Healthy planning structures in many ways, from responding to consultations to having representation within planning structures. However, a range of barriers to involvement and influence remain, including a lack of information and accessibility and our limited organisational capacity.

*“Overall, the research indicates that community-led health organisations feel much the same in 2014 as in 2011 about how much influence they have, which is disappointing given the seemingly supportive current policy environment, which aspires to involve and work more closely with community organisations”.*



Susan McDonald inspired us by giving a warts and all journey of Active Communities' efforts to become influential in Renfrewshire, including through setting up the Community Health and Wellbeing Network and the work and perseverance it took to get a seat at the table where decisions should be taken. She told us of the benefits this has brought to all the network members. This is all stemmed from their shared belief that

*"the power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital".*

This set us off perfectly for our afternoon workshops held around the question: how can we be more influential?



Workshops were set up with two concentric circles of chairs in pairs facing each other. Learning from each other's experiences of influence through a series of 5 minute conversations – we were reluctant to move around.

Each workshop then had a general discussion about how local organisations can be more influential, with the key points being captured and fed back to all colleagues.

These included that we need to:

- be at the table before policy is made
- build trust and work together- both with other community led health organisations and with those traditionally in powerful positions. This should be based on our own credibility and reputation.
- create and collate the right evidence and use it to best effect.
- be consistent in defining 'health' as being about wellbeing.
- be creative – in thinking and acting differently
- build the capacity of community members and professionals
- build on proven methods of engagement and influence
- give clear messages of the benefits from community-led health to decision-makers

These workshops used a Margolis Wheel method; you can find out about this [here](#).

***“great opportunity for networking and I really enjoyed the workshops. I particularly liked the “speed” discussions at the end where we moved round and spoke for 5 mins”***

## Let's keep talking

---



Susan McDonald shared the following quote from Lesley Riddoch with us in her talk:

*"Since the referendum, bystanders have become organisers, followers have become leaders, politics has become creative, women have become assertive, men have learned to facilitate not dominate. Independent action and self-reliance have helped create a 'can-do' approach shared by almost everyone active in Scotland today.*

*Scotland's biggest problems haven't changed.*

*But we have."*

There's a lot of energy, ideas and commitment to working to build the influence of community-led health at a national level. A number of people signed up for a follow-on session on **27th August in Glasgow** to keep working on how we best do that. There is much to build on from the conference and from ideas from across the Community-led Health Sector. Please get in touch if you'd like to attend or contribute. You can see the list of participants from the conference [here](#).





***"Loved the artist, Graham who captured the event by illustration."***

Graphic Facilitation was provided by the fab [Graeme Ogilvie](#). Please feel free to use images from this page, or find more [here](#).

***"it was all good - possibly the best conference I have attended"***