

Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach

Staff Bulletin | December 2020 | Issue 41

CEO & ECO visit Caithness

Earlier in November, Chief Executive Donna Manson and Executive Chief Officer for Education Nicky Grant visited Caithness.

Nicky also has geographical responsibility for Caithness. Both were keen to meet staff on a personal basis to

check in on staff wellbeing, find out how staff are coping with the pressures and impact of Covid-19 and to thank staff for all that they are doing. They each attended a small number of schools and work sites, within the Covid guidelines and adhering to all restrictions.



Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

Message from the Chief Executive



Dear Colleagues

It was great to recently get out and up to Caithness to visit staff in their locality, albeit within the current guidelines which limited where we could go and who we could see. It was good to hear first hand about how staff and pupils are coping with the pandemic. There are some anxieties about welfare and wellbeing in the community, but school risk assessments and curriculum recovery are working well. Play and recreation are well managed, there is very good compliance with guidelines and pupils are engaged and positive. Everyone's IT skills have been enhanced throughout this period. It was an opportunity also to meet local members and hear about community issues. We were impressed with all the roads and waste crews who have been out on the roads delivering frontline services together with other staff throughout the Covid pandemic.

The ongoing restrictions and other Covid harms to society and the economy are taking their toll on everyone. The positive news about a vaccine gives us significant hope for the future, but we cannot underestimate the deep impact which will be felt for a very long time to come. There has been excellent compliance and really good partnership work in Highland with the Health Protection Team and this has helped to keep numbers relatively low here. There is no room for complacency and we must continue to be careful and to look after each other over the coming weeks and months.

We held our first staff briefing on "Teams Live" on Monday 30th November. It was great to see 611 of you tuned in and we received some good questions and feedback. We intend to hold a further briefing in 2 weeks and some live interactive staff forums with you over the next few weeks.

Take care and keep safe,

Donna Manson **Chief Executive**



Watch the Chief Exec's staff briefing (30th November) here:
www.bit.ly/StaffBriefing30Nov



Name:

Anthony Coyle

Post title:

Systems & Change
Assistant

New Role:

Corporate Communications
& Engagement Officer

Previously undertaking an IT and welfare reform role within the Systems & Change Team (Resources & Finance Service), Anthony has recently taken on a seconded post within the Corporate Communications and Resilience Team.

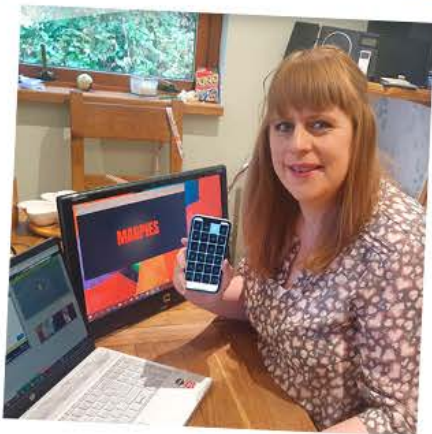
While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a changeable and dynamic situation – where it is possible and safe to do so – elements of the Council's business-as-usual activities have gradually restarted over the last number of months.

With both of these now running in parallel, the Corporate Communications and Resilience Team continues to deal with a large volume of varied media enquiries, writing and publishing news releases and engagement via social media – internally and externally – both for business-as-usual activities and the COVID-19 situation as it continues to emerge.

Speaking about his experience of taking on this new role, Anthony said:

"Having the opportunity to become involved in the work of this team has been rewarding and fulfilling. A particular highlight for me has been attending Committee Meetings and preparing press releases for the varied range of topics which are presented, discussed and sometimes subject to vote by Members within this forum."

"It can be a fast-paced environment at times, but it's such an interesting role and I'm expanding my knowledge every day. Additionally, working within the team and attending Committee Meetings has provided me with visibility and perspective of the vast range of responsibilities and work carried out by Highland Council's workforce." He continued: "As I continue to find my feet and develop in this new role, the impressive team spirit, drive and level of support demonstrated by colleagues within the team since I joined them in October has been reassuring. I very much look forward to continuing to work alongside them into the beginning of next year."



Name:

Dawn MacPhie

Post title:

Primary Teacher
- Mallaig Primary School

Mrs MacPhie Charity Quiz Champion

Dawn MacPhie is a Primary Teacher at Bunscoil Mhalaig and when not teaching her P1-P3 class she is kept busy hosting quizzes to support local charities.

The quiz nights started as a weekly staff quiz during lockdown. Dawn thought it would be good to develop the quizzes to allow more people to enjoy a way to meet-up socially online.

Dawn has raised over £1100 for various good causes including Alzheimer's Research, Lucy's Blue Day-Children's Mental Health Charity and Lochaber Hope.

Commenting on the quiz nights, Dawn said: "For me, hosting the quiz nights has given me a release during these challenging times. "It's been a way of bringing people together, having fun and raising money for some very deserving causes. I'm indebted to the quizzers who have shown huge generosity."

Deirdre Beck – Depute Head Teacher Mallaig ASG said: "Dawn has brought so many people together in a fun way, it really has been a great way to keep in touch with staff, friends and family during lockdown and it has now become the new weekly 'social' for many of us. It brings people together and really lifts moods."

Good News



Name:

Douglas Cameron

Praise from Plockton

Community Works Operative Douglas Cameron, who is based in Ardelve, got a welcome 'shout out' from the community Facebook group 'Plockton. Past and Present' recently where a photo of him was published clearing leaves on Frithard Road in Plockton.

Plockton. Past and Present said:

"Douglas Cameron working hard on a cold November day. Working for The Highland Council but there can be no doubt that he goes far above and beyond in what he does for Plockton and surrounding area. We owe him a debt of gratitude."

Mackenzie Sutherland, Acting Roads Officer said:

"Douglas used to work for us a Roads operative. Our loss was definitely Amenities gain as he is an excellent hard-worker... he never stops. Well done Douglas on this public recognition."

Street Cleaner

Martin MacDougall has been employed with the Council for over 30 years, he works within a small team as a Street Cleaning Operative in Inverness City Centre. Martin has recently won the Stagecoach Highland Community Hero Award.

Martin was nominated for the award after giving away over 650 colouring books to children to keep them occupied during the period of lockdown. The idea came from seeing his own two nephews struggling for things to do at the start of lockdown.

As a result of winning the Highland award, Martin progressed through to the final of Stagecoach National Hero.

On the 10th of November it was announced that Martin had been successful in winning the National Stagecoach Community Hero award by public vote. Martin was voted the overall national community hero in recognition of work he has done in supporting local children in Inverness and the surrounding areas by providing them with free books during lockdown.

Good News

Apprentice Mechanics

The Transport and Logistic Team are pleased to inform Members that 6 apprentice mechanics have finished their training and have received their certificate:

Name: Elliot Geddes Workshop: Wick

Name : Alick Elrick Workshop: Brora

Name: Kai Campbell Workshop: Fort William

Name: Kyle Dempster Workshop: Fort William

Name: Jon Hutchinson Workshop: Inverness

Name: Scott Matheson Workshop: Inverness

The 7th apprentice mechanic, Gregor Rose from the Aviemore workshop, completed his training a year early and he came to the Chamber to be presented with this certificate last year.

The success of our programme is built on the huge support our trainees receive from the mechanics and foremen who willingly spend time training and coaching them.

Food Safety Officer

Susan Messem, a trainee food safety officer based in Sutherland, passed her professional exams in August for the Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection.

Susan joined the Council in July 2019 having previously been a lecturer in the Hospitality and Business Department of the University of the Highlands and Islands. Susan can now carry out food hygiene inspections and is doing great work on EU Exit including inspecting fishing vessels. She will be looking to undertake additional qualifications in 2021 on food labelling and composition. Congratulations to Susan for this achievement.

The home office

The last 8 months have been tough for everyone and responses to the pandemic and consequential lockdowns highly personal.

Shining bright through these dark and difficult times has been the overwhelming sense of hard work, commitment, good will and community spirit from staff. This has enabled us to respond with new ways to support the more vulnerable members of our communities whilst maintaining the delivery of key services, converting 'agility' from buzzword to reality!

Homeworking continues to play an important role in the Council's response to the crisis. Around 500 office-based staff are continuing their roles from home, in line with Government guidance and further demonstrating staff commitment to service delivery and serving our Highland community.

We must continue to follow government guidance advising homeworking wherever possible over the coming

months. Where homeworking isn't possible, we will continue to take a careful approach to returning staff to the workplace when we are confident, we can do so safely.

The response to home working has been largely positive enabling employees to achieve a better work life balance or juggle caring responsibilities around work roles. However, we do recognise that homeworking does not suit everyone and indeed for some it can feel socially isolating.

Due to staff determination and resilience to meet service demands in these challenging times we are taking this time to develop new ways of working and the next steps for recovery. Whilst this is our current focus we want to provide reassurance that the wellbeing and safety of staff will remain our priority.

Homeworking Guidance will be published shortly and is designed to enhance the homeworking experience for staff and managers.

In the meantime, please make it a priority to look after yourself. There are lots of Wellbeing resources and support available to staff including our Employee Assistance Programme. See page 23.

It is important for staff to contact your line manager should you have any immediate concerns and for line managers to regularly check in with staff.



The banner features a dark purple background with geometric patterns. At the top left is the 'spectrum.life' logo in white and teal. At the top right is the Highland Council logo with the text 'The Highland Council' and 'Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd'. The main title 'Employee Assistance Programme' is in large white font. Below it is a white horizontal line. To the right is an illustration of a person with blonde hair sitting on a large teal heart, using a laptop. At the bottom left, the text 'Register online:' is in teal, followed by the URL 'https://app.spectrum.life/login#' and the organisation code 'j5n2Rh73' in white.

spectrum.life

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Employee Assistance Programme

Register online:
<https://app.spectrum.life/login#>
Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**

Wider Wallet Benefits Hub

This scheme offers you privileged access to a tempting package of benefits and discounts, all designed to make your money stretch further.



<https://highlandcouncil.widerwallet.com/login>

Access Code: **S612612H**

What is a close contact for COVID-19?

In this guidance, a 'contact' is a person who has been near (within 2 metres) to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and this contact was any time from 2 days before until 10 days after onset of symptoms in the infected person (this is when they are infectious to others). For the purposes of contact tracing and isolation, however, 'close contact' means having face-to-face contact with someone less than a metre away (even if a face-covering or face-mask is worn) or being within 2 metres of an infected person for 15 minutes or more.

Further information on Test and Protect and close contacts can be found here:

www.bit.ly/WhoNeedsToSelfIsolate

Christmas Timetable

Payroll

	Pay Date	Cut off date for Paper Expenses Claims	Cut off date for Online Expenses Claims	Cut off date for all Data Entry Claims, CSVs etc	Payslips available online
32 Admin	23 rd Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	7 th Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	16 th Dec 2020
39 Valuation	23 rd Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	7 th Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	16 th Dec 2020
65 Child Services	23 rd Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	7 th Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	16 th Dec 2020
72 HLH	23 rd Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	7 th Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	16 th Dec 2020
42	23 rd Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	7 th Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	16 th Dec 2020
38 Teachers	23 rd Dec 2020	2 nd Dec 2020	7 th Dec 2020	4 th Dec 2020	16 th Dec 2020

Christmas/New Year Holiday Arrangements 2020-21

The 4 fixed public holidays are:

- **25th and 28th** (substitute day) **December 2020**; and
- **1st and 4th** (substitute day) **January 2021**.

These are the only days which attract public holiday enhancements during this period. For any queries relating to how this might impact your usual working arrangements please contact your line manager.

Nice to see you - To see you nice!

Where we aren't seeing our colleagues and staff or managers in the usual office setting, it is good to see each other and check in on Teams.

Did you know that communication is only 7 percent verbal and 93 percent non-verbal? The non-verbal component was made up of body language (55 percent) and tone of voice (38 percent). So where staff don't have or use cameras, you are missing 55% of the communication!

The Council has been trying hard to order sufficient cameras so that everyone has one, however there is a



global shortage. If you need a camera, please discuss this with your line manager – and we will endeavour to prioritise the roll out of cameras to those who need them most – particularly where a camera could greatly enhance existing communication and wellbeing. All of the new laptops have cameras built-in so the plug-in cameras are really only needed by those of you who use a desktop computer.

Contact: Requests should go to the ICT Service Desk and Wipro will pass requests through to ICT Services. Where possible it would be very useful if managers could submit a single request covering all their team members who require them.



Brexit

The UK left the EU and entered a transition period on 31st January 2020 which is scheduled to end on 31st December 2020.

Discussions are ongoing around the terms of any future trade arrangements with the EU and there is a lot of speculation that a deal will be announced any day now. If we do not agree a deal then we will begin trading on World Trade Organisation rules on 1st January 2021 at the end of the Transition Period. This is also known as a hard Brexit, a no deal Brexit or an Australian type deal and will mean tariffs and quotas on goods.

There are some issues we are already aware of around the import and export of goods as well as immigration and travel as we will have left the Single Market and Customs Union. If you are a business that trades with the EU then there a number of actions you'll need to carry out around customs declarations and other forms of certification in order to continue trading.

Changes to Immigration rules will see the cessation of freedom of movement and a new points-based immigration system from 1st January 2021. There will no longer be an

automatic right to live or work in the EU and if an EU Citizen wants to work here after the 1st January 2021 then they will need a fixed job offer, the requisite skills and be able to speak English. The minimum salary threshold will be £25,600 on top of additional employer and employee costs.

Travelling abroad will mean insurance cover for health care as your European Health Insurance Card will no longer be valid and you will be expected to pay roaming charges. Pet passports will not be recognised and there may be additional driving licence requirements.

As it stands, just short of 8,000 EU Citizens in The Highland Council area have applied for the EU Settlement Scheme which will allow these individuals to remain with the largest grouping of applicants from Poland with Latvians and Romanians taking up a distant second and third place.

Changes are coming and we will need to be ready for them and adapt as necessary. The Highland Council Services are looking at current risks in relation to their areas of responsibility and planning mitigations around these. These are under constant review.

Further information on Brexit can be found at: www.highland.gov.uk/brexit

Covid Vaccination Programme

Coronavirus COVID-19 vaccinations are expected to be available as early as next month.

The first vaccinations will be given to health and social care staff, older care home residents and those over 80 years old who live in the community possibly starting in December 2020.

The first groups to be prioritised for vaccination have been identified based on current independent clinical advice. Once these initial priority groups have been vaccinated, those over 65 will be offered the vaccination along with those under 65 who are at additional clinical risk, before moving on to the wider population over the age of 18.

www.gov.scot/news/covid-19-vaccines-update

Virtual Climate Change Conference hailed a 'success'

In May 2019, The Highland Council announced a climate and ecological emergency in recognition of the serious and accelerating changes to the world caused by climate change.

The Highland Council's first online climate conference held on the 2nd November 2020; allowed the public the opportunity to discuss regional, national and global responses to climate and ecological emergencies caused by climate change.

The conference was split into four themes:

- **Biodiversity and Habitat**
- **The Bigger Picture** – looking at international policy and sustainability targets
- **Personal Responsibility**
- **The Green Recovery**

Attended by a large and diverse audience and offering the public access to 30 guest speakers with almost all the 200 workshop tickets allocated. It's a positive and welcomed sign of the demand from Highland residents to embrace change and decrease their impact on the planet.

The contributions made by over 30 speakers offered an interesting range of issues for attendees to consider.

The following summaries indicate a snippet of the wealth of discussion of ideas to emerge from the cross collaboration from both the public and speakers.



Biodiversity and Habitat workshops

Chaired by Joe Perry, The Highland Council

The future of forestry in Highland came under discussion, with some concern that plantation forestry is having a negative impact on biodiversity and carbon sequestration in carbon-rich soils. The use of locally produced timber in construction was seen as a greener approach to development, which plantations in Highland could support.

The Highland Council's decision to support the Sutherland space port came under some criticism in relation to its impact on the peatlands.

There was universal support across both workshops for ongoing work to protect and restore our peatlands, as well as to find out more – possibly by conducting an audit – about our blue carbon resource.

The Bigger Picture workshops

Chaired by Keith Masson, The Highland Council

Native woodland expansion was enthusiastically supported for Highland, while concern about the impact of plantation forestry on biodiversity and carbon was expressed. The impact of agriculture on emissions was also expressed, with general agreement that more incentives for eco-friendly management is needed for land managers and farmers.

The planning process was frequently referenced, and it was noted the climate and ecological considerations are now front and centre of new local development plans as well as the Council's consultation response to NPF4 and its submission of an indicative regional spatial strategy (iRSS) for the region.

Funding for low-carbon initiatives was also a topic of discussion, with concern expressed that Council funding has now ceased, despite high appetite for these types of projects. It was also expressed that a Highland-wide focus would be welcomed. An interesting funding option was put forward in the form of a local benevolence fund; whereby local people could leave money for local low-carbon projects in their will.

Active and public travel infrastructure is often limited in Highland. Investment here could not only reduce car use, but potentially aviation emissions. It was also expressed that developers in Highland should be subject to stricter guidance in respect of low carbon heating solutions.

An increase in the carbon literacy for Highland residents is important and if this could be tied to local impacts, it would add weight to the need for individual and community action. Many participants recognise that communities want to be involved in climate action and recognise that it isn't just the Council's responsibility, but the flow of information and support requires improvement. Part of the answer to this messaging issue could come from more frequent dialogue between the Council and local community councils.

What is being planned for COP26, a comment was made that it presents an opportunity to highlight to world leaders the potential of Highland to contribute to national and global climate ambition. It was confirmed that Highland will indeed be represented at COP26 and outline plans will be pulled together early in 2021.

Personal Responsibility workshops

Chaired by Cllr Trish Robertson, The Highland Council

Food production and food security were important issues for the Personal Responsibility workshops, with many attendees showing enthusiasm for the idea of growing their own fruit and vegetables in their gardens and allotments. One potential barrier to this was a lack of “know-how” and it was suggested that basic classes or support from the Council could help to increase participation in individual food production. Seasonal food should also be encouraged, to reduce food miles.

Climate change education in schools was identified as an effective way of encouraging behaviour change from an early age. It was accepted that some work on this is already being done in Highland.

Improving home insulation is important for family budgets as well as carbon emissions. Making more funding available to support this in Highland. Attendees also felt that home energy efficiency reports should be produced for all homes.

Littering was identified as a problem in Highland. A possible answer to this would be a new litter campaign, perhaps encouraging people to pick up 3 pieces of litter when they visit the beach.

There was overall agreement that we can have a bigger impact on the climate and ecological emergency by organising at a community and regional level.



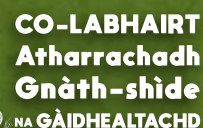
The Green Recovery workshops

Chaired by Stuart Black, HIE

The Green Recovery workshop also considered food production and security. Attendees agreed that seeing empty shelves at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak made people more interested in food chains and food security. In a similar vein, the idea of encouraging more local networks of suppliers to work more loosely together was supported. Not only would this reduce the miles that products and services need to travel, but also this would keep money in Highland.

Waste - Another important theme of the green recovery workshops was the concept of turning waste into something useful. This could be the production of energy from waste, for example through biomass boilers. This conversation moved on to the idea of the circular economy and it was agreed that it would be beneficial not only to the green recovery but also to the reduction of emissions if Highland were to do more to keep products in useable condition for a longer period of time, perhaps through re-using or recycling components of products.

Tourism was a topic of interest, in particular the idea of promoting slow and sustainable tourism. The NC500 route was recognised as a double-edged sword for Highland; while it undoubtedly has brought money to the area, this money has not been evenly spread across the driving route, while the traffic issues have affected a wide range of communities.



Scottish Child Payment is now open for applications

Scottish Child Payment is a new payment for families on tax credits or certain benefits to help towards the costs of looking after a child. It's £40 paid every four weeks for each child under six.

The payment starts on Monday 15th February 2021, with first payments made from the end of February onwards, but Social Security Scotland is taking applications now to help manage demand.

You can apply if your child will be under six on 15th February 2021. The qualifying benefits are:

- **Child Tax Credit**
- **Income Support**
- **Pension Credit**
- **Working Tax Credit**
- **Universal Credit**
- **Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)**
- **Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**

Social Security Scotland will ask for evidence that the person applying is responsible for a child under six, usually through the child being named on a benefit claim form.

If more than one person applies for the same child, there's a process for deciding who gets the payment - prioritising the person who the child lives with most of the time.

Scottish Child Payment will not be taken into account for UK benefit and tax credit assessments and there is no cap on the amount of children this payment can support.

First payments will be made from late February onwards. When someone gets paid will depend on how many applications we get and the process each individual application goes through.

If someone applied before Monday 15th February 2021, this will be the date that their payment will be calculated from. If they apply after this date, it will be calculated from the date that they applied.

Payments will be made every four weeks following the first payment.

Find out more information and apply at:

www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment

or call Social Security Scotland on **0800 182 2222**

The Council's Welfare Support Team provide free, impartial and confidential support to claim all benefits and entitlements including the Scottish Child Payment.

Contact the Welfare Support Team at:

Phone: **0800 090 1004** or email: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

Welfare Support Team

The Welfare Support Team provide free, impartial and confidential support to claim all benefits and entitlements. Contact the Welfare Support Team at: **0800 090 1004** or email: **welfare.support@highland.gov.uk**

Citizens Advice – your local Citizens Advice provides advice on money, benefits and housing.

Council Tax Reduction

You may be entitled to a reduction in your bill if you are on a low income, even if you own your own home. Council Tax Reduction can't be used to reduce water or sewerage charges on your bill. You can claim if you, or your partner:

- live in the property you're applying for;
- are on a low income. This can be DWP benefits or low paid work;
- are responsible for paying the Council Tax bill;
- do not have combined savings or capital of £16,000. This is unless you're receiving Pension Credit (Guaranteed Credit).

Apply online:
www.highland.gov.uk/applyonce

Universal Credit

Universal Credit (including help with rent) is a means-tested payment to help with living costs. It's normally paid monthly, but you can request fortnightly payments once you have applied. You may be able to get it if you're on a low income, out of work or you cannot work.

You may be able to get Universal Credit if you're on a low income or out of work; 18 or over (there are some exceptions if you're 16 to 17); you're under State Pension age (or your partner is); you and your partner have £16,000 or less in savings between you.

Apply online:
www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim
or contact the Universal Credit helpline
telephone: **0800 328 5644**

New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

If you are ill or have a health condition or disability that limits your ability to work you may be able to get New Style Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) instead of Universal Credit, depending on your National Insurance record.

Your (or your partner's) savings will not affect how much New Style ESA you're paid. If your partner works, it does not affect your claim.

Apply online:
www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-employment-and-support-allowance#how-to-apply
or contact the Universal Credit
helpline telephone: **0800 328 5644**

Welfare Support Team

New Style Jobseeker's Allowance

If you're unemployed or work less than 16 hours a week you may be able to get New Style Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) instead of, Universal Credit, depending on your National Insurance record.

Your savings and capital (or your partner's savings, capital and income) are not taken into account when claiming New Style JSA. However, your earnings and any payment you are getting from a pension can affect the amount you may receive.

Apply online:

www.gov.uk/guidance/new-style-jobseekers-allowance#why-should-i-claim-new-style-jsa

or contact the Universal Credit helpline
telephone: **0800 328 5644**

Personal Independence Payment (under state pension age) (PIP)

PIP can help you with some of the extra costs if you have a long-term ill-health or disability. The amount you get depends on how your condition affects you, not the condition itself.

You can get PIP whether you're working or not. You must be aged 16 or over and usually have not reached State Pension age to claim. You must also have a health condition or disability where you:

- have had difficulties with daily living or getting around (or both) for 3 months.
- expect these difficulties to continue for at least 9 months.

Claim by telephone:

0800 917 2222

Attendance Allowance (over state pension age)

Attendance Allowance helps with extra costs if you have a disability severe enough that you need someone to help look after you. You can get Attendance Allowance if you've reached State Pension age and the following apply:

- you have a physical disability (including sensory disability, for example blindness), a mental disability (including learning difficulties), or both;
- your disability is severe enough for you to need help caring for yourself or someone to supervise you, for your own or someone else's safety;
- you have needed that help for at least 6 months (unless you're terminally ill).

Apply by post:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/attendance-allowance-claim-form

Welfare Support Team

Carer's Allowance (CA)

If you care for someone at least 35 hours a week and they get certain benefits. You do not have to be related to, or live with, the person you care for. The person you care for must already get one of these benefits:

- Personal Independence Payment - daily living component;
- Disability Living Allowance - the middle or highest care rate;
- Attendance Allowance;
- Constant Attendance Allowance at or above the normal maximum rate with an Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit;
- Constant Attendance Allowance at the basic (full day) rate with a War Disablement Pension;
- Armed Forces Independence Payment.

Apply online or by post:
www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim

Housing Benefit (HB) (over state pension age)

If you need help to pay your rent and you are over state pension age. You can apply for Housing Benefit whether you're unemployed or working. You can be a tenant of:

- the council or housing association;
- a private landlord.

Further information: www.highland.gov.uk/housingbenefit

The Scottish Welfare Fund

SWF is intended to offer grants or in kind support for two purposes Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants:

- Crisis Grants provide safety net in emergency or when there is an immediate threat to health and safety;
- Community Care Grants enable independent living or support when families are facing exceptional pressure.

Apply online at: www.highland.gov.uk/welfare-fund
or Freephone **0800 083 1887**

Want to buy yourself some time?



Check out the HolidayFlex Offer for Highland Council employees by visiting the link below or go to the Highland Council intranet page and click on the Wider Wallet link.

<https://highlandcouncil.widerwallet.com/login>

Access code: **S612612H**

All queries to info@holidayflex.com



The HolidayFlex scheme is now open until Friday 4th December 2020



Claim tax relief for working from home

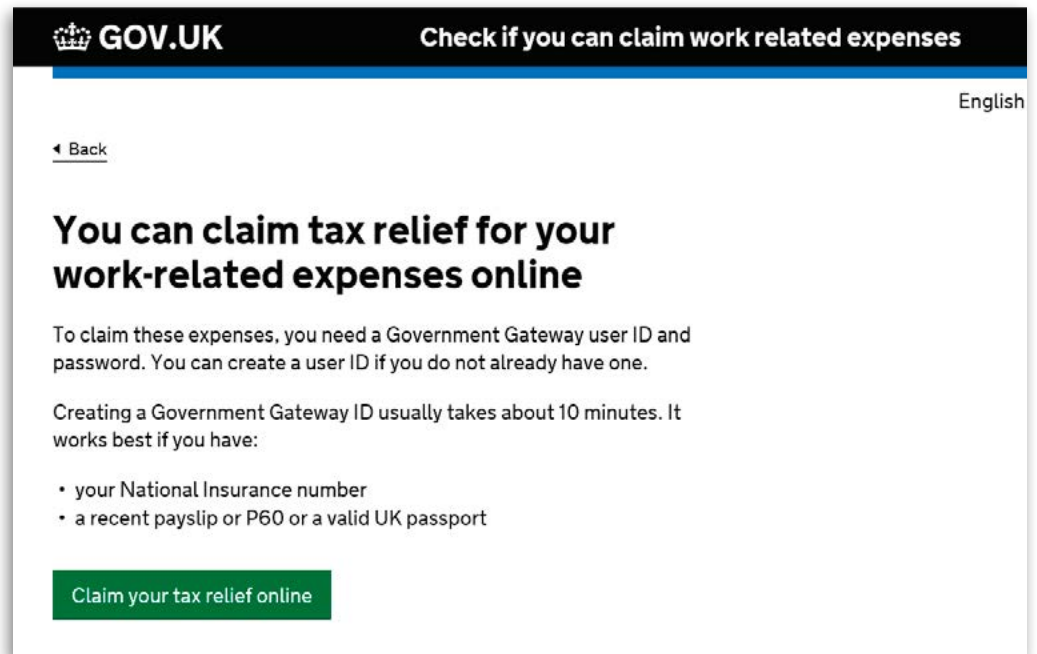
HMRC have announced that they will award a full year's working from home tax allowance, even if staff have only worked from home one day in this tax year. You can find more information and apply here:

www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home

If you want to apply, you'll need to create a Government Gateway ID.

- Click 'Create Sign-in details'
- Enter your email address
- You will now be emailed a confirmation code. Use this code to confirm your email address.
- You will now be issued with a User ID for your government gateway account.

RECOMMENDED: File your user ID somewhere safe. It is a digital string so not memorable. Losing this ID can create a lot of work in the future.



Once you have your Government Gateway ID, go back to this website and click the green button '**Check if you can claim**'.

www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home

Money Savings Expert's blog has indepth information about this tax relief and instructions on how to fill out the form:

<https://blog.moneysavingexpert.com/2020/04/martin-lewis--working-from-home-due-to-coronavirus--claim-p6-wk-/>

The section half way down the page called 'How to claim the tax relief' will help guide you through the process.

A greener way to heat your home

Your first central heating system



Up to 100% funding towards a first time central heating system, delivered through an air source heat pump.

Free cavity wall and loft insulation



It's never been easier to keep your home warm during winter.

Partially funded external wall insulation



Simply complete our online form to find out if you're eligible.

Check your eligibility now



Eligibility criteria and further information is available at:

www.highland.gov.uk/energyefficientscotland

Stop the Fraudsters



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**
Keeping people safe

- Ensure you have adequate anti-virus protection on your computer and keep software up to date.
- Be wary of clicking on links or web pages especially links in unsolicited emails.
- Never give out login details in an email or over the telephone, no matter how genuine you think the request is.
- Be wary of the information you are giving out on social networking sites (contact details, date of birth etc).
- Do not include your birth date or address in your email address.
- When you are finished with personal or financial documents, shred them before you throw them out.
- Be wary of cold calls. If in doubt just hang up, and never give out personal or financial information if you are unsure who you are dealing with.
- No reputable company will instruct you to make payment by money transfer or by gift voucher.

To keep you, your family, friends and communities safe sign up to receive safety alerts and information at: www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk

Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or at Highland Council Trading Standards at: www.bit.ly/ScamsAdviceGuidance

Victim Support Scotland on 0800 160 1985 or at www.victimsupport.scot

Take Five at www.takefive-stopfraud.org.uk

Fearless is the youth brand of the independent charity Crimestoppers.

www.fearless.org provides young people with a safe place to give information about crime 100% anonymously.

www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/advice-for-victims-of-crime/fraud

Sign up to our new online Risk Assessment Training Course

This two-hour course, delivered through Microsoft Teams, focuses on providing the knowledge and skills to enable risk assessments to be carried out in a competent and consistent manner.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- ✓ Identify hazards
- ✓ Understand the difference between hazard and risk
- ✓ Determine the likelihood of harm occurring
- ✓ Identify and prioritise suitable control measures based on risk rating
- ✓ Record the process and arrange for future reviews

The course includes discussion, scenarios, activities and a theory quiz.

This course is available to all The Highland Council employees and Elected Members who are required to undertake health and safety risk assessments of work activities or working environments.

Why become a Risk Assessor?

Risk assessment training teaches you both what risk assessments are, as well as how and when to perform them. It provides you with an understanding of the benefits of comprehensive risk assessments and how to comply with basic legislation.

What is Risk Assessment?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says:

“A risk assessment is nothing more than a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people.”

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require organisations to:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in your business (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this isn't possible, control the risk

Please contact learning.development@highland.gov.uk for details on tailored occupation or service specific courses.

“Hi, thanks for today! Very helpful and a good reminder of what is required.”

T.M.

“Thank you for today's course. I found it very interesting and got a lot out of it.”

A. M.

“Thanks for the session – interesting and helpful.”

R.S.

“Thank you for this morning's training it was very useful.”

C.B.

SIPP Training: Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme

This programme is now being delivered as an online course by approved Suicide Prevention trainers. The training has been split over 2 x 1.5hrs session and attendance at both of the sessions is required.

The programme was originally developed in Tayside, and complies with Health Scotland's requirements of suicide prevention training. It is suitable for Clinical staff and also for staff in partner organisations such as Health & Social Care, Emergency Services, Further & Higher Education, Third Sector and Wider, and has been successfully delivered in Tayside to these audiences, and to members of the public.

Who is the training for?

Highland dates are open to any staff from Highland Community Planning Partnership (includes Third Sector):

- Any staff who want to be able to help someone who might be at risk of suicide.
- All staff (NHS, Council, frontline services including Third Sector) who have patient/client/service user/public contact who have had no previous suicide awareness training or last training was more than three years ago.



Brief Outline

- About Suicide: the scale of the problem, facts and myths, risk factors, attitudes and stigma.
- How to help: recognising the signs, how to ask and listen in a supportive way, keeping the person safe. Signposting.
- Case Study: group discussion, identifying risk factors, how to help.

What will I learn?

- The ability to recognise a person at risk of suicide.
- The ability to ask about suicide including the ability to display listening and questioning skills.
- An awareness of the impact of attitudes on suicide.
- How to signpost to appropriate support.

Upcoming dates:

Course 1: 10am – 11.30am
Tuesday 8th December; and
Thursday 17th December

Course 2: 10am – 11.30am
Thursday 10th December; and
Wednesday 16th December

To apply:

Registration is through **Learnpro** – click on the link and follow the instructions:
www.bit.ly/NHS-HealthImprovementTraining

First Aid online course

Lone and Home Workers can now access First Aid modules online through the My Online Learning portal.

www.bit.ly/MyOnlineLearningLogin

Have your login details ready to login. Click on the Health, Safety and Wellbeing button; you'll find the courses by clicking on the First Aid tab.

All staff are encouraged to complete modules relevant to them.

First Aid App

You can also have specialist help at your fingertips with the British Red Cross First Aid app.

www.bit.ly/BritishRedCrossApp

First Aiders

Designated First Aiders will still have to complete their relevant requalification course available through Learning and Development. The on-line modules can be used as refreshers for designated first aiders prior to gaining their requalification.

www.bit.ly/LandD-TrainingCourses

Staff in Education and Learning and Health and Social Care who are not designated First Aiders can access Paediatric First Aid modules by clicking on the Care and Learning button in My Online Learning.

First Aid Provision

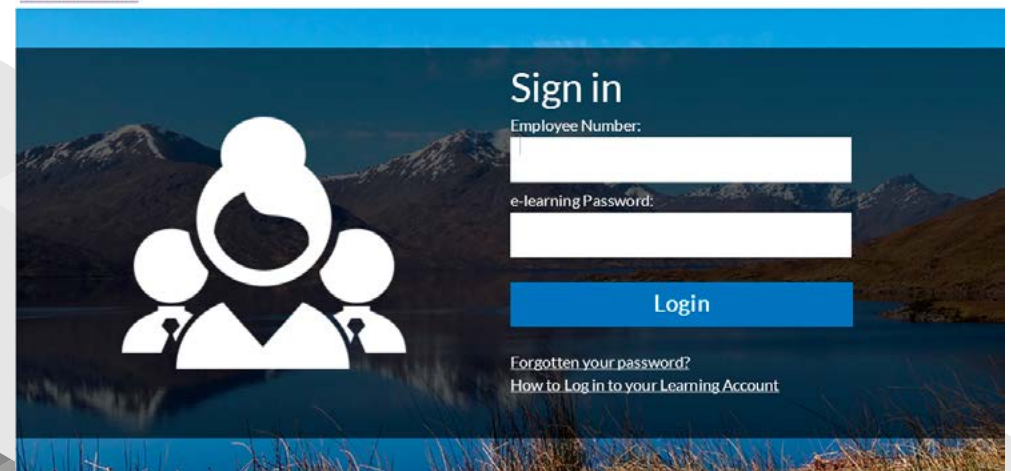
In order to ensure adequate and appropriate First aid cover, Duty Holders, RPOs and Line Managers are requested to carry out an assessment to determine the extent of cover required in their workplace. Details on provision and assessment can be found on the Councils First Aid Policy and guidance:

www.bit.ly/FirstAidPolicy

Advice on First Aid during the Covid-19 pandemic can be found by visiting the HSE website:

www.bit.ly/CoronavirusFirstAid

Further information and guidance can be obtained by emailing:
HealthSafety.andWellbeing@highland.gov.uk



Employee Assistance Programme

Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a confidential counselling service that provides support to company employees and your family.



24/7



**Our EAP is available
24/7, 365 days a year covering:**

- Counselling
- Legal information
- Financial information
- Consumer information
- Career guidance
- Life coaching
- Mediation
- Health information
- Health information
- Cancer support
- Autism support
- Infertility & pregnancy loss
- Elder care support
- Parent coaching
- International employee support



Register online:

<https://app.spectrum.life/login#>
Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**

Autumn/Winter Wellbeing series

Delivered by our team of qualified Health and Wellbeing experts and streamed from our state of the art 4K wellbeing studio. Each week will focus on a different aspect of health and wellbeing with topics ranging from Sleep, Mental Health, Fitness, Parenting and more.

You'll be able to ask questions before the event, during the event and take part in polls. All sessions will be available as a recording once the event finishes.

Do I need to register?

Yes you do. Registration for each Session will open 7 days before the event date and you'll receive helpful reminders leading up to the event.

Will each Session be recorded?

Yes, they will please visit this page after the event has ended. Recordings will be available approx. 30 minutes after the event has ended.

Can I share the links with family?

Yes of course, we hope the content is helpful for your whole family.

All Sessions Start at 1pm

The Schedule

All Sessions Start at **1pm**

October 7th	Small Steps to Self-Care	Watch Recording
October 14th	Managing Your Mental Health During Covid-19	Watch Recording
October 21st	Remote Working Top Tips	Watch Recording
October 28th	Checking Your Home Desk Set Up	Watch Recording
November 4th	Introduction to Yoga	Watch Recording
November 11th	Managing Change as a Parent	Watch Recording
November 18th	Your Daily Home Workout	Watch Recording
November 25th	Practicing Mindfulness	Watch Recording
December 2nd	Food Demo: Top Tips Over The Holiday Period	Coming Soon
December 9th	Finding Balance	Coming Soon
December 16th	Maintaining Social Connections	Coming Soon
January 6th	What's Your 2021 Resolution?	Coming Soon

Register and login to www.spectrum.life then click on 'wellbeing series' tab at the top right of the website.

Register online: <https://app.spectrum.life/login#>

Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**

5 ways to wellbeing

The coronavirus outbreak has brought with it much uncertainty. With many of us working in a different environment whether in a school, office, home, or in communities, it is understandable that we may experience frustration, concern, anxiety or feel overwhelmed at times. Yet even with these unprecedented challenges and pressures there are still some simple steps we can take to look after our own wellbeing.



Move your body –

Get those steps in. With many people working from home daily steps may have dropped as you're not walking to work or taking the office stairs!

Get outside daily and enjoy fresh air. Being near trees and nature releases feel good hormones that are known to have a mindfulness effect. It will help clear the mind and re-focus.



Give back –

Supporting others can go a long way for both the giver and receiver. Making a regular phone call to someone that is living alone or feeling isolated

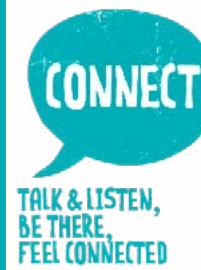
from friends and family would appreciate to hear a friendly voice. Volunteer as an NHS volunteer responder or join one of the local initiatives in your community.

Connect with others –

Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing.

If you're working from home, call colleagues rather than emailing.

If you are missing your lunchtime walk with colleagues, schedule a catch-up via telephone or video instead.



Be present –

Prioritise the NOW by spending less time after work in front of screens, dedicating some down time to something that will relax your body and mind.

Get a good night's sleep – Sleep restores the body, increases concentration and regulates mood. A good reason for an early night! Aim for 8hrs sleep per night.

Drink plenty water. Keep your body hydrated. Drink at least 2 litres of water each day.

Take up a new hobby –

A hobby such as yoga helps promote relaxation which is the natural opposite of stress and helps train the brain to relax and feel better.

It also allows your body to get a good stretch and release tension. There are lots of tutorials available online, suitable for beginners.

Listen to your own body and limitations. Breathe work alone will help ease tension.





spectrum

.life 

is
the Council's new Employee
Assistance Programme.

Discover Spectrum.Life,
our new online health and
wellbeing service, by
watching the video here:

www.bit.ly/Discover-Spectrum-Life

and signing up using our
organisation code.

Organisation Code

j5n2Rh73

Support includes a Counselling service with web chat support, fitness plans, legal assistance, financial advice, and eLearning content relating to a variety of wellbeing topics.

