

Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach



Staff Bulletin | February 2021 | Issue 42

Refuse workers on the Isle of Skye praised for their quick thinking in ensuring the safety of elderly islander

Two Highland Council refuse workers carrying out their work on the Isle of Skye prior to the New Year have been recognised and commended by a local councillor for their attentiveness and quick intervention to ensure the safety of an elderly resident.

Ronnie Reid and Kenny Gillies were travelling in a refuse lorry in Ardvasar, Skye in very cold conditions, when – with assistance from the height of their vehicle – Ronnie spotted something to his near side and alerted Kenny. They reversed the lorry and found an elderly gentleman had fallen over an embankment and was in early stages of hypothermia.

The Highland Council operatives immediately alerted emergency services, contacted the gentleman's family and remained with the casualty, speaking to him until his son and medical assistance arrived and he was transferred to hospital.

Praising the actions and compassion demonstrated by both Highland Council employees, Cllr John Finlayson, who represents the Eilean a' Cheò Ward, said:

“Clearly the most important thing is that the gentleman is recovering in hospital which is down to the alertness and quick thinking of Ronnie and Kenny, which certainly ensured that a positive outcome came of what could have been a tragic situation. I personally would like to thank them for what they did and also thank all our employees on Skye and Raasay, for their support over the festive season as well as in recent months. I have received many communications from members of the public highlighting a number of situations where workers have gone beyond their contractual obligations to help people in the community.”



Photos by Willie Rennie | West Highland Free Press

Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

Message from the Chief Executive



Dear Colleagues

Following the First Minister's review announcement, we now know that lockdown will continue until at least the end of February and there will be a phased return of pupils to schools, starting with early years and P1 to 3 from the 22nd February and a blended learning approach for our senior years. This allows us to plan ahead, with the expectation there will be a slow easing of restrictions from March onwards.

There is encouraging news on the vaccination front, with over 70's and vulnerable groups to have received their vaccinations within the next fortnight. We are supporting the vaccination programme in every way we can and you can read more about this on page 4.

We are in the midst of preparing a budget for next year and we are in a stronger place because of your hard work in helping to make savings and build our reserves last year. Our focus must now be on addressing the impact of the pandemic on both the council and on our communities.

The staff engagement sessions in November were really positive. Our long term vision must be to capture everything we learned over the past year and to harness new and improved technology and ways of working so that we change and adapt to be more resilient in the future. Your energy, your feedback and your adaptability has shown what amazing things we can do. We are currently planning more staff engagement sessions over the coming weeks and months.

Thank you for your continued work and support and your dedication to your communities.

Take care and keep safe,

Donna Manson **Chief Executive**

Welcome Fiona Duncan

- ECO for Health and Social Care



Fiona Duncan has joined The Highland Council as Executive Chief Officer for Health and Social Care.

Ms Duncan commented:

"I am delighted to now be in post as ECO Health and Social Care with The Highland Council. The overarching principles of what I believe we are aiming to achieve is to design better structures, processes and systems that will bring better outcomes to everyone we work with in the Highlands. Whilst COVID-19 has presented significant problems – both personally and professionally – it is also presenting us with opportunities to do things differently. This is something that we need to build on. I am really looking forward to working with everyone in such a challenging but exciting time."

Fiona has not only worked in one of the smallest Councils, Clackmannanshire (as Head of Children and Justice Services), she has also had experience in one of the largest, Edinburgh City Council. During her 10½ years with Edinburgh City she held a variety of management and practitioner roles in Criminal Justice including Drug Treatment Services, with the majority of time spent managing teams. Working in the Health and Social Care Partnership in East Lothian, Fiona was actively involved in helping to build strong collaborative arrangements within Adult Services.

As Chief Social Work Officer in both East Lothian and Clackmannanshire, Fiona is proud of her profession. She remains committed to improving practice standards alongside continuous learning and development. Fiona is keen to build on the already established links with colleges and universities to help 'grow our own'.

Donna Manson, Chief Executive added:

"Fiona will be an excellent addition to the senior leadership team. A fundamental part of the ECO role is to also provide senior officer support to Sutherland which takes in some of our most remote and rural locations. I have no doubt Fiona will engage with staff and communities of Sutherland to support key initiatives in this area."

**Health
and
Social Care**

Covid-19 and Vaccination Programme

The Highland Council is working closely with NHS Highland and partners including HLH to support the vaccination programme across the region. The model in Highland is GP led, which makes sense given our geography.

The Council is helping with:

- Identifying premises to complement GP surgery buildings where needed;
- Helping with cleaning, facilities management and pavement gritting in any other venues being used;
- Creating a new mobile resource for vaccinations to be delivered from our fleet;
- Providing staff support, with school nurses helping to deliver vaccinations and drivers for the mobile unit;
- Connecting with our community resilience groups in case more support is needed with marshalling people at vaccination venues. British Red Cross is marshalling volunteers in the first instance where needed.

NHS Highland aim to meet or exceed Scottish Government targets for vaccination, though these plans are subject to change based on Scottish Government guidance and depend on the supply of the vaccine.

The vaccination programme prioritises those most at risk of adverse consequences of Covid, and to those who care for them. This is set out by the UK Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation programme.

As of 30th January, over 30,000 people have been vaccinated in Highland Council area. The numbers vaccinated increase daily.

The first wave of vaccinations to care homes, front-line patient facing staff and people aged over 80 years in the community have been completed.

Care homes in Highland were completed 2 weeks earlier than the national programme timelines, with the exception of homes currently experiencing an outbreak.

Council staff working in Health and Social Care with a patient/client facing role were on track to be vaccinated by 5th February 2021. Some other specific staff groups working in a residential or support setting are eligible too and are being included.

The current plan for vaccination roll out is shown below. This may change if vaccine supply increases. Any slight variation by location is due to our GP led model and the need for them to use all their vaccine supply when they receive it, so if they have vaccinated one cohort and have vaccine left, they will continue to work through their patient lists into the next cohort. This helps to avoid vaccine wastage.

Priority group	When the first dose will be completed	Total population across the NHS Highland area* (to nearest 500)
All those 80 years of age and over	5 February	18,500
All those 75-80 years of age	Mid-February	14,000
All those 70-75 years of age	Mid-February	21,000
Extremely clinically vulnerable individuals	Mid-February	4,500
All those 65-70 years of age	Early-March	20,000
All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions and unpaid carers	Early-May	44,000
All those 60-65 years of age	Early-May	22,000
All those 55-60 years of age	Early-May	23,000
All those 50-55 years of age	Early-May	22,000

*Includes Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council areas.

More information about the national roll out programme and priorities can be found at:

www.bit.ly/CM0update-VaccineProgramme

Fuel Support Fund for low income Highland households

Households in the Highland who are on low income and experiencing fuel insecurities as a result of COVID-19 can apply for a Fuel Support Fund from The Highland Council.

People on low incomes who are experiencing fuel insecurities can apply online at the website below, for a £60 non-repayable cash payment per application which is made to eligible applicants.

As this is a cash-limited fund, the Scheme will close on:

28th February 2021.

The £270,000 Fuel Support Fund has been set up by the Council using Scottish Government funding which can be used flexibly to alleviate financial insecurities.

Large sections of the Highland population do not have access to mains gas and are reliant on more expensive sources of domestic heating such as oil, wood, coal, and wood pellets.

The Highland Council has therefore decided to use part of the Government's funding to set up a fuel support fund for those who are having difficulties paying for fuel for their homes.

For those experiencing fuel insecurities, the scheme is available to low income households who are entitled to Council Tax Reduction (CTR) and for those without recourse to public funds.

All applicants will be offered a referral to Citizens Advice (CAB) for energy checks and expertise available from CAB as this may help to reduce domestic fuel bills.

Crisis Grants for fuel support are already available via the Scottish Welfare Fund for those in crisis. Where appropriate, eligible applicants will be awarded a grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund before being considered for a grant from the local Fuel Support Fund.

www.highland.gov.uk/fuelsupportfund



Staff Engagement Feedback

611 staff tuned in to the live staff briefing in November: www.bit.ly/StaffBriefing30Nov

We received some good questions and feedback. Feedback on how staff are adapting to their new work routines and the benefits and challenges experienced were part of the open engagement.

Engagement feedback regarding home working outlines many positive benefits, but also highlights some drawbacks and improvement suggestions. Areas highlighted were as follows: Less commuting has allowed for more family time in the morning and in the evening; reduced childcare; flexible working; and time for exercise or hobbies and health improvements. Challenges are in connectivity; missing interaction with colleagues; IT training; and home set-up for working. See some of the feedback below.

“ Thank you for the opportunity to hear views of other staff. Flexibility, balanced by practical guidelines and thinking about how best to support, train staff and keep interaction and productivity are all challenges. ”

“ I appreciate the humane tone of managers thinking carefully about staff wellbeing when spending much of the day in front of screens. Benefitting from improved work life balance, no travel, feeling productive. Business support have been fantastic in moving case files towards digital – the only cost being time. Online platforms helping us to deliver a responsive service. ”

“ I think a blended approach is the healthy way forward as office tasks can certainly be done from anywhere but as someone who works for communities, I do require to be out in the community to engage and meet. Sore back from working from a laptop and no suitable chair. A mix of both office and home working would be great. ”

“ A benefit from working from home is a reduction in sick days to care for children who are not able to attend school if feeling under the weather. Previously staff would have to take days off whereas unless the child need 100% attention can work from home and still be there for the poorly child. ”

“ I have found great benefits from working at home both in productivity and in my personal health. I agree that protocol around MS meetings is important. Times to switch off, other than lunch and a staggered time frame to allow for a quick break from screens between meetings. Say meetings start at quarter past the hour and finish on the hour? Thank you for taking the time to discuss with employees, it is a welcome step forward. ”

“ Investing in IT for home working must also include investment in training. At a time when many are having to quickly adapt and learn new IT skills and ways to work electronically it would be great to have training support. ”

“ I was reluctant about working from home but am now a convert. Routine is important and remembering to switch off and not check emails out with working hours or days off. I have underlying health conditions and have found that I have reduced my 'sick days' as I am not catching common colds etc from working in a shared environment. ”

More staff briefing and engagement sessions are being planned for 2021.

Budget process

Plans are progressing for setting a budget for the coming year 2021-22.

Planning can now take account of the Scottish Government's settlement proposals, although much uncertainty remains.

The core funding increase in the Scottish Government's settlement amounts to £2.5M, however significant pressures will exceed that funding.

A cash increase of £13.2M includes ringfenced funding for Early Years expansion, Health and Social Care and a Council Tax freeze.

The exact impact for Highland of the public sector pay policy is not yet known, but is estimated to add another £3M to our pay pressure for next year bringing this to over £9M. Other pressures include increased costs, ongoing loss of income and various Covid pressures.

The Council also has a duty to consider medium term financial sustainability in planning ahead to take account of future risks and uncertainty and impacts on the wider economy.

The budget and Council Tax will be set at a meeting of the Council on 4th March. Prior to that there will be a range of staff briefings and trade union meetings.

Amber response

Thank you to all the staff who assisted in the response to the heavy snow which caused a number of road blockages and a major incident on the A835 with over 22 vehicles trapped in drifts during the Amber weather alert.

Our roads staff assisted the multi-agency rescue operation, sharing resources with Bear Scotland and helping to clear the drifts. Emergency centres were set up with assistance of Ward staff, High Life Highland and local businesses and support was given by communications and resilience staff to inform the public through social media and broadcast. Once the incident was cleared, roads staff worked tirelessly on the enormous task of clearing the surrounding roads. The picture shows the difficult conditions on the A832 at Fain.



Whistleblowing Policy

The Council recently reviewed its Whistleblowing Policy and agreed to transfer management to the Council's Corporate Fraud Team. This means that an independent, dedicated confidential route is available to you to report concerns.

We would ask that you take the opportunity to visit the new dedicated web page and review the policy and information on how to contact the team and raise a concern:

www.bit.ly/THC-Whistleblowing

Outlined below is the purpose of the Whistleblowing Policy:

Whistleblowing is defined in legislation in relation to malpractice and wrongdoing falling into one or more of the following categories:

- Criminal offences
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Miscarriage of justice
- Health and safety danger of an individual
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate attempt to cover up of any of the above.

It is important to note that Whistleblowing does not cover:

- Less serious matters where an employee should raise these with their line manager and follow the organisational hierarchy for escalating concerns
- An employee's concerns about their employment which should be addressed in accordance with the relevant HR policy for example bullying and harassment or grievance policy.

There are many established routes for you to report a wide range of concerns and these include the Council's Grievance Policy & Procedures, Bullying & Harassment Policy and existing Fraud reporting requirements. If you are uncertain about using the Whistleblowing Policy or if it is the right one please read our short guidance note on Raising Concerns (which includes information on bullying and harassment):

www.bit.ly/RaisingConcerns

We will keep the policy under review with the Trade Unions and update the Audit & Scrutiny Committee in June 2021.

Feedback on the policy documents would be welcomed, please email: performance@highland.gov.uk

Armed Forces Covenant

Support for veterans and families of veterans

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

As a signatory to the Covenant, The Highland Council is committed to supporting those who have served and the families of those who have served or are still serving.

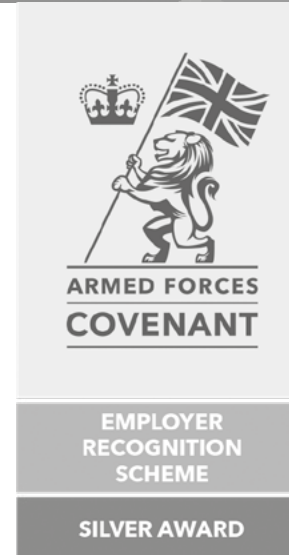
An Armed Forces Staff Network has been formed to support and work directly with veterans, reservists and families. There are 60 members in the network with their own Facebook group and dedicated Wellbeing lead, James McCreath who can be contacted on:

James.McCreath@highland.gov.uk

Members of the network understand through shared experience the difficulties our colleagues may be going through, and some have been trained as mentors to work closely with colleagues who require support.

At The Highland Council we are building on our support to the Armed Forces community to engage ex-forces personnel and their families in our recruitment process. Those applying for roles with us who meet the essential criteria under the 'ideal candidate' on the advertised vacancy are guaranteed an interview under our guaranteed interview scheme.

We are totally committed to supporting ex forces personnel and their families and were delighted to receive the Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award in 2015 for our dedication, which has recently been revalidated. We are working hard to further strengthen our support to the Armed Forces Community and hope to achieve Gold Award status this year.



This is one part of a developing Armed Forces Community Policy which will recognise and enhance our support for families and is part of our ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. The Council (in partnership with Moray Council) also developed a support website for those both currently serving in or leaving the military which is available at:

www.armedforcesmorayandhighland.co.uk

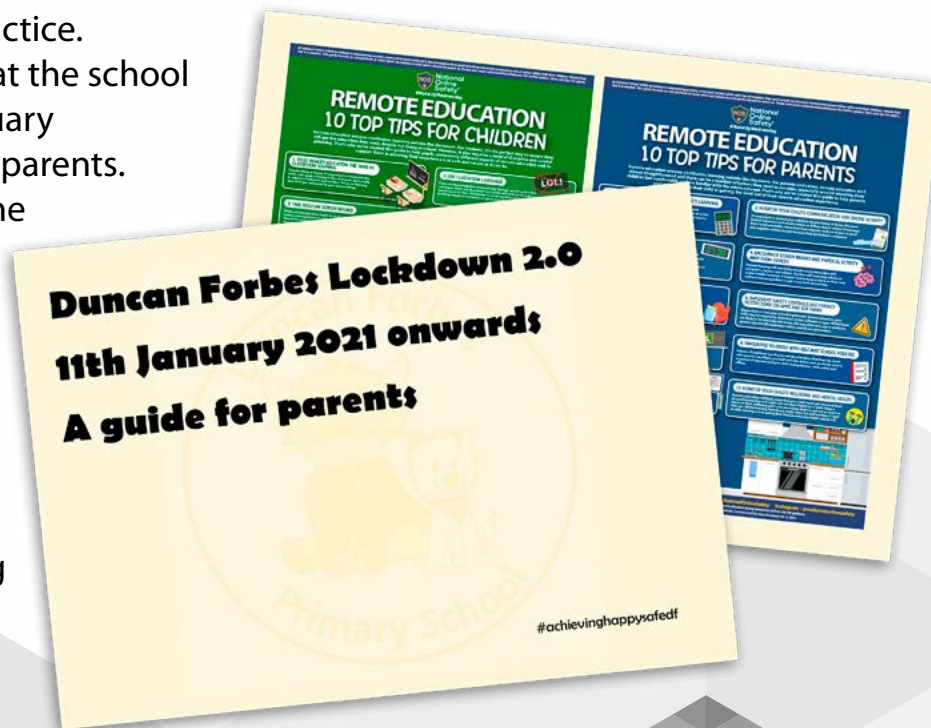
Duncan Forbes Primary – Lockdown Learning acknowledged for good practice by HMIE

Wendy MacKay, Head Teacher at Duncan Forbes Primary School, was recently interviewed by HMIE inspector about remote learning.

HMIE were so impressed with the remote learning being delivered at the school that they passed along the schools 'Lockdown Guide' to Education Scotland who in turn will share it on their website as an example of good practice.

Wendy explained that the school had produced a January Lockdown Guide for parents.

She also discussed the strategies in place to deliver remote learning, what learning had been taken from the previous lockdown, what was going well with remote learning and what barriers were being experienced.



Wendy MacKay said:

"I am so proud of the recognition for our school and for the staff. Credit should be given to all staff who are working tirelessly in very difficult and challenging circumstances to meet the needs of all pupils. Teaching online is not a patch on being in the class with pupils but our team are working hard to find solutions. We have assemblies and interact with the pupils as much as possible when doing them. We have had over 120 devices successfully logged in at one time through google meet which is incredible. The engagement of pupils this time is fantastic. I've had lots of positive feedback from parents thanking the staff for their efforts which is lovely and very much appreciated. However, we can't wait to be back in school with the pupils, children are social learners!"

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.

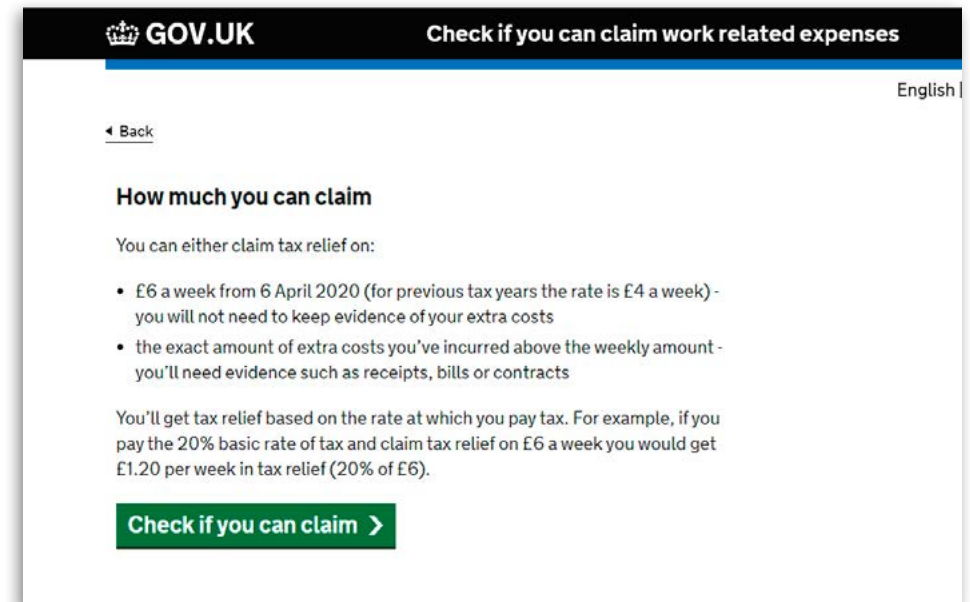
You can find more information and apply here:

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

If you want to apply, you'll need to create a Government Gateway ID. The website above will take you through the process to do this.

NOTE: 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**'.



The screenshot shows the GOV.UK website page for checking eligibility for work-related expenses. The page includes a 'Back' link, a section titled 'How much you can claim', and a list of conditions for claiming tax relief. A green button labeled 'Check if you can claim >' is visible at the bottom.

GOV.UK Check if you can claim work related expenses

English

[Back](#)

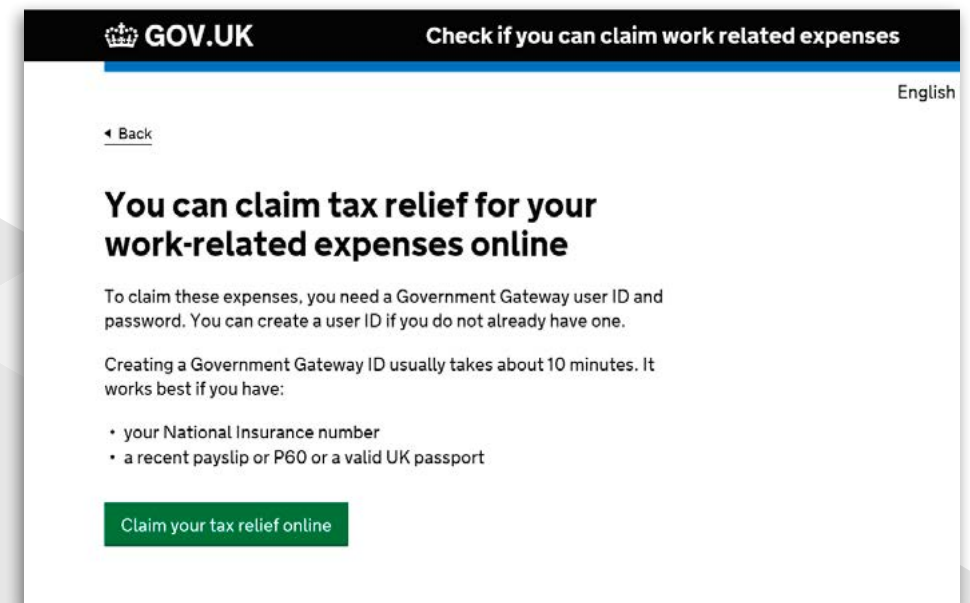
How much you can claim

You can either claim tax relief on:

- £6 a week from 6 April 2020 (for previous tax years the rate is £4 a week) - you will not need to keep evidence of your extra costs
- the exact amount of extra costs you've incurred above the weekly amount - you'll need evidence such as receipts, bills or contracts

You'll get tax relief based on the rate at which you pay tax. For example, if you pay the 20% basic rate of tax and claim tax relief on £6 a week you would get £1.20 per week in tax relief (20% of £6).

[Check if you can claim >](#)



The screenshot shows the GOV.UK website page for claiming tax relief online. The page includes a 'Back' link, a section titled 'You can claim tax relief for your work-related expenses online', and instructions on how to claim these expenses, including a list of requirements. A green button labeled 'Claim your tax relief online' is visible at the bottom.

GOV.UK Check if you can claim work related expenses

English

[Back](#)

You can claim tax relief for your work-related expenses online

To claim these expenses, you need a Government Gateway user ID and password. You can create a user ID if you do not already have one.

Creating a Government Gateway ID usually takes about 10 minutes. It works best if you have:

- your National Insurance number
- a recent payslip or P60 or a valid UK passport

[Claim your tax relief online](#)

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

www.bit.ly/MartinLewis-ClaimTaxRelief

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



Want to be part of an

electronic team?

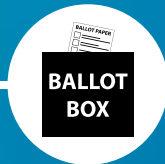
Interested in opportunities to develop new skills?

With the Scottish Parliamentary election this year in May and the Highland Council elections in 2022 we are looking for staff to step forward and be involved in elections.

There are various roles and we want to create a bank of people and build experience within our workforce, especially our young people. It is a great chance to meet other people from other services, work together as a team and gain new skills.

Our Chief Executive, Donna Manson said:

“Running elections is a statutory duty and important for our reputation. It's vital that we have a top team involved so I am authorising all Managers to release staff who are interested in getting involved in the various roles. It will be very rewarding and a chance to meet new colleagues and be part of a wider team.”



The benefits?

- **Employment opportunities**
- **If you work for the Council you are released from normal duties**
- **Enhanced payment**
- **Special leave is granted for Council employees**
- **Excellent opportunity to work as part of a team**
- **Gain valuable expertise and build up your CV**
- **Various flexible roles to suit different skills**
- **Full training provided**

Positions

Polling Stations

Presiding Officer, managing a polling station where people vote.



Poll Clerk, working in a polling station alongside the Presiding Officer.



Polling Station Inspector/Covid Compliance Officer, carrying out polling place inspections.



Information Assistant, greeting and managing voters entering the polling station.



The Count

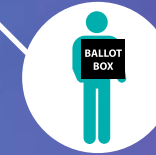
Accountants, reconciling ballot paper accounts and counted votes.



Count Supervisor and Clerks, responsible for the verifying and counting of the votes.



Box Runners, assisting with the storing of boxes.



Mixing and Counted Votes Team, batching and accounting for all papers received from count supervisors.



If you are interested and feel you would like to get involved and play an active role please apply at:

● www.bit.ly/EmploymentAtElections

Anybody over 16 can apply.

If you require any further information:

● Phone: **01349 886657**

● Email: election@highland.gov.uk

“I really enjoy working in a Polling Station, there is a great sense of teamwork. I love meeting and helping hundreds of people, exercising their democratic right to vote! The day just flies by” **Louise McGunnigle**

Highland Council By-election

Pre-election guidance for staff

Following the death of Councillor George Cruickshank a by-election for Ward 12 - Aird and Loch Ness will be taking place and this message is to advise you that we are now in the pre-election period.

You will be able to access the pre-election guidance for all Council staff, which is on the staff intranet:

www.bit.ly/Pre-Election-Guidance-for-staff

For your information here is a link to the news release:

www.bit.ly/Notice-of-Election-Ward-12

You can also find further details by visiting:

www.highland.gov.uk/ward12byelection

If you have any questions regarding the guidance please email the Elections Team on:

election@highland.gov.uk

Do you currently work part time and would relish the opportunity to work additional hours?

Although initially for a 3 month period, there will be future opportunities arising with other elections so it could well be the start of developing a second career within the Council.

For further information please contact Linda Johnstone on:

Mobile: **07496 176004** or email: linda.johnstone@highland.gov.uk

Transport and Logistics team to make 600 protective screens for Highland polling stations

The election team faced quite a challenge in sourcing screens in preparation for the by-election of Ward 12- Aird & Loch Ness and in planning for the Scottish Parliamentary Election on 6th May 2021. 600 screens in total will be required in May. This is a requirement for all polling stations operating under Covid-19 restrictions.

Mike Cooper, Transport and Logistics Manager, together with Neil MacLennan, Building Maintenance, came to the rescue by making protective screens.

Currently producing 30 for the polling stations on 11th March and will increase production to produce the required 600 protective screens to cover all 285 polling stations across the Highlands to be ready for the 6th of May 2021.



Youth Trainee Programme

Article

The Employability Team are pleased to inform you the preparations are underway for the Youth Trainee programme, 2021.

The YTP was established to tackle the problem of youth unemployment within The Highland Council area and is made up of a paid six-month work placement, open to those aged to 16-24 years who have had, or still continue to be, experiencing difficulties in securing work.

This is to enable them to gain experience of the world of work and by the end of the six months:

- Be 'employment ready'; and
- Have a clear 'progression pathway' - whether employment, education or further training.

In 2020, The Highland Council hosted 40 youth trainees and 14 went onto a modern apprenticeship programme in their host service.

Covid has thrown up a lot of challenges and Youth Unemployment is currently at 41% across the Highlands. In 2021 we aim to take on a total of 60 youth trainees which will be funded by the European Social Fund and the Scottish Government Young People's Guarantee.

Finally, there is no budget pressure on the host department. All we ask is Youth trainees are assigned a mentor who will agree a development plan and any training requirements with a view to improving employability.

If you are a team leader or supervisor who would like to mentor or host a youth trainee or who might have departmental duties that might be appropriate for a youth trainee to take on, please email:

Drew McNeil, Employment Support Adviser for more information on:
drew.mcneil@highland.gov.uk

Case study

**Heather - Former Youth Trainee Mentor
Mentored 6 Youth Trainees**

"I loved the chance to make a small change in someone's life, but youth trainees have been an invaluable resource in our department too."

"Working with trainees has been one of the most rewarding and interesting parts of my work. I have had the opportunity to build excellent working relationships with a diverse range of young people. Because of their backgrounds and ages, trainees bring different skills, interests and approaches to life. The sharing and learning has always gone both ways. So I have been open to being challenged about my work and have encouraged a working relationship where boundaries and roles are clear, but ideas and learning go both ways. This is always a positive challenge as we all have expectations of how certain people behave based on gender, age, background, etc."

My role, along with my colleagues, was to identify learning opportunities for trainees and set them tasks. However, in addition to this, I always offered a nurturing role. Trainees are with us for a reason and I always tried to support them and help them understand the expectations of working for an organisation like the council. This included behaviour, dress and general approach to work. Some trainees have come from an unsettled personal/family background and I have been able to allow them to build up trust and help them identify how this may affect them in the workplace."

www.bit.ly/THC-Employability

www.bit.ly/EmployabilityInScotland-Pipeline



Be Seen, Be Heard
Faicear Thu, Cluinnear Thu

Highland Youth Convener | Neach-Gairm Òigridh

12-month contract, working from home (laptop and smartphone provided)

£17,290 annual bursary, a full-time role from May 2021 (or as soon as possible after this date) for a one-year term. The post requires some evening and weekend work.

We are looking for the Highlands' next Youth Convener

You will help make the Highlands the best place in Scotland to be young by ensuring that the voice of young people in Highland is heard on issues and developments that impact them. You'll work with the High Life Highland Youth Services Team in developing Highland Youth Parliament and other initiatives that increase youth involvement in decisions that affect them. You'll be a key representative of young people in Highland at various Highland Council meetings and other committee meetings.

You should be aware of a spectrum of issues affecting a wide range of young people and be able to represent their views. You will be a good communicator –speaker/facilitator/reader/writer, with the ability to work with and relate to a wide range of people and organisations.

The Contract Specification is available on request from either of the emails below.

To apply, please email to us in no more than 500 words 'How you would ensure young people's views are voiced to The Highland Council and Community Planning Partners', with a CV, and 2 referees noted. Applications can also be submitted as video or audio, equivalent to 500 words (applications from previous applicants would be welcome).

Closing date for Applications is Wednesday 24th February 2021

Please note that interviews will take place online in two stages, on:
Friday 26th March and Wednesday 31st March 2021.

Email applications to: ian.abbot@highlifehighland.com and audrey.anthoney@highlifehighland.com

A small conversation about mental health has the power to make a big difference!

The focus of this year's Time to Talk Day was on the power of small, because however you have a conversation about mental health – whether it's a quick message to a colleague, a virtual coffee morning, or a socially distanced walk and talk – it has the power to make a big difference. But Time to Talk Day shouldn't be about just one day. You have the power to make a difference to someone's day, any day of the year.

You can download materials from SeeMe-Scotland to help start your conversations:

www.bit.ly/SeeMeScotland-EmployersPackPDF

The Learning and Development team are also taking this opportunity to launch some new virtual resources:

www.bit.ly/HC-Learning-and-Development [Intranet]

Online Team building. Help your team reconnect with an interactive team building session facilitated by one of our professional Learning and Development Advisors.

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/915284/team_building

Wellbeing sessions. Give your Wellbeing a boost by joining one of our virtual sessions, looking at a variety of ways to improve our sense of wellbeing.

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1200973/wellbeing_workshops

Mental Health Awareness. A short informal course discussing the subject of mental health and its impact on individuals and the community at large.

www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1523495/mental_health_awareness_training



Further support, information and guidance is available through your Employee Assistance Programme or from the Highland Councils' Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit.



www.bit.ly/EAP-Poster [Intranet]

www.bit.ly/MHW-Toolkit [Intranet]



Welcome to *Café Connect*

Are you?.....

Feeling a bit under the weather?  A bit flat? 



Making connections helps!

Join one of our open coffee mornings every Friday morning 



Catch up with old colleagues or get chatting with new ones....

Where?



Microsoft Teams

When? 

10am – 10:30am
every Friday

12th February

19th February

26th February

5th March

12th March

19th March

26th March

www.bit.ly/JoinCafeConnect



Coronavirus testing and reporting positive cases

Staff Testing

Testing is available for any HC staff (and those living with them) **who are showing symptoms** of Coronavirus. The test works on antibodies and the optimum test period is from Day 3-5 of experiencing symptoms.

Symptoms may include the following:

- High temperature/fever (above 37.8°C)
- New continuous cough
- Anosmia (a loss of or change to your normal sense of smell. This may also affect your sense of taste as the two are closely linked)

Staff should report symptoms to their line manager as soon as possible, in order that appropriate steps be taken and to ensure the health and safety of other colleagues (where appropriate).

COVID Vaccination Appointment

Staff requiring to attend an appointment should inform their line manager to seek time off.

This will be treated the same as special paid leave for a hospital appointment. Paid time off will be given during working hours to attend the appointment.

Reporting Covid absence

All Coronavirus related absence (Caring responsibilities, Shielding and Coronavirus confirmed cases) should be recorded as **“Special leave”** on My View .

A Fast-track service for staff testing is available, please contact the HR helpline for advice and to request a test on **01349 886610**.

Testing is generally available the same or next day and results are usually provided within 24 hours.

In addition to UHI scheduled test appointments and mobile testing units, a “walk in” centre has been set up in Inverness however staff must still contact **0800 028 2816** to book an appointment in advance.

Asymptomatic testing (Rapid Antigen Lateral flow test) is not currently available via the Staff testing portal. This is an antigen test, currently only used in Healthcare or similar settings (i.e. Care Homes). This may be introduced for the purpose of mass testing within some Education settings at a later date.

Home working

Guidance for staff working from home can be found on the intranet here: www.bit.ly/THC-HomeWorking

The guidance, for managers and staff includes a homeworking risk assessment, Manager and employee checklists and a full wellbeing toolkit.

These practical resources have been designed to ensure employees can work safely and effectively from home to achieve the best possible outcomes for themselves and the organisation.

Staff Wellbeing – 5 tips to help with productivity

Positive wellbeing is critical to staff working productively, not least when many staff are based at home, away from their usual place of work, line manager and work colleagues.

Some tips to help ensure staff wellbeing are:

Stay connected

To your manager, team and other colleagues, both formally and informally. Discuss and agree appropriate method(s) and frequency.



Find a balance

Flexibility versus putting pressure on yourself – speak to your manager about how you can work more flexibly and enjoy some time out during the day. Try to make use of daylight hours and get outside for a quick walk if possible.



Move regularly

Try not to sit for too long and take regular breaks away from your screen. Get up and walk about, get a glass of water. You rarely sit for long periods in the workplace so try not to fall into this habit at home. Try stretching before or standing for your next Teams meeting.



Annual Leave

Holidays are essential for our health and wellbeing. Staff are encouraged to take regular breaks to help build resilience and avoid feeling overwhelmed.



Make time for “commuting” to your next meeting

Try to avoid back to back meetings. If you are setting up meetings, why not schedule them for 20 or 50 mins instead of a full half hour or hour – your attendees will be grateful of some time to gather their thoughts and grab a glass of water before their next meeting.



Staff are encouraged to make use of the following support resources:

Employee Assistance Programme – offers free confidential support 24hrs/365 days. This is available to both employees and their families. Managers can refer staff to support (with staff consent) or staff may wish to self-refer.

www.bit.ly/Covid-19-StaffLinks [Intranet]

MHW toolkit

– includes contact details for Mental Health Representatives:

www.bit.ly/MHW-Toolkit [Intranet]

www.bit.ly/MHW-Stress [Intranet]

www.bit.ly/MHW-ContactList [Intranet]

My Online Learning

– Preparing for the new normal

www.bit.ly/MyOnlineLearningLogin

Homeworking guidance

www.bit.ly/THC-HomeWorking

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE HELP IS AVAILABLE

Don't delay in seeking help during the current coronavirus situation. Call the 24-hour Domestic Abuse Helpline in confidence on **0800 027 1234** or visit **safer.scot**

Domestic abuse is a crime.

Call **101** to report it or **999** in an emergency.



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**



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.

Clear Your Head Campaign



These are worrying and uncertain times.

The coronavirus outbreak has changed daily life for us all in Scotland and has had a real impact on how many of us are feeling. It's ok to not feel yourself right now, and we have some great tips to help get you through it.

'Clear Your Head' highlights the practical things people can do to look after themselves whilst staying at home.

Find tips on how to stay positive and feel better at:
www.clearyourhead.scot