

# Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach



Staff Bulletin | June 2021 | Issue 44

## Management leadership days

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May was the first of a number of “reconnecting days” for the senior management team.

Working within the current guidelines and restrictions, the team spent the day out of doors, walking, talking and visiting some new developments near HQ, including the Gathering Place, the hydro scheme, the new canal swing bridge and the new park at Torvean. Holding meetings in the Northern Meeting Park, they discussed new ways of working and plans for the future. Staff engagement sessions will be held in June and senior officers will be out on area visits in July.



Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

# Message from the Chief Executive

Dear Colleagues

Many of you will now have had a vaccination and it is heartening to see some of the restrictions we have all been living under being gradually lifted.

It has been fantastic to physically meet up with the senior management team on a couple of occasions this month. We obviously all need to be cautious and mindful of keeping safe, but having some good weather and being able to meet initially outdoors has been wonderful.

We have visited some local infrastructure projects and this underlines the fantastic work which has been continuing in recent months. I am hopeful that other teams will start to reconnect in this way.

It has been really great to chat with many of you through the online staff engagement sessions in the past week. You can watch the session here: [www.bit.ly/VirtualStaffBriefings](http://www.bit.ly/VirtualStaffBriefings)

Lots of you had questions and suggestions and these are being worked on by the project team who will publish an FAQ.

Following these online sessions, which had a focus on new ways of working, senior officers and I will be out on area visits over the recess period and I look forward to perhaps catching up with some of you then.

In the meantime, I hope you all manage to take a well earned break over the summer.

Take care and keep safe,

Donna Manson, **Chief Executive**



# A reflection of our achievements over the past year

The unique challenges presented by the impacts of a pandemic and Brexit was a supreme test of the Council's vision of being Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected.

Our ambition to be high performing, responsive and resilient is reflected in the agility and adaptability of our staff and the delivery of key service and financial objectives, as well as an effective and compassionate response to the pandemic.

We achieved financial sustainability and a recovery plan, despite challenges faced.

A continuous programme of staff and community engagement, as well as dedication to partnership working and collaboration ensures we are a Connected Council.

The following is a reminder of all our achievements over the past year.

## **Our vision**

The Highland Council recently introduced and communicated a new vision for an Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected Council. Our Corporate Plan updated in 2019 sets out the vision and integrates the priorities of the organisation and the measures required to deliver and monitor the Council's priorities.

[www.bit.ly/HighlandCouncilCorporatePlan](http://www.bit.ly/HighlandCouncilCorporatePlan)

Financial sustainability is a key priority for the Council. COVID-19 impacted adversely on the budget and particularly income generation, and early work was undertaken to forecast, quantify, explain and manage the impacts over the course of 2020.

[www.bit.ly/THC-Covid-19Lockdown](http://www.bit.ly/THC-Covid-19Lockdown)

The measures taken to control spending and focus on delivery of critical services, including business support, welfare and food distribution, culminated in achieving a balanced budget, delivery of efficiency savings and building additional Reserves of over £40M to ensure sustainability and future resilience, recognising poverty and unemployment as the biggest risk to the economy and wellbeing of people. This also enabled a programme of investment in 2021 to stimulate growth and recovery and sustain employment.

Significant collaborative work by Officers and Members in this period, through establishment of a Recovery Board, set the foundation for economic recovery and investment in and an ambitious **Health and Prosperity Strategy - Ambitious Highland:**

[www.bit.ly/AmbitiousHighland](http://www.bit.ly/AmbitiousHighland)

A continuous programme of member, staff and community engagement, as well as dedication to partnership working and collaboration, ensures we are a successful and Connected Council.

## Our performance

In January, the Inverness Courier named our Council 'Organisation of the Year':

" Take a bow Highland Council – often maligned, sometimes deservedly, sometimes nitpickingly so – for performing sterling service to the community in disbursing grants and helping the needy.

...teachers and support staff also deserve great credit for a year in which they've had so many stresses and strains but have emerged top of the class. "

- We granted highest number of small business bonus awards in Scotland worth £20.1m to 11,520 businesses
- We have the lowest staff absence of councils in Scotland (1.9% compared to 4.8%)
- 74% of KPIs remaining on target
- We have maintained and adapted core service delivery, to ensure safety of clients and staff, including waste collection, registrations and social work.

[www.bit.ly/GuideForCampervanWaste](http://www.bit.ly/GuideForCampervanWaste)

[www.bit.ly/RegistrarsMaintainingQualityServices](http://www.bit.ly/RegistrarsMaintainingQualityServices)

## Community leadership and collaboration

The Council's leadership has been central to the role of the Local Resilience Partnership (HILRP) – joint messaging, co-operation on risk identification and solutions, including use of mutual aid, through armed forces transporting patients and delivering coordination of testing units; and working groups on visitor management. [www.bit.ly/ThisEaster-StayLocal](http://www.bit.ly/ThisEaster-StayLocal)

Close communication and collaboration with the NHS and other partners has been essential in successfully controlling and suppressing local outbreaks of COVID-19, particularly in schools, with proactive incident management, information resources, and supporting vaccination and community testing.

A ground-breaking partnership was established by the redirection of Eden Court theatre staff to support the pandemic response with helpline and food distribution work.

Collaboration with the Third Sector and community groups has been fundamental to the COVID-19 response. [www.bit.ly/EdenCourtPartnership](http://www.bit.ly/EdenCourtPartnership)

We collaborated with DSRL to provide online learning resources enabling furloughed staff to upskill and sustain employability.

[www.bit.ly/OnlineTrainingDuringCovid](http://www.bit.ly/OnlineTrainingDuringCovid)

Throughout the year, weekly virtual briefings were held with all elected members, recognising that local members are leaders and information sources in their communities. The sessions provided local and national situation reports, detailed information on services and the COVID-19 response, including business grants, education and welfare. It was also an opportunity to engage and to obtain local information.

We have also provided daily briefings for all staff and made information available on our website and staff facebook page and we have held regular staff engagement sessions over Teams.

## Supporting our local communities

### Adaptability and innovation enabled an exemplary response to the pandemic.

- Establishment of a Strategic and Tactical response to provide coordination and visible leadership.  
[www.bit.ly/RespondingToCoronavirus](http://www.bit.ly/RespondingToCoronavirus)
- Innovative solutions enabled us to increase network capacity for remote working from 500 to 5000 within 2 weeks.
- Establishing COVID-19 helpline and humanitarian aid hubs with volunteers and 3rd sector.
- Early rollout of pupil chromebooks enabled a quick response to remote learning.  
[www.bit.ly/LearningDuringLockdown](http://www.bit.ly/LearningDuringLockdown)
- Staff adapted quickly to new roles and ways of working to provide food distribution, helpline, funding support, registration services.  
[www.bit.ly/StaffShareTheirViews](http://www.bit.ly/StaffShareTheirViews)
- Distributing £56M business grants in the first few weeks of lockdown.
- Vehicle conversion (“Jabbernavts”) to support vaccination programme and community testing.  
[www.bit.ly/CommunityTestingProgramme](http://www.bit.ly/CommunityTestingProgramme)
- Introducing virtual committees and meetings ensuring continuity of governance with no summer recess in 2020.  
[www.bit.ly/VirtualCommitteesWebcasting](http://www.bit.ly/VirtualCommitteesWebcasting)
- Staff and public communications using videos, social media, welfare leaflets, business advice sheets, staff engagement sessions, community newsletters and videos, and member briefings.
- Tactical response involving all services in managing COVID-19 outbreaks in collaboration with NHS.
- Introduction of a visitor management plan to aid impact of recovery tourism.  
[www.bit.ly/VisitorManagementPlan-NewsRelease](http://www.bit.ly/VisitorManagementPlan-NewsRelease)
- Environmental health advice for businesses and COVID-19 compliance officers.
- Welfare support to our communities.
- Collaboration with supermarkets to source essential items in short supply, including nappies, formula milk, baby food and toiletries and provide vouchers for school meals for vulnerable families.  
[www.bit.ly/FreeSchoolMealsVouchers-NewsRelease](http://www.bit.ly/FreeSchoolMealsVouchers-NewsRelease)

## Our resilience

In normal circumstances our vast geography, immense infrastructure and dispersed and fragile communities present unique challenges to service delivery, however our flexible workforce is embedded in communities across the Highlands. You are used to problem solving and innovation, and have thrived on the extreme challenges faced over the past year.

## Our innovation

We were also one of the first local authorities in Scotland to develop a Schools Digital Learning Hub, to provide individual pupil chromebook devices, and to use TikTok to reach young people.

[www.bit.ly/DigitalLearningSuccess](http://www.bit.ly/DigitalLearningSuccess)

## Striving for continual improvement

- Our Virtual Academy which has success in senior pupils achieving higher grades, was adapted to deliver education across all age groups during 2020.  
[www.bit.ly/VirtualAcademySuccess](http://www.bit.ly/VirtualAcademySuccess)
- The Council's partnership with FareShare enabled distribution of over 374 tonnes of food worth £498,582.00, providing targeted support while reducing food waste.
- Designed locally to alleviate fuel poverty and improve wellbeing and inclusion, 12,218 households benefited from our fuel support scheme. Supplier switching, arrears write-off, and energy efficiency grants were accessed by 30% of recipients
- Our welfare payments of £61.1m included adopting a cash-first approach thus providing significant socio-economic benefits for recipients, communities and local businesses, thus supporting the recovery, health and prosperity of the Highlands.
- We produced a Money Worries leaflet in partnership and this is published in different languages.  
[www.bit.ly/WorryingAboutMoney](http://www.bit.ly/WorryingAboutMoney)
- We collaborated with UK and Scottish Parliaments, through evidence sessions and consultation responses while also engaging with CoSLA and the Scottish Government to design and review national policy.

# Know the COVID-19 protection levels

There are 5 COVID-19 Protection Levels (0-4). Currently The Highland Council area is in Level 1 (with all islands in Highland in Level 0, except Isle of Skye).

The number of positive cases in each local authority is published daily by Public Health Scotland: [www.bit.ly/DailyCasesinScotland](http://www.bit.ly/DailyCasesinScotland)

## Protection Level 1 allows the following:

### Indoor Socialising

- Maximum 8 people from up to 3 households may socialise indoors in a public place\*.
- Maximum of 6 people from up to 3 households may socialise in a private dwelling.

### Outdoor Socialising

- Maximum of 12 people from up to 12 households.
- Under 12s do not count towards restricted numbers or households outdoors.

### Travel

- Unrestricted travel to all Levels 0-2 areas; must not enter a Level 3 or 4 area unless for a permitted reason\*, \*\*.

### Transport

- Active travel (walk, run, cycle, wheel) where possible.
- Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible.
- Face coverings compulsory on public transport.

### Childcare

- Nurseries, childminders and regulated school age childcare providers open.
- Informal childcare (family and friends) permitted.

### Children's activities

- Permitted subject to guidance.

### Schools

- OPEN

### Colleges & Universities

- Blended.

### Hospitality

- Outdoors: local licensing laws apply.
- Indoors: Closed 11pm.
- Indoors (8 people/3 households); or Outdoors (12 people/12 households) socialising rules apply.

\* Check the latest guidance for permitted reasons for travel.

\*\* Different rules apply for international travel and travel between Scotland and other parts of the Common Travel Area (England, Northern Ireland, Wales, Republic of Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man).

Check the latest guidance if you are considering travelling.

Regulations in relation to each level will be published on [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk) and relevant public health advice (such as physical distancing, face coverings and enhanced hygiene measures) applies.

Find relevant guidance on: [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



# Know the COVID-19 protection levels

## Sport and exercise

- All organised activity permitted except adult indoor contact sports.

## Tourist accommodation

- Open (must follow in-house socialising rules).

## In-home work and house moves

- (e.g. repairs and decoration) – Permitted.

## Others

- Close contact services, Shopping and Food to Go/Takeaways - Open.

## Testing

- Everyone is encouraged to get tested, as around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms. Testing is free and results are available in around 30 minutes.

[www.bit.ly/GettingTestedInScotland](http://www.bit.ly/GettingTestedInScotland)

## Protection Level 0 (Islands in Highland, except Skye):

### You can meet socially in groups:

- of up to 8 people from 4 households in your home or theirs – and can stay overnight.
- of up to 10 people from 4 households in an indoor public place like a café, pub or restaurant.
- of up to 15 people from 15 households outdoors.
- under 12s do not count towards the total number of people or households meeting outside but count towards the household numbers indoors.
- you do not need to physically distance from family and friends in a private home.
- up to 200 people can attend weddings and funerals.

### Childcare

- you can provide informal childcare, for example to look after a grandchild.

### Travel

- you can travel anywhere in Scotland in Levels 0, 1 or 2 but must not enter a Level 3 or 4 area unless for a permitted reason.
- you can travel anywhere in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands - before you travel you must check the travel rules in those countries.

### In-home work and house moves

- tradespeople can carry out any work in your home such as painting, decorating or repairing.

### Working from home

- you should work from home where possible.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot



# “A Fantastic Team” - Returning Officer thanks everyone involved in the Scottish Parliamentary Election

Our CEX and the Returning Officer for the Highlands and Islands sent a message to staff involved in the May election to personally thank them for their invaluable support and assistance in helping to deliver what was undoubtedly the most difficult election to be held in the history of democracy.



The Scottish Parliamentary Election is always one of the most demanding elections given it has both a constituency and regional vote meaning we have double the number of boxes and votes to verify, sort and count. On this occasion we also had the largest

regional list paper in the history of the Highland and Islands Region!



Under normal circumstances Highland has its own unique challenges when it comes to an election due to the geographical spread of the area, the logistics involved, and the high number of willing people needed to make it a success. Add to this the need to deliver an election during a pandemic with all the social distancing and COVID-19 compliance requirements – and you get an idea of just what we were up against.

Delivering the actual manual count over two days spread across three count centres was a new experience for everyone involved, as were the special



COVID-19 arrangements at all polling stations that included having dedicated COVID-19 marshals to support staff and assist members of the public coming to vote.

## In her message Donna said:

- “ Working with face coverings; constant hand cleansing and social distancing in what is a very physical process was difficult and I thank you for your diligence, perseverance and observance for everyone’s personal safety and the delivery of the final count results.
- “ 1,191 staff were involved and as some of our experienced election staff could not work with us this time due to personal circumstances regarding self-isolating, we relied on many new people coming forward to be part of the team. It really could not have asked for a more fantastic team. Thank you. ”

A short in-house video has been made to specifically highlight the part local young people from our schools and further education settings played by taking on a wide variety of roles including Postal Vote Assistants, COVID-19 marshals in polling places, counting staff and reception staff at the count centres. Students play their part in the Scottish Parliament election with Highland, YouTube - [www.bit.ly/StudentsAtScotGovElections](http://www.bit.ly/StudentsAtScotGovElections)

A survey of staff taking part in the election was carried out to capture feedback on the training provided, arrangements at polling stations and the count and general views on the running of the election. Feedback has been positive and will be helpful for planning for future elections.

There are two by-elections due to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> August and we have the Highland Council election in May next year so if you are not yet registered and you are interested in getting involved for the first time and being part of the Council-wide team working to deliver elections you can put your name forward by emailing: [election@highland.gov.uk](mailto:election@highland.gov.uk)

There are many different roles and it is a great opportunity to learn new skills, met people and be part of the whole democratic process.

## Staff comments:

- “ I was very impressed with communication from start to finish and all areas were addressed and covered in extremely challenging circumstances. ”
- “ Everything seemed well thought out and I can’t think of anything that could be improved upon. Enjoyed my day working with rest of polling staff. ”
- “ I really enjoyed the interactive online training and think this is the way forward. ”
- “ Retain, the information officers. It worked much more smoothly when they were managing the voters! ”
- “ Considering the challenges of establishing a COVID-19 safe environment and the logistics behind pulling it all together, I was really impressed with the great work done by all those responsible for organising and setting up the count, well done! ”
- “ I actually preferred working this time - during the day, more space, less stress, I worked in the marquee which was well lit, spacious, helpful & chatty senior staff - a pleasure to work on Friday and Saturday. ”
- “ My first experience of an election from a count perspective, albeit I have had previous experience of elections through previous employment, and I thought that The Highland Council presented a very professional operation which ran smoothly considering the potential pitfalls. Having spoken to colleagues who have been involved in previous night counts, the majority of them stated that they enjoyed the day count more and this could potentially be something that may be considered nationwide for future elections. ”

# Staff Survey Results

The Dynamic ways of working Council project were tasked with creating a dual purpose survey of all employees. The objective was to use the survey data to understand staff Wellbeing and remote working in response to COVID-19 and gather employee views of what The Highland Council's dynamic ways of working should look like for the future.

A total of **2,979** responses were received, giving an overall response rate of **29%**.

We received **1886** survey returns giving a response rate of **72%** from the **2600** current homeworking population.

**70%** of staff would like to work from home in some capacity

**39%** of staff would prefer the 80% home 20% office split

**2600** homeworkers across the organisation

**52%** of our survey respondents said workplace safety is a top concern

Staff who live in a more rural area were more likely to choose to work from home full time

"Homeworking has meant a greater ability to focus with fewer distractions and better work/life balance"

Survey respondent 2021

**22%** of our employees with caring or parental responsibilities would like to work from home full time

**33%** of our employees with a disability would like to work from home full time

**69.78%** respondents identify as female; this reflects this high proportion of women in the workforce (**74.3%**)

**41%** said one of their main concerns was not being able to work from home in the future

**Over 57%** of staff said that there would be a positive impact on their work/life balance if they continued to work from home in one form or another.

## Top benefits of homeworking:

- Work/life balance (66%)
- Family time (39%)
- Saving money (39%)
- Wellbeing (38%)

## Top challenges of homeworking:

The biggest challenge cited by homeworking employees was the:

- lack of engagement with colleagues (51%)
- Social isolation (42%)
- Increased costs of homeworking (28%)
- Appropriate space (25%)
- WIFI speed (22%)
- Distraction in the home (22%)

## Practical considerations

### Dedicated workspace

67% of our homeworkers have a dedicated workspace, 13% have dedicated workspace **some of the time**. Nineteen (19%) **don't** have any dedicated space at all.

### Equipment

56% of our homeworkers have the equipment they need to work effectively from home. Thirty five percent (35%) do **most of the time** and 8% of our respondents don't have the equipment they need to do their job at home.

24% of our staff said **Systems and Equipment** is a work-related concern they need help with right now.

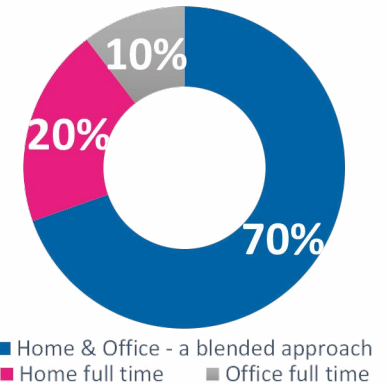
The top concerns expressed about returning to the office in any capacity are:

- Workplace safety (52%)
- The workplace environment (42%)
- Not being able to work from home (41%)
- Having to work from a different location/desk (42%)
- Fuel and Parking costs (31%)
- Where they would keep their stuff (28%)
- Juggling virtual and actual meetings (23%)
- Adjusting (21%)
- Childcare/caring responsibilities (19%)
- Digitization of paperwork/access to records (12%)

## New models of working

A significant amount of staff (70%) would like to continue to work from home and the office in some capacity.

Twenty percent (20%) would like to be at home full time and 10% in the office full time.



### Disability and preference

Of the 170 staff who identified that they consider themselves to have a disability. Seventy staff (67%) would prefer a blended approach and 34 (33%) **would prefer to work from home full time**.

### Parental/caring responsibilities and preference

The findings for this staff group are consistent with the rest of the homeworking population where 70% would prefer a blended approach however **a higher proportion (22%) would prefer to work from home full time**.

# Management Engagement Workshops

As part of the New Ways of Working project, a key milestone after the staff survey was to run management engagement workshops. 15 sessions were held in total with the support reaching 122 managers across all functions of the council.

These workshops were devised to provide an overview of the survey results and share how integral managers will be in developing new ways of working at the council. To share specific details about the project; what was happening, why and when. It was also an opportunity to discuss with managers how their teams might be affected by the projects plans and understand and support their needs.

As a result of the management engagement workshops drop-in sessions which will occur every two weeks have been arranged starting 21<sup>st</sup> June where managers can be brought up to date with project advancement and talk through specific challenges that new ways of working might present for them and their teams. Focus groups will be arranged to better understand service specific challenges – dates to be cascades through SMT's.

The next big milestone and critical for the successful return of staff to Highland Council buildings is the data gathering exercise which is due to go live 28<sup>th</sup> June (fingers crossed).

The project requires this information from managers, as an outcome of engagement with their teams, to help in the planned approach of return to offices. Please take the time to complete it and send back promptly to help us plan the next phases of the project.

## Staff Recognition

We would like your views on how the Council might recognise the amazing work of its staff, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What are your views on:

- Approach – what kind of event(s)?
- How should we recognise staff (type of award)?
- What categories of award(s) are needed?

Please email your replies by **16<sup>th</sup> July** to: [corona.staff@highland.gov.uk](mailto:corona.staff@highland.gov.uk)

Your views will help us to plan recognising staff achievements.

# New Ways of Working Team

Please meet some key members of the New Ways of Working project team.

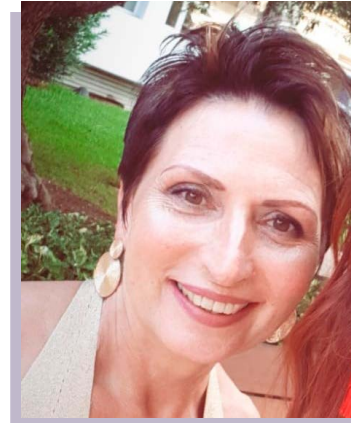
**Jonathan Scott,  
Project Manager,  
Transformation  
service**



NWOW is just one of the Council's projects that Jonathan is leading on.

" It is exciting to lead a team that is focused on reconnecting people and teams with each other, establishing dynamic ways of working that will ready us all to meet future challenges as one Highland Council. As flexible working can take many shapes, we are looking forward to working with you and your teams directly towards designing solutions that work for everyone."

**Kateryna Zoryk,  
HRBP and  
Lead HR Officer  
on NWOW**



Kateryna is the HR Business Partner for the project focusing on the change management and organisational development needs of the agreed project vision and outcomes.

**She is really looking forward to working with the other transformational projects to effect corporate change.**

" I have a disability and although I previously worked from home for two days a week full time homeworking has been more beneficial physically and mentally than I could have imagined (apart from a retired husband that still requires training). I am still to develop the right work life balance but am working on it."

**Cheryl Townsley,  
HR/Comms Officer**



Cheryl is the comms and staff engagement support on the project. Cheryl has been working on the recent staff survey, analysis and report to communicate out to staff.

" I joined the council in November working from home and have been privileged to work on such an exciting project with a very supportive and talented team. I have loved working from home as it has allowed me to be more present for my two little girls, but I am really excited about the next few months on NWOW as I might get to finally meet all my colleagues in person!"

# New Ways of Working Team

**Alister MacBain,**  
Strategic  
business analyst,  
Transformation  
service



**Lucy Lallah,**  
Strategic  
business analyst,  
Transformation  
service



Alister and Lucy are experienced hands when it comes to data, research and analysis. Alister has recently been working on the collection of data with regard to the Council's property portfolio to assist the project in its decision making to repurpose Council assets, and Lucy has come onboard to the Project to add resource to this.

**Alister:**

" On the whole I've found homeworking to be a positive work experience. I've developed a better work life balance and through the use of technology I've been able to work effectively with colleagues and the rest of the team."

**Lucy:**

" Homeworking, when a whole household is doing the same certainly entails a lot of logistical changes, both to home life and worklife, and I've found it important to challenge myself on some tasks that can be done as easily from home. However, there have been times during this period that I've been involved in face-to-face workshops (Covid compliant) and more technical meetings where results have been enhanced by the physical time together. To me, finding the balance is important."

The team are happy for you to contact them directly if you have any questions about the NWOW project:

**[Kateryna.zoryk@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Kateryna.zoryk@highland.gov.uk)**

**[Jonathan.scott@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Jonathan.scott@highland.gov.uk)**

**[Alister.macbain@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Alister.macbain@highland.gov.uk)**

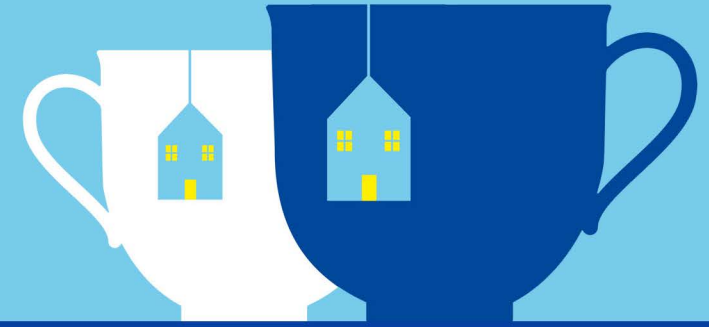
**[Cheryl.townsley@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Cheryl.townsley@highland.gov.uk)**

**[Lucy.lallah@highland.gov.uk](mailto:Lucy.lallah@highland.gov.uk)**

We will be adding a new HR Officer to the project, **Jennifer Greenshields** and we are really excited to welcome Jennifer to the team. Jennifer is new to The Highland Council and will work closely with Kateryna on all the people and organisational aspects of the project.

# EU citizen in Scotland?

Apply to stay by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021



[www.mygov.scot/help-eu-citizens](http://www.mygov.scot/help-eu-citizens)

## EU Settlement Scheme - don't miss out

EU citizens and their families who want to stay here after June 2021 have to apply for settled status or pre-settled status to secure their rights to live, work and use public services in the UK.

Telephone support is available from the EU Settlement Resolution Centre:  
Phone: 0300 123 7379 Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm or weekends from 9.30am to 4.30pm.

A helpline service called EU Citizens Support is available by phone from the Citizens Advice Bureau:

Phone: 0800 916 9847 Mondays and Fridays from 9am to 1pm or Wednesdays from 1pm to 5pm.

You can also get advice and assistance from the Citizens Rights Project who can also offer support in different languages:

Phone: 07518 926137 or email: [info@citizensrightproject.org](mailto:info@citizensrightproject.org)

### DO NOT WAIT



TIME IS RUNNING OUT



APPLY FOR STATUS



SECURE YOUR UK RIGHTS



BEFORE THE DEADLINE

**APPLICATIONS CAN TAKE WEEKS TO COMPLETE**

[mygov.scot](http://mygov.scot)



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
[gov.scot](http://gov.scot)



# Welcome to the Customer Resolution & Improvement Team

The Customer Resolution & Improvement Team bring together the Customer Services Officers from their old service structures into one new corporate team, within the wider Customer Services Team sitting in Communities and Place Service.

Our mission is to improve the quality of Council responses to customers, reduce response timescales, and to support significant culture change in the organisation to improve outcomes for our customers and citizens. As a public service organisation, we all have a role in supporting responses to customer contacts even if you do not work within frontline Customer Services.



Our new single point of contact email address will improve the allocation of cases to staff, and the team have actively engaged with all Service Management Teams to reduce the percentage of cases overdue. This engagement will continue to inform improvements and we have been encouraged by the early feedback received on the management of caseloads. Our new approach has shown significant progress as the Customer Resolution & Improvement Team have directly resolved 53% of Frontline complaints at first customer contact, within Q4 20/21.

Our workload includes managing all Complaints, Freedom of Information (FOI/EIR) requests, Parliamentary Enquiries, Subject Access Requests and Senior Management Correspondence. In addition, we process all Violent Incident cases to relevant managers/SMT's and manage all compliments received.

## Meet the Team

Customer Resolution & Improvement Team Leader:  
**Angela Morrison**

Customer Services Officers:  
**Eliane Higa,  
Carolynn Baker,  
Marianne Grech,  
Nina Dempsey,  
Sean Campbell,  
Paula Finlayson,  
Pauline McIntyre,  
Rachel Eden.**

# Customer Resolution & Improvement Team

## Timescales

If you receive an email from the Customer Resolution team, time and quality is of the essence! You must respond to us promptly as many involve **statutory** timescales.

- **Stage 1 (Frontline)**  
Complaints must be responded to within **5 working days**.
- **Stage 2 (Investigation)**  
Complaints must be responded to within **20 working days**.
- **FOI/EIR**  
Requests must be returned to the team within **10 working days** – further information available at:  
[www.bit.ly/FOI-Requests](http://www.bit.ly/FOI-Requests)
- **Enquiries/Parliamentary**  
These questions must be responded to within **10 working days**.
- **Subject Access Requests**  
These must be responded to within **30 days**.
- **Violent Incident Cases**  
These must be responded to as soon as possible – further guidance on this will be issued to Managers shortly.

## News Flash

The Council has adopted the revised Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's Model (SPSO) Complaints Handling Procedures and is available for staff and customers.

[www.bit.ly/ComplaintsHandlingProcedure](http://www.bit.ly/ComplaintsHandlingProcedure)

We aim to promote early resolution, engagement with the customer, and actively learn lessons when something goes wrong. We will report this to our customers and colleagues on a regular basis.

Work will commence shortly to design and deliver complaints training to all members of staff – please watch out for this in the coming year.

## Contact us

Please do not hesitate to contact the Customer Resolution & Improvement Team for any question you may have – the team are here to assist you and can be found at:

[customerresolution@highland.gov.uk](mailto:customerresolution@highland.gov.uk)

We would also be happy to come along to any Team Meeting to explain our work in further detail – please contact:

[angela.morrison@highland.gov.uk](mailto:angela.morrison@highland.gov.uk) to arrange this.

# Bench renovated courtesy of Community Payback

A popular bench at a panoramic Wick viewpoint has been given a new lease of life thanks to offenders sentenced at Wick Sheriff Court.

The memorial bench at the breath taking viewpoint at Braehead in front of Pulteney House in Wick was in a bad state of repair prior to being given a full makeover by the Wick Community Payback Team.

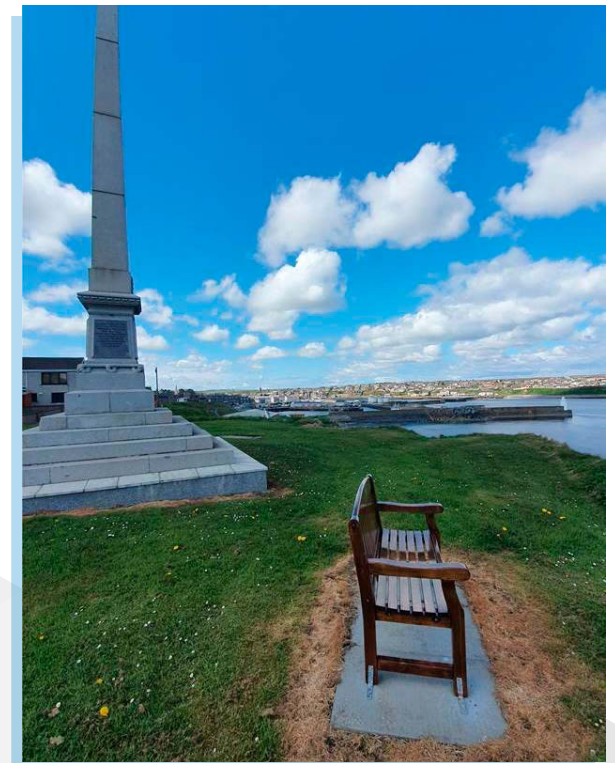
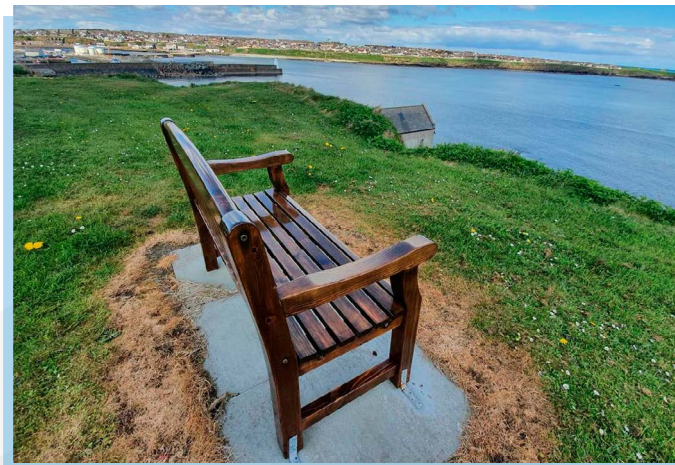
The bench which was put there several years ago in memory of Sandra Briggs (nee MacLeod) is a popular resting place for dog walkers and locals alike who can sit and admire the views across Wick Harbour towards the town.

The bench was badly affected by rot caused through age and weather conditions due to its exposed position.

Community Payback Officer for Caithness, Steve MacDonald said:

“ We have been on a greatly reduced capability as a result of COVID-19 however we can still ensure that quality work of benefit to the community can continue. The work was carried out by individuals sentenced at Wick Sheriff Court to pay back the community for the offences they have been convicted of.

“ This bench is just one example of how this can be done and great pride is taken by the clients who undertake the work in the knowledge that the community will be a better place as a result. ”



If anyone would like further information on Community Payback, Steve can be contacted on: **01349 781300**

## Our health and wellbeing staff benefits



### Shared Cost AVCs

A cost efficient way for LGPS members to increase their retirement benefits



### Childcare Vouchers

Exchange a portion of your salary for Childcare Vouchers and enjoy potential tax savings. Use them to pay nurseries, child minders and more



COMING SOON!

### Cycle to Work

Save up to 30%\* on the latest bikes and accessories for your commute to work. Spread the cost via salary with no credit checks



COMING SOON!

### Lifestyle Savings

Access a huge range of discounts online across the UK's major retailers and supermarkets



COMING SOON!

### Car Scheme

Drive away with a brand new car that's fully maintained and insured, with no deposit

An exciting selection of **NEW** staff health and wellbeing benefits are available to **The Highland Council** employees!

We are offering a range of benefits from our health and wellbeing partner Vivup, helping to improve your physical, financial and mental wellbeing



**WIN one of FOUR Incredible prizes!**

Register today or refer a colleague

Visit [highlandcouncil.vivup.co.uk](http://highlandcouncil.vivup.co.uk) and register before midnight 30 June 2021 for your chance to **WIN one of FOUR prizes** including the Apple AirPods Pro, a JVC TV 50 Smart 4K Ultra HD HDR LED TV with Google Assistant, an Apple iPhone 12 Pro Max or a PlayStation®5 Digital Edition! If you're already registered, simply refer a colleague and ask them to enter your email address and theirs at the point of registration and you will both have a chance to win\*\*

Start browsing now at [highlandcouncil.vivup.co.uk](http://highlandcouncil.vivup.co.uk)



\*Savings are realised through a salary sacrifice arrangement. Figures are a guide only and dependent on personal situation

\*\*To & Co For a chance to win one of four prizes, including the PlayStation®5 Digital Edition, Apple AirPods Pro, JVC LT-50CA890 Android TV 50 Smart 4K Ultra HD HDR LED TV with Google Assistant or Apple iPhone 12 Pro Max, you or your colleague must register by 30 June 2021 and you will both be automatically entered into the prize draw. Offer ends at 23:59 on 30 June 2021. All prizes are subject to availability, and a similar alternative will be selected if the original prize is not available. Only one winner per prize. The winners will be notified directly on their email addresses used when registering with Vivup. If the winners do not respond within 14 days of being contacted by email, a new winner will be selected. Open to all Vivup users. If you are a winner of the prize draw, you agree that we may use your name and town and/or county of residence to announce the winner of such a prize draw and for any other related promotional purposes. Winners reserve the right to object to their information being published or made available, or reduce the amount of information published or made available. In this instance, they must notify [marketing@vivup.co.uk](mailto:marketing@vivup.co.uk) in writing.

# Mental Health Representatives (MHR)

The aim of developing a pool of Mental Health Representative is to have a group of personnel trained as first responders for staff who require support and assistance in mental health and wellbeing issues. A further aim is to promote a culture of early identification, subsequent referral and support for those with mental health concerns.

## Role of a Mental Health Representative

The role of an MHR is to:

- be recognised as a source of support in the workplace
- be available to colleagues in the workplace
- offer mental health interventions to staff
- respond to alerts on mental health issues raised by colleagues \*
- support managers in creating mentally healthy workplaces
- assist in mental health activities
- encourage other staff to get involved in mental health activities
- promote mental health first aid.

\* Prior to any pro-active intervention the employee's line manager should consult with the MHR. Responsibility for the health and safety of employees remains that of the line manager.

## Pre-requisites and responsibilities of a MHR

Staff who act as MHRs must:

- have a keen interest in mental health issues
- be prepared to partake in mental health initiatives in the workplace
- attend meetings with other MHRs and MHR facilitators
- be appointed to the role of their own free will
- feel free to relinquish the role of being a MHR if they so wish
- be able to relate empathically to staff
- be committed to undertake associated training and information sessions
- disseminate regular updates and revisions on mental health initiatives to staff
- maintain appropriate referral pathways that are of benefit to staff.

## If you are interested in being a Highland Council Mental Health Representative contact:

**Jim McCreath,**  
Moving & Handling Co-ordinator/  
Health & Safety Trainer

Tel: **01463 644009**

Email: [james.mccreath@highland.gov.uk](mailto:james.mccreath@highland.gov.uk)

**Isabel McClellan,**  
Senior Learning and Development Advisor

Tel: **01463 644026**

Email: [isabel.maclellan@highland.gov.uk](mailto:isabel.maclellan@highland.gov.uk)



**Mental Health Representatives**  
Listening - Supporting - Signposting  
Mental Health First Aid



**The Highland Council**  
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

All information collected by MHRs will be dealt with in a respectful and confidential manner.

# Mental Health Representatives (MHR)



**Jim McCreath**  
Senior  
Mental Health  
Representative

Jim has been a part of the MHR initiative since it started in 2016. As an approved Scottish Mental Health First Aid Trainer, Jim delivers most of the MHR training as well as volunteering as an MHR.

“ There is a great sense of satisfaction when a colleague confides in you and trusts you to support them when they are going through a rough patch. We are just the same as the first aiders in the workplace, but for mental health distress rather than physical injury. ”



**Marianne Grech**  
Mental Health  
Representative

“ I was really keen to become a Mental Health Rep and enjoyed the training we were given. However, I then felt quite apprehensive thinking about what to say if anyone called me. When I did get a few calls, I realised how important it was to be a good listener. I focussed on being a kind support and my fears about not knowing what to say disappeared. One colleague came to see me in tears and we chatted for a while, when they left they said “I knew you’d be kind with me”. We planned to meet again the next day, I expected a tearful person and was surprised by how positive they were, completely changed. Sometimes, we can feel overwhelmed and just a bit of support, understanding, suggestions for help can make a huge difference. ”



**Audrey Shepherd**  
Mental Health  
Representative

“ I have been a Mental Health Rep for approximately 4 years. I decided to put my name forward for the training as I had lost a couple of close friends to suicide. I felt if I could help just one person by listening, being honest and open, signposting them to the right support network this would make the training worthwhile for me. This last 18 months has been a strange time for us all and I have regularly talked and signposted staff to one of our 100+ Mental Health Reps or to look at the Employee Assistance Program. ”

# Mental Health Representatives (MHR)

## Learning and development training courses - Mental Health Representative - Remote Training

### Dates and time

**3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

Remote

10am - 12pm

**7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

Remote

10am - 12pm

**7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

Remote

10am - 12pm

### About this course

This course is aimed at providing staff with the knowledge and skills to promote mental health in the workplace and be a first point of contact for colleagues with mental health difficulties.

#### **The course consists of the following elements:**

- Initial one to one introduction to course content with trainer.
- Day one – Introduction to Mental Health and listening skills. (Two-hour session)
- Day two – Mental Health issues and how to respond. (Two-hour session)
- Post course one to one with trainer.

#### **Following the course, employees will be able to:**

- Promote mental health in the workplace
- Understand the role of an MHR
- Fulfil MHR duties as described in the MHR Support document
- Know how to Sign Post additional sources of support

For further information on the application process or on the role please contact:

**Jim McCreath – 01463 644009**

or **Isabel McLellan – 01463 644026**

# 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](http://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](http://www.clearyourhead.scot)