

Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach



Staff Bulletin | March 2022 | Issue 47



**Scottish
Apprenticeship
Week 2022**

Celebrating the success of the apprentices learning, working and prospering throughout Highland.



Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Programme

The Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Programme has enabled several hundred individuals to undertake training and enhance their skills in a variety of roles and locations across the Highlands.

The Apprenticeship Programme has been in place since 2017 and is open to those aged between 16–67 years old. Since its launch, the programme has seen over 320 staff enrol with 119 of those having completed training to date.

The Council has facilitated a range of opportunities, both for new employees and existing staff, across a range of work areas and continues to grow the portfolio of apprenticeships which can be offered.

Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2022

7 - 11 March | apprenticeships.scot | #ScotAppWeek22

The current frameworks include:

- Business Administration
- Civil Engineering
- Construction: Building
- Construction: Civil Engineering
- Construction: Technical
- Customer Services
- Data Analytics
- Domestic Plumbing and Heating
- Electrical Installation
- Freight Logistics
- Horticulture
- Housing
- IT & Telecommunications
- Paralegal
- Project Management
- Technical Social Services & Healthcare
- Social Services (CYP)
- Trees & Timber.

Apprenticeships are delivered in partnership with a broad range of training providers both locally and across Scotland utilising University, College and independent training provision for the Apprentices across all Highland Council services.

The Modern Apprenticeship Programme sees apprentices committing to between 2-4 years of learning and work experience within the organisation. On completion of their qualification, they have several years of real time work experience, providing much needed life skills and a sound understanding of the working world in their chosen profession.

Work is currently underway in the development of further apprentice frameworks in order that the Council can provide opportunities to match workforce needs.

Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2022

Want to work, learn and earn?
Apprenticeships Work

Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Programme



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2022 7 - 11 March | apprenticeships.scot | #ScotAppWeek22

On the Graduate side of the Apprenticeship Programme, six different frameworks are currently offered:

- **Construction in the Built Environment**
- **Civil Engineering**
- **Data Science**
- **Engineering and Design & Manufacture**
- **IT for Business Management**
- **Cyber Security.**

Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2022

Want to kick start your career?
Apprenticeships Work

The Highland Council apprenticeship opportunities are advertised throughout the year with apprenticeships starting from £9.78 per hour (£9.90 from 1st April 2022) including a great benefits package. All of our apprentice posts are advertised on the MyJobScotland website: www.bit.ly/MJS-HighlandCouncilJobs

Find out about Scottish Apprenticeship Week: www.bit.ly/apprenticeships-scotland

More information at Skills Development Scotland: www.bit.ly/SDS-apprenticeship-week



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Message from the Chief Executive

Dear Colleagues

I am delighted to say that a balanced budget has been agreed for the coming year. This has been hugely challenging, with enormous pressures such as our energy costs, which alone are increasing by over £3m and I am very well aware these kind of inflationary costs are putting pressure on all of you and your family budgets, as well as households across the Highlands.

I want to thank staff for the enormous amount of work which has gone into preparing the budget proposals behind the scenes and for the part which you have all played in increasing our Reserves to a level which allows opportunities for investment. It is important to note how highly Members spoke of staff during the budget setting council meeting on 3rd March.

This week is Apprentice week, and it has been a pleasure to meet many of our apprentices and to see our young people getting valuable experience and skills. Our young people carry our future and we can't underestimate the importance of involving them in plans and creating work and life opportunities for them in the Highlands.

The restrictions of the pandemic are nearly behind us now. It has been a very challenging 2 years and 2022 promises to be a time when it is possible to reconnect with colleagues, catch up with friends and family, make plans and maybe enjoy holidays away from home. In the background of this more positive outlook, there is the shadow of events in eastern Europe and the terrible war in Ukraine. I know some schools are organising fundraising activities to help the Ukrainian people and some of you may have ideas of how we as a Council can do something to show our support. See page 5 for more details of how you can help.

It was great to speak with many of you who attended the staff briefings we had last week. I have enjoyed getting out to meet you on many occasions and I am very much looking forward to coming out to visit staff again in early April.

Take care, keep safe and strong,

Donna Manson, **Chief Executive**

P.S. Thank you for all you do every day in helping our Highlands to continue to flourish in challenging times.



Supporting the people of Ukraine

We stand with

Ukraine

More than a million people have fled their homes to escape conflict in Ukraine. Leaving behind jobs, belongings and loved ones, they now face an uncertain future.

Intense conflict in Ukraine is threatening the lives and livelihoods of civilians across the country. Families have been separated. People have been injured. Lives have been lost. Homes have been destroyed or are unsafe to live in. Critical infrastructure such as health facilities, water supplies and schools have also been damaged or destroyed.

When large-scale disasters hit countries without the capacity to respond, the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) brings together 15 leading UK aid charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently. Pooling their resources to work as one, they are pivotal in co-ordinating the UK public's rapid response to overseas disasters.

Disaster Emergency Committee charities are in Ukraine and neighbouring countries meeting the needs of all refugees and displaced people. The UK government is match funding (up to £20m) donations to DEC charities for the people of Ukraine.

- £30 could provide essential hygiene supplies for three people for one month
- £50 could provide blankets for four families
- £100 could provide emergency food for two families for one month.

In addition to DEC some of the possible Charities already on the ground are listed below for your assistance if you wish to donate direct to them:

- **Blythswood Care** | <https://blythswood.org>
- **Sunflower of Peace** | Facebook | www.facebook.com/sunflowerofpeace
- **United Help Ukraine** | <https://unitedhelpukraine.org>
- **Голоси дітей (voices.org.ua)** | <https://voices.org.ua/en>
- **Ukraine Crisis Appeal** | British Red Cross | <https://donate.redcross.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-crisis-appeal>

Due to economic waste and export rules most charities are simply sending cash directly to partner organisations as they feel that to be more effective and efficient use of resources. If you do wish to donate goods those listed below are currently accepting donations - please check their page for up to date information:

- **Saffron Oriental Foodshop** | www.facebook.com/Saffron-Oriental-Food-Shop-118741838150840
- **Inverness Cathedral Dedicated to St Andrew** | www.facebook.com/invernesscathedral

A central email is being used to capture ideas for fund raising as well as information about existing activities that are underway. These will be collated and then shared for those interested in getting more involved. Please send all suggestions to: ExecutiveAdminSupport@highland.gov.uk

www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal

Highland schools raise support for Ukraine

Schools across Highland are showing their support for Ukraine by organising sponsored activities and events to raise donations to help Ukrainian refugees.

Several Highland schools are organising a dress down day by asking pupils to donate £1 and to wear blue and yellow items of clothing, the colours of the Ukrainian flag. Schools will be donating to the national charity of their choice including The British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal, UNICEF, The UN Refugee Agency, and Save the Children's Ukrainian Crisis Relief Fund.

Some schools have chosen to organise sponsored sporting events to help raise money for Ukraine. Kinmylies Primary will be highlighting the long journey which many Ukrainian families have to make in order to reach safety through a sponsored walk. Pupils from ELC to P7 will be collectively walking 35 miles within the school grounds. PE classes at Invergordon Academy have also started 'running to Ukraine' by logging their distances during cross-country practice.



We stand with

Ukraine



Ukraine's national flower – the sunflower – is also used by schools to show their support. Kingussie High School have organised a sunflower growing competition and donated sunflower seeds to local businesses so the flowers may grow in shop windows. A QR code is being used alongside the sunflowers for members of the public to scan and donate money where they can. Pupils at

Ferintosh and Mulbuie Primary Schools will be making their own sunflowers with a blue centre to display in the school's windows.

Last week, schools across the world celebrated World Book Day. The pupils of Newton Park Primary School wanted to celebrate World Book Day while also providing support to Ukraine. Therefore, the children donated books and then organised and ran a book sale to raise just over £75.

Some schools are also currently accepting donations. Information on donations is available on individual school's websites and social media platforms.

Staff can contact EAP if they need support see pages 26-29.

Graduate Interns with The Highland Council

TWELVE graduate interns have joined the Council since the middle of last year.

The Highland Council's Employability team, supported by the Scottish Government's Young Person's Guarantee funding, is overseeing the Graduate Intern Programme for 2021/22.

This enables recent graduates to gain valuable work experience by undertaking a project within a council service. Staff Connections caught up with some of the graduate interns to discover more about their projects and the skills they have gained so far.



Graduate Interns pictured L-R: Eilidh McCann, Katie Moran, Morven MacSwan, Euan Armstrong, Andrew MacKenzie



Andrew said:

Andrew Mackenzie is working with the Communications and Resilience Office. Andrew is developing resources to promote business continuity planning and community resilience. Other tasks have included producing reports on recent business

continuity exercises and participating in a test of a multi-agency emergency plan.

"The internship has been a valuable experience. I have learned about the council's responsibilities in resilience and emergency planning, as well as communications. I have enhanced my research and clerical skills through a range of activities."



Eilidh said:

"We have made fantastic progress with the new look - which is still mostly under wraps - but will be going live very soon!"

Eilidh McCann is working with the council's HR service. Drawing on skills and experience in graphic design, Eilidh is rebranding the HR service's current policies, guidance and website. While noting the initial challenge of working at home and starting an internship, Eilidh acknowledges the support of the HR team in developing design, communication and analytics skills, in addition to greater knowledge of the council.



Euan Armstrong is based in the Policy team within Performance and Governance. Euan is helping to set up a citizen's panel of residents from across the Highlands to represent local concerns. Euan also produces and distributes the political and parliamentary summary briefing of the Scottish and UK parliaments for council members and senior staff. The variety of the role has helped Euan develop a broader understanding of issues affecting the Highlands.

Euan said:

"Being involved in the citizens' panel has also allowed me to experience and understand the process of developing a project from the very beginning and seeing it through to completion. The citizens' panel has also helped develop my problem-solving skills, primarily through working out excel formulas."

Rudy Cialucco is based in the Environmental Health service. Rudy's projects include updating the caravan site licensing records database, private water sampling and maintaining the dog control notices online system. Rudy feels the role has enhanced his time management, organisational and communications skills.

Other graduate interns have been working on projects with Education and Learning, Housing and Building Maintenance, Waste Management and Development and Resources to develop their skills and pursue a career with the council or in the Highlands.



Katie Moran is working with the council's Business Waste team and is currently helping with renewals for the new financial year. Katie has helped to design and implement the new Business Waste Account page for council customers and assisted the Garden Waste team in issuing new garden permits.

Katie said:

"I feel very supported by my team and I'm proud of what we have achieved. I have learned a lot about the behind the scenes requirements that goes into catering for our 6,000 BW customers. My ability to carry out tasks by myself and confidence has grown throughout my placement."



Morven MacSwan is based in the Professional Learning, Leadership and Empowerment team, in Education and Learning. Morven is working with primary schools across the council area to collect data on the provision of breakfast for all pupils, as part of a research project in collaboration with Glasgow Caledonian University and the Northern Alliance.

Morven said:

"I am grateful to work in a very supportive team, who have helped me to develop my interpersonal and research skills within a new environment."

International Women's Day – March 2022

Monday 8th March was International Women's Day when the achievements of inspirational women of all ages and backgrounds across the world, both now and in the past are celebrated.

The Highland Council recognises the great contribution women make in the Council organisation but also continue to strive for equality throughout the year **#BreakTheBias** 2022 is the theme for International Women's Day this year. A year to raise awareness against bias, work together to create a world free from discrimination, where everyone has access to the same opportunities.

The Highland Council is gender balanced as is our leadership and senior management team. Our gender pay gap is one of the lowest among local authorities in the region.

We are proud to be an equal opportunities employer, yet recognise that there is always more that can be done.

Encouraging people to change the way they look at certain careers is a good example. Roles such as those in the care sector, primary and nursery schools and the arts often attract more applications from women. Roles, such as those in construction, roads, business, and finance, tend to have more males in position. Despite all people being capable of excelling in any career.

The Highland Council will be working throughout 2022 to spread the **#BreakTheBias** campaign 2022 and in partnership with the Modern Apprenticeship Programme to support women to achieve their future goals.



Why is the council supporting International Womens Day?

- The Highland Council are supporting this campaign as we recognise that an equal Council is an enabled Council.
- Gender equality works both ways and it's important to have equal levels of access to opportunities to enable all our employees to reach their full potential. Equality is not only a women's issue and is going to take everyone to think about being inclusive – all the time.

Inspirational comments from Council employees:

"We all have a part to play in working together to make a change in our lives and communities"

"The message of worthiness is very important – Everyone is worthy of achieving their goals - Be open, honest and transparent"

"Challenge yourself, great things happen out with your comfort zone and can have a really positive effect on your life"

"Equality is improving as a generational shift happens, women in 21st century can achieve and be anything they want to be"

£10m investment agreed in budget for 2022-23

£10m of additional investment in 2022-23 was agreed at the full meeting of Council on 3rd March as part of a collaborative budget.

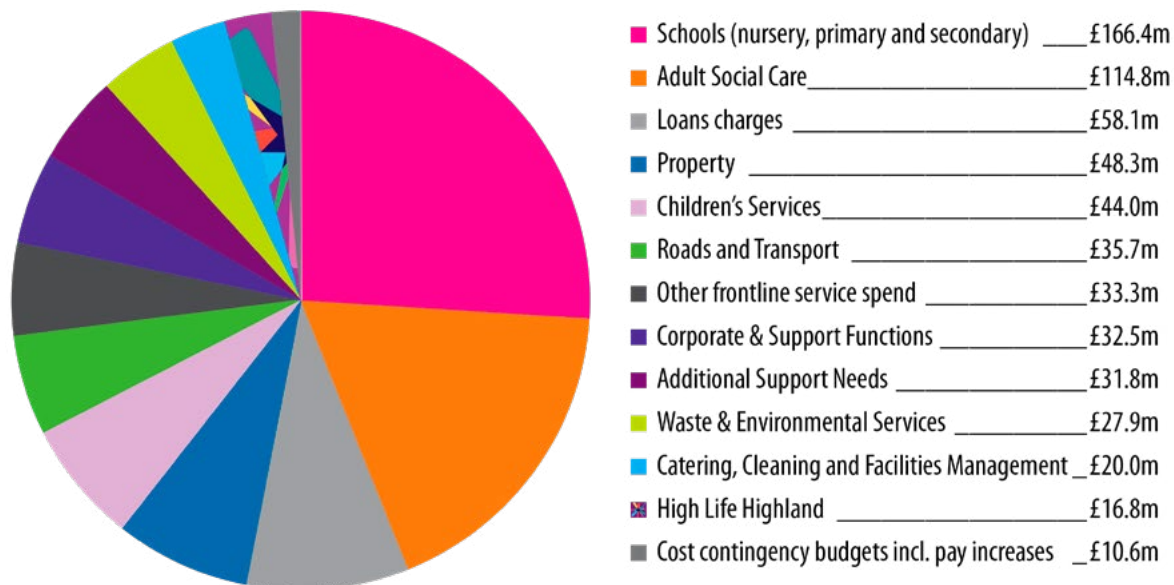
The Council has a total of £642m to spend in 2022-23.

A range of pressures including inflation, energy, pay and employer NIC costs resulted in a significant budget challenge. In order to balance the budget, a package of management savings and a council tax increase of 3% were agreed.

The agreed budget encompasses investment plans totalling £10m from General Reserves. This will include £5.5m additional investment in the roads infrastructure, £2m for climate action, green energy and jobs, £1m for innovation in education, £1m for early interventions in children's services and £0.5m for rural transport initiatives.

Financial prudence and building our reserves over the past 3 years has enabled the Council to be in a position to invest £10m, while maintaining sufficient General Reserves to manage any risks in the coming year.

Figure 1 How the Council Revenue Budget is spent



Note: Loans charges are repayment for capital money borrowed to invest in our infrastructure.

Based on the Council's 2021/22 figures



ICT Services Update

The previous edition of Staff Connections provided an update on the transfers from Wipro to the Council of ICT Field Services on 1st October 2021 and the ICT Service Desk on 1st November 2021.

Initial performance figures are already showing improvements with some high customer satisfaction scores.

During this period, ICT have also been working on building the capacity and capability to deliver digital solutions for The Highland Council with the recruitment of a number of specialist staff. The in-house ICT team now numbers nearly 100 people and recruitment continues in preparation for the next major milestone on 1st April 2022.

That date will see the Council team taking on responsibility for most of the behind-the-scenes support activities required to keep our ICT up and running. That includes the End User Computing function responsible for overall management of the computers and software everyone relies on, and the management of the networks providing connectivity in our schools and offices.

Other developments

In tandem with the recruitment, ICT Services have been developing tools, processes, and procedures to help the Council get the ICT it needs.

Ready to launch in the first quarter of 2022 are the new self-service catalogues. These catalogues will be available through MyICTPortal and will include a much wider range of hardware, software and other services available as standard.

Where there is a cost to the Council a budget code and budget holder approval step is included in the request process. No requests should be raised without prior assessment and agreement of needs with a line manager/budget holder.

The telephone number for the ICT Service Desk has changed to:

01463 383810

Joiners & Leavers

A new process for creating IT accounts for joiners and removing accounts for leavers has been implemented. This allows the line manager to create an IT account online as soon as the payroll number is available. If a member of staff is leaving the Council, it also allows the line manager to have access to the email and OneDrive data if required, for up to 28 days before the account and data is deleted.

New Ways of Working (NWoW)

ICT Services have managed to secure 1,000 laptops from our supplier HP. This original order was placed in August 2021, and due to the worldwide shortages of devices, these laptops were expected to be delivered from July 2022 onwards.

As a result of working with HP, ICT Services have managed to secure the order for delivery mid-April 2022 which will help the Council move forward with the NWoW kit earlier than planned.

These devices will be used primarily to replace existing desktops to support flexible working.



Get ready for Microsoft Edge

Microsoft Edge is a faster, more secure, and more modern browsing experience than Internet Explorer!

In 11 weeks on Friday 29th April 2022 we'll be retiring the Internet Explorer browser at The Highland Council. Whether Internet Explorer is your primary browser, or you only use it for specific tasks, you'll no longer be able to access Internet Explorer on your device after this date. Instead, we're moving to Microsoft Edge as our recommended browser! We recommend Edge for a few reasons.

- **One browser, not two**
Edge can open both work-critical and external sites, so you don't need to bounce between Internet Explorer and another browser to open work sites.
- **Fast performance**
Edge delivers a more modern browsing experience than Internet Explorer with better speed, compatibility, security, and privacy.
- **Unique innovations**
Better organize and view your tabs with vertical tabs and quickly access Microsoft apps and files just by opening a new tab.

3 steps to get started:

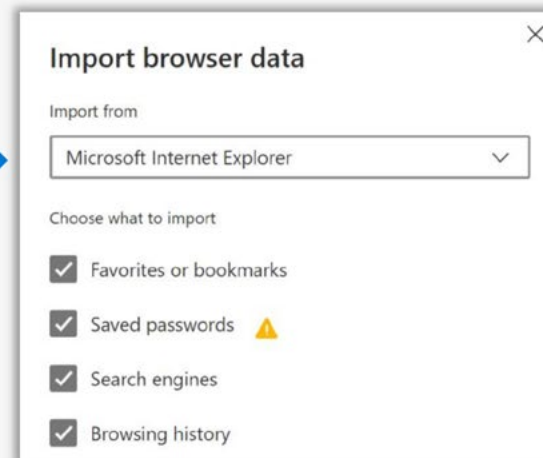
Microsoft Edge is already installed on your device. All you need to do is...

1. Open  Microsoft Edge

2. Enter this address into your address bar ↓



3. Select **Internet Explorer** from the dropdown, and choose which data you want to import—favorites, passwords, history, and more.



Microsoft Edge -

 How to Import
Browser Data Tutorial

<https://aka.ms/EdgeImportDataVideo>



Get ready for Microsoft Edge

Why is Internet Explorer going away?

Microsoft Edge offers a more modern web experience with the benefits of Internet Explorer built in. We're moving to Microsoft Edge as an organization, before Internet Explorer is retired in June 2022.

Can I still access the sites I used to use Internet Explorer for?

Yes! Microsoft Edge lets you open older, work-critical sites right alongside newer, modern ones. This way you can just use Edge instead of going back and forth between Internet Explorer and another browser.

What if I encounter a site that doesn't load?

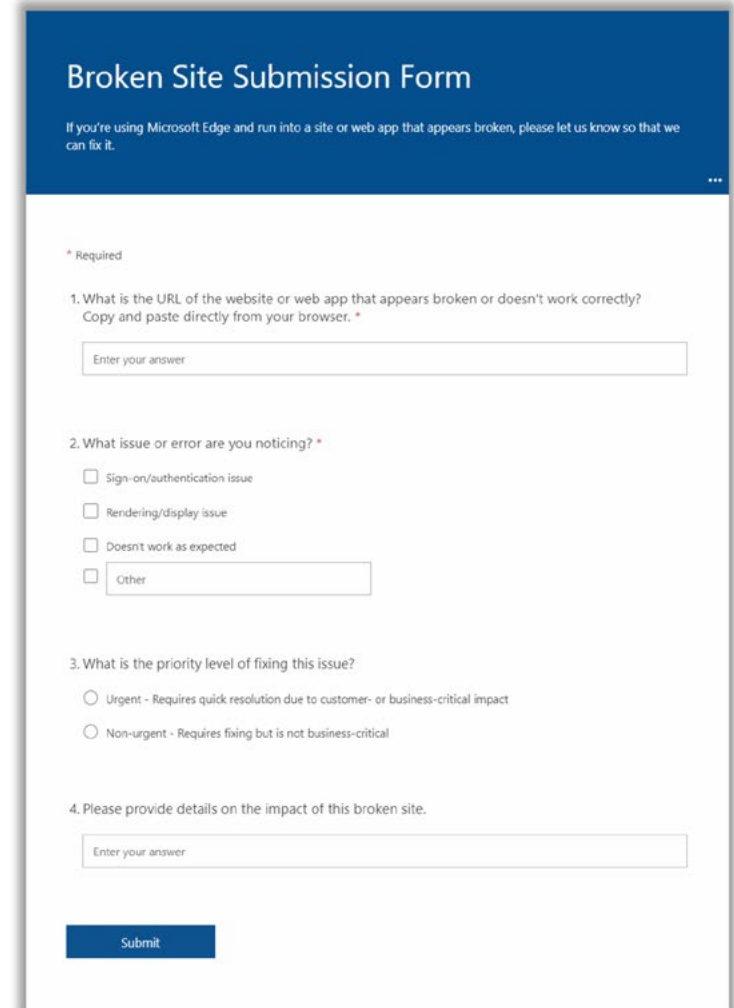
If you run into a site in Edge that appears broken, please submit it via this form:

<https://forms.office.com/r/8Jt0rGDz0c>

If you're using Microsoft Edge and run into a site or web app that appears broken or unsupported, please let us know so that we can fix it for everyone.

Follow [this link to the submission form](#) and provide a few pieces of information...

1. URL of the website
2. Issue or error you're noticing...
 - Sign-on/authentication issue
 - Rendering/display issue
 - Doesn't work as expected
3. Priority level
 - Urgent
 - Non-urgent
4. Relevant details about the impact of the broken site



The screenshot shows a web form titled "Broken Site Submission Form" with a blue header. Below the header is a sub-header: "If you're using Microsoft Edge and run into a site or web app that appears broken, please let us know so that we can fix it." The form contains four numbered questions:

1. What is the URL of the website or web app that appears broken or doesn't work correctly? Copy and paste directly from your browser. *
2. What issue or error are you noticing? *
 - Sign-on/authentication issue
 - Rendering/display issue
 - Doesn't work as expected
 - Other
3. What is the priority level of fixing this issue?
 - Urgent - Requires quick resolution due to customer- or business-critical impact
 - Non-urgent - Requires fixing but is not business-critical
4. Please provide details on the impact of this broken site.

At the bottom of the form is a blue "Submit" button.

Cyber Security Threats

The recent crisis in Eastern Europe between Ukraine and Russia has caused Cyber Security Threats coming from Russia. As a precautionary measure, The Highland Council has now banned all web access to Russian websites for Corporate and Curriculum users due to the current Cyber Security Threats.

We recommend that all users refresh their understanding of The Highland Council ICT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) ([link below](#)) in light of new and evolving Cyber Security Threats. Some of main points to remember are:

● Passwords

- Ensure that your password is not given to anyone
- It is recommended that a passphrase is used as this provides additional security
- www.bit.ly/Password-staff-guidance

● Phishing and Malware

- Users should not open any suspicious email attachments or independently load any software, including screensavers, onto their computers.

● Device Security

- You must always lock your device when leaving it unattended, regardless of where you have left it (home, at your desk etc...)
- Ensure that all software updates are completed upon request
- Do not download any unapproved applications on your device.

If you suspect that your account or device may have been compromised, contact the IT Service Desk on **01463 383810** or via the Service Portal.

www.bit.ly/THC-AcceptableUsePolicy

Violence and Aggression at work

Ensuring employee health and safety is very important to the Council. Employees are not expected to have to deal with violent or aggressive behaviour either in the workplace or as a direct result of your role in the Council.

All staff are reminded that there is a dedicated phone line where you can report instances of violence or aggression at work. All calls to **01349 886622** will be answered by trained Customer Services staff. Incidents will be investigated by your line manager.

Violence and Aggression at Work Policy and reporting information can be found on the Intranet:

www.bit.ly/violence-and-aggression

All reports of violence and aggression will be reviewed by Service Senior Management Teams who will consider whether a marker should be placed. This decision will be based on the severity, or potential severity, of the incident or whether the member of the public has a history of abusing staff.

Scottish Local Government Election 2022

– Pre-election Guidance

With the Scottish Local Government Elections taking place on 5th May 2022 there is a need for heightened sensitivity to ensure that Council resources are not used in any way that relates to party political issues or the election campaign.

The pre-election period is between the date of the publication of the notice of Election on Monday 14th March 2022 and the date of polling on Thursday 5th May 2022 inclusive.

The main points of guidance, which applies to all staff and arm's length organisations, such as High Life Highland, are:

- Always act in a politically neutral way;
- Do not use or allow the use of Council stationery/equipment/transport or other resources for party political or election campaign purposes;
- Do not display party political or election campaign material in Council premises or in/on Council vehicles;
- Do not publish any Council material or stage any Council events which appear to be designed to support any one political party or candidate;
- Staff as well as children in our care should not be used in any election material or election publicity;
- Respond positively to requests from candidates for briefings and visits where they can be accommodated without interfering with operational needs.



There is full information about the Pre-Election Guidance on the Council's Election website:

www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/24828/pre-election_guidance_for_council_staff+

Should you need any clarification on the guidance, please contact:

corporate.communications@highland.gov.uk

or Linda Johnstone, Elections Manager on **01463 702930**.

New Ways of Working – hybrid approach

This guidance applies to corporate, office-based staff. Those working within the Education & Learning Directorate should continue to refer to and follow their service-specific guidance.

The Scottish Government confirmed a return to the workplace at the end of January, encouraging a hybrid approach, with workers, who are able to do their job remotely, spending some time in the office and some time at home, where that can be done safely. The Highland Council agreed the vision for hybrid working in 2021 and **all office based workers who are currently working from home should now be spending some time in the office, where possible.**

Key safety measures remain in place to ensure a safe working environment to protect yourself and others. While most legal restrictions have now been lifted, the measures outlined below currently remain until 21st March:

- **Face coverings are still mandatory** in most indoor public places until 21st March. Everyone, including visitors, must wear a face covering in indoor communal areas and shared spaces at work. However, in the following circumstances you can choose to remove your face covering:
 - when you can stay one metre away from other people;
 - when there are screens or partitions in place; or
 - if you are exempt from wearing one.
- **Do not come into the workplace if you have symptoms and follow guidance on self-isolating and booking a test.**

www.bit.ly/NHS-Self-Isolation-Guidance

As an organisation, we have a duty of care to manage workplace risks under existing health and safety legislation (www.bit.ly/HSE-Working-Safely), as well as specific requirements in the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Requirements) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 (www.bit.ly/Health-Protection-Regulations).

Your line manager is responsible for supporting a managed return to the workplace including:

- Continuing to conduct and regularly review risk assessments: www.bit.ly/THC-RiskAssessmentForm
- Encouraging everyone to practice good hand and respiratory hygiene and surface cleaning, ventilation and face covering regulations unless exempt.
- Supporting employees to follow self-isolation guidance for both those displaying symptoms: www.bit.ly/NHS-Self-Isolation-Guidance
www.bit.ly/Coronavirus-Symptoms
- Promote available resources to support the mental health of staff: www.bit.ly/ScotGov-SaferWorkplaces

If you have not already done so, please discuss the practicalities of your return to the workplace with your line manager and your staff.

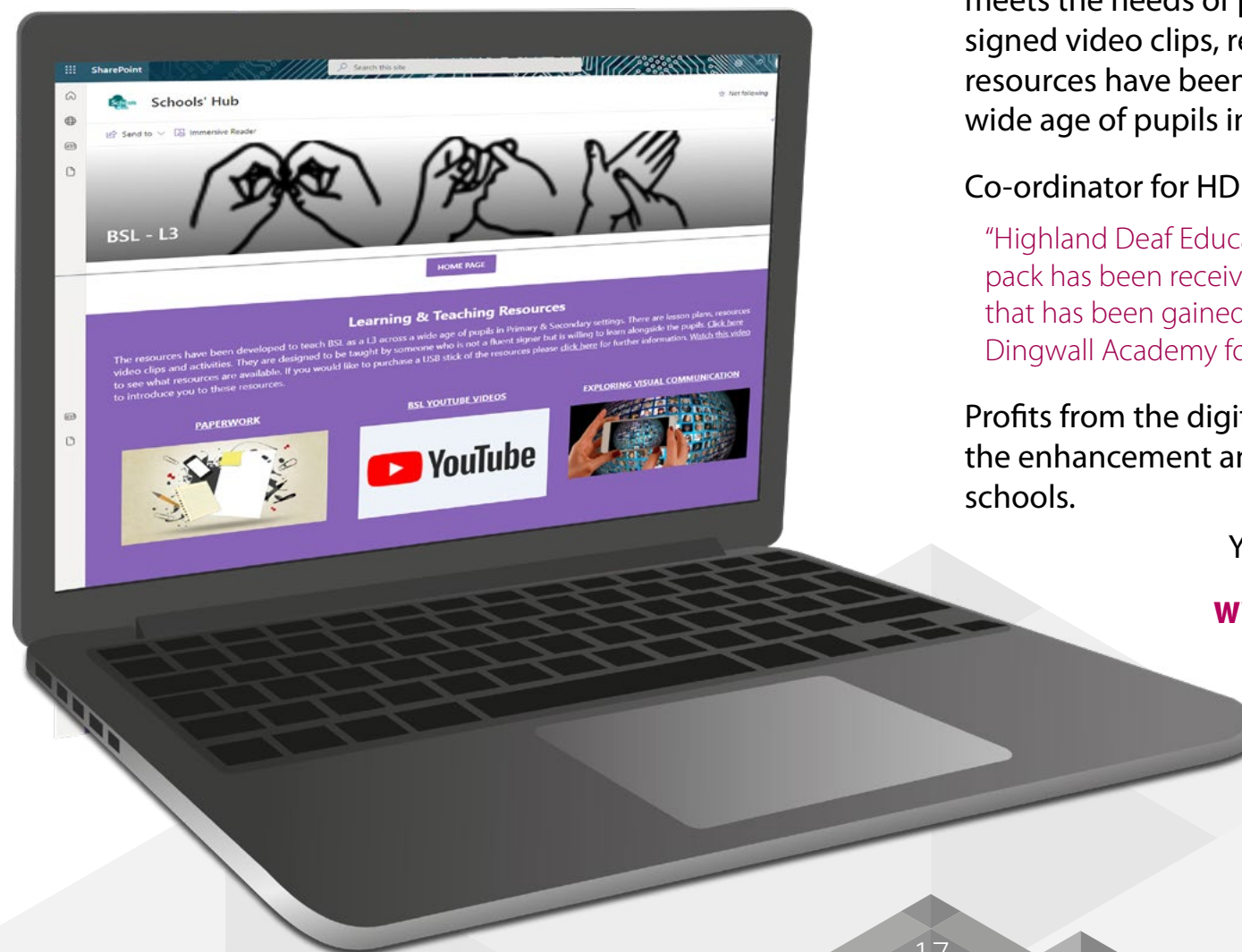
Additional information and further support and guidance for managers on all aspects of NWOW project can be found on the NWOW website:

www.bit.ly/THC-NewWaysOfWorking

[Internal link to Intranet]

Highland's unique 1+2 BSL digital pack a national hit

Over 20 Scottish Local Authorities have purchased The Highland Council's British Sign Language (BSL) Education 1+2 pack, and the interest is growing.



The Council's Highland Deaf Education Service (HDES) developed the pack to enable schools to deliver BSL within the curriculum without the need for a signing tutor to be present. The unique digital pack is flexible, affordable and meets the needs of pupils and staff by including lesson plans, signed video clips, resources, activities, games, and more. The resources have been developed to teach BSL as a L3 across a wide age of pupils in primary and secondary schools.

Co-ordinator for HDES, Mrs Sheila Lundberg said:

"Highland Deaf Education Service is delighted with the way our BSL pack has been received. It is great to be able to share the knowledge that has been gained from having had BSL as a mainstream subject in Dingwall Academy for the last 30 years."

Profits from the digital pack orders are being reinvested into the enhancement and further development of BSL delivery in schools.

You can visit the site here:

www.bit.ly/BSLschoolhub

[Internal link to Sharepoint site]

Transformation Hub

The Highland Council's Transformation Programme consists of nine key projects and 21 workstreams to support transforming the Council and the delivery of approved / proposed savings, cost avoidance, cost mitigation and identifying new savings for the coming years. The Programme Management Office (PMO) works with Project Managers, Leads and Sponsors to support the overall delivery of the Transformation Programme, which consists of both Transformation Projects and Business Change Projects.

Transformation Hub

The Transformation Hub is a 'one-stop shop' for all staff to find out more about projects under the Programme or access the Services we offer. Services provided are as follows:

- Project Document Templates
- Project & Programme Assurance
- Research Service
- Benefits Realisation
- Project & Programme Risk Management
- Lessons Learned
- Workshop & Meeting Facilitation
- Continuous Improvement
- Business Analysis
- Monthly PMO Drop-in
- Business Analyst Network

If you think you may have a potential project and would like to chat to the Transformation Team for some advice and guidance on how best to approach it, or discuss any of the services we offer, please just get in touch via the Transformation Hub.

www.bit.ly/TransformationHUB [Internal link to Sharepoint site]

The screenshot displays the Transformation Hub website interface. At the top, there are two dropdown menus: "What is the Transformation Hub?" and "How can Transformation help me?". Below these are three main tiles: "Recovery, Improvement & Transformation Board" (1 of 3), "Transformation Programme Projects" (1 of 3), and "Programme Management Office" (1 of 2). A bottom row features four smaller tiles: "Looking for Support?" (Message the PMO Team), "Research Library", "Project Templates & Tips", "Capture Lessons Learned", and "Meet the Team".

Transformation Hub

Advice and Guidance

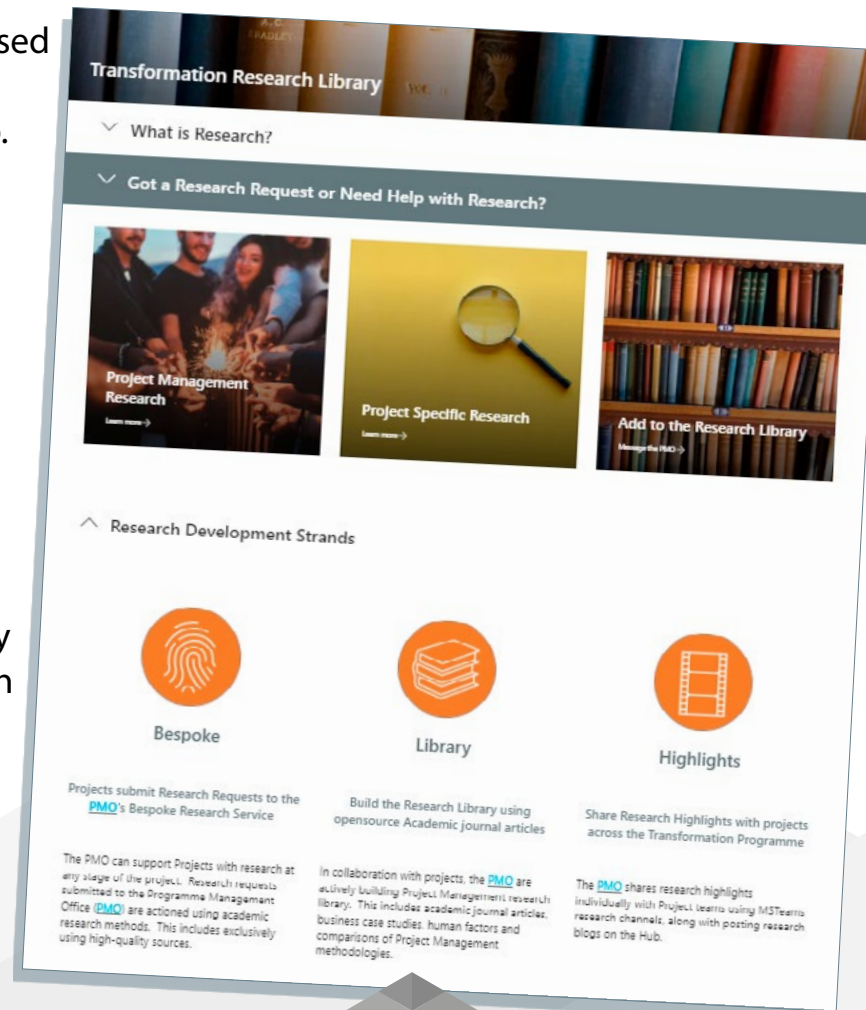
The PMO is here to support staff through facilitating the provision of progress updates on Transformation projects, providing advice and guidance on areas such as Risk management, Benefits Realisation, Lessons Learned, developing and advising on the use of project documentation such as writing a Business Case and providing project-based research. All of this support can be accessed via the Transformation Hub.

Research Support

The Research Support service provided by the PMO enhances existing understanding around a particular subject. This 'enhanced understanding' forms a solid evidence base that can be used to help inform decision making. To gain rich data, the PMO exclusively uses academic sources, government guidance, policies and can interview key people. Read examples of PMO research activities here. The research service is open to staff, projects and services - let's chat via the Transformation Hub.

www.bit.ly/ResearchSupportService

[Internal link to Sharepoint site]



Networking

The PMO also runs the monthly PMO drop-in session and a Business Analyst Network, which enables staff to make linkages and connections with other projects, share knowledge and good practice and be kept up to date on other aspects of the Transformation Programme overall. Anyone working on projects or working in an analyst role across the Council is welcome to attend either the PMO drop-in or the Business Analyst Network and can request an invite via the Transformation Hub:

www.bit.ly/PMO-Drop-in-sessions

[Internal link to Sharepoint site]

If you need any advice, message the PMO via the Transformation Hub:

www.bit.ly/Message-the-PMO

[Link to email]

World Book Day

On Thursday 3rd March, schools across Highland celebrated World Book Day 2022! World Book Day aims to promote reading for pleasure, offering every child and young person the opportunity to have a book of their own. Designated by UNESCO as a worldwide celebration of books and reading, the day is marked in over 100 countries and this year is celebrating its 25th year.

Pupils across our primary schools celebrated by dressing up as their favourite literacy character, reading and also taking part in fun games and activities!

Some activities at schools included:

- Pupils at Caol Primary were surprised to find golden tickets with famous author quotes on them inside their favourite books.



Caol Primary School

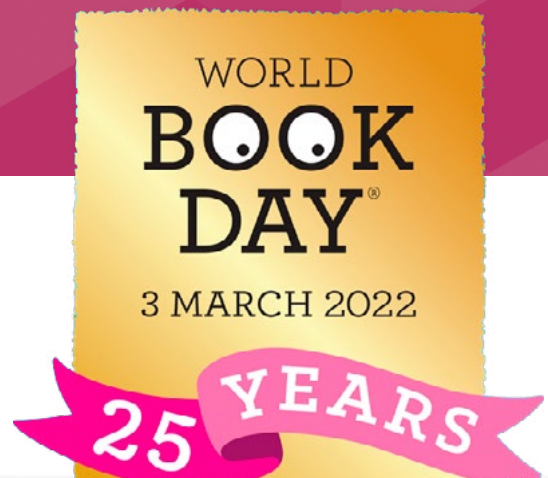
- Aviemore Primary pupils had a virtual storytelling session from parents and received £1 book tokens to spend in Waterstones.



Aviemore Primary School



Kilchoan Primary School



Lybster Primary School



Cradlehall Primary School



Ben Wyvis Primary School



Keiss and Bower Primary School



Marybank Primary School



Kilmuir Primary School

World Book Day

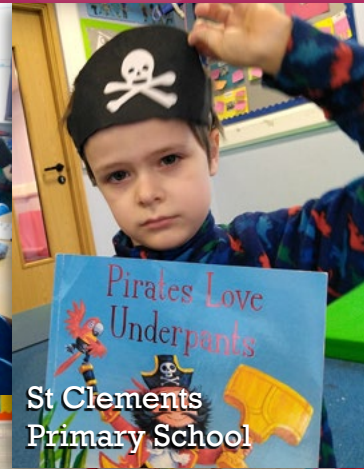
- Milton Primary pupils relaxed with a biscuit and hot drink while reading their favourite page-turners.



Milton Primary School



Miller Academy



St Clements Primary School



Ullapool Primary School

- Ullapool Primary enjoyed a local trip down to a bookshop to collect their bookday books.



Cauldeen Primary School



Sgoil Stafainn

- Daviot Primary pupils became authors for the day to create their own books using Book Creator.



Daviot Primary School



Inshes Primary School



Strathgarve Primary School



Strontian Primary School

- Strontian Primary pupils created their favourite characters out of fruit and veg!



Smithton Primary School



Thrumster Primary School

Former employee of the year retires

A long serving Housing Officer who has worked tirelessly to ensure tenants are given the support they need retires on 14th March 2022.

Ron Archer was Highland Council's Employee of the Year in 2019 and has been a Housing Management Officer working in the Inverness team for 38 years and during this time has provided support to many individuals and families to help them through what can often be difficult and challenging times in their lives.

Anna Wasko, PHO presented Ron with a retirement gift from colleagues.

Over the years, Ron has made it his priority to ensure tenants are given the assistance they need to cope with changes. His dedication and drive meant he also made strong links and networks with third-sector agencies, Housing Benefit colleagues and other support agencies. Ron shows genuine commitment, care and compassion. He is the kind of person who always went the extra mile to help tenants and his work colleagues and was always there to provide support and to help to find a solution.

We wish Ron well in his retirement and are sure that his caring nature – such as being a volunteer with the Highland Blind Tandem Club for over 30 years – will continue into his retirement.

Best wishes Ron in your retirement.



Signposting to mental health and wellbeing resources

The impact of the measures to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 has placed increased pressure and uncertainty on everyone so it's important to know where to find help and support for our mental health and wellbeing when it is needed. There are services where you can find confidential and trusted support, in this article.

Help in a crisis

The following advice is intended for crisis situations which happen only rarely. A mental health crisis is when someone feels their mental health is at breaking point and they need urgent help and support.

If you are concerned that you are, or if you feel that someone else is, in immediate danger call **999**.

If you are calling for someone else, try to establish the person's, name, contact details and location.

If the crisis is not life-threatening but you are concerned for your own or somebody else's mental health, advise them to call NHS 24 on **111** or speak to their GP. The route into formal mental health services is through a GP surgery. If someone discloses to you that they are already in receipt of support for their own mental health they should be directed to link in with that pre-existing support.

Support, advice and resources can also be found at:

- **Samaritans: 116 123** (calls are free and do not show on a phone bill).
- **Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87**
(Monday to Thursday 6pm – 2am; Friday 6pm to Monday 6am).
- **Mikey's Line: 07786 207755** (Sunday to Thursday 6pm - 10pm, Friday to Saturday 7pm - 7am).
- **Young People** can email: yp@mikeysline.co.uk for an appointment.
- **The Hive, 19 Academy Street, Inverness** – closed during lockdown
- **Ewen's Room: 0800 689 3317** (Weekdays 5pm - 10pm; Weekends 12 noon - 10pm).
- **National Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0800 027 1234**
- **Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highland (RASASH): 03330 066 909**
(Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9.30am till 12.30pm; Tuesday and Thursday 1.30pm till 4.30pm).
Text support Service: **07451 288 080**
Support email: support@rasash.org.uk
- **Rape Crisis Scotland: 08088 01 03 02** (Phone free any day between 6pm and midnight).
Text: **07537 410 027** (If no immediate response, let them know when is a safe time to contact you).
- **LGBT Helpline Scotland: 0300 123 2523**
- **Childline: 0800 1111**
- **CRUSE Bereavement Care Scotland: 0845 600 2227**
- **James Support group: 07563 572 471** (24 hour helpline).

Signposting to mental health and wellbeing resources

Non-crisis situations

In most instances where mental health concerns are raised it will not be a crisis. If you have, or someone you are in contact with has concerns about mental ill health, a GP should be the first point of contact.

It is understandable in the current pandemic that many people will feel anxious, worried or stressed.

For those who are in need of emotional/wellbeing support or who are affected by isolation due to the current COVID-19 circumstance, you might want to look for local voluntary organisation who can offer a regular welfare call or suggest contact with a befriending service.

Additional resources

While we can't control many of the challenges around us, there are still things we can do to protect our mental health and wellbeing. Check out any of the resources:

Befrienders Highland www.befriendershighland.org.uk

A small voluntary organisation working to improve the lives of people who are lonely and isolated and have experience of mental ill health; memory difficulties or dementia and carers.

Clear Your Head www.clearyourhead.scot

Great tips from the Scottish Government and partners to help get you through these difficult times.

Highland Mental Wellbeing www.highlandmentalwellbeing.scot.nhs.uk

A collection of resources gathered by NHS Highland to support mental wellbeing.

Highland Digital School Hub: Wellbeing for all www.highlanddigitalschoolshub.com/wellbeing-for-all

Resources to use at home to help with going back to school, and resources for school staff to support themselves.

SAMH Information Service www.samh.org.uk/information-service

You can talk to their Information team about mental health on **0344 800 0550**, and there is a range of information on support, including:

- **If you urgently need help:** <http://bit.ly/3buW30F>
SAMH have put together a list of organisations who can help if you need to speak to someone.
- **Protect your wellbeing in winter:** <http://bit.ly/2NZ4WYs>
Some of us may struggle with our mental health and wellbeing during the colder months.

Signposting to mental health and wellbeing resources

Prevent Suicide – Highland App

The 'Prevent Suicide – Highland' app can be downloaded for smart devices from:

- Apple App Store: <https://apple.co/3ukb2nf>
- Google Play Store: <http://bit.ly/37FiFuS>

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) national animations (each video is approximately five minutes in length)

A series of videos promoting children and young people's mental health and preventing self harm and suicide:

- What is mental health? - <https://vimeo.com/450051310>
- How to talk about mental health - <https://vimeo.com/450052951>
- Self-harm and suicide prevention - <https://vimeo.com/450054407>

A series of videos for adults are also available:

- Ask, tell, look after your mental health - <https://vimeo.com/338176495>
- Ask, tell, have a healthy conversation - <https://vimeo.com/338176444>
- Ask, tell, save a life – every life matters - <https://vimeo.com/338176393>

This resource has been produced by the Highland Community Planning Partnership Mental Health & Wellbeing Delivery group
If you require a copy of this guide in an alternative format please contact the Highland CPP by emailing: admin@highlandcpp.org.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**

Help is at hand through the Employee Assistance Programme

spectrum
.life

Moving in to its third year running the Employee Assistance Programme offers free and confidential services to all staff and their families.

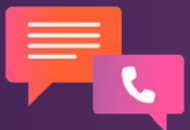
Wellbeing support is available to all Council employees, their partners, and dependents over the age of 16 who are still living at home. A telephone helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The helpline provides immediate access to confidential telephone counselling, or you can access the service through a web portal, live chat, or app. You may be referred on to face-to-face, phone or video counselling where appropriate. Telephone consultations with qualified experts, can provide practical advice in a wide range of fields.

Contact **Spectrum.Life** if you need:

- Legal or financial assistance.
- Consumer advice.
- Career guidance or life coaching.
- Mediation.
- Support for non-nationals and their families.
- Health advice, including physio, podiatrists and dietitians.
- Advice on practical, day to day issues and services.

The service can also support managers with any unique issues they may face as part of their role. It also offers help and guidance around managing staff better when there is an issue you feel unable to deal with yourself.

In addition to your emotional wellbeing the employee assistance programme also offers a wealth of information and podcasts on a range of topics including parenting tips; heart health; switching off; understanding cancer; making positive changes; budgeting; getting/staying fit; and healthy eating.



24/7



Register online:

<https://app.spectrum.life/login>

Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**



When should I use the Employee Assistance Programme?

The EAP can help with a wide variety of problems. Our fully qualified team of counsellors and experts are highly experienced in personal and work-related issues and can support anyone suffering with issues including, but not limited to:

- Depression, anxiety, stress.
- Grief and bereavement.
- Addictions.
- Relationship and marital problems.
- Work stress and work-life balance issues.
- Life transitions such as career progression.
- Financial concerns
- Queries around a legal issue.

Who will I speak to?

When contacting the EAP you will get straight through to a fully qualified, accredited, and experienced counsellor who will work with you to ensure you get the most appropriate help with whatever issue you are having. The counsellors can understand the root causes of an emotional issue and help with onwards referral to the service most appropriate.

What happens on the initial call?

On first contact, the Case Manager will explain what the service can provide and its confidential nature. The only information that must be given is the name of the company to initially access the service.

If follow up referral is necessary, to set up your case file, the Case Manager will gather some additional information:

- Such as name and date of birth - to check employee's eligibility for the service.
- Contact details so that the team can get in touch with the employee if needs be.
- To enable the Case Manager to create and keep a full record of all your contact with the service to keep track of their case, referral etc. and ensure you are receiving all the care needed as promptly and efficiently as possible.
- If the Case Manager is unavailable when you are looking for help, other team members will have your case details at hand and will be able to provide you with the most up-to-date and accurate guidance.
- Wherever appropriate, the Case Manager will share necessary details with the relevant professional you are being referred to such as counsellor, legal expert etc.

Note: This information is stored securely and is never shared with the Council or colleagues. It is only ever shared when necessary with qualified and accredited professionals and the employee will always be made aware of this beforehand.

Is the service confidential?

Yes - the service is always completely confidential.

When you call, the only information that must be given is the Council's name to initially access the service. You choose what information you share, and no details will be given to anyone unless you instruct the EAP to do so.

As outlined, to arrange a follow up or referral, additional information provision is necessary. The only information that we would ever provide to the Council is anonymous statistics, to enable the Council to know how the service is being used. We will never give any information that may cause anyone to be identified and personal details don't have to be supplied to access the service.

All counsellors and the extended team are bound by professional standards and a strict code of ethics regarding confidentiality and the disclosure of details of individuals who have contacted them.

The only limits to confidentiality are if the individual discloses that they may be at risk to themselves, an identified adult, or a child. In these situations, we would need to let other professionals know, but this will be discussed with the individual if anything like that comes up.

Register online:

<https://app.spectrum.life/login>

Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**



How do I get referred for counselling?

Following initial assessment, based on your preferences and suitability, the counsellor is informed enough to allow for a sophisticated matching of you with the relevant type of counselling be it face-to-face, video or phone, with the most suitable counsellor available.

On referral, contact from a counsellor will be made within 48 hours and they will offer an appointment within 5 working days and will arrange the first session at a time that suits you.

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is
the Council's new Employee
Assistance Programme.



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.

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

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

