

The Highland Council

Minutes of the meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 28 May 2025 at 9.30am.

Present:

Dr C Birt	Ms E Knox
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms L Kraft
Mr S Coghill	Mrs I Mackenzie
Mr D Fraser	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr R Gale	Mrs A MacLean
Mr R Gunn	Mrs K MacLean
Mrs B Jarvie	Mrs M Reid
Ms L Johnston	Ms M Ross

Non-Members present:

Mr A Christie	Ms J McEwan
Mr J Finlayson	Mr P Oldham
Ms M Hutchison	Mrs T Robertson

NHS Highland representatives:

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health
Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing
Ms R MacDonald, Depute Director of Adult Social Care

Third sector representatives in attendance:

Dr G Rodger, Inspiring Young Voices

Participating Officials:

Ms F Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer & Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer, Integrated People Services
Mr I Kyle, Lead Officer Strategy, Performance and Quality Assurance
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health
Mr J Libby, Transition Head of Children & Justice
Ms J Jennifer Baughan, Programme Manager, Whole Family Wellbeing
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council.
All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

Mr D Fraser in the Chair

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr J Grafton and Mrs M Paterson.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 6 – Ms L Johnston

3. Service Achievements Coileanaidhean Seirbheis

The Committee **NOTED** updates on the following:-

- North Partnership NQSW Conference
- Brighter Beginnings – Inverness Family Centre
- Service Achievements – Child Protection Committee
- Bairns Hoose
- Safe & Together model
- Domestic Abuse Commissioner (England & Wales) Report: "Victims in their own right; babies, children and young people's experience of domestic abuse"
- The Care Inspectorate video working in partnership with Social Workers

4. Performance Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh

There had been circulated Report No HCW/07/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried whether the relatively low number of applicants to become foster carers was partly the result of kinship carers being able to receive payment, and the complexities of the situation, including the perceived intrusiveness of the foster care recruitment process, were summarised, as well as measures being undertaken to address the situation;
- information was sought and provided on the relatively high rates of sickness absence in the Health and Social Care Service, and the training provided to managers to tackle this;
- attention was drawn to the 15% staff survey return rate and whether this suggested staff were not adequately engaged;
- possible links between people waiting for care at home and the increased use of Self Directed Support (SDS) were queried;
- in relation to Adult Social Care (ASC) in the community, an example was provided of the useful intervention of the Council's welfare team in resolving an issue, for which the staff were thanked;
- the significant challenges facing ASC, with particular reference to delayed discharges from hospital, and the use of SDS, were summarised, and it was suggested that more detailed information on this would be useful. The Chief Officer, Integrated People Services, explained that a report on SDS was being considered by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and that an update to this committee might be beneficial in future;

- also in relation to delayed discharges from hospital, information was sought on whether waits for occupational therapy, the need for home adaptations, lack of power of attorney, or delays in the SDS application process were exacerbating the problem, and whether there was a shortage of frontline staff to deal with these issues. The list of codes for delayed discharges would be circulated to the Committee after the meeting; and
- an explanation was sought and provided of the scoring system for the Council's risk register, which factored in the severity of the risk, and the likelihood of the risk coming to fruition.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Service's performance and risk information.

5. Delivery Plan Update Cunntas às Ùr mun Phlana Libhrigidh

There had been circulated Report No HCW/08/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the timetable for the review of technology-enabled care was queried and a brief summary of progress provided, with business cases being worked on, and more detail to be provided in due course. Assurance was sought that provision of telecare would not be affected by the analogue switch-off, with concern expressed in particular for those who were receiving telecare outwith the NHS. Attention was drawn to the item on the agenda for the special full Council meeting on 29 May 2025, Digital Connectivity;
- information was sought and provided on the pilot care project in Lochaber, for which a report would be presented in due course;
- the process for carers to receive funding from the whole family wellbeing team was queried and explained; and
- it was requested that, in future, specific examples of how the delivery plan had helped to improve outcomes, especially in remote and rural areas, and to work towards sustained service improvement, would be useful.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the updates provided for the Projects/Programmes in the report.

6. Adult Social Care Assurance and Strategic Update Barantas agus Cunntas Ro-innleachdail mu Chùram Sòisealta Inbheach

Transparency Statement: Ms L Johnston declared a connection to this item as an employee of Connecting Carers but, having applied the objective test, did not feel that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/09/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought and provided on progress with plans to return some vaccination programmes to GP practices. Historical anomalies in record-keeping for vaccinations were queried and efforts to tackle this summarised, Information was also sought and provided on how vaccinations would be delivered in remote and rural areas, noting that the detail remained under discussion. Concerns about the effectiveness of the vaccination booking system were highlighted;
- an update was sought and provided on progress to keep Strathburn House care home open, and attention was drawn to many wider challenges in the locality, including childcare, housing and education provision;
- assurance was sought and provided that local Members would be kept updated on progress with a new care facility planned in Sutherland, and a brief summary of progress to date was provided;
- the acknowledgment in the report of the work of unpaid carers was welcomed, and attention was drawn to the importance of providing respite and support for unpaid carers, with the suggestion that breaks should be built into care packages. The Council's support of staff who were carers was welcomed and information would be provided outwith the meeting on efforts undertaken to publicise this;
- the Chair thanked staff, third sector partners, and unpaid carers for their work, with particular reference to the challenges in remote and rural areas;
- attention was drawn to the forthcoming changes in the model of integration between the Council and NHS Highland, and the various threads that connected both organisations and the third sector in delivering services in the face of significant challenges, including pressure in ASC and delayed discharges from hospitals. The extent of future-proofing, and plans for collaboration, were queried;
- noting that it had been agreed that the codes for delayed discharges would be circulated after the meeting, information on the percentage of hospital beds being used by people delayed in hospital was sought and provided;
- specific examples of the uses of the Carers Wellbeing Fund were sought and provided, these being primarily for short breaks;
- it was suggested that people with experience of unpaid or kinship caring might be interested in paid employment in the care sector;
- it was queried whether records were kept of the numbers of people who were given places in care homes due to the lack of availability of care at home; and
- the value of the wellbeing hubs was highlighted, and a summary was provided of efforts being undertaken to support them, and the delivery of the Strategic Plan, with more information available outwith the meeting from the Chief Officer, Integrated People Services.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

7. Integrated Children's Services Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhnail Seirbheisean Chloinne Amalaichte

There had been circulated Report No HCW/10/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Vision 26 event, which would take place at Eden Court on 11 August 2025, was welcomed;
- assurance was sought that the GIRFEC refresh would include similar multi-agency training as its original launch;
- the increase in the 6-8 week breastfeeding target achievement was welcomed, as was the reducing number of children in temporary accommodation;
- concern was expressed at the numbers of young people not attending school, and information was sought of what was being done to assist this group, from an educational and mental health perspective. A summary was provided on the workstream being developed in this regard, and reference was also made to home-schooled children, while acknowledging that this area was covered by the Education service;
- it was queried what support was offered to cared for young people when they went on to higher education. The ongoing monitoring of this cohort was highlighted;
- it was queried whether the increase in looked after children could be a positive situation as a result of the successful Home in Highland project. Noting also that referrals to the Children's Reporter had reduced, it was queried whether both of these sets of figures represented an overall positive situation, and the complexities of the reasons behind the changing figures was summarised. A summary of the implication of a child being on the child protection register was sought and provided;
- increased engagement with local Members on the proposed new children's home in Thurso was requested and would be undertaken as long as doing so did not compromise the need for confidentiality etc;
- the format of the report was welcomed;
- assurance was sought on the work being undertaken by the youth work team, since returning to the control of the Council, with particular reference to their work to support young people in communities;
- it was noted that some targets were not being met within timescale in relation to staff sickness;
- with regard to rights and participation, attention was drawn to the work undertaken by Inspiring Young Voices to help implement the People's Participation Strategy, with particular reference to engaging with young children and those with learning support needs. Funding challenges were summarised;
- the benefits of a parental employability pilot in Wick was referenced and it was suggested that a pilot scheme teaching 'from scratch' cookery skills, to save money and increase nutrition, was suggested, with possible input from third sector organisations; and
- the Chair thanked officers and third sector partners for their work.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the ICSB annual report which shared the work undertaken by the children's services planning partnership 2024/25 in delivering the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023/2026; and
- ii. the work of the delivery groups.

8. Whole Family Wellbeing Programme Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Sunnd Teaghlaich air Fad

There had been circulated Report No HCW/11/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the value of working in close partnership with third sector organisations was highlighted, with particular reference to their local expertise;
- it was requested that the outcomes of the funded projects detailed in the report be reported to the Committee once they had been completed, noting in particular the importance of tracking the outcomes of funded third sector projects to try to protect their funding. It was concerning that there were some excellent funded projects taking place in localities, but local Members had not been informed of them. Attention was drawn to the use of data analysts to assess the impact of projects, and to the role of the joint strategic needs assessment to help measure impacts;
- a request was made for more information on various issues including the contextual safeguarding project, and the children and young people companions, and this would be provided to outwith the meeting;
- information was sought and provided on the commissioning and governance processes, and the role of the locality co-ordinators with regard to communication with communities and local Members;
- the need for legacy planning for projects was highlighted;
- advice for the families of children with less severe autism or other neurodiversity issues would be useful;
- Mrs B Jarvie queried whether funding for projects in the Nairn area had been ringfenced and this would be discussed further outwith the meeting to clarify which funds were being queried;
- the importance of the availability of venues for many of the projects was highlighted; and
- clarification was sought that the funding was available for individual families but that they could not apply for it directly.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the update with reference to the Scottish Governments Route-map and National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support.

9. Models of Integration Review Ath-sgrùdadh air Modailean Amalachais

There was circulated Report No HCW/12/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **NOTED** the update provided in the report.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes were circulated and **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 13 December 2024;
- ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 30 October 2024; and
- iii. Child Protection Committee held on 7 November 2024.

Closing remarks

The Chair thanked Dr T Allison, outgoing Director of Public Health, for his work, and wished him well for the future.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm.