

Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee – 20 August 2025

Service Achievements

1. Mind of My Own Winner



Dear Team at Scottish Highlands,

On behalf of all of us, I would like to extend our congratulations on your well-deserved recognition with the **Voice in Action (VIA) Award**.

This award highlights your outstanding commitment to amplifying the voices of young people across the Highlands and ensuring their perspectives are at the heart of decisions that shape their lives. Your dedication to meaningful engagement, active listening, and genuine action sets a powerful example for others to follow.

Your success reflects the strength of your vision, the perseverance of your efforts, and your unwavering belief in the importance of youth voice. This is not only a celebration of your past achievements, but also a recognition of your continued leadership and impact in creating inclusive, youth-centred practices.

June VIA Award Winners

- **Scottish Highlands** – for the most successful implementation
- **Birmingham** – for ongoing dedication to Mind Of My Own

A huge congratulations to both organisations! Your passion and commitment are truly inspiring.

2. Doctoral Achievement

The Highland Council Commends Dr. Tina Barrows on Doctoral Achievement

The Highland Council is delighted to extend its warmest congratulations to Health Visitor Tina Barrows, based on the Isle of Skye, on the successful defence of her doctoral thesis titled *"A Classic Grounded Theory Study Exploring the Social Processes of the Health Visitor Antenatal Home Visit."*

Tina's achievement is the culmination of many years of dedicated academic study and professional practice. Her research offers a significant contribution to the understanding of antenatal care, particularly the vital role health visitors play in supporting families during the earliest stages of parenthood.

Her work, grounded in real-world experience and rigorous methodology, provides valuable insights that will inform and enhance health visiting services not only in Highland communities but across Scotland. It reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to supporting professional development and evidence-based practice within our health and social care services.

Jane Park Head of Health at THC said

"Tina's dedication to both her academic journey and her community is truly inspiring. Her research will have a lasting impact on how we understand and deliver antenatal support. We are incredibly proud to have such a committed and forward-thinking professional serving the people of Skye, Lochalsh and the wider Highland region."

The Highland Council recognises the importance of continued learning and innovation in public service and celebrates Tina's success as a shining example of excellence in community healthcare.

3. Care Experience and Corporate Parenting e-learning module



As a local authority, we are a **Corporate Parent** and we have committed to **Keep The Promise**. To help staff learn more about care experience and their responsibilities as Corporate Parents we are pleased to report a training module on Traineasy is now available for all staff, the training module is also available for Members to complete. This module will enable you to better understand care experience, the unique barriers and challenges that Care Experienced people can face and what you can do within your role as a Corporate Parent.

'It is vital that we turn our duties as Corporate Parents into action so that we are actively making a difference for our care experienced young people. Whilst the Corporate Parenting module has a wealth of information contained in it, it also asks us to reflect and consider what we do in the workplace and as an organization. I would urge all of you to put aside some time and read through this new module' Fiona Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer

4. Vision 26

Integrated Children's Services hosted a vibrant and well-attended Family Fun Day at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness on Monday 11 August 2025. The Vision 2026 event built on the success of previous years, evolving into a lively celebration for children and families across Highland. Organised by the Integrated Children's Service Board, the event brought together professionals from across the partnership, all contributing to a fantastic range of activities designed to entertain, engage, and support families. It was a true team effort, with organisations working side by side to create a welcoming and fun-filled atmosphere.

Over 800 families attended and took part in activities including a family ceilidh, arts and crafts, pop-up play, parachute games, balance bikes, and baby massage. Outdoor play was held in Northern Meeting Park, and goodie bags were distributed with low-cost activity ideas and a selection of play resources.

The event was a celebration of the work being delivered through the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023–26 and highlighted the strength of partnership working across Highland. It provided a valuable opportunity to connect with families, showcase available support, and celebrate the achievements of services working together to improve outcomes for children and families.



5. SQA exam results day for young people across Highland 2025

As SQA results are released, we want to take a moment to recognise and celebrate the dedication and resilience shown by all our young people across Highland. Regardless of the outcome, every learner deserves recognition for the effort, commitment, and perseverance they've shown throughout the year.

We're especially proud to share a heartening story of one young person in foster care who, with the unwavering support of their carers, worked incredibly hard and is now applying to study for a degree at a prestigious Scottish University. This is a fantastic achievement and a testament to what can be accomplished with determination and the right support.

To all our young people, carers, families, and educators—thank you for your continued hard work and encouragement. We wish everyone the very best in their next steps, wherever they may lead.

6. Joint Inspection of Adult Services in Highland: Integration and Outcomes – focus on people living with mental illness

The above named joint inspection took place between January and June 2025. The inspection report – due for publication on 19 August, will highlight key strengths as well as priority areas for improvement.

More detailed comments will be made at Committee with the report link to be circulated to members following Committee.

7. Student Summer Placements (6th Year)

We were delighted to be one of the Host Services for the pilot of the of Summer Paid Placements Programme which is being developed as part of the My Highland Future portfolio (previously Workforce for the Future). HSCW hosted 2 senior pupils for 4 weeks giving them a chance to gain valuable work experience in a busy, diverse work environment, whilst highlighting to the young people what varied careers and training opportunities there are in the Health and Social Care Service.

Staff valued having the young people with initial feedback from all being very positive.

8. Congratulations to our Graduating Trainee Social Workers

We are delighted to congratulate Hollie MacLean, Maria Vastano, Rebecca Gorman and Nicolle Banks in gaining their Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work. Hollie, Maria, Rebecca and Nicolle became Trainee Social Workers in 2023 as part of Highland Council's Trainee Social Work scheme. Maria, Nicolle and Rebecca will now move into Social Worker positions within their teams in Inverness- West, Caithness and Inverness- East and Nairnshire respectively. Hollie is our first Trainee Social Worker to graduate in Justice Services- widening our Trainee Social Work scheme across the Highland Council.

Hollie, Rebecca, Nicolle and Maria have enjoyed academic support and success with our academic partner, The Open University. Experts in distance learning, The Open University cover theory to practice, research and practice skills while ensuring peer support and face to face workshops.

9. Gordon Wyness

Gordon is a Children's Hearings Volunteer Panel Member and has reached the incredible milestone of 45 years service for the children of Highland & Moray.

Children's Hearings Scotland is the largest tribunal in Scotland and supports approx, 10,000 children across Scotland every year. As a volunteer Panel Member, Gordon is a tribunal decision maker based in our Highland & Moray Panel Area who sits on children's hearings and makes legal decisions about the care and protection of infants, children and young people. Hearings are specifically focussed on the needs of the child and to support them achieving their life potential.

Gordon has been a volunteer with CHS since May 1980 and is an active and well-respected member of the Highland & Moray Children's Panel. In addition to his Panel Member role, he also is a volunteer Panel Engagement Lead, acting as a key contact and liaison for his peer volunteers to support them in their role.

Thank you, Gordon.

(Fiona Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer & Chief Officer)