

**Highland Council/NHS Highland
Joint Monitoring Committee**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held in the Council Chamber, Headquarters, Inverness on 25 September 2025 at 10.30am.

Present:

Highland Council

Mr David Fraser (Chair)
Mr Raymond Bremner
Mr Derek Brown
Mr Alasdair Christie
Ms Fiona Duncan
Mr Ian Kyle
Ms Kate Lackie
Ms Fiona Malcolm
Mr Paul Oldham
Mr Brian Porter

NHS Highland

Ms Heledd Cooper
Ms Fiona Davies
Ms Jennifer Davies
Ms Arlene Johnstone
Ms Karen Leach (sub for Ms Compton-Bishop)
Mr Gerry O'Brien
Mr David Park (sub for Mr Anderson)
Dr Paul Treon
Dr Neil Wright

Staff Representatives

Ms Samantha Purdie (Highland Council)

Third Sector, Carer and Service User Representatives

Mr Christopher Allan (Scottish Care Highland Branch Chair – Care Homes)
Ms Roisin Connolly, (Connecting Carers)
Vacant (Scottish Care - Care at Home)
Mr Ian McNamara (Highland Senior Citizen's Network)
Ms Gaener Rodger (Inspiring Young Voices)
Ms Mhairi Wylie (Highland Third Sector Interface)

Officers Present

Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Highland Council
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Highland Council

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 Ms Sarah Compton-Bishop, Mr Alex Anderson, Ms Louise Bussell, Ms Elspeth Caithness and Mr Ian McNamara.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **APPROVED** minutes of the meetings of the Joint Monitoring Committee held on 13 March 2025, noting that the meeting scheduled for 12 June had been cancelled due to an IT outage.

4. JMC Action Log Loga Gnìomha

There had been circulated and **NOTED** the Committee's Actions Log.

5. Chief Officer Presentation Taisbeanadh an Àrd-Oifigear

A presentation was provided by the Interim Chief Officer, Highland Health and Social Care Partnership, which had also been circulated.

Reference was made to the recent airing of BBC Disclosure, which had featured Castlehill Care Home, and a summary was provided of the investigation that was being undertaken, the support that was being provided to the families involved, and to the role of the Care Inspectorate as the lead on the improvement work.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Chief Officer's Report Adult Services Aithisg Àrd-Oifigeir mu Sheirbheisean Inbheach

There was circulated Report No JMC/11/25 by the Chief Officer, Highland Health and Social Care Partnership. Ms Johnstone indicated her intention to review the format of the report and she welcomed input on this.

During discussion, consideration was given to the challenge of balancing operational and transformational work, with reference to the various strategies that were being developed, including commissioning, care home and market facilitation. Information was sought and provided on the Short Life Working Group for the internal care home review, which aimed to create efficiencies and standardisation of some areas such as administrative functions and emergency processes pan-Highland.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** on the work undertaken in implementing the HHSCP Joint Strategic Plan and assurance performance information as supplied; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the Highland HSCP Annual Performance Report 2024/2025

7. Integrated Children's Service Update Aithisg Bhliadhnail Plana nan Seirbheisean Cloinne Amalaichte

There was circulated Report No JMC/12/25 by the Chair of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Board.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- attention was drawn to the value of the Vision 26 event, which had been held at Eden Court Theatre in August 2025, and had been of benefit to young people and many third sector organisations. It was explained that the easy-read version of the children and young people's participation strategy was nearing completion and would be helpful to many;
- the development of performance indicators for vaping was welcomed;
- the methods for obtaining, and the reliability of, the drug use performance indicators was queried and information provided on the non-mandated lifestyle survey which was used to obtain some of the data. The Head of Performance and Improvement could provide further detail on this outwith the meeting; and
- the Chair emphasised the value of the work of the third sector, pointing out the usefulness of the services they provided, and that they could be more easily accessible to people than large organisations like the Council and the NHS.

The Committee **NOTED** the work:

- i. undertaken by the children's services planning partnership in delivering the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026; and
- ii. of the delivery groups.

8. Chief Social Work Annual Report 2024/25

Aithisg Àrd-Oifigear Obrach Sòisealta 2024/25

There was circulated Report No JMC/13/25 by the Chief Social Work Officer.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- concern was expressed at the increasing levels of demand for children's disability services, and it was confirmed that this demand likely related to post-covid catch up, and had not yet plateaued. In this regard, initiatives related to Self Directed Support, in communities and with partners, including re-implementation of the short break service, were summarised;
- in response to a query about the need for social work services at the new Inverness prison, which had double the capacity of the previous prison, discussions on this were ongoing with the Scottish Prison Service and would be reported in due course;
- the Chair summarised the need to change the balance of care, by working with communities and partners, and getting a balance between the provision of care and nursing homes, and care at home services, while lobbying for an appropriate funding model that suited Highland's unique geography. The Council's Chief Executive provided an overview of work that was ongoing in this regard, including the need to balance current service delivery with the necessary transformational change to tackle the longer term challenges, including the ageing population, and to work to find solutions through this committee and other groups. The NHS Highland's Chief Executive reaffirmed the aim to continue to care for people in their own homes for as long as possible, while recognising the need for a balance of care and nursing home facilities, and she highlighted the collaborative work that was ongoing to ensure this, including the work to change the model of integration between the Council the NHS, and to bring to fruition the strategic planning that had been undertaken. She urged everyone to raise the needs of the Highlands at national level wherever possible and to advocate for the workforce; and

- in relation to the need to provide enrichment activities as part of care at home to tackle isolation and loneliness, attention was drawn to initiatives being undertaken in some communities, to the need to ensure this happened pan-Highland, and to the role of the Strategic Plan in ensuring the gap between statutory care and enrichment was bridged. The importance of adequately funding third sector organisations in this regard was highlighted, as was the national challenges recruiting staff in the care sector.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the annual report and the implications for Social Work and Social Care services within Highland Council and NHS Highland.

9. Highland Health & Social Care Partnership Finance Report Aithisg Ionmhais Com-pàirteachas Slàinte & Cùraim Shòisealta na Gàidhealtachd

a. Highland Health & Social Care Partnership Finance Report Aithisg Ionmhais Com-pàirteachas Slàinte & Cùraim Shòisealta na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No JMC/14/25 by the Director of Finance, NHS Highland.

The Chair expressed concern at the forecast deficits for the Council and NHS Highland, and suggested a workshop be held at which they could be discussed (as detailed further at item 9b).

The Committee **NOTED** the financial position at Month 3 2025/2026 (June 2025).

b. Highland Council Finance Report Aithisg Ionmhais Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No JMC/15/25 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the Council's Chief Executive provided assurance in relation to the plans in place to tackle the forecast overspend, including actions to transform future service delivery, all of which would be considered by the Council's committees and at future Joint Monitoring Committee meetings. The Chair and the Council Leader reiterated the need for a JMC workshop for Council and NHS members to consider solutions to the financial challenges.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the forecast financial position for the year as set out in this report and appendices;
- NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions being taken or proposed; and
- AGREED** a workshop be held for Council and NHS Highland JMC members to consider the financial challenges, the outcomes from which would be reported to the Committee.

10. Risk Register

Clàr Cunnairt

There was circulated Report No JMC/16/25 by the Chief Officer, Highland Health and Social Care Partnership.

It was explained that a JMC workshop was scheduled in November 2025, at which the risk register would be reviewed, and committee members were urged to feedback on areas they felt should be covered. It was suggested that this might be combined with the financial workshop agreed at item 9b.

The Committee **NOTED:**

- i. the content and movement of risks in the Partnership Risk Register; and
- ii. the issues raised by committee member Campbell Mair for inclusion in the risk register; and
- iii. that the risk workshop scheduled for November 2025 might include financial issues as agreed at item 9b.

Closing Remarks

As Mr Campbell Mair was stepping down as the Chair of Scottish Care, the Committee Chair thanked him for his valued contribution to the work of the JMC.

The meeting ended at 12.20pm.