

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	12
Report No	SR/8/26

**Committee:** Skye & Raasay Area Committee

**Date:** 16 February 2026

**Report Title:** Childrens Disability Service Update

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - People

## **1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The reports provide the Committee with information in relation to the delivery of Childrens Disability Services within the Highland Council and specifically within the Skye & Raasay area.
- 1.2 A timeline of the progress of the short break service within Skye & Raasay is also included to inform the committee members.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. Note and comment on the issues raised in the report and the implications for the future provision of service within Skye & Raasay.

## **3 Implications**

There are no Resource, Legal, Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island), Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk or Gaelic implications to highlight. However, the report does refer to the service challenges that the service is facing now and will continue to face. Those service challenges are in terms of Skye & Raasay principally.

## **4 Impacts**

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

## 5 Background

### 5.1 The Children's Disability Service (CDS)

- continues to provide professionals, parent/carers, and children with access to an additional level of specialist health and social care service where the priority is supporting children with the greatest and/or most complex needs/situations as a result of disability across the Highland area. This year has again seen an increase in the number of children being supported by the Service from early years till transitions to adulthood by 7.8%. The children accessing Self Directed Support (SDS) rose by almost 20% from the previous year.
- During 2024/2025, the service worked with partners in the 3rd sector, NHS and SDS Scotland to increase the availability of support to families in Highland from Personal Assistants. This has risen from 17 in 2023 to 72 in 2025. This has enabled an additional 91 children to be supported within their homes.

### 5.2 Short Break Services

- The short break service provided by Highland Council (in Inverness, Skye and Caithness) has been unavailable since 2023. However, in partnership with our 3rd sector partners, a short break and overnight care service has been provided since this time.
- In 2025 Highland Council provided investment to this service for The Orchard (Inverness), Thor House (Caithness) and Taigh Blathbheinn (Skye) to develop and reopen short break services within these houses.
- Updates were provided to elected members in May 2025 which included a proposed timeline of works and dependencies – See **appendix 1**.

## 6 Current Skye & Lochalsh Childrens Disability Service

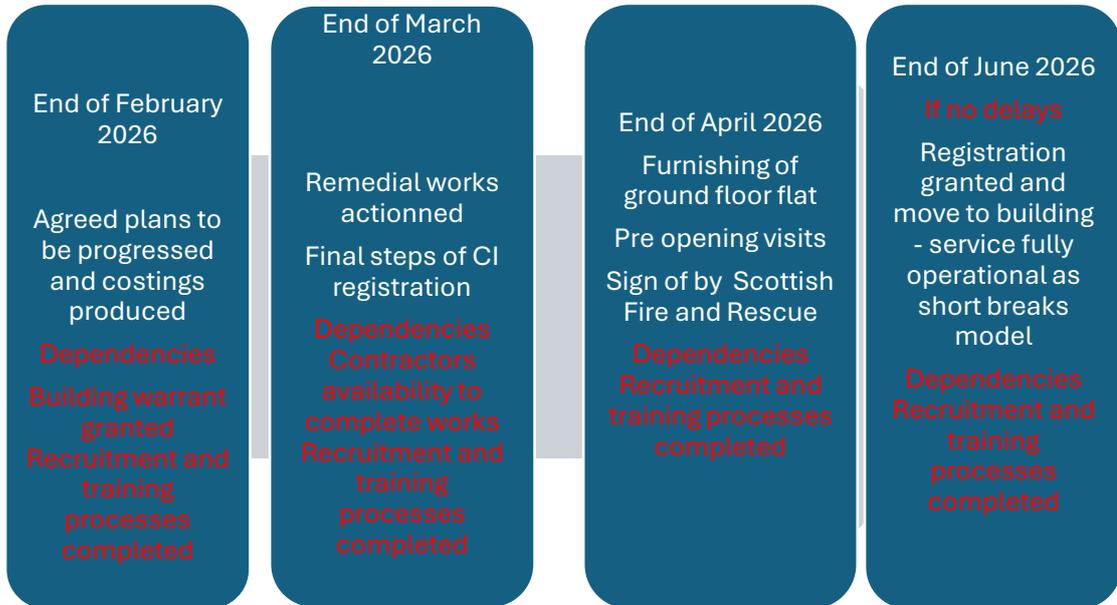
- 6.1
- The Skye & Lochalsh Disability service sits within the Care & Protection service which covers Skye Lochalsh , Wester Ross & Assynt. This service supports 14 children & young people , 11 of whom reside in Skye & Lochalsh .
  - Since 2023 Staff have continued to support families in the community at weekends and holidays. Overnight breaks have been available through Personal Assistant support to families.
  - It is anticipated that eight children will require overnight short breaks when this service resumes from the current discussions with parents / carers. In order to meet this need it is expected the service will require to provide daytime short breaks r 3 out of every 4 weekends with the 4<sup>th</sup> weekend including overnight breaks.
  - Since August 2025 the Social Care staffing for the short break service has had a 50% vacancy rate with 2 further permanent staff required. There have now been 4 advertisements for these posts in this time, including social media. One successful candidate has been appointed from these. At present a relief position is being advertised to potentially identify staff who can support the service on a flexible basis. This would not address the need for permanent staff but may give some flexibility in order to progress the service from Day

support to overnight support in a limited capacity once Taigh Blathbheinn is available for use.

- Remedial building works have been agreed with Care Inspectorate and a building warrant for works has been submitted for Taigh Blathbheinn.

## 6.2 Revised timeline

Please see revised timeline in relation to Taigh Blathbheinn which highlights the dependencies for the overnight Short Break service to be fully operational by end of June 2026.



Designation: Assistant Chief Executive

Date: 02 February 2026

Author: Dianne Henderson, Strategic Lead Care & Support

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Letter to elected members & Skye Timeline 14/05/2025

## **Appendix 1**

Please ask for: **Dianne Henderson**  
Direct phone: 07825116482  
Your ref:  
Our ref: RSBPH-DH  
Date: 14/05/2025

### **Review of Short Break Provision in Highlands for children with additional needs**

I would like to provide an update in relation to the development of Short Break Provision in Highland.

I understand that you may be receiving requests from your constituents regarding this provision and therefore it was felt that it would be helpful to send this update to you at this time. Please see appendix 2 for services' projected timelines to ensure that vulnerable families in the Highlands have access to Short Break Care in local areas in the future.

The timeline for Thor House has had to be extended due to delays in the planning process which, although disappointing, was scoped as a risk within the project development.

A planning application has been submitted to change the use of a domestic property at Mowat Court, Thurso, into a long term childrens house for two young people within the local area that currently reside at Thor House. Once this has been resolved an updated timeline will be made available to you.

Yours sincerely

**Dianne Henderson**

Strategic Lead, Care and Support  
Health and Social Care

## Skye timeline - Short breaks

