

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 12 March 2026 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 Fiona Malcolm
Mr Paul Oldham
Mr Brian Porter

NHS Highland

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

Staff Representatives

Ms Samantha Purdie (Highland Council)
Mr Gavin Smith (NHS Highland)

Third Sector, Carer and Service User Representatives

Mr Christopher Allan (Scottish Care Highland Branch Chair – Care Homes)
Mr Ian McNamara (Highland Senior Citizen's Network)
Ms Gaener Rodger (Inspiring Young Voices)

Officers Present

Mr D Park, Depute Chief Executive, 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

Mr A Anderson, Ms R Connolly, Ms K Lackie, and Ms M Wylie.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were none.

3. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **APPROVED** minutes of the meeting of the Joint Monitoring Committee held on 4 December 2025.

4. Transitions Audit Sgrùdadh Eadar-ghluasadan

There was circulated Report No JMC/01/26 by the Chief Officer Integrated People Services (THC), the Chief Social Work Officer & Chief Officer Health and Social Care (THC), and the Chief Officer (NHSH).

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the importance of the transition period in a young person's life was emphasised. While there were areas of improvement highlighted by the audits, the joint work being undertaken and the focus on young people was encouraging;
- a workshop was proposed to further consider the findings of the audit and best practice for the future. It was suggested that people with lived experience of the transition process could be invited. Attention was drawn to the experiences of, and the support provided to, the carers and families of the young people going through transition, as well as to funding arrangements;
- the relatively small number of people (ten) studied for the audits, was queried by several members, and it was explained that this had been the recommended sample size. The Chief Officer Integrated People Services offered to provide information outwith the Committee on the number of young people currently on the Transition Team radar;
- with regard to geographic implications, the need to use the audit recommendations to drive improvement across wider geographic areas was emphasised, as was the need to capture lived experience and use it to shape improvement. A summary was provided of some of the practices in place to work across different geographical areas;
- while the audit focused on the processes and systems in place for transitions, it was also important to consider the human side, including the additional support needs of young people who lacked parental support;
- attention was drawn to the engagement at national level being undertaken with regard to managing transitions, and to the importance of not only considering the outcomes from the audits but to look at the quality of the young people's experiences and cultural leadership across services. It was helpful to think of services being required to wrap around children and young people, rather than children and young people moving through services;
- assurance was sought and provided in relation to the achievement of target dates for actions detailed in the report;
- the linkage with SDS Option 1 was welcomed and innovative examples of the process to share information with families facing uncertainty would be beneficial;
- information and clarity were sought and provided on the position of the transitions process on the risk register, with this to be further considered at the workshop; and
- challenges around the cost escalation process in relation to transitions were being worked on.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the audit reports and the implications for the future provision of service across Highland Council and NHS Highland, and **AGREED** a workshop be held to further consider the issues raised and their implications for the future.

5. Models of Integration Steering Group Verbal Update Cunntas Beòil Buidheann Stiùiridh nam Modailean Amalachaidh

A verbal update was provided and **NOTED** as follows:

The Steering Group had considered the outcomes of Phase 1 of the Models of Integration Review on 16 January 2026, and elements of Phase 2 on 23 February 2026, with a focus on the engagement and communications plan. The next step was for the draft reports and recommendations to go to the Council and the NHS Highland Board in late March 2026. This would be following by an engagement process, and the aim of a final recommendation by September 2026. A more comprehensive report would be provided to the JMC after the March 2026 governance cycle. Attention was drawn to the need to involve the third sector, and this would form part of the planned engagement process.

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

There was circulated Report No JMC/02/26 by the Chief Officer, Highland Health and Social Care Partnership.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- reference was made to the District Planning Group (DPG) reporting variations, the needs of different communities, and the process for the DPGs to feed into the Strategic Planning Group (SPG). Work was underway to improve how information was fed downwards from the SPG to the DPGs;
- it was highlighted that while the partnership was performing well against many metrics, it was an outlier in relation to Delayed Discharges, and a summary was provided of work being undertaken to test assumptions in this area, including holding conversations about leadership and capacity. A discharge without delay action plan was in progress and an interface manager was working to improve the situation;
- information was sought and provided on how the population health framework was being taken forward through both the Council and NHS Highland, and with input from the Community Planning Partnership as the broader determinants of health were being considered. Reference was also made to the Council's establishment of a poverty commission, which would tackle issues relevant to the JMC; and
- the importance of working together to avoid duplication and to identify gaps was emphasised.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the work undertaken in implementing the HHSCP Joint Strategic Plan and assurance performance information as supplied.

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

There was circulated Report No JMC/03/26 by the Chair of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Board.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was welcome that The Promise was becoming increasingly embedded in day to day operations and embraced by all;

- the strategic needs assessment was a powerful evidence-based tool that would help to develop and improve services. The inclusion of the voices of children and young people in the report was welcomed;
- it was queried whether any significant changes were anticipated for the new Children's Plan post-2026 and what the implications for the third sector might be. Reference was made to the population health framework being considered by the Community Planning Partnership and the impact of intelligence gathering on the strategic needs assessment, with an aim to align priorities to ensure focus for collective change;
- in relation to the measures for poverty, attention was drawn to the impact of expenditure, for example in rural areas, versus an income-based measure;
- with regard to the value of linking data sets, attention was drawn to challenges around the uptake of free school meals not being in proportion to the levels of child poverty, and to challenges in relation to vaccination uptake, with both of these issues being considered ahead of the next iteration of the Plan; and
- the importance of providing support to young carers and their right to a young carer plan was reiterated.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

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

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

The Committee **NOTED** that the Chair and Vice Chair had written to the Chief Executives of the Highland Council and NHS Highland with regard to the financial situation, and that the responses were being worked through and would help to shape future JMC agendas.

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

There was circulated Report No JMC/04/26 by the Director of Finance, NHS Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial position at Month 9 2025/2026 (December 2025).

b. Highland Council Finance Report Aithisg Ionmhais Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No JMC/05/26 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- forecast financial position for the year as set out in the report and appendices;
- explanations provided for any material variances and actions being taken or proposed; and

- iii. information set out regarding budget decisions made by Highland Council on 5 March 2026.

Closing Remarks

The Chair drew attention to April 2026 being National Autism Acceptance Month, which would be marked by the Council and NHS Highland.

The meeting ended at 11.55am