

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	EDU/25/23

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Education Committee

**Date:** 23 November 2023

**Report Title:** High Life Highland Progress Report

**Report By:** Chief Executive, High Life Highland

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report is in three parts:

**Part one** - presents information on the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 30 September 2023, including information on HLH's contributions to the Council Corporate Plan 2022-27.

**Part two** - provides general updates since the last report to the Council's Education Committee in June 2023.

**Part three** - provides information on an aspect of the work of HLH, this time, High Life Highland's health and wellbeing work.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:

- i. the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 30 September 2023, including HLH's contributions to the implementation of the Council Corporate Plan in **Appendix A**;
- ii. the general updates provided in section 2 of this report;
- iii. that HLH continues to deliver Public Service Obligations on behalf of the Council as set out in the Service Delivery Contract;
- iv. the progress on the Service Delivery Contract review; and
- v. the information in **Appendix B** on the health and wellbeing work delivered by HLH.

## 3. Implications

3.1 Resource – please see section 6, financial position, below.

3.2 Legal – there are no legal implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report. However, the HLH zero reserve position has implications in respect of HLH's going concern status: in mitigation, a letter of comfort has been issued from the Council. Legal advice on the SDC review will be required as it progresses.

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - there are no community implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - there are no climate change/carbon clever implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.
- 3.5 Risk - there are no risk implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The HLH Board has its own Corporate Risk Register and associated management plans.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – there are no health and safety risks associated with the recommendations in this report.
- 3.7 Gaelic - there are no Gaelic implications for the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 HLH was established as a charity by the Highland Council (THC) in October 2011. The Council has contracted with HLH to deliver its Public Services Obligations (PSO) through a Service Delivery Contract (SDC). The following areas of work are delivered by HLH on behalf of the Council: Adult Learning; Archives; Arts; Countryside Rangers; Leisure; Libraries; Museums; Music Tuition; Sports Development; and Youth Work.
- 4.2 HLH was set up to deliver services on behalf of the Council. Each year, Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) status saves the Council c. £2m p.a. through non-domestic rates relief. As well as these savings, annually:
- there is annual adjustment to the Council's funding to HLH, being the same percentage movement in the Scottish Government grant settlement with the Council. In years where the Council's grant settlement has reduced, this has resulted in relative reduction to the funding to HLH and a saving to the Council; and
  - HLH meets the cost of inflationary increases for staff salaries, pensions, living wage and pension increases.
- 4.3 This arrangement has consistently returned revenue savings for the Council with recent (5 year) savings averaging £1,086,496 p.a. (7% of Services Fee). Prior to 2023/24 savings have been achieved through income and efficiencies, whilst minimising service reductions. Notably, HLH has continued to take on additional services at the request of the Council, with 43 new services and facilities having been added to HLH since it was established in 2011. While this arrangement has meant that savings have been made for the Council, the wider economic situation in recent years has led to the terms of the contract being unsustainable.

#### **5. HLH Governance**

- 5.1 HLH Directors are appointed by the Council (8 independent Directors and 4 Councillor Directors). The HLH Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/about/board-directors/>.
- 5.2 The HLH Trading Board Directors are appointed by the HLH Board (5 independent directors and 4 HLH Board Directors). The trading company Directors can be found on the HLH web site: <https://www.highlifehighland.com/about/trading-company-directors/>

## 6. Financial Position

- 6.1 The funding provided by the Council to HLH as a Services Fee is £16.1m (2023/24). The post-pandemic operating environment (particularly staff pay inflation) has meant that the Council has had to provide additional funding to HLH from Council reserves to help protect services. This was included in the Council's budget when it was agreed at the Highland Council meeting held on 2 March 2023. HLH has mitigated a forecast £5.4m budget gap in 2023/24 by £2.4m through a combination of income, efficiencies and agreed service reductions. The remaining £3m has been funded in 2023/24 from Council reserves. Given this, and the Council's own financial position, it is likely that a review of the SDC will have to include a reduction in the public service levels as well as a review of the funding formula.
- 6.2 HLH has moved out of five properties and is in the process of looking at others which will make Council property budget savings, contributing to the Council's asset rationalisation.
- 6.3 Recruitment controls are in place to minimise the amount of additional Council funding required during financial year 2023/24. They are being implemented in advance of the work on the review of the SDC and might help to provide some flexibility depending on future decision-making around the contract review.

## 7. Service Delivery Contract Review

- 7.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27, Our Future Highland, which was approved by the Highland Council at its meeting held on 8 December 2022, includes an action to review the Service Delivery Contract with HLH.

The purpose of the review has been agreed between the Council Leader and HLH Chair as follows:

- **Affordability** (the services delivered need to be affordable to the Council – the budget pressure caused by inflation has to be addressed).
  - **Sustainability** (HLH needs to be on sustainable financial footing to operate effectively).
  - **Joint working** (there needs to be continued joint working between the Council and HLH, particularly around service development and capital investments).
- 7.2 An officer project board has been established to review the Service Delivery Contract, led from a council perspective by the Executive Chief Officer, Education. The current work of the group is focusing on:
- Income and efficiencies – HLH is developing a plan to deliver a further £1m in income and efficiencies in financial year 2024/25, although it is recognised that the financial gap is more significant and other actions will need to be agreed to meet this as part of the review;
  - Planning for long term sustainability – a joint plan is being developed for the properties and services delivered by HLH on behalf of the Council with the aim being to have that plan ready for consideration by the Council when it sets its budget in February 2024 which includes the need for Community Impact Assessments whereby services have to ensure that any new or revised proposals (plans, policies, practices and decisions) are considered for impacts on communities at an early stage and meet the requirements of: Public Sector Equality Duty; Fairer Scotland Duty; and rural/island impacts.

## 8. Part One - Service Delivery Contract Monitoring

- 8.1 The Service Delivery Contract with HLH was originally made up of objectives from the Council's Education Service Plan. Subsequently, reporting has evolved to reflect Council Corporate Plans. A summary of HLH's contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27 which was approved by the Highland Council at its meeting held on 8 December 2022 can be found at **Appendix A**.
- 8.2 There are three indicators which are used to provide a balanced assessment of HLH's performance in terms of effectiveness, reach into the Highland population and efficiency. These are:
- Effectiveness (total customer engagements),
  - Reach into the Highland population (percentage of the population with an HLH card) and,
  - Efficiency (Council services fee as percentage of expenditure).
- 8.3 **Effectiveness** - in 2022/23 customer engagements were higher than they have ever been at 9,067,929. This was also reported at the July 2023 Education Committee and customer numbers have continued to grow with the results for the first six months of this year exceeding the same period in 2022/23.
- 8.4 **Reach into the Highland population** – the percentage of the Highland population with an HLH card is used as a measure of reach into the Highland population because leisure and library memberships allow that kind of analysis to be undertaken. It is an indicator rather than an absolute count because it only captures two of the ten services HLH delivers on behalf of the Council and even then, cannot capture customers who access those two services without having a card. This indicator dropped by 8% between 2022 and 2023, however, the national definition of library memberships counts active memberships<sup>1</sup> over the past two years and this will clearly result in a reduction because facilities were closed/customer numbers reduced during and after the pandemic which skews the results as the indicator lags behind actual performance.
- 8.5 This indicator is continuing to improve in the current year and to provide the current picture, library customer numbers in 2022/23 were 3.7m 36,572 more than the pre-pandemic year. There was a year-on-year increase in leisure centre membership of 14%. Two thirds of HLH's leisure memberships are family subscriptions and this performance indicates the increasing importance of family access to activities like swimming lessons and after school activities. Recent focus has been on corporate memberships sales with 54 Highland businesses recognising the benefits of investing in employee health and wellbeing by supporting them with a High Life membership. Budget subscriptions where people in receipt of income related benefits gain access to leisure centre activities for fifty pence per visit are a key part of HLH meeting the Council's social objectives and are over 13,000.
- 8.6 When taken over time, the effectiveness and efficiency indicators show HLH to be an organisation which is performing well:
- **Effectiveness:** HLH customer numbers have increased from 2.3m when it was set up in 2011 to 9m now.

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<sup>1</sup> library membership is only required for book borrowing and computer use, all other library services do not require a card for people to participate. 40% of customers use libraries of other purposes. Leisure pay as you go customers do not need a card to participate.



- **Efficiency:** The Council Services fee as a percentage of overall HLH expenditure started at 79% and is now 52% (it was 50% pre-pandemic).
- **Reach into the Highland population:** this indicator was not measured at the time HLH was set up so comparisons cannot be given. Customers participate in HLH services by choice and a 29% reach by only two of HLH's services into the community is indicative of HLH being highly relevant to the people of the Highlands.

8.7 Performance information is within the scope of the Service Delivery Contract review and as part of that consideration will be given as to how best to represent the work of HLH.

## 9. Part 2 – General Updates

9.1 This section of the report contains a series of updates following the last update provided to the Education Committee in June 2023.

9.2 The new 'Get Set for Summer' event welcomed over 8,000 visitors to the Northern Meeting Park on a sunny Saturday 24 June 2023. It was one of the final major events to take place in the location prior to refurbishment works taking place at the historic city location. High Life Highland and LCC Live brought together a partnership to deliver a free to enter event to thousands of people, based on the concept of giving back to the community at a time when many individuals and families were struggling.

9.3 Inverness Botanic Gardens staff and volunteer team worked hard this year to grow and curate over 1000 hanging flower baskets for display all over the Highlands, with many of the hanging baskets being bespoke to match the requirements of local business and to keep consistent with their branding. In total, over 650 hanging flower baskets for businesses across Inverness in collaboration with Inverness Business Improvement District (BID), and 350 hanging flower baskets for Oban BID were provided with the project taking months to coordinate, with over 15,000 plants to grow, water, and arrange.

9.4 Partnership links with NHS Highland were further strengthened throughout the year. A community-led support hub was launched at Nairn Library. The drop-in hub brings together organisations within the community which are able to support local health needs, offering advice and support to individuals where required.

9.5 An NHS Near Me hub opened at Thurso Library. Near Me is a confidential and secure service which allows NHS patients to attend their pre-arranged appointment using a video call, rather than attending in person. For those who do not have digital access from home, the service is being made available via a number of libraries throughout Scotland. Scottish Library and Information Council funding has been secured to expand the service to other libraries throughout the Highlands including, Nairn, Inverness, Lochcarron, Lochaber libraries and mobile libraries.

9.6 The After Dark initiative in Nairn has been a collaboration between HLH youth workers and Active Schools staff. One major impact of the lockdowns during the pandemic was on children moving from primary to secondary school: they missed many of the transition activities their predecessors had. After Dark was aimed at S1 and S2 pupils, who were invited to participate in after school multi activity sessions and they were encouraged to sign up to the charity's Leadership Programme. Sessions were accessible to young people with additional needs who flourished in a safe space. Observable outcomes included better communication skills, working effectively with others and problem solving.

- 9.7 The Testing for Change initiative aimed to try something innovative around youth participation i.e., empowering young people to have a stronger and meaningful voice in aspects of service delivery. Seven groups of young people from across Highland took responsibility for deciding how to award funds to local youth groups and individuals. Over 25 grants were given out ranging from £130 to £1500 (total £25154.35). The innovative part was that the young decision makers were remunerated for their work ranging from vouchers, group trips and activities (totalling £2580). Examples of what was supported – DofE equipment for less well off; gardening equipment; kitchen equipment; pool table; guitar; bicycle; mountain biking equipment; strips for girls football team; arts & crafts; outdoor sporting equipment; boxing club equipment; hall hire; shinty sticks; trips for P7/S1 transition group; games equipment; laptop for young carer; help with living expenses before starting college / work; wellbeing packs; Mental Health & Wellbeing sessions; youth club furniture; refreshments; cooker; fridge; gaming group comfy chairs; Switch and Xbox; TV; theatre trip; Awards (John Muir fees).
- 9.8 An adult learning digital skills drop-in was offered in partnership with the Warm Hub at Dingwall Community Centre where local people were invited to enjoy a cup of tea, a slice of cake and access free Wi-Fi. Digital skills tutors and volunteers were on hand to offer learning opportunities to those interested in improving their digital literacy skills. One learner said: “For those of us who have been somewhat left behind in the world of computers and smartphones, patient help to understand [technology] better and be able to use it, is an enormously encouraging factor in our lives.” Some learners took their first steps on their learning journey and others took further steps by working towards qualifications. One learner said: “sessions with my tutor are progressing well. It’s good to have a direction to go in. I’m enjoying getting stuck in and I hope to achieve my level 4 qualification soon.
- 9.9 High Life Highland Countryside Rangers and local community volunteers from Caithness Environment Volunteers assisted NatureScot with conservation work within the River Thurso recently. The River Thurso is designated as a Special Site of Scientific Interest and alder saplings removed from the river to protect its environment were relocated to other suitable sites. The Countryside Ranger team continues to carry out site checks on behalf of the Council and facilitate safe and responsible access to the outdoors through its schools and community programme of activities.
- 9.10 HLH has recently engaged with a number of Highland businesses to offer them a corporate highlife subscription package for their staff. 54 businesses have taken up the programme and 2,748 of their staff have engaged with it. [www.highlifehighland.com/corporate-membership/](http://www.highlifehighland.com/corporate-membership/)
- 9.11 The museums team took advantage of several external funding and partnership opportunities to enable a range of projects. These included the development of reminiscence and learning resources, youth group summer day visits, historic buildings refurbishment and exhibition development. External funding also enabled a significant digital project at Highland Folk Museum, creating a legacy of 360-degree digital tours of its historic buildings and unique collections.
- 9.12 High Life Highland’s Schools Out Programme offered a range of over 1000 activities across 155 locations in Highland during the Summer Holidays. In total the programme offered 39,995 places on activities during the summer period with a mix of day long or weeklong camps, hour long activities and sessions that were simply ‘drop in’. Bespoke sessions were created to engage with targeted groups of young people, participants with a disability and to engage with families. Being able to deliver sessions for a group of

unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was one of the highlights. The creativity and diversity of the programme was fantastic with activities such as circus skills, football, go-kart building, drama groups, ranger led walks, Bookbug sessions and sea-side safaris delivered by the different services within High Life Highland.

## 10. Part 3 – High Life Highland’s Health and Wellbeing Work

- 10.1 Health and wellbeing is core to HLH’s work both in terms of its general activity and targeted work and there is more detail in **Appendix B**. All of HLH’s services help to improve the physical, mental, and social health and wellbeing of people in Highland communities. The targeted programmes can be life-changing for some customers and include falls prevention; pain management and rehabilitation/prehabilitation programmes for people who are in receipt of health and social care support.
- 10.2 As well as making a significant contribution to making people’s lives better, HLH’s health and wellbeing work contributes positively to its financial performance. On average, over the past 10 years, health and wellbeing project income has been £209,000 per year. There are currently over 1,300 people who are *highlife* members accessing targeted health and wellbeing programmes in leisure centres which further supports HLH to achieve its financial, as well as its social objectives.
- 10.3 The work that HLH delivers fits well with the work of the Council and NHS Highland. The targeted health and wellbeing programmes are delivered, in collaboration with NHS Highland, with a focus on reducing health inequalities. The importance of HLH’s work has been recognised in the Director of Public Health annual reports.

Designation: Chief Executive, High Life Highland

Date: 18 October 2023

Author: Steve Walsh

Background Papers: None

## Appendix A

### HLH Contributions to the Council's Corporate Plan

<b>1. Fair and Caring Highland</b> <b>Gàidhealtachd Chothromach agus Choibhneil</b>	
Work together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people	
1.1 Improve outcomes including attainment, achievement, positive destinations for all children and young people with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy, and our most vulnerable learners.	<p>HLH delivers a programme of adult literacy and numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Classes and 1:1 support. Recent years have seen an increase in need among refugee communities and through close working with other HLH services and THC. HLH Adult Learning team provides language learning and related culture and leisure experiences for Ukrainian, Syrian and Afghan families and individuals and also many young men who have arrived in Highland as unaccompanied minors. HLH supports over 160 individuals per week as part of this work and maintains a cross service focus group to specifically address the needs of refugees as they relate to all HLH services and opportunities.</p> <p>The HLH Adult Learning team has supported and delivered family learning approaches to improving numeracy levels as a delivery partner on the UK Shred Prosperity Fund work in Highland. A CLD family learning STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) initiative is being developed as a legacy and mainstreaming work from this additional project work.</p> <p>HLH runs a Young Persons' Leadership Programme and is now developing leadership opportunities across other parts of the organisation in addition to sports development. There were 372 young people who gained a leadership award during 2022/23 compared to 331 in 2021/22.</p> <p>Youth work staff provide opportunities for young people to gain achievement awards (Saltire Awards, DofE etc.) which are of significant benefit for young people in gaining employment or higher and further education places. A 72% increase in awards gained through youth work over the last 2 academic years has taken place with over 1500 awards achieved in the last year.</p> <p>HLH operates a range of activity programmes for children and young people across its leisure facilities. These include both primary school swimming lessons and learn to swim programmes across highland ensuring that children and young people learn this essential life skill.</p> <p>The active schools and youth work programmes provide a wide range of activities. A key focus of the Active Schools Programme is equality, diversity and inclusion and targeted programmes are being developed to reduce barriers to participation. The Tennis Serves project in areas of deprivation, links with ASN units in schools with a focus on delivering women and girls activities and the partnership development with the Home to Highland Care Experienced Education Team are all ways the active schools programme has been developed to be more inclusive over the past year.</p>

	<p>HLH library staff deliver an extensive programme of activities to support early years literacy and numeracy, including Bookbug sessions and early years/family STEM activities. Libraries also support learning and teaching through the provision of the school library service.</p> <p>HLH Libraries enjoyed 3.7 m visits in 2022/23. This included 1.4m visits to library buildings, with footfall rising to 75% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year as customers returned to their libraries and library events and activities were reintroduced. Virtual footfall resulted in 2.3m visits with levels similar to those achieved in 2021/22.</p> <p>High Life Highland delivers weekly Instrumental Music Tuition to more than 4,200 young learners across Highland. Music tuition adds to each pupil's development in a broad range of ways, including increasing personal responsibility, focus and concentration in addition to the broader numeracy &amp; literacy benefits. Young people also have access to a wide range of music ensembles led by HLH Instructors, at school, area and regional levels (Highland Young Musicians) affording them an insight into the cooperation, discipline and focus required to make a valuable contribution to these kind of groups – and the bearing these experiences will have on life skills beyond school age.</p>
<p>1.2 Tackle child poverty including promoting access to welfare support.</p>	<p>HLH participates in the work of the CHAMPS board and CEYP are provided with free memberships to leisure facilities. HLH continues to provide both specific youth work opportunities for looked after children and to encourage engagement in its wider youth work offer.</p> <p>HLH Youth Work maintains a free food offer in many of its community-based youth clubs, drop-ins and youth forums which also serve as warm and safe spaces as well as supporting their personal and social development.</p> <p>HLH provides access to its leisure centres for fifty pence per visit for adults and children of families who are in receipt of income related benefits. Currently we have almost 13,000 card holders accessing this scheme.</p>
<p>1.3 Secure positive destinations including Modern Apprenticeships.</p>	<p>HLH provides modern apprenticeships through its leisure facilities which support young people who wish to remain in Highland and develop their careers at home.</p> <p>The HLH Youth work team is hosting and supporting a team of Development Officers on the My Future My Success project in partnership with THC working together to increase the number of positive destinations in Highland for school leavers.</p>
<p>1.4 Work with partners on suicide prevention.</p>	<p>HLH is supporting the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) work to deliver the Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme (SIPP) training. SIPP is led by the Health Improvement Team within Public Health in NHS Highland and supported by all community planning partners. HLH colleagues, from a range of HLH services, have been trained as trainers to deliver the SIPP programme and are co-delivering, with colleagues from various Community</p>

	<p>Planning Partners, as part of the Highland wide training roll out across Highland. SIPP training aims to improve awareness of suicidal thinking, increase confidence to ask someone if they are feeling suicidal, and to support them to seek further help, the training is open to anyone to attend participate.</p>
<p>1.5 Encourage a diverse range of traditional and emerging sporting activities and active lifestyles.</p>	<p>Through the partnership with sportscotland, the Active Schools and Community Sports Hubs programmes supports local volunteers and clubs to deliver a diverse range of sporting and physical activity opportunities.</p> <p>In 2022/23 there were 273,735 visits to Active Schools sessions, an increase of 2,734 visits from the previous year. 41% of the school roll access the Active Schools programme (the national average is 38%) and this equates to 77% recovery of participants since pre-pandemic levels. One of the key objectives for the team over the previous academic year was the recovery of the volunteer network, gaining 279 delivers to return to a similar level compared with 2019, 1,266 deliverers. Volunteer recovery is at 80% of pre-covid levels with the biggest gains in volunteers coming from Secondary School pupils who support the delivery of activities while developing their own skills and confidence through the HLH Leadership Programme.</p>
<p>1.6 Promote fair access through co-located services across the Highlands.</p>	<p>There are a number of joint school and community leisure centres and libraries across the Highlands and the experience of them is that the co-location increases footfall to all of the services delivered. Larger examples include Portree, Wick, Aviemore and Alness with there being similar but smaller scale provision in smaller communities such as Ardnamurchan and Kinlochleven. THC and HLH are currently working together to identify future opportunities through the process of the service delivery contract review.</p>
<p>1.7 Work with partners to improve the levels of mental health and wellbeing experienced by people in our communities.</p>	<p>All of the services delivered by HLH contribute towards mental health and wellbeing. The evidence based “5 ways to wellbeing” highlights there are steps people can take to improve their mental health: connect; get active; mindfulness; learn; give. HLH provides opportunities for people to take each of the steps outlined in the “5 ways to wellbeing” from engaging in arts and cultural activities, which can help to manage mental health and support recovery, to participating in learning opportunities facilitated by the adult and youth services such as SQA qualifications in health and wellbeing and mental health.</p> <p>The links between mental health and wellbeing and physical activity are also well established and it is widely recognised that activities which engage people and reduce social isolation and loneliness make a positive contribution to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The High Life membership scheme is premised upon accessibility at an affordable price; the budget membership scheme provides a safety net for hard-pressed families to enjoy access to facilities at an affordable price.</p> <p>Targeted projects which HLH are delivering which contribute to improving mental health and wellbeing include: falls prevention; cardiac rehabilitation; cancer rehabilitation; older adults health</p>

	<p>and wellbeing; type II diabetes and physical activity; physiotherapy in leisure centres; and dementia friendly initiatives including “House of Memories.” There are over 1300 highlife members taking part in HLH’s targeted health and wellbeing programmes.</p> <p>In collaboration with THC, HLH has developed an initiative called Mental Health Reps to promote positive mental health in the workplace, support and comfort any employee experiencing mental health difficulties, encourage conversations on mental health, support employees through a mental health crisis, and signpost to appropriate support.</p> <p>HLH also supports the work of the CPP Mental Health Delivery Group through being an active member of the group and supporting the various workstreams of the group including developing and delivering training, promoting resources, and making information accessible for people across Highland communities.</p>
<p>1.8 Develop whole family support approach to ensure families stay together and thrive in their local communities.</p>	<p>HLH seeks to support families by offering an all-inclusive leisure subscription which is one of the cheapest in the country of its kind and covers a whole household (two adults and children under 18). Children’s activities, gym, swim group fitness single court activities such as badminton and swimming lessons are included in the subscription. There are currently 18,395 member subscriptions. In addition, there is a specific scheme for families in receipt of income related benefits whereby the adults and children can access activities for fifty pence per visit.</p> <p>Family friendly sessions are being delivered and developed through Active Schools with an emphasis on recruiting and supporting parent volunteers to deliver activities to young people.</p> <p>HLH operated museums offer no-cost family leisure and learning opportunities both day-to-day and through structured activity programmes.</p>
<p>1.9 Work with partners to develop early intervention for drug and alcohol reduction.</p>	<p>HLH Youth, Sport and Leisure services are working jointly with NHS Highland and the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership on the Planet Youth Initiative. The pilot project based around Tain, Dornoch, Golspie and Caithness will focus on early intervention and using sport and physical activity as a preventative measure.</p>
<p>1.10 Facilitate strategic sports and cultural planning across the Highlands.</p>	<p>A new four-year partnership agreement with <b>sportscotland</b> commenced in April 2023 which secured over £1m investment per annum in the Highlands and delivers an active schools programme in every Associated School Group (ASG) in Highland as well as a community sports hub programme. In addition to that the Council, HLH and sportscotland are working together on a facilities strategy for Highland which is a key aspect of the Active Highland Strategy, a community planning partnership initiative led by NHS Highland.</p> <p>An Active Highland Strategy Group has been established, made up of representatives from the CPP plus <b>sportscotland</b> and with input from Public Health Scotland. The aim of the Active Highland Strategy Group is to create a framework that enables people to be active through, movement, play, physical activity, and sport in Highland with full commitment from all key partners and reporting</p>

	<p>to the Highland CPP Board. HLH is fully engaged and supporting the work of the Active Highland Strategy Group.</p>
<p>1.11 Continue to promote Gaelic language and cultural development.</p>	<p>HLH collaborates with THC’s Gaelic Team to deliver specific targets within GLP3 and supports the promotion of Gaelic language and culture primarily through its Archives, Museums and Music Tuition services.</p> <p>Am Baile, a bi-lingual cultural heritage website managed by the HLH Highland Archive Service has seen increasing customer engagement and in 2022/23 had 147,258 visits. The site has bilingual descriptions of content and new Gaelic content is added on a regular basis using skilled Gaelic translators. A third of all social media posts are now bi-lingual and customer feedback illustrates that these posts are proving useful for Gaelic learners to improve their language skills. Community heritage groups are increasingly seeking to use Am Baile as a digital place of deposit for their digital heritage collections and they are supported to create Gaelic content as part of their projects.</p> <p>Within museums, all interpretation at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery is bilingual and the museum offers two permanent display sections explaining and promoting Gaelic, including an interactive exhibit that gives visitors the opportunity to learn Gaelic words and try out the Gaelic language. At Highland Folk Museum visitors can experience Gaelic language and traditions in a variety of living history settings, including Gaelic psalms singing in the church and regular waulking the cloth demonstrations.</p> <p>Skye and Lochaber Archive Centres regularly support and work in partnership with Gaelic medium schools in their areas and are also in ongoing collaboration with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and several community groups undertaking initiatives that aim to sustain and transmit Gaelic language and culture.</p> <p>HLH libraries has a Gaelic book collection and delivers Gaelic Bookbug (0-4 age rhyme, song, and storytelling sessions with parents/carers).</p> <p>Gaelic Sports Leadership Courses are available to young people and resources available for primary school leadership training.</p>
<p>1.12 Promote and enhance the Highland’s rich heritage and culture.</p>	<p>HLH operates the two regional museums, the Highland Folk Museum and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and one county museum, the North Coast Visitor Centre. They offer the opportunity to experience and understand the uniqueness of the Highlands and to be part of carrying forward its traditions and heritage.</p> <p>HLH’s four Archive Centres, in Inverness, Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and Caithness, similarly enable people to explore and understand Highland’s heritage.</p> <p>The digital archive Am Baile gives access to thousands of items from archives, libraries, museums, and private collections spanning the history and culture of the Highlands. In 2022-23,</p>



	there were 1.25m engagements with Am Baile’s on-line archive or social media platforms. Countryside ranger programmes and activities also contribute to this outcome.
<b>2. Resilient and Sustainable Communities</b>	
<b>Coimhearsnachdan Fulangach agus Seasmhach</b>	
<b>Help our communities to be prosperous, sustainable, and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.</b>	
2.1 Develop affordable and reliable public transport.	HLH has played a supporting role with the Council and other partners in providing locations at its facilities for sustainable transport including cycle racks, e-bike storage/charging, and car charging points.
2.2 Continue to work with partners to develop and promote Road Safety and Water Safety.	Support for Bikeability training is provided through Active Schools programmes, upskilling local volunteers to deliver, and developing afterschool and club cycling opportunities.  High Life Highland runs a learn to swim programme which had an average of 3,208 individual participants per month during 2022/23. This number has increased during the current year to 4,700.
2.4 Develop place-based plans that focus on quality neighbourhoods and direct local funding opportunities towards local priorities.	High Life Highland contributes to local community planning and other partnerships with partnership development areas in youth work, literacy and numeracy, access to services, refugee resettlement, health and wellbeing and mental health and wellbeing.  HLH staff, learners and partners have worked together with THC staff to increase the range of voices and influences contributing to the current development of the East Ross Place Plan. This has been with particular emphasis on marginalised and vulnerable groups and has benefitted from community engagement due to the wide partner use of HLH facilities in the area including Joss Street Hall Invergordon and the Alness Youth Centre.
2.5 Support communities to help each other live well and independently.	HLH provides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a falls prevention, strength, and balance exercise programme, developed in partnership with NHS Highland is available in most HLH leisure centres and online to support older people to remain active and independent in their communities.</li> <li>• Specialist exercise classes for people affected by Parkinson’s disease are being offered in a range of leisure centres and online. These classes have been developed in partnership with Parkinson’s UK and NHS Highland</li> <li>• “Dynamic Wellbeing” which is a programme targeting people with a range of long-term health conditions including arthritis, respiratory illnesses, and neurological conditions to safely get active and stay active both online and face-to-face in leisure centres.</li> <li>• People experiencing pain from osteoarthritis are able to access pain management classes delivered in HLH leisure centres to help manage pain and improve quality of life.</li> <li>• the “You Time” programme is delivered across Highland and includes activities delivered by archives; leisure facilities; libraries; countryside rangers; and is supporting older people</li> </ul>

	<p>to sustain and improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing and reduces social isolation and loneliness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HLH, working with third sector partners, embedded in communities Highland's created the 'House of Memories,' an App based resource which benefits people living with dementia and their carers to access museum collections.</li> <li>• HLH offers supported and personally rewarding volunteering opportunities throughout the Highlands.</li> </ul>
2.6 Work with partners to promote visitor management.	<p>HLH operates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 70 libraries on behalf of THC.</li> <li>• the two regional Museums, the Highland Folk Museum and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, and their associated engagement programmes and is supporting the ongoing work of the Council to develop the Inverness Castle/Spirit of the Highlands programme.</li> <li>• The former Caithness Horizons facility has been re-launched as the North Coast Visitor Centre, operated by HLH on behalf of THC.</li> <li>• four Archive Centres, in Caithness, Skye, Lochaber and Inverness and provides Am Baile, the extensive, web-based heritage resource.</li> <li>• 22 stand-alone and joint school/ community leisure centres.</li> <li>• HLH operates the following visitor centres, Broch Centre, Ferrycroft, Ben Nevis and Inverness Botanics.</li> </ul>
2.7 Work with communities and partners to keep public spaces clean and safe.	<p>The Countryside Ranger team continues to carry out site checks on behalf of the Council and facilitate safe and responsible access to the outdoors through its schools and community programme of activities.</p>
2.8 Support Scottish and UK Government initiatives to ensure maximum digital connectivity across the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libraries provide free public access computers in sixty locations across the highlands which is a significant contribution to social inclusion. In addition, there is free Wi-Fi in all libraries and the majority of leisure/community centres.</li> <li>• In partnership with NHS Highland, iPads are available for free loan to Diabetes patients across the Highlands via Library loans.</li> <li>• The Google Workspace platform and Chromebooks have been introduced to benefit Adult &amp; Youth learners including Syrian refugee support and ESOL.</li> </ul>
2.9 Work with the Scottish Government on the delivery of improved transport infrastructure throughout the Highlands.	<p>Some of the HLH Community Centres, Leisure Centres and Libraries in Inverness and Fort William are partner facilities in the HI-BIKE electric bike share system in Inverness and Fort William. This contributes to the Council and its partners objectives relating to travel carbon reduction.</p>
2.10 Encourage private sector and public sector economic development partners in ensuring that Highland remains a top destination for inward investment.	<p>HLH has recently engaged with a number of Highland businesses to offer them a corporate <i>highlife</i> subscription package for their staff. 54 businesses have taken up the programme.</p>
2.11 Work with partners to develop a community wealth building strategy.	<p>HLH actively promotes volunteering and has a volunteering policy which includes recruitment, induction, training, and review for volunteers (annual volunteer figure over 1400).</p>

<b>3 Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes</b> <b>Dachaighean Gàidhealach So-ruigsinn agus Seasmhach</b>	
<b>Build houses to support communities and economic growth</b>	
3.4 Support the needs of veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant.	<p>HLH has achieved the Armed Forces Covenant, Employer Recognition Scheme, Gold Award and offers a discount on its leisure subscriptions and advertises posts to armed forces leavers as part of its support under the covenant. There are 231 Armed Forces subscriptions.</p> <p>In addition, HLH has designated an officer to represent the Charity on the local Military Liaison Group (MLG), contributing updates to its quarterly newsletter. HLH's Leadership Programme Officer has been working closely with the Army Welfare Officer to create a leadership training programme specifically for Army families.</p>
<b>4. A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy Àrainneachd Ghàidhealach Sheasmhach agus Ionad Cruinneil airson Lùth So-ùrachaid</b>	
<b>Accelerate our response to the climate and ecological emergency. Make the most of the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.</b>	
4.1 Promote active travel infrastructure across Highland.	<p>HLH promotes active travel through the provision of cycle facilities at many of its sites. Some of the HLH Community Centres, Leisure Centres and Libraries in Inverness and Fort William are partner facilities in the HI-BIKE electric bike share system in Inverness and Fort William. This contributes to the Council and its partners objectives relating to travel carbon reduction. HLH is supporting the emerging priorities of the Active Highland Strategy Group in relation to active travel.</p>
4.2 Promote greener transport including low carbon public transport and the development of hydrogen hubs throughout the area.	<p>The Council has installed electric charging points for cars at some HLH facilities.</p>
4.3 Work with communities to find local solutions and lever funding.	<p>The provision of local facilities minimises the requirement to travel and HLH provides facilities in communities throughout the Highlands on behalf of the Council. HLH provides mobile libraries which operate throughout the Highland area.</p> <p>Online and virtual developments, many as a result of the need to pivot due to the pandemic, are further opening up opportunities to access services that did not previously exist for all ages pre pandemic e.g., music tuition, archives, and libraries sessions. In addition to online leisure classes for all age groups, cardiac recovery, Macmillan, and Parkinson exercise classes are all available online.</p> <p>The Active Schools team aims to offer volunteer led activity in all Highland Schools, this work is focused on equalities and teams are working hard re-establish this now that restrictions have ceased.</p> <p>On behalf of THC, HLH provides five community minibuses which can be hired by local groups.</p>

4.4 Value and protect Highland's natural environment.	HLH provides a range of activities through archives and library services that protect and enhance the environment as well as encouraging people to enjoy environmental activities and participate in environmental education projects. Countryside ranger programmes further contribute to this outcome.
4.5 Encourage greater use of land and seas being well managed for nature and adaptation including blue economy, carbon sequestration, and peatland restoration.	<p>The Countryside Rangers worked with 247 community volunteers in 2022/23 to ensure habitats are well managed and monitored. Some highlights included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Farr Glebe Reserve - Habitat management for the Great Yellow Bumblebee</li> <li>2. Ardersier Commons – Butterfly monitoring in particular small blue butterfly and habitat management</li> <li>3. Thrift/Sea Pinks translocation from Ullapool Harbour</li> <li>4. Barnacle Goose Count (monitoring) at Balnakeil in Durness</li> <li>5. Removal of invasive gorse at Cromarty SSSI</li> <li>6. Habitat Management of Machair for wildflowers at Achmelvich/ Clachtoll</li> </ol> <p>In addition, the 2022 mammal project was a project designed to help raise awareness of the wide range of the special mammal species within the highlands. Engagement was working with schools and the public to find out more about the varied Highland species, their distribution both historic and at present and to teach the importance to highland ecology. The rangers engaged widely across Highlands on the project and further afield via online talks.</p>
4.7 Achieve our Net Zero targets.	Inverness Botanic Gardens is fully committed to 100% recycling and is a sector leader the sector in terms of carbon reduction and biodiversity. The Council and HLH work in partnership to install energy efficient systems such as LED lighting, biomass, solar panels with funding available to the Council – e.g., Salix funding.
4.9 Identify and commit to renewable energy investments to reduce the overall energy costs for the Council.	<p>The Council has installed Hydro Ness which provides power for Inverness Leisure.</p> <p>THC and HLH continue to work together to seek support from THC to undertake energy efficiency audits by the Councils energy team at its high use sites to support the strategic reduction of emissions and save on energy costs.</p>
4.11 Promote a “Just Transition” by moving to a more environmentally sustainable economy in a way that is fair to everyone.	HLH contributes to this outcome through the provision of its services and facilities throughout the Highland Council area. Its approach to low-cost access to leisure facilities has achieved and sustained high participation rates as well as an improved financial provision. Archives, museums, and visitor attractions also form part of what the Highlands has to offer, and they improve the quality of life for residents and improve the visitor experience.
<b>5. A Resilient and Sustainable Council</b> <b>Comhairle Fhulangach agus Sheasmhach</b>	
<b>Work with partners to address service delivery challenges with a positive approach to change.</b>	
5.1 Grow and retain our own talent within the Council.	HLH currently has seven modern apprenticeships in Leisure Centres, trainee archivist positions and works with UHI on student placements and training through its Memorandum of Understanding with UHI.

<p>5.2 Work with public and private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities.</p>	<p>The Council and HLH have a redeployment agreement to protect staff and jobs in the context of both organisations being committed to exploring service delivery redesign in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council. HLH attends Developing Young Workforce career fairs as part of the work which schools are doing with their pupils to support them in positive destinations and has signed up to the Young Person's Guarantee and works with THC's Employability team to host paid work placements within HLH.</p> <p>HLH also provides My Future My Success mentors to support young people in work.</p>
<p>5.4 Actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council.</p>	<p>The Council and HLH are working together on a review of the Service Delivery Contract to ensure that HLH is sustainable, and that service delivery is affordable for the Council.</p>
<p>5.5 Work together with communities and partners to produce local plans which meet communities' needs</p>	<p>HLH staff work with local community partnerships along with Ward managers on local service and community plans. HLH colleagues also contribute to the work of the CPP subgroups relating to the Highland Outcomes Improvement Plan such as the Mental Health Delivery Group.</p>
<p>5.6 Develop place-based partnership strategies to coordinate investment and rural repopulation</p>	<p>HLH delivers services right across the Highlands and employs local staff, thereby supporting local communities and their economies.</p>
<p>5.7 Continue the Council's success in attracting rural tourism infrastructure funding to provide improvements to local infrastructure.</p>	<p>HLH delivers a number of services which support tourism including visitor attractions; museums; countryside rangers; libraries; and leisure centres.</p> <p>22/23 - 8,938,120 customer visits footfall and virtual. Leisure - 2,172,513 footfall only.</p>
<p>5.8 Accelerate the delivery of our Asset Management approach to increase efficiency and reduce overheads and carbon impact</p>	<p>HLH has vacated its two headquarters buildings (Dingwall and Inverness) generating potential for a capital receipt (c £400k), along with circa £87k revenue savings for utilities and maintenance. Additionally, HLH has handed back to THC the Old Library at Wick, the old leisure administrative office in Thurso and the "Jannies Hoose" at Merkinch, for use by NHS Highland. This office rationalisation has been possible through the new ways of working and has been done in direct support of the Council's asset rationalisation strategy. There are further opportunities to rationalise buildings from which services are delivered which will be explored through the sports facilities strategy, and a wider HLH Asset Management review linked in with the service delivery contract review.</p>

HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND



# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

NOVEMBER 2023



ADULT LEARNING, ARCHIVES, ARTS, COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS,  
LEISURE FACILITIES, LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS, MUSIC DEVELOPMENT,  
SPORT, YOUTH WORK



**highlife**

highland  
na Gàidhealtachd

i-care integrity community accountability respect example

**MAKING  
LIFE  
BETTER**

**9M**

customer visits  
per year

**2/3**

*highlife* customers  
are in low to middle  
income households

*Currently there are over 9 million customer visits per annum to HLH services. Two thirds of HLH customers are from low to middle income households.*

ADULT LEARNING, ARCHIVES, ARTS, COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS,  
LEISURE FACILITIES, LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS, MUSIC DEVELOPMENT,  
SPORT, YOUTH WORK



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# IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE



High Life Highland (HLH) services support The Highland Council to achieve it's strategic priority outcomes including improving the quality of life and opportunities for people in Highland communities.

HLH is making life better for people by working together with the Council and other partners, such as NHS Highland, to improve physical, mental and social health and wellbeing.

HLH understands that providing universal services with added intensive support for vulnerable groups (proportionate universalism) is effective and is committed to helping to reduce health inequalities.

The service examples included within this report are universally available, with added intensive support for vulnerable groups, and are being delivered in response to the level of presenting need to help improve and maintain health and wellbeing in Highland communities.



## LOW-COST ACCESS TO LEISURE

The *highlife* leisure membership scheme was designed to support people who are financially disadvantaged to access leisure centre activities.

A postcode analysis has shown that two thirds of members are on middle to low incomes. card has resulted sustained a long-term, The *highlife* membership scheme has resulted in an increase in customer visits to leisure centres of 90%.

An important part of the scheme is the budget membership. This intensive support is available to people who are eligible for income related Government benefits who can participate in any leisure centre run activities for 50p per visit or a monthly fee of £3 (individual) or £5 (family) for unlimited usage.

People not eligible for budget membership can have unlimited access to leisure centre activities for £24.85 (individual) or £37.40 (family) per month. Please see item 12 on this [HLH Board report](#).

*“Offering free or concessionary entrance charges to use municipal facilities such as swimming pools or gyms is one way that local authorities can support people to be active.”*

*National Institute for Health and Care Research*

Removing cost related barriers to accessing leisure facilities is proven to increase overall population levels of physical activity while reducing inequalities.

*“our evaluation shows that the classes are valued by those who attend and provide considerable health and wellbeing benefits”*

## What Works Scotland Evidence Review

# FALLS PREVENTION

Falls are a significant public health concern, 1 in 3 people aged 65+yrs will experience a fall each year. Falls and fractures present a serious threat to older people’s health, wellbeing, and independence.

Since 2012 HLH has offered evidence-based falls prevention exercise classes, currently on average **175 people take part in classes across Highland every month**, either face-to-face or online.



An outcome-focused evaluation of the programme (2018) by What Works Scotland (partnership initiative between Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow plus Scottish Government), can be [viewed here](#).

The evaluation highlights physical benefits and wellbeing value to people, corroborated by views of care home staff and exercise class instructors and physical balance tests.

The benefits included an increased sense of confidence, increased engagement in other activities out with the classes, improved knowledge and strategies to both preventing falls and knowing how to deal with one, as well as improved balance and posture.





## INEQUALITIES IN LONG-TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS

*People in lower socio-economic groups are more likely to have long-term health conditions, and these conditions tend to be more severe than those experienced by people in higher socio-economic groups. Deprivation also increases the likelihood of having more than one long-term condition at the same time, and on average people in the most deprived fifth of the population develop multiple long-term conditions 10 years earlier than those in the least deprived fifth. ([The Kings Fund](#), 2022)*

HLH offers a variety of targeted physical and social activities in a programme called Dynamic Wellbeing which support people with a range of long-term health conditions including (but not limited to): arthritis; chronic pain; type 2 diabetes; and neurological conditions.

Dynamic Wellbeing focusses on what people are physically able to do rather than the health condition they have been diagnosed with, providing a holistic and inclusive programme which enables improved physical and mental health outcomes.

On average **76 people take part in Dynamic Wellbeing each month** - the number is expected to rise as sign-posting from health professionals begins to increase.

# CARDIAC REHABILITATION

Cardio Vascular Disease is known to be among the largest contributors to health inequalities, accounting for one-fifth of the life expectancy gap between most and least deprived communities. ([UK Government, 2021](#))

The rate of heart disease in Highland is higher than the Scottish average, which is why, since 2012, HLH has worked in partnership with the specialist Cardiac Rehabilitation teams in Raigmore Hospital, Ross Memorial Hospital and also in the Lochaber and Caithness Districts, to deliver rehabilitation for people that have had a cardiac event.

A number of HLH Tutor Coach colleagues have been upskilled and trained to become specialist exercise Level 4 cardiac rehabilitation coaches

to support people into exercise following a cardiac event. An average of **38 people attend HLH cardiac rehabilitation classes every month** either online or face-to-face.

Referrals can be made to the programme by Specialist Physiotherapists and Nurses who work closely with the HLH team to ensure a safe pathway from secondary care to community based self-management. There is a significant body of evidence that supports the efficacy of cardiac rehabilitation and in summary, cardiac rehabilitation reduces both cardiovascular mortality and episodes of acute hospitalisation whilst also improving functional capacity and perceived quality of life. ([BACPR, 2017](#))







## LIVE IT

It is well understood that diabetes is more prevalent in disadvantaged groups. ([Diabetes Therapy](#), 2021)

The Live It programme aims to support people with pre diabetes or type 2 diabetes to manage their condition.

Live It is a 6 week course which is offered both face-to-face and online and covers topics such food, mood, physical activity, sleep and stress in relation to diabetes.

**85** people have taken part in Live It to date

Quotes from participants include:

"It is more beneficial than any medicine. The programme was hugely educational and anyone with pre-diabetes or diabetes would highly benefit in attending!"

"I can now help myself manage diabetes and enjoy life! This course simplifies how to eat sensibly and enjoyably. I knew diet could impact diabetes, but had no idea stress and not enough sleep had an impact."

"I have a more rounded understanding of type 2 and I know how I can try to avoid medication."

# OLDER ADULTS - YOU TIME

The principles of proportional universalism have been applied to reducing inequalities for older adults by augmenting HLH programmes to provide opportunities for older people to be physically, socially and mentally active that are fun and accessible is an important part of maintaining independence, preventing ill health, reducing loneliness, and improving wellbeing.

HLH's You Time programme provides a wide range of activities with an average of **750 older people participating in activities each month**.

The University of the Highlands and Islands undertook an evaluation of the HLH You Time programme in 2018 (report attached) and the findings included:

- You Time is having greatest impacts in the older and aging sections of the population
- There are increases in number of times exercising over time for those taking part
- The programme has provided participants with 2 additional opportunities to socialise per week
- Increased opportunities to socialise were more pronounced in small towns and rural areas
- You Time programme has potential wider benefits, particularly in the areas of reduced primary care visits; reduced medication costs; increasing heart health and reducing falls.





## ESCAPE PAIN

ESCAPE-pain is a national programme developed by Osteoarthritis UK, it is an innovative and evidence-based, cost effective, group rehabilitation programme for people with chronic joint pain, which integrates educational self-management and coping strategies with an exercise regimen individualised for each participant which increases physical function and improves quality of life.

To date **>150 people have participated in HLH's ESCAPE-pain programme.** Participants are asked to complete a survey before and after participating in the programme, survey findings highlight people experience less pain and feel better able to manage pain and to function well and that their overall quality of life has greatly improved.







## SOCIAL PRESCRIBING & GP MAP

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Social Prescribing involves connecting people to non-clinical supports and services in communities.

A range of HLH's services, initiatives, projects and opportunities contribute to Social Prescribing in Highland including the GP Movement & Activity Programme (MAP).

It has been important to HLH to enable health professionals, particularly those in primary care, to refer people to the range of local, non-clinical services which HLH offers.

HLH recognises that people's health and wellbeing are determined mostly by a range of social, economic and environmental factors and HLH is well placed to address people's needs in a holistic way and support individuals to take greater control of their own health.

GP MAP provides GPs the option to signpost patients to HLH leisure facilities to access everything the centres have to offer that can support their health and wellbeing.

The programme started in Dingwall and Tain and recently extended to Gairloch and Ullapool GP Practices.

HLH is in discussion with Change Mental Health to potentially extend the pilot to include an option for their Community Link Workers (based in 29 GP Practices across Highland) to also be able to connect their patients to HLH facilities in their localities .



## PARKINSON'S EXERCISE

HLH provides support to people affected by Parkinson's Disease through a dedicated exercise programme which is available across the Highlands both face-to-face and online.

HLH specialist exercise instructors help participants to keep well by providing group exercise classes in a range of locations (including online) as well as specifically tailored information such as how to exercise safely at home and how to access resources on topics like how to eat well.



The exercise programmes have been planned in consultation with Parkinson's UK Scotland and NHS Highland, resulting in people affected by Parkinson's having a choice of ways to keep active and connected to others who are also affected by Parkinson's.

It is now well understood that if people can keep active it can significantly improve functional capacity, fitness and quality of life as well as reducing the risk of ill health, disease recurrence, deterioration of condition, risk of falling and even acute hospital admissions whilst also helping to manage symptoms. ([Parkinson's UK](#), 2023)

There are currently on average **48 people from across Highland who are affected by Parkinson's that are participating in HLH's Parkinson's Exercise programme each month.**



## DIGITAL INCLUSION

HLH libraries provide technological support for people living with type 2 diabetes through loaning iPads packed with information and support. The growing prevalence of type 2 diabetes and providing technology, loaded with health information, access to online peer support, online education and helping people access appointments aims to improve people's access to technology, loaded with health

The project is a partnership with NHS Highland, High Life Highland, Diabetes Scotland and AbilityNet. The iPads include mobile internet connections as well as training and support for people at risk of diabetes and those newly diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

National Director at Diabetes Scotland Angela Mitchell said: "We heard first-hand from people in Highland about what really helped when they were first diagnosed and being digitally connected gives people living with diabetes the opportunity to access online resources, support and even healthcare.

"About 10% of the UK population is still digitally excluded – particularly people on a low income, and rates of type 2 diabetes are 80% higher in our most deprived communities, so we know there is a real need for those communities to be connected to support."



## NEAR ME

HLH is working with NHS Highland to improve digital access in libraries to health, social care and public services through the delivery of the Near Me initiative.

Through this programme members of the public are provided with a private space and suitable digital device within the library to make "Near Me" video calls.

Near Me is a secure form of video consulting for health and social care appointments which is approved for use by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland.

The Near Me video consulting service enables people to attend appointments from home or wherever is convenient and in this case a private space within public libraries.

The service is widely used across NHS Scotland for health and care appointments with around 20,000 consultation being held every week.

This collaboration with NHS Highland is part of a national roll out across a wide range of public services which we hope will enable people who are unable to access Near Me from home the opportunity to do so in a safe and confidential space in their local library.





# SUICIDE INTERVENTION & PREVENTION PROGRAMME (SIPP)

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There is, sadly, a higher rate of suicides than the Scottish average in Highland.

Suicide can be preventable through encouraging help-seeking and providing sources of support

Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme (SIPP) is a multi agency training delivered on behalf of the Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP) to provide support for people who may be at risk.

The aims and objectives of SIPP are to improve awareness of suicidal thinking; increase confidence to ask someone if they are feeling suicidal and to enable people to feel able to support someone at risk to seek further help.

All colleagues from Highland Community Planning Partner organisations are invited to attend SIPP training including:

- Any staff/volunteers who want to be able to help someone who might be at risk of suicide
- All NHS staff (including clinical staff), council, frontline services, third Sector who have patient/client/service user/public contact who have had no previous suicide awareness training.

HLH is supporting the role out of SIPP by delivering some of the training with other partners.





## RESEARCH PROJECTS

HLH has collaborated with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) on a number of research studies to help improve service delivery and outcomes for participants in HLH programmes.

The research studies have included:

- [the impact of home based and online exercise compared to face-to-face classes in leisure settings](#)
- [support for people affected by Type 2 Diabetes into physical activity](#)
- [prescribing cultural and green health activities for people with mental health problems](#)

Collaborating with UHI has enabled HLH to develop new and innovative activities, initiatives and services which support our endeavours to improve and maintain the mental, physical and social health and wellbeing of Highland communities.

Being involved in research has had many benefits to HLH including: validation of new ideas; reducing cost and risk; supporting the development of research skills internally as well as raising the profile of HLH as a trusted partner.

These collaborations with UHI have also enabled longer term benefits, for example supporting HLH's move to delivering efficient and effective online services.





## More Information

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