



Highland Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group Newsletter Spring 2025



Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group (MHDG) newsletter produced by NHS Highland - Health Improvement Team, on behalf of the Highland Community Planning Partnership (HCPP) Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group

As the days lengthen into Spring and there are signs that much of the natural environment around us is waking up after Winter, there is a sense of renewal and energy that comes with the Season.

For many people, having more opportunity to get out into nature now that the days are warmer and longer can have a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing and their ability to manage stress and anxiety. However, for others this is a time when societal expectations of fresh starts and boundless energy can have a negative impact as they struggle to meet expectations of being productive, more social and making the most of the better weather and longer days.

As the world moves from hibernation mode to full steam ahead, some of us might just need a moment for our mental health to catch up. It is no surprise then that April is designated Stress Awareness Month and that at this time of year, as much as any, it is important to practice self-care.

I hope this Spring edition of the Highland Community Planning Partnership, Mental Health Delivery Group newsletter will help raise awareness of stress, anxiety and mental health and provide useful information on resources and sources of support to help support positive mental health and wellbeing.

Cathy Steer, Chair of Highland Mental Health Delivery Group

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#LeadWithLove

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Spread the word via this newsletter! Keep us updated please?

The Mental Health Delivery Group Explained

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April is Stress Awareness Month



STRESS - the GOOD, the BAD and the EXTREME

The GOOD

In life, stress can be a driving force. It keeps us safe by keeping our body alert and prepared to respond to life's challenges. It can feel good, the adrenaline rush when on a rollercoaster or when we do things that excite us.

The BAD

Good stress deteriorates when we're responding to or facing situations or events that we have less control of. In these intermittent circumstances we experience the less pleasant side of stress, but with careful attention and time to recover, healthy normality can return.

The EXTREME

This is where the balance tips. Stressful events and demands are constant, relentless even, leaving our minds and body's less time to recover and recharge. Humans are not designed to function in this relentless environment and it can take a mental and physical toll.

[verywellmind](https://www.verywellmind.com/)

#LeadWithLove



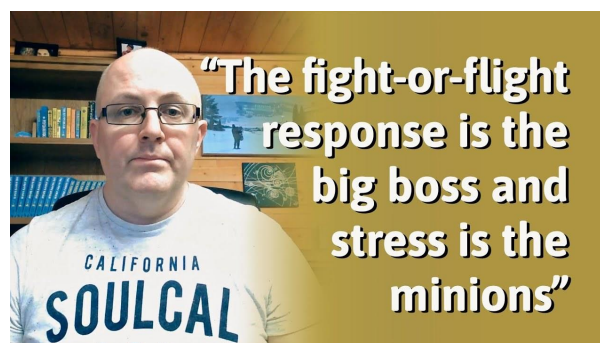
The Stress Management Society have chosen this years awareness months theme as **#LeadWithLove**. They ask that we think about taking kindness, compassion and acceptance into our relationships with others and towards ourselves.

"In today's world, where stress often thrives in the midst of conflict, tension, and division, we believe that love is the universal force capable of shifting the narrative. By choosing love as our starting point, we embrace empathy, prioritize understanding, and create positive change in every interaction."

"Whether it's extending a gesture of kindness to someone nearby, offering support to global communities, or simply practicing self-love, even the smallest acts of love can spark powerful waves of positivity that ripple outward"

[Stress Management Society 2025](#)

The science of STRESS and how it affects our body



Dr Dean Burnett, neuroscientist and author explains all. (3 minute watch)

Alcohol, Drugs and Stress



Alcohol and drugs are often used as self-medication for serious stress, mental pain or distress.

Using alcohol and drugs as a way to cope with life's challenges and problems is common across the general population, as well as for people who have a diagnosed mental health problem. However the impact substance use has on life, our bodies and our relationships, can increase stress in our life.

The Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership's website has a wealth of information about the effects of drugs and alcohol as well as helpful services, if alcohol or drugs are becoming a problem for you or someone else.

Website: [Help and Support - Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership](#)



A source of information for people with drug and/or alcohol problems, and their families or friends, that helps prevent overdose and encourages engagement.



Get it on
Google Play



Download on the
App Store

Available for both Android and iPhone

The **HOPE app** is a source of information for people with drug and or alcohol problems, as well as their families or friends, which helps prevent overdose and encourages engagement with services that can help.

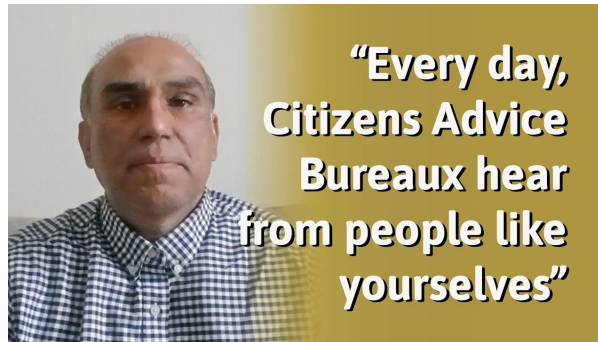
It contains information on what to do in an emergency overdose situation for both depressant and stimulant drugs. Harm reduction information and details on how to contact a range of support services are also available on the app.

Poverty causing stress and mental 'illbeing'



[Mind: Fighting for the mental health of people living in poverty Research findings report: August 2021](#)

- A quarter of people experiencing a common mental health problem also have financial problems, 3 times more than the general population.
- People with mental health problems can fall into a 'spiral of adversity' where unemployment, income and relationships are affected by their mental health experiences, creating a poverty and poor mental health trap. (Faculty of Public Health, Mental Health Foundation, 2016).
- Some people, experiencing poverty, feel more disempowered talking about or reaching out for support for mental health



Coping with Money Stress

Saleem's Story: How Citizens Advice can help (1 minute 40 secs watch)



Worrying About Money? Highland app

NHS Highland in partnership with the Highland Council have created an app to help people worrying about money.

The 'Worrying About Money? Highland' app is available for Apple and Android devices.

You can download it now by searching for 'Worrying About Money? Highland' in the [Google Play Store \(external link\)](#) and [Apple app store \(external link\)](#) or scan the QR codes:

Step 3: Where can I get help?

Each of these services offer free and confidential advice

Highland Council
The Welfare Support Team provide free, impartial and confidential support to claim all entitlements that are due to you
0800 590 1024
welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

Help with options: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Citizens Advice Bureau
Free, impartial and confidential advice on benefits, debt, money and housing

Caithness
01847 554 243
www.caithnesscab.org

North and West Sutherland
01871 521 730
www.nwscab.org.uk

East and Central Sutherland
01408 633 000
www.ecscab.org.uk

Ross and Cromarty
01349 863 333
www.rossandcromartycab.org.uk

Skye and Lochalish
01478 612 032
www.skab.org.uk

Nairn
01667 456 877
www.nairncab.org.uk

Lochalish
01397 705 311
www.lochalishcab.org.uk

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspay
01463 237 664
www.invernesscab.org

Help with options: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Updated on 17/08/24
Share your experience of using this guide:
www.scot.gov.uk/feedback

Step 3: Where can I get help?

Scottish Welfare Fund
Crisis grants to cover the cost of an emergency
0800 083 1887 | www.highland.gov.uk/welfare-fund

Social Security Scotland
You may be eligible for support from Social Security Scotland. For example, Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant & Best Start Foods can help with the costs of having a child.
0800 162 2222 (toll-free) | mygov.scot/benefits

Other Support

Home Energy Scotland
Free, impartial energy efficiency advice to help save on bills and stay warm at home
0800 808 2202 | www.homeenergyscotland.org

Shelter
Free housing advice
0800 800 4444 | scotland.shelter.org.uk

Breathing Space
Confidential helpline for anyone feeling low, anxious or depressed
0800 83 85 87 | www.breathingspace.scot

Salvation Army
Free housing advice
01463 234 123

Worrying About Money? Highland App
Scan the QR code to download the app and find out more about local support.

Apple Android

Interactive version:
www.worryingaboutmoney.co.uk/highland

Worrying About Money?

Financial advice and support is available if you're struggling to make ends meet

Follow these steps to find out where to get help in Highland

Supported by:

NHS Highland, Public Health, The Highland Council, Foodbank, The Highland Council, The Highland Council, The Highland Council

Scottish Welfare Fund
Financial Advice Scotland

Step 1: What's the problem?

I suddenly have no money

- Lost job/reduced hours
- Lost money/unexpected expense
- Disaster (e.g. flood or fire)
- Relationship breakdown
- Money stopped (e.g. failed a medical)
- Sanctioned - see option 5

See options 1 2 5 6

I am waiting on a benefit payment/decision

- Made a new claim for benefit
- Benefit payment is delayed
- Waiting for a benefit decision

See options 1 4

My money doesn't stretch far enough

- Deciding between food/fuel/mobile credit
- Low income or zero hours contract
- Statutory Sick Pay too low to cover costs
- Not sure if eligible for support
- Change of circumstance (e.g. new baby/bereavement/illness/partner)

See options 1 2

I have debt

- Rent or Council Tax arrears
- Gas or electricity
- Credit or store cards
- Personal loans and overdrafts
- Owe friends and family
- Benefit repayments

See option 3

Step 2: What are some options?

1 Scottish Welfare Fund
People on low incomes may be able to get a crisis grant from the Council.
This is a payment to help you cope during an emergency or disaster, or due to unexpected expenses. Crisis grants do not have to be paid back (not a loan).
www.highland.gov.uk/welfare-fund

2 Maximise Your Income
Anyone who is struggling financially can get a benefit check and speak to an advisor for free and confidential advice.
A benefit check can ensure that you are receiving all the money you're entitled to, especially if your circumstances have changed recently. Speaking to an advisor could also help you with managing gas and electricity bills and make sure you're not missing out on things like school clothing grants or free school meals.

3 Debt Advice
Debt can happen to anyone. Free advice and support can help you find ways to manage your debts and reduce how much you pay each month.

4 Benefit Advance
If you have made a new claim for benefit and are in financial hardship while you wait for your first payment, you may be able to get an advance to afford things like rent or food. It's important to get advice before taking out an advance. Benefit advances must be paid back, and the money will be taken from your future benefit payments (a loan).

5 Hardship Payment
If you have been sanctioned, you may be able to request a hardship payment from the Jobcentre. Hardship payments are not always paid immediately, and they're not available to everyone. Hardship payments of Universal Credit need to be paid back (a loan), but hardship payments of Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance do not (not a loan).

6 Challenge a Decision
You can challenge a benefit decision if your benefit has been stopped / sanctioned / reduced / refused or you have been overpaid. Most benefit decisions need to be challenged within one month.

Step 3: Where can I get help with these options?

Access 'Worrying About Money?' leaflets online at www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/cash-first-leaflets

Knowing what help is out there is difficult.

Download this leaflet by [CLICKING HERE](#)

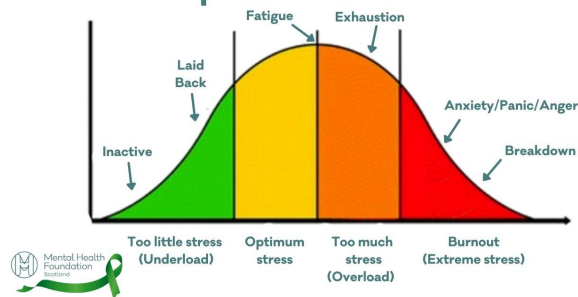
OR

[CLICK HERE](#) to find an interactive tool that will guide you to the right kind of help and support for you.

Managing Exam Stress



Stress performance curve



Be Kind An act of kindness you could show yourself	Step Away 3 things you enjoy, to do in revision breaks	Time for You Something to look forward to	Bigger Picture 5 things that make you - YOU, outside of schoolwork
Prioritise Wellbeing Something to look after yourself eg. a drink of water	One step at a time 3 things you have achieved today eg. made your bed	Find your Rhythm A plan for the day - include breaks!	Support Network Someone you could talk to



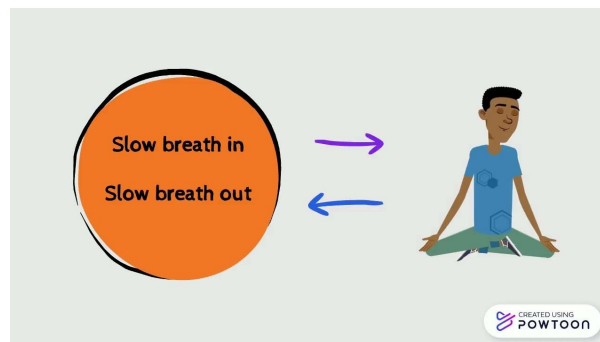
[Young Scot in partnership with young leaders from the Mental Health Foundation](#) came up with 8 top tips for managing exam stress. They link it alongside this useful 'stress performance curve' to help us understand the good, the bad and the extreme nature of stress

1. Be kind to yourself: be patient with yourself and use kind language when you are doubting yourself or feel frustrated – it matters for our mental health.
2. Step away from your books: plan regular breaks into your revision schedule, and try to get outside when you can – it really helps with focus.
3. Protect time for yourself: plan in little things to look forward to that you enjoy – it helps our mood and increases our productivity when we are studying.
4. Focus on the bigger picture: remember that exams are not the only measure of success, there are lots of things that make you, you.

5. Prioritise your wellbeing: keep yourself mentally and physically healthy during this busy time – try to eat well, stay hydrated, move your body and get good quality sleep.
6. Take one step at a time: take every hour or day at a time and try to stay present in the moment. Practising mindfulness can help with this.
7. Find your rhythm: create a plan, list or timetable that works for you – make sure to include those breaks to keep your mind balanced!
8. Reach out to your support network: reach out to people you trust in your network, remember you are not alone in this.

Self Help - ideas to help manage stress

Take a Breather



Even when things feel overwhelming, it is possible to settle our brain and emotions. A few minutes of conscious breathing, where the *in breath* and the *out breath* are around 5 seconds long each, can help activate calmness and safety in the body.

Try it for yourself by taking a few minutes from your day.

Mindfulness- why try it?



The Mental Health Foundation tells us that practicing mindfulness or meditation can help you to become more aware of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations so that instead of being overwhelmed by them, you will be better able to manage them. It can help you to:

- Understand that stress is a natural response to a challenge
- Pay attention to your thoughts and emotions AND be kind to yourself
- Turn your stress and anxiety into things you can do to help you cope

Want to know more about this practice?

The [Highland Mindfulness Group](#) provides beginner's mindfulness courses and support, plus motivation and continued training in all aspects of mindfulness meditation for anyone who has completed basic mindfulness training.

They are in process of re-organising this website to make it more user friendly, but if you are looking for something specific and can't find it by using the search box, you can email them on highlandmindfulness@gmail.com for help.

Take Time Outside



"Taking time to enjoy your local outdoor green space could bring you huge health benefits – getting outdoors is good for your physical, mental, and social well-being. Regardless of age and ability, there really is something for everyone, including groups and organisations in your local area that can support you.

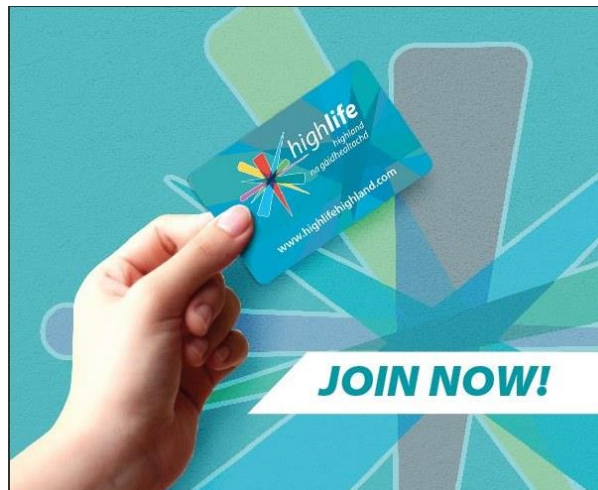
You may not be the “outside type” but we aren’t talking mountain climbing and adrenalin sports here, we’re talking small steps to make a positive change"

Think Health Think Nature is here as a free resource to help you explore and enjoy your local green spaces.

Follow this link to Think Health Think Nature website for more information and ideas

[Think Health Think Nature](#)

Physical Activity with highlife Highland



Budget Family

Only pay 50p per activity

[Sign up as Budget Family](#)

WHY CHOOSE THIS PLAN?

- ✓ 2 adults and unlimited U18s within your household
- ✓ Only available to those receiving benefits
- ✓ Only for residents of Highlands and Islands
- ✓ Book up to 7 days in advance
- ✓ Able to book online

Budget Individual

Only pay 50p per activity

[Sign up as Budget Individual](#)

WHY CHOOSE THIS PLAN?

- ✓ Only available to those receiving benefits
- ✓ Only for residents of Highlands and Islands
- ✓ Book up to 7 days in advance
- ✓ Able to book online

Individual

All inclusive membership

£26.60 / month

Your plan will cost £28.99 per month from 8 April 2025.

[Sign up as Individual](#)

WHY CHOOSE THIS PLAN?

- ✓ No minimum contract
- ✓ No joining fees
- ✓ Access to over 25 leisure facilities
- ✓ Group fitness classes
- ✓ Book up to 7 days in advance
- ✓ Includes term time swimming lessons
- ✓ Discounted access to premium services such as Love to Swim & Personal Training
- ✓ Pay by Direct Debit
- ✓ Able to book online

Family

All inclusive membership

£39.99 / month

Your plan will cost £42.99 per month from 8 April 2025.

[Sign up as Family](#)

WHY CHOOSE THIS PLAN?

- ✓ 2 adults and unlimited U18s within your household
- ✓ No minimum contract
- ✓ No joining fees
- ✓ Access to over 25 leisure facilities
- ✓ Group fitness classes
- ✓ Book up to 7 days in advance
- ✓ Includes term time swimming lessons
- ✓ Discounted access to premium services such as Love to Swim & Personal Training
- ✓ Pay by Direct Debit
- ✓ Able to book online

highlife membership offers you and your family access to a range of health and fitness opportunities in leisure centres throughout the Highlands. In addition to swimming pools and fitness suites, your membership gets you access to court activities, swimming lessons and a huge range of group exercise classes for people of all abilities and interests

If you access government benefits - cost - **50p per session**

Website : [Join High Life Highland](#)

Click on these images to find out about the different packages on offer

If things get really tough, you are not alone, people are out there, ready and waiting to help

If you or someone else is experiencing mental distress and you are worried about your own or someone else's immediate safety:

- Call 999 or go straight to A+E immediately.
- If you are calling for someone else, try to establish the person's, name, contact details and location

If the crisis is not life-threatening but you are concerned for your own or somebody else's mental wellbeing:

- Advise them to call NHS 24 on 111 or speak to their GP. The route into formal mental health services is through a GP surgery.
- If someone discloses to you that they are already being supported for their own mental health, it's useful to link them to where they are currently receiving support

Important Support Line Numbers and Links

- [NHS 24](#) on 111
- [Samaritans](#) on 116 123
- [Breathing Space](#) on 0800 83 85 87 (6pm Friday – 6am Monday & 6pm – 2am on weekdays)
- [Mikeysline](#) text and multimedia crisis support
- [Shout](#) by texting 85258
- [Clear Your Head](#) website

Prevent Suicide Highland

Available for both Android and iPhone



If you need urgent help with suicidal thoughts call:
Samaritans on 116 123 or
Breathing Space on 0800 83 85 87

Encourage everyone to download the FREE Prevent Suicide Highland App.

An information resource and safety planning/discussion tool for the whole community

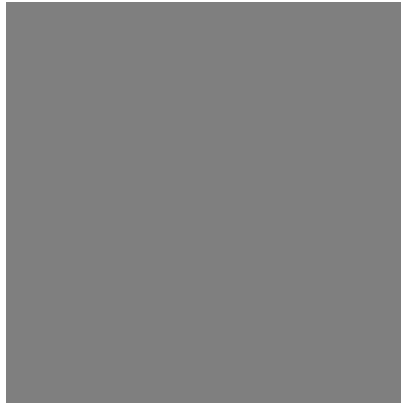
[ANDROID LINK](#), [APPLE LINK](#) or scan the QR codes

Learning and Development

FREE for all staff/volunteers and community groups

A wealth of training opportunities can be found by selecting the Training tab of the Highland Mental Wellbeing website [CLICK HERE](#)

By scanning the QR codes or clicking the links below, you'll be taken to Turas Learn to find dates and availability.



How to Access Turas Learn

Turas Learn is a website for health and social care staff to find and record learning, including eLearning modules and courses. Watch the video to find out how to:

- Register for Turas Learn
- Sign in to find learning resources
- Find your Learning Record

NHS Highland Health Improvement Training Programme

Training delivered by NHS Highland Health Improvement colleagues is available to anyone working in Highland.

Topics include:

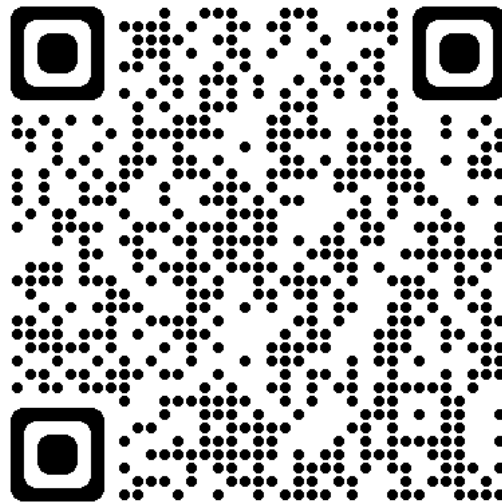
suicide prevention; mental health awareness; Scottish Mental Health First Aid;

There is also training which supports us all to address health inequalities such as e.g. poverty, discrimination which we know lead to poorer physical and mental health .

For further information please download the programme using this link:

[Health Improvement Training \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://scot.nhs.uk/health-improvement-training)

Money Counts

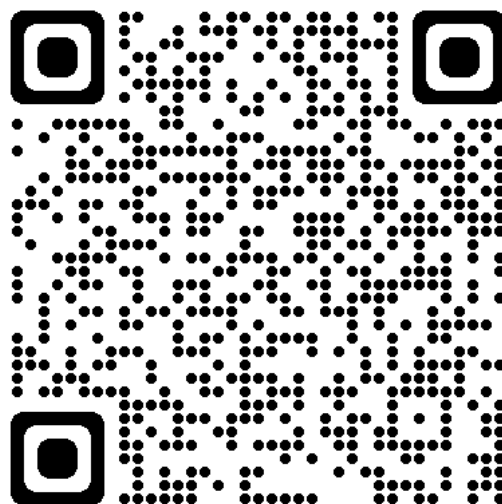


[Money counts](#)

This aim of this course is to build the confidence of staff working with people that may benefit from income maximisation help. It aims to increase staff understanding of poverty and the importance of asking about money worries, and increase knowledge of what support agencies can provide to those needing financial support.

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/48351>

Health inequalities - [why bother?]

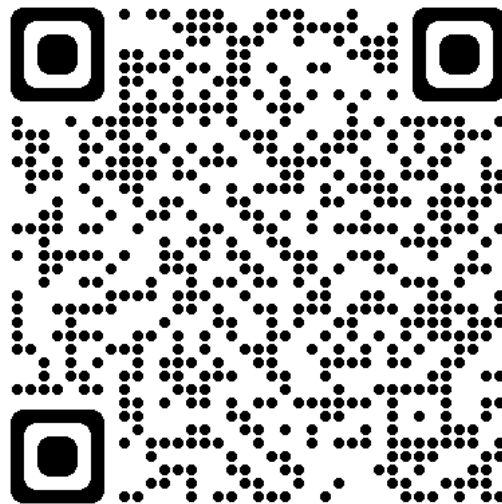


Health inequalities - [why bother?]

The aim of this course is to explore why tackling inequalities is the responsibility of everyone, what works to tackle health inequalities and explore how to apply this learning in your own working practices.

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/41809>

An introduction to mental health and wellbeing



An introduction to mental health and wellbeing

The aim of this course is to provide the essential knowledge and skills required by all staff working in health and social care or within partner organisations to positively impact on their own and others mental health and well-being.

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/62849>

Highland Mental Wellbeing Resource Website





On the Highland Mental Wellbeing website you will be able to find a wealth of information and local services supporting communities across Highland.

FIND A SERVICE, has a filter option to help you narrow down your search and find the right support for you, in your area.

TRAINING section provides information about training available around the Highlands, provided by many different organisations covering various topics.

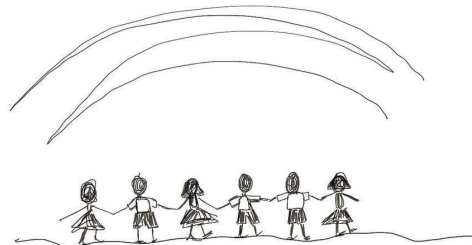
RESOURCES, a broad range of free downloadable resources and apps covering themes such as stress, grief, money worries, mental distress and suicide

EVENTS tab aims to highlight upcoming training and events. It needs you, in local areas, to tell us what's planned, so please tell us about it so it can be shared for the benefit of all concerned. You'll find a contact form in the next section - Spread the Word....

NEWSLETTERS, all editions of the newsletter will be uploaded on the website. They are packed with information and resources

The website can be accessed by scanning the QR code or [CLICKING HERE](#)

Spread the word via this newsletter!



together we can do so much -

JEN.

The MHDG would welcome the views of everyone from across Highland, who is interested in improving the mental health and wellbeing of people in their local communities.

If you have anything you want to include in our next newsletter, e.g. services you wish to highlight, exciting local initiatives that other areas may wish to replicate, please complete this electronic form,

or alternatively,

download a word version using [this link](#) and scroll to the bottom of the page. Once completed email it to **nhsh.mentalhealthtraining@nhs.scot**

The information in the newsletter or the mental health and wellbeing website is only as good as the day it is published.

We work hard to keep it updated but cannot guarantee everything is 100% current unless **all partners and local community planning groups keep us updated.**

Thankyou to those people who are already keeping us updated!

Keep us updated



No matter where in Highland you live or work, whether you organise/lead/attend a service, activity or training, please allow us to help you share information about it through this newsletter and the Highland Mental Health and Wellbeing Website

[CLICK HERE](#) to complete a very short form

Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group (MHDG) Explained



The MHDG is one of 3 regional sub groups of the [Highland Community Planning Partnership](#) (HCPP). The partnership brings together public agencies, third sector organisations and other key community groups to work collaboratively with the people of Highland to deliver better outcomes.

Other regional groups:

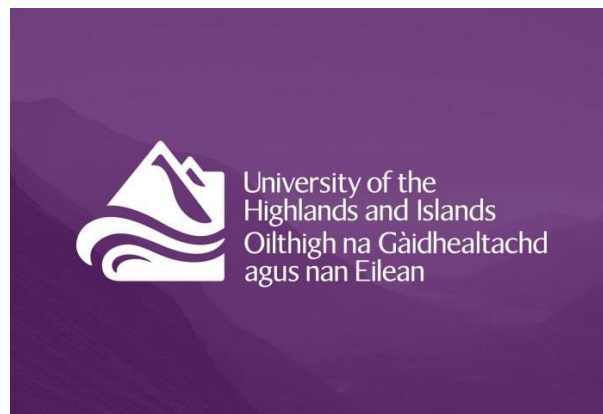
- [Poverty Reduction.](#)
- [Community Safety and Resilience](#)

AIM - ALL PEOPLE IN HIGHLAND WILL BENEFIT FROM GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

This multi agency group is chaired by Cathy Steer, Head of Health Improvement NHS Highland and is committed to

- Sharing best practice, ideas and resources, avoiding duplication of effort
- Act as a coordinating group for delivery of the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention priorities including the Creating Hope Together in Highland action plan.
- Developing an action plan that reflects identified need as highlighted via services from people with lived experience and from data provided both nationally and locally
- Ensuring the people around the virtual table represent the range of activities and services from communities across all [9 local community partnership areas](#)







[Click on the images to see all partners](#)
