



Summer 2026 Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter

Welcome to our Summer Mental Health Delivery Group newsletter. We are already in the swing of Summer and with warmer weather and longer daylight hours, we are provided with more opportunities to spend time outdoors. Summer can bring welcome opportunities to pause, reconnect and look after ourselves and one another. For some people, however, this time of year can also bring changes in routine, financial pressures, caring responsibilities, loneliness or worries that affect wellbeing.

In this edition, we share information about a range of initiatives that are available in Highland to support our mental health and offer some simple ideas to support wellbeing over the summer months — from getting active in ways that feel manageable, spending time in nature, staying connected with others, taking notice of small moments, and knowing where to turn if extra support is needed. We hope you find something useful, encouraging and easy to try, whether for yourself, your family, your team or your community.

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Centred & The Men's Shed

The Men's Shed at the Wellington Centre in Wick provides a vital lifeline for many people across Caithness. Run by Centred, the Men's Shed offers a welcoming and supportive environment where people can connect with others, reduce loneliness, and build confidence by learning new skills. This support is more important than ever, with the male suicide rate being 2.9 times higher than the female rate in 2024, continuing a long-standing trend.

[Probable Suicides, 2024 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)

For many, it is much more than a place to meet; it is a safe space to talk, share experiences, and feel part of a community. Members have recently been transforming the outdoor area by landscaping the garden and coming up with innovative ways to re-use materials to create an attractive and practical communal space that can be enjoyed by everyone who uses the centre.



To help ensure this invaluable service can continue, the Caithness Centred team will be taking on the challenge of climbing Ben Bhraggie on Saturday, 15 August 2026. The 396-metre ascent is no easy feat, but every step will help raise essential funds to support

the Men's Shed in Wick. As the largest mental health charity in the Scottish Highlands, Centred is committed to improving mental wellbeing across Highland communities, and every penny raised from this fundraiser will go directly to supporting the Men's Shed.

If you are able, please consider making a donation and help us continue to provide this vital local service, enabling the Men's Shed to support even more people and further develop projects that benefit the wider community.

Find out more about [Centred](#).

Clarity Walk



[Clarity Walk](#) is an initiative of Centred Scotland. It's a free service, wholly volunteer led in Inverness and the surrounding region. It was created for people who are lonely, isolated, or suffering from poor mental or physical wellbeing. Walks vary from small, simple, and accessible walks to longer and more challenging walks. However, every walk ends with the same connection, a hot drink and a snack, and a chance to talk and build friendships and connections.

Walks run regularly each week with a schedule available to view online via their [Inverness page](#).

PeerChat



PeerChat is a new one-to-one digital peer support service from The Mix, designed specifically for young people aged 16–25.

PeerChat offers bookable 45 minute webchat sessions with trained young peer supporters, providing a safe, confidential space for young people to talk through challenges they may be facing, from mental health and relationships to stress, identity and daytoday worries. The service has been developed and codesigned with young people, in response to growing demand for more human, relatable support, particularly for those who may feel uncomfortable accessing traditional helplines or clinical services.

You can find the webchat service [PeerChat page](#) on The MIX website.

The MIX is essential support for those under 25 and as well as PeerChat they also have varied ways you can access support and advice through support groups, discussion boards and one to one counselling. They also have podcasts and You Tube videos to support your mental wellbeing.

To find out more about what The MIX can offer click on [their website](#).

Three promotional posters for PeerChat from The Mix are displayed side-by-side. Each poster features a pink heart character and a yellow star character. The first poster on the left has a yellow background and lists benefits like '45 minutes', 'Confidential', and 'No judgement'. The middle poster has a white background and lists topics you can talk about, such as 'Relationships or friendships' and 'Stress, anxiety or low mood'. The third poster on the right has a yellow background and includes a QR code for booking a session.

Need someone to talk to?

PeerChat from The Mix is free, one-to-one digital peer support for 16–25s.

Chat with someone close to your age who gets it, about stress, relationships, loneliness or anything on your mind.

45 minutes.

Confidential.

No judgement.

Book now

PeerChat from The Mix

Free 1-to-1 digital peer support for 16–25s

Talk to someone who gets it.

PeerChat connects you with a trained PeerChat Supporter, someone close to your age, ready to listen without judgement when life feels overwhelming, confusing or tough.

What you can talk about?

- Anything that feels hard to put into words
- Relationships or friendships
- Identity and self-esteem
- Loneliness or feeling disconnected
- Uni, work or life pressure
- Stress, anxiety or low mood

What to expect

A safe, confidential 45-minute webchat.
No pressure. No ongoing commitment.
Just space to talk about what's on your mind — and figure out your next steps.

Scan here to book your session
You don't have to handle it alone.

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Confidential.

No judgement.

Book now

Book your session at
www.themix.org.uk/get-support/peerchat/
You don't have to handle it alone.

Highland Youth Living Well Modules - Now Available

Highland Youth Living Well are delighted to announce the launch of **10 Highland Youth Living Well Modules**, that are now live and available to access free of charge through [their website](#).

- Introduction to Self-Management & Wellbeing
- Relaxation & Mindfulness
- Relationships & Socialising
- Exploring Emotions & Feelings
- Eat Well
- Movement & Activity
- Sleep & Fatigue
- Our Environment & Wellbeing
- Habits & Behaviours
- Managing Change

Developed as a practical information resource for professionals, volunteers and anyone working with children and young people, the modules aim to support facilitators in helping young people navigate the challenges they may face and promote positive health and wellbeing.

The website includes guidance on how to register and access the modules. While there are a few steps involved in the initial registration process, once registered, accessing the modules is quick and straightforward.

Highland Youth Living Well encourage you to explore the site, make use of the resources and download the modules to support your work. As this is a new resource, they would love to hear your feedback. Your comments and suggestions will help them continue to develop and improve the content to ensure it meets the needs of those supporting young people across Highland.

Each of these modules comes with an easy to follow session plan, suggestions for fun activities and animations that help to bring the key themes to life. To keep them versatile and relevant to different contexts, the modules are designed to be used in any order or to pick out themes that are most important to your group.

If you would like to discuss using these modules in your setting with a Youth Networker first, please email Angela on youth@myselfmanagement.org

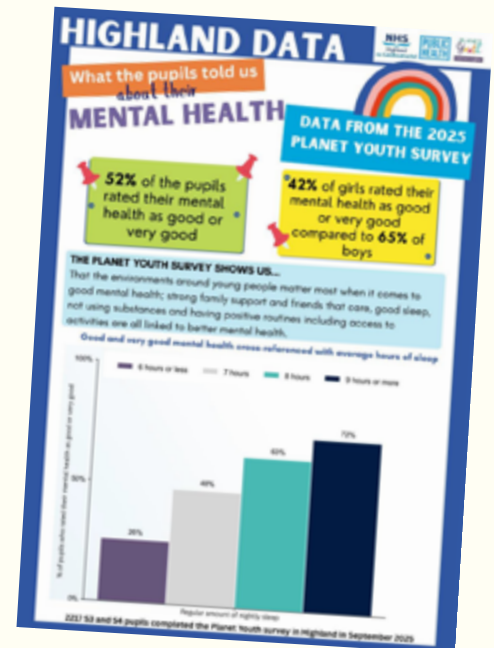
Strengthening Young People's Mental Health through Planet Youth



Since 2021 when the first survey was carried out in 5 pilot schools, Planet Youth has grown to include the voices of 2217 young people's voices from 13 Highland Secondary schools. The survey of S3 and S4 students in the latest survey in September 2025 had a completion rate of 79%, making for some very robust data. The survey collects experiences of growing up in the young people's local communities and centres around the domains of their life in school, family, health and wellbeing and activities.

This data is not just collected—it's used for positive change through community action. Through local Community Action Groups, partners from education, youth work, health and the wider community are coming together to explore the findings and agree shared priorities. Throughout the Community Action groups improving young people's mental wellbeing has been a key priority and the focus has been on practical ways to improve wellbeing overall, including strengthening support for young people, promoting positive relationships, increasing activity options and addressing factors such as sleep that can influence mental wellbeing.

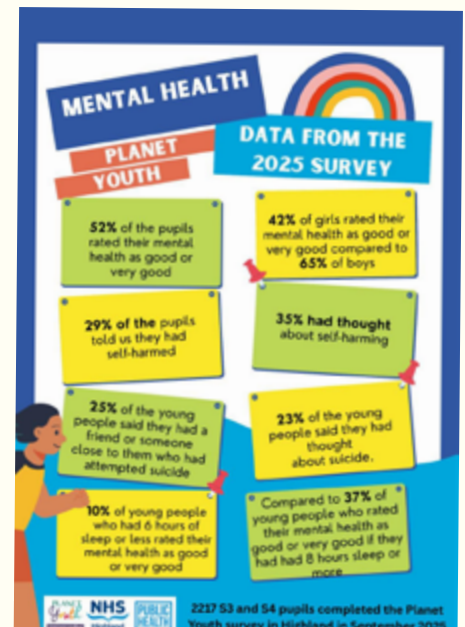
Earlier this year, Planet Youth funded all 13 schools to take part in the Sound Sleep programme, delivered by Sleep Action through PSE classes. This was complemented by followup online sessions for parents and carers, helping them support and reinforce healthy sleep routines at home. Survey data shows a clear link between sleep and wellbeing: young people aged 14–17 who achieve the recommended amount of sleep report higher levels of mental wellbeing than those who sleep less.



Alongside this, Planet Youth partners with High Life Highland and funds PY sports coaches to increase afterschool opportunities, boosting participation in positive, adult-led activities that support wellbeing.

Through successful funding from the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme, Planet Youth is also supporting 13 local youth focussed organisations over two years to expand activities and services, using local data to target early intervention and increase protective factors.

To find out more and access all of Planet Youth In Highland's resources and contacts, click on the following link to the [Planet Youth In Highland Linktree](#).



Why We Talk About Health Inequalities

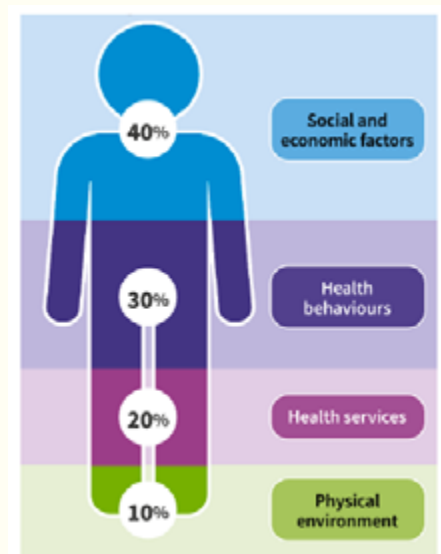
The [Highland Mental Health Delivery Group](#) is part of the [Highland Community Planning Partnership \(HCPP\)](#), bringing together public services, third sector organisations, communities and partners from across Highland. Together, we work to improve wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

The term "**health inequalities**" comes up a lot in our conversations, but what does it actually mean?

Health is influenced much more by social and economic conditions than by healthcare services alone

The graphic is a great way to visually show that a person's health is influenced by many factors, not just healthcare:

- **40% Social and economic factors** – The biggest influence on health. This includes things like income, education, employment, housing, and social support. People with fewer opportunities or resources are more likely to experience poorer health.
- **30% Health behaviours** – Lifestyle choices such as smoking, alcohol use, physical activity, diet, and sleep can affect health and wellbeing.
- **20% Health services** – Access to and quality of healthcare services help prevent and treat illness, but they are only one part of what determines health.
- **10% Physical environment** – Factors such as the quality of housing, air quality, transport, green spaces, and community safety also impact health.



Health inequalities are largely driven by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. These are called the **Social Determinants of Health**

What Does This Mean for Highland?

Health inequalities can be seen across Highland in different ways. For example:

- People living in rural and remote areas may experience greater loneliness and social isolation.
- Distance and transport challenges can make it harder to access services and support.
- Financial pressures, poverty and housing difficulties can increase stress and affect wellbeing.
- Young people's outcomes can vary depending on the opportunities and support available within their communities.

These inequalities are not inevitable. They are often preventable, which is why tackling inequalities is such an important part of improving mental health across Highland and why we have many conversations about them.

Good mental health is about more than treatment and support services. It is influenced by things like secure housing, strong social connections, educational opportunities, financial stability and a sense of belonging.

This is why the Highland Mental Health Delivery Group takes a **wholesystem approach**, working with partners across communities, housing, education and the third sector, as well as health and social care.

By working together to address the root causes of poor mental health, we can help create a healthier, fairer Highland for everyone.

Safe Strong & Free AGM Celebrates Community Achievement, International Recognition and New Programme Launch



Safe Strong & Free's Annual General Meeting brought together partners, community members and professionals from across the Highlands for a day focused on prevention, inclusion and safeguarding.

The event provided an opportunity to reflect on another successful year of empowering children and young people with the knowledge and confidence to stay safe, while also looking ahead to new developments that will strengthen the organisation's impact both locally and internationally.

A highlight of the day was the presentation of the Safe Strong & Free Community Shield to Born To Lose MCC. The award recognises organisations and groups that share Safe Strong & Free's values of prevention, community spirit, inclusion and protecting vulnerable children and young people. Members of the motorcycle club were recognised for their commitment to supporting local communities, promoting inclusion and raising funds for charitable causes.

Attendees also heard the exciting announcement that Safe Strong & Free has officially become an ISPCAN Country Partner, joining the global network of the [International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect](#). The partnership will create opportunities to share the organisation's prevention work internationally while learning from child protection professionals and organisations across the world.

Chief Executive Kerry Lowe said:

"We are incredibly proud to see our work recognised on an international stage through our partnership with ISPCAN. It is an opportunity not only to share what we have learned in Scotland, but to learn from others working to prevent child abuse across the world. Prevention remains at the heart of everything we do."

The AGM also marked the launch of [Rights and Respect](#), a new communitybased prevention initiative developed in partnership with local communities and faith groups. The programme aims to promote children's rights, healthy relationships, safeguarding awareness and respectful dialogue while recognising the importance of cultural understanding.

The launch featured contributions from community representatives, professionals and individuals with lived experience, encouraging open discussion about how communities can work together to keep children safe while building trust, inclusion and understanding.

Safe Strong & Free would like to thank everyone who attended, presented, shared their experiences and contributed to the discussions. The organisation looks forward to continuing its work with partners across the Highlands and beyond to ensure every child grows up safe, strong and free.

For further information: [Safe Strong & Free](#)

Top tips for physical and mental wellbeing in Summer



Whether you're looking forward to some extra sunshine or you'd rather sit in the shade, staying safe in hot weather is important for your mental and physical wellbeing. There's lots of information available to help everyone stay well in the summer months:

- Stay cool on hot days – you can find [advice on how to cope in hot weather](#) from the NHS
- Stay hydrated – [drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid](#) each day and have regular cool drinks on hot days. The BBC Good Food website has ideas for [refreshing nonalcoholic drinks](#).
- Some medications can affect body temperature regulation (also known as temperature dysregulation) and make you more sensitive to heat. [Check out this guide](#).

Summer time is often holiday time and your regular contacts, friends and family might be away or unavailable. You can still stay in touch by email, text or social media, even if people are abroad.

Support is available all year round for people who need them. You can find these on the [Highland Mental Wellbeing website](#)

You could also explore local events and groups over the summer months too.

[Highlife Highland](#) provides events throughout the summer as well as leisure and schools out program for children and young people

Going outdoors for at least 20 minutes of exercise each day. Walking in a green space can help you feel refreshed and energised.

The [Highland Green Partnership](#) has a fantastic page to help you find the green space close to you, from parks to forests we are spoiled for choice in the Highlands.

On hotter days, trying to avoid the middle of the day can help you stay safe. If the weather's nice, but you can't go out, try opening the window for some fresh air.

If going outside remember to use sunscreen – the NHS has useful advice about [sunscreen and sun safety](#) and the British Association of Dermatologists has a [Sun Protection Factsheet](#).

Holidays might be different this year, with people worried about the cost of living problems. It's OK to make plans your own way – try not to feel pressured into expensive breaks or days out.

Picnic in the back garden or nearest park can be great fun and if you are a family [ScotRail offers Kid for a Quid](#) return tickets, for up to four children aged 5- 15 return.

There are a lot of recipes to use leftovers and pantry basics to make a [healthy picnic to take to the park](#)

Young people aged 11 to 26 should check out the [Young Scot](#) card with free bus travel and

reduced entry to attractions and events.

The last few years have been difficult, with many people feeling anxious about their health or families, job security or money worries.

Take some time each day to relax. Find what works for you, whether that's [relaxation breathing](#), caring for your plants, going for a run, or getting up and moving to your favourite feelgood tunes.

The Mind website has [eight tips for relaxation](#) and consider making a [selfsooth box](#) that can be just in reach when things feel overwhelming.

You can access support about money worries too via the [Worrying about Money app](#)

Taking a mindful approach to your drinking can benefit your physical and mental health [NHS inform](#) has tips to help you cut down.

If you need support or are worried about some one else's drinking the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership website offers a directory of support and you can download the [HOPE app](#) there too.

Keeping a journal can be a great way to explore and organise our thoughts. It can help you plan your day, express gratitude and understand your worries and feelings.

Summer can be a great time to think about goals and preparing for the rest of the year, so why not get a notebook or find a journal app and get writing?

The Mental Health Foundation has a [nature journal](#) (free to download) which could inspire you.

If you're struggling, it's OK to ask for help if you need to, there's always someone to talk to you can find local and national support and helplines on the [Highland Mental Wellbeing website](#).

If you are experiencing something that makes you feel unsafe, distressed, or worried about your mental health, you can call the NHS 111 phoneline and select the mental health option. [This is for all ages, including children and young people, and those with neurodevelopmental needs.](#)

The [Prevent Suicide App](#) is also available, it helps you safety plan should you ever find your self in distress, feeling hopeless or suicidal in the future.

MHDG Website Updates & Feedback Form

You can give feedback on communications and engagement across MHDG using the Highland Mental Health Delivery Group, [Newsletter Registration, Website Updates and Feedback form](#), where you can feed back on this Newsletter and the Highland Mental Wellbeing website. The Communications and Engagement SubGroup is Chaired by Kieran Scott (Head of Communications at Change Mental Health). We publish this newsletter every three months and your content contributions are greatly appreciated. Should you ever want to submit anything, please contact Lachlan.Buick@nhs.scot