



Chair's Introduction

Whilst wishing all our members and all older people in the Highlands a Good New Year there has not been such global insecurity for a long time as that which we are witnessing at the present. We can only hope that those charged with resolving the current turmoil can do so with minimal conflict.

On the Home Front we have reason to be optimistic. Our membership grows steadily, and we look forward to continuing to increase our Get-Togethers across the region and to respond to members' wishes for more Scam Awareness meetings and expanding these to include Vulnerable Adults, Door-Step Crime and Falls Prevention. It is not easy to put a monetary figure on the savings to NHS Highland and The Highland Council that we achieve through our preventative work but we suspect it is not insignificant.

With this issue we include a short questionnaire. Its purpose is to ask members what they see as our priorities for the future and to ask how best to communicate with our membership. The more returns we receive the more valid will be our decision making.

Ian McNamara

Staying in touch with Highland Senior Citizens Network

Phone or e-mail our Co-ordinators

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visit our website www.hscn.co.uk

follow us on X (Twitter) and via our
Facebook page

HSCN Survey:

If you receive your news-sheet by post, a paper survey and stamped addressed envelope for its return are included in this mailing.

Online readers are asked to complete the survey online on Survey Monkey via the link in our accompanying e-mail. If any online readers would rather complete a paper survey, please contact Anne or Jo. Thanks!

Future HSCN Tea-breaks

Our weekly online catch-up on a Thursday morning, 11 until 12, offers an opportunity to meet other HSCN members, and to hear from organisations sharing information in this informal setting. This is one of the ways we currently offer ongoing connections for our HSCN membership – so we're asking for your views on the Tea-breaks in the survey accompanying this news-sheet.

February 2024 Tea-breaks

- 1st Technology Enabled Care, NHS Highland
- 8th Advocacy Highland
- 15th Remembering Together, Covid Memorial Project in the Highlands
- 22nd AbilityNet, Digital Switchover
- 29th UHI, NHS Past, Present, Future Research

To join us, please just e-mail anne-hscn@outlook.com for the link.

HSCN Member Investigation: Ear Wax Removal Treatment

When health services change, particularly those we use regularly which are vital to our well-being, people can be left uncertain of their rights and choices.

Last year, one of our Highland Senior Citizens Network members took action to seek clarification after hearing from friends that they had been told to seek ear-wax removal privately as their GP practice was no longer providing this service. Our member, having received excellent treatment at their own medical practice for this very thing, wanted to clarify what choices were open to those who weren't in this lucky position.

They wrote to Emma Roddick MSP for Highlands and Islands (Region) who raised the issue with Jenni Minto MSP in her capacity as Minister for Public Health and Women's Health.

The Minister's response clarified that:

- Ear syringing is no longer the recommended procedure for clinicians due to concerns about uncontrolled water-pressure.
- NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) recommends that patients should be asked to self-administer with ear drops first and follow-up care should be irrigation or suction.
- The new GP Contract, introduced in 2018, committed Health Boards to set up Community Treatment and Care (CTAC) services to shift workload away from GP Practices to NHS Board-employed staff... The Scottish

Government has confirmed to Health Boards that CTAC services should cover ear wax management generally.

- GP practices should not tell patients to seek private treatment for services, such as Ear Wax Management, that should be freely available on the NHS but if patients ask where they can access ear syringing as a preferred means of treatment, most GP practices will advise their patients how it can be found.

A follow-up enquiry to a contact at NHS Highland further clarified:

“In Highland the CTAC service is still under development. The care which is to be provided by CTAC currently remains with Highland GPs. Even if CTAC were a service sitting out-with the GP practice, it’s likely that only cases considered suitable for such treatment would be referred for wax removal, but where clinically indicated it’s more likely a patient would require referral to a secondary care specialist for review.In this case, the secondary care service would likely be Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Department Specialist Nurse for micro suction.”

In summary:

- Consider self-care in the first instance, detail available on NHS Inform: [Earwax build-up | NHS inform](#)
- Community pharmacists can often advise on over the counter treatments.
- Some GP practices will still be assisting with Ear Wax Removal.
- Some GP practices may not have facilities or trained staff to offer Ear Wax Removal but, if your treatment is considered clinically necessary, you should be referred to NHS services for this, or to a secondary care specialist for review.
- You shouldn’t be told to seek private treatment for things provided by the NHS – but, if you do choose to access a preferred means of treatment in this way, your GP practice may advise you on where this can be found.
- Where a clinician advises that ear wax removal is not clinically indicated / you choose to avoid a waiting list, there are private businesses locally that might offer the service - pharmacies, opticians, specialist hearing services.

Our member outlined their reasons for investigating this issue on behalf of others:

“They may feel like I do that 42 years paying National Insurance contributions and 76 years paying Income Tax entitles them to receive necessary treatment via our National Health Service. If people have the correct information, it gives them proper choices.”



Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland is one of the country's leading health charities, supporting the 1 in 5 people across the country living with chest, heart and stroke conditions and Long Covid to live life to the full.

Since January 2023 I have been working as the Community Healthcare Support Services Co-ordinator across Badenoch and Strathspey, Lochaber, Kyle and Lochalsh.

We know from speaking to people living with our conditions that they often leave hospital feeling frightened, alone and unable to access the services they desperately need. That's where CHSS comes in.

My role is to support people with new diagnoses of chest heart and stroke conditions who are leaving hospital, as well as those in the community who have been living with these conditions for a number of years.

I work closely with Community Health Teams, local GP practices and hospital-based health professionals and currently support a number of people who have been referred through the NHS or by friends and family.

By providing advice, one-to-one, or group support through our Peer Support Groups, CHSS can support those living with chest, heart and stroke conditions and Long Covid to get back to doing things they love – spending time with friends and family or enjoying an activity or hobby they took part in before their diagnosis.

Connecting with others with similar lived experience through online or in person support groups within their own community can provide much needed friendship, support, and reassurance.

I work with 3 other Co-ordinators and volunteers who provide similar bespoke and tailored community healthcare support services in the diverse communities they support across the Highland area.



If you'd like to learn more about the services provided by Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland or volunteering opportunities with the charity, visit www.chss.org.uk, contact vince.mclaughlin@chss.org.uk or call our National Advice Line 0808 801 0899

Samaritans Seek Home-based Volunteers living in West Highlands and Skye

Every 10 seconds, a Samaritans volunteer answers a call for help from someone who may be considering taking their own life.



Our volunteers, based at 19 branches spread across Scotland, come from all walks of life and backgrounds, and are ready and willing to listen, 24/7, 365-days-a-year.

Samaritans' priority is simple - to reduce the number of people who lose their lives to suicide. To do this, we need to reach those who need help most and encourage them to make that potentially life-saving call.

The Highlands region recorded the second highest number of probable suicides in Scotland between 2017 and 2021.

We know that issues of isolation, access to health services and stigma can often make seeking help and support challenging in a rural area. We also recognise that the geography of the Highlands and the nature of many key industries – such as tourism and aquaculture – can create issues of isolation and connection.

For anyone struggling to cope, a trained Samaritans volunteer can provide a listening ear and really valuable support. Our 24-hour helpline and email service can help, whatever someone is going through, at any time.

We are currently recruiting for home-based volunteers living in the West Highlands and Skye area for our Email Hub (from Oban to Ullapool and Skye).

Email Hub volunteers will be part of the Samaritans volunteer pool and respond to calls for help from throughout the UK via email. Excellent training and support will be provided and, although the role is remote, you will be part of a team.

Email Hub volunteer Gavin, from Portree, said: "The training is excellent, it's very supportive.

"Volunteering for the Samaritans Email Hub is worth the effort you put into it. It's a group of like-minded, incredibly supportive individuals. And it fulfils a role in my life that I didn't have otherwise."

For more information visit www.samaritans.org/highlands-training or email highlands@samaritans.org

If you need to talk, any time day or night, just call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org

PAWS FOR THOUGHT - IT Revisited



Regular readers of this news-sheet may recall that a couple of years ago the progress of IT, a hound recently arrived in this world, was testing his alleged master to the limit of human endurance. Time has passed. Adolescent turmoil is still evident but on occasions obedience has been observed – invariably in return for food. IT's canine IQ clearly dwarfs that of his master.

Why this update? Well, a learned Journal has some consoling news for IT's master and other such sufferers. New research says a dog can reduce the risk of developing dementia in old age. Any dog. According to the study canine ownership has a suppressive effect on incident disabling dementia.

The researchers claim this is the first time that scientists have established a clear link between owning a dog and the onset of dementia. The scientists from Japan spent four years monitoring over 11,000 adults aged 64 to 84. They concluded that dog owners were 40% less likely to get dementia than those without. Having a dog effectively requires people to get into the habit of physical activity and that makes it much more likely that they will then have interactions and socialise with other people.

The study considered gender, marital status, education, income, and medical history as well as amount of exercise regardless of pet ownership. If a dog owner did not take regular exercise and was socially isolated, the risk of dementia was still lower than for someone without a dog.

The findings are in keeping with previous research which has supported the potential health benefits of pets, including improved activities of daily living, mortality and cumulative survival rate. The researchers have previously shown that older adults who had owned a dog or cat had lower risk of frailty. And at the height of the covid-19 pandemic, a study reported that dog owners had better wellbeing than those with no pet.

The charity Age UK says that people with pets typically have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, while animals improve the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of older people. What about cats? It is *ruff* (!) but, sadly, cat ownership did not seem to have any effect. Cat owners do not walk their cats and they do not bring people together socially in the way that dogs do.

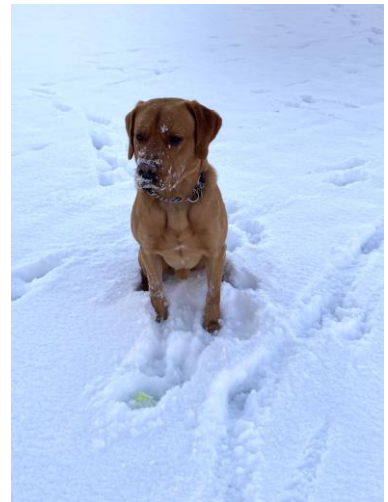
IT's owner will continue to endure the turmoil that IT brings on the basis it is meant to be doing him good. Only time, what is left of it, will tell....

From IT's Photo Album!

From this.....



To this...



Congratulations to Red Chair Highland! Real Digital Champions

We were delighted to hear that Red Chair Highland are the well-deserved winners of Social Enterprise Awards Scotland “Tech for Good Award”. Red Chair Highland work hard to reach out to those in need of digital connection. Their digital drop-in sessions are currently being offered at Hilton Community Centre and Ness Bank Church to coincide with the lunch sessions – with more venues being planned across Highland. Their Chromebook lending library allows people to take those first steps towards connection, and collaboration with the National Databank allows them to support people to stay connected with their free data offer. They keep us safe too with their Cyber Resilience Workshops. If you need help getting or staying digitally connected, check with Red Chair Highland whether they have something planned in your area. 01463 417240 or e-mail info@redchairhighland.scot

INVERNESS WARM WELCOME LOCATIONS

This list of places in and around Inverness offering warm food and company has been forwarded to us for sharing with you. We're aware that many people hesitate to take these offers up – but they offer valuable opportunities for community members to come together as well as the sharing of food. **ALL ARE WELCOME!**

Monday

- Bught Stop Cosy Café – 1.00 - 2.30 pm refreshments, sandwiches and baking
- Café 1668 – free meals from 12.00-2.00 pm
- Inverness Vineyard Church Raigmore Community Centre, 1.30- 3pm. Free community lunch & free food cupboard items.
- Smithton Free Church – 2.00-4.00 pm free hot drinks and baking.
- Culloden – Balloch Baptist Church – Tea/coffee/juice and biscuits, games and study area 4- 8pm, free meal served 5 to 7pm
- Free North Church – 10.00- 1.00 pm hot drinks, biscuits and toast and a hot shower also available.
- Kings Inverness, Smithton – 10.00 - 3.00 pay forward drinks and meals
- Church of God (off Friars Lane) – 12.00 – 3.00 offering soup and sandwiches, teas and coffee.

Tuesday

- Ness Bank Church – Inverness Foodstuffs – 12.00 – 3.00 3 course hot vegetarian lunch, helpline 07552 303056
- St Michaels Church– 1100-1.00 – Free teas and coffee, biscuits, board games
- Kings Inverness, Smithton – 10.00 - 3.00 pay forward drinks and meals

Wednesday

- Café 1668 – free meals from 12.00-2.00 pm
- Hilton Community Centre – Inverness Foodstuff - 12.00-2.00 pm 2 course lunch and Listening Ear Support
- Kings Inverness, Smithton – 10.00 - 3.00 pay forward drinks and meals

Thursday

- Ness Bank Church – Inverness Foodstuffs – 12.00 – 3.00 pm 3 course hot vegetarian lunch, helpline 07552 303056
- Smithton Free Church – 05.00 – 06.30 pm - Burgers, Hot Dogs and drinks, 4 items for £1
- Kings Inverness, Smithton – 10.00 - 3.00 pay forward drinks and meals

Friday

- Café 1668 – free meals from 12.00-2.00 pm
- Hilton Community Centre – Inverness Foodstuff - 12.00-2.00 pm -2 course lunch and Listening Ear Support
- The Barn Church – 12.15 – 2.15 pm (term time) free soup, bread, yogurts, tea & coffee and biscuits.
- Free North Church – 10.00- 1.00 hot drinks, biscuits and toast and a hot shower also available.
- Kings Inverness, Smithton – 10.00 - 3.00 pay forward drinks and meals

Saturday

- Ness Bank Church – Inverness Foodstuffs – 12.00 – 3.00 3 course hot vegetarian lunch, helpline 07552 303056

Daily

- Inverness Cathedral offers a Warm Welcome 9.00 – 4.00 Mon to Sat and 12.30 – 4.00 on Sun. Suspended coffees daily in the cathedral café 9.00-4.00
- Inverness Mosque warm welcome – 2.00 - 9.00 pm

Gardening Corner

Our regular contributor, Uisdean, wishes all readers a Happy 2024 – and commences this year's columns reflecting on fellow gardening enthusiasts...

In his long career Uisdean has worked in many gardens including those at the old Craig Dunain Hospital. Whilst there he made the acquaintance of the now deceased Dr Ronald Cadell but never got the chance to ask Dr Cadell if he was related to the Cadell sisters from Edinburgh.



The sisters Anna (1869-1951) and Marion (1874-1959) were born in India and spent their early years there. They returned to Scotland to their family estate - Cockenzie in 1892.

Cockenzie House

cc-by-sa/2.0 - Cockenzie House by Richard Webb - geograph.org.uk/p/5358000

On the death of their father in 1919, they used their inheritance to purchase some ground and they built their house - The Dean - in Longniddry where they set up a nursery specialising in primrose cultivation. As well as horticulture, the sisters dabbled in animal husbandry – developing and patenting the Dean Hopper poultry feeder. The sisters exhibited in the Royal Horticultural Society shows from 1932, and were winning prizes at the Chelsea Flower Show throughout the decade until the war intervened. The sisters were both in their seventies in 1947 when the Flower Show restarted post war and they did not exhibit after this.

There is little information about the sisters' links with the Dean, or Cockenzie, but these links may be of interest. The Dean now appears to be an upmarket bed and breakfast location -

<https://www.visitscotland.com/info/accommodation/the-dean-bed-and-breakfast-p1112621> and the Cockenzie Estate is now in the care of a community group - <https://www.facebook.com/CockenzieHouse/>

Intergenerational Online Workshops

Generations Working Together invite you to take part in a digital training session involving intergenerational work. This session is **FREE** with spaces limited to 20 each workshop. Book your space soon.

Whether it is working with a group of primary school children to interview older people about changes in their community or how to make soup or art or anything really. It gives everyone a chance to be involved and connect with each other, share stories about life.

It isn't a one-way street, older people will be learning, maybe technical skills or digital photography, and younger people may learn about interacting with older people and other skills, but the main thing is that they may be forming relationships with someone from a different generation through the medium of digital.

Description

This session aims to build your own confidence in digital skills and show how using digital to connect generations can have some powerful lasting results. The session will look at stages in:

Planning an Intergenerational Digital Connection – how to plan, where to start, how to connect, how to involve (purpose and methodology).

Materials – what you may require.

Decision on subject and design – is it training in digital, is it use of digital to connect, is it filming?

Case Studies – some case studies which may help you with your own journey.

Accessibility- things to think about to make the sessions open to all (linking in with AbilityNet).

Challenges – discuss with potential partners including a ‘round table’ planning session facilitated by Bella Kerr.

You can choose one of two dates below. Make sure you are signed in before you book.

[Thursday 15th February 2024, 1.30 pm – 3pm](#)

Or [Thursday 14th March 2024, 1:30pm - 3:00pm](#)

These links can also be found on the website www.generationsworkingtogether.org

If you have any challenges signing in, email me and I will assist - bella@gwt.scot

Pavement Parking Ban Enforcement across Highlands to start in February

The Highland Council’s parking enforcement team are reminding drivers that during February they will be enforcing the new pavement parking ban.

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 has prohibited pavement parking, double parking, and parking at dropped kerbs and anyone caught can face a £100 fine.

Chair of the Council’s Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Cllr Ken Gowans said: “Many people face daily difficulties with pavement parking. It is dangerous and frustrating, especially for those with impairments or limited mobility. It can force people to take unnecessary risks. For example, people using wheelchairs and buggies or prams without access to dropped kerbs can be forced onto the road, risking their safety.”

“Since December our parking enforcement team have been issuing warning notices to drivers caught breaking the law but during February 2024, they will be taking full enforcement action. Anyone parking on a pavement risks a fine of £100 or £50 if they pay it within 14 days.”

“Details about the new regulations have been provided on the Council’s website so I urge all drivers to make themselves familiar with the information. We hope everyone will consider others and there will be limited need for enforcement.”

The team have provided information on the rollout of enforcement on the Council’s website - <https://www.highland.gov.uk/pavementparkingban>

Members of the public can report any parking issue anywhere in the Highlands via this link - https://self.highland.gov.uk/service/Report_a_parking_issue or by calling the team on 01463 239786.

Inverness Openarts: FREE Art-for-Wellbeing Sessions



Open to people of all abilities and backgrounds aged 16+ with a particular focus on increasing access to artmaking for those who face barriers to participation in the arts. For example, due to social/ financial circumstances or mental & physical health. Sessions are designed to support wellbeing through creativity in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Support workers are welcome to accompany clients to sessions.

No need to book! Arrive/Leave whenever you wish within session times.

Session Schedule: Jan – Apr 2024

Venue	Date	Time	Artists	Activities
Spectrum Centre	Thurs 11 th Jan	2pm-4.30pm	Cecilia & Izzy	Free Choice
Inverness Creative Academy	Tues 16 th Jan	10am-3pm	Cecilia & Jay	Inky Mark Making & Free Choice
Tree House (IV3 8EX)	Thurs 25 th Jan	2pm-4.30pm	Evija & Cecilia	Free Choice
Inverness Creative Academy	Tues 30 th Jan	2pm-4.30pm	Cecilia & Jay	Rock Painting & Free Choice
Spectrum Centre	Thurs 8 th Feb	2pm-4.30pm	Evija & Jay	Free Choice
Inverness Creative Academy	Tues 13 th Feb	10am-3pm	Evija & Jay	Life Drawing & Free Choice
Tree House (IV3 8EX)	Thurs 22 nd Feb	2pm-4.30pm	Izzy & Evija	Free Choice
Inverness Creative Academy	Tues 27 th Feb	2pm-4.30pm	Izzy & Evija	Charcoal Drawing & Free Choice
Spectrum Centre	Thurs 7 th March	2pm-4.30pm	Cecilia & Evija	Free Choice
Inverness Creative Academy	Tues 12 th March	10am-3pm	Jay & Izzy	Collage & Free Choice
Tree House (IV3 8EX)	Thurs 21 st March	2pm-4.30pm	Cecilia & Izzy	Free Choice
Inverness Creative Academy	Tues 26 th March	2pm-4.30pm	Evija & Izzy	Sketch booking & Free Choice

Questions? Queries? Feedback? Contact Project Coordinator, Bonnie: -
text/call: 07539020698 **email:** invernessopenarts@waspsstudios.org.uk