



Connecting Carers
A better life for unpaid carers in Highland

"What a great place for carers. Love the sofas and the colours are so relaxing"



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A Great New Space for Carers

A brand new café where carers can gain respite for a couple of hours has opened in Inverness.

The More About Carers (MAC's) café, based at the Mackenzie Centre on Culduthel Road, provides an ideal place for those who care for a loved one to relax, meet fellow carers and take some time to focus on themselves.

The café is the result of work carried out in partnership with NHS Highland, Connecting Carers, the Mackenzie Centre, and with support from the Highland Third Sector Interface, Macleod and MacCallum, and Tesco.

Connecting Carers Carer Strategy Co-ordinator Liz Syred said: "This is the culmination of some fantastic and generous work carried out by a range of organisations and we are very proud to open the doors of MAC's café."

"We have worked closely with carers across Highland to identify ways we can help support them and an issue that continued to arise was that they had nowhere to socialise or put their feet up for a couple of hours."

"I want to thank everyone involved in this project for supporting us to achieve our goal of providing a relaxing, friendly environment in which carers can have a well-earned break. One of the benefits of the café is that if the person who is being cared for is aged over 60 they can attend day services in the Mackenzie Centre while the carer has a break."

Mackenzie Centre manager Kathy Martin said: "This is a big step in the right direction as we aim to become more of a resource centre for the wider community. It has been a lot of work to get to this point but I'm delighted with the finished product."

"The café is now an ideal place for meeting friends for a coffee or even to hold meetings when appropriate. It is bright, comfortable and spacious and I'm sure it will prove to be a huge hit with carers across Highland."



Carer Support Groups - here for you

Have you been along to one of our Support Groups?

Connecting Carers has support groups in **Aviemore, Dingwall, Dornoch, Fort William, Inverness, Nairn and Thurso**, with a new group starting in **Mallaig** at the end of April.

Some groups meet weekly, some monthly, and what they all have in common is the opportunity for carers to meet other carers, share experiences, receive training and support, and gain access to information and advice to help them in their day to day caring roles.

Some groups undertake activities, whilst some are all about meeting up over a coffee and just chatting. Groups are open to all unpaid carers in Highland. Support Groups meet:

Aviemore, first Wednesday of the month, 10.00 am - 12.00 noon, Aviemore Community Café, St Andrew's Church Hall

Dingwall, first Tuesday of the month, 7.00 pm - 9.00 pm, St Clement's Church Hall, Dingwall

Dornoch, every third Thursday, 12.30 pm - 2.30 pm, West Church Hall, Dornoch

Fort William, first Monday of the month, 10.00 am - 12.00 noon, Thrive Café

Inverness, every Tuesday, 10.00 am - 12.00 noon, Inverness Library, Farraline Park

Nairn, fourth Wednesday of the month, 2.00 pm - 3.30 pm, Nairn Dunbar Golf Club

Thurso, second Tuesday of every month in the High Street above the Cancer Research shop 1.00 pm - 3.00 pm

Mallaig will be the last Tuesday of every second month (25 April, 27 June, 29 August, 31st October) at the Astley Hall in Arisaig from 11.00 am - 1.00 pm.

To find out more, give the Carer Centre a call on 01463 723575 or just pop in to a support group near you. We are also setting up a drop-in session at the Carer Centre in Dingwall.



Our Support Groups Need Volunteers - You Can Help

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and learn new skills. Some carers volunteer when their caring role has ended and they are looking for a new challenge.

Other carers volunteer alongside their caring role to help them keep their skills up to date or simply because they feel passionate about it. It can give them a break from caring and the chance to get out and about.

Volunteering can also give you a chance to gain valuable experience that may help you when you apply for a job or further study.

MAC's Café Needs You!

Now that MAC's Café is open for business we are looking for volunteers who have a couple of hours to spare every Tuesday from 10.00 am - 12.00 noon to help with teas, coffees and cake in a great new venue in Inverness.

Support Groups—Volunteer Lead Role

Our support groups are all about carers taking a break, meeting others in a similar situation, sharing experiences and receiving help support and advice (with tea, coffee and cake). Right now we are looking for volunteers to lead support groups in Inverness, Nairn and Dornoch. Full training will be given and you will become part of a growing team of volunteers, all working to make a better life for unpaid carers in Highland.

To find out more and get an application pack, please call Mary on 01463 723561 or email volunteers@connectingcarers.org.uk

Young Carers Climbing High on Awareness Day

The beginning of 2017 was a very busy and exciting time in the Connecting Young Carers team. January 26th was National Young Carers Awareness Day and this year Young Carers in Highland wanted to mark the day in a spectacular and different way.

Twenty Young Carers set themselves the challenge of collectively climbing the height of Ben Nevis indoors - a whopping 1,345 metres. With the support of Connecting Carers staff, High life Highland and their schools, Young Carers from Wick, Golspie, Kingussie, Nairn, Dingwall, Tain and Inverness spent the day at Inverness Leisure Climbing Wall completing the challenge, and we are delighted to say they absolutely smashed their target.

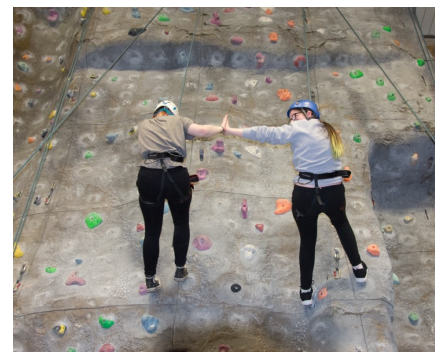
The Young Carers involved wanted to raise awareness and highlight the existence of Young Carers in a fun and unique way. By making a real statement about Young Carers they hope more young people and adults that work with Young Carers feel confident about coming forward and asking for support and information.

In other Young Carer news, we are very excited about the successful roll-out of our schools awareness programme. With the forthcoming Carers Act, there will be a duty placed on all Local Authorities to identify, record and assess the needs and wellbeing of Young Carers. Schools are ideally placed to recognise and support a young person who has a caring and support role. Young Carers and their families have told us that when their schools are informed about Young Carers and the pressures they face at home, they feel more confident about coming forward and seeking support.

In January we were delighted to be invited to Lochaber High School to speak to all the S1-S4's about Young Carers – 600 pupils in total.

The young people were extremely engaged, knowledgeable and sensitive about Young Carer issues and we look forward to keeping in touch with the school and helping them support any Young Carers they come into contact with.

As always throughout the year, Connecting Young Carers runs a series of events, training and breaks for Young Carers to participate in. Please keep an eye on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ConnectingYoungCarers/> for all future fun or get in touch with the team at youngcarers@connectingcarers.org.uk.



Self-Directed Support – Flexibility, Choice and Control for Carers?

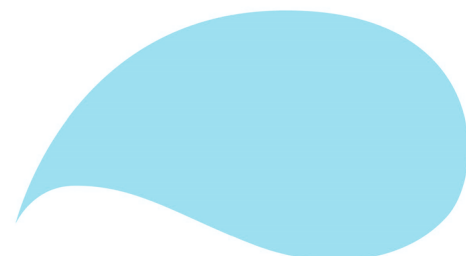
In Highland over 31,000 people have identified themselves as providing unpaid care by looking after and/or supporting an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner, who cannot manage without this help. Unpaid carers need support to prevent the caring situation escalating to the point of crisis. Connecting Carers, as a service, can help prevent a caring situation from getting to this point, but on occasion more is required.

Good support for the person who is being cared for can also make the carer's role easier, as it means carers can have a break and a life alongside caring.

The Social Care (Self-Directed Support) Scotland Act 2013 is a Scottish Parliament Act that ensures that local authorities offer Self-Directed Support to anyone who requires support services, including unpaid carers who require support to help them maintain their caring role. Currently in Highlands 401 adults and 283 children have Option 1 (Direct Payments) and 187 have Option 2 (Individual Service Fund).

The aim of Self-Directed Support (SDS) is to provide support in a manner that allows people to have choice and control over what kind of support they get. In theory it means that people can choose and arrange some or all of their own support instead of having it chosen and arranged by other people.

Carers have the right to ask for an assessment in order to get support.



This assessment will be undertaken by a member of the NHS Highland Social Work Team (Adult Services) or Highland Council Social Work Team (Children's Services). The assessment usually takes the format of a Personal Outcome Plan (POP) that identifies the outcomes needed for the cared for person, linked to the support required.

Once the POP is completed and the level of need is determined, it is then presented to a panel who make a decision on the finance required to ensure that the right support is obtained.

SDS Options for Carers: There are four Self-Directed Support options and one of the duties of the Act is that everyone has to be told about all the options available:

Option 1 – known as a Direct Payment. The individual budget is a cash payment and will be paid into your SDS bank account and used to pay for the services required. This money can be used to employ support workers or buy services required from organisations.

Option 2 – known as an Individual Service Fund. This is when the money is held by another organisation. Although the money is managed by them, you still have control over how the money is spent.

Option 3 – known as a Traditional Service. This is when the individual budget is held by the Local Authority/NHS Highland and they arrange the support for you

Option 4 – is a mix of any of the above options. If you want to choose some of your support but have other parts arranged for you, option 4 is for you.

The ethos of Self-Directed Support has **3 strands, flexibility, choice and control**. Having flexibility, choice and control is essential to ensure the right support and activities are purchased to ensure that the outcomes identified as part of the Personal Outcome Plan (POP) are met.

A recent communication from NHS Highland to carers about Option 1 (Direct Payment) could potentially have a negative impact on some individuals' personal outcomes not being met due to limitations on what the money can be spent on. These changes are not just impacting on the wellbeing of the carer, but most importantly, on the person receiving the support.

The NHS guidance could be interpreted by the reader as removing the 3 strands of the Act, **flexibility, choice and control**.

If the person you care for has been affected by the new guidance for Direct Payments, please get in contact with your Social Worker to request a review of the personal outcomes. You can always contact the Connecting Carers team too.

Connecting Carers is represented on the Carer Improvement Group along with a number of carers who have been impacted by the changes. The course of action that is taking place to try to mitigate the impact of the new guidance in relation to Direct Payments is as follows:

- NHS Highland to carry out a self-assessment review against the guidance of the The Social Care (Self-Directed Support) Scotland Act 2013. The aim of this review is to

ascertain the areas of development that need to be achieved to meet the duties of the Act.

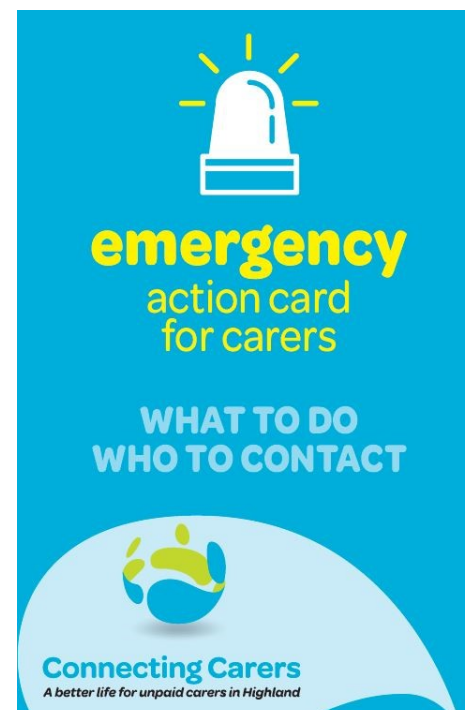
- The development of a Stakeholder group, to include users and carers who will provide guidance to any communication that is being developed linked to Self-Directed Support that requires to be shared with carers .
- To learn from Best Practice from other Local Authority areas throughout Scotland
- It was agreed that any communication has to be written in a style that carers and the cared for person can understand.

If the person you are looking after has been impacted by the changes please get in contact with your social worker and ask for a review of the Personal Outcome Plan.

If you would like to find out more about Self-Directed Support or have been impacted by the recent communication linked to Direct Payments please get in touch with me or any one of the team.



Roisin Connolly,
Carer Centre Manager



Emergency Planning Just Got Easier

Connecting carers are launching our new, easier to use, credit card-sized Emergency Action Card for carers. This handy little card lets everyone know that you are carer and who to contact in the event of an emergency.

To obtain your Emergency Action Card please get in touch at carers@connectingcarers.org.uk

Little Treats Can Make A Big Difference

Recently two groups of carers received some respite from caring by attending pamper days in Fort William and Strathpeffer.

Funding for the Strathpeffer day was sourced from the Carers Trust. The aim was to provide a fun, relaxing and informative day for unpaid carers who care for someone with dementia. The day could not have happened without the support of Carol Weir from 'Cut & Go', Emma Hampton from 'Hair Chic', Allison MacBean from 'The Gift Box, Karen MacDonald of Aran Mhor, Sharon Fox, and Munro Butchers. Lisa Law and Kerry Goddard from **Innes & Mackay**

were on hand to offer advice on Power of Attorney, and Geraldine Ditta from Alzheimer's Scotland also attended with advice and support.

After the event one carer commented:

'I have had a wonderful day. I didn't know what to expect. Not only have I had the most amazing treatments but I've made a friend, whose husband just went into care just like mine...'



Fort William Pamper Day

Five lucky carers in Fort William recently spent their day not in their usual caring role, but being cared for by a team of local beauticians. The pamper day was organised by Gillian Macleod, Carer Liaison Worker for Lochaber, and was a resounding success. A huge thanks to Izzy Valenti and her daughter Katy Macdonald who came along and made sure the carers had a great time. Izzy gave massage treatments and

Katy demonstrated making body scrubs, then the carers had a go and took away their handiwork in lovely decorated jars. All the carers had manicures from Roslyn, a local mobile beautician, and Vivienne, the Body Shop rep, was on hand to demonstrate some new products. All the carers who attended left with a goody bag of products kindly donated by Morrison's Supermarket in Fort William.

Why is Advocacy good for Carers?

Advocacy is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- Access information and services.
- Have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.
- Defend and safeguard their rights.
- Have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.
- Explore choices and options.

An advocate is someone who provides advocacy support when you need it. An advocate might help you access information you need, or go with you to meetings or interviews in a supportive role. You may want your advocate to write letters on your behalf, or speak for you in situations where you don't feel able to speak for yourself.

Advocacy can be helpful in all kinds of situations where you:

- Find it difficult to make your views known.
- Need other people to listen to you and take your views into account.

Part of Connecting Carers, Highland Carers Advocacy is a very busy service, supporting carers with a variety of issues from accessing Home Care and Respite, to improving communication with related agencies. Our Advocacy team's role is not to provide the answers, but to work with carers to enable them to find these themselves. If you think that the Advocacy team could help you in your caring role then please contact Rhonda McRorie on 07850 794530 or email rmcorie@connectingcarers.org.uk



We are looking for Advocates to join our team

If you, or someone you know, has had training in Advocacy or experience of this type of support and have a few hours to spare occasionally, we would like to hear from you.

We are keen to create a pool of sessional/casual Advocacy Advisors who would receive payment for their time, but are not required to commit to regular working hours. If you would like to find out more please contact Rhonda McRorie on 07850 794530 or email rmcorie@connectingcarers.org.uk

Help with Social Security

Are you getting the support you need? Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for social security help.

Changes and events in our lives mean that sometimes we all need a bit of help. Scotland's social security system is there to support you when you need it.

Social security is an investment in everybody and is there to help when you need it. To find out what support you might be eligible for and get advice on how to claim it, visit the Citizens' Advice Scotland website www.cas.org.uk or call their helpline on 0800 085 7145.



New Arrivals

Kasia Wilczynska joined Connecting Carers in February 2017 as our new Senior Carer Liaison Worker for Inverness, Nairn and Ross-Shire. Her previous roles included working for Women's Aid and providing support to people with learning disabilities.

Kasia moved to Scotland 12 years ago from Poland and truly enjoys this beautiful part of the world with its amazing people, stunning landscapes and diverse wildlife.

Her current role involves providing support to carers in Inverness, Nairn and Ross-Shire, organising events and training for carers and assisting the Highland-wide Carer Liaison Team.

In her spare time, Kasia loves going for long walks on the beach, listening to jazz music and reading. You can reach Kasia on 07850 794423 or by email at kwilczynska@connectingcarers.org.uk



Dates for your diaries...

Events & Training Courses for Unpaid Carers

We are currently planning a series of free events and training courses for unpaid carers throughout Highland. These events and training courses will take place from April onwards, and we will be promoting these on our website www.connectingcarers.org.uk and on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/connectingcarers.

Nail Cutting Service for Carers

A new service is available for carers and cared for people. The Mackenzie Centre, Culduthel Road, Inverness, is offering a nail clipping service (not manicures) at a cost of £10.00 per person. Ideal for those with mobility problems who might not be able to manage on their own. To find out more and to book an appointment call 01463 231488.

Time 2 Be Update

Some lovely feedback from a carer who received a Time 2 Be grant recently...

"I used my Time 2 Be grant to pay for my allotment fees for 2017. Thank you very, very much. This means I can carry on 'plotting' for a good while yet! My allotment is my bolt hole. The place I go just for a break – to breathe and just to be. I can't stress enough how much this plot means to me. Regular wee visits just brighten my day and give me renewed energy and feelings of wellbeing."

It's wonderful when we receive feedback like this and makes everything we do here at Connecting Carers so worthwhile.

Contact Us

Call in confidence for information about how Connecting Carers can help you.

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Support Line: 01463 723560
E: carers@connectingcarers.org.uk
www.connectingcarers.org.uk

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14,902 Respite Hours Awarded

Between April 2016 and Feb 2017, we awarded funds to 264 applicants totalling £25,892 through the Connecting Carers Time 2 Be, Wee Treat, Parent/Carer Kinship, Sibling, Respite and Hardship funds.

This amazing sum gave carers in Highland the equivalent of 14,902 hours of respite from their caring roles.