



CAITHNESS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Meeting Minutes

Location: Microsoft Teams

Date: 12th December 2025

Time: 11.00 – 13.00

Chair: Eann Sinclair

Agenda Items

1	Welcome and Apologies	Eann Sinclair (Chair)
2	Notes from last meeting	Eann Sinclair (Chair)
3	Review of Previous Actions	Eann Sinclair (Chair)
4	Presentations • Trauma Informed Practice • Welfare Support Team – Income Maximisation	Helen Perkins Susan Webster
5	Thurso Transformation Delivery Group	Eann Sinclair
6	Priority Action Tracker	Lynn McNeil
7	Highland Community Planning Partnership Board – update	Eann Sinclair
8	A.O.B	
9	Proposed Dates of 2026 Meetings • Friday 27th March – 10.00 – 12.00 Teams • Friday 26th June – 10.00 – 12.00 In Person • Friday 25th Sept – 10.00 – 12.00 In Person • Friday 18th Dec – 10.00 – 12.00 Teams	

Attendees: Eann Sinclair (HIE); Christian Nicolson (NHS); Gail Prince (HCPP); Gillian Begg (Connecting Carers); Paul Castle (HLH); Susan Webster (HC); Vicky Strange (HLH); Anne Gillies (WFWP); Alexander Glasgow (TCC); Siobhan Leen (NHS); Lindsay Broomfield (Planet Youth); Catherine Sapalski (Befrienders Highland); Fiona MacDonald (H&I Climate Hub); Cai MacIver (HC); Alistair Jack (CVG); Fiona Webster (HC Employability); Helen Perkins (NHS); Kay MacRae (Police Scotland); Cllr Jan McEwan (HC); Charlotte Mountford (Lyth Arts); Gillian Unger (SDS); Marie Cuthbert (NHS); Michael Simpson (CAB); Keith Moncur (HC); Natalie Bird (Alienergy)

Apologies: Lynn McNeil (HC); Kayleigh Nicholson (HIE); Jane MacIntosh (CAB); Cllr Raymond

Bremner (HC); Grant Mackenzie (Wick Joint Campus); Daniel MacLeod (Dunbeath and District);

Notes from the last meeting:

Minutes from the meeting held in September were circulated with the meeting invite. No amendments were raised, minutes were approved as accurate.

Review of Previous Actions:

Lynn McNeil		To circulate a request for information on warm spaces, food provision and emergency support across Caithness CP Area – organisations to respond with details for mapping and gap analysis	Email sent to Caithness CP contact list and Alastair from CVG sent it to all CVG members requesting information. In partnership with Police Scotland, we are now looking to produce an Information leaflet/poster so people are aware where they can go for help. Meeting has been held with other partners to discuss how we can take this action further. Possible subgroup to be formed, Project Officer, funding???
Lynn McNeil/Alastair Jack		Lynn to collect mapping data from partners and coordinate with Alastair to update and expand the HTSI food map.	Information continues to be gathered, and follow-up calls to be made to ensure people are happy with the information gathered and permission granted to have it shared on the HTSI map.
Jane Macintosh		Clarify current availability of energy Vouchers	Caithness CAB works closely with the Fuel Bank Foundation and can issue energy vouchers for emergency fuel credit to households that meet the following criteria: • Client must have a prepayment meter; and • Client has run out of credit and has no money to top up, OR • Clients will run out of credit within the next 24-48 hours and have no money to top up; OR Clients are making significant sacrifices to fund their energy
CLlr Karl Rosie		Refresh and relaunch Caithness Drug & Alcohol Forum with a workshop planned for late October/November, update distribution list and invite wider participation, including Planet Youth.	Action ongoing – Lynn to liaise with Karl and update to be given at next meeting
Cai Maciver		Work with HC resilience teams and community councils to develop or refresh resilience plans.	Cai Maciver attended the ACCC meeting on the 2 nd December to ascertain what CC's have a current resilience plan and further work will be done with others to support each CC to get a resilience plan in place. Fiona MacDonald HI Climate Hub offered her support in this action.
Vicky Strange		Promote Get Active Highland Fund (up to £5,000 per group) – applications due by November 10th	The Get Active Highland fund was promoted to sport and physical activity clubs and groups across Highland, link was also shared within the minutes of the last Caithness CP meeting and there has been a great response with many applications being received for the first round of funding. The second round is now open and will close on 2 nd Feb 2026.

Presentations

Trauma Informed Practice – Helen Perkins

HP delivered an insightful presentation on Trauma-Informed Practice, outlining Scotland's ambition to become a trauma-informed nation. She explained that psychological trauma can result from a wide range of harmful experiences, including abuse, violence, loss, or life-threatening events, and its impact can be long-lasting—affecting mental health, physical health, and life chances. Trauma can disrupt trust and relationships, making it harder for individuals to engage with services. **HP** emphasised that trauma is everyone's business, not just for specialist services, and highlighted the importance of recognising triggers and avoiding re-traumatisation in everyday interactions. She shared evidence showing that trauma-informed approaches improve wellbeing, reduce emotional distress, and enhance access to support and recovery services.

HP introduced the core principles of trauma-informed practice, Safety, Trust, Collaboration, Choice, and Empowerment, and explained how these should underpin all service delivery. She encouraged organisations to adopt a "trauma-informed lens," considering how every contact and environment might affect someone with lived experience of trauma. Practical steps include creating safe spaces, offering choices, and fostering collaborative relationships. Also referenced were the Scottish Government's National Trauma Transformation Programme and its Knowledge and Skills Framework, which provides resources and training for staff at all levels. **HP** concluded by offering tailored sessions for local teams and stressed that this is an ongoing journey requiring cultural change across organisations

To view the presentation please click the link below:



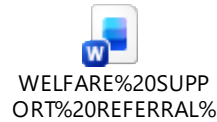
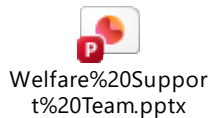
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Any questions on Trauma Informed Practice please contact Helen Perkins by email at helen.perkins2@nhs.scot

Welfare Support Team, Income Maximisation – Susan Webster

SW Welfare Manager for Highland Council provided a detailed overview of the Welfare Support Team and its critical role in tackling financial hardship across the Highlands. The team consists of 12 Welfare Officers and two Intensive Support Officers, covering a vast geographic area, with plans to recruit a dedicated officer for Caithness and Sutherland to reduce reliance on long-distance travel from Inverness. Susan explained that the team's primary focus is income maximisation and benefit checks, ensuring households receive all entitlements to meet government-set "applicable amounts" for basic living costs. This involves assessing personal allowances, premiums for disabilities or caring responsibilities, and identifying gaps where families are living below these thresholds. The team also supports applications for Universal Credit, housing benefits, council tax reductions, and other entitlements, while educating clients on managing changes to avoid debt. Susan highlighted the holistic approach taken, looking beyond the initial referral to explore all possible benefits and financial support options.

SW also outlined additional services such as personal budget support, home visits for vulnerable clients, and advice on cost-saving measures like social broadband tariffs. The team administers local authority benefits (e.g., free school meals, clothing grants, blue badges, and disability band reductions) and assists with UK and Scottish Government benefits, including disability payments, carers' support, and heating allowances. **SW** shared powerful case studies where interventions resulted in significant backdated payments, sometimes thousands of pounds, transforming clients' financial stability. She stressed the importance of early referrals, noting that many people delay seeking help due to stigma or lack of awareness, which often worsens debt. **SW** concluded her presentation with an invitation for partners to use the referral template and promote the service widely, as well as an offer to deliver tailored sessions to community groups to raise awareness of available support.



For any questions on Welfare Support Please contact Susan – susan.webster@highland.gov.uk

Thurso Transformation Delivery Group

CM & ES – informed the group that the recent pre-consultation events on the Thurso POD was very positive, with 156 people engaging with a mix of supportive feedback gathered as well as concerns, and creative suggestions. The purpose was to listen to community worries and ideas before formal decisions are made. A pre-consultation survey remains open until the end of January, with further analysis and consultation expected to provide clearer plans by June. No decisions have been finalised yet, and the group emphasised the importance of community input in shaping the project.

To improve communication and address previous gaps, a new communications group has been established, meeting fortnightly and led by Vicki from Focus North, with representation from the community council and development trust. The next three to five years will be extremely busy, with ambitious plans for a replacement high school, potential new or relocated primary schools, and infrastructure upgrades coinciding with other major developments. The Highland Investment Plan also proposes a depot point of delivery to link council services with emergency services. Everyone is encouraged to complete the survey, as both positive ideas and concerns will help shape this significant opportunity for Thurso.

Links for the Thurso Community POD – School Estate Management and the pre-consultation survey can be found below.

- [Thurso Community POD | School Estate Management | The Highland Council](#)
- [Thurso Community Points of Delivery \(PoD\) Pre Consultation Survey](#)

Priority Action Tracker

It was noted that **LM** holds the master copy of the tracker and updates should be sent to her before the festive break. **GP** encouraged leads on actions to submit their progress. **ES** highlighted that the tacker was first introduced back in September and is proving useful for visibility and accountability.

AG provided a detailed update from the While Family Wellbeing Local Partnership Network Group. Two Key areas were highlighted:

1. **Mental Health and Well-being for the Caithness workforce supporting families** – The focus is on mapping existing resources, identifying gaps, and creating a route map for training opportunities. Plans include trauma-informed practice sessions, mental health first aid, and suicide prevention training, with potential for local trainers to improve delivery.
2. **Transport challenges** – Access to family support activities remains a barrier. Ann attended the Caithness Transport Forum and will link proposals for family activities with transport solutions. There is also potential synergy with Caithness Rural Transport, and Alastair agreed to reconnect with the forum to strengthen collaboration.

The group agreed that the tracker adds value by making progress visible and will ensure it is shared in advance for future meetings.

Highland Community Planning Partnership

GP highlighted several key reports, including the Health Inequalities Report supported by NHS Highland and Public Health Scotland, which is on the CPP website. To view the report click the link here: [Health Inequalities Report](#) This report contains valuable data and statistics, some broken down

to local areas. Additionally, the Community Learning Development Annual Report and the Child Poverty Annual Report are available or will be updated on the CPP website.

GP also outlined challenges and priorities from her quarterly report. These include:

- **Partner Engagement:** Engagement from statutory partners (HIE, Police, Fire, Council, NHS) has declined in some areas. Work is underway to strengthen collaboration, including joint meetings with NHS Highland's Health Improvement team in January.
- **Secretariat Support:** Current support levels are unsustainable due to reduced staffing, with officers covering multiple partnerships. Gail encouraged lead agencies to explore additional support options.
- **Shared Online Space:** Progress on creating a secure, live platform for updating the Priority Action Tracker has stalled due to budget and technical constraints, but efforts continue to find a solution.

The emphasis moving forward is on improving engagement, ensuring adequate administrative support, and enhancing communication tools to streamline partnership work.

A copy of the full quarterly report can be found here: [HCPP-Update-November-2025.pdf](#)

A.O.C.B

Highland Council Budget Consultation

GP highlighted to the group that the Highland Council Budget Consultation is now open and would encourage everyone to complete it - [Budget 2026 to 2027 | Our budget | The Highland Council](#)

Caithness Community Partnership Networking Event

GP raised the idea of hosting a Caithness Community Networking Event to bring together public, third sector and community groups in a local venue. These events, which have been successful in other areas, provide an opportunity for the public and practitioners to learn about local services and initiatives. Caithness has not yet had such an event as previous engagement focused on NHS pop-up sessions. The proposed timing is mid-March 2026, potentially aligning with the Highland Council Chief Executives staff roadshow in Wick on 12th March with PPP suggested as a possible venue. The format would include stalls, networking opportunities, and possibly an opening update from council leadership.

The idea received positive feedback, with volunteers identified to support planning the event alongside Lynn. Suggested contributors include Kai, Siobhan and Fiona. There is also an opportunity to align this event with plans from Hie and the North Highland Chamber of Commerce who are developing a calendar of events. Next steps will be to confirm interest and begin organisation.

Poverty Reduction

MS suggested that Poverty be discussed at the next meeting as poverty has not been discussed for about 12 months and would like to revisit it, especially since the Highland Poverty Commission will not meet again for another year, although they plan to visit Wick when they do. **ES** supported the idea, noting that the commission's work is ongoing and that it would be useful to have a coherent local position before their visit.

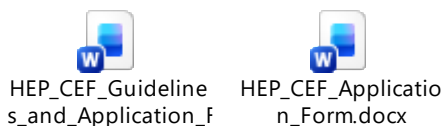
GP added that the Commission is due to report to the council in June 2026 and recently provided an interim update. She also mentioned that HTSI has held three poverty consultation sessions recently, with a report expected early in the new year for member feedback. Gail will speak to Lynn about bringing relevant information to the next agenda. The suggestion was well received, and the group agreed it is an important topic to address.

Community Engagement Fund

FW highlighted the launch of a new Community Engagement Fund aimed at supporting community organisations to host free-to-attend events under the Work Life Highland banner. These events can be single or a series and are designed to bring together residents who could benefit from employability support, providing opportunities to learn about available services. Examples include informal gatherings like weekly lunches offering free soup and sandwiches to encourage participation. The fund offers up to £5,000, which must be spent by the end of March. Organisations can claim an

automatic 15% uplift to cover staffing, utilities, and energy costs without needing receipts for those additional expenses. Receipts are only required for direct event costs, and up to 80% of funding is paid upfront to help with preparation. Fiona encouraged Caithness community partnerships to take advantage of this opportunity and noted that her team would like to attend these events to promote employability services if notified in advance.

For more information and an application form please see links below:



Lindsay Broomfield – Planet Youth

LB informed the group that she has been seconded to a new role within the Mental Health Delivery Group (Comms and Engagement). She will take over part of Maggie Hume’s previous responsibilities related to suicide prevention and will serve as Vice Chair, supporting Karen Scott as Chair of the group. **LB** is happy to help promote any mental health and well-being events or initiatives happening in Caithness and encourages people to get in touch. **LB** is still familiarising herself with the various subgroups but is keen to collaborate, particularly alongside Siobhan, to ensure effective communication and engagement.

Actions

Lynn/Cai/Siobhan	Community Networking Event to be planned for mid-March – aligning with chief exec visit on 12 th march, venues to be considered PPP, Carnegie House.
All	Poverty to be a specific agenda item for next meeting – explore relaunch of Caithness Poverty Action Group or something similar
Fiona Webster	Promote Community Engagement Fund for Work Life Highland
Ann/Alastair	Ann to link Alastair CVG with Caithness Transport Forum to share Caithness Rural Transport input
Lynn	Share community engagement Survey link for Thurso Transformation Delivery Group
Vicky Strange	Promote Get Active Highland Fund (up to £5,000 per group) – applications due by November 10 th
Karl Rosie	Update to be provided on progress in reinvigorating the Caithness Drug & Alcohol Forum
Lynn/Alastair	To continue gathering information from community groups for mapping food resources.
Cai/Alastair/Eann	To continue supporting Community councils in updating Community resilience plans and to explore funding for generators and raise issue with SSE through funders circle.

Next Meeting Date:

The next Caithness Community Partnership meeting is scheduled to take place on **Friday 27th March** – via Microsoft Teams from **10.00 – 12.00**.