



Advocacy Highland Newsletter

June 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter!

We are excited to share with you updates and news about our charity.

We continue to be dedicated to providing professional, high-quality independent advocacy for individuals aged 16+ under the Mental Health Act, focusing on their care and treatment. Our goal is to empower them, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights protected.

Welcome

to

our new
Admin & Referral Officer:
Louise MacDonald

our new
Advocacy Worker:
Melanie Mitchell,

and to
Feranmi Thomas,
our new Board Member.

Highland Advocacy Partnership continues to thrive, and we have recently secured additional funding to continue this project in partnership with Partners in Advocacy. This initiative, funded by the Highland Alcohol & Drug Partnership, provides independent advocacy to individuals aged 16+ within a 25-mile radius of Inverness who have lived or are living with drug and alcohol experiences.



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Charity No: SC035363

**In March we said goodbye to Hazel and Val,
as they retire after many years.**

Val served as the Advocacy Coordinator for Skye, Lochalsh, and Lochaber, dedicating an incredible 20 years to Advocacy Highland. She touched the lives of many with her kindness, empathy, and level-headedness. When Val first joined Advocacy Highland, the organisation was still newly formed, and the team was still finding their footing in a new field. Val's consistency and expertise helped the charity evolve and grow over the years. Val contributed to the organisation in many ways offering advice, training new advocates, and sharing her wealth of knowledge.

Hazel has been a long-standing employee of Advocacy Highland, making a significant impact in Caithness. Known for her helpfulness and professionalism, Hazel's dedication to the organisation and her unwavering commitment to supporting vulnerable individuals is truly impressive. She consistently went above and beyond in her role, managing to support an impressive number of people despite working part-time hours. Hazel's ability to connect with and assist her advocacy partners will leave a lasting impression on the community, providing invaluable support to many.

A lovely meal was organised with staff, both past and present to celebrate Val and Hazel's retirement. The event was filled with laughter, happy stories and expressions of gratitude for Val and Hazel's incredible contributions over the years.

It was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to come together. Everyone at Advocacy Highland wishes Val and Hazel all the very best in their well-deserved retirement, hoping they enjoy this new chapter of their lives to the fullest



Following Val's retirement, Vicky Gordon has been promoted to Area Coordinator for Skye, Lochalsh, and Lochaber. Vicky, who has been an advocate in Lochaber for some time, is delighted to take on the coordination of the wider area.

In Caithness and Sutherland, Mairi and Allison's hours have been increased to cover Hazel's retirement.

Welcome to Louise and Melanie

We are thrilled to welcome Louise and Melanie to the team!

Louise joins us as our new Admin and Referral Officer and will be the first point of contact for most people reaching out to our organisation. With extensive experience in the care sector and admin, Louise has hit the ground running and is already making a significant impact. Her expertise and proactive approach ensure that our administrative processes run smoothly and efficiently, providing excellent support to both our staff, stakeholders and clients.

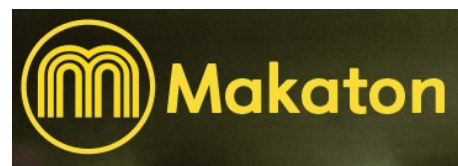
Melanie is our new Mental Health Advocate, covering Inverness and Nairn. She brings a wealth of experience of Health & Social Care from her previous role as a Health Care Assistant with NHS . Melanie is currently shadowing Natasha and Joanne in meetings to gain hands-on experience and familiarise herself with our procedures. Her dedication and her compassionate nature make her a valuable addition to our team. We are confident that Melanie will soon be ready to take on her responsibilities independently and make a positive difference in the lives of those she supports.

Both Louise and Melanie are based in our Inverness office.



Team Training

Building on our Talking Mats training from last year, we have organised Makaton training for later this month. Makaton is a unique communication program that uses symbols, signs, and speech to help people communicate.



The team is excited to learn the basics which will enhance our ability to communicate effectively with a diverse range of individuals.

Highland Directory of Services

Highland Directory of Services has recently launched!



The Highland Directory of Services is a searchable online directory of third sector services by geography in Highland that should will improve access to and understanding of what is available to support individuals.

The Directory of Service is a collaborative effort between NHS Highland and Highland Third Sector Interface. The directory will be hosted on HTSI's website and be maintained jointly by HTSI and NHS Highland.

Check out the Directory via HTSI's website. Just follow the pink button at the top right of the home page:

[Highland Third Sector Interface \(HTSI\)](#)

Changes to our Board of Directors

Pam Courcha has retired as a voluntary Trustee on the Board of Directors after a number of years of dedicated service to Advocacy Highland. Her wisdom will be greatly missed. Pam has served on various voluntary boards for 18 years and has truly earned a well-deserved rest. She wished Advocacy Highland well, saying, "I know AH will continue to make a significant contribution supporting those who are vulnerable." Thank you Pam from everyone at Advocacy Highland, we wish you all the best.

We are delighted to welcome Feranmi Thomas to the Board of Directors. Feranmi has a passion for advocacy and empowerment, along with a strong legal background. We are confident that she will be a tremendous asset to the board, and we eagerly anticipate her involvement and insight.





Volunteers' Week

Monday 2nd – Sunday 8th June

Volunteers' Week returns in 2025 for its 41st year, along with the launch of a brand-new UK-wide website!

www.volunteersweek.org

Advocacy Highland is immensely grateful to all our volunteers for their unwavering support and dedication. We have a number of volunteers as Directors as well as Volunteer Advocates. Their selfless contributions continue to make a significant impact to the organisation and to the lives of those we support.

The dedication, effort, and expertise of our volunteers are truly admirable. Thank you. Together, we are making a difference!



CONTACT US



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Clare:	Deputy Manager	Tel: 07771 225742
Louise:	Admin & Referral Officer	Tel: 07717 704638

Area Co-ordinators

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Allison:	(Caithness & Sutherland)	Tel: 07717 704639
Joanne:	(Ross & Cromarty)	Tel: 07717 704640
Vicky:	(Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh)	Tel: 07717 704635

Advocacy Workers

Natasha:	(Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey)	Tel: 07917 976967
Melanie:	(Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey)	Tel: 07917 327716
Mairi:	(Caithness & Sutherland)	Tel: 07884 602848
Rebecca:	(Skye & Lochalsh)	Tel: 07717 730865

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We invest in people Gold



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