



Highland Alcohol and Drugs partnership

Annual Report 2025/2026



Introduction

This report provides an overview of HADP's activities, achievements and developments during 2025/2026 and reflects our ongoing commitment to partnership working, continuous improvement and delivering positive outcomes for the people of Highland.

This Annual Report highlights some of the work of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) during 2025/2026 and reflects our shared commitment to preventing harm, promoting recovery and improving the lives of individuals, families and communities affected by alcohol and drug use across Highland. Throughout the year, partners from across public and third sectors have worked together with the aim to deliver a compassionate, evidence-based and person-centred approach that recognises alcohol and drug use as both a public health and social justice issue.

At the heart of HADP's work is a commitment to human rights, dignity and respect. We recognise that people affected by alcohol and drug use are experts by experience, and that meaningful involvement of people with lived and living experience is essential to shaping effective services, informing strategic priorities and improving outcomes. Our work continues to be guided by trauma-informed principles, recognising the impact of adversity and striving to create services, systems and communities that support healing, hope and recovery.

This year has been one of development and renewal. The publication of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategic Plan 2025-2030, informed by a comprehensive Health Needs Assessment with engagement with partners and communities, provides a clear direction for the years ahead. Publication of the national alcohol and drug strategy, Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery, and the Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships Delivery Plan provide further guidance for practice and approach. In addition, the partnership has strengthened its use of data and intelligence, expanded opportunities for collaboration, supported innovation, and continued to invest in prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery and family support.

The challenges associated with alcohol and drug-related harm remain significant. However, this report demonstrates the dedication, resilience and passion of individuals, communities and organisations across Highland who are working together to save lives, reduce inequalities and support recovery. It highlights achievements, learning and areas for continued improvement, while recognising that lasting change requires collective action and sustained commitment.

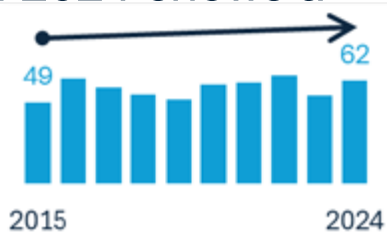
We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this work during the year, particularly people with lived and living experience whose insight, expertise and courage continue to strengthen our partnership. Together, we are working towards a Highland where people experience fewer harms from alcohol and drugs, have access to the support they need, and can live healthier, safer and more fulfilling lives.

Infograph summaries on alcohol and drugs

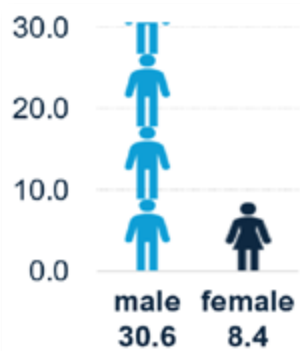
Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Alcohol Summary

62 alcohol specific

deaths in 2024 shows a stable trend in Highland



The alcohol mortality rate per 100,000 population in 2023 was **3.6 times higher for men than women** in Highland.



All people were ages 45 years and over at time of death with half of deaths at ages 65 years and over.



In 2024 people who experienced an alcohol death in Scotland were **5 times more likely** to have lived in the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) than the least deprived areas (SIMD 5).



In 2023/24 people who had an alcohol-related hospital admission in Scotland were **5 times more likely** to have lived in the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) than in the least deprived areas (SIMD 5). In Highland annual hospital stays = 1140.



Alcohol Treatment in 2025

Referrals for specialist treatment
744

Started treatment
483

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700

Prevention work shows that from young people in Highland surveyed in 2025:-



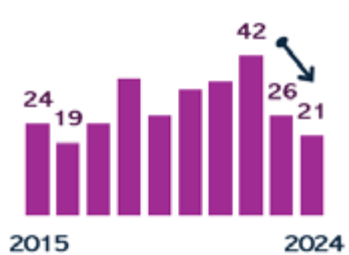
43% say they **get alcohol from a member of their family**



45% say they **had consumed alcohol in their home.**

Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership **Drugs Summary**

↓ **21 drug-related deaths**
this is a sustained reduction in 2024 in Highland.



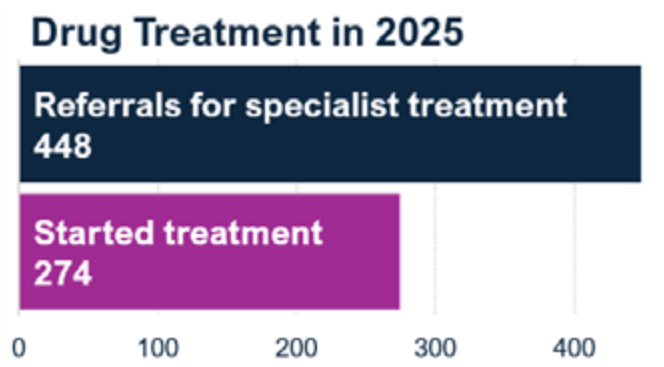
For deaths in 2020-2024 average age was 35-44 years, 68% male and 32% female.



🏠 In 2024 people who experienced a drug related death in Scotland were **12 times more likely** to have lived in the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) than in the least deprived areas (SIMD 5). 🔒

Scottish Ambulance Service responded to **210 incidents to administer Naloxone** in 2024 to help prevent fatal overdose. 🚑

In 2024, **266 near-fatal overdose alerts** received by Assertive Outreach teams



🏠 In 2021/22-23/24 people who had a drug-related hospital admission were **14 times more likely** to have lived in the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) of Scotland than in the least deprived areas (SIMD 5). In Highland annual average stays = 210. 🔒

546 Naloxone kits were distributed in Highland in 2025 in the community, a decrease of 13% on the previous year. 🚰

Local Early Warning System

The Highland Local Early Warning System (LEWS) group was established in May 2024 following guidance from Public Health Scotland. The group aims to build and operate a local early warning system to enable effective local response to reduce drug-related harms. The Highland LEWS group is multi-disciplinary, providing a space to review drug trends by collecting, assessing and acting on local intelligence. It provides coordination of monitoring drug harms, identifying incidents and responding appropriately where required. Developments for the LEWS in 2025/2026 include a Simulation Exercise, and introduction of a Flag Status rating system.

A Simulation Exercise was conducted by the group in April 2025. The activity further tested the Highland reporting form, which allows for faster identification of issues in Highland to HADP, and is also connected to the national Public Health Scotland [RADAR reporting system](#). The exercise also aimed to test the Standard Operating Procedures of other teams, a recommendation from a Tabletop exercise in December 2024.

Following reports to the Highland Reporting Form, as part of the exercise, a mock Problem Assessment Group (PAG) was convened to consider the situation in collaboration with 19 partners. Discussion points included consideration of a case definition, risk assessment and potential actions or other next steps.

A short evaluation was shared with partners after the exercise. Feedback on the LEWS simulation was positive, with participants highlighting strong multi-agency collaboration, rapid information sharing, effective partnership working, and a well-chaired meeting that enabled contributions from all organisations. Key areas for improvement, which have since been addressed, included improving access to Teams chat functions, streamlining reporting forms and alerts, adding clearer risk assessment criteria, and making the PAG process more focused, structured, and action-oriented to reduce alert fatigue and ensure timely decision-making. Overall, participants felt the exercise strengthened preparedness, reinforced harm reduction actions, and demonstrated a shared commitment to responding effectively to emerging drug-related risks.

A further development for the LEWS was the Flag Status reporting. Since July 2025, following partner updates and consideration of available information, members of the group provide a flag rating to gauge level of feeling regarding current drug-related risks in Highland. The categories are as follows:

- **1 Flag** - Calm & Confident:



- Everything feels under control. No red flags, gut says the situation is stable, no immediate action needed.

- **2 Flags** - Slight Unease:



- Something feels a bit off. Minor concerns of inconsistencies, worth monitoring but not alarming, consider gathering more information.

- **3 Flags** - Growing Concern:



- This could become a problem. Clear signs of escalation, gut is signalling caution, action or intervention may be needed soon.

- **4 Flags** - Alarm Bells:



- This feels urgent or dangerous. Strong intuitive warning, situation feels unstable or risky, immediate attention or action required.

In 2025/2026, the average rated level of risk was 2.2 flags, with a range of 1.4 to 2.5.

Further developments for LEWS are planned for 2026/2027.

Self Assessment

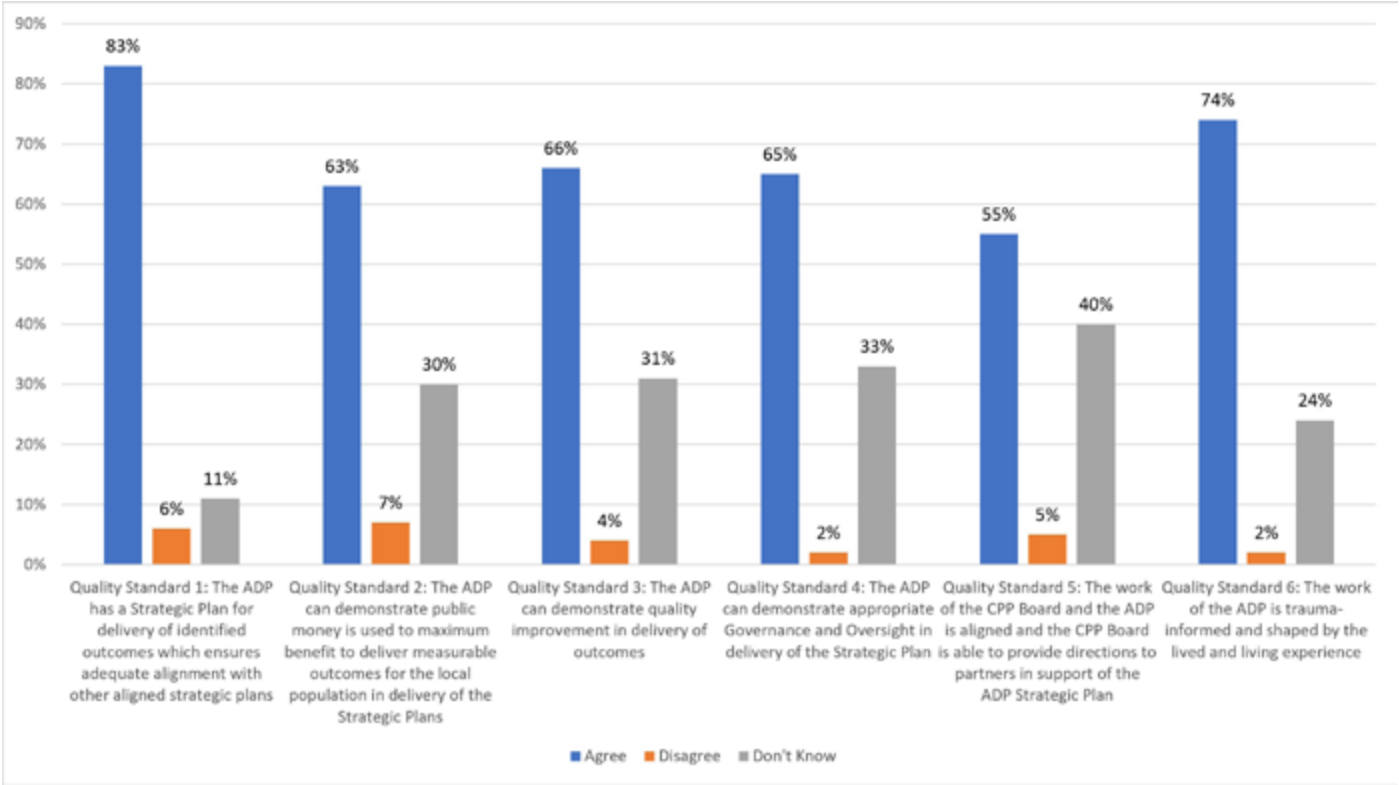
ADPs are encouraged to complete self-assessments to identify areas for improvement. The Scottish Government provides a framework for this, which includes five quality standards, with three gradings; maintain, explore and develop. During the spring of 2025, HADP began work to complete a self-assessment. The previous one had been completed in 2022. HADP sought support from the Local Authority Improvement Service, to provide guidance and independent facilitation from experts. To ensure the process was fully relevant to HADP, some parts of the assessment were amended, and an additional sixth quality standard was added, to check the extent of partnership being trauma informed and shaped by lived and living experience.

Quality Standards asked about in the Self-Assessment:

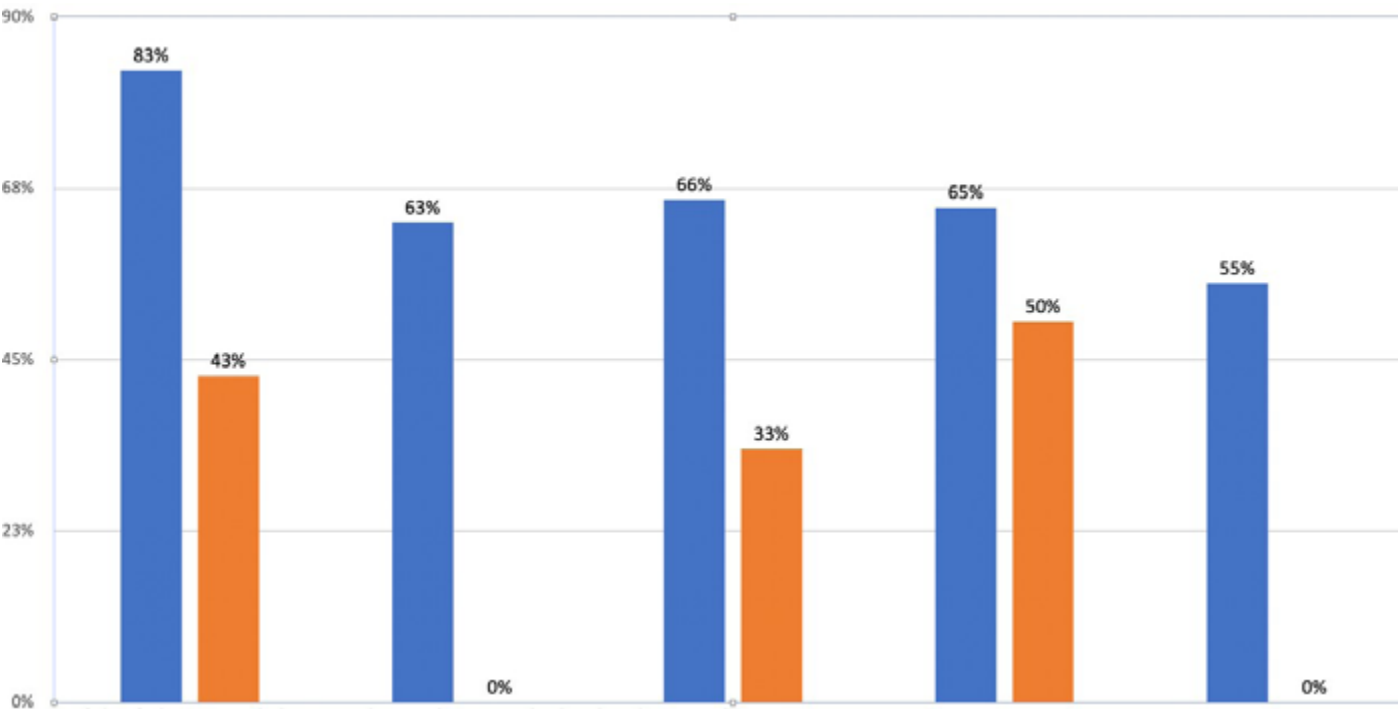
1. The ADP has a **strategic plan** for delivery of identified outcomes which ensures adequate **alignment** with other aligned strategic plans.
2. The ADP can demonstrate **public money is used to maximum benefit** to deliver measurable outcomes for the local population in the delivery of strategic plans.
3. The ADP can demonstrate **quality improvement** in the delivery of outcomes.
4. The ADP can demonstrate appropriate **governance and oversight** in delivery of the strategic plan.
5. The work of the **CPP Board** and the ADP is aligned and the CPP Board is able to provide directions to partners in support of the ADP strategic plan.
6. The work of the ADP is **trauma-informed** and shaped by **lived and living experience**.

There were two parts to the self-assessment. Firstly, during the summer, an anonymous online survey was shared with members of the HADP Strategy Group. Then in autumn there was an in-person workshop to discuss results and agree next steps. The results were provided in a report by the Improvement Service in December 2025.

The report showed that there were overall positive responses across the 6 standards in 2025.



There was considerable improvement in self-assessment ratings from 2022 to 2025.



Improvement priorities for initial focus were identified as:

1. Supporting a shift towards evidence-based and outcomes focussed funding and reporting;
2. Continuing to ensure HADP includes the voices of people with lived and living experience of alcohol and drug use strategic planning in a meaningful, robust and trauma-informed way; and
3. Streamlining strategy planning and reporting processes across policy areas working to shared outcomes.
4. Once these are complete, a further three improvement actions can be progressed substantially;
5. Continuing to progress and strengthen risk assessment activities (a workshop will be planned in 2026 to review risk descriptions and emerging risks);
6. Building capacity and capability for quality improvement activities across all areas of the HADP's work and wider areas of Public Protection; and
7. Escalate actions to map resources across the HADP.

These will be progressed as detailed in the Improvement Service report, and the next HADP self-assessment will be in 2027.

Health Needs Assessment

HADP and NHS Highland Public Health colleagues completed the Health Needs Assessment (HNA) in May 2025. The HNA provided a systematic process to identify and evaluate health requirements of the population of Highland, in relation to alcohol and other drug use. The HNA reviewed multiple data sources, both national and local, experiential in the form of a focus group and surveys, and community engagement events.



The HNA will guided the development of our Strategic Plan by identifying key issues and priorities, supporting strategic allocation of resources, and tailoring interventions to specific community needs. Responding to challenges informed by the HNA can improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities for people who are affected by alcohol and other drugs. HADP plan to develop an easy read version of the HNA.

RDI event June

The NHS Highland Research and Development and Innovation Conference took place on 12th June 2025 in Inverness with the theme of Addressing NHS Challenges: Can we answer difficult questions?

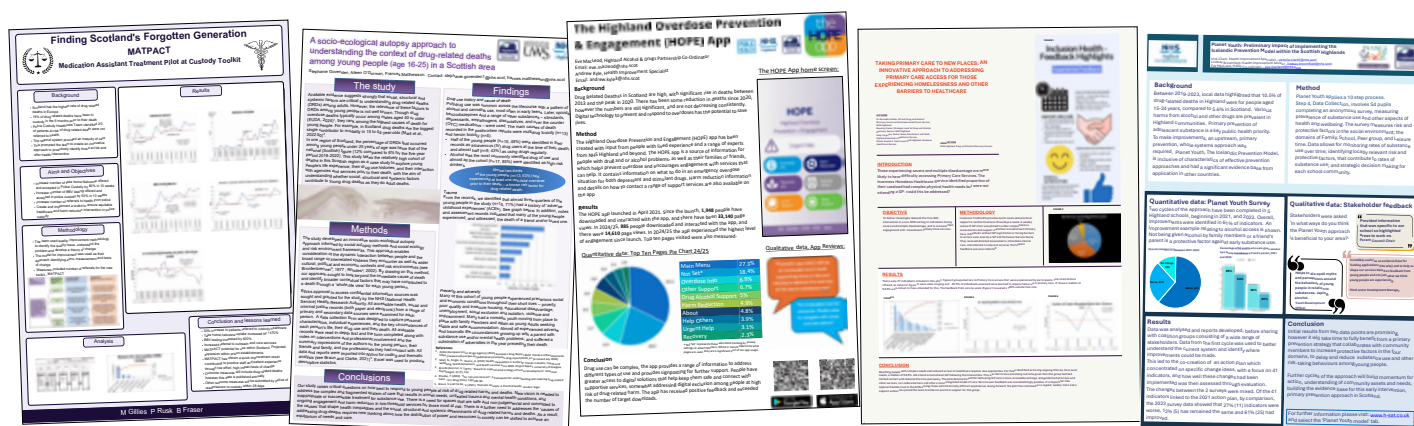
Drugs and Alcohol was one of the five NHS Challenges on the agenda which also included Mental Health, Obesity, Delayed Discharge and the NHS and Financial Pressures. The conference provided a useful opportunity to shed a spotlight on the Highland context of drug and alcohol harms, describe some of the initiatives and partnership projects which are bringing much needed change as well as outlining the ongoing challenges and emerging drug threats in Highland and more widely. The keynote speech was delivered in a joint presentation by Bev Fraser, Strategic Lead for Highland Drug and Alcohol Services (DARS) and Frances Matthewson, Research and Intelligence Specialist for HADP.

Three breakout sessions were hosted in the afternoon, each with six shorter presentations. A prize for the best presentation in one session was awarded to Michelle Beattie (UHI) and Bev Fraser, and Lesley Campbell, DARS Caithness, for presenting their early findings on 'How can we assertively outreach those most at risk of drug-related death within 48 hours of an A&E visit?'. This project is aimed to implement the use of the Trigger Checklist and assertive outreach within 48 hours for those at high risk of drug-related harm within a rural Emergency Department and explain how the Trigger Checklist can be optimised in the Emergency Department.

In addition to the keynote speech and breakout session, five posters were on display from research and projects relating to drugs and alcohol. Andrew Kyle, Health Improvement Specialist, and Eve MacLeod, HADP Coordinator, won third prize for their poster on the HOPE App; Highland Overdose Prevention and Engagement.

Poster Title	Authors
Finding Scotland's Forgotten Generation: Medication Assistant Treatment Pilot at Custody Toolkit (MATPACT)	Paul Rusk, Marion Gillies, Bev Fraser
A socio-ecological autopsy approach to understanding the context of drug-related deaths among young people (age 16-25) in a Scottish area	Stephanie Govenden, Aileen O'Gorman, Frances Matthewson
HOPE App; Highland Overdose Prevention and Engagement	Andrew Kyle, Eve MacLeod
Taking Primary Care to New Places: An Innovative Approach to Addressing Primary Care Access for those Experiencing Homelessness and Other Barriers to Healthcare	Alexandra Dallas, Sally Ferguson, Bev Fraser, Shona Urquhart
Planet Youth: An evidence based primary prevention approach to improving health outcomes of children and young people through reducing and delaying substance use	Vicki Clark, Lindsay Bloomfield, Eve MacLeod

Full versions of the posters are available in the appendix at the end of the report.



Subgroup development

Following the Risk Assessment development in 2024/2025, it was agreed to begin two HADP Strategy Group subgroups. Both subgroups started in July 2025.

The primary objective of the Prevention subgroup is to provide oversight of primary and secondary prevention interventions that enable progress towards HADP strategic outcomes as detailed in the 2025 – 2030 HADP strategy, particularly outcome 1; Prevent, delay onset, and reduce problem alcohol and drug use. The group is therefore responsible for:

- Reviewing available data and learning from a variety of sources including, but not limited to:
 - Planet Youth data,
 - the drug related death process,
 - RADAR data,
 - HADP health needs assessment (2025),
 - available literature of the evidence base,
 - lived and living experience of individual,
 - families and communities
- Assessing options for aligning and connecting prevention inputs, providing coordination whether or not HADP funds the prevention activity
- Actioning and influencing the alcohol and drugs section of the [Integrated Children's Service Plan](#)
- Seeking approval for projects and programmes of work from the HADP strategy group prior to progressing to delivery
- Contributing to the realisation of the Rights of the Child, and Rights of People who use alcohol and drugs.

The Prevention subgroup met on three occasions in 25/26, and are considering the Public Health Scotland Consensus approach on prevention of substance use harm among children and young people in a Highland context, before planning next steps.

The primary objective of the Innovation and Development subgroup is to provide oversight of innovative developments that enable progress towards HADP strategic outcomes as detailed in the 2025 – 2030 HADP strategy. The group is therefore responsible for:

- Reviewing available data and learning from a variety of sources including, but not limited to:
 - the drug related death process,
 - RADAR data,
 - HADP health needs assessment (2025),
 - available literature of the evidence base,
 - lived and living experience of individual,
 - families and communities
- Assessing options for innovation and development
- Prioritising and selecting options for progression into projects and programmes of work using methodology agreed by the HADP Strategy Group
- Ensuring that the Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use (2024) is embedded into projects and programmes of work selected for progression to delivery
- Seeking approval for projects and programmes of work from the HADP strategy group prior to progressing to delivery.

The Innovation and Development subgroup met on five occasions in 25/26, and have completed an Impact Effort matrix exercise to prioritise focus for 26/27; Community of Practice plus Assertive Outreach.



HADP and NHS Highland are pleased to support **With You Anywhere Highland**, which launched in August 2025. This remote service provides support for people and families affected by alcohol and drug use. Support is available across Highland, through phone support and online options. This service is reaching people who might find it challenging to connect with other available support, for lots of different reasons. For more information visit: www.wearewithyou.org.uk/local-hubs/highland

Vision '26 Event

An annual event supporting the Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan, Vision '26, was attended by a range of partner organisations, including HADP. As way to showcase work achieved through the Plan, one task for the event was to provide activities for children under the age of 12, providing a Family Fun Day experience. HADP asked children to design stickers that would help to cheer someone up. The designs were fantastic;

HADP used the themes from the children's designs to develop two stickers in an anti-stigma sticker set. The other two messages were developed by people with lived experience.

There were many kind, compassionate and colourful designs that highlighted themes of love, rainbows, smiling faces and messages about having good days. Thank you to all the children that took part.



Partnership Data and Intelligence Development Workshop

HADP held a Partnership Data and Intelligence Development Workshop; Understanding available data and how to maximise potential for prevention and intervention across the partnership. This workshop provided an opportunity to bring partners together to build on the work of the Health Needs Assessment. The workshop looked at HADP data including current uses of partners data which include;



- National Reporting
- Core Indicators
- HADP Dashboard
- HNA & Strategy development / monitoring
- Local Early Warning System
- Progress Reporting
- Service Improvement e.g. MAT Standards
- Use of Case Studies
- Infographs.

Partners then showcased their data, with consideration to how alcohol and drug use affects their service, the ways in which that was known, if there were any gaps in knowledge, and finally any intersectionality.

Scottish Drugs Forum provided insight from the Experiential Report 24/25, showcasing the voice of people in service, their family members and staff in service. The report suggests Highland's services are delivering many of the intended principles of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards, particularly around rapid access, dignity, respect and therapeutic relationships. However, participants identified ongoing challenges around mental health support, psychosocial interventions, information and informed choice, workforce capacity, and reducing stigma across the wider system.

The Police Scotland contribution emphasised that alcohol and drugs are not only a policing issue but also a public health, community safety and social inequality issue. Their evidence highlights impacts on victims, offenders, staff wellbeing, community confidence and police resources, while also identifying important gaps in understanding around hidden populations, root causes and wider harms. The strongest themes were the connections between substance use, mental health, trauma, domestic abuse and deprivation.

NHS Highland Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (DARS) provided helpful insights, including a service facing growing demand, workforce pressures and recruitment challenges, particularly in rural areas. While strong routine data systems exist, significant opportunities remain to improve intelligence on outreach, attendance, psychosocial support and service outcomes. Future developments suggested linking activity to outcomes, demonstrating the impact, and maximising the use of existing information systems to support service planning and improvement.

Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI) demonstrated the importance of third-sector organisations in delivering prevention, recovery and community support across Highland. The insight suggests that the greatest impact comes from person-centred, relationship-based approaches that address the wider social determinants of substance use. Case studies reinforce that outcomes such as housing stability, employment, family reconnection, social inclusion and improved wellbeing are key indicators of recovery success and should sit alongside traditional measures.

Highland Council Justice Services contribution demonstrated that problematic alcohol and drug use is deeply connected to trauma, deprivation, offending and social exclusion. While substance use creates significant risks for individuals and communities, there are positive impacts from long-term, relationship-based support and community rehabilitation. Key challenges include rural access barriers, limited rehabilitation capacity, County Lines activity and the need for trauma-informed, holistic services that address housing, health, finances and social wellbeing alongside substance use recovery.

HMP Inverness highlighted the complex relationship between substance use, offending, trauma, mental health, neurodiversity and social disadvantage. The prison reports relatively low levels of illicit drug activity but continues to manage significant alcohol and drug-related vulnerabilities among people in custody. Key priorities include maintaining a holistic, trauma-informed approach, strengthening partnership working, preparing for emerging substances such as Nitazenes, and improving support for reintegration into communities.

Plenary discussion followed, considering maximising use of data, exploring data sharing opportunities and barriers, and thoughts on how data can lead to action. Finally, the workshop considered outcomes of the Strategic Plan, and ways in which they could be measured. Actions from this workshop will continue to progress data improvements.

HADP are grateful to NHS Highland Health Intelligence team, who facilitated the workshop. With thanks to partners for their insight.

Drug-related and Alcohol-specific Deaths

In 2025, statistics on alcohol specific deaths and drug related deaths registered in 2024 are reported. 62 deaths were directly attributed to alcohol in Highland in 2024, an increase of 9 deaths on the 2023 figure of 53 deaths. Further information is available in this briefing paper.

21 drug related deaths were registered in Highland in 2024, a decrease of 5 deaths on the 2023 figure of 26 deaths. Further information is available in this briefing paper. In 2025/2026 HADP reviewed 14 suspected or confirmed drug related deaths.

Recovery Walk

HADP supported attendance of 40 people from Highland at the National Recovery Walk, in Stirling. The day, organised by a group of people with lived experience and HADP support team, helped to showcase the power of hope, that recovery is possible, and is something to celebrate. The event also provides a poignant memorial for people lost to drug-related deaths. Take a couple of minutes to watch the Recovery Walk Scotland 2025 - Stirling video from Scottish Recovery Consortium.



Voice and Choice

In collaboration with Partners in Advocacy, HADP were successful in achieving funding from the Way Forward for Families Corra Foundation fund. The funding will support a children's independent advocacy service. This will provide support for children aged up to 16 affected by problem substance use, either their own, or that of a significant person in their lives. HADP and Partners in Advocacy are co-chairing the steering group, which has met twice since October 2025.

HADP Dashboard

An interactive HADP dashboard was launched in 2025/26 to enable the timely review of prevention, harm reduction and treatment indicators by the HADP Strategy Group. This approach provides an accessible way to view data, helping to demonstrate alignment with the HADP Strategy and highlight opportunities for improvement. The development is undertaken using Power BI software which enables automated analysis and presentation of data from a wide range of nationally published and open-source data. This is then augmented by including local data and insights.

The dashboard greatly improves efficiency by significantly reducing the time spent on report preparation and through the repurposing of outputs in response to other data requests. Future planned enhancements include increasing the coverage of indicators from across the partnership and introducing summary insights for ease of understanding.

Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategic Plan



Informed by the Health Needs Assessment (HNA) findings, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) developed a Strategic Plan for 2025/2026-2029/2030.

The vision of the Strategic Plan is to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drug use in Highland, through a comprehensive, compassionate, and evidence-based approach. Our partnership outcomes are to:

- Prevent, delay onset and reduce problem alcohol and drug use;
- Improve access to and benefits from effective, integrated, person-centred, quality and recovery-oriented systems of care;
- Reduce harm and risk experienced by people using alcohol and drugs by increasing the availability and access to harm reduction approaches;
- Make better use of the whole system to meet the needs of people with problem alcohol and drug use;
- Develop a resilient, skilled, trauma-informed workforce that work in trauma-informed places;
- Ensure effective engagement, governance and reporting arrangements.

The Strategic Plan highlights that we all have a role to play in supporting people with alcohol and drug problems. We can do this by;

- Report any drug related information into RADAR: RADAR Reporting Form
- Download the HOPE app and/or encourage people who use drugs to do so. The HOPE app contains harm reduction advice, support contacts, and other information.
- Android: <https://bit.ly/3tawMkA> Apple: <https://apple.co/39XfjEi>
- To promote the HOPE App, resources are available from HIRS for free. Search 'HOPE'. Our Save a Life. How to respond to a drugs overdose leaflet will come up in a 'HOPE' search.
- Naloxone can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose providing time for emergency services to attend. Anyone can legally administer Naloxone in an emergency to save a life. HADASS, DARS and SFAD all offer Naloxone training and supply.
- Support people into recovery services; this is a protective factor for overdose. Encourage people to engage with DARS or HADASS. In addition, details of other drug and alcohol services in Highland are available in our Service Directory.
- A Living Experience group is available, in Inverness, for people using drugs and alcohol, and is run by Scottish Drugs Forum. For more information contact peerengagement@sdf.org.uk
- Visit HADP's website, sign up to the newsletter, engage in any available training. Follow us on social media: Facebook: @HighlandADP,
- Visit the Highland Substance Awareness Toolkit at www.h-sat.co.uk.

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the Strategic Plan, and is available on the NHS Highland website.

Lived Experience Panel development and In-Year Review

Scottish Drugs Forum are commissioned by HADP to support the function of the Lived Experience Panel. The Panel provided an in year review to the HADP Strategy Group in November 2025. The HADP Strategy Group wish to thank the Panel for the In Year Review, which was welcomed and well received. The review is an excellent example of the work of the Panel; thorough, concise, well considered and clear, it aligns well with what HADP aims to achieve. The In Year Review also demonstrates the development of the Panel over the year, and HADP are grateful to SDF colleagues and Panel members for their commitment to, and expertise in this work.

Local Improvement Fund



The HADP Local Improvement Fund, administered by Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI), continued in 2025/2026. The fund invites third sector organisations across Highland to apply for grants of up to £10,000, to help fund drug and alcohol related activities which complement the aims of the partnership and the Scottish Government's National Mission on drug-related deaths and harms. In addition, involvement of people with lived experience was an important factor:

- to establish the need for the proposed service/activity,
- to identify the benefits to the community,
- to influence the design and implementation of the service/activity.

In 2025/2026, the Local Improvement Fund panel awarded funding to:

- ACI Recovery Services – Core Funding for trauma-informed counselling, family support and recovery coaching
- ACI Recovery Services – Pilot a pathway for long-term recovery coaching clients to become trained peer volunteers
- Apex Scotland – Foundations for Change programme
- Calman Trust – Drug and alcohol awareness, with age and stage appropriate content
- Counselling Care Skye & Lochalsh – Delivery of counselling
- Discovery College – Family Recovery College Highland
- Highland WellNess Collective – Sober Socials and Community Connection
- Lochaber Hope – Community Recovery Support Groups; SMART, Families and Recovery Walks
- Thurso Community Café – Support in a safe, structured environment

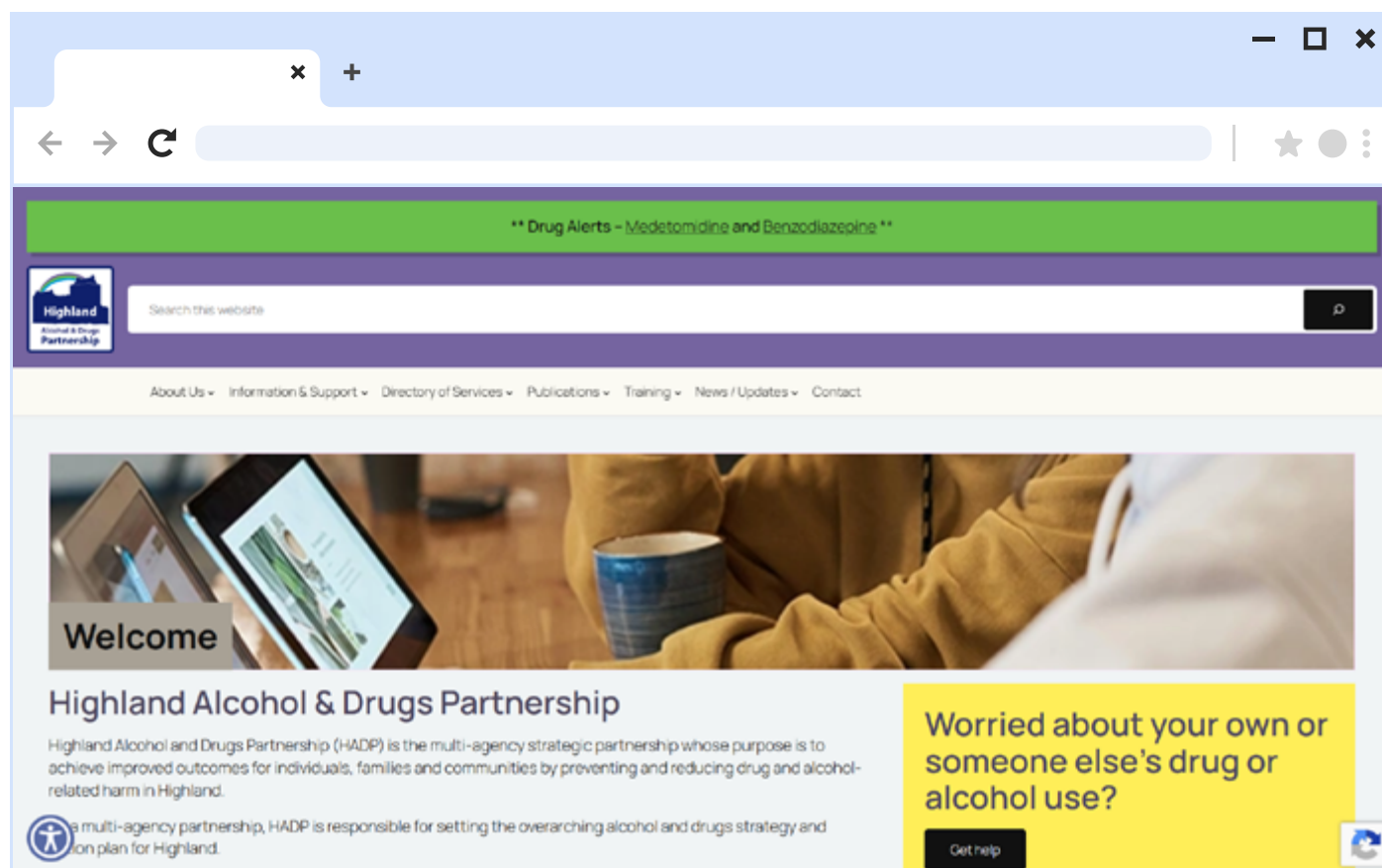
HADP is committed to celebrating practice made possible by the Local Improvement Fund. HTSI shared a report exploring the tangible impacts of the Local Improvement Fund in Highland, showcasing how community-driven action, strategic investment, and collaborative partnerships are fostering positive change and improving lives across the region. HTSI and HADP appreciate the progress made possible by high levels of commitment, endurance and dedication from a variety of community groups, working together with their communities, to build relationships and develop support options, including:

- Early intervention programmes for families
- Targeted local supports for individuals and groups
- Peer-led and lived-experience informed service design
- Community forums for sharing learning and celebrating achievements.

The report is available on the [HADP website](#).

New website

HADP updated website launched on the 1st December 2025. With thanks to the Lived Experience Panel who informed areas for improvement, and NHS Highland Health Improvement support to the website development and transfer. In the first four months of the website, 905 people visited the site, accessing 2,918 page views. Developments to the website will continue in 2026/2027, with plans for a section regarding Rights.



Recruitment to Development Manager post

HADP support team Development Manager post experienced a period of vacancy for six months. The post was filled in January 2026, fixed term for one year, while a team review is undertaken. The post holder will initially focus on the Residential Rehabilitation Action Plan, and stigma, trauma-informed practice and rights.

Together We Can

An online workshop in January 2026 completed the Together We Can work. There were 47 attendees at the event, which built directly on earlier work captured in the Together We Can Project Report (Summary Report also available). The event shared learning from previous community events in Thurso, Inverness, Fort William and Milton, reflecting themes such as harm reduction, access to services, stigma and lived experience. Updates included progress on service mapping, workforce development, peer support, communications and governance, aligned with the HADP Strategic Plan. Although the final event, the Together We Can work will continue, and will report to the HADP Strategy Group to ensure accountability. Full details of the event can be found in this report. [Together-We-Can-Online-Event-January-2026-Report.pdf](#).



Hear Me

HADP have commissioned a Highland wide Independent Advocacy service for individuals with drug and alcohol problems accessing DARS, through establishment of self and professional referral pathways to improve health and social outcomes. The service is now called Hear Me.

Partners in Advocacy will deliver the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance Outcomes (SIAA) by:

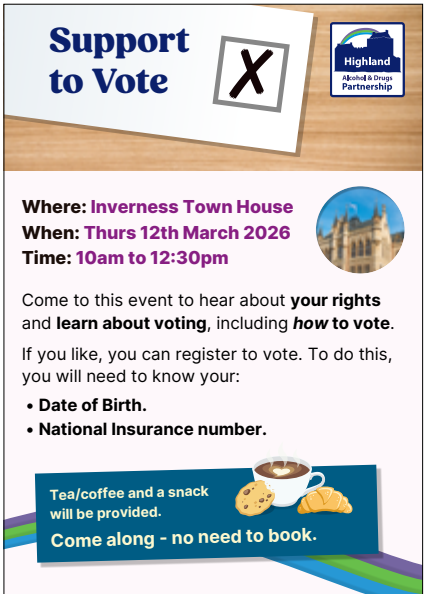
- Engaging with individuals to build effective and trusting relationships, understanding their views, needs - including issues and concerns – wishes and choices
- Working with individuals to identify how to best support them whilst clearly communicating what support independent advocacy can and cannot provide
- Working with individuals to enable them to; express their views and wishes, access information, make informed choices and exercise control over decisions affecting their lives, increasing agency and power
- Working with individuals to know that their voices have been heard, and their needs and wishes have been understood
- Informing individuals of their rights
- Working with individuals to enable them to uphold their rights, needs and wishes
- Working with individuals to recognise, understand and challenge power imbalances that influence their lives.

This service provision supports delivery of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards, in particular MAT Standard 8; All people have access to independent advocacy and support for housing, welfare and income needs.

The Highland wide service began in March 2026, transitioning from the established service that was provided in the Inverness and surrounding area by the Highland Advocacy Partnership.

Support to Vote

HADP and partners delivered a voting support event in March 2026 to increase confidence and participation in the Scottish Parliament election. The session sought to provide information on voting rights, support voter registration, and offer a realistic practice voting experience. A revised approach was agreed after no attendees came to the Town Hall event on the 12th of March. This included a condensed 60-minute session to be delivered within the local residential rehabilitation unit and other potential services, with delivery scheduled for April 2026. The work aimed to improve awareness of rights and reduce barriers to voting for people with lived and living experience.



Support to Vote  

Where: Inverness Town House 
When: Thurs 12th March 2026
Time: 10am to 12:30pm

Come to this event to hear about **your rights** and **learn about voting**, including **how to vote**.
If you like, you can register to vote. To do this, you will need to know your:

- **Date of Birth.**
- **National Insurance number.**


Tea/coffee and a snack will be provided.
Come along - no need to book.

HOPE App



The HOPE app passed its fourth year of delivery in 2025. It continues to provide harm reduction information, including what to do in an overdose, plus details of support services. In 2025/2026, 885 people used the HOPE app. HADP will continue to promote and develop the app with partners.

National Alcohol and Drug Strategy Published

During 2025/2026, Scottish Government and COLSA developed the new national alcohol and drug strategic plan. Preventing Harm Promoting Recovery brings alcohol and drug agendas together in a ten-year plan. The national vision for health and social care is “a Scotland where people live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives”. They highlight that this applies equally to people affected by alcohol and drugs. The aims of this Alcohol & Drugs Strategic Plan are to: prevent harm, promote recovery and save lives. To achieve these, delivery of the plan will be underpinned by:

- A human rights-based approach, ensuring that the voices of people with lived and living experience shape the design and delivery of services, and that people receive person-centred care and support;
- A locally-led, responsive and sustainable system that is accountable and works effectively in partnership, guided where appropriate by clear national direction and support.

The Plan focuses on four interconnected areas:

- prevention and early intervention;
- harm reduction;
- treatment and care; and
- the wider circle of support.

HADP were involved in a number of consultation events about the end of the National Mission on Drug Deaths, and the development of this new plan, including an in-person partnership session with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care in April 2025.

Community fund

HADP updated the Community Fund for 2025/2026, inviting statutory and third sector organisations to apply for one off funding of up to £2,500 for projects in Highland. The fund opened during quarterly application windows. Applications had to have a clearly defined link to national Drugs Mission outcomes;

- Fewer people develop problem alcohol or drug use
- Risk is reduced for people who take harmful drugs
- People at most risk have access to treatment and recovery
- People receive high quality treatment and recovery services
- Quality of life is improved for those experiencing multiple disadvantages
- Children, families and communities affected by substance use are supported

Guiding Principles underpinned all funding processes and decisions, setting standards to be demonstrated and evidenced in all projects considered for funding. The guiding principles were;

- Improving outcomes
- Involving people with lived / living experience
- Improving collaboration
- Improving prevention and early intervention
- Improving integration and innovation
- Improving engagement and inclusion
- Reducing inequality
- Improving and adding value

In 2025/2026, the HADP Community Fund awarded funding to;

- Active Futures for Positive Pathways for Young People in South Kessock
- NHS Highland Specialist Midwives for Maternity Comfort Packs
- TLC Inverness for Baby Bliss
- NHS Highland Planet Youth for Good Sleep Hygiene for young people programme
- Partnerships for Wellbeing for Affordable and accessible transport to recovery support services

At time of publication, only feedback regarding the Maternity Comfort Packs has been received. The Maternity Comfort Packs project was developed in response to a clear clinical need identified within NHS Highland, providing essential toiletries and nightwear to women arriving unexpectedly at maternity services without personal belongings, often due to vulnerabilities such as poverty, homelessness, substance use, or crisis situations.

Through Community Fund support, the project expanded from Raigmore Hospital to community midwifery units across Highland, purchasing 29 packs, distributing 21 packs and receiving overwhelmingly positive staff feedback. The packs helped promote comfort, dignity, hygiene, emotional wellbeing, and trauma-informed care, while reducing stress for both women and staff. The project successfully met its aims, demonstrated strong partnership working, and is now seeking further funding to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Planet Youth



PARTNER *Highland*

During 2025/2026, Planet Youth Highland focused on improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The five original schools continue to be involved, and the approach has spread to eight new schools in the area. The stages of the approach were applied, with the anonymous survey taking place in the autumn of 2025. This increased the responses to over 2,200 pupils. In addition, parents and carers were supported with resources on topics such as vaping, sleep and relationships, school-based wellbeing activities were provided, the Substance Aware School Award was promoted, and local action was strengthened through community and school partnerships.

There was also development of funding community-led support through the Planet Youth Community Fund, via the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme. In January 2026, the Planet Youth Oversight Group invited applications from third sector organisations to support the delivery of Planet Youth in local areas across Highland. Successful organisations are as follows;

- Caithness Klics
- Thurso Community Café
- Brora Youth Room
- Highland Thrive CIC
- Tain YMCA
- Cloutie McToot Community Café
- Alness Community Hub / Fox and Friends
- Mikeysline
- Safe Strong and Free
- Aban Outdoor Ltd
- The Nevis Centre
- Skye Bridge Studios 123

We look forward to seeing Planet Youth develop in the coming years.

HADP Coordinator
July 2026