

CASE STUDY

Designing for Wellbeing: Refreshed Dining Spaces for Raigmore and Invergordon Hospitals

IDENTIFYING THE NEED

Across NHS Highland, colleagues work under pressure, delivering care within busy clinical environments that demands emotional resilience and physical stamina. Feedback following the COVID 19 pandemic reinforced a clear message: staff need accessible, modern, and calming spaces to decompress, recharge, and take uninterrupted breaks.

Raigmore General Hospital, the region's largest acute site, has around 500 beds, 10 operating theatres and an Emergency Department. Existing dining facilities were functional but dated, uninviting, and unable to fully support staff wellbeing. Most furnishings were more than 25 years old. Similar issues were present at Invergordon Community Hospital, where around 200 staff, along with inpatients, outpatients and minor injuries attendees, relied on facilities that no longer reflected modern expectations for rest and recuperation.

The need was simple: create dedicated, welcoming environments that demonstrate our Charity's commitment to the workforce of NHS Highland and offer practical support for rest and recuperation.

THE CHALLENGE ON THE GROUND

Delivering the project at each site meant balancing works with the need to keep essential catering services running. Staff engagement was also prioritised to ensure the final design reflected their needs. Invergordon faced similar challenges, upgrading a traditional canteen into a flexible wellbeing space while maintaining service continuity and sourcing modern, durable furniture.

HOW WE RESPONDED

Thanks to a grant of £82,013 from NHS Charities Together, the Charity and NHS Highland embarked on a full refurbishment of the dining halls at Raigmore and Invergordon in 2024/25. Mood boards were placed in busy hospital zones with QR-code feedback, enabling staff to shape the environment they would ultimately use. This helped build ownership and generate excitement.



The refurbishment introduced modern, wellbeing-focused design, with zoned seating, contemporary décor and energy-efficient lighting to create a calm, flexible space. Old furniture was sustainably repurposed across the NHS Highland estate. Invergordon adopted the same approach on a smaller scale, creating an equally valuable 24-hour wellbeing zone for staff, patients, families and ambulance crews.

THE CHANGE WE ACHIEVED

The project increased seating capacity, easing peak-time pressure and reducing reliance on takeaway consumables, supporting NHS Scotland's disposable waste reduction goals. A calmer, multi-use environment has been created which supports social connection, private breaks, meetings, and reflective time away from busy clinical areas.

Feedback demonstrates a significant positive contribution to staff, patient and family wellbeing. Colleagues describe the new space as calming, comfortable, and conducive to meaningful breaks, supporting better morale in teams working hard to deliver the best care to patients.



THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The refurbishment of Raigmore and Invergordon's dining and wellbeing spaces is helping to embed wellbeing at the heart of our estates improvement projects and create dedicated spaces that allow staff, patients, and families to rest, recover and reconnect.

The success of these projects, both in terms of staff experience and operational benefits, sets a strong foundation for future improvements across the estate, including a similar planned project for the staff dining room at the Belford Hospital in Fort William.