

NHS Highland	
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Meeting:	Board Meeting
Meeting date:	28th July 2026
Title:	Gaelic Language Plan Progress Update
Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:	Gareth Adkins
Report Author:	Gayle Macrae, EDI Lead-Workforce

Report Recommendation:

The Board are asked to:

- Note the adequate progress against the Gaelic Language Plan up to September 2025, awarded by Bord Na Gaidhlig
- Recognise the statutory duties under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, strengthened by the Scottish Languages Act 2025, including compliance requirements and potential enforcement measures.
- Note the priorities for 2026/2027 reporting period and any associated risks

1 Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Assurance

This report relates to a:

- Government policy/directive
- Legal requirement
- NHS Board/Integration Joint Board Strategy or Direction

This report will align to the following NHS Scotland quality ambition(s):

Safe, Effective and Person Centred

This report relates to the following Strategic Outcome(s)

Start Well	Thrive Well		Stay Well		Anchor Well	
Grow Well	Listen Well	X	Nurture Well	X	Plan Well	
Care Well	Live Well		Respond Well		Treat Well	
Journey Well	Age Well		End Well		Value Well	
Perform well	Progress well		All Well Themes			

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

The current edition of the [Gaelic Language Plan \(GLP\)](#) was launched in 2023 and runs until 2028. A monitoring report is sent to Bòrd na Gàidhlig every year to record progress against the objectives set within the GLP. Between September 2024 and September 2025 (the latest reporting period) progress was noted as adequate by Bord Na Gaidhlig.

This is an improvement on the 2023/24 reporting period which was formally recorded as inadequate.

The introduction of the EDI Lead - Workforce post in January 2025 has led to some traction in this area as they now hold responsibility for delivery of the GLP. A working group was set up, and a successful funding bid was made to Bòrd na Gàidhlig which has allowed the recruitment of a Gaelic Development Co-ordinator on a 12 month fixed term contract until November 2026. The person who holds this post is a Gaelic speaker which is an essential skill for this area of work.

With the introduction of this post, NHS Highland has been able to recover progress lost during 2023/24 and achieve several objectives set within the GLP during 2024/2025. Significant progress has continued to be made throughout 2025/26, and this will be reported on in September 2026.

The new Gaelic Development Co-ordinator post offers an initial solution, but potential expiry of funding (November 2026) risks repeating previous inactivity. A new funding application has been submitted to Bord Na Gaidhlig to continue the post until 2027, and we anticipate a decision mid-June 2026.

2.2 Background

There are 2 pieces of legislation that underpin our statutory obligations with regards to the Gaelic Language Plan. These are –

- **Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005**
 - Established Bòrd na Gàidhlig and mandated it to secure Gaelic as an official language of Scotland, “commanding equal respect to the English language”.
 - The Act empowers Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require public bodies—including NHS Highland—to prepare and implement Gaelic Language Plans, aligned to the national strategy.

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig can monitor implementation, issue formal notices, require review or revision of plans, and escalate unresolved issues to Scottish Ministers.
- **Scottish Languages Act 2025**
 - Recognises Gaelic and Scots as official languages of Scotland, reinforcing equal status alongside English.
 - Enhances duties on public bodies by:
 - Requiring reporting on Gaelic standards, planning, and actions
 - Allowing Bòrd na Gàidhlig to set language standards and hold bodies to account
 - Granting enforcement powers—consistent with section 12 of the Act—for failure to meet obligations.
 - Introduces new provisions for Gaelic-medium education, nursery access, and community “areas of linguistic significance”.
- **Statutory Duties for NHS Highland**
 - Must publish and implement a Gaelic Language Plan once required by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
 - Obligations include embedding Gaelic in communications, service delivery, workforce training, signage, and internal operations.
 - Regular monitoring returns are submitted annually; non-compliance exposes NHS Highland to formal enforcement actions and reputational risk.
- **Consequences of Non-Compliance**
 - Under the 2005 Act: receipt of formal notices, mandatory plan revision, public censure, and escalation to Scottish Ministers.
 - Under the 2025 Act: Bòrd na Gàidhlig may enforce compliance via additional powers, including public naming of non-compliant bodies and formal enforcement measures.
 - NHS Highland risks legal, operational, and reputational damage—including adverse publicity and loss of community trust—if statutory duties are not upheld.

2.3 Assessment

Since the introduction of the Gaelic Development Co-Ordinator, we have made significant progress throughout 2025. Examples of work include:

- Launching the Gaelic Staff Network – currently the fastest growing and largest network with 106 members
- Attended a Gaelic Schools careers event in January 2026

- Establishing external partnerships with UHI, Highland Council, NHS Western Isles and NatureScot
- Provided translation services including patient information leaflets, Care at Home information, Director of Public Health annual report and social media posts.
- Appeared on BBC Radio nan Gael promoting the work being done in NHSH
- Ran a campaign throughout World Gaelic Week
- Developed a new section for the staff induction which explains about Gaelic heritage and the GLP
- Created a new Gaelic staff intranet page
- Updated the public facing website Gaelic pages
- Launched a staff languages survey with over 100 responses to better understand Gaelic and BSL use throughout NHSH

The strengthened legislative environment highlights the importance of dedicated resource to deliver NHS Highland's Gaelic commitments, embed compliance and sustain momentum.

Plans for the remainder of 2026 and into 2027 include:

- Launch of free beginner online lessons for NHSH colleagues (funding permitting)
- Introduction of Gaelic Children's books into the 4 acute sites as well as Broadford, Portree, and Islay hospitals, will receive books written in Gaelic for ages 0-3, 4-8, and 8-14. (funding permitting)
- Working with Maternity, Paediatrics and Play Therapists to identify opportunities for integration of Gaelic into Children's services
- Working with activity co-ordinators in Care Homes to schedule Gaelic related activity for service users
- Collaboration with NatureScot and our Care Homes on a project to deliver sessions on history of the Highlands and local areas
- Integration of Gaelic into Lochaber project and any future capital projects
- Collaboration with Highland Council to deliver intermediate and advanced lessons for NHSH colleagues, providing progression from the Beginner level.
- Stakeholder engagement to support the creation of the new 2029-2034 GLP

2.4 Proposed level of Assurance

Substantial		Moderate	X
Limited		None	

Comment on the level of assurance

Assurance is moderate in terms of the progress on the Gaelic Language Plan from September 2024 to September 2025. Substantial assurance could be given if permanent resourcing was possible rather than being reliant on repeated grant applications to Bord Na Gaidhlig.

3 Impact Analysis

3.1 Quality/ Patient Care

- **Improved Accessibility and Comfort:** Gaelic-speaking patients can access information, signage, and some services in their own language, which can reduce anxiety and improve communication during care.
- **Person-Centred Care:** Recognising and respecting linguistic and cultural identity supports dignity and inclusion, especially in sensitive areas like maternity, dementia, and end-of-life care.
- **Better Health Outcomes:** Clear communication in a patient’s preferred language can reduce misunderstandings and improve adherence to treatment plans.

3.2 Workforce

- **Cultural Competence:** Staff gain awareness and skills to engage with Gaelic-speaking communities, fostering inclusivity.
- **Learning Opportunities:** Training and development in Gaelic language and awareness can enhance staff confidence and professional growth.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** Promoting Gaelic as a desirable skill can attract candidates from Gaelic-speaking communities, supporting workforce sustainability in rural areas.
- **Organisational Culture:** Embedding Gaelic within NHS Highland strengthens equality, diversity, and inclusion, creating a more positive and respectful workplace.

3.3 Financial

No current financial impact, however, if the funding bid to Bòrd na Gàidhlig was unsuccessful, then a decision would need to be made about NHSH funding the post going forward. The post is currently funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig until November 2026. Post is Band 3 which according to the Agenda For Change 2025/26 pay scales with oncosts comes to £37,765

3.4 Risk Assessment/Management

Ongoing risk of non-compliance leading to formal action from Bòrd na Gàidhlig or Scottish Ministers, and reputational damage.

3.5 Data Protection

No personal data impact

3.6 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

Upholds legislative obligations and supports NHS Highland’s Equality Outcomes through linguistic inclusion.

3.7 Other impacts

Strengthens NHS Highland’s community engagement and credibility in Gaelic-speaking areas.

3.8 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

N/A

3.9 Route to the Meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

- Gaelic Language Plan Project Group – 2nd June 2026
- Area Partnership Forum – 12th June 2026
- Board Meeting – 28th July 2026

4.1 List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1: Letter to NHS Highland Chief Executive from Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Appendix 2: Monitoring Report 2024–25
- Appendix 3: Gaelic Language Plan Presentation



Fiona Davies
Ceannard
NHS Gàidhealtachd

Air a sgaoileadh le post-d
Sent by email

21 Giblean 2026
21 April 2026

A' Bh-uas Davies chòir,

**NHS na Gàidhealtachd, Plana Gàidhlig Eagrain 03: Freagairt
Bòrd na Gàidhlig air adhartas 2024-2025**

A' leanntainn air aithisg dearcnachaidh 2024-2025 a chuir NHS na Gàidhealtachd a-steach don Bhòrd air 16 Màrt 2026 agus coinneamh adhartais a chaidh a chumail eadar na h-oifigearan againn air 13 Giblean 2026, tha mi a' sgrìobhadh thugaibh gus innse do NHS na Gàidhealtachd gu bheil an t-adhartas a tha air a mhìneachadh anns an aithisg 2024-2025 agaibh air a' mheas iomchaidh fo earrann 6(4) de dh'Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005.

Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig an dùil gun tèid co-dhiù 50% de ghealltanasan gach bliadhna a chur an gnìomh a rèir nan clàran-ama a tha air am mìneachadh ann am Plana Gàidhlig NHS na Gàidhealtachd agus stèidhichte air mion-fhiosrachadh san aithisg agus an tuilleadh fiosrachaidh a chaidh a thoirt seachad aig a' choinneamh adhartais, chaidh adhartas iomchaidh a dhèanamh air cuir an gnìomh plana Gàidhlig NHS na Gàidhealtachd fo earrann 6(4) de dh'Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005 a thaobh an tomhais seo.

Tha sinn mothachail air an adhartas a rinneadh on an aithisg mu dheireadh agus tha e follaiseach gu bheil a' bhuidheann air ceumannan a ghabhail gus Gàidhlig a stèidheachadh na h-obair gu corporra. 'S e cùis brosnachaidh a th' ann faicinn gun deach an lìonra luchd-obrach Gàidhlig a stèidhicheadh agus thathar ag aithneachadh gur e gnìomh feumail a bhios seo a thaobh cuir an gnìomh a' phlana a' dol air adhart.

Bu mhath leinn taing a thoirt dhuibh airson an adhartais a chaidh a dhèanamh gu ruige seo le cuir an gnìomh a' Phlana Ghàidhlig agaibh agus tha sinn a' coimhead air adhart ri bhith ag obair còmhla ribh sa bhliadhna a tha romhainn air tuilleadh buileachaidh.

**NHS Highland, Gaelic Language Plan Edition 03: Bòrd na
Gàidhlig's response to progress 2024-2025**

Following on from NHS Highland's submission of their 2024-2025 report on 16 March 2026 and the progress meeting that was held between our officers on 13 April 2026, I am writing to inform NHS Highland that the progress detailed in your 2024-2025 report has been assessed as adequate under section (6)(4) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig expects that at least 50% of each year's commitments be implemented according to timescales that have been set out in NHS Highland's Gaelic Language Plan and based on details in the report and further information provided at the progress meeting, NHS Highland has made adequate progress with the implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan under section 6(4) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 with regards to this measure.

We note the progress that has been made since the previous monitoring report, and that steps have been taken to begin to embed Gaelic within the corporate aspects of the organisation's work. It is encouraging to see the establishment of the Gaelic staff network that we are confident will serve as a helpful platform going forward with the implementation of the plan.

We would like to thank you for the progress that has been made to date with the implementation of your Gaelic Language Plan and we look forward to continuing to work with you in the year ahead on further implementation.



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Bidh an t-Oifigear Phlanaichean agaibh, Christie Monti, fhathast ann an conaltradh ri do cho-obraichean gus comhairle agus taic a thoirt seachad mun bhuileachadh thairis air a' bhliadhna a tha romhainn.

Your Plans Officer, Christie Monti, will remain contact with your colleagues to provide advice and support in their implementation over the coming year.

An cuireadh sibh fios gu christie@gaidhlig.scot ma tha ceistean sam bith agaibh mun Phlana Gàidhlig agaibh.

Please get in touch at christie@gaidhlig.scot if you have any questions regarding your Gaelic Language Plan.

Is mise le spèis,



Stiùbhart Dunmore | Stuart Dunmore

Manaidsear Planaidh is Ghnìomhan Reachdail | Planning and Statutory Functions Manager

Cc: Christie Monti, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Gayle MacRae, Ealasaid Morgan, Richard MacDonald NHS Highland



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Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Monitoring Report Template

Section 6(2) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 enables Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to submit a report on the extent to which it has implemented the measures set out in its plan.

This monitoring report should detail progress on:

- Commitments that have a timescale for completion for each reporting year and;
- Any details on progress on commitments that have been designated as ongoing or throughout the lifetime of the plan.

There is no requirement for public bodies to use this template. Providing evidence is submitted as detailed above, reports can be submitted in a format suitable to individual public authorities.

Name of Organisation:

NHS Highland

Date of report:

04/03/2026

Reporting Period (including day/month/year):

September 2024 to September 2025

1. Please provide a high-level summary of progress made in implementing your Gaelic Language Plan highlighting successes, challenges and areas for improvement.

In January 2025 a new role of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead for Workforce was created in NHS, and delivery of the Gaelic Language plan was assigned to this role as a key responsibility. The EDI Lead established a GLP oversight group with members from across the organisation who had an interest in the GLP delivery in either a personal or professional capacity. This working group was headed up by an Executive Director so that it had a direct route to the NHS Executive Team and Board. The GLP was reviewed and an action plan drafted up for the group to progress. It was agreed that dedicated resource was needed to support the progression of the GLP and a successful funding bid was made to BNG which permitted the recruitment of a new Gaelic Development Co-ordinator post on a 12 month fixed term contract. Interviews for this post took place in September 2025 and the person started with us in November. We recognise that progress has been inadequate for the time period prior to the mobilisation of the working group and recruitment of the Gaelic development co-ordinator, but we are confident that now this structure and support is in place we can drive the GLP forward.

2. Please provide details of commitments that have a timescale for completion in this reporting year.

Targets for Year 2: 2024–2025

Aim/Target: **NHS will recognise Gaelic as intrinsic to improving health and wellbeing in its communities including its family and maternity services. – December 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Identify Gaelic speakers within the families (including children's services such as ophthalmology) and maternity services across the organisation and collaborate on best practice across the NHS area.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 2 - Engage with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other partners to ascertain the most useful ways in which to embed Gaelic within these services.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period

Action 3 - Gain feedback from patients and service users around the benefits of using Gaelic.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 4 - Collaborate with Comann nam Pàrant and Comhairle nan Leabhraichean to ensure Gaelic resources are readily available to interested parents or leaflets to signpost them to Gaelic information.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 5 - Gather views from services within the community regarding use of Gaelic with patients and service-users to contribute to considerations for future development of local and community services, i.e., community nursing, substance misuse services, community care and learning disabilities.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 6 - Provide a Gaelic representative on the Community Planning Partnerships in relevant areas such as Skye and Wester Ross	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period

Aim/Target: **Gaelic will be included as part of NHS's vision and strategy.**

Progress:

Action 1 - Enhance the visibility of Gaelic within the organisation and our plans, making full use of the new website and Gaelic intranet site. – Website complete by Dec 2024	Actioned - There is a dedicated section on the NHS Highland public website for Gaelic https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/gaidhlig/ This is also accessible from the home page, it was moved to a more prominent site to increase visibility. There is also a specific internal intranet site for colleagues. This intranet site underwent a transformation and is now sited on the home page so it is one of the first pages staff now see when they logon.
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Aim/Target: **Positive message that communication from the public in Gaelic is always welcome –
December 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Proactive and positive messaging in social media stating that Gaelic is welcome. Training and procedures for staff to deal with correspondence received in Gaelic.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 2 - Collaborate with other public organisations to research best practice in this area, in terms of dealing with the requests given many staff do not have Gaelic.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 3 - Bilingual events within communities where appropriate.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period

Aim/Target: **Opportunities to hold public meetings bilingually or in Gaelic are regularly explored and promoted. –
December 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Planned events to be considered bilingual at an early stage through collaboration with the Communication and Engagement Team.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 2 - Increased number of meetings held bilingually	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period

Aim/Target: **Opportunities to deliver public exhibitions bilingually or in Gaelic should be explored on a regular basis with priority given to those with the highest potential impact. – December 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Include Gaelic as part of the planning process for appropriate key events such as the Festival of Remote and Rural Learning or National Dementia Week, where Gaelic has a specific connection to the event/topic.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 2 - Ensure there are Gaelic opportunities fed into recruitment, careers, and succession planning strategies for events.	Not Actioned within timeframe. Since September 2025 NHSH has attended Siuthad, the Gaelic Development Co-ordinator has also been involved in NHSH led careers events in Skye,

Aim/Target: **Gaelic language skills training and development offered to staff, particularly in relation to implementing the public authority's Gaelic language plan – December 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Develop clear pathways for staff learning Gaelic.	Actioned - Different models of Gaelic courses are promoted on the internal Gaelic intranet site for staff. These include online, self-led, courses at SMO, paid and unpaid options. Staff have also been accessing Highland Council's classes throughout the reporting timeframe. Out with the timeline we have started to explore collaboration with Highland Council and Argyll & Bute Council to tap into their infrastructure and look at potential expansion options with our involvement.
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Action 2 - Collaborate with Sabhal Mar Ostaig, the National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture, on specific training needs and CPD.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 3 - Promote the Gaelic workplace courses available via the University of Aberdeen.	Actioned - Have been signposting colleagues to Online Gaelic 2025-2026 - Catalogue of Courses and also the learngaelic.scot course finder tool Find a course to help them locate classes local to their area or distance learning options

Aim/Target: **Recognising and respecting Gaelic skills within the recruitment process throughout the public authority. Gaelic is named as an essential and / or desirable skill in job descriptions to deliver the Gaelic language plan and in accordance with the Bard na Gàidhlig recruitment advice. Bilingual or Gaelic only job adverts for all posts where Gaelic is an essential skill. – December 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Gaelic will be included as a desirable skill in all posts within the Oban and the Isles, Skye, Wester Ross and Raasay areas.	Actioned - This has been done on a replacement basis owing to the design of our job evaluation system for job descriptions. Any changes to job descriptions must go through a matching panel before being adopted in case the changes impact on the salary banding of the colleague. It would not be feasible to change all of the job descriptions for roles in these areas under this action. As new jobs have been advertised the job descriptions have been reviewed.
Action 2 - Continue to provide bilingual adverts in these areas.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 3 - Gaelic will be added as an essential skill for the Gaelic communications team member.	Actioned

Action 4 - NHS Highland welcomes applications from Gaelic speakers” will be added to all NHSH job adverts.	Not Actioned within timeframe – however has since been completed
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3. Please provide progress on commitments that are ongoing or throughout the lifetime of the plan.

Ongoing Targets Progress – Year 2: 2024-2025

Aim/Target: **Gaelic will be included as part of NHSH’s vision and strategy.**

Progress:

Action 1 - Recruit a Gaelic-speaking member of the Communications team or create a partnership whereby bilingual communications will be possible, as required.	Actioned – With the support of Bord Na Gaidhlig, the Gaelic Development Co-ordinator was recruited in September 2025 with a start date of 10 th November 2025.
Action 2 - Increase the number of opportunities being made available to staff, patients, and the public bilingually.	Not Actioned within timeframe – this is something that has been progressed after the reporting period and will be detailed in the 2025/26 progress report.
Action 3 - Increase visibility of Gaelic across the organisation	Not Actioned within timeframe - this is something that has been progressed after the reporting period and will be detailed in the 2025/26 progress report.
Action 4 - Use social media to engage in a wider Gaelic audience e.g., Instagram account specifically for Gaelic health and social care content	Not Actioned within timeframe - limited opportunities were provided in the reporting period. It is not possible to create an NHSH Gaelic specific social media account as social media accounts are limited to the main NHSH ones to allow for monitoring and interaction by the trained comms team. It will however be possible to increase the number of bilingual posts on social media and this is something that has been progressed after

	the reporting period and will be detailed in the 2025/26 progress report.
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Aim/Target: **Written communication in Gaelic is always accepted (post, email, and social media) and replies will be provided in Gaelic in accordance with the general policy**

Progress:

Action 1 - Continue to promote the availability of Gaelic communication.	Actioned – referenced in our Contact Us webpage and the dedicated Gaelic pages on the intranet and internet.
Action 2 - Our complaints and comments forms are bilingual and available on the website.	Partially Actioned – Complaints form is available bilingually, feedback form is not
Action 3 - Increased visibility in email signatures.	Actioned – colleagues are free to choose to use bilingual email signatures if they wish – this is not mandated
Action 4 - Our automatically generated text such as email disclaimers will be bilingual	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 5 - The #cleachdi image is promoted regularly and staff with Gaelic will be encouraged to use it.	Actioned – We are grateful to have received the merchandise from Bord Na Gaidhlig. Some colleagues have the logo in their email signatures, some have stickers on their office doors, the lanyards and small badges are popular.
Action 6 - You can write to us here in English or Gaelic” will be made more visible on the “Contact Us” page.	Actioned

Aim/Target: **High profile news releases and all news releases related to Gaelic are circulated in both Gaelic and English**

Progress:

Action 1 - Year-on-year increase in bilingual press releases in additional areas to include Oban and the Isles, Skye, Raasay and Wester Ross, recognising that press releases are becoming much less frequent.	Partially Actioned – Gaelic press releases have been produced but for NHS Board wide area, not specific to the areas mentioned
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Aim/Target: **A process is in place to ensure that the quality and accessibility of Gaelic language in all corporate information is high**

Progress:

Action 1 - Continue to ensure consistency and high-standard translation.	Actioned – Translation services are provided by Global Languages
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Aim/Target: **The most recent Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (GOC3) will be followed in relation to all written materials produced by the public authority**

Progress:

Action 1 - Continue to ensure consistency and high-standard translation.	Actioned – Translation services are provided by Global Languages
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Aim/Target: **Gaelic place name advice from Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is sought and used**

Progress:

Action 1 - Continue current practice.	Actioned
Action 2 - Build on the current database of placenames, building and location names for reference	Actioned

4. Any other relevant information.

Have included actions which were due for completion within the previous reporting cycle with updates on progress where appropriate.

Aim/Target: **NHSH will include Gaelic in any educational outreach work it conducts in communities – December 2023**

Progress:

Action 1 - Collaboration with SDS and other appropriate agencies around attendance and planning for recruitment and careers fairs, especially a presence at those specifically targeted at Gaelic speakers.	Actioned - attended Siuthad in 2025 and 2026
Action 2 - Develop a programme of planned events around Gaelic and healthcare within the communities, including engagement with Gaelic schools and units.	Partially Actioned – NHSH employability team has a school engagement programme that involves visits and career inspiration weeks. The Gaelic Development Coordinator has produced Gaelic career information material for pupils and we are going to be planning a dedicated week specifically for GME schools
Action 3 - Encourage and support relevant teams to consider and include Gaelic in their events management and development i.e., Festival of Learning, Awareness Weeks with a 10% year on year. Increase.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period

Aim/Target: **Render the corporate logo and branding in both Gaelic and English at the first opportunity and as part of any renewal process. The logo should demonstrate equal prominence for both languages – December 2023**

Progress:

Action 1 - Secure permission from NHS Scotland by lobbying at senior levels.	Actioned – Dual branded logo in use
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Aim/Target: **Where Gaelic speaking staff can provide this service, they are supported to do so, and the service is promoted to the public – June 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Provide support and offer training to all reception staff to answer the phone in Gaelic.	Partially Actioned – Role specific training for admin staff has not been specified however training has been offered to all staff across the organisation
Action 2 - To support staff in responding to users when they do not have the skills to continue in Gaelic.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 3 - Encourage Gaelic speaking staff to use their Gaelic confidently by providing videos around appropriate usage.	Not Actioned – due to no dedicated Gaelic resource in the organisation during this reporting period
Action 4 - Create a cohort of Gaelic-speaking surgery and reception staff to share ideas and best practice.	Partially Actioned – A cohort of surgery and reception staff has not been developed however an NHS wide Gaelic Staff Network has been launched, inviting all staff members with an interest in Gaelic to join. 60 colleagues have joined to date. The network provides a space for Gaelic speakers to converse, and the meetings and communications are all produced bilingually so that people can participate from all ability levels.

Aim/Target: **Gaelic content distributed regularly through social media, guided by the level of actual and potential users – July 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Create a Gaelic social media space for NHS Highland on Instagram, targeting a younger audience.	Partially Actioned - It would not be possible to create an NHSH Gaelic specific social media account as social media accounts are limited to the organisational ones to allow for monitoring and interaction by the trained comms team. It is however possible to increase the number of bilingual posts on social media which has been actioned.
Action 2 - Create a plan for bilingual social media postings and campaigns in conjunction with the Communications & Engagement Team.	Actioned – plan identified for 2026
Action 3 - Work towards securing the services of, or employing, a Gaelic speaking communications assistant.	Actioned – Gaelic Development Co-ordinator in post
Action 4 - Create 30 bilingual online posts a year, to include various types of footage e.g. posts, case study, video	In Progress – dedicated content for World Gaelic Week across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Comms for Lochaber new build produced bilingually, specific news articles for prominent Gaelic speaking areas produced bilingually

Aim/Target: **Gaelic content should be available on the public authority's website, with emphasis given to the pages with the highest potential reach – July 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Agree a plan for the new website which creates an appropriate amount of Gaelic to include most prominent pages, menus, and a section dedicated to Gaelic.	Actioned
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Aim/Target: **Corporate Publications Produced in Gaelic and English with priority given to those with the highest potential reach – May 2024**

Progress:

Action 1 - Approve a policy around bilingual corporate publications stating when, why and how often this will be appropriate. This policy will be based on the principle of equal respect for Gaelic and English.	Partially Actioned – A policy is not the correct terminology here. We have created guidelines that advise on what type of publications we would expect to publish bilingually
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Aim/Target: **Knowledge of the public authority's Gaelic language plan included in new staff inductions – December 2023**

Progress:

Action 1 - Ensure that there is a link in the induction which takes new employees straight to the Gaelic Plan on the NESH intranet.	Actioned – link included that takes colleagues to GLP on NESH website rather than internal site. This allows for greater accessibility as can be accessed on mobile and tablet devices not connected to our internal network.
Action 2 - Create a list of handy phrases in Gaelic on the NESH intranet.	Actioned – available on our internal Gaelic intranet site.

Aim/Target: **Gaelic awareness training offered to staff, with priority given to directors, board members and staff dealing directly with the public – December 2023**

Progress:

Action 1 - Further communication about the module and active encouragement from Team Leaders for new starts to complete the training.	Actioned – Gaelic awareness module available to all staff through our learning platform TURAS
Action 2 - Add the Gaelic Awareness modules to Board inductions and training plans.	Actioned – Referenced in the organisational induction that all staff should attend. Has also now been signposted to through our internal Gaelic intranet site.

NHS Highland's responsibility to the promotion of Scottish Gaelic



Gàidhlig

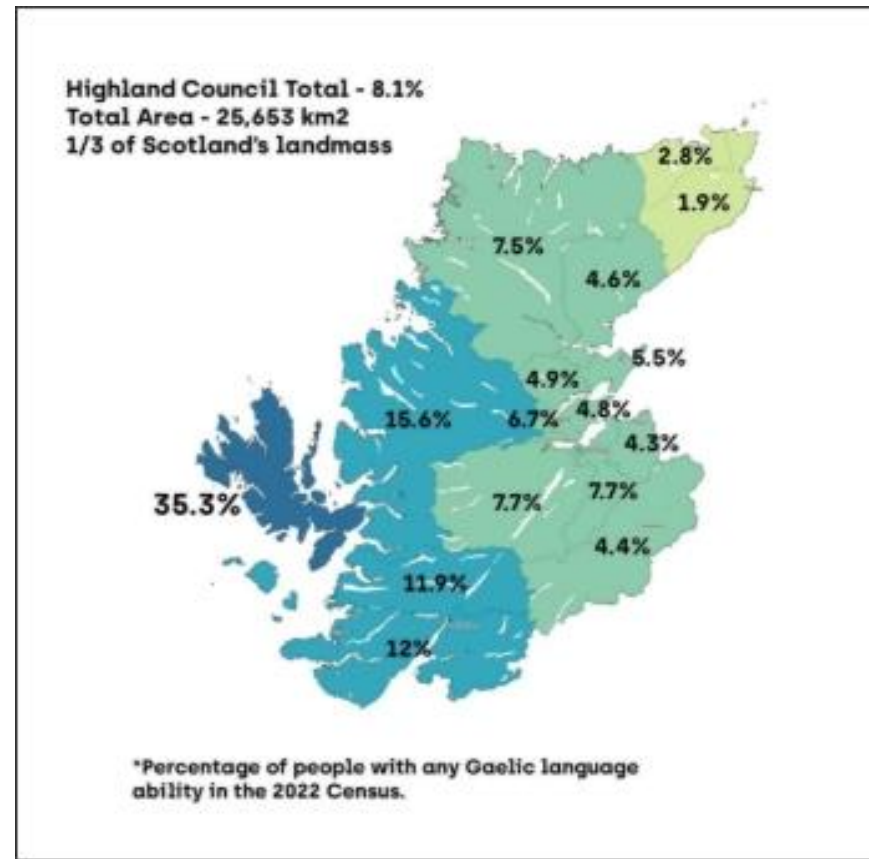
Earlier actions, current efforts, and next steps in ensuring the compliance of the NHS Highland Gaelic Language Plan.

What is Scottish Gaelic?

Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language that has been spoken in Scotland for over a thousand years.

Gaelic continues to be spoken across Scotland and is taught in schools, used in communities, and promoted through media, education, and public services.

Gaelic can increasingly be seen and heard across Scotland through recent revitalisation efforts and public initiatives, including events such as the National Mòd, platforms like Duolingo and BBC Alba, and the growing use of Gaelic on road signs and public signage.



Legislation



Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

- Gaelic is recognised with equal respect to English
- Requires public bodies to prepare a **Gaelic Language Plan**
- Established Bòrd na Gàidhlig and gave them powers to:
 - Monitor Gaelic Language Plans and assess progress
 - Require revisions to plans if aims are not being met
 - Escalate issues to Scottish Ministers if non-compliance persists

Scottish Languages Act 2025

- Recognises Gaelic and Scots as official languages of Scotland
- Latest changes include:
 - Bòrd na Gàidhlig can set enforceable standards for public bodies
 - Introduced stronger enforcement powers, including compliance measures for organisations not meeting statutory obligations

Overview of our Gaelic Language Plan

Current Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2023-2028

- The current Gaelic Language Plan sets out NHS Highland's commitments to supporting and promoting the Gaelic language across its services, workforce, and communications.
- Since there was no Gaelic Development Co-ordinator in post in 2023, an external freelancer was hired. Many organisations have inhouse Gaelic Development Co-ordinators to write the plans.
- The five-year duration allows sufficient time to embed Gaelic into organisational practices, deliver agreed actions, and show sustained progress rather than one-off activity. A new plan will need to be written for 2029-2034

Annual monitoring reports given to Bòrd na Gàidhlig

- Each year, NHS Highland must send a formal monitoring report detailing actions taken, progress achieved, challenges met, and areas where improvement is needed.
- **NHS Highland was non-compliant for the 2023-2024 period**

3. GEALLAIDHEAN A' PHLANA – PLAN COMMITMENTS

High-Level Aims

An example from the GLP

- Increasing the use of Gaelic
- Increasing the learning of Gaelic
- Promoting a positive image of Gaelic

INCREASING THE USE OF GAELIC

High-level Aim	NHSH will recognise Gaelic as a need within clinical and social care as part of its care for patients.
Desired Outcome	An increased understanding, acceptance, and use of Gaelic with patients and service users by all staff within the relevant areas of the organisation.
Current Practice	There are already members of staff within clinical and social care departments using Gaelic in an informal way, but this is not being measured or captured in a formal way.
Actions Required	1. To map the areas and departments in which Gaelic is available for patients. 2. Collate and record Gaelic ability among Care at Home staff. 3. To provide a clear and simple method of identifying Gaelic-speaking staff and patients 4. To collaborate with partners such as Alzheimer's Scotland, SEALL and others third sector groups, to maximise the opportunities available in providing Gaelic in a beneficial setting for dementia and Alzheimer patients, within care homes and elsewhere. 5. Participate in national events such as Dementia Awareness Week 6. To include Gaelic within the patient media systems, through collaboration with Hospedia and to develop some Gaelic programmes for the hospital radio, to provide patients who wish to engage with Gaelic, the opportunity to do so and to expose patients to Gaelic while they remain in hospital care. 7. In areas where at least 20% are Gaelic speakers or where there are Gaelic-medium schools, Gaelic will be treated as a desirable skill in recruiting into social care and clinical roles. 8. Staff will be asked to record use of Gaelic within clinical and social care to benchmark for future reference and organisational development purposes
Target Date	Dec 2026
Responsibility	Katharine Sutton, Chief Officer, Acute Services, NHS Highland Louise Bussell, Interim Chief Officer, Highland Health and Social Care Partnership Fiona Davies, Chief Officer, Argyll & Bute Health and Social Care Partnership

2023/2024 Period

Limited activity between 2023 and July 2024

Following the launch of the Gaelic Language Plan, progress during the initial reporting period was minimal. Activity was restricted to keeping existing arrangements rather than delivering new actions set out in the Plan.

No dedicated resourcing during this period

There was no identified lead role or distributed capacity to co-ordinate delivery of the Plan, which limited the organisation's ability to progress aims or respond proactively to checking requirements.

As a result – progress assessed as inadequate

Bòrd na Gàidhlig formally recorded NHS Highland's progress for the 2023–2024 reporting period as inadequate, reflecting the lack of measurable delivery against agreed aims.

Risk of falling behind statutory expectations

This position increased the risk of non-compliance with statutory duties, potential escalation by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and reputational impact for NHS Highland if the situation is not addressed.

If non-compliance persists

Formal notices – Official correspondence highlighting failure to meet statutory duties

Mandatory plan revision – Plans may need to be updated or rewritten to address shortcomings

Public censure – Non-compliance could be publicly reported, affecting organisational reputation

Escalation to Scottish Ministers – Persistent issues may be escalated to the Scottish Government

Public naming of non-compliant bodies – Organisations may be officially named for not meeting statutory obligations

Risks to NHS Highland:

- **Legal** – Potential enforcement action if statutory duties are not fulfilled
- **Operational** – Disruption to services or organisational processes if corrective action is needed urgently
- **Reputational** – Damage to NHS Highland's credibility with staff, stakeholders, and the public
- **Loss of community trust** – Reduced confidence among Gaelic-speaking communities (5.4% of the population we serve are fluent Gaelic Speakers) and wider public

2024/2025 Period

Gaelic Language Plan group was set up by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lead. The creation of this group allows staff to have a say in Gaelic related matters.

With support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, a dedicated post was successfully developed and filled, providing focused leadership and coordination for Gaelic initiatives across the organisation.

This has allowed NHS Highland to move from aspiration to delivery in several areas of the Plan, including staff engagement, visibility of Gaelic, and the development of learning opportunities.

Progress made during 2024–2025 was recognised by Bòrd na Gàidhlig as showing **adequate progress** against the commitments set out within the NHS Highland Gaelic Language Plan.

Actions taken since the recruitment of our Gaelic Development Co-ordinator

- **Developed new staff induction content**

Created new induction materials to ensure all new staff understand - Gaelic heritage in the Highlands and NHS Highland's responsibilities under the Gaelic Language Plan

- **Published bilingual communications**

Introduced bilingual communications to increase visibility of Gaelic and prove practical implementation of Gaelic Language Plan commitments. Example of bilingual publications is the Gaelic voice over and subtitling of the video introducing the new Lochaber hospital

- **World Gaelic Week**

For Seachdain na Gàidhlig (World Gaelic Week) in February we shared daily content on our socials. These included Gaelic words of the day, stories from staff and patients, and a well-received video of staff teaching some Gaelic phrases.



Actions taken since the recruitment of our Gaelic Development Co-ordinator

- **Launched Gaelic Staff Network**

Established a dedicated staff network to support Gaelic speakers and learners, increase engagement, and create a visible forum for promoting Gaelic within NHS Highland. Nearly 100 members have joined, the largest of the 6 networks. The network is a safe space for Gaelic speaking staff and learners alike to communicate freely in their preferred language.



- **Attended a Gaelic Schools Careers Event**

We were able to attend a careers event aimed at Gaelic-medium schools for the first time. This was to raise awareness of NHS career opportunities and strengthen future workforce pipelines through Gaelic. The event was held in Eden Court and was attended by Gaelic Speaking pupils across the whole of the Highlands



Actions taken since the recruitment of our Gaelic Development Co-ordinator

- **BBC Radio nan Gàidheal (Gaelic radio channel)**

Our Gaelic Development Co-ordinator took part in an interview with the BBC to discuss the establishment of the new Gaelic Staff Network. The interview highlighted the reasons behind creating the network, including the growing interest in Gaelic across the workforce and the organisation's commitment to supporting Gaelic development within NHS Highland.



- **Updated Gaelic staff intranet page and the NHS Highlands Website**

The Gaelic section of the NHS Highland intranet and website was refreshed to improve accessibility, visibility, and staff engagement with Gaelic-related information. The link to the Gaelic page was also moved so that it is now accessed under one of the main menu tabs, making it easier to find.

[About NHS Highland](#)

[Our population and people](#)

[Highland Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

[Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership](#)

[NHS Highland Board](#)

[Board and committee meetings](#)

[Publications and public records](#)

[Service redesign](#)

[Equality, diversity and inclusion](#)

[Gàidhlig / Gaelic](#)

[Public holidays](#)

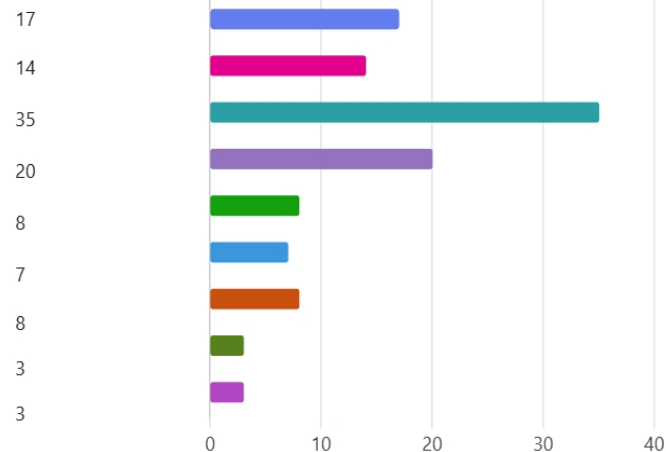
[NHS Highland Charity](#)



Survey – Language Skills Audit – 105 responses

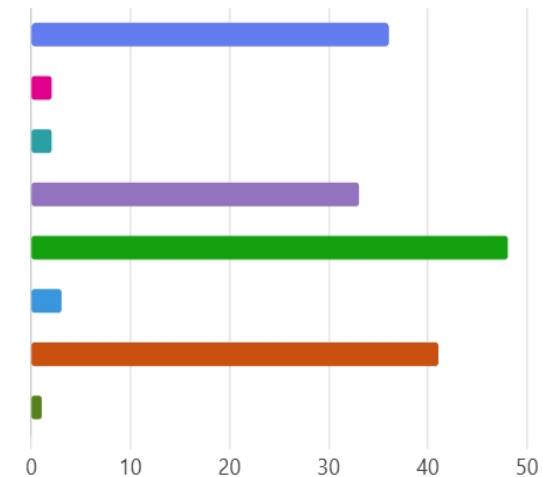
4. Do you have an interest in learning Gaelic?

- I have no interest in learning Gaelic
- I would be interested in learning phrases only
- I would like to learn Gaelic at a beginners level
- I have beginner skills in Gaelic and would like to progress to intermediate level
- I have intermediate skills in Gaelic and would like to progress to advanced level
- I would like to do some refresher training (previously in Gaelic Medium Education, etc)
- N/A
- Yes
- Other



5. Have you ever heard Gaelic being spoken whilst in a NHS Highland setting? Please tick all that apply

- Yes - by a staff member
- Yes - by a board member
- Yes - by a volunteer
- Yes - by a member of the public
- Yes - by a patient
- Yes - other
- No
- Other



Most patients that I deal with can speak in English as well as Gaelic and can understand what is being said to them. I chose to speak Gaelic to them because its what I would speak to another fluent person. I think it does help to speak to people in their own language if they eg are confused or have dementia and they then revert back to their native language, in cases like this it is helpful to have a staff member who understands them and can communicate effectively with them.

Plans for
2026 and
Beyond



Beginner Lessons



As seen in the survey responses, and from day-to-day interactions with staff, that there is a want for beginner lessons.

- We have also placed a funding bid into Bòrd na Gàidhlig in hopes that we can start our own **online Beginner Gaelic Course**.
- The beginner course would be free to all NHS Staff. The course would be following the Speak Gaelic A1 course. The aim is to get as many of our staff through this Beginner course as possible and then signpost the graduates onto the in-person/online Highland Council courses.
- The Highland Council also follow the Speak Gaelic courses, but are at full capacity for their beginner courses, which is where we come in. The levels beyond beginners are not at capacity, and we would encourage those who are interested in continuing their studies to join them.

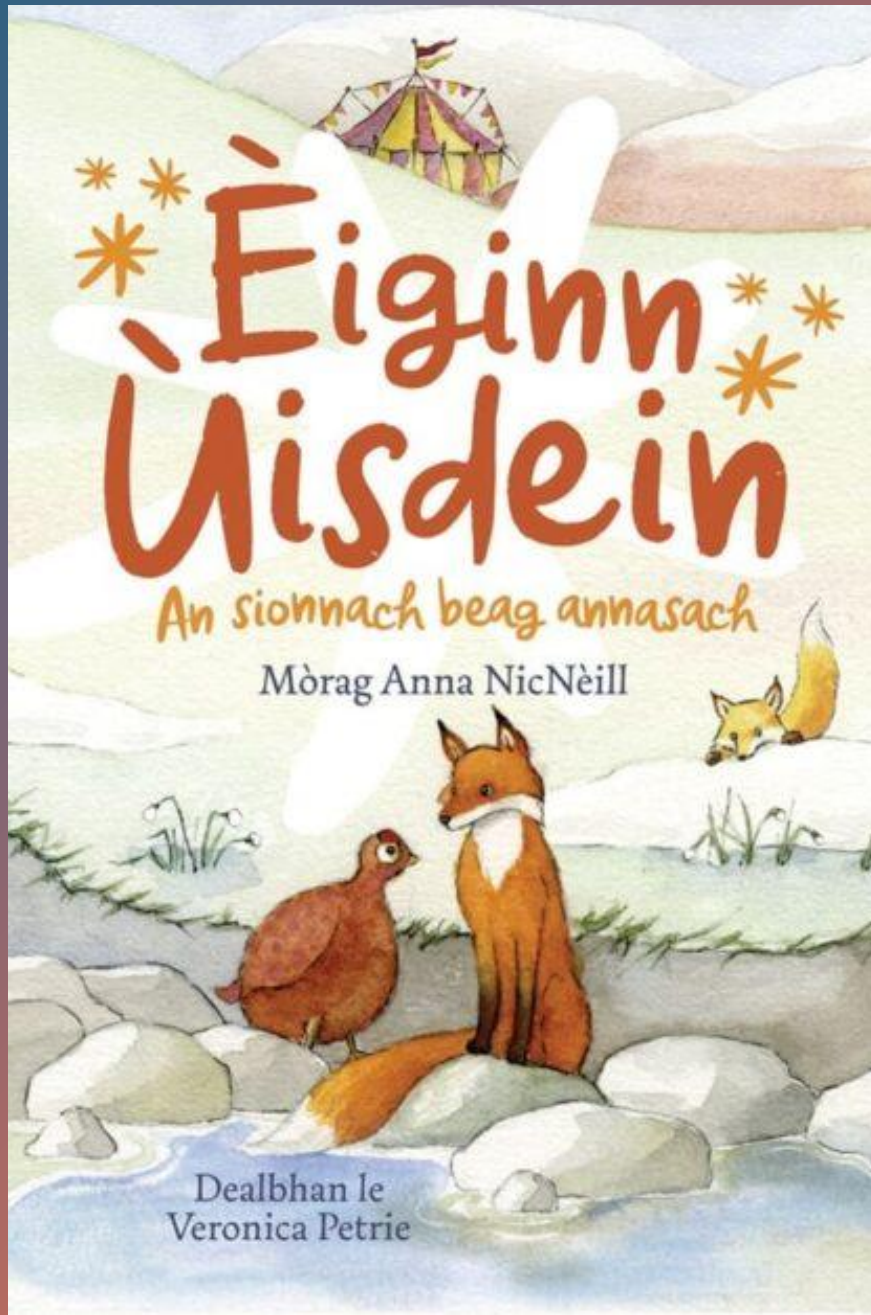
External partnerships



NATURE
SCOT

In recognition of the wellbeing benefits of connecting with nature, and in support of NatureScot's ambition to strengthen Gaelic communities' engagement with the natural environment, we are creating a collaborative outreach project between NHS Highland and NatureScot.

Using existing bilingual place-name publications covering areas across the NHS Highland region, NatureScot would create simple laminated A4 cards featuring local Gaelic place-names, their meanings, and photography. Through conversations with an inhouse Gaelic-speaking facilitator, these resources aim to spark memories, discussion, and connection amongst care-home residents.



Comman nan Leabhraichean (Gaelic Book Council)

We have applied to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for funding to support the purchase of children's Gaelic books for our hospitals.

The proposal aims to buy 84 children's books through Comhairle nan Leabhraichean (Gaelic Books Council), who have kindly offered us a 10% discount.

Each of the main NHS Highland hospitals, as well as Broadford, Portree, and Islay hospitals, will receive books written in Gaelic for ages 0-3, 4-8, and 8-14.

Through conversations with play and education specialists in Raigmore, we have found that there is an appetite for Gaelic resources for children accessing Gaelic Medium Education.

Care at Home and Care Home

We have been working with Care Home and Care at Home teams and were invited to speak at the Care at Home Team Managers' meeting about the Gaelic Language Plan and how we can support them.

We created a leaflet for the Dingwall team to share with their service users. The team showed great interest in supporting their Gaelic speaking service users by learning basic phrases.

We look forward to continuing this partnership and will be working alongside Activity Co-ordinators to develop Gaelic related sessions for service users.



A BHEIL GÀIDHLIG AGAIBH?
SCOTTISH GAELIC IN HEALTHCARE

Can we make your care more person-centred in a Gaelic way?

For more information, please contact:

The Discharge to Assess service supported Mr X home from hospital following surgery. It was established that he was born and raised on the Western Isles. From conversation it was highlighted that Mr X and staff knew a lot of the same local people which sparked meaningful conversations in Gaelic. This prompted 2 members of the team to greet Mr X in Gaelic, this included 'good morning' and 'good evening' which positively impacted on his rehabilitation boosting his mood and engagement with the team.

- Care at Home Staff Member

NHS
Highland
na Gàidhealtachd



A BHEIL GÀIDHLIG AGAIBH?
SCOTTISH GAELIC IN HEALTHCARE

An urrainn dhuinn do chùram a dhèanamh nas pearsanta le Gàidhlig?

Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh, cuir fios gu:

My granny was diagnosed with dementia, and as it progressed, she reverted to her native language, Gaelic. Over time, her understanding of English declined significantly, which led to her appearing disengaged during care interactions. This was initially misunderstood by the care team, who considered withdrawing support, causing anxiety for our family. After exploring ways to communicate, it became clear that the issue was not a lack of engagement, but a language barrier. When spoken to in Gaelic, she was able to understand instructions and respond appropriately. With access to Gaelic-speaking staff, the care team was able to continue providing support, ensuring she received the care she needed.

- Care at Home Staff Member

NHS
Highland
na Gàidhealtachd

Gaelic Visibility



- **Merchandise**

We have developed Gaelic NHS Highland branded merchandise to support the visibility within healthcare settings. The aim is to provide Gaelic-speaking staff with lanyards and badges that show their language skills, allowing patients, colleagues, and visitors to recognise when Gaelic communication may be available. In addition, stickers featuring the phrase “I have some Gaelic” have been produced to encourage informal and reassuring interactions between staff and patients. These are intended particularly for learners or staff with basic conversational skills, helping to open personal conversations and support person-centred care.

- **Basic Phrases poster**

A poster of basic Gaelic phrases has been made, and we have begun to share the poster with NHS buildings. We hope that this will support the learning and using of Gaelic.



Removal of Funding – The Associated Risks

- **Without continued investment of time and resources, there is a significant risk that progress made towards the NHS Highland Gaelic Language Plan will slow or stall.** Considerable work has already been undertaken to set up meaningful Gaelic initiatives across the organisation, including the creation of the Gaelic Staff Network, strengthened partnerships with external organisations, increased visibility of Gaelic, and growing staff engagement. Without sustained support, there is a danger that these achievements and relationships will not be kept or developed further.
- **If the indicatives and connections cannot continue to be nurtured, there is a risk that this momentum will be lost and that confidence in NHS Highland's long-term commitment to Gaelic development will weaken.** The Gaelic Staff Network, which has created an important sense of community and support for speakers and learners, may struggle to continue effectively without ongoing investment and coordination, leaving engaged staff feeling unsupported and discouraged.
- **There is also a wider strategic risk. NHS Highland has statutory responsibilities under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.** If progress becomes inadequate over time, this could lead to increased scrutiny from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and reputational damage to the organisation. Most importantly, it could harm relationships with Gaelic-speaking communities, who may feel that their language and culture are no longer being meaningfully supported within local healthcare services. Sustained investment is therefore essential not only for language development, but also for trust, inclusion, and credibility within the communities NHS Highland serves.

Staff and Patient Stories

Last year I was asked to pop up to a ward at Lorn and Islands Hospital, to see a patient who had suddenly switched back to Gaelic, leaving staff unsure how to communicate. Thankfully, this episode didn't last too long, and he was back to speaking in English in a day or two. I was extremely happy to help, and his family were incredibly grateful for my input. I continued to drop in for chats for several weeks after his admission.

What let me feel that I had some voice in my treatment were my unexpected encounters with Gaelic along the way. Whether with the doctor trying out his learnt words, the nurse with the language of her childhood, the consultant fluent in her new language, the older patient on the same journey with a native mastery of the language. And yes, the Gaelic leaflet in the waiting room. My thanks to them all

My granny was diagnosed with dementia and as the condition progressed, she reverted to her native language, Gaelic. Over time, her understanding of English declined significantly, which led to her appearing disengaged during care interactions. This was initially misunderstood by the care team, who considered withdrawing support, causing considerable anxiety for our family. After exploring alternative ways to communicate, it became clear that the issue was not a lack of engagement, but a language barrier. When spoken to in Gaelic, she was able to understand instructions and respond appropriately. With access to Gaelic-speaking staff, the care team was able to continue providing effective support, ensuring she received the care she needed.

Being able to use my Gaelic while working as a doctor in NHS Highland is especially important to me because it allows me to practice medicine in a way that is rooted in the community I serve. Speaking to someone in Gaelic in the hospital setting can ease anxiety, strengthen rapport, and help them express symptoms, fears, and values more clearly.

I'm a native Gaelic speaker from Lewis and I feel really privileged to be able to chat with clients in the language we share. For many, it's the only chance they get to speak Gaelic, and you can see how much it lifts them.

Let's learn some Gaelic!

- **Madainn Mhath** – *mah ting vah* – Good Morning
- **Feasgar Math** – *fes-ger mah* – Good Afternoon
- **Ciamar a tha thu?** – *kim-ir a ha u* – How are you?
- **Tha mi gu math** – *ha mee gu mah* – I am good
- **Chan eil mi gu math** – *chan yell mee gu mah* – I am not well
- **Tapadh Leibh** - *tah pah lev* – Thank you

