

CASE STUDY

A Season of Compassion: Christmas 2025

Christmas can be a challenging and emotional time for people who are in hospital, living in care homes or receiving health and social care support away from family and friends. Over the 2025 festive period, NHS Highland Charity supported staff across Highland and Argyll & Bute to create warmer, more welcoming experiences for patients, residents and service users, helping ensure that no one felt forgotten at Christmas.

Through charitable support, staff were able to provide festive gifts, activities, decorations and celebrations across hospital wards, care homes and day services throughout the region. These small but meaningful touches helped bring comfort, dignity and a sense of normality to people at a time when it mattered most.

MAKING CHRISTMAS FEEL SPECIAL IN HOSPITAL

For people spending Christmas Day in hospital, thoughtful gifts and festive treats helped ensure the day still felt special, even when they could not be at home with loved ones.

At Lorn and Islands Hospital in Oban, staff shared presents and treats with patients who were unable to spend Christmas with their families, taking time alongside their clinical duties to mark the day with care and kindness.



Staff at Lorn and Islands Hospital in Oban dressed up to distribute Christmas treats.

At **Victoria Hospital in Rothesay**, a new Christmas tree helped lift spirits for patients, visitors and staff alike, continuing a lovely festive tradition.

Staff across several hospitals spoke about the positive ripple effect of creating a festive atmosphere, not just for patients, but for colleagues working over the holiday period.



Leona, from **Victoria Hospital** shared:

"We have a lovely tree in the hospital, cheering the place up for patients and visitors. Everyone is saying it is lovely and festive."

Staff described how the festive atmosphere had a positive ripple effect across the hospital.

"It cheers the place up for staff working at this time of year – all the staff are delighted."



"The patients were delighted to have gifts and treats on Christmas day, seeing as they were stuck in hospital, it cheered them all up and they were very grateful."

"Families/friends of the patients were delighted their relatives/friends had been treated so well on Christmas Day".

Elizabeth, **Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban**

"The parcels were the only present one patient received. Feedback was very positive."

Louise, **Raigmore Hospital, Inverness**

FROM PATIENT PARENT TO CHRISTMAS CHAMPION

In the lead up to Christmas 2025, Lauren rallied her workplace to collect toys for children spending the festive season in the **Highland Children's Unit at Raigmore Hospital**. For Lauren, this was more than a goodwill gesture. It was a way to give back after her own family experienced the kindness and magic of the ward the previous year.

Over Christmas 2024, Lauren, her partner and their little girl, Harper, spent nearly a week in the children's ward. It was an incredibly difficult time for the family, but the atmosphere on the ward brought unexpected comfort and joy.

Lauren shared what encouraged her to support NHS Highland: *"We were inspired to help support the NHS, particularly the children's ward at Raigmore Hospital because over the Christmas period in 2024 last year, myself, my partner and my little girl Harper spent nearly a week on the children's ward. We were absolutely blown away by the amount of gifts, Christmas spirit and overall joy that was on the children's ward over the holiday period.*

The staff were all absolutely incredible as well as everyone who came in throughout the week to donate gifts to the children. Harper had only just turned one at the time so didn't even know what Christmas was but the amount of effort and joy really did make a huge difference to us, her parents and family.

We couldn't believe the magic that was created on Christmas Eve with Santa himself delivering presents to the end of every bed and all the staff wearing Christmas pyjamas. We truly can't thank everyone involved enough. You made our Christmas so magical even at the worst time."

Thank you



Lauren and Harper at the hospital over Christmas in 2024.



Baby Harper in 2024.



Lauren and her family returned to spread Christmas cheer in 2025, pictured with Serena (right), Play Specialist.

Those memories stayed with Lauren. She wanted other families, particularly those facing fear or uncertainty, to feel the same warmth and sense of care that her family received. Lauren explained why supporting local healthcare matters to her, saying:

"We want to help contribute to the magic we received last Christmas. Every child deserves to have a wonderful Christmas no matter their circumstances or health."

Her workplace collection brought together colleagues who were eager to help make a difference. Together, they donated toys that will bring joy, distraction and comfort to children who may be spending Christmas away from home. Lauren encourages others to get involved too:

"Do it. There is always room for more help and every little thing can help make a huge difference. It's important to help support all the wonderful staff at Raigmore Hospital."

Alison from **Campbeltown Hospital in Kintyre** said

"To mark the occasion of Christmas day for patients in Ward during this time our Porter dressed up as Santa (he does this every year) and a Domestic Assistant dressed up as a Snowman to hand out all the gifts to the patients. This certainly made the patients very happy as you can see.

Some of these patients had no family visiting them on Christmas Day so it was a lovely gesture to get a gift from Santa!"



"Family were grateful that their family members were not forgotten over the festive period, as this can be a very difficult period for them as well as the patients." - Elaine, Raigmore Hospital

Donna from the **Raigmore Renal Service** shared with us that *"Patients love to see the real tree, we sing to the patients and dress up as Santa to give out our Christmas gifts. Most of the patients enjoy the effort that the staff put in to making Christmas time enjoyable with a chronic disease."*

Lorna from **Mid Argyll Hospital Maternity Ward** shared the impact of their Christmas party for local babies and parents saying it was *"great for mood and wellbeing of mums and babies. Important for social development of infants. Nice sense of community and gets mums together who might otherwise never have met"*.

Donna from **Portree Hospital on the Isle of Skye** said *"Having a gift to open on Christmas Day helped to boost the morale of patients in what can be a difficult time. Being able to offer patients a small token of care improves the mood of the staff too."*

Laura from **Caithness General Hospital** provided toiletries and sweets to patients on the ward and said *"Patients were delighted to see Santa and receive a present from Santa on Christmas day. Staff were happy to participate with Santa and to make the environment cheerful on Christmas day."*



Patients at the Renal Unit in Raigmore Hospital in Inverness received a visit from Santa while receiving dialysis treatment.

SPREADING CHEER ACROSS OUR CARE HOMES

For residents living in care homes, staff worked hard to bring extra cheer to the festive season with many parties held and even some outings to the local pantomime. We supported fifteen NHS Highland residential homes in Highland to add a bit of extra sparkle this Christmas.

Thanks to Jacqueline at **Pulteney House Care Home in Wick** for sharing these images from their Christmas party.



Jacqueline from **Pulteney House** told us:

"The residents were excited and looked forward to the party. Some of the ladies got their hair, make-up and nails done for the event. The residents and staff all wore Christmas jumpers. The residents enjoyed the music and sang along with the Christmas songs."

When Santa arrived, the residents were thrilled to see him and receive gifts from the large Santa bag. There was a sense of togetherness and families got to take photo's with their loved ones. The day was enjoyed by all.

"The afternoon felt like we were all family".

SEASONAL SMILES AT DAY CENTRES

We supported eight NHS Highland day centres to celebrate the season with supported people and their families.

Donna, at the **Isobel Rhind Centre in Invergordon**, described the impact of their Christmas party:

"Seeing Supported Peoples Anticipation & Excitement days before leading up to the party to socialise and meet up with friends they may not of seen for a while.

Being recognised for all their hard work throughout the year. Feeling included and valued as part of the community.

Creating memories, connections, wellbeing, laughter, enjoyment, socialising, excitement and lots, lots more".



Donna from the Isobel Rhind Centre with Mr & Mrs Claus.

Donna shared with us that "Staff loved putting the party together knowing what pride, purpose and connection it would bring for all our Supported People. Everyone contributed and seeing the joy and excitement it gave to our Supported People meant lots to everyone. Also it was an opportunity to create something special for the people we support, to see the Supported Peoples excitement long before event and then delivering was very rewarding for staff".



Isobel Rhind Centre attendees at their Christmas party.



Heike from the **Glen Centre in Aviemore** said of their party:

"Happy smiling faces all around. One service user words were 'it's nice to know someone cares about us'. It makes the staff feel very good to see all those happy faces. It's good for everybody's wellbeing".



Glen Centre, Aviemore hosted their annual Christmas party.



Christmas 2025 was made special because of the care, commitment and compassion shown by people across Highland and Argyll & Bute.

Thank you to all the NHS staff who took the time, alongside their usual duties and while working over the festive period, to decorate spaces, organise activities, wrap gifts and create moments of joy for others.

Thank you also to our donors and supporters. Your generosity helps fund the extras that NHS budgets can't cover, the small comforts and meaningful moments that improve experiences for patients, residents and service users. Because of your support, people across hospital wards, care homes and day services felt remembered and cared for at Christmas.

Thank you!

Get Involved – Christmas 2026

If you, your school, workplace or community group would like to support NHS Highland Charity by organising a gift collection or donation for Christmas 2026, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact the Charity team at:
endowments.nhshighland@nhs.scot

Together, we can continue to help make Christmas a little brighter for people receiving care across NHS Highland.