

BLUE TEXT denotes new text added since the last revision.

RED TEXT denotes guidance for those who are shielding where different from the rest of the population.



Circle of Support Development Plan in line with Scottish Government's COVID-19 Levels

Where we are now

Since late March we have been unable to run a number of our services, including the Helmsdale and Golspie Village Hubs, and Art 'n Blether. Our staff have adapted to this and been able to provide limited support online or via telephone during this period, but the ongoing restrictions have meant the projects could not get back up and running. We are pleased that we have been able to continue to provide our Dinner To Your Door service and provision of our Grab 'n Go Bags was only suspended for one month back in April due to problems sourcing ingredients.

As we entered winter and the 9th month of COVID-related restrictions we realised that everyone is really beginning to feel the strain, particularly those who live alone with little support and those who care for a loved one at home. We realise that it will not be possible for us to run those of our projects that have been suspended for some time and so we are looking at a way to adapt our work to ensure we can provide the much-needed support our local folk need in a way that is compliant with the restrictions.

In November 2020 it appeared the situation was easing for the Highland region and we were placed in Level 1, although going into others' homes was still not permitted. There seemed to be greater emphasis on meeting others outside of the home in small numbers either in outdoor spaces or in publicly accessible buildings, presumably due to public buildings having hygiene guidance to follow. The loosening of restrictions enabled us to start the Helmsdale Walking Group and plans were underway to introduce a new Chatty Café at Helmsdale Community Centre from January. However, just before Christmas 2020 the Highlands were moved to Level 4 meaning that both of these activities could not continue/be introduced.

With the Stay at Home guidance added to the Level 4 restrictions in January 2021 this will set us back further. We now need to look at providing support to the community without going into individuals' homes unless it is essential for us to do so.

This document considers how the restrictions will impact on a variety of proposed projects, including our existing projects, those we have introduced since the start of the pandemic and those we would hope to run in the near future.

Circle of Support at Home

To combat the above challenges, we had planned to work towards moving our Circle of Support from a community setting to people's homes during this trying period. This Circle of Support at Home model was going to fall into three main areas:

Blether at Home: a member of our staff visits someone in their home to provide company and emotional support.

Activities at Home: a member of our team visits someone in their own home to support them with activities they enjoy.

Support at Home (NHSH Caring for the Carer): this service aims to support carers and those who require some level of physical care or support who have really struggled through lockdown with little or no help. Our team would offer to help with various tasks, ranging from sitting with and chatting to the person who is being cared for while the carer gets some respite, right through to providing personal care and physical help with activities of daily living.

In addition to the above, we would also promote our Dinner To Your Door and Grab 'n Go Bag services as they will continue to be part of the Circle of Support at Home effort.

As restrictions started to be eased during the second half of 2020 we were hopeful that this model would offer a solution to provide support to those who were struggling. As restrictions were lifted one of the key areas that didn't change was mixing inside other people's households. Instead there was a greater emphasis on people meeting outdoors or in public places where hygiene measures could more easily be managed. While we felt the Support at Home service could continue as an essential service in most cases, both Blether at Home and Activities at Home would not be permitted.

The Scottish Government's Level system

From Monday 2nd November 2020 the Scottish Government's approach to addressing COVID-19 changed to a more geographical system using a number of Levels based on the risk in those particular areas. These Levels are outlined in their COVID-19 Strategic Framework. These Levels are currently in draft form but will hopefully be approved by Parliament on 27th October.

The Level in our area will determine which of our project areas can run and to what degree. This document aims to act as guidance for staff on Connecting Communities' working arrangements in the coming months as we follow this new system.

We are aware that our geographical area may move between Levels very suddenly and we will have arrangements in place with our staff centred on open communication channels both internally and with our clients, customers and members.

The following gives an overview of relevant permitted activities at each Level. The information **shown in red** is for those in the 'Shielding' category, those at higher risk of serious illness if they contract the virus. This is only shown where the advice is different from the guidance for those not in the shielding category. This guidance needs to be taken into consideration for a number of our project areas, particularly the Hub.

Level 4 with 'Stay at Home' guidance (details for those previously shielding is as per Level 4 below):

- Contact with others: No in-home socialising. Outdoors only two people from up to two households (excluding children under 12).
- Shopping: All non-essential shops to be closed.
- Work from home unless it is not possible for you to do so.
- Travel: Stay at home unless travel is essential or for exercise. Stay within your local authority area. No travel outside Scotland unless essential.
- Transport: Avoid car sharing with those outside your extended household group. Minimise use of public transport and no use of transport unless it is essential.
- Hospitality: Cafes etc. are closed. Takeaways operate as normal with hygiene measures/social distancing.
- Events: Not permitted.
- Support services (mental health, counselling, day services, respite care): Essential only. Online where possible.

Level 4:

- Contact with others: No in-home socialising. Outdoors and in public places 6/2 (six people from two households). **Minimise contact with people outside your own household if you can. You should not take public transport.**
- Shopping: All non-essential shops to be closed. **Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping and limiting the number of times you go to a shop. Shop at quieter times.**
- If you cannot work from home: **The Chief Medical Officer will issue an automatic two week fit note to give people on the shielding list protection while they speak to their GP or consultant and get a personal fit note if necessary.**
- Travel: No non-essential travel into or out of the level 4 area. If necessary, limits on travel distance, or a requirement to stay at home. Exemptions for essential travel for work and to care for someone outside the areas. International quarantine regulations apply.
- Transport: Active travel (walk, run, cycle, wheel) where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Minimise use of public transport, except for essential purposes. Face coverings compulsory on public transport.
- Hospitality: Cafes etc. are closed. Takeaways operate as normal with hygiene measures/social distancing.
- Events: Not permitted/ closed to spectators.
- Support services (mental health, counselling, day services, respite care): Essential only. Online where possible.

Level 3

- Contact with others: No in-home socialising. Outdoors and in public places 6/2 (six people from two households). **Limit meeting people outside your own household, avoid indoor public spaces.**
- Shopping: **Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping and limiting the number of times you go to a shop. Shop at quieter times.**
- If you cannot work from home: **Speak to your employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place. If they are not, discuss getting a fit note with your GP or clinician.**

- Travel: No non-essential travel into or out of the level 3 area. Exemptions for essential travel for work or caring for an individual outside of the area. International quarantine regulations apply.
- Transport: Active travel (walk, run, cycle, wheel) where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Avoid non-essential use of public transport. Face coverings compulsory on public transport.
- Hospitality: cafes etc. can open indoors and outdoors for the consumption of food and non-alcoholic drinks. Table service is mandatory. Takeaways operate as normal with hygiene measures/social distancing.
- Events: Not permitted/ closed to spectators.
- Support services (mental health, counselling, day services, respite care): Permitted, but online where possible.

Level 2

- Contact with others/Socialising: No in-home socialising. Outdoors and in public places 6/2 (six people from two households). Reduce the number of people or households you have face to face contact with. Avoid one metre zones.
- Shopping: Strictly follow the guidelines when shopping
- If you cannot work from home: Following a workplace risk assessment, your employer should make the necessary adjustments to your workplace to protect you. You can discuss getting a fit note with your GP or clinician if you still feel unsafe.
- Travel: No non-essential travel to/from level 3 or higher areas in Scotland and equivalents in rest of UK. Exemptions for essential travel for work, education, shopping, health etc; outdoor exercise; weddings and funerals; and transit through restricted areas. International quarantine regulations apply. Otherwise unrestricted.
- Transport: Active travel (walk, run, cycle, wheel) where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport.
- Hospitality: cafes etc. can open indoors and outdoors for the consumption of food and drinks. Table service is mandatory. Takeaways operate as normal with hygiene measures/social distancing.
- Events: Events not permitted/closed. Drive-in events permitted.
- Support services (mental health, counselling, day services, respite care): Permitted.

Level 1 (limitations for areas where you can meet indoors under this level are [shown in blue](#))

- Contact with others/Socialising: no meeting indoors in people's homes, and outdoors meetings are permitted with a max of 8 people from 3 households. [Once restrictions are lifted to allow meeting indoors in this level, up to 6 people from two households can meet.](#)
- If you cannot work from home: [Following a workplace risk assessment, your employer should make the necessary adjustments to your workplace to protect you. You can discuss getting a fit note with your GP or clinician if you still feel unsafe.](#)
- Travel: No non-essential travel to/from level 3 or 4 areas in Scotland and equivalents in rest of UK. Exemptions for essential travel for work, caring for someone living in these areas, and transit through restricted areas. International quarantine regulations apply. Otherwise unrestricted.
- Transport: Active travel (walk, run, cycle, wheel) where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport.
- Hospitality: [cafes etc. can open indoors and outdoors for the consumption of food and drinks. Table service is mandatory. Takeaways operate as normal with hygiene measures/social distancing.](#)
- Events: Outdoor events seated and open space permitted (restricted numbers). Outdoor grouped standing events not permitted. Small seated indoor events permitted.
- Support services (mental health, counselling, day services, respite care): Permitted.

Level 0

- Contact with others/Socialising: 8/3 indoors (in-home socialising permitted) i.e. max 8 people from 3 households. 15/5 outdoors (fifteen from five households).
- If you cannot work from home: [Following a workplace risk assessment, your employer should make the necessary adjustments to your workplace to protect you. You can discuss getting a fit note with your GP or clinician if you still feel unsafe.](#)

- Travel: No non-essential travel to/from level 3 or higher areas in Scotland and equivalents in rest of UK. Exemptions for essential travel for work, education, shopping, health etc; outdoor exercise; weddings and funerals; and transit through restricted areas. International quarantine regulations apply. Otherwise unrestricted.
- Transport: Active travel (walk, run, cycle, wheel) where possible. Avoid car sharing with people outside extended household wherever possible. Face coverings compulsory on public transport.
- Hospitality: cafes etc. can open indoors and outdoors for the consumption of food and drinks. Table service is mandatory. Takeaways operate as normal with hygiene measures/social distancing.
- Events: Outdoor events permitted. Indoor events – seated and ambulatory permitted (restricted numbers). Indoor grouped standing not permitted.
- Support services (mental health, counselling, day services, respite care): Permitted.

Working from home is still advised where possible across all Levels. For Levels 1-4 only those for whom it is essential to go to their place of work should do so.

How each level impacts our work

The following table gives an overview of the status of each of our projects within the Circle of Support at Home in relation to each Level. Those columns in green are projects run in their pre-COVID form.

All activities will follow current guidance on social distancing, hygiene and hand washing, and the use of face coverings.

	Dinner To Your Door	Online Art 'n Blether	Walking Group	Chatty Café	Blether at Home	Activities at Home	NHSH Caring for the Carer (Support at Home)	Sutherland Home Care (Care at Home)
Level 4 with Stay at	Level of risk to be assessed, but full	Full service	Only one member/client at one time, e.g.	No service	Indoors: None Outdoors: in public space	Indoors: None Outdoors: in public space only,	Online/by telephone where possible	Full service where possible

	Dinner To Your Door	Online Art 'n Blether	Walking Group	Chatty Café	Blether at Home	Activities at Home	NHSH Caring for the Carer (Support at Home)	Sutherland Home Care (Care at Home)
Home guidance	service if possible		'buddy walks'		only, one member/client at one time	one member/client at one time		
Level 4	Level of risk to be assessed, but full service if possible	Full service	Only one member/client at one time, e.g. 'buddy walks'	No service	Indoors: none Outdoors: only one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people), but no shielding individuals	Indoors: none Outdoors: only one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people), but no shielding individuals	Full service, but online/by telephone where possible	Full service
Level 3	Full service	Full service	Full service	Full service with hygiene measures/social distancing	Indoors: none Outdoors: only one member/client/household group at one time (max 6	Indoors: none Outdoors: only one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people).	Full service, but online/by telephone where possible	Full service

	Dinner To Your Door	Online Art 'n Blether	Walking Group	Chatty Café	Blether at Home	Activities at Home	NHSH Caring for the Carer (Support at Home)	Sutherland Home Care (Care at Home)
					people). Shielding individuals should limit meetings	Shielding individuals should limit meetings		
Level 2	Full service	Full service	Full service	Full service with hygiene measurer/ social distancing	Indoors: none Outdoors: only one member/client/ household group at one time (max 6 people). Shielding individuals should limit number of face-to-face meetings	Indoors: none Outdoors: only one member/client/ household group at one time (max 6 people). Shielding individuals should limit number of face-to-face meetings	Full service	Full service
Level 1 with in-	Full service	Full service	Full service	Full service with	Indoors: none, unless support	Indoors: none	Full service	Full service

	Dinner To Your Door	Online Art 'n Blether	Walking Group	Chatty Café	Blether at Home	Activities at Home	NHSH Caring for the Carer (Support at Home)	Sutherland Home Care (Care at Home)
home meeting <u>not allowed</u>				hygiene measures and social distancing in place	is required and not able to be provided online Outdoors: only one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people). Shielding individuals should limit number of face-to-face meetings	Outdoors: only one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people). Shielding individuals should limit number of face-to-face meetings An exception to this would be a walking group which would be limited to 30 individuals with social distancing, face coverings and hygiene measures in place		
Level 1 with in-	Full service	Full service	Full service	Full service with	Indoors and outdoors: only	Indoors and outdoors: only	Full service	Full service

	Dinner To Your Door	Online Art 'n Blether	Walking Group	Chatty Café	Blether at Home	Activities at Home	NHSH Caring for the Carer (Support at Home)	Sutherland Home Care (Care at Home)
home meeting allowed				hygiene measures and social distancing in place	one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people). Shielding individuals should limit number of face-to-face meetings	one member/client/household group at one time (max 6 people). Shielding individuals should limit number of face-to-face meetings		
Level 0	Full service	Full service	Full service	Full service with hygiene measures and social distancing in place	Indoors: only two members/clients /household groups at one time (max 8 people) Outdoors: up to 4 members/clients/household groups at	Indoors: only two members/clients /household groups at one time (max 8 people) Outdoors: up to 4 members/clients/household groups at one time (max 15 people)	Full service	Full service

	Dinner To Your Door	Online Art `n Blether	Walking Group	Chatty Café	Blether at Home	Activities at Home	NHSH Caring for the Carer (Support at Home)	Sutherland Home Care (Care at Home)
					one time (max 15 people)			

The above figures all take into account that one member of Connecting Communities staff will be present.

In addition to the above:

- We are awaiting details of NHS Highland’s remobilization plan to direct any decisions made about the Helmsdale and Golspie Village Hubs. For both Hubs, consideration needs to be given to the use of a public building for the Helmsdale Hub in particular and the hygiene implications of, and lack of control over, this.
- We anticipate our Art `n Blether in person classes will not be able to resume under any of the Levels described here. This is due to the cost effectiveness of running the classes with a limited number of participants and if in person classes were to resume additional funding would be required to cover the shortfall.

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