

Care and Connect *for families*



March 2026 Issue #48



Welcome!

In this issue of Care and Connect...

- Read our **2026 – 29 Strategy**
- Receive an update on **PHEW Respite**
- Check out our Early Years team's **40 Ways to Play**
- Find out about **free companion rail travel for visually impaired people**
- Take part in the Scottish Government's **Right to Breaks Consultation**
- Get involved in our **upcoming fundraising events**
- Read **news from your service**

2026 – 29 Strategy

We are excited to reveal our strategy for 2026 – 29. We have used your feedback which you have shared with us at review meetings, at events, and through our annual survey, to inform our strategy. Our strategic aims for 2026 – 29 are as follows:

1. Ensure the people we support and their families receive consistently good services.
2. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the charity through digital innovation.
3. Manage our data well and make informed decisions based on evidence.
4. Demonstrate to staff, people we support, their families, and wider society that we value fairness and inclusiveness.
5. Encourage environmental responsibility in our work.

To find out more about our strategy, including how we aim to meet the aims above, go to sensescotland.org.uk/who-we-are/strategic-plan.

PHEW Respite

In 2024, we told you of our plans to incorporate PHEW - a residential short break service for people with learning disabilities, based in Motherwell – into Sense Scotland. We are pleased to announce that on Wednesday, 1 April 2026, PHEW will be fully incorporated into Sense Scotland.

By incorporating PHEW into Sense Scotland, we are able to ensure the sustainability of the service and provide the support and infrastructure necessary to focus on providing care to the people who attend PHEW.

40 Ways to Play

Over the last year, our Early Years team have shared a number of different activity sheets for children with additional support needs and their parents to use, as part of our 40 Ways to Play - celebrating 40 years of Sense Scotland.

Thank you to everyone who has engaged with these activity sheets. We hope you've enjoyed all the sensory fun!

All 40 ways to play – including a sensory song book – are now available to download at www.sensescotland.org.uk/play-at-home/.

Right to Breaks Consultation

There are an estimated 700,000 to 800,000 adult unpaid carers and around 27,000 young carers in Scotland. It is crucial that carers are supported to have a life alongside caring, and that they are able to sustain and improve their own health and wellbeing.

Through the Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025, the Scottish Government will establish a right to breaks for carers, to help protect their wellbeing and sustain caring relationships.

The Government want to understand the views of carers and others on key issues to be set in regulations and guidance, and what these might mean to people in relation to their experience of providing or receiving unpaid care.

A consultation for people to share their views is now open. The answers will be used to inform the new regulations and guidance to make sure the right to breaks is delivered effectively and consistently.

The consultation will be open until Friday, 22 May 2026. Please go to bit.ly/scot-gov-right-to-breaks to share your views.

Free Blind Companion Rail Travel

Last year, the Scottish Government announced the launch of a pilot scheme that provided free rail travel for companions of blind and partially sighted people travelling by train. Among those who knew about the scheme and had travelled by rail:

- 84% used it, showing how popular it became once people were aware of it.
- Over 95% of users reported benefits across every area measured, including independence, mobility, confidence when travelling, travel costs, and feeling safer and more supported.
- Nearly nine in 10 said the scheme had changed how they use rail, with 84% taking more trips and 69% visiting new places they had not travelled to before.

Earlier this month, the government announced plans to make this scheme permanent from Wednesday, 1 April 2026. In order to receive this benefit, you must apply for an Eye Plus One National Entitlement Card (NEC). Once you are a holder of this card, you can then travel with a companion throughout Scotland at no extra cost.

To apply for a National Entitlement Card, go to nec.scot/apply-now.

Fundraising Opportunities

Sense Scotland is a charity. Many of our services rely on funding from trusts, foundations and the public. We need to raise at least £1million every year. Can you, your family, friends or employer

help? To find out more about our fundraising activities and opportunities, please sign up to our fundraising newsletter at bit.ly/sense-scotland-fundraising, give the team a call on 0300 330 9292 or email us at fundraising@sensescotland.org.uk.

Glasgow Kiltwalk – Saturday, 25 April and Sunday, 26 April

The first of five Kiltwalks – Scotland’s largest mass participating walking event – will take place in Glasgow on Saturday, 25 April and Sunday, 26 April – and we want you to join Team Sense Scotland to take on a fun challenge and raise funds for a great cause while doing it. We still have free charity places available for the Big Stroll (Saturday and Sunday, approx. 14.6 miles) and the Wee Wander (Sunday only, approx. 3.1-miles).

When you sign up for a charity place with Team Sense Scotland, we’ll pay for your entry, and we’ll provide you with t-shirts, water bottles, and even a doggy bandana if you’re planning on taking a pooch with you! In exchange, we ask that you raise a minimum of £100 for Sense Scotland.

To sign up for the Glasgow Kiltwalk (or for the following Kiltwalks in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh), visit sensescotland.org.uk/kiltwalk.

Tough Mudder

We’re excited to announce that we have a number of charity places available for this year’s Tough Mudder event in South Queensferry on Saturday, 6 June - and if you sign up now, you’ll get your place for just £20.

Tough Mudder creates hardcore obstacle courses designed to test your all-around strength, stamina, and mental grit. With the most innovative 5K and 15K courses and millions of participants worldwide to date, it is the premier challenge series in the world.

When you sign up for a charity place with Team Sense Scotland, you’ll get entry for just £20! In exchange, we ask that you raise a minimum amount for Sense Scotland (£150 for 5K, £250 for 15K). And when you’re crawling through the mud, splashing through water, or climbing over walls, you’ll be helping to raise funds for the people we support. To sign up now or find out more information, visit sensescotland.org.uk/tough-mudder.

Please let us know what you think of Care and Connect. Send your feedback to communications@sensescotland.org.uk.

You can find past issues at sensescotland.org.uk/care-and-connect.