

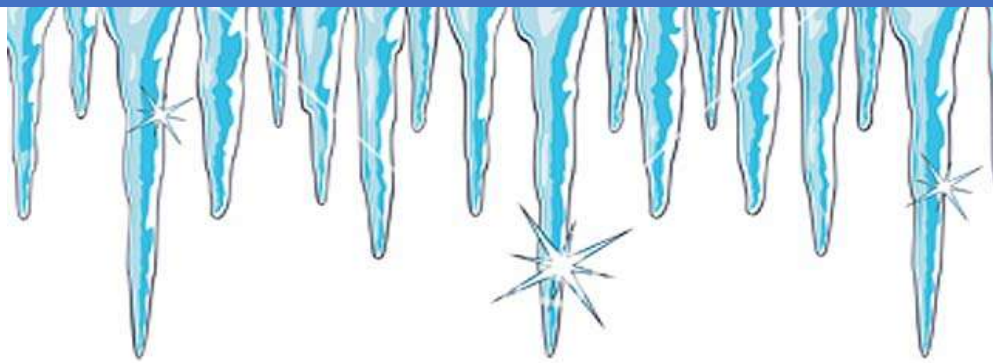


Befrienders
HIGHLAND



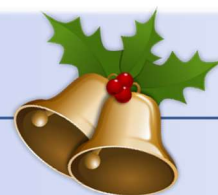
The Wee Blether

Winter 2022 Edition



Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
Or call us on 01463 712 791

Christmas Message from Susan White, Executive Director



Season's Greetings to everyone – is it me, or does Christmas come earlier each year? Reflecting on the past 12 months, a lot has happened for us at Befrienders. We had our first ever cooking group in Caithness, we moved offices and held our first Peer2Peer course in Inverness. We are looking forward to having another Peer2Peer course early in 2023, so ask your coordinator for details if you would like to learn more about your personal recovery journey and how you can share your lived experience to support and encourage others.

Staff continue to be very busy, as referrals have doubled since the pandemic started. Please be patient if it is taking longer than usual to be matched with a befriender, and we are sorry for your wait. Due to the difficulties we have with fundraising, and competition for large grant funding awards this year, our Board will be developing some contingency plans for 2023. We may have to make some changes to the services we provide if we are unable to secure new funding. If any of our volunteers or friends would like to be involved in the Annual Planning event on 23rd January 2023, please get in touch, as we would appreciate your input into these decisions.

Think about joining in with our **30for30 fundraising campaign in 2023**, to help us raise £30,000 for our 30th Anniversary!

There are people planning running and cycling events but you do not have to be sporty to participate. I took on a 30-day crochet challenge, selling the items to fundraise at a Christmas Craft Market, and another volunteer is planning on baking and selling 30 batches of shortbread. Fundraising can be fun, so get in touch with margaretgrant@befriendershighland.org.uk if you or someone you know wants to get involved.

Thanks for your ongoing support of Befrienders Highland, and Merry Christmas!

Susan





HAPPY 30th BIRTHDAY BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND!

We'd love to make 2023 a year full of fundraising and fun events for our 30th Anniversary, so please think about joining our **30for30 challenge**

It's **30for30** Your Way, so the limit is your imagination, but please do let us know so we can encourage you and celebrate with you!!!

1993

Can you bake? Why not raise **£30** by organising an afternoon tea party for 10 of your friends, asking for a £3.00 per person donation Befrienders?

CELEBRATE WITH US!

Or maybe you have children or grandchildren who might like to do a **30 minute** sponsored silence or hopping challenge, or to read 30 books for sponsorship?

2023

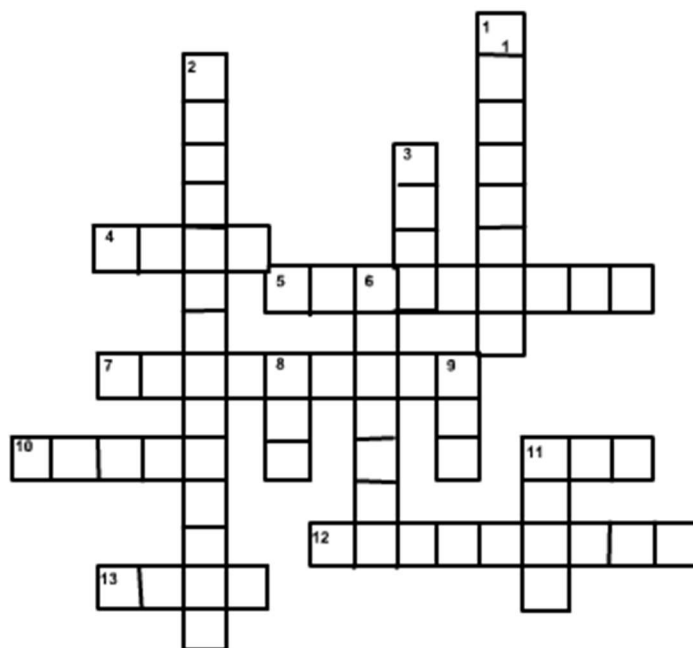
Can you craft or paint or sew? Why not make **30 items** and sell them on behalf of Befrienders?

What about doing a fitness challenge? You could raise money through donations at the event, and maybe complete **30k** as part of your training programme too!

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
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CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Down



Across



Good luck!

(Answers at the end of the newsletter)

Write to us at 1st Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT
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Mental Health Service Update

It's hard to believe we're approaching the end of 2022 and what another incredibly busy year we've had at Befrienders Highland. We continue to receive increased numbers of referrals and unfortunately have had to stop taking face to face referrals for the Inverness area due to the number of people on the waiting list.

During COVID we felt people needed to know someone was there for them, so we continued to accept the increasing number of referrals coming in. However, this has left us with the longest waiting list we've ever had. On a more positive note, we have been creating new friendship matches recently so we are slowly bringing the list down to a more manageable level. If you are still waiting for a match please don't worry, we haven't forgotten about you!



We are always looking for new volunteers and were delighted to receive a new application recently from a previous high school student. She had been part of a group who picked Befrienders Highland as their chosen charity for the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI). The YPI is a powerful active citizenship programme, empowering young people to make a difference in their communities, while developing a range of skills, and is run as part of their English coursework. It's great to see the impression our charity made on someone at school which has led them to volunteer with us.

It has been heartening to see people face to face again and whilst we know life for a lot of people has changed immeasurably since March 2020, it's encouraging to have a bit of 'normal' back.

We look forward to seeing a lot more of you face to face again!



Befrienders Highland needs your help....

We have lots of ways for you to get involved with Fundraising. We have teamed up again with "Making a Difference" an organisation that you can buy Christmas cards and other cards from in printed or e-card form, and in return we receive £2 from every card you buy plus any extra donation. Find them at

<https://gb.makingadifference.cards/supporting/befrienders-highland>



We also have places for next year's Baxters Marathon on 1st October 2023 available. One of our volunteers, Kasia, has already signed up to run next year, so keep an eye out for updates on her training.

An exciting update is we have been very lucky to team up with An Talla and Jacobite Cruises for the rest of 2022, and all of 2023. They are hosting a giving tree on behalf of Befrienders Highland this Christmas. Anyone who donates is able to take one of our homemade snowflakes or stars from the tree as part of giving something back to any donors and sharing friendship and kindness. If you are able to help us make additional snowflakes or stars we would be very grateful.



We are also keen to look at Match-Funding in your workplace. Some employers offer incentives to staff to fundraise for charity. For example, your workplace might have a policy in place that they match any money you fundraise for charities. We would love to chat to anyone who may work for an organisation like this, or if your workplace doesn't currently do this but might be interested please point them in our direction!

Don't forget, if you're doing any of your Christmas shopping online, any purchases made through AmazonSmile will earn a donation of 0.5% of the value of eligible purchases for Befrienders Highland. Use the link to start raising money for the charity which won't cost you a penny more!

smile.amazon.co.uk

<https://smile.amazon.co.uk/ch/SC029386>

**Thank you very much for all your help...
we couldn't do it without you!**

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Update from Keith Walker, Convener, Befrienders Highland



As I write, Befriending Week 2022 has just finished, and I've really enjoyed our celebration of friendship and the huge difference it makes in all of our lives. The last two or three years have given us all so many challenges and it's good to take a little time to reflect on the power of friendship in helping us to meet those challenges, knowing we're doing it together. 2023 will bring with it many more opportunities to celebrate as we look back proudly on 30 years of befriending in the Highlands.

Over the course of those 30 years we have pushed many boundaries, starting with face-to-face befriending and introducing email and phone befriending so that we can reach all parts of the Highlands. Our groups brought another new dimension to that and this year Peer2Peer befriending has added a new and exciting aspect to our work. This is a wonderful time for me to be starting as Convener and I'm excited to be taking over from David Stallard - if a little daunted by the prospect of trying to fill his shoes. So, I'm sure you will all join me in thanking David for 30 years of inspiring, compassionate leadership. Here's to the next 30 years!

Talking of our 30th anniversary, you'll see elsewhere that we're aiming to raise £30,000 in celebration of this milestone. My **30for30 challenge** is two-thirds complete, having run in the Loch Ness 10k and the Dramathon 10k races during October. I'll complete it early in January with the Loch Morlich 10k race. Also, elsewhere inside this issue of the Wee Blether, you'll find the dates for our seasonal Mince Pie Days and I'll look forward to seeing you there!

Keith



JOIN OUR
30FOR30
CHALLENGE

Caithness Day Out

Fun Trip to the Forest...and a good time had by all!

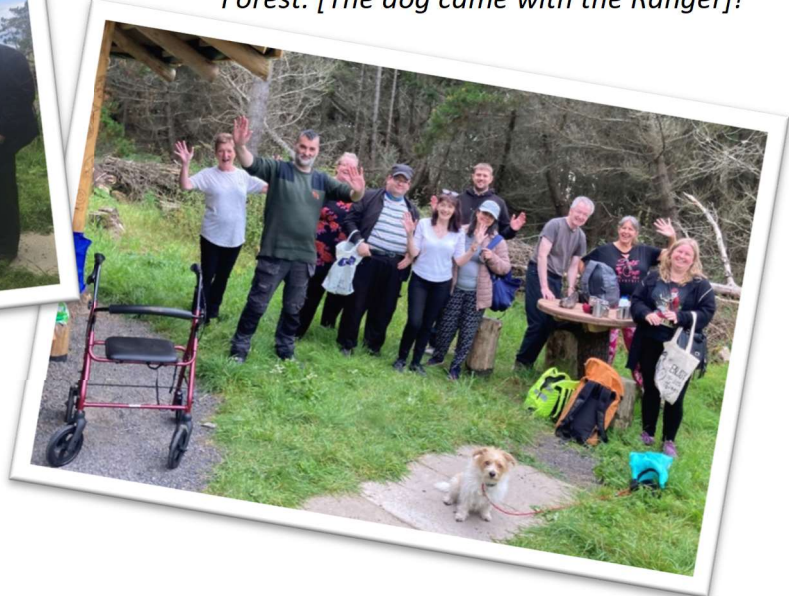


For the first time, Befrienders Highland were able to offer a social bus trip to its members in Caithness [funded locally]. We are fortunate to have such wonderful volunteers who offer their time so generously, including Lisa who volunteered to take on the role of mini-bus driver for the day.

The trip included morning coffee at the Northern Sands Hotel, Dunnet, who provided much appreciated morning coffee and wonderful homemade shortbread biscuits. This was followed by an exciting and adventurous day at Dunnet Forest! We were greeted by the Dunnet Forest Ranger who arranged transport for one of our less mobile Friends enabling her to get into the forest and participate fully. We had a packed lunch in the recently created forest *Roundhouse* and the Ranger organised forest activities that were both fun and educational.

The trip was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to socialise, stroll in the forest and unwind in a beautiful environment. Sad when we had to go home though!

Catherine, the CaithnessCoordinator [Centre] with Friends & Volunteers having fun in the Forest. [The dog came with the Ranger]!



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Fundraising Update from Malcolm

As some of you may know, earlier this year I completed the 80-mile Loch Ness ultra-marathon to raise funds for Befrienders Highland (huge thanks to everyone who sponsored me). A couple of months before the event I injured my knee, which restricted my training and made the run that bit more challenging (as if it wasn't challenging enough 😊). Since the ultra I've continued to have problems with my knee, which has resulted in me not being able to run at all without pain. This led me to seeing a physiotherapist who has referred me to orthopaedics.

Accepting Change

Knowing that it may be some time before I get an appointment to investigate my knee issues, I felt I needed to do something before the situation really impacted my mental and physical health. I needed to replace running with something else. I started thinking about biking because it is less impactful, but I've always been a bit biking adverse; it was just never my thing. I always found it really uncomfortable, and awkward, and I had a bit of a fear of being out in traffic on the bike, but needs must so I decided I would push myself in that direction even though my mind was quite resistant to the idea. Like most people, I need goals to work towards. I need to have direction and be able to focus on something where I can see some sort of progress to help me feel content, so when some friends mentioned they were entering the [Loch Ness Etape](#) I got carried away with their excitement and thought I would jump on the band wagon and enter too. So, there I was having entered the iconic 66-mile bike race around Loch Ness having not ridden a bike in over 8 years and not even owning a bike at the time of entering; I suddenly had a new direction and a lot of work to do.

The Plan

My first step was to source a bike, which I have done now. I have managed to get hold of an exercise bike for training when the weather is unfavourable for biking outside and a real bike to use in the times that I can be out and about. I just need to use them now; that's always the hard part. For this to happen, I need to work them into my life, I need to create a structure that will allow good habits to be formed, and my mind and body to adapt to biking. I know this can be achieved through the small step strategy of setting challenging, but achievable, goals and working towards them. Seeing the progress builds confidence, which can improve self-esteem. When doing new things I have to keep in mind that it's all about progress, not perfection.

As part of my training, I am planning to do 30 km for 30 days on the bike to help raise awareness for Befrienders Highland's 30 Year Anniversary. I will also be participating in the Etape for Befrienders Highland so if anyone wants to sponsor me then please donate to the **30for30** fundraising page. <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/BHL30for30>

If you feel you would like to see some progress in your life, please take up the 30-day challenge, maybe try something new. It doesn't have to be a physical activity; it can be anything. Over the 30 days you will experience change and seeing the progress you make will have a positive impact on your life.

Many thanks, Malcolm – Befrienders Highland Co-ordinator



GIFTS....

Some of our friends and volunteers like to exchange gifts at Christmas – and some mark birthdays too.

We are delighted to act as a forwarding office, but do ask you to remember these few guidelines;

- The value of your gift should not exceed £5.00
- Try to send a gift which is light in weight and small in size, to help keep BHL's postage costs down.

Remember, small is beautiful!

Help us to save money and save the Planet!

We know how much you love the Wee Blether but did you know that it costs the charity **£2,571** to print and post out over 350 copies, three times each year!

Next year, as well as saving money for the organisation, which could be spent on helping more people, we would like to try and reduce our carbon footprint by sending out our Wee Blether newsletters via email.

If you would still like to receive a paper copy, you can opt in by calling us on 01463 712791 or emailing admin@befriendershighland.org.uk.

Or just let your Co-ordinator know!

WALKING GROUP UPDATE...

We will be meeting at Inverness Botanic Gardens (Floral Hall) for our walks.

We'll meet at the entrance to the Gardens and walk from there if the weather is agreeable. If we have stormy weather we'll go into the Botanic Gardens and spend some time there, and maybe go for a coffee or tea if people fancy that. We'll have a choice of walks from that location, including around Torvean Park, along the canal and through the islands. There are toilets and plenty of free parking available.

Walking groups meet on Wednesdays at 12.30pm

Inverness Botanic Gardens, Bught Lane, IV3 5SS

If you would like to participate, contact Malcolm on 07917 793 131 or email

malcolmmacsween@befriendershighland.org.uk

SIPP training from NHS Highland

We're sorry for the short-notice cancellation of the planned Suicide Intervention Prevention training advertised in the last edition of the Wee Blether.

We are trying to secure new dates in Jan or Feb 2023. We'll be in touch with anyone who was booked onto the last course as soon as possible.

If anyone else would be interested in participating, there are a few more places that can be filled.

For more information, please contact:

susanwhite@befriendershighland.org.uk

Season's greetings from the Memory & Carers Team

Christmas and New Year is a time of year which can evoke an array of feelings; for many it can be a happy time, but for some of us it can heighten feelings of stress, loneliness and grief, which no doubt will be amplified this year. The Memory and Carers service have compiled a list of tips that will hopefully be of help over the festive period. Allana and Carol would like to wish everyone a peaceful festive season and look forward to catching up with everyone in the New Year.

- ★ **Try to be realistic and practical** Have the Christmas day that suits you. Take this pressure off yourself and don't place such high expectations on the day itself or on you.
- ★ **Try and plan as much as you can** Last minute things to do add even more stress. If you like to cook everything from scratch, try and do this before in stages and freeze as you go. If you shop online for food, try and get a delivery slot secured well ahead of Christmas. If the person you provide care for thrives on routine, try and build the Christmas period around usual activities such as mealtimes etc. You may also find it helpful to stagger any visitors and explain your plans to them to manage your stress, as well as the person you care for.
- ★ **Check Christmas opening times** of your GP's surgery and pharmacy or any other services that you rely on. Remember, you can always call NHS 111 for advice. Keep a list of important phone numbers handy, including GP's surgery or any family or neighbours that can offer support.
- ★ **Try and rest or have time for you** This could be having a relaxing bath, spending time reading, chatting with friends or going for a walk.
- ★ **Keep warm and well** It is important to keep warm in winter – both inside and outdoors. Keeping warm over the winter months can help to prevent colds, flu and more serious health problems as well. Wearing several layers of light clothes can help. Make sure you're receiving all the help that you're entitled to. There are grants, benefits, and sources of advice available to make your home more energy efficient, improve your heating, or help with bills. Home Energy Scotland provides free, impartial energy efficiency advice to householders, community groups and businesses and they can advise you on current grant schemes and offers: Call free on 0808 808 2282 during office hours to speak to a specialist advisor.
- ★ **Check your medicine cabinet** Ask your pharmacist what medicines should be in your cabinet to help get you and your family through the winter season. Many over-the-counter medicines (including paracetamol and ibuprofen) are available to relieve symptoms of common winter ailments such as colds, sinusitis, or painful middle ear infection (earache).
- ★ **Prescriptions** Make sure you get your prescription medicines before your pharmacy or GP practice closes for Christmas. If you've been prescribed antibiotics, or any other medication, make sure you take them as directed.
- ★ **Stock up if you can**, with enough food supplies for a few days, just in case you can't go out. If you do need to go out in the cold, wrap up warm and wear sensible non-slip shoes to help prevent any slips or falls.



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Help keep yourself safe from Romantic or Emotional Scammers



Imagine meeting the love of your life online. Imagine telling that person all about yourself and imagining a happy future together. Imagine trusting that person enough to share very personal information, including financial details, and even giving that person large sums of money they told you they desperately needed.






Now imagine finding out that it was all a lie, that the person you have fallen in love with doesn't exist, that your trust has been broken and your money is gone...

Romantic or Emotional Scammers tend to target people who have a "nurturing or complimentary disposition," so it makes it easier for them to fall victim to emotional manipulation.

You may be targeted on dating websites, via social media, or contacted directly and scammers often create a fake persona that would appeal to you. For example, if you were religious, or had particular views, the scammer may pretend to hold the same opinions and values.

The scammer uses any tactic possible to build trust. Scammers will often be very attentive, loving and readily available to chat online or over the phone. If you are going through a difficult time, the scammer could be there to talk you through it.

It's not always easy to spot a scammer straight away but these are some common warning signs:

-  They may call you pet names like "honey" or "babe" in order to quickly forge a bond.
-  They may be quick to tell you sad stories about their life, for example, tales of a sick relative or a partner who passed away – tactics to induce your sympathy.
-  They may try to monopolise your free time, keeping you isolated from friends and family.
-  They may be in constant contact, via texting, calls, or other means, aimed at making you feel like a real relationship is building and solidifying.
-  They may talk a lot about the future – again, making you feel like the relationship is becoming more meaningful – but none of the plans, or activities, may actually come to fruition.

Once a scammer has built some trust, and expressed strong emotions for you, there will often be some sort of financial request disguised as an urgent need.

The scammer may claim to need funds for an emergency medical procedure, claim to have been mugged or need money for a family member who is in trouble or some sort of danger. Sometimes the scammer pretends that they need the funds to come and visit you in person.

Scammers always make up a good excuse and pretend that they will pay you back.

Some romantic scams take place over the course of years, with the scammer continuing to ask for more money from the same person.



Here are some tips to protect yourself from romantic scams:

- Be cautious when meeting someone online, or if you are contacted directly via social media or other means - especially if the person is never able to meet you in real life
- Be wary if someone seems too perfect or expresses strong feelings very early in the “relationship”
- Search for the person’s photo online to see if it has been “stolen” or used for other dating profiles (in the Google Chrome browser you can do this by right-clicking on the picture and selecting ‘Search Google for image’. If the image appears on different websites under different names, it’s a strong sign the person isn’t genuine)
- Be aware that any photos or personal information you share online could be used by a scammer to blackmail you
- Never send money or share any financial information, such as bank or card details, with someone you don’t know, no matter what their reasons are
- Be mindful of requests to send “money” in other forms, such as gift cards, phone top-ups or Amazon vouchers for example. This way any money is not directly transferred into a bank account, is less traceable, and the scammer can claim it was a “gift”

Romantic scams can hurt financially and emotionally. Use caution and don’t ignore the warning signs. Don’t be ashamed or embarrassed if you think you may have been scammed – you are not alone. If you feel unsure or suspect a scam - TELL SOMEONE.



Resources and further information

Take a minute to watch this short guide on avoiding ‘romance fraud’

<https://vimeo.com/547457111>

A guide to staying safe online <https://www.godigitalhighland.com/staying-safe-online>

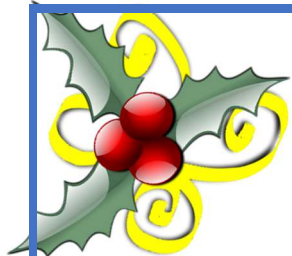
For information from the Citizens Advice Bureau

<https://consumeradvice.scot/romance-scams-top-tips-to-avoid-a-broken-heart-and-empty-bank-account/>

What to do if you suspect you have been scammed

Call Advice Direct Scotland’s Consumer Service on 0808 164 6000

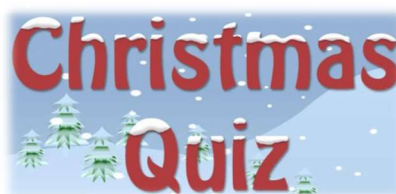
Contact Police Scotland by calling 101



Ho! Ho! Ho!

What's on in December...?

Join Catherine for her regular Online Quiz!
Regulars will know this is an opportunity
to participate in some non-competitive fun,
for about 40 minutes.



Next online quiz is **THURSDAY, 8th December at 6.45pm**

Contact Catherinepatterson@befriendershighland.org.uk for the link to join.

WHY NOT JOIN US FOR A
MINCE PIE AND A CUPPA?



Tuesday 6th December, 11am – 1pm
Perrins Centre, Alness



Friday 9th December, 10am – 1pm
Telford House, Wick



Friday 9th December, 11.30am – 1.30pm
The Classroom, Cawdor Street, Nairn



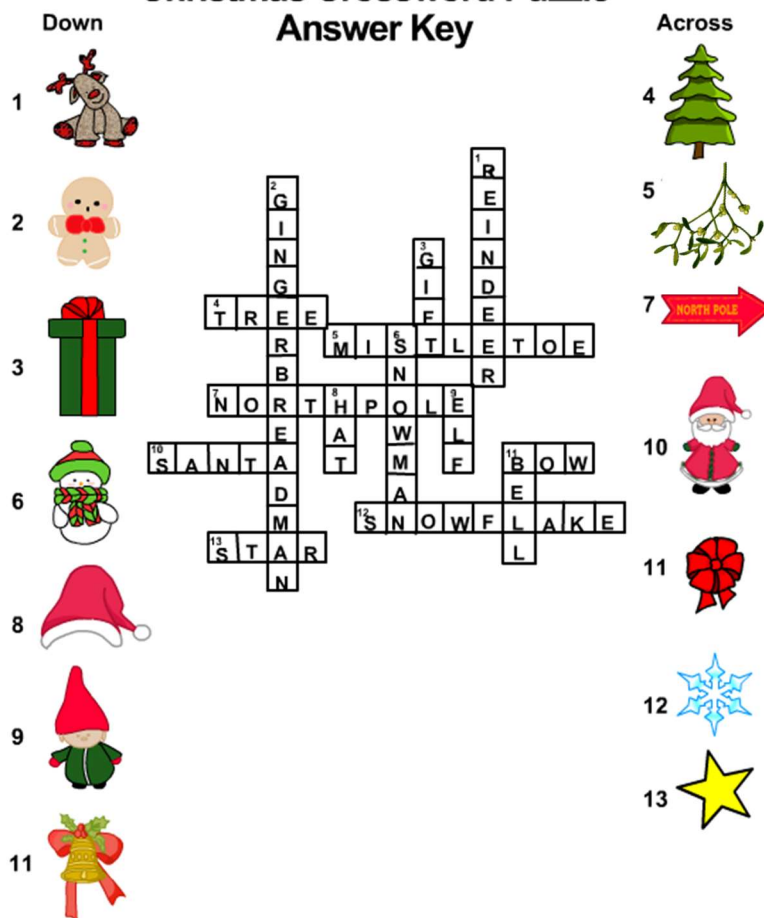
Thursday 15th December, 1pm – 3pm
Befrienders Highland, Academy House, Inverness

Drop in, have a chat with friends and enjoy a mince pie
& other festive treats!

To help us organise catering, please let us know in advance if you plan to join us by
contacting us via admin@befriendershighland.org.uk or calling 01463 712 791

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Christmas Crossword Puzzle Answer Key



**Support over the
Christmas period**



Alzheimer Scotland 24hr Dementia Helpline

Tel: 0808 808 3000 Email: helpline@alzscot.org

The 24-hour Freephone Dementia Helpline provides information, signposting, and emotional support to people with the illness, their families, friends, and professionals. The Helpline is confidential and you don't have to give your name if you would prefer not to.

Samaritans

116 123 (freephone)

NHS 24

Call NHS 24 by dialling 111 if you think you need A&E but it's not life-threatening, if your GP or dental practice is closed and you can't wait until they reopen, or you need urgent mental health support. They will assess and advise you on the next steps

You should always contact 999 in an emergency

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Friendship...

It's raining outside, as I sit here alone,
With only my thoughts and the fridge with its drone.
As I ponder another strange year nearly gone
And wonder if next year will bring a new dawn?

However, I'm lucky, not alone all the time.
I have family and friends I call mine.
Not so for everyone, so I am told,
People whose voices are lost in a void.

We must remember when we are alone
What it must feel like with only that drone.
Be a friend, a welcoming ear,
Hold open that door and beckon them here.

Show them the rainbows during the rain.
The sun on the hills as day starts to wane.
That chatter of birds at the still break of dawn,
The funny wee hedgehog crossing the lawn.

Friendship is positive, caring, a lifeline.
All is not lost, again you can shine
Like the moon rising high on a clear dark night
It is dark, there are stars, but still it is light!

Alison Campbell, November 2022



From everyone at Befrienders Highland, thank you to all our dedicated volunteers and supporters.

We wish you a happy, healthy, and safe festive period and all good wishes for the coming year.

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