

Help and Advice

Advice and Information Centres

Independent advice agencies can provide free, confidential and impartial advice on employment, housing, welfare benefits, legal matters, immigration, debt and consumer issues. Whilst they cannot recommend any particular solicitor, they can provide lists for you to choose from. As well as having an area office, many of the advice centres provide outreach services on certain days in other towns and villages. Click on the links for more information on opening hours and contact details.

Inverness

Ness Citizens Advice Bureau

<http://www.nesscab.co.uk/>

103 Academy Street, Inverness Telephone 01463 235345

Caithness

Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau

<http://www.cas.org.uk/WebOfficeDetails.aspx?id=16&letter=T>

7a Brabster Street, Thurso Telephone 01847 894243 or 896797

123 High Street, Wick Telephone 01955 605989

East Sutherland

East Sutherland Village Advisory Service

<http://www.hain.org.uk/index21.htm>

Golspie, Bonar Bridge, Brora, Helmsdale, Lairg, Dornoch

Telephone 01408 633000

Lochaber

Lochaber Citizens Advice Bureau

<http://www.hain.org.uk/index24.htm>

Dudley Road, Fort William,

Kinlochleven, Mallaig Telephone 01397 705311

Nairn

Nairn Citizens Advice Bureau

<http://www.hain.org.uk/index25.htm>

6 High Street, Nairn Telephone 01667 456677

Ross & Cromarty

Ross and Cromarty Citizens Advice Bureau

<http://www.hain.org.uk/index28.htm>

Balallan, 4 Novar Road, Alness Telephone 01349 883333

4 church Street, Dingwall Telephone 01349 864850

Skye and Lochalsh

Skye and Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau

<http://www.hain.org.uk/index29.htm>

The Green, Portree, Isle of Skye Telephone 01478 612032

Further resources are the online Advice Guide provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as Citizens Advice Scotland.

Highland Council Service Points

The Highland Council is the local government authority which provides a range of essential services to people living in the Highlands, including housing, education, roads maintenance, refuse collection, leisure facilities, libraries, money advice, support for people with care needs and much more. The council collects a local Council Tax to pay for these services and has a network of one-stop advice and information centres called **Service Points** which provide local access to all its services.

Emergency Services

For emergency help from the Police, Fire Brigade, Ambulance Service for accident and emergency medical care, or Coastguard for emergencies at sea, **telephone 999**. All these services provide free emergency assistance for everyone.

Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service

The Scottish Executive, working with the Scottish Fire Services, has developed "**Don't Give Fire a Home**", a national fire safety campaign for Scotland. On these pages you will find links to advice and information on safety measures that you can take to protect your family from fire. Prevention is seen as the key to reducing fire deaths and injuries. Members of the public need to work with the fire service to deliver safer communities. Visit the website of the Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service and [click on Community Safety Advice and Information](#) for the 10 key safety points you should know.

Free Home Fire Safety Check

As part of our commitment to your safety at home, we are offering a **FREE** home fire safety check. This service is carried out by Community Firefighters from your area.

- Visits will be by appointment only
- All appointments will be pre-arranged with you
- The firefighters calling will always be in uniform, use an agreed password and show an ID card
- **DO NOT let anyone into your home without identification**

The total time to complete a Home Fire Safety Check will vary with each situation but normally would last around 30 – 45 minutes.

This safety check will look at all areas of accident and fire risk within your home. We will advise you on the installation and maintenance of smoke alarms and also give advice and information on how to stay safe from fire including kitchen hazards, safe disposal of smoking materials, candles, heaters, electric blankets and dangers from harmful substances.

In addition, we will help you to make an escape plan to help prepare you should a fire occur in your home.

To request your **FREE** Home Fire Safety Check fill in our **online booking form**, or contact us by telephone on 01463 227000.

Legal Advice and information

The **legal system in Scotland** has two distinct sections for:

- **Civil cases** which involve disputes between individuals or organisations, for example divorce, breach of contract, or eviction from your home. These cases are heard in **civil courts**
- **Criminal cases** which involve charges being brought against individuals or organisations, for example theft, assault, or driving offences. These cases are heard in **criminal courts**.

Each section has its own courts and systems for dealing with cases and appeals.

If you need help with a civil or criminal case – if you are accused of a crime or need help in a civil dispute, you may need a solicitor to represent you.

If you need a solicitor you need to choose one who has experience in the appropriate area of law.

Help with legal costs

People on a low income can get free help from solicitors (Legal Aid) in certain circumstances. Legal aid allows people who would not otherwise be able to afford it to get help for their legal problems.

The **Scottish Legal Aid Board** can provide funding to help people who qualify to get legal advice and “representation” (where a solicitor puts their case in court).

- *Civil legal assistance* helps people to get legal advice and “representation” in civil cases;
- *Criminal legal assistance* helps people who have been charged with a criminal offence to get legal advice and “representation.”

Civil legal assistance includes *advice and assistance* and *civil legal aid*. Similarly, criminal legal assistance is *advice and assistance* and *criminal legal aid*.

More information is available on the Scottish Legal Aid Board website which also offers many translated leaflets for download.

A local advice agency should be able to recommend local solicitors, or you can search online for a solicitor registered with the Scottish Legal Aid Board. If you are in custody at a police station, or have been charged, you can obtain free legal advice under the duty solicitors' scheme. If you are at court, the arrangements for providing the solicitor will vary.

For more information on the law and the Police, see the Law and Personal Safety section of this website.

Immigration advice and information

Registered immigration advisers

All immigration advisers must be registered with the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), or be an adviser with an organisation, such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux, which is exempt from registration.

Anyone who gives immigration advice and is neither registered nor exempt will be committing a criminal offence. Every registered or exempt advice agency should display a certificate issued by the OISC to show it meets the OISC standards.

A list of all registered and exempt advisers and advice organisations can be seen on the OISC website which also includes details of how to make a complaint about an immigration adviser, and has information translated into many languages.

Immigration advice from Solicitors

In addition to immigration advisers registered with the OISC, solicitors can register with the Law Society of Scotland to provide immigration advice. Their website has a search facility to find immigration solicitors nearest to where you live.

Relocation Advisory Service

The Relocation Advisory Service (RAS) is part of the Fresh Talent Initiative. The main aim of the Relocation Advisory Service is to provide information about practical matters such as immigration for people seeking to come and live in Scotland or for those wishing to remain.

If you have any questions, contact the Relocation Advisory Service in

Glasgow. This is a specialist team of advisers who offer comprehensive help and advice about all aspects of settling in Scotland. Their service covers visas, work permits, help looking for jobs and starting a business as well as general information about living in Scotland. This is a free service and they are there to help. You can contact the Relocation Advisory Service in several ways. You can use the online form at www.scotlandistheplace.com or send an email to them at info@scotlandistheplace.com. You can also telephone on +44 141 248 2808 if you are calling from outside the UK or 0845 602 0297 if calling from within the UK.

Your right to vote

If you are a citizen of any of the European Union member states (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden) and are staying in the UK for approximately six months or longer, you can register as elector for local government, Scottish Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections.

You are entitled to be registered in the register of **local government electors** for any electoral area if on the relevant date you

- are resident in that area;
- are not subject to any legal incapacity vote (age apart);
- are a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of the European Union; and
- are of voting age.

Voting age in Scotland is 18 years or over.

You are not entitled to vote as an elector

- more than once in the same electoral area at any local government election; or
- in more than one electoral area at an ordinary election for a local government area which is not a single electoral area.

If you are not registered as an elector already, print out an Application to Register form, fill it in, and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer at any of the addresses listed at the end of the form.

A Polish Application form is also available for download from the UK Electoral Commission website.

Once your local Electoral Registration Officer has received your Application to Register for local government and Scottish Parliamentary Elections, you will

be sent a supplementary form that allows you to choose if you want to vote for European Parliamentary Elections in the UK or in your home country.

Useful URLs

Ness Citizens Advice Bureau <http://www.nesscab.co.uk/>

Citizens Advice Scotland <http://www.cas.org.uk>

Citizens Advice Bureau <http://www.cab.org.uk>

Highland Advice and Information Network

<http://www.hain.org.uk/index0.htm>

Advice Guide www.adviceguide.org.uk

"Don't Give Fire a Home" www.dontgivefireahome.com

Highland Council www.highland.gov.uk

Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service www.hifrs.org

Scottish Legal Aid Board <http://www.slab.org.uk/>

Office of Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) www.oisc.org.uk

Law Society of Scotland <http://www.lawscot.org.uk/find>

Electoral Commission website <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>