

**Highland
Communities
Mental Health
& Wellbeing
Fund
Year 2
Closing Report
May 2023**



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership



**HIGHLAND
THIRD
SECTOR
INTERFACE**

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The Highland Third Sector Interface is a Scottish Registered Charity, SC043521 and a Scottish Registered Company SC425808

Introduction

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults, launched in 2021, has now provided around 3,300 grants to community organisations delivering mental health and wellbeing support, bringing total investment [in Scotland] to £51 million.

Improved mental health and wellbeing support is one of the commitments in the Scottish Government's Policy Prospectus, which outlines firm actions to be achieved by 2026.

A fund of £15million was made available for the 2021/22 financial year across Scotland and administered through the Third Sector Interface Network in partnership with the relevant Health and Social Care Partnerships. This was repeated in 2022/23 and became the second year of provision.

For year two in Highland, we had just over £700k to support local, grassroot community activity that meets the overarching national ambitions for the funds and the local priority areas. The funding was for projects specifically for the Third Sector, Charities and Community Groups.

Health Secretary, Michael Matheson explained that:

"This investment reflects the importance we place on promoting good mental health and early intervention for those facing mental health challenges - ensuring that people can access a range of different types of help to match their needs. The Fund will continue to support a range of valuable community mental health and wellbeing projects, reflecting one of the priorities set out by the First Minister earlier this week."

In recognition of the vital role that local third sector organisations play in supporting mental health and wellbeing within local communities, a further £15 million will be provided in 2023/2024.

Summary of Local Approach and Priorities

In Highland, the local fund priorities and assessment were undertaken in partnership with the Health and Social Care and Community Planning Partnerships. As such a panel of individuals from both Public and Third Sector organisations was formed, including those who have been selected because of their relevant life experiences.

Originally, we would have envisaged some form of local panel arrangement but the time pressures due to the funding detail being released later than planned, meant we had to modify this. So, we opened with an expression of interest, thus providing the opportunity for more applications to be assessed on some basic proposal details at a local level. Our Highland TSI supporting partners arranged eight local assessment panels along with their respective Community Planning Partnership, to evaluate proposals' fit with local priorities and existing provision. We also arranged a panel to sift through Highland-wide proposals for thematic communities. The process was delivered in two identical phases, to allow applicants more time to develop proposals and maximise capacity across the piece:

Phase One

- Expressions of Interest (EOI) opened 17 October – 7 November
- Local and thematic panel assessments by 18 November
- Liaise with applicants re panel recommendations
- Issued invites to apply by 5 December
- Closing date 20 January
- Main panel assessed phase one applications 30 January

Phase Two

- EOI opened 7 – 28 November
- Local and thematic panel assessments by 15 December
- Liaise with applicants re panel recommendations
- Sent invites to apply 20 December
- Closing date 6 February
- Main panel assessed phase two applications 10 February

Groups applying were provided with a robust set of guidance notes and details around the Scottish Government outlined aims and principles and the locally identified priorities, all of which were underpinned by the need to reduce inequalities and promote wellbeing:

- Social Isolation
- Unpaid Carers and those with a Long-Term Condition
- Prevention of Suicide
- Rurally Distanced
- Poverty
- Trauma
- Staff and volunteer support and wellbeing

We held two webinars at the start of the process to allow groups to engage with the key messages and parameters for the funding and a specific section on the HTSI website provided access to the expression of interest, guidance, and other key documents. A flyer was included in the HTSI Conference delegate packs and staff and partners promoted the opportunity to community groups. It was also promoted in the Equalities Bulletin circulated by The Highland Council.

Demand for the Fund

Total amount of money across all requests:

The total amount requested across both application phases totalled **£1,436,779.06** exceeding the available funds by more than 100% of the amount allocated for Highland. There was an initial shortfall therefore of £731,890.06 with a grant allocation of £704,889.00.

There were a number of entries not invited to submit a full application based on the initial Expression of Interest (EOI). Of those invited to submit a full application, not everyone did - however 75 grants in total were approved.

Initial Expression of Interest Received	174
Those invited to apply after the EOI stage	121
Applications approved following full submission	75

Key learning / messages

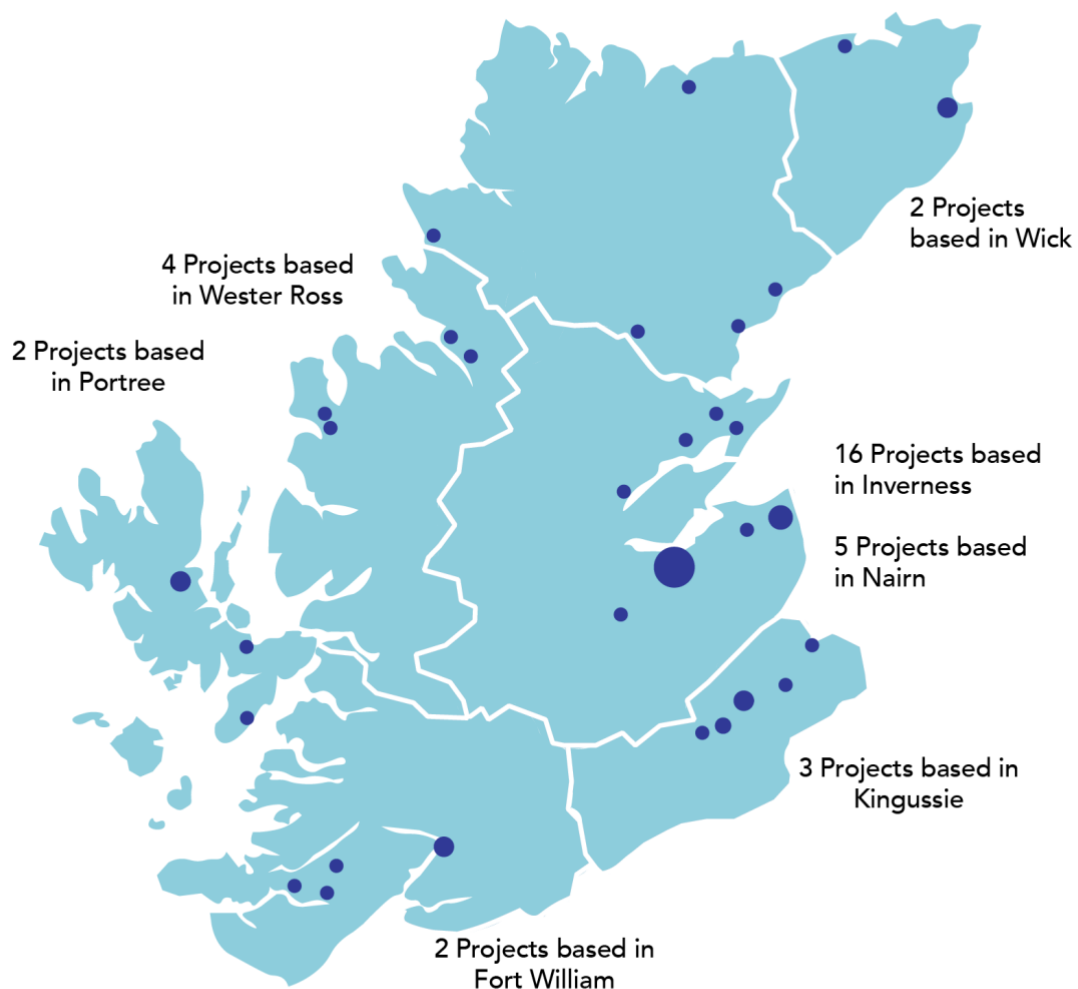
- As in year one, the capacity, identified need and capability of the sector far exceeds the investment level. It would be possible to increase third sector and community-based activity around mental health provision significantly were more funding available, either locally or nationally and particularly if this investment were sustained over a longer period of investment.
- For those organisations who benefitted from a grant in year one, guidance from Scottish Government dictated that they could only meet the criteria for year two funding if they were planning significant expansion or development of the original proposal. For this reason, some proposals were declined due to proposals being too close in their design and/or objectives.
- As the fund had limitations on the scope of the funding ask, it does limit the ability to build sustainable services that communities can rely on. Instead, it can focus efforts on seeking 'quick wins' that can be harder to sustain benefits from in the long term. Demand on the funding might shift if the funding focused on longer term projects, services, and impacts – though this would potentially be at the expense of smaller investment to more communities and community groups, who are potentially more likely to provide support further upstream and prevent problems occurring. Arguably there is a demand for both within communities in Highland.
- Several applicants, who were invited to apply in the second stage of the process, did not submit a final application. Few of them responded to a request for feedback so we don't know all the reasons, but we do know this was a very busy time of year for organisations.

Distribution Across Highland

Awards made across Highland

In the second year, a total of **£704,331.26** has been made across Highland. The map below provides a breakdown of the geographic areas where funding has gone.

2022 - 2023 Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Funded Projects in Highland



An additional 15 projects with a Highland-wide area were funded.

Investment by thematic activity

Thematic activity could include coverage across the whole of Highland to a specific community or group of people with a specific need, condition, or shared experience. A total of **£144,923.26** has been invested in thematic based activity with beneficiaries coming from across more than one geographical community, this includes targeted activity for the following groups:

- People living with Huntington's, Autism, and Acquired Brain Injury
- Refugees and ethnic minorities including the Gypsy/Traveller community
- Adults affected by either suicide, baby loss or imprisonment
- Survivors of sexual violence
- Young Adult Carers
- LGBTQI+ young people aged 16-25
- Young adults aged 19-25 with disabilities/ASN/in remote and rural communities

Investment across areas

A few activities are being delivered on a thematic basis but only within specific communities. In this instance a project has been supported to deliver activities in two or more communities that span across different Community Partnership areas. A total of **£43,575.50** has been invested in activities that include:

- In-person and telephone support for older people experiencing social isolation
- Counselling and educational courses for survivors of domestic abuse
- Outdoor activities for people living with long-term conditions/disabilities
- Creche time for parents to join facilitated discussions on child development/behaviour, etc.

Investment and activity by Community Partnership areas

A total of **£516,175.50** has been invested in locally delivered geographical community activity. The following breaks down where the activity will take place, rather than the registered address of the organisation(s) delivering the grant activities and provides more detail to support the map above.

It is important to note that there was no deliberate intent to ensure equality of distribution across the CP areas, because the different areas have unique needs, specific funding streams and are at different points in their community development around understanding and responding to mental health and wellbeing issues.

Badenoch and Strathspey

Badenoch and Strathspey Community Partnership area has no specific identified communities of highest need, though there is an acknowledgement that the area does have families and groups of households who are experiencing disadvantage and received **£59,970.75** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Activities for people with LTCs/disabilities
- Shinty Memories Group
- Inclusive Shed project
- E-trike 'taxi' for elderly/disabled people who are isolated (socially and geographically)
- Transition programme for school leavers at risk of disengaging, including Ukrainian refugees

Caithness

Caithness Community Partnership area has four identified communities of highest need and received **£48,735** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Peer support for expectant and new parents
- Befriending for people experiencing social isolation and mental health challenges
- Outings for people with sight impairment
- Mobile men's shed

East Ross

East Ross Community Partnership area has four identified communities of highest need and received **£31,599** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Free singing workshops for adults
- Horticultural training for adults with learning disabilities
- Collaborative 'grow your own' project for people with isolation, health issues and poverty
- Expanding men's shed activities to provide outdoor activities, art, and 3D woodwork

Inverness and Inverness-Shire

Inverness Community Partnership area has four identified communities of highest need and received **£169,965** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Trauma informed group work
- Mental health support for parents of primary school children
- Kintsugi Hope, focused on low level mental health issues
- Foodbank providing briefings/advice on income maximisation/debts
- Youth Hub for Ukrainians recently arrived in Scotland
- Outdoor social hub for young adult carers
- Activities for Afghan & Syrian Refugees
- Mentoring, training, and volunteer development
- First Aid training for volunteer drivers

Lochaber

Lochaber Community Partnership area has three identified communities of highest need and received **£30,393** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

Wellbeing activities in remote locations, including:

- Paddleboarding
- Qigong
- Mindfulness
- Crochet classes
- Warm place with hot meals

Nairnshire

Nairn Community Partnership area has one identified community of highest need and received **£26,116** in total from the fund. The activities funded include the following:

- Armed Forces Community Hub
- Bowling Club social gatherings
- Free twice-monthly wellbeing events
- Trike rides for those with limited mobility
- Peer support for new parents

Sutherland

Sutherland Community Partnership area has three identified communities of highest need and received **£58,845** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Community based classes for people with learning disability and autism
- Counselling and therapies
- A month-long wellbeing festival
- Mental health support for survivors of domestic abuse
- Befriending for older people facing severe and multiple disadvantage
- Accessible transport support for community groups including refugees

Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross

Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross Community Partnership area has two identified communities of highest need and received **£90,552.50** in total from the fund. The range of activities funded include the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Therapeutic garden project and wellbeing workshops
- Creative art workshops and culture for wellbeing events
- Weekend Drop-in Service for people with mental health challenges
- Inclusive events for remote community including hot meals
- Group lunch for older people

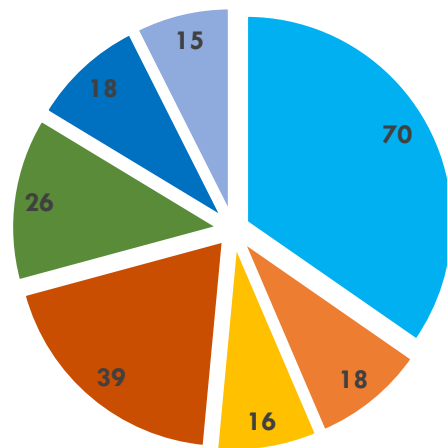
Key learning / messages

The distribution across Highland has been varied and includes some very remote and rural areas. An area where the allocation is notably disproportionate to the indicated prevalence of need, is Lochaber. However, there were fewer applications which met the essential criteria submitted for consideration from this area.

Activities tend to focus on general wellbeing, though some focused activities in and around suicide prevention and bereavement are not surprising given the prevalence within the region of suicide and suicidal ideation. We observed an increase from the previous year, in thematic work relating to trauma, poverty and activities for people with protected characteristics.

Distribution Across Thematic Areas of Need and Priorities

Activities Targeted at Local Priorities 2023



Local Priorities >3 each	
Social isolation	70
Unpaid carers and LTCs	18
Prevention of suicide	16
Rurally distanced	39
Poverty	26
Trauma	18
Staff/Volunteer Wellbeing	15

- Social isolation
- Unpaid carers and LTCs
- Prevention of suicide
- Rurally distanced
- Poverty
- Trauma
- Staff/Volunteer Wellbeing

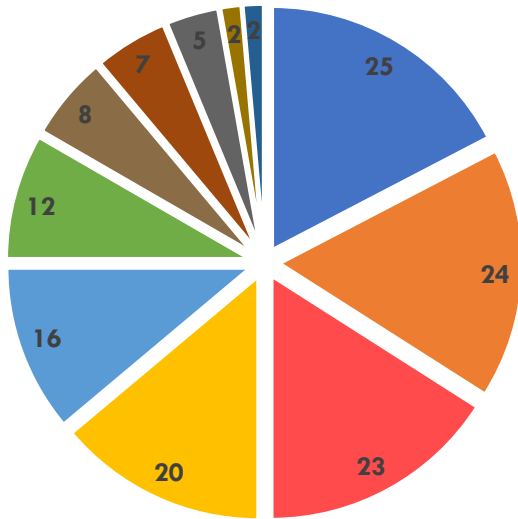
Each of the applicants were asked to identify the priority areas of action for the funded activities. Activities aimed at reducing social isolation were the most common and support for staff and volunteer wellbeing, the least. Proposals to address issues related to being rurally distanced were the second largest, which given the geography and infrastructure of Highland is understandable. Although there are a relatively high number of activities focused on targeting people with long-term conditions and unpaid carers, which is logical, given the close links to physical and mental health, a higher number of proposals were aimed at people experiencing poverty. Perhaps this reflects an increased understanding of the impact that poverty can have on mental health and overall wellbeing.

Key communities and beneficiary groups

The Fund prioritises a range of 'at risk' groups such as people facing socio-economic disadvantage, black and ethnic minority communities, people with a long-term health condition or disability, older people and LGBTIQ communities. There is representation across all the intended beneficiary groups. However, a significant number of organisations wanted to focus on people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, geographic disadvantage and people living with long-term conditions/disabilities. There were also a high number of projects targeting older people, people with diagnosed mental illness and those experiencing psychological trauma or bereavement/loss.

There were only two projects specifically being delivered for LGBTIQ+ and the same number for people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Compared to last year, there are a higher number of projects targeting refugee communities and women affected by domestic abuse/sexual violence.

Priority groups targeted by projects



Socio-economic disadvantage	25
Geographic disadvantage	24
Long-term condition/disability	23
Older people (50+)	20
Diagnosed mental illness	16
Psychological trauma	12
Bereavement/loss	8
Women	7
Refugees	5
Minority ethnic background	2
LGBTQI+	2

- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Geographic disadvantage
- Long-term condition/disability
- Older people (50+)
- Diagnosed mental illness
- Psychological trauma
- Bereavement/loss
- Women
- Refugees
- Minority ethnic background
- LGBTQI+

Key lessons / messages

Any opportunity for further development of projects for LGBTQI+, BAME communities and refugees, would be appropriate given that these areas were underrepresented in this funding round.

What Worked Well, The Challenges and Key Lessons

What Worked Well

Previously, we were able to pull from a lot of pre-existing partnership work around key relevant areas of strategy. The strength of existing partnerships was evident in that work, and we were able to easily clarify that there was no need to change these priorities.

We identified in the first year that third sector organisations would require support to address challenges with defining their outcomes and designing effective methods to evaluate success. A new role was recruited to fulfil this responsibility, allied to the core TSI offer of support. Workshops were devised and delivered, to address this issue which had affected the quality of applications previously and we observed some improvement in the second year.

The ability to have a dialogue with applicants, to discuss the feedback from the local panel meetings, has been welcomed. The support from the TSI has made a significant difference to building longer lasting relationships with groups in some areas and that will have a significant impact going forward.

The Challenges

There is no doubt that the demand on the fund was a significant challenge, and there was no supplementary investment from the Government this year.

The timeframe for the development and roll out of the funding cycle was compromising in terms of approach, impeding the potential to improve grassroots involvement and encourage a participative approach to design and decision making.

A localised approach to assessing the suitability of initial proposals was valuable but collating feedback from nine separate panels and responding to 174 expressions of interest was laborious, particularly where the panel had questions/concerns for applicants to address in the next stage.

Key Lessons

Generally, the funding distribution did appear to balance the competing demands of time, specificity of purpose and the needs within communities reasonably well. It is acknowledged however, that an approach which could be more localised and over a longer period would have the potential to deliver even better results.

The existing partnership working in Highland was sufficiently strong to support rapid action and identify the local priority areas without delay.

With the majority of projects aiming to support people facing socio-economic and geographic disadvantage, as well as addressing the local priorities of social isolation and rurality, it is evident that communities are facing ongoing health inequalities due to living in remote and rural areas.

Potential areas for improvement in the future

- Although this is not within the remit of the panel or HTSI, a longer period to allow more localised collaboration and constructive dialogue with and between community groups would be a significant advantage.
- A long-term strategic plan for the funding would benefit community planning and meeting of development priorities.
- A community of practice is now being facilitated by Evaluation Support Scotland, to provide more support for third sector intermediaries to facilitate an improved outcome focus and support better self-evaluation.
- Improved clarity around the funding of counselling services would ensure a fairer approach for applicants and panel members.
- Localised panels made good use of community knowledge this year, and this should be explored further.
- Although there was support from across the CPP related groups, a closer governance role would be welcomed, which might facilitate a more active role within the process.

Where the funding has been invested

Àban Outdoor Ltd	£9,150.00
Able2Adventure	£15,000.00
An Talla Solais - Ullapool Visual Arts	£8,500.00
Apex Highland	£21,348.00
Autism Initiatives	£9,554.00
Badenoch & Strathspey Community ConnXions	£8,000.00
Badenoch and Strathspey Therapy Gardens	£9,950.00
Badenoch Shinty Memories Group	£17,500.00
Barnardo's	£4,950.00
Befrienders Highland (Caithness)	£17,103.00
Befrienders Highland (Peer groups)	£10,000.00
Blooming Gardeners CIC	£8,000.00
Caberfeidh Horizons Ltd	£8,400.00
Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid	£6,000.00
Caithness Sight Impairment Group	£2,812.00
Caithness Voluntary Group - Befriending Caithness	£10,000.00
Calman Trust	£19,780.00
Care and Learning Alliance (Aviemore)	£5,347.75
Care and Learning Alliance (Nairn)	£5,347.75
Care Lochaber	£8,793.00
Cawdor Bowling Club	£5,290.00
Connect Assynt Ltd	£10,000.00
Create Inspire Projects CIC	£8,998.00
Cromarty Firth Men's Shed	£5,500.00
CrossReach Community Connections (SCIO)	£10,000.00
Cruse Scotland Bereavement Support	£9,000.00
Ewen's Room	£10,000.00
Families Outside	£9,848.00
Farr Edge 2000	£3,270.00
Farr North Community Development Fund	£9,500.00
Fearn Free Food Garden (FFFG)	£9,040.00
Fèis Rois	£9,059.00
Gairloch and District Heritage Company Ltd.	£10,963.00
Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action Forum (GALE)	£9,000.00
Glenurquhart Rural Community Association	£8,000.00
Go Golspie Development Trust	£10,921.00
Grantown Initiative Spey Shed project	£6,120.00
Headway Highland SCIO (Highland-wide)	£10,000.00
Held In Our Hearts (Highland-wide)	£12,896.00
Highlife Highland (Brora Learning Centre)	£6,480.00
Highlife Highland (Caol Crochet)	£2,600.00
Highlife Highland (Refugees Active for Wellbeing)	£8,100.00
Highland Multicultural Friends	£11,000.00

Highland Yoga Collective (LGBTQ+)	£3,300.00
Highland Yoga Collective (Wellbeing events)	£2,480.00
Home-Start Caithness	£9,320.00
Inspiring Young Voices	£3,151.00
Inverness Foodstuff	£15,000.00
Inverness Women's Aid	£7,880.00
Invershin Hall Committee	£1,500.00
IRL Education CIC	£10,000.00
James Support Group	£26,497.00
King's Fellowship SCIO	£3,784.00
LGBT Youth Scotland	£7,000.00
MECOPP (Gypsy Travellers Community Health Team)	£25,000.00
Merkinch Partnership	£9,800.00
Mikeysline	£10,000.00
Morning Call	£10,000.00
Nairn Citizens Advice Bureau	£9,950.00
Nairn River Enterprise (Operating as Green Hive)	£5,096.00
Partnerships for Wellbeing (accessible vehicle)	£7,000.00
Partnerships for Wellbeing (First Aid training)	£4,900.00
Rag Tag and Textile Ltd	£7,199.00
Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highland	£10,000.00
Reach4Reality	£10,081.26
Scottish Huntingdon's Association	£9,896.00
Scourie Community Development Company	£10,000.00
Skye & Lochalsh Mental Health Association	£22,812.35
Sleat Community Trust (SCT)	£6,000.00
SNAP (Special Needs Action Project)	£8,000.00
The Cooking Club	£3,480.00
Urram SCIO	£9,000.00
Velocity Cafe and Bicycle Workshop	£7,653.00
Viewfield Garden Collective	£16,757.15
Voluntary Groups Sutherland	£10,674.00