



**Highland
Communities
Mental Health
&
Wellbeing
Fund**

Report 1:

**Closing the funding application
rounds March 2022**



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Introduction

On the 15th of October 2021 Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care, announced a new Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. The Fund is part of the overall Scottish Government's Recovery and Renewal fund and the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan.

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A fund of £15million for the 2021/22 financial year, with the intention that a further fund would be available for 2022/23, was made available across Scotland and administered through the Third Sector Interface Network in partnership with the relevant Health and Social Care Partnerships.

In Highland, we initially had just over £700k to support local, grassroots community activity that meets the overarching national ambitions for the funds and the local priority areas. This year's funding was for projects starting before March 2022 and is specifically for the Third Sector, Charities and Community Groups. The fund being significantly over subscribed, Scottish Government then provided an additional £279k to allow further investment.

The Scottish Government explained that;

Building on the focus on wellbeing and prevention in the Transition and Recovery Plan, the Fund will provide significant investment into community support for adults. This investment complements the children and young people's community wellbeing supports currently being rolled out across Scotland. It also has strong links to the Scottish Government's commitment to ensure that every GP Practice will have access to a primary care mental health and wellbeing service by 2026, providing funding for 1,000 additional dedicated staff who can help grow community mental health resilience and direct social prescribing.

Summary Of Local Approach And Priorities

In Highland the local fund priorities and assessment was undertaken in partnership with the Health and Social Care and Community Planning Partnerships. Additionally, members from groups or individuals with lived experience were also key to the approach and participated in the planning phases and assessment of the applications.

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Although we would have preferred to have held localised assessment panels, we agreed that a pragmatic approach including local input and intelligence from the wider network of TSI supporting partners would support a Highland centralised process, while allowing a more streamlined and faster response.

Applications were opened in November and closed in early January with three rolling panels sitting in late November, December and January. A rolling programme was specifically intended to allow groups with the chance to respond to panel feedback before resubmitting, if necessary, – supporting the development of ideas and concepts and allowing learning and capacity building support to be provided through the local TSI officers where appropriate.

Applicants were asked to complete an application form, including indicating how they had engaged with, and taken direction or feedback from, the people intended to benefit from the service in the design and identification of need. They were also asked to consider the overall purpose of the fund, its priorities and to describe the outcomes that would result in the proposed activity.

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

Several webinars at the start of the process were held to allow groups to engage with the key messages and parameters for the funding and a new section on the HTSI website supported access to the application, guidance, local plan, and other key documents.

Demand For The Fund

Total amount of money across all requests:

The total amount requested across all the application rounds totalled **£1,674,461.10**, exceeding the available funds by £970,911.62, Highland having been allocated £703,549.48. Demand through the third and final panel was particularly high, and the quality of the applications meant the panel went back to the Scottish Government to request additional funding to meet the gap between available funds and the highest quality of applications. A further £279k was provided in early March and this brought the total available to invest to **£983,521.48** against a total request of £1,674,461.10.

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Areas of demand that fell outside the remit of the fund:

There were relatively few applications that fell outside the scope of the funding remit, most applications were prioritised on general strength, but there were a few key points and exceptions:

- Larger scale capital projects were not specifically within the remit of this funding, smaller items and items for projects that supported delivery of a wider purpose were considered. A number of applications were made requesting support for large scale capital projects, such as building projects or refurbishments. While these would eventually release benefits that may be relevant to the fund, they weren't appropriate at this stage for this funding and at times struggled to properly articulate the specific benefit that projects would be directly responsible for delivering against the fund priorities.
- There were a few applications that did not provide sufficient assurance that activities would not generate profit, or would eventually lead to the generation of profit (i.e. research for products to sell) – that is to say that they were not being delivered on a not for profit basis as per the Government's guidance. Where they occurred in the earlier rounds, clarity was sought but where the assurance failed to be provided, or they came to the final panel without contact for prior conversation, they were withdrawn from consideration with the panel's consent. It may be useful to consider specifying explicitly in future rounds the governing structures that will be considered for funding as the guidance did allow for some ambiguity, though not around the profitable nature of the work.
- Age beneficiary groups were at times difficult. Some groups that work with young people applied but were unable to provide assurance that activities would be solely for those over 16 or that the activities would be community wide and include people of all ages. As the fund was intended for over 16s only this presented some problems that we were able to work through with many of the groups but not all.
- A number of partnership activities within Highland are 'hosted' by HTSI and these activities were not eligible for funding. Although this is to ensure that there is separation between the administrators of the fund and the beneficiaries of the fund it does leave some partnership approaches at a disadvantage. Alternative means of providing independent assurance have been used in similar circumstances and could be explored to enable TSI related partnership activity to benefit from investment in the future, this is perhaps more relevant in rural areas than elsewhere in Scotland.
- At times requests from communities verged on the desire to put in place services that were seen as replacing or filling gaps, perceived and actual, in provision around clinical mental health needs, though these were very limited.

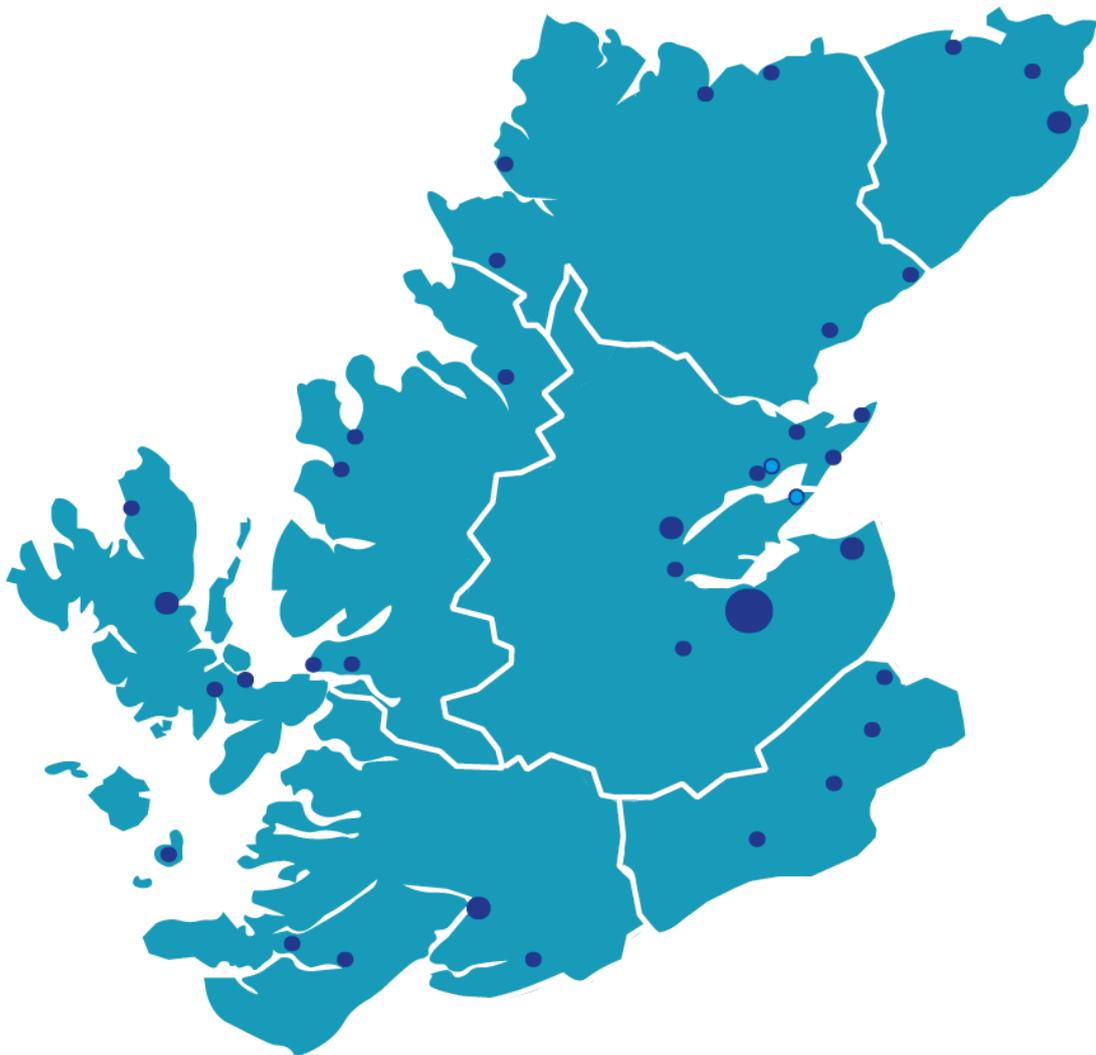
Key learning / messages

- 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 was sustained over a longer period of investment.
- As the fund had limitations on the scope of the funding ask, financial and timescale, 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 may 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.

Distribution Across Highland

Awards made across Highland

To date a total of **£982,863.08** has been made across Highland. The map below provides a breakdown of the areas where funding has gone. Page | 7



-  Projects funded
-  Projects covering multiple areas

Our areas of deprivation / highest need

Within Highland the Community Planning Partnership has identified the following areas as key areas of disadvantage and in need to direct support to address inequality of life outcomes:

Ardersier	Kinlochleven
Nairn	Conon Bridge
Lybster and Dunbeath	Muir of Ord
Castletown	Dingwall
Thurso	Kyle of Lochalsh
Wick	Portree and North East Skye
Alness	Brora
Invergordon	Golspie
Milton, Kildary and Balintore	Helmsdale and Kinbrace
Tain	Inverness Merkinch
Fort William	Inverness Hilton
Caol	Inverness Raigmore

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 needs, condition, or shared experience. A total of £124,540.38 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 cancer, Huntington's, autism, sight or hearing loss and diagnosed mental ill health
- Refugees and ethnic minorities
- Carers
- Young Carers
- People surviving suicide by a loved one
- Parents of young children

Investment across areas

A number of activities are being delivered on a thematic basis but only within specific communities. In this instance a project will have been supported to deliver activities in two or more communities that span across different Community Partnership areas. A total of £74,572.50 has been invested in activities that include:

- Intergenerational Activity
- Managing the impacts from hearing and sight loss
- Mental health support, peer support groups

Investment and activity by Community Partnership areas

A total of £794,703.02 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 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, in significant part due to the timescale but also because the different areas have different needs, varying areas specific funding streams (i.e the Caithness Pathfinder, *Caithness Cares*), and are at different points in their community development around understanding and responding to mental health and wellbeing issues.

The purpose of including this breakdown is to help inform planning for any future funding distribution, which has already been considered and would arguably be strengthened by a more localised approach. Additionally, some narrative around questions which have arisen in connection to community development and readiness have been included further below and relate to what emerged through the absence of applications from some areas and the themes of proposed activity; again, intended only to inform possible areas of future investment.

Caithness

Caithness Community Partnership area has four identified communities of highest need and received £111,457 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Befriending
- Specific support for Men
- A cycling project for older people
- A joint activity to train people with lived experience across Wick and Inverness as part of the establishment of a Recovery College

Sutherland

Sutherland Community Partnership area has three identified communities of highest need and received £76,946.14 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Community based classes, creative spaces and workshops
- Developing access to community-based Mental Health 1-1 support for those in rurally distanced Northwest
- Befriending Services
- Support for people living with dementia
- Physical activity for people with long term conditions
- Accessible transport support and covid protection

Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross

Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross Community Partnership area has two identified communities of highest need and received £155,973 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Community based grief support
- Therapeutic garden projects
- Accessible transport support and covid protection
- Befriending Services
- Weekend Drop in Service for people with mental health needs
- Re-engagement for vulnerable adults services
- Programme of community outdoor activities

Lochaber

Lochaber Community Partnership area has three identified communities of highest need and received £116,084.78 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Befriending Services
- Lunch Club
- Accessible transport
- Young Adults activities
- Wellbeing summit for the four Small Isles

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 £56,909.78 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Befriending Services
- Community hub services
- Activities for people with a disability
- Support group for those bereaved by suicide
- Buddy support for individual impacted by anxiety

Inverness and Inverness-Shire

Inverness Community Partnership area has four identified communities of highest need and received £166,158.92 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following, but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Befriending services
- Community gardening
- Mental health and suicide prevention hub
- Drop in for homeless community
- Bereavement support
- Developing digital skills and employability development
- Development of peer support
- Support group for those bereaved by suicide
- Transitioning skills for young adults with ASN
- Life skills for people with ASN
- A joint activity to train people with lived experience across Wick and Inverness as part of the establishment of a Recovery College

Mid Ross

Mid Ross Community Partnership area has three identified communities of highest need and received £55,520 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Befriending Services
- Development of Men's Shed based activities

East Ross

East Ross Community Partnership area has four identified communities of highest need and received £35,901 in total from the fund. The range of activities funded included the following but a more detailed list is at the back of the report:

- Befriending Services
- Support groups for drug and alcohol misuse
- Young Parents support

Nairn

Nairn Community Partnership area has one identified communities of highest need and received £8,800 in total from the fund. The activities funded included the following:

- Befriending Services
- LGBTQ+ yoga-based wellbeing activities

Key learning / messages

The distribution across Highland has been very varied and includes some very remote and rural areas, however, there are areas that have lower levels of investment that are perhaps justified by their demographics or deprivation. The distribution could be improved by using localised panels in any future rounds or by ring fencing the investment at the Community Partnership level for a centralised panel. If that was undertaken, there would still be a need to facilitate the movement of funds depending on demand if they were under utilised towards the end of the process.

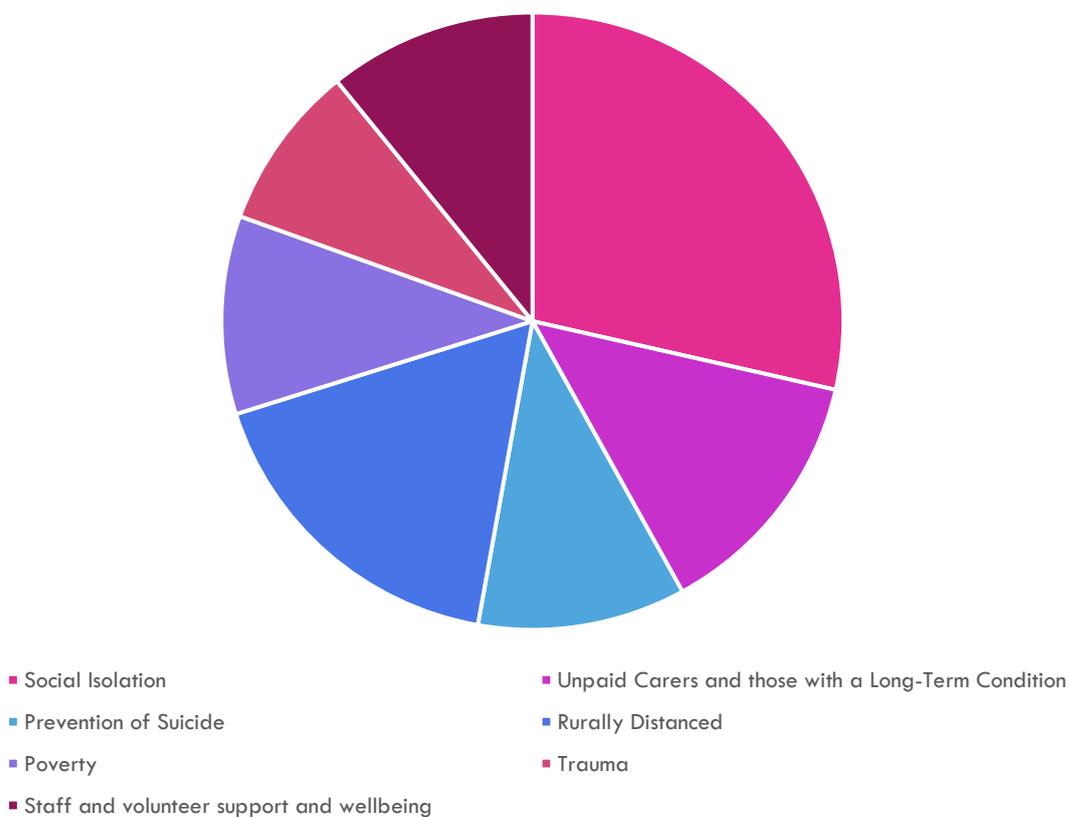
Activities tended to focus on general wellbeing, though some focused activities in and around suicide prevention are not surprising given the prevalence within the region of suicide and suicidal ideation. What is interesting is the minimal areas of activity around thematic work connected to trauma.

Distribution Across Thematic Areas Of Need And Priorities

Delivery across the identified areas of priority

Each of the funded activities were asked to identify the priority areas for action, agreed through the panel at the local level, see page 4. The reduction of social isolation was the most common and support for trauma the least. Proposals that would address issues related to being rurally distanced were the second largest, which given the geography and infrastructure of Highland is understandable. The lack of connection to reliable and affordable transport hinders access to and the self-management of one's own health and wellbeing by limiting access to services, activities, socialising and employment, all of which can contribute to good mental health and wellbeing.

How the activities are divided across the local priority areas



Key communities and beneficiary groups

There is representation across all of the intended beneficiary groups, however, the majority of projects are focused on people who have diagnosed mental ill health, older people, people who have an elevated risk of developing mental ill health and people who are rurally distanced from services. There was only one project specifically being delivered for LGBTQ+ and a small number for people from BAME or Refugee communities.

Given the severity of the issues connected to suicide and suicidal ideation in the areas it is unsurprising that a significant number of project proposals were also connected to this, either explicitly or implicitly. Although Highland has seen a developing concern about female suicide in recent years, we have had a long term challenge around male suicide and specifically young male suicide. For this reason it was seen to be a

positive aspect of the projects proposed that several was specifically directed at men and supporting spaces that meet their specific needs.

Key lessons / messages

Any opportunity for further development of projects for LGBTQ+, BAME and vulnerable women would be appropriate given that these areas were perhaps underrepresented in this funding opportunity.

What Worked Well, The Challenges and Key Lessons

What Worked Well

In the first instance, when developing the priority areas for Highland, we were able to pull from a lot of pre-existing partnership work around key relevant areas of strategy. This work, allowed for confident and quick responses to the planning process. The strength of existing partnerships was very evident in that work.

We identified very rapidly that HTSI would need additional staffing capacity to support the delivery of the funding programme. With no internal redeployment possible and the time pressures contained within the roll out programme we approached our public sector partners for options around a secondment and Police Scotland were able to support that request. This has worked very well and in addition to providing the immediate staffing support, it has also provided the member of staff with a greater understanding of the Third Sector in Highland that can then be taken back to the Divisional Command Unit here in Highlands and Islands. HTSI will recognise that support, and others, from Police Scotland by presenting them with the Partner of the Year award for 2021 in March this year.

The ability to have a dialogue with applicants, by allowing them to respond to feedback from the panels in November and December, including the referral to a TSI funded officer for support, has been particularly 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 big impact going forward.

“Having the opportunity to work close with groups in the planning and writing of the funding applications has been a great way of connecting to groups who do not normally use our TSI services. Some applicants had not been involved in writing funding applications before and we were able to provide one to one training in a manner most relevant to the group. Having the ability to help in much more detail has been very enjoyable for the team and the groups who do not have paid workers have certainly benefitted from the process.” - Regional TSI Officer

The Challenges

There is no doubt that the demand on the fund is a significant challenge, and the additional support from the Government has ensured that an addition 22+ groups received funding.

Without a doubt the timeframe for the development and roll out of the funding cycle was compromising in terms of approach and the potential to improve grassroots involvement, participative approach to design and decision making. A longer-term approach would have allowed better ongoing analysis of investment and the ability to work with communities and groups to develop more ideas and concepts to better address existing gaps.

The balance between an interactive process, where we could encourage dialogue and support between the applicants, the TSI officers and the panel, and fixed panel dates did result in some challenges. While the interaction from November forward was positive, the cumulative interest increased demand for the fund over the three panels and although all panel's allocated a cumulative spend over each, the percentage of approvals at each panel fell as demand at each grew. We did discuss the potential to ring fence investment for each panel, which as it transpired wouldn't have likely changed the total spent at each significantly, but at the start of the process there were concerns that the timeframes and other parameters would limit interest in the fund and that we didn't want to create additional barrier to accessing the fund.

The use of language around outcomes rather than outputs still proved to be challenging for most groups, often support had to be given to assist with the articulation of outcomes that could be anticipated because of the proposed activity. This is an ongoing training need for the wider sector and particularly for smaller

groups who may be less exposed to the theories and language around this approach to managing the benefits of project delivery.

Taking a central Highland approach was easier in terms of administration, and subsequently quicker, but at times the panel did struggle to have as robust a local context for decision making as a panel formed at the Community Partnership level would have done.

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 generally acknowledged however, that an approach which could be more localised and over a longer time frame 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. The support from Police Scotland in particular demonstrated the value of working across Sectors effectively and sharing a focus on joint aspirations that can inspire collective working to tackle barriers and challenged.

Potential areas for improvement in the future

- Although this is not wholly within the remit of the panel or HTSI, a longer time frame to allow localised approaches and more constructive dialogue with and between community groups would be a significant advantage.
- Localised panel approaches would support better use of localised knowledge and lived experience, and this should be explored. Balancing this with thematic communities and their needs across the region needs to be considered and some agreed division of budget would also be required to support this and the division across the geographic areas too.
- Although there was support from across the CPP related groups a closer governance role for the Health and Social Care Partnership would be welcomed, this might facilitate a more active role within the process – possibly through the local Community Partnerships.
- Much more work should be done with the sector throughout the area to help support an understanding of how to identify the outcomes and methods for evaluating impacts, this was the more significant issue that we came across consistently in relation to quality of application and is consistent with feedback from other funders.

Where the funding have been invested

Able2adventure CIC	15,000
Badenoch and Strathspey Therapy Gardens	8,675
Cairngorm Confidence Outdoors CIC	15,994
Cromdale Hall Management Committee	4,891
Highlife Highland	12,350
Befrienders Highland	14,008
Caithness Voluntary Group	12,060
Caithness Voluntary Group - Mens support worker	15,418
Caithness Voluntary Group- pilot online support	15,418
Caithness Voluntary Groups - Befriending	3,902
Cycling Without Age Scotland	1,500
Farr North Community Development Trust	8,631
Lyths Art Centre	10,250
Pulteneytown Peoples Project	13,670
Thurso Community Cafe	9,600
Thurso Community Development Trust	7,000
Apex Scotland	16,945
Balintore & District Residents Group	7,080
Evanton Wood Community Company	9,640
Home Start East Highland	9,966
Kilmuir & Logie Easter Action & Development Group	8,110
Kilmuir Development Trust	9,300
Tarbat Community Hall Group	5,432
Aban Outdoors Lts	5,000
Apex Scotland	28,000
Clarity Walk	11,500
Glen Urquhart Wellbeing Project	9,840
High Life Highland	9,368
Inverness Food Stuff	12,265
Merkinch Community Centre Association	7,400
Merkinch Partnership Ltd	10,000
Mikeys Line	10,000
Mikeysline	14,790
Newstart Highland	13,322
Partnerships for Wellbeing	10,000

Partnerships for Wellbeing - additional staff hours	3,771
SNAP (Special Needs Action Project)	10,000
Velocity Cafe and Bicycle Workshop	10,903
Birchwood Highland Ltd	12,500
Calman Trust	19,780
Care and Learning Alliance	11,290
Hearing and Sight Care	11,095
James Support	9,908
Ross Sutherland Rugby Club	10,000
Care Lochaber	9,615
Coal Regeneration Company Ltd	10,000
Darach Social Croft Ltd	10,200
Ewens Room	9,960
Kinlochleven Community Trust	11,483
Lochaber Hope	15,000
Lochaber Mindfit	11,000
Shop mobility Lochaber	10,459
Small Isles Community Council	6,100
Tuesday Social Club	3,889
Urram SCIO	9,129
Voluntary Action Lochaber	9,250
Befrienders Highland Ltd	15,901
Dingwall Mens Shed	10,000
Muir of Ord Development Trust - Mens Shed	10,000
Highland Yoga Collective	2,300
Nature 4 Health - Nairn	6,500
Aultbea Community Hub	9,350
Broadford and Strath Community Company	13,300
Creativity in Care	10,808
Gairloch & Loch Ewe Action Forum	10,000
Gairloch and District Heritage Company	19,700
Gairloch community car scheme	5,686
Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust	10,498
Rag Tag and Textile Ltd	5,206
Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations	10,520
Skye & Lochalsh Mental Health Association	14,000
Skye Circus Skills Association	6,692
The Garve and Dostrict Development Company	9,978

The Selkie Collective Ltd	10,316
Ullapool Sea Savers	9,919
Viewfiled Garden Collective	10,000
Connect Assynt	11,833
Dementia Friendly	9,570
Engaging With Activity CIC	9,937
Go Golspie	10,000
North Coast Connection	7,943
Scourie Community Development Company	7,150
Strathnaver Museum	10,000
Voluntary Group Sutherland	10,513
Autism Initiatives	7,368
Bipolar Scotland	5,360
Cruse Scotland	8,000
Headway Highlands	10,245
Highland Community Care Forum	26,000
Highlife Highland - Refugee Wellbeing	15,255
Maggie Keswick Jencks Cancer Caring Centres Trust	10,000
Scottish Huntington's Association	9,516
SPIRIT ADVOCACY	5,800
SPIRIT ADVOCACY	12,294
The Cooking Club	3,750