



HIGHLAND
THIRD
SECTOR
INTERFACE

Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults Year Four

Closing Report
April 2025



Scottish Government
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Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership



HIGHLAND
THIRD
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INTERFACE

The Highland Third Sector Interface is a Scottish Registered Charity, SC043521
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Introduction

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults was established in October 2021. Since then, £66 million to distribute more than 4,800 awards has been spent across Scotland, to tackle social isolation, loneliness and mental health inequalities made worse by the ongoing pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

In April 2024, funding for a fourth year was announced, with over £700,000 allocated to Highland third sector organisations to promote good mental health and wellbeing, and to mitigate the impact of distress and mental health issues among adults. This report describes how and where this has been invested.

The grants provided in Highland have supported a wide range of activities for adults aged 16 and above, showcasing various approaches to enhance community wellbeing, build capacity and resilience within the sector and prevent individuals from reaching crisis point. Since 2021, 284 separate grants have been awarded to 260 organisations, with a total investment exceeding £3,088,000.

“Since the fund was established, we have invested £66 million, reaching a variety of groups supporting those at increased risk of poor mental health and wellbeing – including people facing socio-economic disadvantage, older people and ethnic minority communities. I look forward to seeing the positive impact that this further £30 million investment will make to the wellbeing of people and communities across Scotland”, Mental Wellbeing Minister Maree Todd.



Approach Year 4

Small Grants for Grassroots Activity

- Grants of up to £10,000 maximum

Large grants for Development & Collaboration

- Grants of up to £50,000 maximum

In Highland, the local fund priorities and assessment were undertaken in collaboration with the Community Planning Partnership. The funding panel included representatives from across NHS Highland, Highland Community Planning Partnership's Mental Health Delivery Group, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and members of relevant Third Sector organisations, who all gave considerable time to determine the best value represented by the proposals received.

We introduced three separate funding programmes to improve the allocation of funding, in view of the panel's reflections on previous years. Two of these were open for application and the third was targeted at specific communities identified by TSI delivery partners.

- Small Grants opened 30 July - two panels assessed applications October & November
- Large Grants EOI opened 9 September, in-person panel 20 January 2025
- Intensive capacity building - identifying communities began in August and in-person presentation took place in March 2025

The large grants were aimed at applicants in an advanced stage of readiness, with either a community action plan devised from engagement and needs analysis, or a collaborative partnership aimed at improving service delivery and outcomes.

In-person presentations were a feature of both the large grants and the intensive capacity-building process. Although resource-intensive, panel members felt they gained an improved understanding of the projects being proposed - compared to written applications - along with the opportunity to ask relevant questions.



Intensive Capacity Building Grants £20,000

CASTLETOWN

- to recruit engagement workers and establish mental health support

TAIN

- to deliver monthly outings for people who are socially isolated

FORT WILLIAM

- to build capacity and establish a community hall for Upper Achintore and Plantation

Support for applicants

We provided numerous resources to support applicants with their proposals, including multiple online briefings and discussion groups, guidance documents and FAQs. The application portal was available via the HTSI website, where they could also download case studies, Closing Reports from Years 1-3 and a sample application form.

TSI Partners

- [Caithness Voluntary Group \(CVG\)](#).
- [Voluntary Groups Sutherland \(VGS\)](#).
- [Skye Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations \(SLCVO\)](#).
- [Voluntary Action Lochaber \(VAL\)](#).
- [Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey \(VABS\)](#).

Our TSI Partners promoted the fund within their localities, provided a local perspective for our funding panel's decision-making, as well as coordinating a Town Team approach for the intensive capacity-building, where applicable. This included our own Inner Moray Firth team.



Demand for the fund

£2,264,251

Amount requested

123

Applications

£714,076

Funds granted

47

Grants awarded

Small Grants

£282,341

Large Grants

£368,841

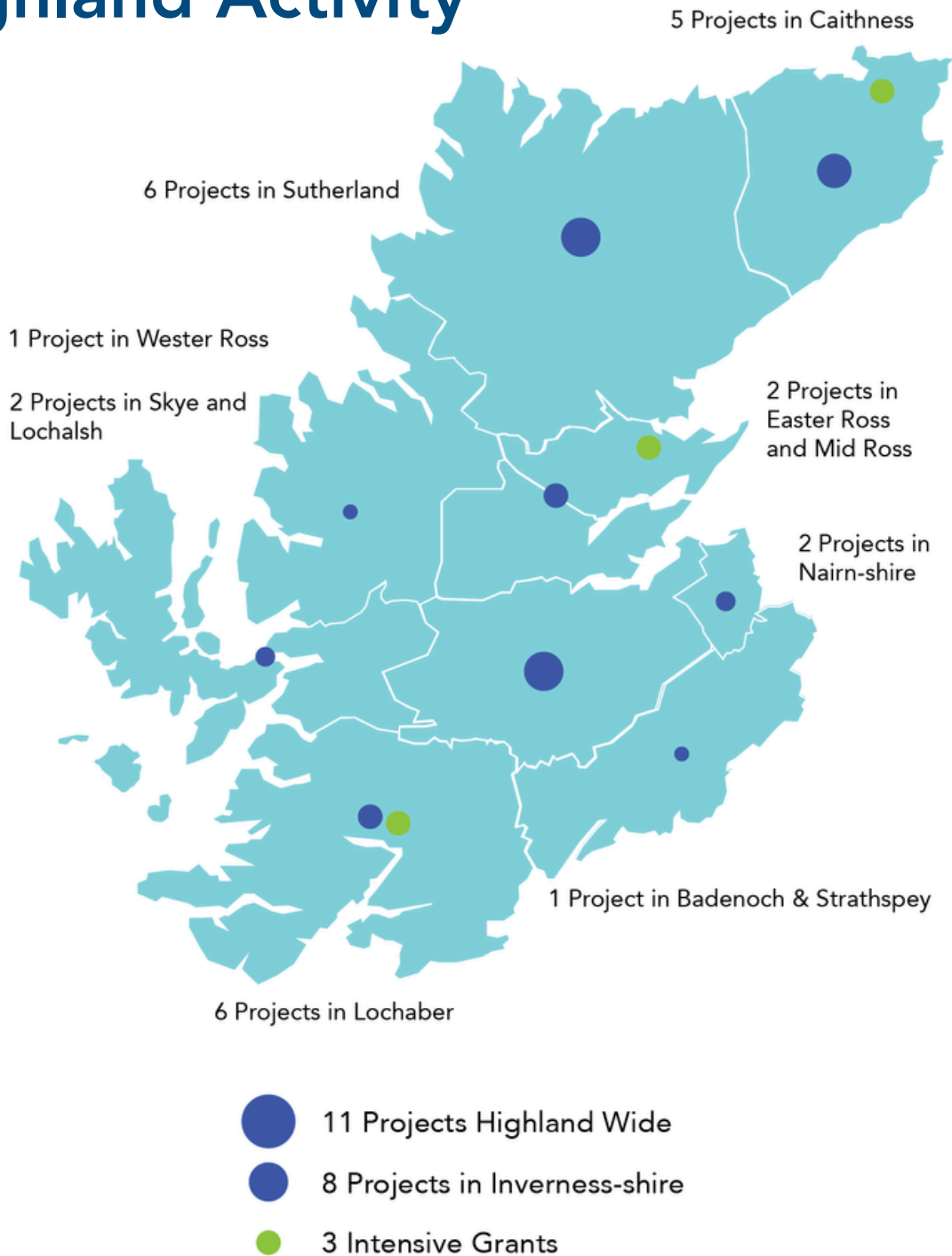
Capacity Grants

£62,892

As with previous years, the identified need and capability of the sector far exceed the level of investment available. Third sector activity around mental health support is growing, but targeted investment along with more cohesion and collaboration between community-led services could lead to better value in the long-term.



Highland Activity



£168,556 was invested in Highland-wide projects. While the cost of living and working continues to rise, many Highland third sector organisations have embraced the opportunity to influence change in this ever-challenging environment.

Restricted Activity

24% of applications are restricting activities for specific groups in need of support.

Targeted Activity

62% of all applicants are targeting activities to specific groups, with activities open to all.

General Activity

13% of applications are delivering activities for the general population in a specific locality.

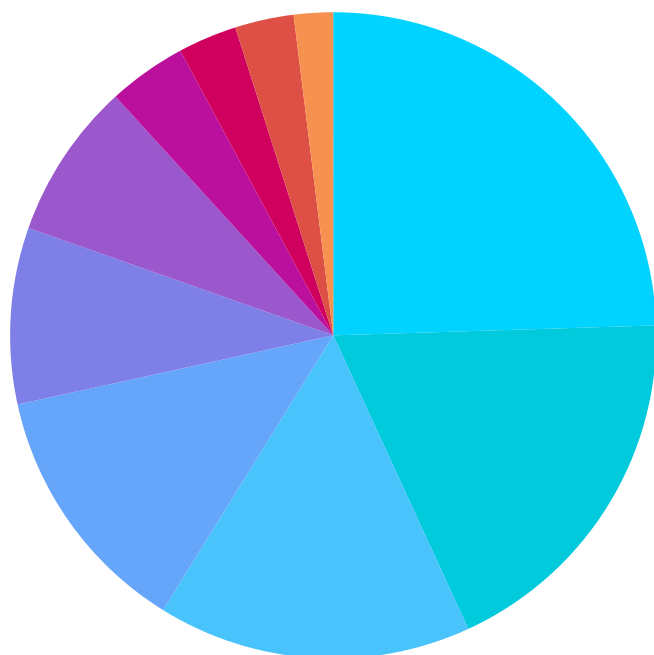
Funding impact

National Priorities	Awards
Social isolation/loneliness	46
Poverty & inequality	26
Suicide prevention	23

Local Priorities	Awards
Rurally distanced	34
Trauma	19
Unpaid carers & LTCs	19

Support targeted as follows:

- People disadvantaged by geography
- People with LTCs/Disability
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- People with diagnosed mental illness
- Older people (aged 50 and above)
- Affected by psychological trauma
- Severe and multiple disadvantage
- People experiencing bereavement o...
- Neurological conditions/learning dis...
- Refugees/no recourse to public funds



Applicants targeted a wide range of 'at risk' groups but a higher portion of applicants planned to focus on people experiencing geographic and/or socio-economic disadvantage, people living with long-term health conditions and older people (50+).

Badenoch & Strathspey	£6,802	Inverness-shire	£137,784	Skye & Lochalsh	£51,066
Caithness	£63,851	Lochaber	£115,619	Sutherland	£50,525
East/Mid Ross	£80,401	Nairnshire	£29,470	Wester Ross	£10,000

What worked well

The process was extended over nine months, enabling applicants time to prepare for a later deadline, or a collaborative/development bid. This also allowed time to prepare fair decision-making for new funding parameters.

This required funding panel members to attend more panels, but fewer applications to be assessed at each panel meeting.

The information briefings were very well attended and the group session for large grants was particularly welcomed, with attendees reporting they were inspired to consider new collaborative ideas. Feedback shows these sessions were appreciated.

The large grant criteria generated new collaborative approaches and the intensive capacity grants have helped to establish new groups working together to find local solutions for mental health and wellbeing.



Challenges

One challenge was the prolonged duration of the process, limiting time for responding to funding enquiries and collating reports. However, with grants paid across several months, future reporting deadlines will be more evenly spaced as a result.

An increased portion of large grants means that fewer organisations were awarded funding, but the investment remains the same.



Key Lessons

-  The existing partnerships in Highland are working to support rapid action and identifying gaps in local provision.
-  Targeting localities not previously benefiting from investment with intensive capacity building should be repeated.
-  The vast majority of applications for large grants were for collaborative projects rather than community development.

Grants paid 2024/25

<u>SMALL GRANTS</u>	
Acharacle Community Company	£9,875
ACI Recovery Services	£9,932
Ardgour, Morvern and Strontian Parish Church	£6,100
Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid	£10,000
Caithness Voluntary Group	£10,000
Connect Assynt Ltd	£10,000
Creativity In Care CIC	£9,787
Cruse Scotland Bereavement Support	£4,300
Cycling Without Age Scotland (Thurso)	£3,100
Dornoch Firth Group SCIO	£10,000
Eden Court Highlands	£8,710
Enable Scotland	£9,991
Ewen's Room	£10,000
Finding Your Feet	£7,694
Friends of Merkinch Local Nature Reserve	£9,800
Gairloch Museum	£10,000
Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association	£5,000
Held In Our Hearts	£10,000
High Life Highland	£9,900
Highland Yoga Collective CIC	£3,470
Home-Start Caithness	£10,000
Kilmallie Community Fridge and Garden	£9,364
King's Fellowship SCIO	£4,920
Kyle of Sutherland Hub	£8,992
Lochview Rural Training Centre	£7,714
Nature 4 Health	£10,000
North Coast Connection	£3,824



Grants paid 2024/25 (continued)

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust	£9,995
Partnerships for Wellbeing	£9,912
Rag Tag and Textile Ltd	£8,670
Reach4Reality	£5,590
Roots and Shoots Highland CIC	£6,802
Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival Highland	£8,900
SPIRIT Advocacy	£10,000
<u>LARGE GRANTS (Lead Applicants)</u>	
Care and Learning Alliance (CALA)	£26,000
Centred (Scotland)	£49,848
Families Outside	£10,000
Kinlochleven Community Trust	£49,316
Mikeysline	£18,016
Scottish Action for Mental Health	£35,499
Skye/Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations	£42,396
Social Enterprise Academy	£47,700
SPIRIT Advocacy	£49,505
WASPS OpenArts	£40,561
<u>CAPACITY BUILDING</u>	
Castletown, Caithness	£20,964
Tain, Easter Ross	£20,964
Upper Fort William, Lochaber	£20,964



Acknowledgements

Caithness Voluntary Groups
Highland & Islands Enterprise
Highland Community Planning Partnership
Highland Mental Health Delivery Group
Highlands Senior Citizens Network
Highland Whole Family Wellbeing Programme
Police Scotland
Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Orgs.
The Scottish Government
Voluntary Action Badenoch & Strathspey
Voluntary Action Lochaber
Voluntary Groups Sutherland



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