

Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

Impact Report 2024/2025



Introduction



The **Scottish Borders Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund** was established to distribute Scottish Government investment to support community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises delivering **adult mental health and wellbeing activity across the Scottish Borders**.

Managed locally by **Borders Community Action (BCA)**, the fund focused on strengthening grassroots, community-led approaches that reduce isolation, improve wellbeing and support people experiencing disadvantage or poor mental health.

The 2024 funding round opened in **August and closed in September 2024**. During this period, BCA delivered a wide-ranging programme of support to help organisations access the fund, including a YouTube video, online guidance sessions, one-to-one support and eight in-person capacity building events held across the Borders.

A total of **98 people attended** these support sessions. We also facilitated and funded, from the capacity building element of the fund 2 evaluation training sessions from Evaluation Support Scotland.

24 applicants attended to ensure they knew what type of evaluation was needed, to enable them to gather the right information from the very start of their projects.

The fund prioritised projects tackling:

- **social isolation and loneliness**
- **suicide prevention**
- **poverty and inequality**

Small, Medium and Large grants were available ranging from **£250 up to £40,000**. Demand for the fund demonstrated both the scale of local need and the strength of community action across the region. **A total of £320,000 was made available** through the Scottish Government, attracting **91 applications requesting more than £1.3 million in funding**.

The fund is aimed at small, locally based organisations delivering preventative and early intervention activity within their own communities, as a result of BCA's local connections, knowledge and outreach we were successfully able to attract the majority of applications from this target group.

Strong governance was in put in place, where applications were initially assessed by BCA to ensure eligibility and accuracy. Next came independent assessment and scoring against a range of criteria including community impact, outcomes, partnership working, value for money and support for priority groups by a range of partner and community expertise.

Benchmarking for fairness featured to ensure all localities across the Borders were allocated awards and activity was available through the fund. The Wellbeing Programme board then reviewed and approved both the approach to assessment and the award recommendations that were presented to make final decisions on successful projects.

All were encouraged to align their work with the Ways to Be Well in the Scottish Borders framework and contribute to wider community wellbeing priorities.

This impact report highlights the reach and achievements of all **34 funded organisations** during the 12 month delivery period of **April 2025 – March 2026**.

Collectively, these projects demonstrate the important role of grassroots community activity in improving mental health and wellbeing, reducing isolation, building resilience and creating stronger, more connected communities across the Scottish Borders.

Following feedback from applicants, both successful and unsuccessful as well as our own observations and the Wellbeing Programme Board, we have taken lessons learned and implemented a number of improvements for the following round of the fund.

This includes **targeting and prioritising applicants in the areas of higher deprivation** and as a result higher need, **making more smaller grants available and removing the larger grants entirely**.

This approach shows our commitment to continuous improvement, aligning to local priorities and meeting the needs of our communities.

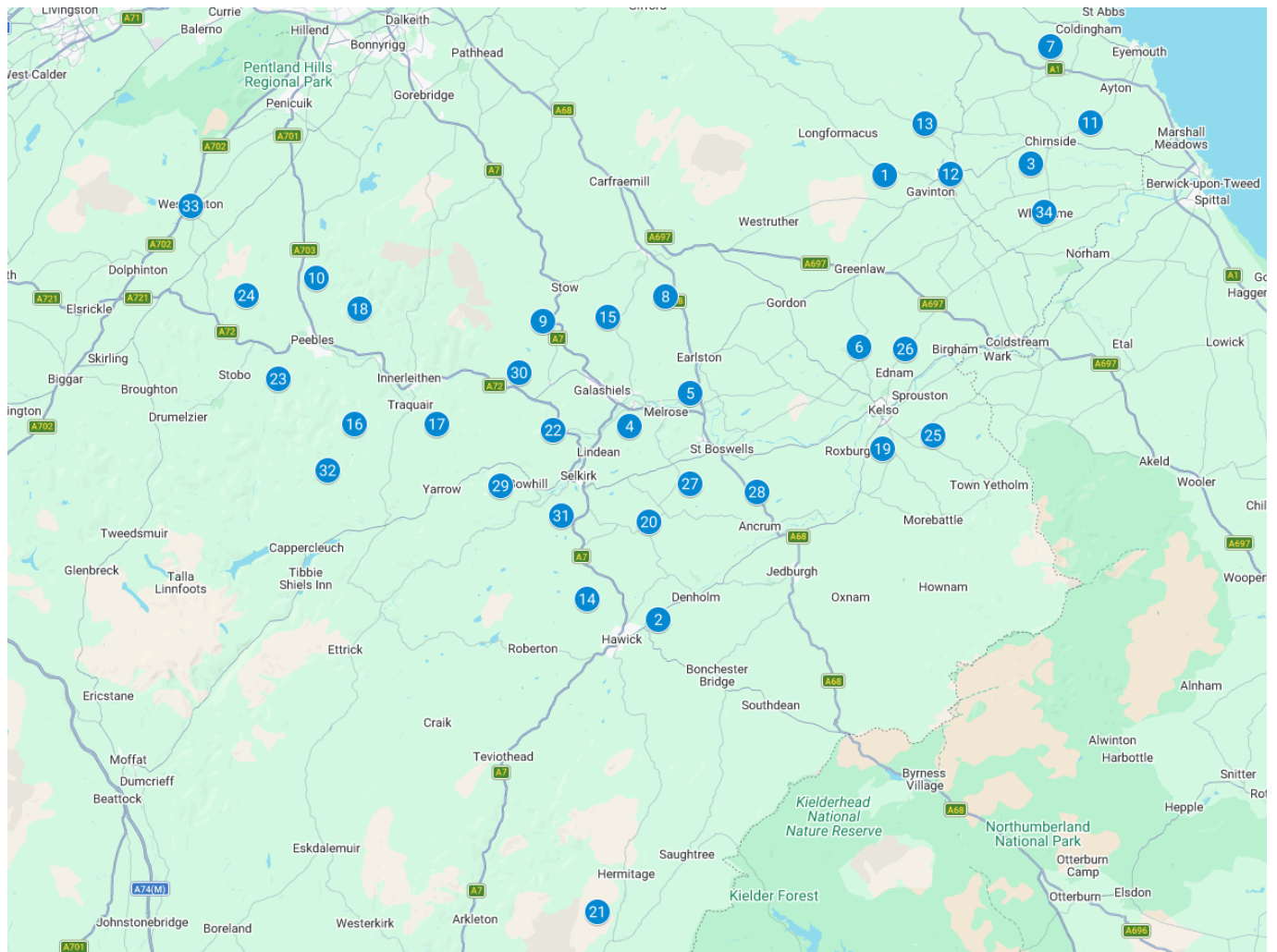
An enormous thank you to everyone involved in making this programme such a huge success.



Juliana Amaral
Chief Executive Officer



Map



1. A Heart for Duns
2. A Positive Start CIC
3. Allanbank Arts
4. Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG)
5. Borders Care Voice
6. Borders Community Sewing Club
7. Borders Pottery CIC
8. Brighter Blainslie
9. Central Borders Citizens Advice Bureau
10. Champion Skill Share Group
11. Coldingham Brave Bayers CIC
12. Duns Fair Share
13. Duns Senior Citizens Club
14. Escape Youth Services
15. Gala Fairydean Rovers Community Trust
16. Greener Peebles
17. ITW Parish Church
18. Inspiring Life : Evie Douglas Memorial Fund
19. Kelso Orchard Tennis Club
20. Nature Unlimited CIC
21. Newcastleton & District Community Trust
22. Nurture the Borders
23. Peebles Old Parish Church
24. Peeblesshire Foodbank
25. Peer 2 Peer Mindfulness
26. QME Care
27. St Boswells OAP Social Club
28. St Boswells Village Hall
29. The General Store Selkirk CIC
30. The Richmond Fellowship Scotland
31. Transform Arts CIC
32. Tweed Valley Trail Therapy
33. West Linton Enterprise Group
34. Whitsome Village Hall SCIO

Fund analysis

Impact and outcomes

The **£320,000 Scottish Borders Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund** has demonstrated the powerful impact of grassroots community action in improving wellbeing, reducing isolation and strengthening resilience across the Borders.

Funding supported a wide range of locally led projects reaching older people, carers, young people, people living with disabilities, individuals experiencing mental health challenges and those affected by poverty and rural isolation.

Across the programme, organisations consistently reported increased confidence, stronger social connections and improved mental wellbeing among participants.

Projects created safe and welcoming spaces where people felt included, valued and supported, often describing activities as a “lifeline” or the highlight of their week.

Many participants developed lasting friendships, continued involvement in community activity and increased confidence to volunteer, learn new skills or seek further support.

A key strength of the fund was its ability to

remove barriers to participation and empower local communities to respond creatively and compassionately to local need, **building stronger, more connected and resilient communities throughout the Scottish Borders.**

Outputs

Across the **34 funded organisations**, the following outputs were reported:

Volunteers	504
Staff	54
Activities planned	1684
Activities delivered	1801
Participants	3631

“This past year, wild swimming has been more than just a hobby – it’s been a lifeline. After losing a friend and getting the news that my dad has a terminal brain tumour, I found myself needing somewhere to just be. The cold water gave me that space. A place to cry, scream, laugh, float – whatever I needed that day. I choose the sea. I choose connection. To nature. To others. To myself.”

Coldingham Brave Bayers CIC, Wild Swimming for Wellbeing project participant

A Heart for Duns

Project overview

A Heart for Duns received **£2,165** to support **Silver Sunday**, a community event for older people in Duns celebrating Age UK's national Silver Sunday initiative. The event aimed to reduce loneliness, strengthen community connection and improve wellbeing by providing older adults with a free day of food, entertainment and social activity.

The event was organised by community volunteers and held at the Volunteer Hall, creating an accessible and welcoming environment for older residents, including people experiencing loneliness, disability and poor mental health.

Delivery & reach

The event provided a free meal, entertainment and opportunities for social interaction and community participation.

Many attendees returned from previous years, demonstrating sustained community engagement and the ongoing value of the event.

Key outputs

Volunteers	15
Staff	0
Activities planned	1
Activities delivered	1
Participants	125

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, strengthening community connection and improving wellbeing among older residents. Attendees consistently reported feeling more connected to their community and enjoying opportunities to socialise and meet new people.

Participants benefited from:

- improved mental health and wellbeing
- reduced loneliness and social isolation
- increased community connection
- opportunities to build new friendships
- increased confidence participating in community activity

New volunteers were identified and recruited, supporting sustainability and future delivery of Silver Sunday activities.

Evidence was gathered through conversations with attendees, volunteer feedback and supported evaluation forms completed during the event. Indicators of success included positive evaluation feedback, repeat attendance from previous years and strong levels of community participation.

Challenges & learning

There were no significant barriers affecting delivery of the event.

The project highlighted the importance of simple, welcoming community activities in reducing isolation and helping older people feel valued and connected within their local area.

Participant voice

"The meal was excellent and friendly atmosphere."

"Very much connects me to my community. Makes my mental health feel better."

"Excellent organisation, well attended and a real asset to the community."



A Positive Start CIC

Project overview

A Positive Start CIC received **£18,117** to deliver its **Community Support/Reconnect & Regulate** project, providing trauma-informed therapeutic support for adults experiencing trauma, emotional dysregulation, anxiety and poor mental health across the Scottish Borders. The project responded to increasing demand following reductions in local statutory and third-sector support services, including the withdrawal of LAC and Housing First provision in the area.

The organisation delivered a combination of one-to-one therapy, CBT support and group wellbeing sessions designed to improve emotional wellbeing, resilience and social connection. Services were inclusive and accessible to adults aged 24–74, including older adults, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals and people experiencing long-term mental health challenges.

Delivery & reach

- more than 1,200 hours of one-to-one therapy
- group CBT and individual CBT sessions
- emotional wellbeing workshops across the Borders

The project reached individuals referred through Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders, Borders College, GP practices, Job Centre services and self-referrals.

Key outputs

Volunteers	6
Staff	2
Activities planned	4
Activities delivered	4
Participants	160

Impact, outcomes & evidence

A Positive Start CIC demonstrated significant impact in supporting individuals experiencing trauma, emotional distress, isolation and poor mental health. Through a trauma-informed and person-centred approach, participants were supported to better understand their emotional responses, regulate anxiety and rebuild confidence and stability in their lives.

Participants reported:

- reduced anxiety and emotional overwhelm
- improved coping strategies and emotional regulation
- increased self-awareness and self-worth
- improved confidence and resilience
- reduced isolation

Several participants progressed into employment, education, volunteering and greater community participation after long periods of disengagement due to poor mental health and trauma.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to measure impact, including session tracking, attendance monitoring, participant evaluation forms and use of the Subjective Units of Distress (SUD) scale.

Indicators of success included:

- consistent reductions in SUD distress scores
- high levels of participant retention and engagement
- repeat referrals
- positive participant feedback
- progression into employment, education and volunteering

The organisation also reported strong attendance and engagement across group CBT sessions and workshops, demonstrating sustained community need and trust in the service.

Challenges & learning

Several operational challenges were encountered during the reporting period, including flood damage and roof repairs to its premises, which temporarily disrupted service delivery for approximately eight weeks. Despite this, the team maintained contact with participants and adapted delivery where possible to minimise disruption to support.

Rural transport barriers also affected attendance for some participants living in remote areas of the Borders, particularly for evening workshops.

Participant voice

"I am now moving forward in a way that was never possible before."

"Being encouraged to check our SUD levels routinely has helped bring awareness to my emotions."

"This course has been so valuable in assisting me to help others recognise and understand the behaviours and long-term effects of trauma."

"I believe now that I am not broken, I am worthy of living my life freely."

Allanbank Arts

Project overview

Allanbank Arts received **£9,523** to deliver **Our Place, Our Time**, a community arts project designed to reduce isolation and improve wellbeing through creative participation. The project provided a safe and supportive environment where participants could build confidence, develop social connections and strengthen their sense of belonging through shared creative activity.

The project particularly supported people at risk of social isolation, including older adults, people with disabilities, people experiencing mental health difficulties, LGBTQ+ individuals, victims of domestic abuse and people recovering from stroke.

Delivery & reach

A range of creative activities and art courses aimed at building community connection, confidence and wellbeing through regular participation in accessible arts provision.

The programme also incorporated intergenerational volunteering opportunities, with young volunteers working towards Saltire Awards while supporting project delivery and strengthening connections across age groups.

Key outputs

Volunteers	7
Staff	2
Activities planned	32
Activities delivered	80
Participants	64

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, improving confidence and increasing community participation among people experiencing poor mental health, disability and long-term health conditions.

Participants reported improvements in:

- self-esteem
- confidence
- speech
- relationships
- overall mental wellbeing

Creative participation enabled individuals to reconnect with their communities, develop new friendships and rediscover confidence in their own abilities. Several participants also progressed into wider community opportunities, while peer support and peer-led activity became an increasing feature of the project.

Case studies highlighted the project's impact on individuals recovering from stroke and those living

with long-term physical health conditions. One participant recovering from a stroke experienced increased confidence, improved communication and greater social connection through regular attendance at the group, with health professionals recognising the positive impact alongside rehabilitation support.

Another participant living with Multiple Sclerosis rediscovered a passion for art, developed confidence in her creative abilities, began sharing work publicly and started completing commissions for friends and family, contributing to improved self-esteem, purpose and community connection.

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring, qualitative feedback and case studies collected in partnership with local organisations.

Indicators of success included:

- reduced loneliness and isolation
- stronger social relationships and community belonging
- increased participation in community activities
- improved communication and speech
- participants progressing into peer leadership roles

Challenges & learning

The primary challenge identified by Allanbank Arts was the insecurity of ongoing funding and the sustainability of the project beyond the current funding period.

Participant voice

"I never thought I could manage to paint anything."

"If only the doctor could have given me a pill as good as coming here months ago."

"Wouldn't miss our Fridays for anything."



Borders Additional Needs Group

Project overview

BANG received **£17,754.80** to deliver the **Youth Wellbeing Sports Programme**, supporting neurodivergent and ASN young people through movement-based wellbeing activities and inclusive sports provision. The project used sport and physical activity as tools to improve mental health, emotional wellbeing, confidence and social connection for young people aged 11–24 across the Scottish Borders.

The programme supported young people with autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, sensory needs and mental health challenges, many of whom faced additional barriers linked to poverty, transport and rural isolation.

Delivery & reach

Inclusive movement sessions, summer camps, residential activities and wellbeing-focused sports provision through projects including Branching In, Branching Out and Branching Forwards.

The project also introduced:

- ways to Be Well wellbeing profiles
- co-produced sensory bags for Borders libraries
- travel confidence and goal-setting support
- young person-led activity design

The summer camp engaged around 50 new young people, many of whom were not accessing support elsewhere.

Key outputs

Volunteers	5
Staff	2
Activities planned	40
Activities delivered	90
Participants	190

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving confidence, reducing anxiety and increasing access to inclusive physical activity for neurodivergent and ASN young people. Young people reported feeling happier, more confident and more socially connected through participation in low-pressure, accessible movement activities.

Participants experienced improvements in:

- confidence in movement and physical activity
- emotional wellbeing
- social confidence and friendships
- resilience and independence

- understanding of personal wellbeing needs

The project strengthened emotional safety and inclusion through predictable and neuro-affirming approaches, helping young people engage in activities that had previously felt inaccessible. Families also reported positive changes in wellbeing, confidence and social inclusion.

Evidence was gathered through co-assessments using the Ways to Wellbeing Framework, wellbeing profiles, reflective journals, observation notes, creative feedback methods and partner feedback.

Indicators of success included:

- reduced anxiety
- stronger friendships and reduced isolation
- increased independence through travel training
- improved inclusion and accessibility

The project also received wider recognition through nomination at the ClubSport Eildon Annual Awards 2025 and recognition as a UNCRC Best Practice Case Study.

Challenges & learning

Several areas are still in development, including Borders-wide inclusive sports delivery, wider coaching opportunities for young people and completion of the Inclusive Sports Toolkit.

The project highlighted the importance of continued consultation with young people to shape future wellbeing and movement activities.

Participant voice

"It's reassuring to see my child ask questions without pressure."

"This is the first event we've all been able to enjoy together, usually one of my children misses out."



Borders Care Voice

Project overview

Borders Care Voice was awarded **£10,000** and delivered a **co-production and lived experience engagement** project focused on improving mental health services and strengthening the voice of people with lived experience of poor mental health across the Scottish Borders. The project supported the development and relaunch of Flourish, a redesigned engagement forum aimed at increasing participation, peer connection and meaningful involvement in service design.

The project primarily supported people living with long-term health conditions or disabilities, people diagnosed with mental illness and people experiencing severe and multiple disadvantages.

Delivery & reach

The project:

- recruited and supported 5 new Lived Experience Representatives
- redesigned and relaunched the Flourish engagement forum
- delivered Consultation Cafes focused on improving mental health services
- co-produced practical resources and service materials alongside people with lived experience

Co-produced work included:

- community mental health team letter templates
- psychology service leaflets
- the Trauma 5 Key Principles flyer
- BRAW foundations course materials
- a draft co-production checklist to support meaningful involvement in service design

Key outputs

Volunteers	8
Staff	1
Activities planned	21
Activities delivered	30
Participants	195



Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in increasing participation, empowerment and peer connection among people with lived experience of poor mental health. Through involvement in Flourish, participants developed confidence, facilitation skills and opportunities to influence service development and recovery-focused practice.

Participants reported:

- stronger natural connections with others

- increased confidence and empowerment
- greater involvement in community activity
- improved recovery and sense of purpose
- feeling more able to contribute to positive change

Consultation Cafes created opportunities for people with lived experience, professionals and service providers to work together on areas including Recovery College development and approaches to trauma-informed practice.

Evidence was gathered through membership and attendance monitoring, outreach engagement, participant feedback and use of IROC recovery and empowerment tools.

Indicators of success included:

- growth in Flourish membership from 19 to 45 members
- engagement with 45 people through outreach activity
- 94.5% of participants feeling comfortable in sessions
- 82% feeling able to participate
- 92% feeling listened to

Use of the IROC tool also demonstrated increased empowerment, including improved social connection, community participation and sense of purpose.

Challenges & learning

The organisation identified inconsistency of attendance as a challenge during the co-design process, reflecting the realities of supporting people in recovery and living with poor mental health.

The organisation also found that the time-intensive nature of the IROC tool limited its use to more engaged participants.

Participant voice

Participants reported feeling more connected, listened to and empowered through involvement in Flourish and co-production activity. Consultation Cafes also created valuable opportunities for peer support, networking and shared learning between people with lived experience, professionals and service providers.



Borders Community Sewing Club

Project overview

Borders Community Sewing Club received **£2,000** to support the delivery of **low-cost community sewing sessions** across four village locations in the Scottish Borders. Funding supported hall hire costs, helping ensure sessions could continue regardless of fluctuating attendance and remain financially accessible to participants.

The sessions provided a safe and supportive social environment, particularly benefiting older women, people living alone and individuals with physical impairments.

Delivery & reach

The organisation delivered four sewing sessions each week across community locations in the Borders, maintaining affordable and flexible “pay as you go” access to encourage inclusion and participation across a wide range of economic backgrounds.

Sessions also supported intergenerational participation, with some groups including children and opportunities for older members to pass on sewing skills and experience.

Key outputs

Volunteers	7
Staff	1
Activities planned	180
Activities delivered	180
Participants	60

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, improving confidence and supporting mental wellbeing through regular social and creative activity. Members described the sessions as important safe spaces where they could focus on themselves, build resilience and connect with others.

Participants reported:

- improved confidence and self-esteem
- increased resilience and willingness to try new skills
- stronger friendships and social connections
- improved mental wellbeing
- greater sense of purpose through making items for others

The project also helped strengthen community connections beyond the sewing sessions themselves, with friendships encouraging participation in other local organisations and activities. WhatsApp groups supported continued social connection throughout the week.

Maintaining low-cost access was an important factor in reducing financial barriers and ensuring sessions remained inclusive and accessible to a broad range of participants.

Evidence of success

Evidence was gathered through:

- member feedback
- AGM discussions and consultation
- sustained attendance levels
- increasing membership numbers

Indicators of success included:

- sustained participation across four community locations
- increasing membership
- positive feedback relating to confidence and wellbeing
- participants expanding social networks and community involvement

The organisation also highlighted the positive role of inclusive and welcoming group environments in supporting preventative mental health and wellbeing within local communities.

Challenges & learning

The organisation reported no significant challenges during the delivery period. However, expansion into additional locations remains dependent on tutor availability and future capacity.

Participant voice

Participants described the sewing sessions as:

“...a much needed safe space to switch off and concentrate on myself for 2 hours a week.”

Members also highlighted the importance of creativity, resilience and shared learning, including:

“There’s no shame in unpicking!”

Borders Pottery CIC

Project overview

Borders Pottery CIC received **£10,000** to deliver **Social Inclusion Through Ceramics and Crafts**, supporting people experiencing poor mental health, isolation and long-term health conditions through creative activity and social connection. The project expanded existing pottery and craft provision in Eyemouth and rural East Berwickshire, including introductory pottery courses, a weekly mental health support group and a new community crafting programme.

The project primarily supported people with long-term mental and physical health conditions, older adults, younger adults with autism and people experiencing loneliness and isolation linked to rural living.

Delivery & reach

Activities included pottery, yoga, woodworking, crochet, knitting, paper craft, needle felting, calligraphy, watercolour painting, sewing and wreath making.

expanded opportunities for peer-led activity, with several participants progressing from attending sessions for mental health support to delivering workshops and volunteering within the social enterprise.

Key outputs

Volunteers	12
Staff	3
Activities planned	12
Activities delivered	16
Participants	163

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, improving confidence and increasing social connection through accessible creative activity. Participants reported improvements in mental wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence, alongside the development of new friendships and peer support networks.

Several participants progressed into leadership and tutoring roles within the project after initially attending as referrals for mental health support. Case studies highlighted participants gaining confidence to lead crochet, paper craft and watercolour sessions, while others developed opportunities to sell creative work or contribute voluntarily to community initiatives such as the knitting library.

The continuation of pottery sessions and expansion of the weekly mental health support group enabled greater participation and increased opportunities for socialisation and wellbeing support. The newly established crafting group was consistently oversubscribed, with future sessions fully booked within hours of release.

Evidence was gathered through verbal and written feedback, questionnaires, attendance monitoring, social media feedback and participant data relating to accessibility and barriers to attendance.

Indicators of success included:

- increased and sustained attendance
- repeat sign-ups and waiting lists
- growing word-of-mouth referrals
- positive feedback from attendees and professionals
- increased community participation and peer support

Challenges & learning

Temporary restructuring of the Local Area Coordination service affected referral pathways during part of the delivery period, although self-referrals helped maintain participation levels.

The organisation also identified the need to improve workshop layout and accessibility, particularly for participants with mobility issues and wheelchair users.

Participant voice

"Such a lovely and fun workshop."

"Loved this class."

"Such a relaxed morning, in lovely company."

"Looking forward to seeing if I can fit any sessions into my diary! I really enjoyed the last lot with a lovely bunch of people."



Brighter Blainslie Village Community Group

Project overview

Brighter Blainslie Village Community Group received **£720** to support the delivery of the Monthly **Brighter Blainslie Soup Social**, a monthly lunch drop-in session open to residents of Blainslie and the surrounding area. The project aimed to reduce isolation, strengthen community connections and improve wellbeing through regular social activity centred around shared meals and conversation.

The project supported residents of all ages, including older people, people living alone and disabled residents.

Delivery & reach

The Lunch Social brought together residents aged from 2 to their mid-90s through monthly community meals featuring homemade soup and baking. The sessions created opportunities for social connection, intergenerational interaction and informal peer support within the village community.

Funding also removed the need for ongoing fundraising, helping broaden volunteer involvement and support the sustainability of the project.

Key outputs

Volunteers	12
Staff	3
Activities planned	12
Activities delivered	16
Participants	163

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, improving confidence and strengthening community relationships. Organisers reported that attendance at the Lunch Socials had increased four-fold over two years, with residents building friendships and support networks beyond the sessions themselves.

Older residents particularly benefited, especially those experiencing loneliness and bereavement. Organisers highlighted examples of people becoming more confident to leave their homes and participate in community life after attending the lunches.

Volunteers also reported positive impacts on their own wellbeing, confidence and sense of purpose. One volunteer living with Multiple Sclerosis described the project as helping rebuild confidence and create a sense of support and belonging within the community.

Evidence was gathered through participant feedback, community comments and increasing attendance and volunteer numbers.

Indicators of success included:

- four-fold growth in attendance
- increased volunteer involvement
- stronger friendships and peer support
- increased community participation among isolated residents

Challenges & learning

No significant barriers affecting delivery were encountered. The importance of simple and accessible funding processes in supporting volunteer-led community projects was highlighted.

Participant voice

"It was a great day for me when I plucked up the courage to go to the Blainslie lunches."

"It was wonderful today. We were totally spoiled and I think everyone felt the same."



Central Borders Citizens Advice Bureau

Project overview

Central Borders Citizens Advice Bureau received **£9,961** to deliver the **Wellbeing Project**, providing outreach advice and income maximisation support across the Eildon area. The project recognised the impact that poverty, financial insecurity and crisis situations can have on mental health and wellbeing, offering practical and empathetic support to people experiencing hardship.

The project primarily supported people on low incomes, including people unable to work due to ill health or disability, carers, people experiencing homelessness and households affected by poverty and poor mental health.

Delivery & reach

Outreach advice sessions were delivered in community locations across the Eildon area, including partnership work with community organisations, housing providers and local events to improve accessibility to advice and support. 355 pieces of individual advice were delivered and 221 client contacts completed.

All clients were offered holistic advice and benefit checks, with pathways into additional support services where required.

Key outputs

Volunteers	12
Staff	1
Activities planned	70
Activities delivered	70
Participants	131

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing financial stress, improving access to support and strengthening wellbeing for people experiencing crisis, poverty and poor mental health. Advice and income maximisation support achieved a total client financial gain of £88,467.32.

Partnership working across the statutory and third sectors was strengthened, improving referral pathways and increasing access to local support services. This included the development of a new foodbank collection point within an NHS setting, helping improve access to emergency food provision.

Participants reported improved mental wellbeing through:

- reduced financial stress
- increased understanding of entitlements and support
- improved access to services
- reassurance from ongoing support and advocacy

Evidence was gathered through Citizens Advice case records, client feedback, financial gain calculations and partner feedback.

Indicators of success included:

- £88,467.32 in client financial gains
- 54 foodbank referrals completed
- increased referrals from statutory and third-sector partners
- positive client satisfaction feedback
- growing community awareness of the outreach service

One participant supported through a casual conversation at an outreach session successfully applied for Pension Age Disability Payment, housing benefit and council tax reduction, increasing household income by more than £10,000 per year.

Challenges & learning

Limited funding and staffing pressures within partner organisations reduced opportunities for some agencies to attend outreach sessions in person. However, partner organisations continued to support the project through referrals, resources and collaborative working.

Participant voice

Clients reported that their mental health had improved as a direct result of the advice and support received, particularly through better understanding of their situation and improved access to entitlements and services.

Champion Skill Share Group

Project overview

Champion Skill Share Group received **£8,915** to provide **friendship, support and skill-sharing opportunities** for people at risk of social isolation, particularly individuals with long-term health conditions, disabilities and learning disabilities. The weekly group created an inclusive and supportive environment where participants could build confidence, develop new skills and strengthen social connections through shared activities.

The group included members aged 18–78 and aimed to ensure that all participants, volunteers and support workers felt actively involved in shaping and participating in activities.

Delivery & reach

Weekly sessions included crafts, games, cooking, visits, discussions and creative activities.

Participants were encouraged to contribute ideas, help plan activities and take active roles within sessions. Activities included visits to the Scottish Parliament, the National Museum of Scotland and local community venues, alongside practical activities such as cooking, knitting and seasonal crafts.

Key outputs

Volunteers	5
Staff	0
Activities planned	27
Activities delivered	27
Participants	18

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving confidence, reducing social isolation and strengthening friendships among participants. Organisers observed increased self-confidence, participation and willingness among group members to contribute ideas, lead activities and express themselves more openly within the group.

Participants benefited from:

- stronger friendships and social interaction
- improved confidence and self-expression
- increased empowerment and participation
- opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills
- improved sense of belonging and routine

Several participants progressed into leading activities such as crafts, games and boccia sessions, while others demonstrated increased confidence through involvement in planning discussions, community visits and engagement with local services and elected representatives.

Evidence was gathered through evaluation sheets, verbal feedback, photographs, completed crafts and email feedback from participants, volunteers and support workers.

Indicators of success included high levels of regular attendance, increased participation in planning and leadership activities and positive feedback demonstrating stronger confidence and social connection.

Challenges & learning

A fire at the Macfarlane Hall required the group to relocate to a smaller temporary venue, limiting access to storage and reducing the range of physical activities and cooking sessions that could be delivered. Changes within the Local Area Coordinator team also temporarily reduced referral activity and external support.

Participant voice

"Friday is my favourite day of the week because I come here."

"This has been such an interesting experience."

"Thank you so much, I have really enjoyed the party."



Coldingham Brave Bayers

Project overview

Coldingham Brave Bayers CIC received **£9,900** to deliver **Wild Swimming for Wellbeing**, a nature-based wellbeing programme using wild swimming, mindful movement and environmental awareness activities to reduce isolation, improve mental health and strengthen community resilience. The project provided accessible and inclusive opportunities for people experiencing mental health challenges, loneliness, trauma, caring responsibilities and long-term health conditions.

The project particularly benefited neurodivergent participants, carers, older adults, LGBTQ+ participants, people living in rural isolation and individuals experiencing anxiety, grief, stress and poor mental wellbeing.

Delivery & reach

This was a combination of coached wild swimming sessions with mindfulness, breathwork, yoga, snorkelling and creative wellbeing activities. Sessions were delivered using trauma-aware and peer-supported approaches designed to create safe and inclusive spaces for participants to build confidence and connection.

The project also strengthened community participation, with 18 participants continuing wild swimming beyond the programme and 11 progressing into community volunteering roles.

Key outputs

Volunteers	4
Staff	6
Activities planned	24
Activities delivered	21
Participants	21

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated exceptionally strong impact in improving mental wellbeing, confidence and social connection. Participants consistently described the programme as transformative, supportive and life changing.

Evaluation data showed:

- 100% of participants would attend again
- significant improvements in mental wellbeing, community connection and confidence in open water
- 86% sustained engagement in wild swimming beyond the programme
- all participants reported sessions were safe, informative and well organised

Participants reported:

- reduced stress, anxiety and isolation
- increased confidence and self-esteem

- improved physical wellbeing and resilience
- stronger social connection and belonging
- increased motivation, volunteering and community participation

Participants also highlighted the importance of the supportive and non-judgemental environment, with many describing the programme as the first place where they felt accepted and able to be themselves.

Evidence was gathered through pre- and post-programme surveys, attendance records, interviews, case studies, participant feedback and social media engagement.

Challenges & learning

Challenges including severe weather conditions and injury to one of the swim coaches required adaptation. Sessions were safely relocated or redesigned using land-based wellbeing and water safety activities when conditions required.

The learning was lower engagement from men and there is now a plan to explore alternative delivery models to improve participation in future programmes.

Participant voice

"Wild swimming has been more than just a hobby – it's been a lifeline."

"It has been more valuable than therapy or medication."

"I feel accepted in the group just as I am."



Duns Fair Share

Project overview

Duns Fair Share received **£12,826** to support its **Social Café, Community Larder and Foodbank**, providing practical support, affordable food and welcoming community spaces aimed at reducing isolation, improving wellbeing and alleviating food poverty. The project combined emergency food provision with preventative community support through a holistic and inclusive approach.

The café and larder were open to all members of the community, supporting older people, people with disabilities, individuals experiencing addiction, people on low incomes and others affected by food insecurity and social isolation.

Delivery & reach

Over a 10-month period the daytime café and larder recorded more than 1,900 customer visits, while the evening free larder attracted around 12–15 people each week. The foodbank also completed 286 deliveries supporting 523 people, including 163 children.

The project worked closely with local partners including Citizens Advice, NHS mental health teams, social work services, housing providers and community organisations to provide practical and emotional support.

Key outputs

Volunteers	42
Staff	0
Activities planned	529
Activities delivered	568
Participants	375

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing food insecurity, improving wellbeing and strengthening community connection. Participants described the café and larder as safe and welcoming spaces where they could access affordable food, social interaction and emotional support without stigma.

Participants reported:

- reduced stress linked to food insecurity
- reduced isolation and loneliness
- stronger friendships and social interaction
- improved wellbeing and sense of belonging
- increased access to affordable food and support services

A 25% reduction in foodbank referrals was reported when compared with the previous year, which was linked to the growing use of the community larder and café as preventative support services.

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring, foodbank referral records and customer and partner feedback. Indicators of success included sustained customer visits, repeat attendance,

expansion of the evening larder and strong partnership support from local organisations and housing providers.

Challenges & learning

Volunteer recruitment and maintaining sufficient food supplies were ongoing challenges affecting expansion of opening hours. Geographic isolation and the costs of purchasing additional surplus food also created financial pressures.

Collaborative partnership working was highlighted as important as well as reducing stigma around accessing food support services.

Participant voice

*"The low-cost food is fantastic...
coming to chat to others is great.
Definitely has made me feel less
isolated."*

*"This larder has helped tremendously
in terms of saving money, keeping my
kitchen stocked and giving me a space
where I feel cared about and
accepted."*

*"Gets me up and out of the house...
meeting new people."*



Duns Senior Citizens Club

Project overview

Duns Senior Citizens Club received **£1,380** to deliver a **Summer Trip to Carlisle** with Meal, providing older adults with opportunities for social connection, recreation and reduced isolation through a supported group outing. The project aimed to improve wellbeing by enabling members, many of whom live in rural areas without access to transport, to enjoy a day away in the company of friends and peers.

The trip included coach travel, free time in Carlisle and a shared group meal.

Delivery & reach

Alongside the organised outing, the club continued its regular fortnightly meetings, helping maintain ongoing opportunities for social interaction, companionship and peer support.

The outing gave members opportunities to socialise, enjoy the scenic journey, shop, share meals and spend time together in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Key outputs

Volunteers	10
Staff	0
Activities planned	4
Activities delivered	4
Participants	45

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing among older adults. Members consistently described the value of spending time together, sharing interests and enjoying activities that helped them feel uplifted and connected.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced social isolation and loneliness
- increased social interaction and friendship
- improved mood and wellbeing
- increased confidence participating in community activities
- opportunities for recreation and enjoyment

The club also reported growing demand for membership, with a waiting list of people wishing to join, demonstrating the importance and popularity of the activities provided.

Evidence was gathered through participant feedback forms and photographs. Indicators of success included positive feedback, high levels of enjoyment during the trip and requests from members for similar outings in future.

Challenges & learning

The organisation reported no significant challenges during delivery, with organisers highlighting that the trip ran smoothly and all participant needs were successfully supported.

The work reinforced the value of simple social activities and accessible transport in supporting wellbeing and reducing rural isolation among older people.

Participant voice

"It was lovely to have a day away."

"Everyone enjoyed their day so much that we've had requests for a repeat outing."

"Good company and banter with friends."

Escape Youth Services

Project overview

Escape Youth Services received **£9,926** to deliver **Stepping Stones Plus**, supporting vulnerable young people aged 16–21 through one-to-one support, group activities and youth work aimed at reducing isolation, improving wellbeing and building confidence and independence.

The project primarily supported young people experiencing poverty, additional learning needs, bereavement, social isolation and barriers to education, employment or training.

Delivery & reach

The project delivered weekly drop-ins, study support, employability sessions, volunteering opportunities and tailored one-to-one support.

Key outputs

Volunteers	7
Staff	2
Activities planned	42
Activities delivered	33
Participants	26

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing social isolation, improving confidence and supporting young people to develop practical life skills and aspirations for the future.

Participants benefited from:

- improved confidence and self-esteem
- stronger peer relationships
- increased engagement in education and volunteering
- improved employability skills
- greater independence and resilience

One participant supported through intensive one-to-one work developed confidence to attend college consistently, complete a CV, approach employers independently and engage with housing services despite significant anxiety and communication challenges.

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring, case studies, staff observations, participant feedback and regular reviews with young people and families.

Indicators of success included sustained attendance, progression into volunteering and employment opportunities, improved social confidence and stronger engagement with support services.

Challenges & learning

The project experienced delays in recruitment which reduced the number of sessions delivered during the reporting period. The organisation also identified challenges in engaging young people not already connected to support services, highlighting the importance of continued outreach work.

Participant voice

"I enjoyed talking about the future and next steps."

"It was nice working with you, hope we can do it again."

"I'm excited and ready for it."



Gala Fairydean Rovers Community Trust

Project overview

Gala Fairydean Rovers Community Trust received **£1,600** to support **Para Football+**, a weekly football programme bringing together adults with physical and learning disabilities to improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and build social connection through sport. The project supported players aged 20–50 and provided opportunities for training, competition, volunteering and peer support.

Funding supported subsidised training sessions, travel to national competitions, football kit and development opportunities for volunteer coaches.

Delivery & reach

The project delivered weekly para football training and participation in national competitions at Grangemouth. Funding enabled seven competition visits and helped recruit four new squad members through subsidised training opportunities.

The project also supported volunteer development, with one volunteer achieving a higher-level SFA coaching licence and another squad member with learning difficulties progressing towards coaching accreditation.

Key outputs

Volunteers	4
Staff	0
Activities planned	40
Activities delivered	42
Participants	28

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving confidence, social connection and emotional wellbeing for adults with disabilities through inclusive sport and peer support. Weekly football sessions created opportunities for friendship, routine, physical activity and belonging, while also providing respite for carers.

A detailed case study highlighted the project's impact on one participant experiencing bereavement, financial crisis and suicidal thoughts following the death of his wife. Alongside football participation, the Trust coordinated practical support including referrals to Citizens Advice, foodbank access, social activities and ongoing peer support. The participant later reconnected with family support networks in Glasgow while remaining involved with the team through competitions and social groups.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced isolation
- improved mental wellbeing
- increased confidence and social connection
- improved physical activity and fitness

- opportunities for volunteering and skill development

Evidence was gathered through weekly attendance records, Para League squad lists and coaching accreditation outcomes. Indicators of success included increased player numbers, sustained participation and continued growth of the squad.

Challenges & learning

The organisation reported no significant barriers beyond the practical challenges associated with managing a large football squad and competition administration. The project described the year as another period of positive growth and development for the team.

Participant voice

The organisation provided a detailed case study demonstrating the importance of football, friendship and practical community support in improving wellbeing and reducing isolation for participants experiencing significant personal challenges.

Greener Peebles

Project overview

Greener Peebles received **£20,000** to deliver **Whatever the Weather**, a community gardening and wellbeing programme supporting people experiencing isolation, poor mental health and social disadvantage through outdoor volunteering, skill sharing and community activity.

The programme supported young people, adults with additional needs, neurodivergent adults, people with mental health challenges, retired people and individuals vulnerable to the cost of living crisis.

Delivery & reach

Activities included weekly volunteer sessions, wellbeing-focused skill shares, seasonal events and partnership work with local community groups.

Partnerships with local support groups were developed including ESOL learners, Ukrainian refugees, Dementia Friendly Tweeddale and mental health support organisations.

Key outputs

Volunteers	200
Staff	3
Activities planned	125
Activities delivered	125
Participants	200

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving wellbeing, reducing isolation and strengthening community connection through inclusive outdoor activity. Participants reported increased confidence, stronger friendships, improved mental health and greater connection with nature and community.

Survey results showed:

- 91% felt more involved in something meaningful in their community
- 89% said the garden helped them make new friends
- 89% felt more connected to nature
- 88% felt more supported to try new activities
- 81% reported greater pride in their achievements

Participants also highlighted the value of intergenerational connection, peer support and accessible outdoor spaces in supporting wellbeing and reducing loneliness.

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring, annual surveys, participant feedback, observations and ongoing collection of quotes and photographs.

Challenges & learning

The organisation adapted partnership plans during the year after some originally identified groups became unavailable. New partnerships were quickly established with other local organisations supporting people experiencing poor mental health and isolation.

Participant voice

"The garden gives me time to think, be in nature and enjoy the company of people I might not otherwise meet. A place to smile and be happy."

"Wholeness. Peace. Joy. Hope."

"Greener Peebles is rare and precious."



Innerleithen, Traquair and Walkerburn Parish Church of Scotland (ITW)

Project overview

Innerleithen, Traquair and Walkerburn Parish Church of Scotland received **£10,836** to deliver **Feeling Brighter Craft & Chat**, providing free crafting classes for older adults experiencing isolation, poor mental health, disability, dementia and poverty within rural communities. The project aimed to reduce loneliness, increase confidence and strengthen social connection through creative activity and supportive group environments.

The project particularly supported older people affected by rural isolation, limited transport, low income, poor physical and mental health and reduced access to community activities.

Delivery & reach

The project delivered regular craft and social sessions in accessible community venues across Innerleithen, Traquair and Walkerburn. Activities included painting, decoupage, card making and seasonal crafts, alongside refreshments, conversation and peer support.

Staff and volunteers worked closely with NHS services, Scottish Borders Council Local Area Coordinators and the Red Cross to support referrals and encourage isolated older people to participate.

Key outputs

Volunteers	5
Staff	1
Activities planned	114
Activities delivered	84
Participants	90

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing loneliness, improving confidence and increasing wellbeing among participants. Many attendees described the classes as an important source of friendship, structure and emotional support, particularly following bereavement, illness or periods of isolation.

Participants reported:

- reduced loneliness and isolation
- increased confidence and self-esteem
- stronger friendships and social interaction
- improved mental wellbeing
- greater motivation to leave home and engage in community life

Participants also described feeling more positive through learning new creative skills, sharing achievements with family and taking part in welcoming community spaces that provided warmth, companionship and routine.

Evidence was gathered through attendance registers, photographs, participant conversations, recorded quotes and feedback from carers and family members. Indicators of success included high levels of repeat attendance, participants expressing disappointment when sessions were missed and positive reports from carers regarding increased confidence and wellbeing.

Challenges & learning

Challenges identified were health issues, hospital appointments, bereavement, poor weather and transport barriers as significant challenges affecting attendance for older participants. Staff also recognised the importance of allowing participants time to remain socially connected after sessions, as many were reluctant to return to isolation at home.

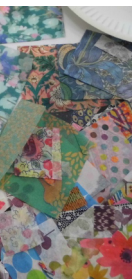
Evaluation methods were adapted after finding some participants struggled with written feedback due to poor eyesight, reduced dexterity and lack of confidence.

Participant voice

"This class saved me because I have made so many friends."

"I always arrive too early because I'm afraid I'm going to miss it."

"It's good to talk."



Inspiring Life: Evie Douglas Memorial Fund

Project overview

Inspiring Life: Evie Douglas Memorial Fund received **£4,500** to deliver the **Inspiring Life Festival** during Suicide Awareness Week, bringing together creative workshops, performances and community events focused on mental health awareness, suicide prevention and wellbeing through the arts. The festival aimed to create safe, inclusive spaces where people could explore mental health openly, build social connection and access peer support.

The programme involved collaboration with community organisations including Andy's Man Club, Borders Recovery Café, Memory Lane Music and groups supporting people living with Parkinson's disease, dementia and poor mental health.

Delivery & reach

Festival activities included creative workshops, music, movement sessions, storytelling, art activities, performances and community meals. Sessions were designed as welcoming, non-judgemental opportunities for participants to try new activities, connect with others and explore positive approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

Opportunities were also created for follow-on participation through ongoing classes, workshops and peer-support connections.

Key outputs

Volunteers	20
Staff	5
Activities planned	16
Activities delivered	15
Participants	300

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in increasing awareness of mental health and suicide, strengthening peer support networks and encouraging participation in community wellbeing activity. Organisers reported significantly increased engagement with conversations about mental health following the festival.

Participants benefited from:

- increased awareness and openness around mental health
- stronger community connection and peer support
- increased confidence trying new activities
- improved access to support groups and wellbeing activities
- greater participation in creative and therapeutic community activity

The festival also strengthened collaboration between local charities, volunteers, facilitators and community organisations, helping create new opportunities for ongoing partnership work and future

projects. Several groups reported increased membership following participation in festival taster sessions.

Evidence was gathered through attendance records, social media engagement, local publicity, community feedback and increasing participation in follow-up groups and activities.

Indicators of success included increased attendance at partner groups, growing volunteer involvement and the expansion of the original Inspiring Life Day into a larger community festival model.

Challenges & learning

There were challenges relating to publicity, accessibility, transport and childcare barriers for some participants. Learning from the project also highlighted the importance of language and presentation when promoting mental health activities, with organisers adapting terminology to encourage broader participation and reduce anxiety around certain workshop descriptions.

Participant voice

"Our small charity is making a big impact."

"We celebrate growth, connection and positive change."

"Inclusivity is all."

Kelso Orchard Tennis Club

Project overview

Kelso Orchard Tennis Club received **£4,200** to deliver **Keep your mind and body active with tennis**, a programme of adapted tennis sessions for older adults living in care homes, sheltered housing and community hospital settings. The project aimed to reduce isolation, improve mental wellbeing and support physical activity for people experiencing dementia, Alzheimer's disease, stroke recovery and other neurological conditions.

Sessions were designed to be accessible for participants with varying mobility levels, including people using chairs and wheelchairs.

Delivery & reach

Weekly sessions were delivered across three care home units and a local community hospital. Activities used adapted tennis equipment including racquets, bean bags and soft balls to encourage gentle physical activity, coordination and social interaction.

The project also organised a visit to the tennis club where residents attended a social doubles event and afternoon tea, helping strengthen community connection and social inclusion.

Key outputs

Volunteers	0
Staff	2
Activities planned	80
Activities delivered	80
Participants	100

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing loneliness, improving mood and increasing social interaction among participants. Staff reported that residents looked forward to the weekly sessions and became increasingly engaged and confident over time.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced social isolation and loneliness
- improved mood and emotional wellbeing
- increased social interaction and communication
- improved coordination and movement
- improved appetite and sleep quality

The social aspect of the sessions was highlighted as particularly valuable, with coaches encouraging conversation, reminiscence and group participation alongside physical activity. Participants enjoyed discussing their lives, sporting interests and memories connected to tennis.

Evidence was gathered through attendance records, feedback from care staff and family members and regular conversations with participants. Indicators of success included increasing attendance, sustained participation and positive reports regarding mood, sleep, appetite and engagement.

Challenges & learning

There were very few barriers to delivery, although occasional sessions were disrupted due to illness outbreaks within care home and hospital settings.

The value of adapted sport and community engagement in supporting both physical and mental wellbeing for older adults and people living with dementia was mentioned as important.

Participant voice

"These sessions have proven to be both popular and well attended."

"One of the most significant benefits of the Tennis Club's visits is the social aspect."

"They have played an integral role in enhancing residents' physical and mental wellbeing."

Project overview

Nature Unlimited CIC received **£19,977** to deliver **Connect, Recover & Thrive in Nature**, a year-long woodland wellbeing programme supporting people experiencing poor mental health, recovery from substance use, isolation and trauma. The project provided weekly nature-based sessions designed to improve wellbeing, strengthen social connections and create a safe and supportive community environment.

The programme primarily supported people living with mental health conditions, people in recovery from alcohol and substance use, people with long-term health conditions, neurodivergent individuals, carers and people who had experienced trauma or isolation.

Delivery & reach

Weekly woodland sessions combined therapeutic outdoor activity, peer support, cooking, crafts and purposeful group tasks such as firewood preparation and meal preparation. Activities focused on building routine, confidence, connection and emotional wellbeing through regular time spent outdoors in a supportive group environment.

Key outputs

Volunteers	8
Staff	3
Activities planned	40
Activities delivered	44
Participants	28

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving social connection, emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging. Participants described the woodland group as a safe and accepting environment where they could be themselves without judgement and build meaningful relationships with others.

Participants reported:

- reduced isolation
- improved confidence and self-worth
- improved mental health and emotional regulation
- increased sense of purpose and belonging
- stronger friendships and peer support

The organisation used iROC wellbeing measures, attendance records, participant interviews, session reviews and staff observations to monitor impact. Results demonstrated measurable improvements in both social connection and mental health, particularly among new participants. Attendance levels were also high, with most participants attending regularly throughout the programme.

Participants also reported wider positive changes including applying for college, volunteering, seeking employment and developing healthier routines and eating habits.

Challenges & learning

The organisation identified several operational and safeguarding challenges, including improving referral processes, supporting late arrivals sensitively within group routines and managing occasional inappropriate behaviour within the group. Staff also undertook additional suicide intervention training following disclosure from a participant experiencing suicidal thoughts.

The project highlighted the importance of strong group agreements, clear boundaries and ongoing reflective practice in maintaining safe and supportive community spaces.

Participant voice

"Nature Unlimited is the best part of my week."

"It makes me feel connected. I was isolated. Getting out into the woods makes me feel alive, part of something meaningful."

"Been to a lot of groups, never felt like I fitted in, I feel like I fit in here."

Newcastleton and District Community Trust

Project overview

Newcastleton and District Community Trust received **£19,647** to deliver Investing in our **Resilience, a community wellbeing and prevention programme** designed to reduce loneliness, strengthen resilience and improve access to support in a rurally isolated area. The project provided accessible group activities, social prescribing initiatives, wellbeing support and community engagement opportunities for local residents, particularly older adults.

The project also aimed to strengthen local support pathways through partnership working with healthcare providers, care services and Citizens Advice.

Delivery & reach

Activities included Welcome Holm drop-in sessions, social groups, community outings and pilot peer-support initiatives focused on bereavement and menopause support. The project also organised trips to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Blackpool to increase social participation and reduce rural isolation.

Key outputs

Volunteers	8
Staff	3
Activities planned	40
Activities delivered	44
Participants	28

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, improving confidence and strengthening community connection among residents living in a rural area. Staff observed increased participation, repeat attendance and stronger social relationships developing through regular engagement in activities and events.

Participants reported:

- improved confidence and self-esteem
- stronger friendships and social connection
- reduced feelings of loneliness and isolation
- greater sense of belonging within the community
- increased willingness to volunteer and participate in local life

One participant who had recently moved to the village described the project as giving them a “new lease on life” by helping them build friendships and settle into the community. Others highlighted the value of organised trips and social opportunities that would otherwise have been inaccessible.

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring using Plinth software, staff observations, participant surveys and regular feedback conversations.

Indicators of success included increased engagement, repeat attendance, development of new friendships and 100% of survey respondents reporting that the project helped them feel less isolated, grow in confidence and connect with others.

Challenges & learning

There were challenges progressing planned Citizens Advice training due to scheduling difficulties and limited availability. Alternative training opportunities were sourced to ensure staff development and support for the community could continue.

Participant voice

"Great way to meet people when you move to a new area."

"The experiences have helped us to settle in to our new community, starting to get to know others and feel less isolated."

"A very friendly & warm welcome."



Nuture The Borders

Project overview

Nuture the Borders received **£19,024** to deliver the **Better Together Volunteer Programme Expansion**, expanding volunteer-led peer support for perinatal families experiencing mental health challenges, social isolation and disadvantage across the Scottish Borders. The project provided early intervention support for mothers, babies, fathers and co-parents through one-to-one befriending, peer support and group activity.

The project particularly supported families experiencing anxiety, low mood, trauma-related distress, rural isolation, poverty, gender-based violence and reduced access to informal support networks.

Delivery & reach

Volunteers were recruited, trained and supervised with lived experience of perinatal mental health difficulties to provide structured one-to-one support and peer-led activity. Volunteers also supported Dad Club sessions, helping improve inclusion and support for fathers and co-parents.

A total of 126 volunteer befriending sessions were delivered during the funded period, providing consistent emotional and practical support for families who often did not meet thresholds for statutory mental health services.

Key outputs

Volunteers	15
Staff	6
Activities planned	4
Activities delivered	4
Participants	87

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving parental wellbeing, reducing isolation and strengthening early parent–infant relationships. Parents consistently described feeling calmer, more confident and better connected to their babies following support.

Outcome monitoring showed:

- 96% of parents demonstrated improved mental and emotional wellbeing
- average wellbeing scores increased by 12.5 points on the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale
- 83% of parents reported improved bonding and parenting confidence

Participants also reported:

- reduced social isolation
- increased confidence leaving the house and attending groups
- improved coping skills and emotional resilience
- stronger family relationships and support networks

Local volunteer capacity was strengthened through accredited training, supervision and safeguarding support, while volunteers themselves also reported increased confidence, wellbeing and sense of purpose.

Evidence was gathered through wellbeing measures including WEMWBS, bonding and parenting confidence tools, attendance records, volunteer supervision records, reflective conversations and participant feedback.

Challenges & learning

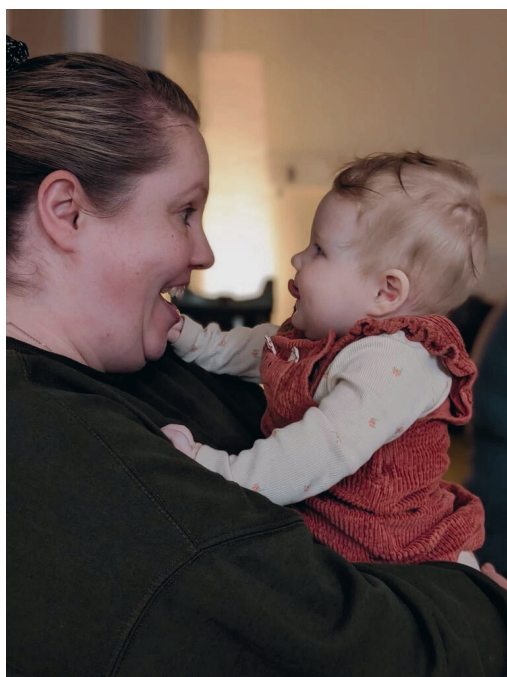
There was high demand for support, with many families requiring more intensive or longer-term intervention than originally anticipated. Rural delivery also created practical challenges relating to travel and volunteer matching. The project responded by strengthening supervision structures and using flexible delivery approaches to maintain safe and effective support.

Participant voice

"I felt like I was drowning but didn't meet the criteria for specialist help."

"Dad Club gave me a space to talk honestly about how hard it was becoming a dad."

"The befriending support helped me leave the house again."



Peebles Old Parish Church of Scotland

Project overview

Peebles Old Parish Church of Scotland received **£6,923** to deliver **Stronger Hands, Hearts, Minds**, providing free and accessible crafting classes for vulnerable older people living in sheltered accommodation, assisted living settings and care homes. The project aimed to reduce isolation, improve confidence and support mental and physical wellbeing through creative activity and social connection.

The project supported older people living with dementia, poor mental health, physical disabilities, poverty and loneliness, alongside carers and family members.

Delivery & reach

The project delivered regular crafting classes within residential lounges and community settings, ensuring activities remained accessible for participants unable or reluctant to travel. Sessions included painting, decoupage, knitting, seasonal crafts and creative group activities supported by experienced arts practitioners and volunteers.

Wider community inclusion was supported by welcoming isolated community members into residential settings through partnership working with NHS services, the Red Cross and Scottish Borders Council Local Area Coordinators.

Key outputs

Volunteers	6
Staff	1
Activities planned	96
Activities delivered	96
Participants	145

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing loneliness, improving confidence and increasing wellbeing among vulnerable older people. Participants consistently described feeling happier, more connected and more motivated after attending the classes.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced isolation and loneliness
- improved confidence and self-esteem
- increased social interaction and friendships
- improved emotional wellbeing
- opportunities for creativity, learning and self-expression

Carers and family members were supported by providing meaningful activity, social stimulation and opportunities for respite. Organisers observed that participants became increasingly confident over

time, with many expressing disappointment when sessions ended or were missed.

Evidence was gathered through attendance registers, photographs, participant conversations, quotes and feedback from carers, families and venue staff.

Indicators of success included sustained attendance, increased participation, positive feedback from residents and families and growing confidence among participants to engage socially and creatively.

Challenges & learning

Supporting attendance among frail older participants due to illness, hospital appointments, dementia-related memory difficulties and venue limitations following relocation issues. Staff and volunteers adapted delivery by providing additional reminders, support and one-to-one assistance where needed.

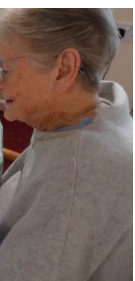
The importance of creating opportunities for participants to continue social interaction after classes had ended was highlighted, recognising that many people were reluctant to return to isolation in their flats.

Participant voice

"Friday is my favourite day because I come here."

"It's so easy to sit in front of the telly all day and before you know it it's dark and you haven't seen anybody."

"This class makes me focus on positive things and forget all the negative stuff."



Peeblesshire Foodbank

Project overview

Peeblesshire Foodbank received **£19,780** to deliver **The Coffee Clubs**, a series of pop-up community cafés across decentralised areas of Peeblesshire designed to reduce isolation, improve access to support services and strengthen community wellbeing. The cafés provided welcoming warm spaces where people could access free refreshments, social connection, advice and signposting support locally.

Older adults, carers, people receiving community support, young parents and residents experiencing rural isolation or financial hardship were supported.

Delivery & reach

The cafés hosted outreach support from Citizens Advice Bureau, Local Area Coordination services and other community organisations, helping people access advice and practical support without travelling to larger population centres.

Opportunities were also created for intergenerational connection, community networking and local group development, including support for craft groups, toddler groups and carers.

Key outputs

Volunteers	12
Staff	1
Activities planned	56
Activities delivered	52
Participants	230

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing social isolation, increasing community connection and improving access to financial advice and support services. Participants described the cafés as safe and welcoming spaces that improved confidence, reduced loneliness and strengthened local relationships.

Participants benefited from:

- increased social interaction and peer support
- improved confidence and sense of belonging
- easier access to advice and support services
- increased community participation
- improved financial resilience through local outreach advice

Significant financial outcomes were achieved through CAB outreach support. From May 2024 to February 2026, 191 client contacts resulted in a financial uplift of £216,493.94, including £121,621 secured between April 2025 and February 2026 alone.

Evidence was gathered through attendance records, participant interaction and CAB financial uplift data. Indicators of success included repeat attendance, growing involvement from partner agencies

and increasing recognition of the cafés as valuable community networking and support spaces.

Challenges & learning

Some café sessions were cancelled due to building repairs and venue booking issues. The organisation also identified that one church-based location created barriers to attendance and successfully relocated to a more accessible venue, resulting in increased participation despite higher venue costs.

The project also highlighted the importance of reducing stigma around foodbank involvement by presenting the cafés as part of wider community wellbeing and support activity.

Participant voice

"One attendee stated that while she woke up feeling down, remembering the café was on encouraged her to come along for company and conversation."

"It was lovely to spend time with family making decorations during which time they just chatted with no phones or electronic devices interfering with quality time."



Peer 2 Peer Mindfulness

Project overview

Peer 2 Peer Mindfulness received **£6,600** to deliver the **Scottish Borders Mindfulness Workshop Roadshow**, providing free introductory mindfulness workshops across 10 towns in the Scottish Borders. The project aimed to improve mental wellbeing, reduce stress and increase access to mindfulness for people who may struggle to commit to longer courses due to work, fluctuating health or caring responsibilities.

The workshops were supported by mindfulness peer volunteers with lived experience, helping create welcoming and supportive environments for first-time participants.

Delivery & reach

The project delivered free two-hour mindfulness workshops in venues across the Borders with access to outdoor space. Volunteers supported local promotion, participant registration, welcoming attendees and practical delivery of the sessions.

The workshops particularly benefited people experiencing stress, anxiety, poor sleep, emotional distress and chronic pain, alongside people who were financially constrained or unable to commit to longer programmes.

Key outputs

Volunteers	25
Staff	3
Activities planned	10
Activities delivered	10
Participants	155

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving emotional wellbeing, reducing anxiety and helping participants develop practical mindfulness skills to support daily life. Participants consistently described feeling calmer, more relaxed and more hopeful following the sessions.

Participants reported:

- improved calmness and relaxation
- greater self-awareness
- reduced stress and anxiety
- improved emotional regulation
- increased confidence in using mindfulness techniques daily

Follow-up feedback showed many participants continuing to use mindfulness practices regularly after the workshops, with several progressing into longer mindfulness courses and retreats.

Evidence was gathered through participant feedback forms, follow-up surveys, group discussion and one-to-one conversations during the workshops.

Indicators of success included:

- 100% of participants rating workshops 7 or higher overall
- 99% rating the sessions as beneficial to mental wellbeing
- average attendance exceeding original targets
- 100% rating teaching clarity 8 or higher
- 100% rating sensitivity to participant needs 8 or higher

Challenges & learning

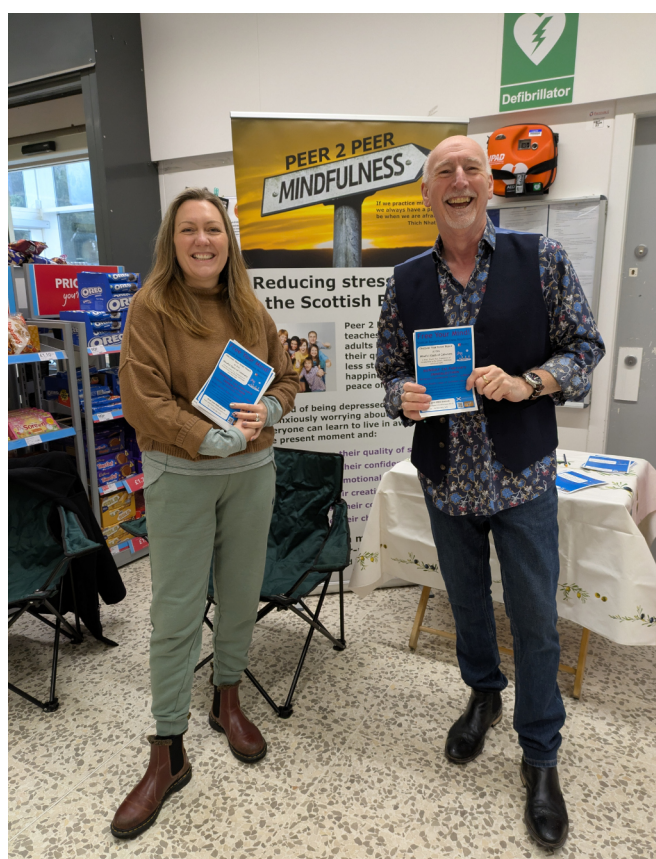
The organisation highlighted the significant volunteer time required to coordinate venues, marketing and website development across multiple locations. Technical problems with the project website also created additional workload during preparation stages, although these issues were resolved quickly through volunteer support.

Participant voice

"I would recommend this experience to everyone, so, we don't only change ourselves, but the whole world."

"Thank you for providing a really important opportunity to help heal ourselves."

"It felt like a sanctuary for calm."



QME Care (Queens House Kelso Ltd)

Project overview

QME Care received **£8,000** funding to deliver **community meal groups and dementia support activities** including Monday Mingle, Fish Supper Bingo and funded Place & Space Dementia Support Sessions. The project aimed to reduce loneliness, improve wellbeing and provide warm, welcoming spaces for older adults and people living with dementia across the community.

The project particularly supported older adults experiencing social isolation, people living with dementia and unpaid carers in need of respite and support.

Delivery & reach

- dementia support sessions delivered
- regular community meal groups provided
- nutritious meals and social activities offered
- respite opportunities created for carers

This work expanded QME Care's community wellbeing offer by increasing the availability of subsidised and free support sessions and introducing additional meal-based social groups. Activities included dementia-friendly sessions, gentle social activities and opportunities for participants to build friendships and community connection.

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, improving wellbeing and strengthening community connection among older adults and people living with dementia. Participants described the sessions as a lifeline and an important opportunity to socialise in a safe and supportive environment.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced loneliness and social isolation
- improved mood and emotional wellbeing
- improved nutrition through regular hot meals
- stronger friendships and community connections
- respite opportunities and reassurance for carers

Referral pathways and community partnerships were also strengthened, increasing engagement with carers' networks and organisations supporting older adults and people living with dementia.

Evidence was gathered through participant feedback, surveys, attendance levels and ongoing community engagement. Indicators of success included consistently positive feedback, high attendance and growing recognition of the groups as an essential source of support and connection within the local community.

Challenges & learning

The organisation highlighted the importance of sustained funding for community meal groups and dementia support services, particularly during winter months when financial pressures and isolation increase for older people.

The long-term value of meal-based community activity in improving wellbeing, supporting carers and strengthening resilience among vulnerable residents was highlighted.

Participant voice

"Attendees told us that these groups often became the highlight of their week."

"The sessions provided valuable respite for carers."

"Many people described them as a lifeline."

St. Boswells OAP Social Club

Project overview

St Boswells OAP Social Club received **£2,649** to deliver **St Boswells OAP Away Activity Day**, providing older people with accessible social outings designed to reduce isolation, strengthen friendships and improve wellbeing. The project organised a full-day group trip and an additional local afternoon tea event to ensure members with disabilities or health conditions were also able to participate.

The activities aimed to remove financial barriers to participation while creating opportunities for social connection, relaxation and community inclusion for older residents.

Delivery & reach

The main away day included travel to Linlithgow and the Falkirk Wheel, giving members opportunities for sightseeing, group activities, shopping and social time, followed by a high tea meal. The additional afternoon tea at Clint Lodge was arranged specifically for members unable to manage a full-day bus trip due to disability or illness.

Committee members ensured all participants felt included and supported throughout the activities, helping encourage conversation and friendship building.

Key outputs

Volunteers	6
Staff	0
Activities planned	1
Activities delivered	2
Participants	52

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing loneliness, increasing social interaction and improving inclusion for older members. Participants described the outings as enjoyable, relaxing and valuable opportunities to spend time with friends and meet new people.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced isolation and loneliness
- increased confidence and social connection
- opportunities to build new friendships
- improved inclusion for members with disabilities
- removal of financial barriers to participation

The local afternoon tea was particularly successful in supporting members who would normally miss out on larger group trips due to disability or limited mobility. Organisers identified this as an important learning point for future planning.

Evidence was gathered through participant questionnaires, informal feedback and observations from committee members throughout the day. Indicators of success included positive feedback, strong

participation and new members joining the group following recommendations from attendees.

Challenges & learning

Some members were unable to participate in the original away day due to disability or illness, leading the organisation to adapt delivery and create the additional local afternoon tea event. This approach was very positively received and highlighted the importance of offering inclusive alternatives for people with mobility or health challenges.

Participant voice

*"Afternoon tea, perfect in every way.
Good food, good company, relaxing
time."*

*"Spending the day with friends and
other members."*

"Everything. A wonderful day."



St. Boswells Village Hall

Project overview

St Boswells Village Hall received **£4,129** to deliver **Wednesday Warmups**, a weekly winter community programme designed to reduce isolation and support vulnerable residents during the colder months. The project provided free weekly morning sessions offering warmth, refreshments, entertainment and social connection for local residents, particularly older people experiencing loneliness, financial hardship and rural isolation.

The programme also encouraged intergenerational connection through involvement from local school pupils and community organisations.

Delivery & reach

The Wednesday Warmups offered free refreshments, newspapers, books, music, bingo, dramatic readings and performances from St Boswells Village School pupils. Information sessions delivered by organisations including NHS services and Citizens Advice also helped attendees access health and energy-saving advice.

Funding supported the purchase of equipment including hot water flasks and improvements to the hall audio system, helping improve accessibility for older participants with hearing difficulties.

Key outputs

Volunteers	30
Staff	0
Activities planned	17
Activities delivered	17
Participants	100

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, strengthening community connection and supporting wellbeing among older and vulnerable residents. Organisers highlighted the importance of creating a welcoming and inclusive community space where people could access companionship, support and social interaction during winter months.

Participants benefited from:

- increased social connection and companionship
- improved confidence and community participation
- access to practical support and information
- intergenerational social interaction
- reduced isolation during winter months

Evidence of success included consistently high attendance, strong volunteer involvement and the continuation of the programme over four years. Regular questionnaires also demonstrated unanimous support for the continuation of the Warmups and positive feedback regarding the range

of activities provided.

Challenges & learning

No significant challenges reported during delivery. The strong support provided by volunteers and local partners was highlighted in sustaining the project.

Participant voice

"It has been brilliant – thank you."

"This is a valuable resource for the community."

"Great way of meeting different groups of people."



The General Store, Selkirk CIC

Project overview

The General Store, Selkirk CIC received **£10,000** to deliver **Stay in Touch**, a project supporting older people to use digital technology to communicate with friends and family, reduce loneliness and improve wellbeing. The project expanded the organisation's over-60s Computer Clinic, helping participants build confidence using phones, tablets and laptops for communication and everyday online tasks.

Funding supported the creation of a private booth space for confidential support and video call practice, alongside marketing and project management to grow the service.

Delivery & reach

Weekly Computer Clinic sessions were delivered providing one-to-one support with devices, online communication and digital confidence. Marketing activity included social media promotion, community presentations and distribution of 3,000 leaflets across Selkirk, Galashiels and Melrose.

The new private booth enabled more confidential and personalised support while also improving capacity during busy sessions.

Key outputs

Volunteers	2
Staff	2
Activities planned	22
Activities delivered	29
Participants	240

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in increasing digital confidence, reducing isolation and improving wellbeing among older adults. Participants described the Computer Clinic as both a valuable learning opportunity and an important social space where people felt welcomed and supported.

Participants benefited from:

- improved confidence using digital devices
- increased ability to communicate online with friends and family
- reduced anxiety around technology
- improved social connection and independence
- increased confidence asking for help and learning new skills

Attendance increased by more than 30% during the project period despite disruption caused by relocation of premises and seasonal challenges.

Of 90 feedback forms completed:

- 100% said the sessions were useful and would recommend them

- 97% reported feeling more confident or somewhat more confident using their devices or being online

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring and participant self-report feedback.

Challenges & learning

There were delays due to relocation of premises and challenges reaching older people who were less confident online. The organisation found door-to-door leafleting and presentations to local groups more effective than digital marketing in reaching the target audience.

Participant voice

"Very approachable and I didn't feel bad asking 'silly questions'."

"Thank God we've got you!"

"I feel more at ease using my phone."



The Richmond Fellowship Scotland

Project overview

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland received **£7,000** to support **Hub Club**, providing day trips and social activities for adults with learning disabilities across the Scottish Borders. The project aimed to reduce isolation, strengthen friendships and increase opportunities for supported individuals to participate in enjoyable community activities outside their usual routines.

Funding supported accessible transport and entry costs for trips including visits to attractions such as Blair Drummond Safari Park and Edinburgh Zoo.

Delivery & reach

Supported group outings and social opportunities were organised, designed to help adults with learning disabilities meet others. Participants were encouraged to develop friendships and experience new activities in a relaxed and supportive environment. Transport and activities were provided free of charge to participants.

Key outputs

Volunteers	2
Staff	0
Activities planned	6
Activities delivered	4
Participants	18

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated positive impact in increasing social participation, strengthening friendships and improving confidence among participants. Several individuals attended group activities for the first time, representing an important milestone in their personal development and community engagement.

Participants benefited from:

- increased social interaction and friendship building
- improved confidence participating in group activities
- increased community engagement
- opportunities to experience new activities and environments
- reduced financial barriers to participation

Participants also became more engaged in suggesting future activities and trips, demonstrating increased confidence, enthusiasm and ownership of the programme.

Evidence was gathered through informal conversations with attendees and feedback sessions during monthly Hub Club meetings. Indicators of success included positive participant feedback, repeat attendance and the development of friendships through shared activities.

Challenges & learning

The organisation experienced staffing changes during the project period which reduced the number of trips delivered compared with original plans. However, planning for future activities continued and the organisation remained committed to expanding opportunities for participants.

The importance of accessible and affordable social opportunities for adults with learning disabilities was highlighted, particularly activities that support confidence and community inclusion.

Participant voice

"Had a brilliant day."

"Enjoyed meeting friends."

"Great fun."



Transform Arts CIC

Project overview

Transform Arts CIC received **£19,995** to deliver **The Well Good Art Sessions**, a programme of creative wellbeing courses designed to reduce isolation, improve mental health and increase access to therapeutic arts activity. Delivered partly in partnership with Health in Mind, the project provided safe and supportive creative spaces for adults experiencing poor mental health, disability, trauma, neurodiversity and social disadvantage.

Participants ranged from age 17 to people in their 70s and included people experiencing long-term mental health conditions, bereavement, rural isolation and gender-based violence.

Delivery & reach

The programme delivered structured art and wellbeing sessions focused on creative expression, confidence building and peer support. Sessions were designed to be inclusive and accessible, using flexible teaching methods, mindfulness techniques and supportive group reflection.

Key outputs

Volunteers	1
Staff	4
Activities planned	26
Activities delivered	26
Participants	56

Impact, outcomes & evidence

Strong impact in reducing anxiety was demonstrated, improving confidence and increasing social connection through creative activity. Participants described the sessions as safe, welcoming spaces where they felt accepted and able to express themselves without judgement.

Participants reported:

- improved confidence and self-esteem
- reduced anxiety and self-judgement
- increased social confidence and participation
- improved emotional regulation
- greater hope, creativity and motivation for the future

Staff observed significant personal development among participants, including people progressing from severe anxiety and low confidence to actively creating artwork independently and engaging positively with others.

Evidence was gathered through participant feedback forms, staff observations, session reflections, post-course surveys and ongoing evaluation meetings.

Indicators of success included sustained attendance, increased participation in creative activity

outside the sessions and participants developing greater confidence to engage socially and explore new opportunities.

Challenges & learning

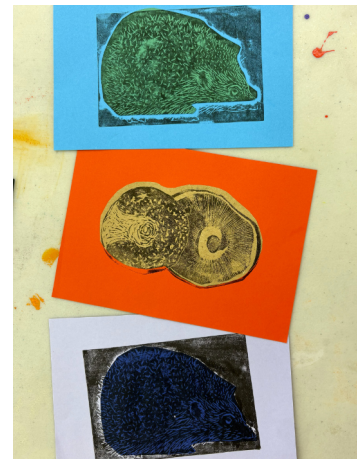
The organisation highlighted the importance of maintaining safe and supportive group environments while adapting sessions to meet a wide range of emotional, sensory and accessibility needs.

Participant voice

"Initially I was extremely anxious about attending these sessions."

"Honestly, focusing on my painting was actually allowing my brain to relax."

"My confidence has improved, which has had a knock-on effect with my self-esteem."



Tweed Valley Trail Therapy CIC

Project overview

Tweed Valley Trail Therapy CIC received **£10,000** to deliver a **pilot mountain biking wellbeing programme** supporting adults experiencing poor mental health, including anxiety, depression, trauma and social isolation. The project used non-clinical, nature-based trail therapy approaches to improve confidence, wellbeing and social connection through guided mountain biking sessions.

Delivery was in partnership with NHS Borders, Scottish Borders Council, Andy's Man Club and Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (DMBinS), supporting participants through structured six-week blocks and introductory taster sessions.

Delivery & reach

The project trained and developed four qualified Trail Therapy Practitioners and expanded access to adapted mountain biking equipment through collaboration with DMBinS, increasing the available bike fleet from six to ten bikes, including six e-bikes.

Sessions combined mountain biking skills, mindfulness approaches, peer support and reflective discussion in outdoor environments designed to support confidence, emotional wellbeing and connection.

Key outputs

Volunteers	4
Staff	0
Activities planned	4
Activities delivered	5
Participants	28

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in improving confidence, reducing anxiety and strengthening wellbeing through inclusive outdoor activity. Participants described feeling calmer, more connected and more confident both during and after the sessions.

Participants reported:

- improved confidence and self-esteem
- reduced stress and anxiety
- improved emotional wellbeing
- increased physical activity and motivation
- stronger social connection and peer support

Positive partnership outcomes were demonstrated by the work, with NHS Borders requesting additional six-week blocks following feedback from participants and Occupational Therapists involved in the initial sessions.

Evidence was gathered through participant feedback, session reflection discussions, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) assessments and collaboration with Edinburgh Napier

University, which is independently evaluating the impact of mountain bike trail therapy.

Indicators of success included increasing participant numbers, expansion beyond original delivery targets, growth in volunteer capacity and strong qualitative feedback regarding confidence, relaxation and emotional wellbeing.

Challenges & learning

Challenges associated with establishing a new Community Interest Company were mentioned, including delays opening a business bank account and adapting rapidly to governance and operational requirements. The project also evolved significantly through collaborative partnerships, leading to changes in equipment provision, volunteer development and programme delivery.

Participant voice

"It's so lovely to come out here, just have that time to forget everything."

"It's been so lovely seeing his confidence just grow."

"That was such a lovely session, I feel so much better now."



West Linton Enterprise Group

Project overview

The Knot Community Shop was awarded **£250**, delivering **benefits for volunteers, customers and the wider community**. The project helped create and maintain friendships, while providing purpose, routine and social connection for volunteers involved in running the shop. The community focus of The Knot gives volunteers a strong sense of contributing positively to local life.

The shop also acts as an important social hub for people experiencing isolation, offering a welcoming space for conversation and connection. Affordable, good-quality items available through The Emporium have been particularly valuable during the cost of living crisis. In addition, income raised through The Knot continues to support other community groups and activities, extending the wider impact of the project across the local community.

Whitsome Village Hall SCIO

Project overview

Whitsome Village Hall SCIO received **£1,701** to deliver **Whitsome Winter Warmers**, a free winter lunch club providing hot meals, warmth and social connection for residents of Whitsome and the surrounding rural area. The project aimed to reduce loneliness, strengthen community spirit and support older and vulnerable residents during the winter months.

The project primarily supported older adults, including people living alone, people with disabilities and residents experiencing rural isolation. Home deliveries were also provided for individuals unable to attend in person.

Delivery & reach

The Winter Warmers provided weekly free hot lunches and opportunities for residents to socialise, build friendships and access wider community support through the village hall. The lunches also helped welcome new residents into village life and encouraged involvement in wider community activities and volunteering.

Volunteers additionally supported isolated residents through lunch deliveries, wellbeing checks and practical support such as shopping and laundry assistance.

Key outputs

Volunteers	12
Staff	0
Activities planned	15
Activities delivered	10
Participants	25

Impact, outcomes & evidence

The project demonstrated strong impact in reducing isolation, strengthening community relationships and improving wellbeing among older residents. Many participants described the lunches as an essential part of winter life and an important reason to leave the house and remain socially connected.

Participants benefited from:

- reduced loneliness and social isolation
- increased community connection and support
- improved wellbeing during winter months
- stronger friendships and neighbour relationships
- increased participation in wider community activities

Wider community resilience was strengthened, with attendees becoming volunteers within the hall and village shop and increasing local participation and footfall.

Evidence was gathered through attendance monitoring and informal participant surveys. Indicators of success included sustained attendance, repeat participation, requests for continuation of the

lunches and positive participant feedback describing the lunches as central to village life during winter.

Challenges & learning

There were no significant barriers to delivery, highlighting that the project is now well established with strong volunteer support and community engagement.

The project demonstrated the value of simple community-based activity in supporting wellbeing, reducing rural isolation and strengthening local support networks.

Participant voice

"Something to look forward to in the long winter days."

"Makes a huge difference to the village."

"I suffer from SADS and it makes a real difference to me."



Appendix

List of funded organisations

Organisation	Project	Award
A Heart for Duns	Silver Sunday	£2,165.00
A Positive Start CIC	Community Support/ Reconnect & Regulate	£18,117.00
Allanbank Arts	Our Place, Our Time	£9,523.00
Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG)	Youth Wellbeing Sports Programme	£17,754.80
Borders Care Voice	Borders Care Voice	£10,000.00
Borders Community Sewing Club	Borders Community Sewing Club	£2,000.00
Brighter Blainslie	Monthly Brighter Blainslie Soup Social	£720
Central Borders Citizens Advice Bureau	Wellbeing Project	£9,961.00
Champion Skill Share Group	Champion Skill Share Group	£8,915.00
Coldingham Brave Bayers CIC	Wild Swimming for Wellbeing	£9,900.00
Duns Fair Share	Social Cafe, Community Larder and Foodbank	£12,826.00
Duns Senior Citizens Club	Summer Trip to Carlisle with Meal	£1,380.00
Escape Youth Services	Stepping Stones Plus	£9,926.00
Gala Fairydean Rovers Community Trust	Para Football +	£1,600.00
Greener Peebles	Whatever the Weather	£20,000.00
Innerleithen, Traquair and Walkerburn Parish Church of Scotland (ITW)	Feeling Brighter Craft & Chat	£10,836.00
Inspiring Life : Evie Douglas Memorial Fund	Inspiring Life Festival	£4,500.00
Kelso Orchard Tennis Club	Keep your mind and body active with tennis	£4,200.00
Nature Unlimited CIC	Connect, Recover & Thrive in Nature	£19,977.00
Newcastleton and District Community Trust	Investing in our Resilience	£19,647.00
Nurture the Borders	Better Together Volunteer Programme Expansion	19,024.00

Organisation	Project	Award
Peebles Old Parish Church of Scotland	Stronger Hands, Hearts, Minds.	£6,923.00
Peeblesshire Foodbank	The Coffee Clubs	£19,780.00
Peer 2 Peer Mindfulness	Scottish Borders Mindfulness Workshop Roadshow	£6,600.00
QME Care (Queen's House Kelso Ltd)	QME Care (Queen's House Kelso Ltd)	£8,000.00
St. Boswells OAP Social Club	St Boswells OAP Away Activity Day	£2,649.00
St. Boswells Village Hall	Wednesday Warmups, winter 2025/26	£4,129.00
The General Store Selkirk CIC	Stay in Touch	£10,000.00
The Richmond Fellowship Scotland	Hub Club	£7,000.00
Transform Arts CIC	The Well Good Art Sessions	£19,995.00
Tweed Valley Trail Therapy CIC	Tweed Valley Trail Therapy - Pilot	£10,000.00
West Linton Enterprise Group	The Knot	£750.00
Whitsome Village Hall SCIO	Whitsome Winter Warmers	£1,701.00