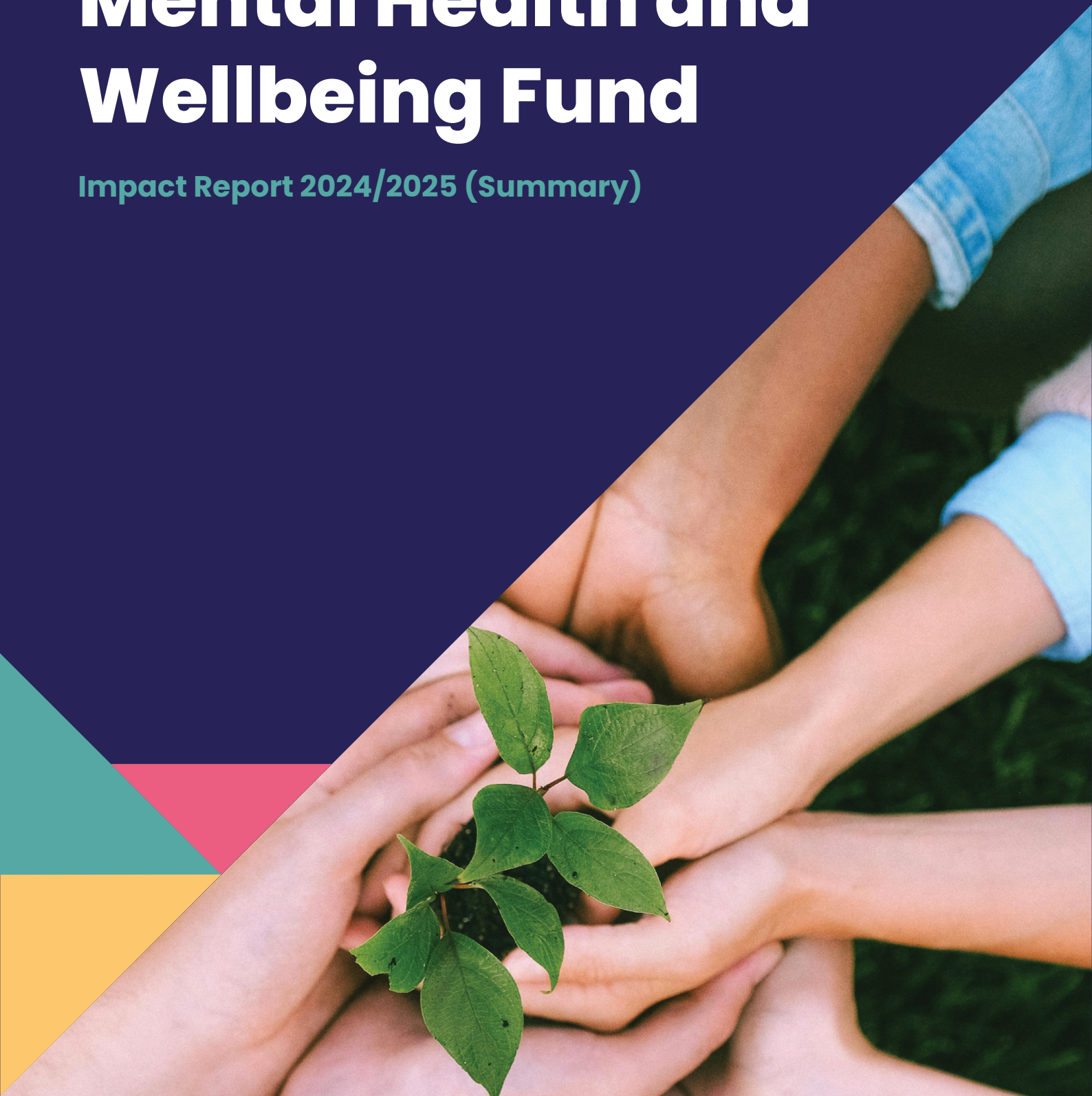


Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

Impact Report 2024/2025 (Summary)



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.

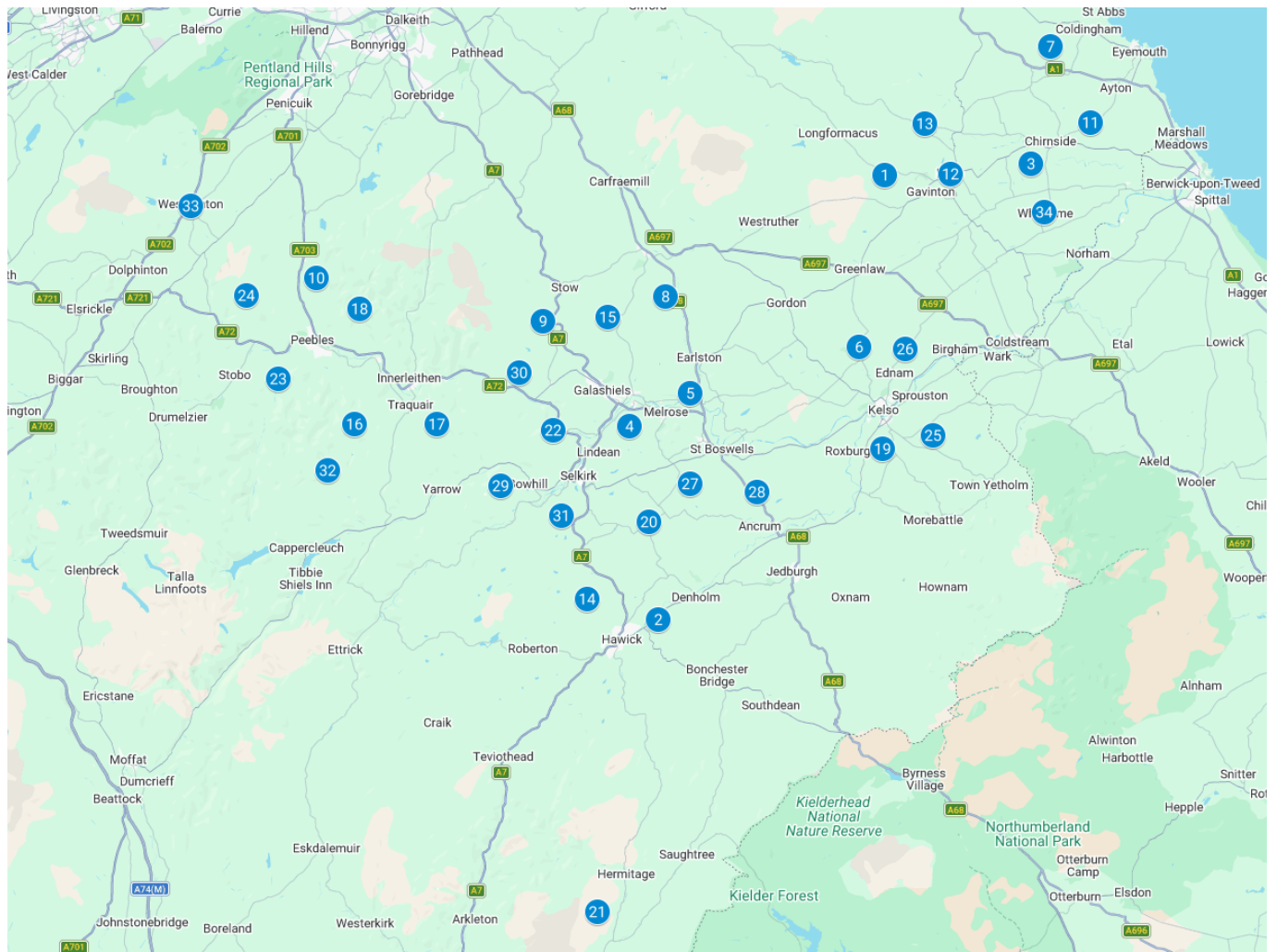
An enormous thank you to everyone involved in making this programme such a huge success.



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
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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

Funded Projects

A Heart for Duns

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.

A Positive Start CIC

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.

Allanbank Arts

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.

Borders Additional Needs Group

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.

Borders Care Voice

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.

Borders Community Sewing Club

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.

Borders Pottery CIC

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.

Brighter Blainslie Village Community Group

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.

Central Borders Citizens Advice Bureau

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.

Champion Skill Share Group

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.

Coldingham Brave Bayers

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.

Duns Fair Share

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.

Duns Senior Citizens Club

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.

Escape Youth Services

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.

Gala Fairydean Rovers Community Trust

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.

Greener Peebles

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.

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

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.

Inspiring Life: Evie Douglas Memorial Fund

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.

Kelso Orchard Tennis Club

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.

Nature Unlimited CIC

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.

Newcastleton and District Community Trust

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.

Nuture The Borders

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.

Peebles Old Parish Church of Scotland

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.

Peeblesshire Foodbank

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.

Peer 2 Peer Mindfulness

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.

QME Care (Queens House Kelso Ltd)

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.

St. Boswells OAP Social Club

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.

St. Boswells Village Hall

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.

The General Store, Selkirk CIC

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.

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland

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.

Transform Arts CIC

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.

Tweed Valley Trail Therapy CIC

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.

West Linton Enterprise Group

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

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.

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