

# Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Impact and Learning Report (2024-25)



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# Community Solutions

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### Background

The Scottish Government distributes the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund to Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire, with the aim to support 'at risk' groups in North Lanarkshire through community-based support provided by the community and voluntary sector, to enable:

- Improved mental health and wellbeing
- Reduction in mental health inequalities
- Reduction in stigma around mental health and illnesses

**£946.6k**  
of funding distributed



**34**  
projects received an  
average  
**£27.8k**

Many thanks to the funded projects which provided information and to the VANL staff who prepared this report.

\*See the [Community Solutions website](#) for a [supplementary report](#) with a full list of funded projects.

### Objectives of Fund

- To develop a culture of mental wellbeing and prevention within North Lanarkshire and across Scotland with improved awareness of how we can stay well and help ourselves and others
- To promote and support the conditions for good mental health and wellbeing at population level
- To provide accessible signposting to help, advice and support
- To provide a rapid and easily accessible response to those in distress
- To ensuring safe, effective treatment and care of people living with mental illness

### Learning and Improvement

The Fund's approach to evaluation, learning and improvement is guided by the Community Solutions **Performance Management, Evaluation, Learning and Improvement (PMELI) Framework**. Funded projects are required to capture information on the support provided, the reach, and the outcomes met by their projects. This report aims to share this impact and learning.

Please see the [Community Solutions website](#) for reporting on previous phases.



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### In 2024-25, the Fund has...

funded delivery of  
**10,186** sessions of  
**187** activities

supported  
**19,844**  
unique individuals

been supported by  
**289** volunteers who devoted  
**19,316** volunteering hours

This is the same as  
**10.6**  
people working full time  
every week!

**6376**

people supported



**£436.2k**

additional funding  
secured



**4507**

people reported on  
**Community Solutions**  
outcomes

From Phase Three, one project per organisation was enforced to allow more organisations to be supported by the fund.

\*Outcomes reported are based on unique individuals, and therefore may be different from total individuals supported

### Funded projects have supported individuals to meet Community Solutions outcomes...

**5184** People feel more connected, included and safe

**265** Carers feel more informed and aware

**1004** Children and young people's health and wellbeing improved

**5455** Adult's health and wellbeing improved

**1400** Carers' health and wellbeing improved

**388** Family relationships are strengthened

**4365** People feel more informed and aware

**1442** Carers are more able to have a life outside of caring

**330** Children, young people, and families are more resilient



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### Learning and Improvement Event

VANL hosted one Learning and Improvement event during Phase Three for funded organisations – on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024. A total of 25 out of 34 organisations participated. The event was organised at the half-way point of the fund delivery period, to:

- facilitate a two-way conversation between funded projects and VANL to discuss their experience of the fund so far
- maximise collective learning and knowledge sharing
- feed into reporting
- inform possible additional support from VANL

#### Projects were proud of the following achievements

- Successfully supporting people to move on from the project - projects discussed service users attending school again, getting jobs, going to college, volunteering
- Service users who then become volunteers for the service
- Friendships growing within groups - people are able to confide in each other
- Service users' confidence growing through attending groups
- Exceeding targets for number of people supported
- Providing accessible local support
- Allowing service users to shape the support they receive
- Whole family approach getting more people involved

#### Projects experienced the following challenges

- Managing capacity to meet demand is challenging
- Lack of available staff and volunteers
- Getting people to attend/engage with groups when they are dealing with difficult circumstances is challenging
- Sometimes more 'serious' things like doctor's appointments or personal crises situations have to be prioritised over wellbeing activities

#### Projects were surprised by

- The opportunities for networking through the fund and how beneficial this was to the organisation

#### Projects came up with the following new ideas

- Organisations discussed new partnership working collaborations that have come from this fund
- Trying new groups and activities e.g. cooking groups, outdoor activities
- One organisation has started offering new 1-to-1 support
- Using new technologies

#### Projects commented on VANL's support

- The funding process is straightforward
- VANL are responsive to evaluation and monitoring queries



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### Unexpected Outcomes

In addition to their planned outcomes, funded project were asked to identify positive but unexpected outcomes. Some examples were:

One of the most unexpected outcomes of the project was the level of engagement and enthusiasm from the wider community, particularly from individuals outside of the BAME community. Many attendees who initially joined out of curiosity or a desire to support the initiative became deeply invested in learning about different cultures and traditions. This created a ripple effect, with several participants reaching out to share how the event inspired them to explore and incorporate diverse cultural practices into their own lives.

The Economic Forum for Family  
Empowerment Scotland (TEFFES)

The Haven

We received a greater demand for this service than we had initially anticipated - surpassing the target of clients supported by 29.

Motherwell  
Baptist Church

Unexpected outcome has been the positive links we have been able to make with various organisations, who now regularly visit the cafe. Such as representatives from SAMH, Carers Together, Lone Parent Scotland, Aruka, Tackling Poverty team, NLRC. Through our links with the addiction charity, Aruka we have recently started a Recovery Group in the cafe.

Yogability initially began delivering weekly carer yoga sessions for us. However, after several carers requested a PMLD inclusive class, Yogability created a fully inclusive sensory yoga class for our young people with PMLD. This class has quickly become a popular and valued addition to the project. Even though funding for the project has ended, carers are so committed to maintaining this service that they are actively fundraising to ensure it continues.

PAMIS

MADE4UINML2

HOPE for  
Autism

Some adults who attended our groups have become volunteers and even secured Group Assistant roles with HOPE For Autism. This has given them added purpose and boosted their self-confidence, creating a positive pathway for the organisation.

Several individuals who initially attended due to isolation or food insecurity have now gained enough confidence to explore training or employment opportunities. Seeing them thrive in ways they hadn't anticipated has been a highlight for us.



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### Service User Feedback

Additional, selected feedback and learning from funded projects – provided in monitoring and evaluation reports submitted to VANL – is highlighted below.

'I was longing for community and support and this group gives me that. I'm looking forward to doing more for the community and building more connections. It makes me feel useful and helps me be more sociable.'

New Opportunities Project

Make and  
Create Arts

'My social anxiety is so much better since I started coming here and my anxiety in general is better.'

### HOPE for Autism

'I just want to say thank you so much this has really helped. I've had a lot of information, learned a lot about other agencies etc, info on how to contact them and what they do. I feel so much better as a parent and a lot less alone in my journey. I can't praise the course enough or say thanks enough. I'm so grateful.'

New Opportunities Project

'I have made new friends and I am more confident. I have went back to college [and] I have been able to control my anxiety and I'm feeling less stressful.'

'Just the fact that being able to have a chat with someone quite quickly helped me so much. Having a bad day I feel is normal in grief, all family and friends will be there for you, but having the option to speak to someone out with that circle gave me such relief in realising that I was not alone in my grief.'

Cruse Scotland

'Attending the cooking/gardening workshops have been a lifeline for not only K but also for me (carer) and her mother. When talking to K, here is the only place she feels comfortable and has a sense of belonging, I can't thank you enough for the support you have given us, not only through the workshops but personally. I do hope this continues as it is a lifeline for our family'

Parent Action for Safe Play





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### Case Studies

#### New Opportunities Project

New Opportunities Project received funding to deliver a range of mental health and wellbeing activities, including a weekly women's group which supported eight new mothers, beginning in 2022. Several of the women who attended are single parents with little/no family support locally. In addition, two women are neuro-diverse, and one is a foreign national with limited English.

The women attending were experiencing poor mental health due complex negative life experiences. All the women were lonely, had poor self-esteem, low self-confidence, and anxiety.

“The group has gave me a sense of importance being listened to and acknowledged.”

The group met weekly, sharing their stories over coffee and taking part in a group activity such as arts and crafts. The women discussed things such as how such adverse childhood experiences impacted their lives and their parenting, and the effects of marital breakdown on themselves and their children. All the women valued the support and encouragement of the other group members.

With NOP's support, the women organised 3 successful community events including Breakfast with Santa (40 families took part) and a family fun afternoon (over 400 people took part). Organising and running these events enabled the women to recognise their skills, capabilities, and the value they bring to their families and wider community. All the women report being happier, more confident, have improved self-esteem, are less anxious, and are less isolated through participating in the group.

- 3 group members have gained paid employment
- 2 group members have started college
- 2 group members now volunteer with the Project

#### MECOPP

MECOPP's Community Health Matters project aimed to:

- create sustained improvement in health and wellbeing of the community and
- address longstanding health inequalities that particularly impact on Gypsy/Travelers e.g. difficulties in registering with GP/Dentists, discrimination, low health literacy and lack of understanding of the culture of the community among health personnel.

Through their 1-to-1 case work, MECOPP supported C, a client who was recently from prison after serving 23 months. Whilst in prison, C was diagnosed with PTSD and Bipolar, and was prescribed medication. C was given a repeat prescription to collect from a local pharmacy upon his release from prison.

Once released, C contacted his GP and was told he had been removed from the patient list, and would have to provide his address and ID to re-register, meaning he had no access to his medication.

MECOPP's Community Health Worker called the practice on behalf of the client and was told the same information about proof of ID and address. The Community Health Worker informed the practice that the 'Right to Register' in Scotland states that this is not a requirement. The CHW attended the practice with C, supported him to fill in the relevant forms and provided a blue card (a health card provided to Gypsy/Travellers to facilitate access to GP services). The practice accepted the forms and made a telephone consultation as a temporary resident. The GP was then able to contact the relevant sources to confirm medication and issued a prescription.



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### Case Studies

#### Parkinson's Self Help Group

PSHG delivered a range of activities tailored for individuals with a neurological diagnosis, a long-term health condition, and older people. The project aimed to improve people's physical and mental health, wellbeing, quality of life and resilience by focusing on recovery, re-enablement and the protection of human rights. It aims to build on strengths and aspirations, with a focus on prevention, early intervention and recovery. The Gentle Exercise activity was introduced to try something they may not have done before, with the purpose of promoting physical activity and a positive mental health outcome. They sourced and spoke to a physiotherapist, explaining some of the physical challenges those attending may experience. The physiotherapist was then able to tailor a gentle exercise class suited to all abilities of those attending.

**10 individuals attend the Gentle Exercise Activity regularly on a monthly basis**

#### Results

- Increased social inclusion, by building positive and supportive relationships through activities
- Increased ability to manage symptoms
- Promoted positive mental health benefits

#### Learning

Staff said 'learning from the project was how keen everyone was to get involved and enjoy the experience on an on-going basis, after we had provided reassurance and structured it in a manner that allowed everyone to take part'.

“The gentle exercise class is a great way to socialise whilst being proactive about my physical and mental wellbeing”

#### The Haven

The Haven provided a range of 1-to-1 and small group based support services which supported emotional and mental health and wellbeing who have been diagnosed with a life limiting illness or who have been bereaved of a loved one as a result of life limiting illness (such as cancer, dementia, MND).

For example, one client, R, had experienced the sudden death of her sister who she was very close to, which inadvertently brought issues up from the death of other close loved ones. She was experiencing anxiety and depression. R attended the digital Nurse Sessions, and digital Wellbeing Support.

The Nurse requested that the 'First Steps Through Bereavement' book, a stress ball, a colouring book and pens be sent to the client before the Wellbeing Sessions began. The Wellbeing Sessions focused on mindfulness. Over the course of 3 sessions, the client was instructed on a variety of meditative techniques. The sessions included Box Breathing techniques, and discussions regarding escalations and corresponding grounding techniques and regulation tools. The client was sent Lifting Your Spirits, Anxiety UK's Booklet, and was signposted to the NHS Stress Control programme.

“I do my breathing before I go to work and I'm taking less medication now. I attend the stress control weekly programme that the Wellbeing Practitioner signposted me to I definitely feel better”