

Highland Whole Family Wellbeing Programme

Thematic Analysis of Element 1 Outcomes and Impact

Summary

This analysis draws together intended outcomes and quantitative return data from across the projects funded from the Highland Whole Family Wellbeing Programme's Element 1 Small Grant Funding. A description of the fund criteria and all funded Element 1 projects are outlined in the [Highland Whole Family Wellbeing Programme Overview and Analysis Report](#).

The analysis shows that the Element 1 fund has delivered strong, consistent, and meaningful impact at scale, particularly in:

- Tangible improvements in mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Significant increases in confidence, resilience and life chances
- Reduced isolation and strengthened family and community networks
- Enhanced early intervention pathways and access to support
- Strong evidence of inclusive, whole-family approaches
- Positive progression into education, employment and volunteering
- Development of sustainable community assets and partnerships

Collectively, the outcome activity demonstrates a preventative, strengths-based approach that reduces demand on crisis services.

Key Quantitative Highlights

The Element 1 grants funded over 50 projects across Highland, reaching an estimated 1,500 – 2,500 children, young people and family members directly.

Projects operated at multiple levels, from intensive 1:1 interventions supporting small groups of 8 to 30 participants, through to community-based provision engaging 100 to 400+ individuals.

This mixed model enabled both depth of impact for those with complex needs and broad preventative reach across communities, with many participants engaging in sustained, weekly provision over several months.

Participation and Reach

- 50+ projects funded
- ~1,500 – 2,500+ participants reached directly (minimum estimate)
- Individual projects reaching:
 - ✓ 8 – 30 participants (targeted)
 - ✓ 30 – 100 participants (typical)
 - ✓ 100 – 400+ participants (community-scale)

High-Impact Examples

- 504 one-to-one support sessions delivered
- 403 households/individuals supported in one locality
- 600+ individuals supported through food provision
- 300+ participants in single community programmes

Engagement characteristics

- Weekly attendance models across most projects
- Long-term engagement (often 6–12 months)
- Strong repeat participation

Thematic Analysis of Outcomes

Improved Mental Health, Emotional Wellbeing and Resilience

Core cross-cutting theme across nearly all projects

What was intended

- Improvements in mental wellbeing, emotional regulation and resilience
- Increased understanding of mental health and coping strategies
- Access to safe, supportive spaces

What was achieved

- Widespread improvements in emotional wellbeing, including reduced anxiety, improved mood, and better self-regulation
- Trauma-informed approaches have supported children experiencing grief, bereavement, abuse, or complex needs
- Increased mental health literacy (e.g. Mikeysline, Wellbeing Champions, youth-led initiatives)

Evidence from feedback

- Children becoming calmer, more engaged, and better able to express feelings
- Families reporting reduced stress, improved routines and emotional stability
- Young people gaining tools to understand and talk about their mental health

The outcomes show mental health improvement as a primary and consistently evidenced outcome across settings.

Increased Confidence, Self-Esteem and Personal Development

A dominant individual-level outcome

What was intended

- Increased confidence, agency, and independence
- Development of life skills, communication and self-expression

What was achieved

- Young people:
 - ✓ Progression into education, employment, and volunteering
 - ✓ Increased willingness to participate socially and try new experiences
- Parents/Carers:
 - ✓ Improved confidence in parenting and accessing support
- Some projects demonstrated very high progression (e.g. 95% positive destinations in IRL Education)

Evidence from feedback

- Confidence growth seen in:
 - ✓ Transition milestones (jobs, college, leadership roles)
 - ✓ Increased participation in group activities
 - ✓ Willingness to speak up or advocate
- Creative programmes enabled self-expression and identity development

Confidence-building emerges as a key mechanism for wider outcomes, linking to employability, wellbeing and relationships

Reduced Isolation and Strengthened Social Connections

Strong community-level impact

What was intended

- Reduce loneliness and social exclusion
- Build peer, family and community networks

What was achieved

- Creation of safe, inclusive spaces for connection:
 - ✓ Youth clubs, family hubs, arts groups, outdoor programmes
- Increased peer relationships and sense of belonging
- Growth of informal support networks among families

Evidence from feedback

- Participants forming friendships and meeting outside sessions
- Parents describing reduced loneliness and newfound support networks
- Intergenerational connection (e.g. youth + older volunteers, family activities)

Reduction in isolation is one of the most consistently evidenced impacts across all project types.

Strengthened Family Relationships and Whole-Family Wellbeing

Clear alignment with whole family principles

What was intended

- Better parent-child relationships
- Improved family functioning and resilience

What was achieved

- Improved:
 - ✓ Parent-child interaction and attachment
 - ✓ Family communication and emotional understanding
- Parents better able to:
 - ✓ Manage stress
 - ✓ Support children's needs
 - ✓ Navigate services

Evidence from feedback

- Families reporting:
 - ✓ "Life at home easier"
 - ✓ Improved behaviour, sleep, and routines
- Projects like Home Start Caithness and Book a Break:
 - ✓ Demonstrated preventative impact and crisis avoidance

Family-level outcomes show significant preventative value, reducing escalation to statutory services.

Increased Access to Support, Services and Early Intervention

System/navigation improvement theme

What was intended

- Improved awareness of services
- Clearer pathways and earlier support access

What was achieved

- Increased:
 - ✓ Service uptake and referrals
 - ✓ Awareness of local and specialist support
- Projects acted as:
 - ✓ Trusted gateways into wider systems

Evidence from feedback

- Families more confident in:
 - ✓ Attending appointments
 - ✓ Seeking help
 - ✓ Navigating benefits, education, or health systems
- Improved multi-agency integration and signposting

Key outcome: earlier intervention, reducing crises and improving long-term trajectories.

Development of Skills, Learning and Positive Destinations

Education, employability and life skills theme

What was intended

- Increased skills (social, practical, emotional)
- Improved school engagement and attainment
- Movement into positive destinations

What was achieved

- Development of:
 - ✓ Practical skills (cooking, crafts, outdoor skills)
 - ✓ Life skills (problem-solving, communication)



- Improved:
 - ✓ School attendance and engagement
 - ✓ Readiness for employment or training
- Access to:
 - ✓ Qualifications (Saltire, SCQF, awards)

Evidence from feedback

- Young people gaining:
 - ✓ Jobs, college/university places
 - ✓ Volunteering roles and leadership experience
- Projects demonstrating real-world progression routes

Skills development is strongly linked to confidence and long-term outcomes.

Inclusion, Accessibility and Targeted Support for Vulnerable Groups

Equity-focused theme across delivery

What was intended

- Inclusive access for:
 - ✓ Neurodiverse young people
 - ✓ Disabled children and families
 - ✓ Care-experienced young people
 - ✓ Young parents and rural communities

What was achieved

- Adapted provision:
 - ✓ Sensory environments
 - ✓ Flexible delivery models
 - ✓ Low-pressure, accessible sessions
- Reduced barriers:
 - ✓ Financial (free provision, food support)
 - ✓ Geographic (rural outreach, transport support)
 - ✓ Social (stigma reduction, safe spaces)

Evidence from feedback

- Increased participation from:
 - ✓ Previously excluded or disengaged groups
- Families reporting:
 - ✓ Feeling safe, accepted, not judged

Inclusion is both an outcome and delivery principle underpinning success.

Community Capacity, Participation and Youth Voice

Wider system and community impact

What was intended

- Strengthened community cohesion
- Increased youth participation and voice

What was achieved

- Young people:
 - ✓ Influencing projects
 - ✓ Taking leadership roles
 - ✓ Engaging in peer support
- Communities:
 - ✓ Stronger cohesion and collective ownership
 - ✓ Increased intergenerational interaction

Evidence from feedback

- Youth-led initiatives (e.g. advocacy, murals, leadership programmes)
- Community hubs becoming trusted local assets

Projects contribute to longer-term community resilience and capacity building.

Practical Support and Poverty Mitigation

Important underpinning theme

What was intended

- Address impacts of poverty (food, cost of living)

What was achieved

- Provision of:
 - ✓ Meals, food banks, community larders
 - ✓ Free activities and resources
- Reduced:
 - ✓ Financial pressure
 - ✓ Barriers to participation

Evidence from feedback

- Families reporting:
 - ✓ Ability to attend activities they otherwise couldn't
 - ✓ Reduced stress linked to cost of living

Practical support is a critical enabler of engagement and wellbeing outcomes

Cross-Cutting Enablers of Success

Across projects, several delivery mechanisms consistently drove impact:

Trusted relationships

Consistent staff and safe environments build engagement and retention

Flexible, responsive delivery

Adapting to community need (timing, format, intensity)

Creative and experiential approaches

Arts, outdoor work, and play as key engagement tools

Partnership working

Strong collaboration across:

- Third sector
- Schools
- Health and Social Care

Accessibility and low-barrier entry

Free, informal, welcoming spaces

Overall Impact Narrative

Element 1 funding has achieved:

- Tangible improvements in mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Significant increases in confidence, resilience and life chances
- Reduced isolation and strengthened family and community networks
- Enhanced early intervention pathways and access to support
- Strong evidence of inclusive, whole-family approaches
- Positive progression into education, employment and volunteering
- Development of sustainable community assets and partnerships

Collectively, the programme demonstrates a preventative, strengths-based model that:

- reduces demand on crisis services
- builds long-term resilience
- improves outcomes across the whole family system