

Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association
Leasachadh Slainte Inntinn An Eilean Sgiathanich' Loch Ailse



Impact Report 2024/25

FOR YEAR APRIL 2024 - MARCH 2025

Executive Summary

The Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association (SLMHA) has continued to provide essential mental health and wellbeing support services across the region, reaching a record number of members in 2024-25. Operating 365 days a year, SLMHA has expanded its reach through strategic partnerships, increased community engagement, and the launch of new initiatives such as the South Skye transport service and the upcycling shed project. This year, the organisation supported 159 regular members, helped prevent hospital admissions, facilitated over 135 medical appointments, and served over 5,300 meals.

Background

SLMHA provides support 365 days a year, ensuring continuous care and a reliable presence for members every single day. Founded in 1993, SLMHA was created to address the needs of those with severe and enduring mental illness and brain injuries. Starting with a few members in "The Cabin," SLMHA moved to Am Fasgadh in 2003, where it continues to operate today. Now supporting 159 members, the organisation remains a critical part of the local care landscape.

SLMHA is a **registered Scottish charity** and a **company limited by guarantee**, governed by a Board of Directors who also serve as trustees of the charity. The Association also runs a Furniture Recycling Project, giving members a sense of purpose and contributing to environmental sustainability and community wellbeing.

Our Values

- **Service:** Supporting every member holistically.
- **Ownership:** Member-led decision-making.
- **Equality:** Fostering a stigma-free environment.
- **Activism:** Advocating for better care and services.
- **Partnership:** Building relationships to improve service delivery.
- **Advocacy:** Using our voice to influence policy.
- **Informality:** Keeping systems people-friendly.

Managers review of the year

Between April 2024 and March 2025, we delivered more support to more individuals than ever before. We take great pride in offering a continuous, 365-day-per-year service to those in our community who rely on us. Our flexible and responsive approach enables us to act quickly when issues arise, addressing the everyday challenges that often cause high levels of anxiety and stress for our members. This report includes both statistical insights and personal reflections that illustrate the breadth and depth of our impact.

Despite our core funding from NHS Highland remaining static—now covering only 58% of our total costs—we were fortunate to secure additional funding from the Robertson Trust to support our running costs and Highland Council's Community Regeneration Fund for our South Skye and Lochalsh pilot project, weekend service and shed project.. This investment has significantly enhanced our service provision in South Skye and Lochalsh. We have more than doubled the number of individuals receiving regular support and successfully integrated the South Skye group with our main hub at Am Fasgadh. This integration has not only improved access to practical support, such as assistance with benefits and mail, but has also helped reduce loneliness by broadening members' social networks.

We place a strong emphasis on member feedback. Regular engagement occurs through monthly meetings, a suggestion box, and ongoing surveys. During a recent development planning session, our members expressed a clear desire to maintain the current model of support, underscoring the value and effectiveness of our existing services.

This year, we also welcomed a joint inspection from the Care Inspectorate and Health Improvement Scotland, conducted on behalf of the Scottish Government. The focus was to evaluate how effectively the partnership delivers integrated, high-quality services that promote positive health and wellbeing outcomes for adults with mental illness and their unpaid carers. Although the final report is pending, the initial feedback was highly encouraging.

Our furniture project continues to thrive, bolstered by strong community support and generous donations. It provides not only essential household items to those in need but also meaningful opportunities for our members to contribute to their community—building confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of fulfillment.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated, skilled, and stable team. With no staff changes over the past year, we've maintained a wide range of expertise that allows us to connect with members from diverse backgrounds. All staff are trained in delivering Decider Skills, and we continue to run at least two full (32-skill) courses and one 12-skill course annually. These programmes empower individuals to manage distress, better understand their emotions, and adopt healthier coping mechanisms—proving immensely beneficial for participants.

Members' Reflections on the Year

It's hard to believe how quickly the year has passed. As we reflect on the past twelve months, we also pause to remember those who are no longer with us. We were deeply saddened by the passing of Iain Dunn. Though he was a relatively new member, he quickly became an integral part of the Fasgadh community. His kindness and laughter are greatly missed.

This year, we've welcomed many new faces through our doors. It has been a pleasure to form new friendships and to extend a warm welcome to those joining the Am Fasgadh family. We've also enjoyed getting to know members from the South End, who now visit on Wednesdays. These visits have brought wonderful conversations—and some competitive games of dominoes!

In May, we had the opportunity to meet with several Members of the Scottish Parliament. Those who wished to, engaged in meaningful conversations with them. Am Fasgadh hosted a buffet for both our members and the wider community. While the long-term impact of these discussions remains to be seen, we are glad that our voices were heard and that the value of Am Fasgadh was shared.

We are especially pleased to see our new shed in operation. Already, members have been involved in sanding and selling a refurbished pew, with plans to upcycle decorative gin bottles into lamps. A member from the South End has even offered to lead sewing lessons—an exciting new addition to our activities.

Throughout the year, we opened our community café several times. While some events were more successful than others, each was an enjoyable experience. During the Skye Half Marathon, although none of us ran the race, several members volunteered as marshals, offering our support in return for the support we received.

We've been fortunate to enjoy several outings this year. Highlights include a trip to Eden Court in Inverness to see *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, a delightful experience for all involved. We've also taken shorter trips around Skye, including visits to Staffin and Kilmuir Hall to see the Old Shops exhibition—complete with tea and home baking. Earlier in the year, we visited Dunvegan Castle to see the snowdrops in bloom. Another favourite was our now-annual trip to the Inverness Pantomime, where we saw *Jack and the Beanstalk*, followed by a group meal and a shopping day before returning home.

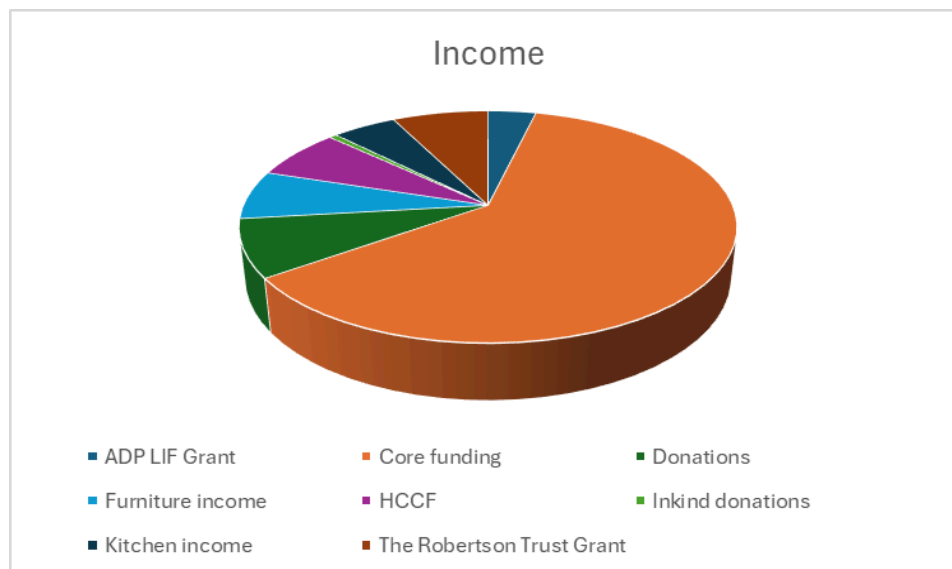
A variety of projects have been available to members throughout the year, including arts and crafts, games like Scrabble, Boggle, and of course, dominoes. Film afternoons—especially around the festive season—have allowed us to watch both classics like *It's a Wonderful Life* and fun favourites like *Elf*. While our attempt at regular keep-fit sessions tapered off, we remain optimistic about picking them up again—perhaps in January! Our request for cooking and baking classes has been met with great success, with several members learning to prepare simple meals and delicious treats.

We are sincerely grateful to Am Fasgadh for the support provided—from assistance with mail, benefits, and appointments, to shopping, day trips, and the comforting daily meals. We feel truly listened to and valued here. Our monthly members' meetings and anonymous suggestion box ensure that everyone has a voice in shaping our shared experience.

Looking ahead, we're excited about what's to come. Plans include three upcoming trips to Eden Court and the long-anticipated launch of our allotment project, where we hope to grow our own vegetables. Most exciting of all is the arrival of our own minibus—thanks to the support of the Highland Cross—which will allow us to enjoy even more adventures together.

Statistics - Financials

Where do we get our funding from



This year 58% of our overall funding came from our NHS Highland Service Level Agreement. Significant donations received this year include - **Plockton High School YPI** who won £3000 for Am Fasgadh which we will use for our Allotment, North Skye Kayak Club who on disbanding the club shared their bank balance between **SLMHA** and another local charity and £700 from **Skye Events** who run the Isle of Skye half Marathon.

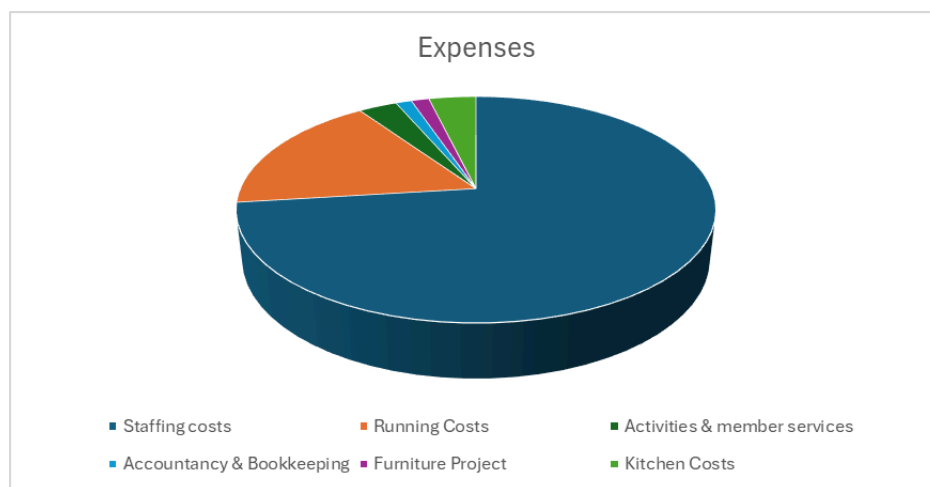
We are very grateful for the Food share project at our local **Portree Co-op** and to the members of staff who give up their time to bring the daily food share items to Am Fasgadh. Also this year **Rembrand Timber** and **Jewsons Portree** have kindly donated building materials for our various projects. And to all those who have donated money either in our fundraisers like the Highland Lottery or Sheep Bingo or just online, and to those to donate their furniture or those who have donated to receive furniture.

“Am Fasgadh provides all I need to cope with my mental illness and an alternative to hospitalisation. It is open every day of the year and you can meet your friends with similar illnesses and share your problems and worries. The staff are very friendly and helpful. Without this facility there would be nowhere else to go for help and advice because the nearest Mental Hospital is 120 miles away. It has served me well personally for over 30 years and I really hope that Am Fasgadh will be supported for many years to come.”

“Am Fasgadh provides us with a friendly place to come. We meet lots of other people. Any problems and someone will try to help.”

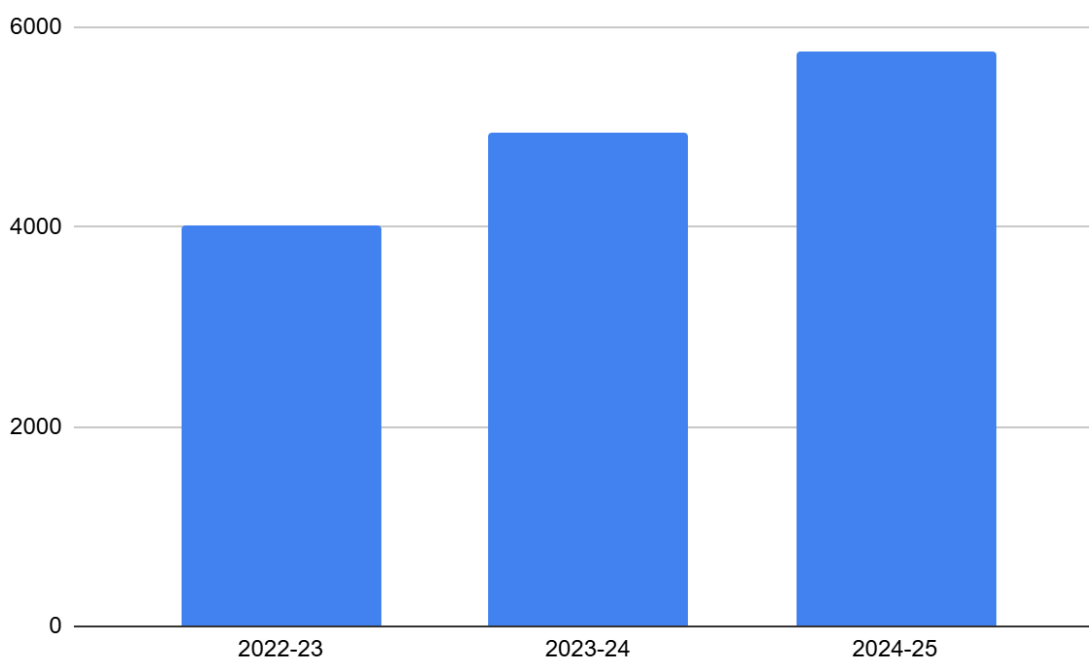
“Am Fasgadh has helped me out a lot in all sorts of ways, the staff are very friendly and it’s a nice atmosphere in there.”

What we spend our funding on



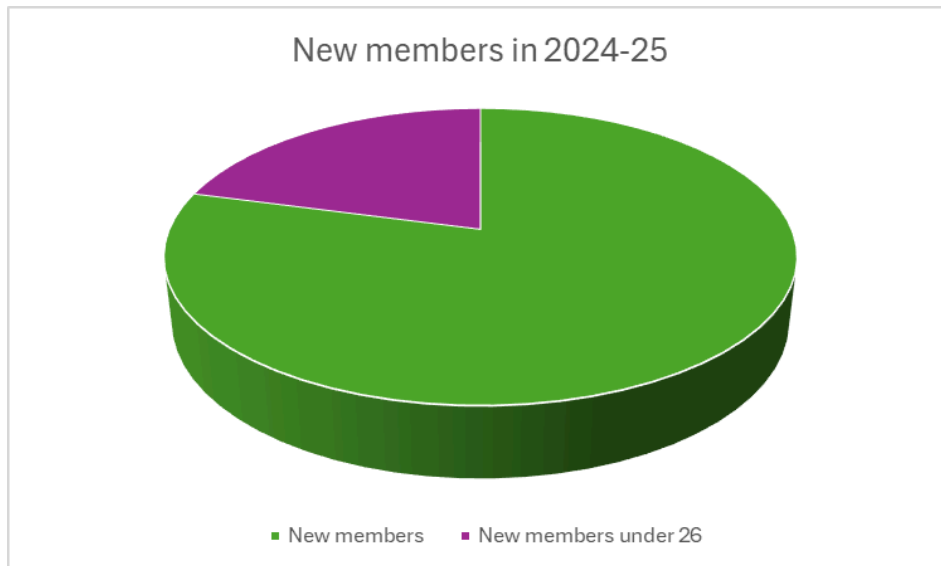
“A life line to me, open 365 days a year”

The number of people accessing our drop-in at Am Fasgadh have increased by 16.5% to 5760 sign-ins 2024-25, these figures only count each person once per day, though several people pop in and out several times per day. We have welcomed more under 26’s than ever this year.



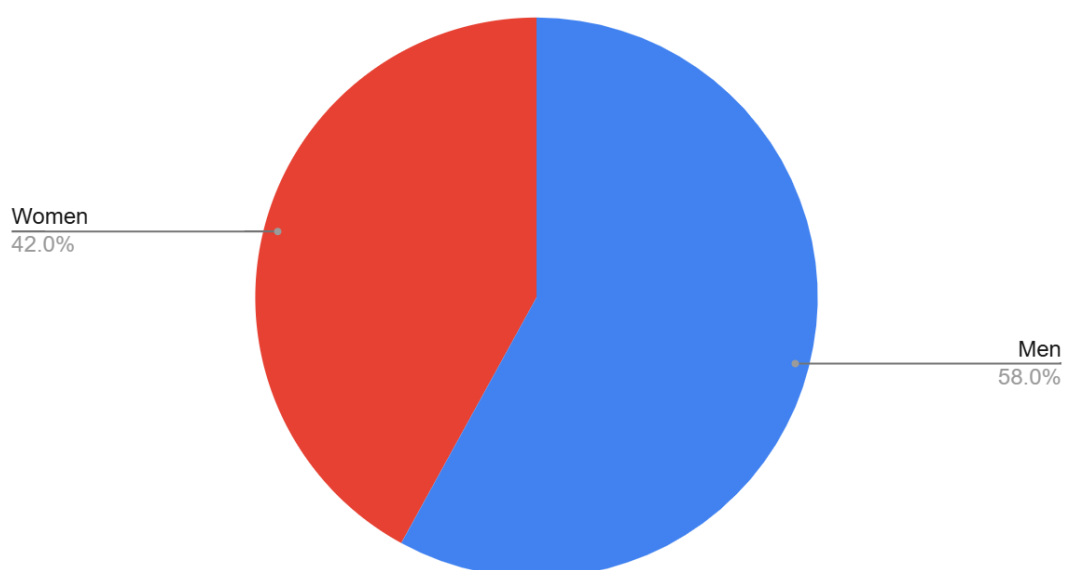
There were slightly less women, by 1.6%, attending this year than last year.

We had 24 new members in the last year of which 5 were under 26



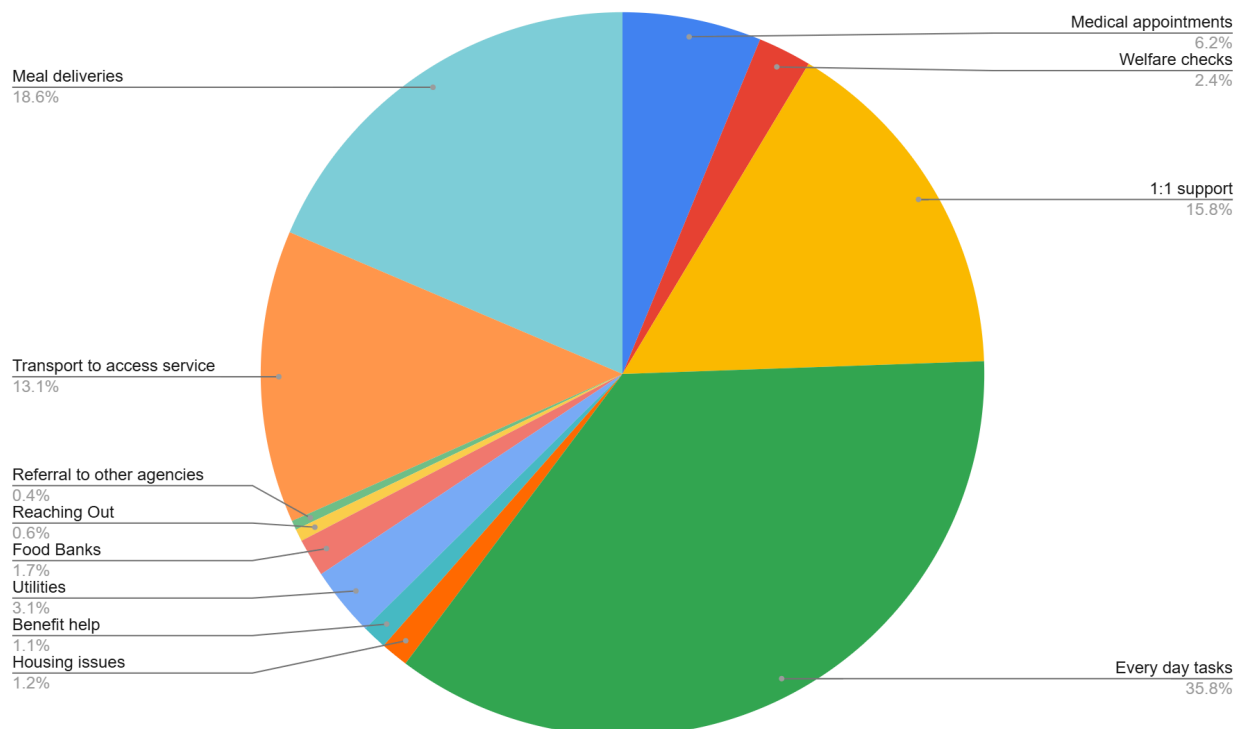
“The day trips are good, I don’t like to go on my own anywhere and they take you in a shopping bus”

Gender split



“Am Fasgadh is a place can go to where the advice is free and the place to start your recovery”

What kind of support are we providing



(Am Fasgadh) “Builds up my confidence”

Our service has prevented 6 hospital admissions this year, we have also supported 2 members who have been in hospital for some time, keeping that link with the community and supporting their mental health.

We helped our members attend more than 135 GP and Clinic appointments for both mental and physical health. Some of these appointments have been in Raigmore Hospital in Inverness and the Belford Hospital in Fort William.

Food continues to be a very important part of the service we provide. We have served nearly 5300 meals this year equating to an average of over 14 hot meals a day 7 days a week 365 days a year of which over 400 were delivered to members who couldn't make it out the drop-in.

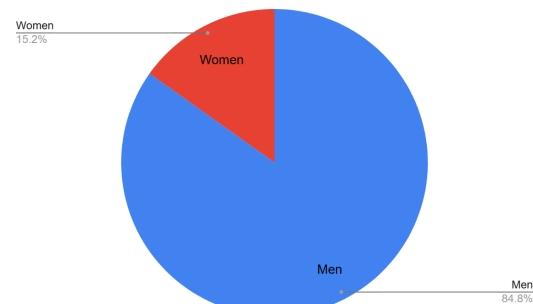
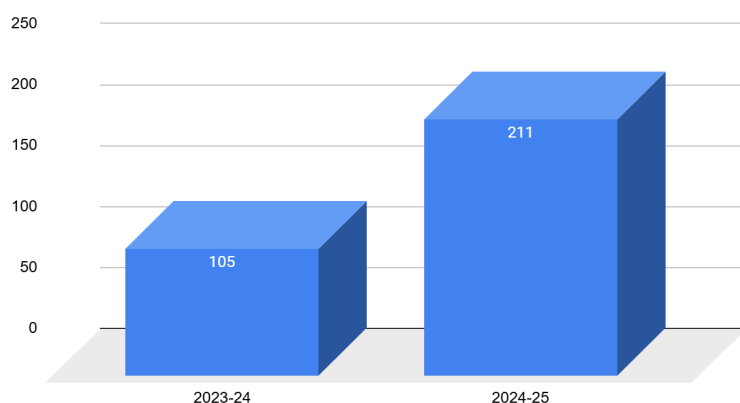
16 different members were given help with their benefit claims, and a further 17 people were helped to get on to social tariffs or with problems with their electricity supplier.

An Drochaid drop-in and our South Skye and Lochalsh Service

Our new South Skye and Lochalsh Project Worker started in Post in May 2024. Since then she has worked hard at engaging with people and now has increased the number of people attending the drop in by over 50%. Then in July she started hiring the MacHaggis bus in Kyle and taking those interested to Am Fasgadh once a week. To do this she picks people up in Kyle, Kyleakin, Broadford and Sleat. This has made a huge difference to some of the people on the Sleat peninsula who find it nigh on impossible to access public transport either due to the distance they have to travel to a bus stop or that their condition is such that they can't travel on public transport as they need support.

There have been 211 sign ins at An Drochaid drop-in at the Lighthouse in Kyle and since August 2024 a further 74 people have come up to Portree to use the service there. This new relationship has allowed the South Skye and Lochalsh members the confidence to join in trips off the island with the Am Fasgadh members because they have got to know them better.

An Drochaid Drop-in numbers



I'm new here, been going to the lighthouse 4 weeks now on Tuesday's. Managed to pluck up the courage to come to Am Fasgadh today. Very pleasant and helpful getting me to get out of my P.J's and mix. Will be coming again next week so that is 2 days per week where I'm not left fighting my own thoughts, getting dressed and also eating as I wouldn't normally bother to eat until late evening. Made to feel welcome. Thank you for such support."

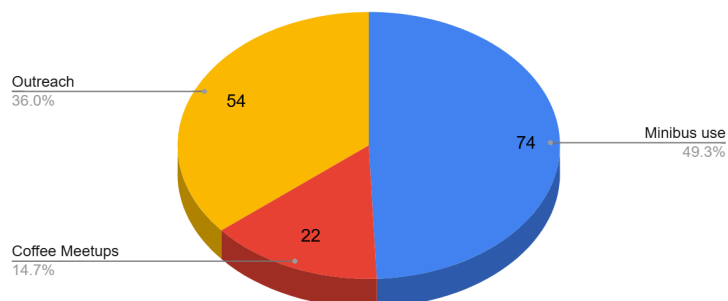
All the staff are great and friendly. If it wasn't for this, where would we all go? This is a homely place and everybody is made welcome. The catering is perfect, what more can you ask for?"

"Am Fasgadh is very good"

“The staff are especially good at filling up and helping with benefit forms”

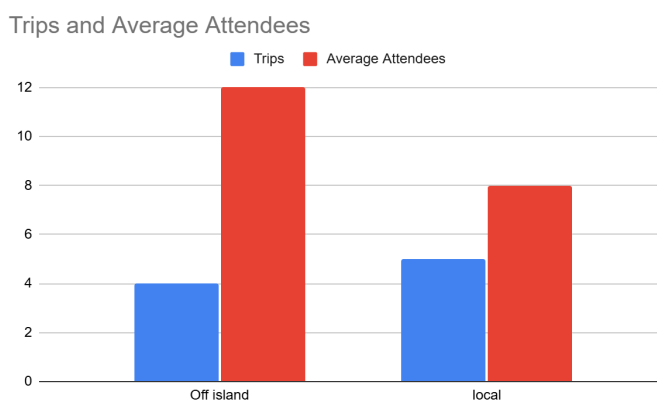
“Am Fasgadh, a place that’s waiting with a smile, a handshake, voice that can take away all the stress and worries you have. “

Service use other than Drop-in



“I like the work Am Fasgadh do, the lunches are excellent and I enjoy helping to clean up after”

Members have enjoyed a number of trips throughout 2024-25 both on and off the island. Off island trips included Inverness for an overnight stay and Fort William. Members were surveyed after each trip and they were unanimous in their opinion that they had really enjoyed them and wanted more of them as it made them feel alive and “normal”.

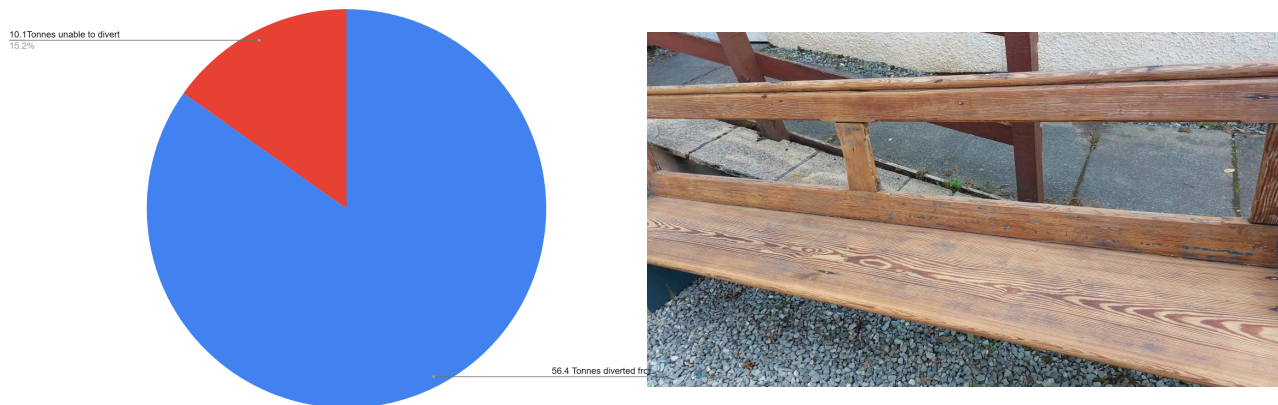


Our Furniture Project Received 66.5 Tonnes of donations

Our furniture project is a popular project with the wider community within Skye and Lochalsh. It has not only helped the individuals needing to get rid of their unwanted items and the residents of Skye and Lochalsh who are needing items of furniture, some of whom are referred to us by Social Work Services, Housing Services and NHS to help those who for one reason or another can not afford it,

and they might be patients in hospital needing certain items before they can be discharged, or, those whose own items have reached the end of their useful lives and need replace but the person can't afford it or after disasters such as fire or flood. The project also helps to build confidence within our own membership as our members sometimes help to pick up or deliver furniture, this gives them a feeling of achievement and pride in being able to help the community.

We have also completed our shed project that was funded through the Highland Council Community Regeneration Fund. This project will enable us to upcycle certain items as an activity and to sell them on. In fact this lovely pew has been upcycled now and sold already..



Over **750** items have gone to at least **600** different households within Skye and Lochalsh and while the furniture project is accessible to anyone within the Skye and Lochalsh area, priority is given to those in greatest need.

“Helping with the furniture makes me feel good about myself, I feel that I am contributing to the community and that people will see me rather than my illness”

Case studies

D's story

I started coming to Am Fasgadh just to get a food bank as they are an access point for the Skye Food Bank. I would come regularly as I wasn't receiving much money. I have suffered from mental health problems most of my life and as a result I started drinking and taking drugs at an early age. The staff at Am Fasgadh kept asking me if I was ok each time I came in, they invited me to stay for coffee, which I did and then the relationship grew from there. Eventually I told them my story, which is pretty grim, a life in care and early years trauma led me to have a very dark view of life. As time went on the staff listened to me and then helped me see a GP about my mental health. I had got in trouble before I started attending the centre and was given a community payback order which I completed at the drop-in centre where I was given support to complete my hours.

Before I started attending Am Fasgadh, I just basically sat in my flat and drank to excess. I didn't really mix with people. Coming to Am Fasgadh was a weird experience at first because I was accepted for who I am and I feel very safe to be me. I feel that my view of the world has softened since attending Am Fasgadh.

Now I attend the centre every day and feel part of the community. I help out when I can with household chores and with the furniture project. I enjoy going on trips with the others to places like

Eden Court Theatre, these are things that I would never have done before. I am only in my early 20's and feel that if somewhere like this was available where I was brought up I might have got help sooner. This place has helped me immensely, it's difficult to put in words what it means.

Sarah's Story

Before I began attending Am Fasgadh in April 2022, I often felt overwhelmed and isolated and suicidal by the ups and downs of my mental health. On my worst days, I would spend the day drinking and having suicidal thoughts. I didn't have a clear direction or purpose and struggled with motivation, confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.

Everything started to change when my support worker at the time, introduced me to Am Fasgadh, a couple of months after I had been in a car accident (lowest point in my life) I began going to Am Fasgadh with my support worker a couple of times a week but I now attend most days. Initially, it was just a place where I would go so I felt less alone. But over time, I realized the support went far beyond just being a safe space, It was a space where I could get help with my mental health but also somewhere I could relax, meet new people and have fun.

The staff don't just help during my bad days - although they are always there when I need them most but they have also took the time to get to know me as a person. They encouraged me to find focus, helped me discover things to keep me occupied, and guided me to set goals for my future. They saw my potential even when I didn't.

One of the most valuable aspects of Am Fasgadh is how hands - on and involved the staff are. They support me in practical ways that have a big impact on my life:

- Attending appointments with me: Having someone there who was independent from my mum, helped me feel independent but not overwhelmed but it all.
- Helping me fill in forms: Whether it was for college or benefits, their help gave me confidence and ensured I didn't miss anything important out.
- Providing encouragement and structure: They reminded me of what I was capable of and helped me stay on track even when I had setbacks and wanted to give up.

Thanks to their encouragement and ongoing support, I've achieved more than I ever thought possible. I completed a full year of college, which gave me a huge sense of accomplishment, I got my driving license back, which gave me independence and freedom. I've built a network of friends, something I struggled with before, I'm now preparing to start another year of college, something that last year felt out of reach. My mental health still has its ups and downs, but the difference now is that I'm not alone. The staff at Am Fasgadh know how to respond and help when I'm struggling. They recognise when I need a quiet moment and when I need a push. Their consistency, boundaries and understanding make it easier to keep moving forward, even on tough days.

Attending Am Fasgadh has genuinely changed my life, Its not just a mental health drop-in but Am Fasgadh is it's own big family. It's not just about crisis support - it's about building a life worth living, step by step. I'm proud of how far I've come, and I know that with the continued support of the amazing staff, there's still so much more ahead of me.