

GIG BUDDIES

THERA TRUST

The Big Round-Up

2025



Gig Buddies at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo

WHAT A YEAR!



We've had another busy year! We've held 89 socials and seen everything from Lewis Capaldi, to Shrek taking his clothes off.

Since 2016 we've now created 187 pairs of Gig Buddies and there's currently 64 pairs of Buddies getting out with each other every month on top of all the other friendships that have been created through gig buddies, as well as all of our group events.

This year we've given away more tickets to events across Scotland than ever before. Over 750 tickets were donated from over 20 venues, festivals and all round cool people!

You can find out about all of this and more in this newsletter, our big 2025 round up!



Kirsty and Kev at Kelburn Garden Party

GIG BUDDIES THERA TRUST 2025 IN NUMBERS

Another year goes by, and it's another year full of gigs, concerts, musicals, plays, festivals, staying up late, fundraisers, stand-up comedy, good fringe shows, bad fringe shows, food, pints, connection, and friends. You could say it's all becoming rather... Ordinary! This is our 2025 in numbers...

21 VENUES, FESTIVALS, AND ORGANISATIONS DONATED **760** TICKETS

THAT'S A COMBINED VALUE OF **£21,455!**

£1200 DONATED BY PILOT BEER'S DRINKLUSION FUND

...AND MANY CANS

5 DAYS AT HIDDEN DOOR

"HIDDEN DOOR WAS NEW TO ME, BUT THROUGH GIG BUDDIES I'M INVOLVED."
ROBERT, GIG BUDDIES MEMBER

WE GAVE AWAY **265** TICKETS TO THE EDINBURGH FESTIVALS

100% SAW SOMETHING THEY HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE

"THE GIG BUDDIES SUPPORT AND TICKETS HELPED ME SEE THINGS THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN ABOUT OR COULDN'T AFFORD."
GIG BUDDIES MEMBER

£5820 IN PUBLIC DONATIONS

2 QUIZZES

6 BANDS

AND MORE!

5 COMEDIANS

2 KILT WALKS

THANK YOU!

"GIG BUDDIES GIVES ME CONFIDENCE. IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SO MANY PEOPLE TO SHARE DIFFERENT GIGS WITH."
SARAH, GIG BUDDIES MEMBER

202 MEMBERS

187 PAIRINGS SINCE 2016

AND MANY MORE FRIENDSHIPS

64 VOLUNTEERS

THANK YOU! ❤️

WE RAN A TOTAL OF: **89** SOCIALS! TOTAL ATTENDANCE OF: **847**

ACROSS **3** AREAS

GIG BUDDIES EDINBURGH

GIG BUDDIES WEST LOTHIAN

GIG BUDDIES GLASGOW

283 PEOPLE TRAINED IN DISABILITY AWARENESS + ACCESS SINCE 2023

"I FEEL LIKE IN THE PAST I'VE MISSED OUT ON A LOT. GIG BUDDIES GIVES ME MORE INDEPENDENCE AND CHOICE."
BECKY, GIG BUDDIES MEMBER

"GIG BUDDIES GET IT. FROM THE STAFF, TO THE VOLUNTEERS, AND OTHER MEMBERS. IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S LIVES."
GIG BUDDIES MEMBER

15 OF US SPENT **3** DAYS AND NIGHTS AT KELBURN GARDEN PARTY

 Gig Buddies with Thera Trust

 @gigbuddiesthera

GIG BUDDIES THERA TRUST

 Thera Trust®

 West Lothian Council

 COMMUNITY FUND

2025 In Numbers...

Just The Text.

We've continued to run more socials, given away more Edinburgh Festival tickets than ever, had more public donations than ever. And, thanks to our project partners we've given away more free tickets than ever before. Thanks to all the venues, organisations and artists that made the year what it was. This is our 2025 in numbers...

We have **202** Gig Buddies members across Scotland.

We have **64** incredible volunteers!

We've created **187** pairs of Gig Buddies since 2016, and many more friendships.

Across **3** areas we ran a total of **89** socials and the total attendance was **847** people.

We raised **£5819** in public donations. (Wow, thank you so much!)

16 Gig Buddies fundraised with the Kiltwalk.

We raised over **£1200** thanks to Pilot Beer's Drinklusion fund.

We've now trained **283** people in Learning Disability and Autism Training.

15 of us **3** days and nights spent at Kelburn Garden Party

We gave away **265** tickets to the Edinburgh Festivals.

We held **29** group socials in August.

Thanks to our amazing project partners, we gave away **760** free tickets, worth **£21455!**

'It has changed my life to go out more and choose what I go to.'
- Ross, Gig Buddies Member

Gigs we've been to in 2025!

This year we have been to lots of music gigs, as local area socials but also with our Gig Buddies pairs through our amazing project partners. Here's just some of the events and artists we've seen this year...



Kikuo, The Rifles, Max Cooper, Hamish Hawk, Bowling for Soup, Emei, Jazz Sabbath, Georgia Cecile, David Gray, Deacon Blue, Amplifi, SCO, Zutons, Skunk Anansie, Rodger Daltrey, Toots and Maytals, Olly Murs, Pygmy Twylyte, RSN, Taiko Drummers, Olly Murs, Wet Leg, Ivy Big Band, Wide Days, Meatopia, Pulp, Robyn Red, Quadrophenia, Hidden Door, Sex Pistols, Love Music Community Choir, Sting, Simple Minds, Brian Jonestown Massacre, Macy Gray, Stereophonics, Sophie B Hawkins, Alanis Morissette, Kendrick Lamar, Catfish and the Bottlemen, TRNSMT, Country Club, Curtis Stiger, Hot dub time machine, Kelburn Garden Party, Lindisfarne, One night in Nashville, David Gray, Guns 2 Roses, Tom Grennan, The Castros, Lewis Capaldi, ZZTOPPD, James Morrison, McFly/Busted, The Kooks, Blow Monkeys + Christians, Larkin Poe, Sophie Ellis Bextor, Biffy Clyro, Jen Brister, Breabach, Ultimate Rave, Brett Young, Steve Reich+, Buller Blake + Grant, Horse, Pop will Eat Itself, Steeleye Span, Simon + Oscar, Fun Lovin Criminals, Wheatus, Flook, Stereolab, Amy Macdonald.

Gig Buddies Ticket Giveaways

We are so lucky to have Gig Buddies project partners who offer us free tickets to so many events. This year we have been able to offer **760** tickets to our members and volunteers to get out to events, from local grassroots venues, and larger venues across the country.

The free ticket offers are available for all members and volunteers, they can search for some events themselves, some venues send us tickets to specific events, or we search and request events on their behalf and offer them to members in a lottery draw.

Here are just some of the events we have been to this year!

Emma and Scott went to see Stereophonics, Kendrick Lamar and Rodger Daltrey:

“Scott and I had the best night at Kendrick Lamar thank you! It was such an amazing show and even though it wouldn't be our usual music taste it's safe to say Kendrick made two new fans last night. Brilliant to be able to share that experience with Scott!” - Emma, Gig Buddy Volunteer.



“Scott had a blast night, loved it. Had lots of fun with Emma, the seats were amazing. The two of them talked about it all the way home!” - Scott’s mum.

Mel and Daniel have been to see Skunk Anansie and Lewis Capaldi:

**“Thank you for the Lewis Capaldi tickets, I had a great time!”
- Mel, Gig Buddies member.**



Malcolm and Stephen went to see Catfish and Bottlemen, Pulp and Biffy Clyro:

“Malcolm loved the gig!” - Stephen after Biffy Clyro.

Andy and Kenneth went to see Simple Minds:

“The gig on Friday with Kenneth went really well and he thoroughly enjoyed it...Taking the car allowed us to stay to the very end. We also saw the full set from Future Islands and KT Tunstall too. Simple Minds were brilliant and Kenneth definitely enjoyed them! Facilities on the accessible platform were great and the volunteers there were really helpful.”

- Andy, Gig Buddy Volunteer.

Coby went to see Tom Grennan and Sting:

“Tom Grennan was amazing, I love him so much!” -Coby.

“The accessible staff where so lovely and the area is fantastic. They have a sensory tent too for anyone who needs to chill. You can order drinks and food to the seats as the hospitality staff were getting it. They had ponchos for everyone if it started raining and plenty big portaloos, all in the one area. Coby was really comfortable the whole time.”

-Coby's mum's feedback after the Sting gig.



If you would like to request tickets for a gig search GigsinScotland.com and let us know if there is anything you would like to see. Our requests can only be considered the month before the gig, and tickets aren't guaranteed.

You can also check out our other project partners event listings:

Room 2, Glasgow. Room-2.co.uk

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh. TheQueensHall.net

SWG3, Glasgow. SWG3.TV

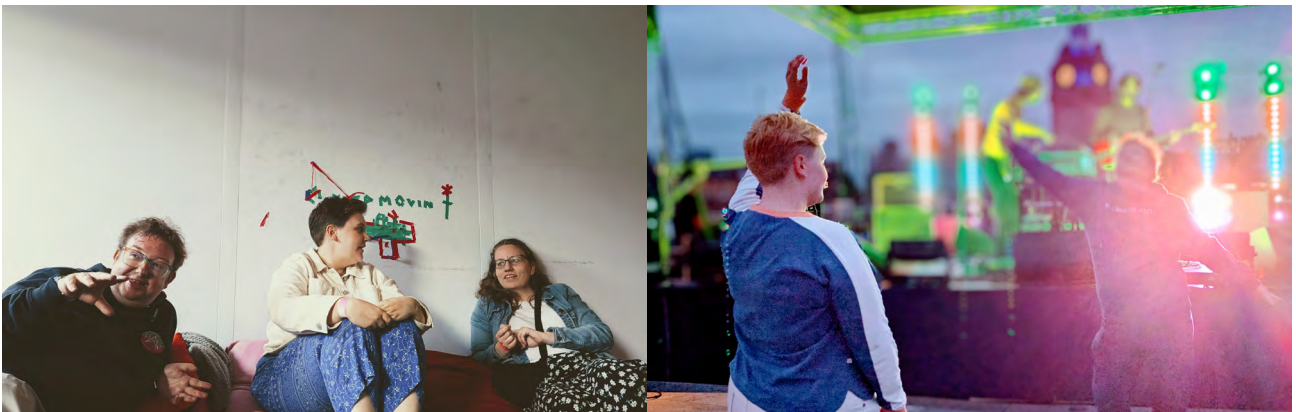
La Belle, Edinburgh. La-BelleAngele.com

Let us know if there is anything you would like to see and we will request tickets on your behalf. Tickets can be for you and your gig buddy, or you can go with with your friend, family or support.

More information on our community partners can be found at the end of this newsletter.

After having a pause on member and volunteer sign ups in 2024, we opened back up to new people this year, welcoming lots of new faces as well as creating 10 new Gig Buddies pairings.

It's also been great to see so many more connections being made outside of people's usual Gig Buddies pairings. Daniel and Joseph had a great time in December at a Queen's Hall comedy night after getting to know each other at Kelburn Garden Party. Gig Buddies member Paul got out to his first Gig Buddies event after local volunteer Anna offered a spare ticket to a poetry event thanks to Push The Boat Out Festival. And a group of Gig Buddies members and volunteers met up one night at Hidden Door without the involvement of our staff team. It's wonderful to see so many relationships thriving in our community.



We've continued to develop our relationships with the brilliant Queen's Hall and La Belle, who have kindly donated countless tickets to fantastic gigs throughout the year. We also made an exciting new connection with Hidden Door festival, a 5 day multi-art festival right on our doorstep every June. Look out in 2026 for more details!



Another great story from our community is Karl and Stephan. We introduced them to each other back in July and they've since developed a fantastic relationship through their love of football! So much so that they present a live podcast together every Saturday morning over on Youtube. Listen to it at the link below.

[Listen here!](#)

In 2025 we've had 25 local socials! We've returned to the Glasgow Mela, the Glasgow Comedy Festival and the Glasgow Film Festival. We've had 12 pub socials! And of course, we've taken in a huge array of live music ranging from local Indie bands like the Castros all the way to the Estonian Philharmonic Choir!

We even had a go at line dancing at Maggie May's- though the project coordinator may have danced right into a pillar on a few occasions!

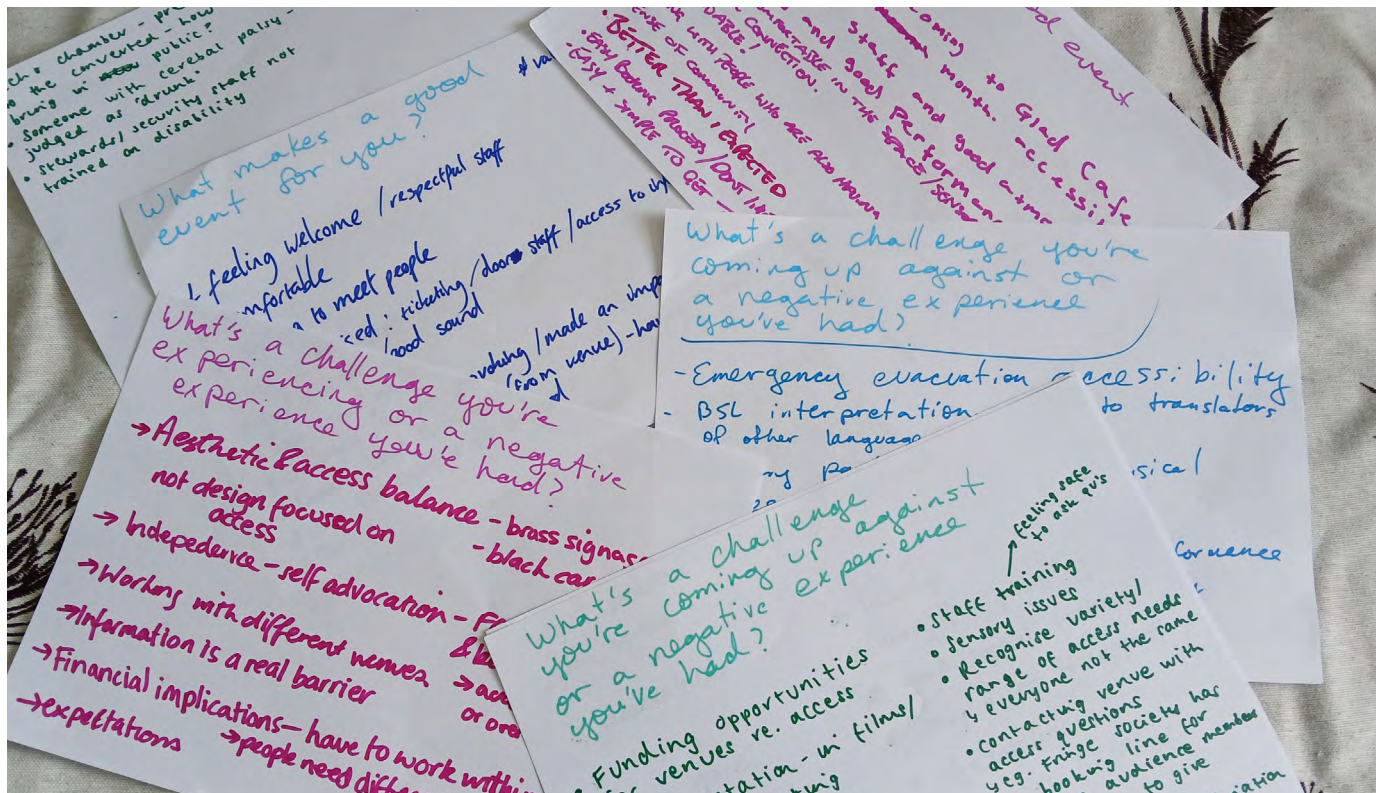


**The Estonian Philharmonic
Orchestra performing at
City Halls**

**Reely Jiggered
performing at
Glasgow Mela**



We've continued to build on our great relationships with arts partners like the OVO Hydro, Glasgow Film Theatre, Room 2, DF Concerts, SWG3 and Glasgow Life. Our partners have supported us with many exciting ticket giveaways, and this year we brought our partners together for a 'Big Access Chat,' where we shared our ideas about how we can make live music more accessible for everyone. This event brought together Gig Buddies staff and members, arts professionals and colleagues from the world of social care. The event was a great success and we hope to do even more events like it in the future.



We've created 11 new Gig Buddies pairings, bringing the total active pairings to 21. We've also seen lots of friendships form at our social events and we've helped connect people less formally through the Gig Buddies Collective. Pairings and pals have celebrated birthdays together and gone to gigs big and small.

'We had a brilliant night at Deacon Blue. I've been buzzin for it! Iain (a fellow member) had a support ticket and his buddy couldn't make it so he invited me, and i thought 'Why not?' It was great! - Michelle, Gig Buddies Member

Gig Buddies West Lothian has had 27 local area socials this year. Our regular pub social at Chain Runner continues to be our most popular social, and we have just had our final pub meet up with 22 of us all getting together for our Xmas pub meet up. We had to stop our monthly meet ups to play pool due to a fire at the Cawburn Inn but we have now changed venue and meet monthly at The Bunker, Deer Park. We've been enjoying learning to play pool, and the friendly competition! Our socials are open to all members and volunteers, come and join us in the new year, we'd love to see you!





In April we had 2 fundraising socials, a pub quiz at Chain Runner, and a gig at Purple Orange, you can read about them later in this newsletter.

In May we went to see Shrek the Musical at Howden Park Centre. In June we went to Hidden Door Arts Festival in Edinburgh.

In July a few West Lothian members and volunteers joined us at Kelburn Garden Party for the weekend, which you can also read more about it later in this newsletter! August was jam packed with Edinburgh Festival group socials, it was great to have so many West Lothian members and volunteers join us!

In November a group of us joined up with some Edinburgh members and volunteers for the Festive Lights at the Edinburgh Botanic.



Edinburgh Festivals

'Gig Buddies provide a lot of information. It's good to know that they're helping people and letting them know how to get out more. It's reassuring.' - **David, Gig Buddies member.**

This year we gave away over 250 tickets to events at the Edinburgh Festivals, enabling adults with a learning disability and autistic adults to see more shows they love, discover new ones, catch up with friends, and make new ones. Every August the population of Edinburgh doubles, with hundreds of thousands of people flocking to city to take part in and enjoy: The Edinburgh International Festival, The Edinburgh Festival Fringe, The Edinburgh International book Festival, The Edinburgh Children's Festival, The Edinburgh Art Festival, The Edinburgh Film Festival, and The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Together these make The Edinburgh Festivals the largest performing arts festival on the planet. With such a variety of events on our doorstep, we want to ensure the people we support are confident in access events that interest them, and also have the opportunity to discover others.



Gig Buddies Volunteers and Robin Ince



This year we offered 29 group socials across August as well as giving away pairs of tickets to many other shows.

'I live in Glasgow and I'd heard about the Edinburgh festivals but getting involved with Gig buddies was the first time I actually went to Festivals. I now know how to access festival events and do with my friends, but if it wasn't for the support from gig buddies and the relationships they have, I would probably only be able to go to free fringe events.' - **David, Gig Buddies member**

The relationships we've built with the festivals mean that Gig Buddies members are discovering a wealth of opportunities on their doorstep. 100% of attendees told us they saw something new this year, with 64% also going back to shows they've loved from previous years. 57% of attendees told us that they saw more shows this year than they have before. And it's not just new shows people are seeing, 93% of Gig Buddies members met new people at our festival socials this year. And it's not just people from Edinburgh getting involved either! Gig Buddies with Thera Trust supports people across the Scottish central belt, and for many people the project helps them to develop their confidence and social networks to the point where accessing things further afield becomes realistic.

'Gig Buddies tickets and support helped me to see things that I might not have thought about or been able to access or afford.'

- Gig Buddies member

Our members also tell us that the support from Gig Buddies is a big driver for them in getting out to the festivals and helping remove barriers they face. 100% agree that Gig Buddies helps them to access the festivals, with 71% greatly agreeing with this statement. Further to this, 93% feel that being part of Gig Buddies makes the Edinburgh Festivals more affordable for them.

'It supported me to see different things and get time away from family support.' - Gig Buddies member

85% of festival attendees this year told us they felt more confident to return to the festivals next year, and with 2026 being Gig Buddies with Thera Trust's 10th anniversary, we can't wait for what it has in store!

'Gig Buddies has changed my social life for the better.'

- Gig Buddies member



A group of Gig Buddies at The Jaffa Cake Musical

Hidden Door and Kelburn

At Gig Buddies we love getting out to Festivals, whether they are on our doorstep or further away. We love the opportunity to share the music and culture with our members. Festivals are a great place to explore music and build relationships with each other.

In June, we teamed up with Hidden Door festival in Edinburgh for the first time. Hidden Door offers 5 days of art and music in 'transformed forgotten spaces'. After the festival, we caught up with Robert, and here's what he had to say about it:

'I didn't know Hidden Door existed before I went along with Gig Buddies. I struggle to find out about events on my own. Gig Buddies told me about Hidden Door and I started to look at the website and talk about it with my Gig Buddy. I find crowds and noises very overwhelming. Going along with people as part of Gig Buddies gives me confidence to be in the crowd and have a good time. Gig Buddies works. It supports people with a learning disability to get involved. Hidden door was new to me, but through Gig Buddies, I'm involved.' - Robert, Gig Buddies member



Hidden Door Festival



Sarah and Mike at Kelburn Garden Party

‘[I had] never been to a festival before...I feel like I’ve missed out on a lot. I’ve never been to anything like this. I’d been wanting to get out with Gig Buddies for ages. It’s really good fun. Getting involved with things like Gig Buddies gives me more independence and choice.’ - Becky, Gig Buddies member

Camping Festivals, are a lot of fun! They enable you to spend several days seeing your favourite bands, discovering new ones, and immerse yourself in a cool locations with like minded people. They’re everything Gig Buddies strives to enable people to achieve.

Since joining Gig Buddies, many of our members are no stranger to music festivals. Almost 40 of us had a brilliant time at Doune the Rabbit Hole back in 2022, and we’ve had a wonderful relationship with Kelburn Garden Party since 2022, with a small group of Gig Buddies attending each year to run a Gig Buddies information stall across the weekend. It’s been great to see them support our project, but also see their commitment to better supporting neurodivergent audiences in general. So at the start of July, 17 of us headed to the West Coast of Scotland for a party at Kelburn!

'Coming along with Gig Buddies gives me confidence, but also information about what's out there to go to. I'll be looking at festivals that are coming up next year and seeing how I might be able to go. Through Gig Buddies I've met so many different people, it feels like a big happy family. It's good to have people to share different gigs with.'

- Sarah, Gig Buddies member

Here are some of our highlights from this year's Kelburn Garden Party:



'Racecar were good. It's nice how much ceilidh type and folk music was on. I also discovered the café that's open year round.' - Neil

'I liked everything, it was all great except the mud!' - Kirsty

'The best part was the bumpy bus and getting to dance at the top of the mountain. There was a Bluetooth speaker so we got to connect our phones and play our own music and have a dance.'

- Kev

'Kelburn was a brilliant experience for me. There was loads. I quite liked looking at the river and climbing the glen. I've seen that many bands, I don't remember most of them.' - Mike



'The drag shows, they were brilliant... and winning 2 free tickets to next year's festival!' - Joseph



Gig Buddies Fundraising

In February we launched our first ever Donation Drive. Through public donations, donations from fantastic organisations like Pilor Beer and the St James Quarter, and through delivering our Accessibility Awareness training, we're on track to have raised over £10,000 by the end of December!

We want to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has donated to Gig Buddies with Thera Trust throughout 2025.

April was filled with fundraisers!

At the start of the month we held our first ever Gig Buddies pub quizzes. The quizzes took place on Thursday 3rd April in Edinburgh, and Friday 4th in Livingston. Thanks to our wonderful friends at Leith Depot and the Chain Runner for hosting, and thanks to our fabulous volunteers Fulvio, Beth, and Heather for writing/hosting the events with us!



“Coby had a great time, even if we did rubbish lol”

- Kirsty, parent of a member.

In Edinburgh, Gig Buddies member Callum and his family took home the prize of a selection of cans from our friends at Pilot Beer, while in Livingston ‘The Goo Goo Gilmours’ won the top prize, a £50 gift voucher, gifted by Chain Runner to spend on food and drink. Our Livingston event finished with a great raffle, with lots of prizes from local businesses, volunteers, and even more beer from our friends at Pilot! Loads of people have requested we host more pub quizzes, and we’ve listened. Look out for these in your local area next year!

We ended April with a gig hosted by our friends at Purple Orange Arts Venue in Bathgate. Four brilliant bands; MIND23T, Lexie Macleod, Minor Kings, and Off the Rails (featuring Gig Buddies Edinburgh member Callum on the drums), brought us a great night of tunes. We then held another huge raffle with lots of fantastic prizes donated from local businesses, volunteers, and the staff and community at Purple Orange. We finished off with a Gig Buddies karaoke session.

“Brilliant night!” - Emma, Gig Buddies volunteer



Snut it Up, with their prize!

“Was a great night, we all had fun. Was lovely meeting other members and volunteers too.” - Janice, Gig Buddy Volunteer.

Overall, our 3 events in April raised an incredible £1139! This all goes towards our aim of improving the social lives of adults with a learning disability, and autistic adults. We will use this money to continue to provide more opportunities for our members to get out to events in their local communities and beyond!

These boots are made for walking!

A team of 16 Gig Buddies members and volunteers completed the Glasgow and Edinburgh Kiltwalks on our behalf this year. Our fantastic team have raised £1969 for Gig Buddies. Gig Buddies volunteer Ed says:

‘Myself and Thomas will be donning the Tartan and taking on the Mighty Stride, a whopping 23 miles! Thomas and I were matched by Gig Buddies in 2023 and have enjoyed countless nights out together. We love our dance music, staying up late and dancing the night away. Our friendship was made possible by Gig Buddies for Thera Trust.’



Gig Buddies at the Glasgow Kiltwalk

Crossmylaff Comedy Fundraiser.

In June 2025 we had our first ever comedy fundraiser at the Glad Café in Glasgow, featuring comedians Tia Boyd, Chris Thorburn, Rory Spence, Hannah Stakes, and Ruth Hunter. The night was hosted by Crossmylaff comedy, who run a monthly comedy night at the Glad featuring local and touring comedians. The night was a great success, raising £495 for Gig Buddies and creating an opportunity to share some laughs! We hope this is the first of many such nights we put on with Crossmylaff.

Hamish Hawk live at Sneaky Pete's

We ended 2025 with an all time high, The Citrines, Redolent, and Hamish Hawk live in one of our favourite places, Sneaky Pete's! A huge thanks to our wonderful volunteer Rachel and the team at Post Electric Artists for organising. Let's do it again soon! We will be announcing the total money raised on social media once it's all counted.

Thanks to everyone who came along to this sold out show. We won't forget it .



Hamish Hawk and Gig Buddies

Gig Buddies Thera

Partner Ticket Offers

We are very lucky to have project partners who kindly offer us free tickets to some of their events and gigs. Members and Gig Buddies pairs can request tickets from the following project partners:

Gigs in Scotland, Scotland - www.gigsinscotland.com

Up to 3 pairs of tickets per month, contact your local area coordinator who will request tickets. Unfortunately, we can't guarantee tickets, and tickets will be confirmed the same month of the gig.

King Tuts, Glasgow - www.kingtuts.co.uk

1 pair of tickets per week, contact your local area coordinator who will request tickets.

Queen Hall, Edinburgh - www.thequeenshall.net

Free tickets to any gigs presented by Queens Hall, we can request tickets for other gigs by external promoters though these aren't guaranteed.

SEC, Glasgow - www.sec.co.uk

A free pair of tickets to some of the gigs and events hosted at SEC, requests depend on availability and may not be available.

SWG3, Glasgow - www.swg3.tv

A free pair of tickets to any SWG3 gigs, requests depend on availability and may not be available.

Room 2, Glasgow - www.room-2.co.uk

Free tickets to Room 2 promoted events/gigs. Other events may be requested but may not be available.

These venues/organisations also offer us opportunities throughout the year, including free tickets for Gig Buddies members and pairings:

- **Edinburgh Fringe Festival**
- **Edinburgh International Festival**
- **Edinburgh International Book Festival**
- **La Belle, Edinburgh**
- **Summerhall, Edinburgh**
- **Sneaky Pete's, Edinburgh**
- **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**
- **Howden Park Centre, Livingston**
- **Livingston Football Club**
- **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**
- **Scottish Fiddle Orchestra**

Thanks to all of our arts partners for their generosity throughout 2025!



A manifesto for an ordinary life:

This is what adults with learning disabilities have told us they need to be able to lead an 'ordinary life'

- Choose where I live and who I live with
- Choose my support staff
- Have happy staff who love their job
- Choose my friends and have a social life
- Choose how I spend my time
- Choose what time I go to bed
- I want the right to have relationships and a sex life
- I want to be active and welcome in my community
- I want to have a proper paid job
- I don't want bad stuff said about me in the media because of my disability

Nothing special, just ordinary. Right!

Contact us for more info.

If you have any questions about anything in this newsletter or simply want to find out more, please contact your local project coordinator.



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