



ANNUAL REPORT

2025/2026

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Introduction

The past year has been one of achievement, growth and opportunity for Ability Shetland. Thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, trustees, participants, families and supporters, we have continued to expand our services while celebrating the incredible achievements of the people we support.

From national sporting success and award-winning volunteers, to the launch of our new Family Support Service, this has been a year filled with milestones.

We have strengthened our commitment to ensuring that children, young people and adults with additional support needs, learning disabilities and their families have access to meaningful opportunities, support and inclusion across Shetland.

None of this would have been possible without the continued generosity of our funders, donors and local community. Thank you to everyone who has played a part in another successful year.



Davie Gardner –
Chairperson



Sporting Success

This has undoubtedly been a landmark year for learning disability sport in Shetland.

For the first time, Shetland sent a team to the Scottish Learning Disability Sport Games, where our athletes competed with determination, pride and exceptional sportsmanship.

The team returned home with an outstanding 15 medals, comprising:

- 5 Gold
- 5 Silver
- 5 Bronze

Athletes competed across a range of sports including:

- Boccia
- Bowls
- Football
- Swimming
- Badminton



These achievements are a testament not only to the commitment of our athletes but also to the coaches, volunteers and families who supported them throughout their journey.

The trip itself was only possible thanks to the phenomenal fundraising efforts of the athletes, their families and friends, who collectively raised over £30,000 to cover transport, accommodation and team kit. Following the successful completion of the Games, the remaining funds have been placed into a Legacy Fund to support future participation in national competitions.

National Recognition

The achievements of our participants continued to receive recognition throughout Scotland.

During Scottish Learning Disability Week we celebrated the stories, ambitions and achievements of many of the people we support, highlighting their talents, aspirations and the positive impact they make within our community.

We were also incredibly proud that a motion was lodged in the Scottish Parliament by Beatrice Wishart MSP recognising the achievements of Connor, Caleb and Erin at the Scottish Disability Sport National Schools' Boccia Championships 2025.

Connor made history by becoming the first Shetland boccia player to win a medal at a national boccia competition—an achievement that inspires future generations of athletes across the islands.



We are here,
and we feel
proud of our
achievements.





Shetland Sports Awards

The success of our Learning Disability Sport programme was recognised locally at the Shetland Sports Awards.

We were delighted that Beverly and Laura received the Volunteer of the Year Award in recognition of their tireless work in supporting Shetland's first ever team to attend the Scottish Learning Disability Sport Games.



Ability Shetland sponsored the Inclusivity Award for the 4th year running, with Bressay parkrun, Shetland Canoe Club and Charis Scott contending for the title. Charis was the winner for 2025, where she was recognised for her work with Ability Shetland, coaching at the Shetland Boccia Club and efforts as team manager at the Scottish Learning Disability Games in July.

She was hailed for her phenomenal work and dedication to those with disabilities.

The Learning Disability Sport Team was also shortlisted for Team of the Year, a fantastic acknowledgement of the commitment, teamwork and achievements of everyone involved. Congratulations to everyone who made this possible.



Developing Our Family Support

A significant milestone this year was the launch of Ability Shetland's new Family Support Service.

Thanks to funding from the Shetland Community Benefit Fund, the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and the Shetland Charitable Trust, we have been able to introduce a dedicated Family Support Coordinator post.

The new service provides coordinated support for families through:

- ASN Holiday Club
- Family Fun Days
- Sibling Support
- Parent and carer support
- Training opportunities for parents / carers
- Young Carers activities
- Under 5s provision

This investment reflects our commitment to supporting not only individuals but the whole family, recognising the invaluable role families play in helping people thrive.

Holiday Club

Our ASN Holiday Club continues to provide safe, enjoyable and inclusive opportunities for children and young people during school holidays.

This year we were delighted with the outcome of our inspection, receiving ratings of Good and Very Good across all areas.

Congratulations to Catriona and the entire team for their outstanding work. You can view the inspection report here –

https://www.abilityshetland.com/site/assets/files/1657/inspectionreport-324285_1.pdf

The inspection included several recommendations, all of which have now been successfully addressed through our Action Plan, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement.



Learning and Development

Investing in our staff, volunteers and wider community remains central to delivering high-quality services.

During the year we facilitated and delivered a wide range of training opportunities including:

- Disability Inclusion Training
- Disability Awareness training
- Understanding Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) in Children and Young People
- Neurodivergence and Our Environments
- Coping with Christmas
- Supporting Autistic Young People to Understand Sexuality and Gender

We were also delighted to welcome Sarah Templeton to Shetland, providing valuable expertise and learning opportunities for professionals and families in a variety of settings, on the condition that is ADHD.

These sessions have helped strengthen knowledge, confidence and understanding across our workforce and the wider community and encouraged partnership working for the better of those we support.

Individual Support



Our Sports Support Worker has continued to provide flexible, person-centred support, enabling people with disabilities to achieve the goals that matter most to them. Recognising that every individual's journey is unique, the service adopts a holistic approach, working alongside participants, families and professionals to identify aspirations, overcome barriers, and promote greater independence, confidence and inclusion in sport and physical activity.

In addition to supporting participation in sport and physical activity, we provide tailored one-to-one support to help individuals access a wide range of opportunities within their communities. This may include attending social activities, developing independent living skills, building confidence, accessing education, volunteering or employment opportunities, and ensuring people have the right level of support to participate safely and meaningfully in our clubs, events and activities.

We support individuals through Self-Directed Support (SDS), enabling them to use their support in ways that reflect their personal goals and assessed outcomes. We work closely with Shetland Islands Council Social Work Services, individuals and their families to ensure people have genuine choice and control over how their support is delivered, providing the right care, at the right time, in the way that best meets their needs. By offering flexible, personalised support, we help people maximise their independence, participate fully in community life, and achieve outcomes that are important to them.

Community Activities

Building inclusive communities remains at the heart of Ability Shetland.

This year we continued to develop partnerships and encourage participation through a variety of activities, including our successful collaboration with the local Parkrun community and our annual fundraising events such as the Winter Ball and Summer Sunday Teas.

We delivered 19 clubs across Shetland to people of all ages and abilities that promoted inclusivity in social and recreational settings. Helping to reduce isolation and loneliness that often comes with being affected by disability.

An important aspect of the service is creating opportunities beyond Ability Shetland. We continue to build strong relationships with local sports clubs, leisure providers, coaches and community organisations, helping to create more inclusive environments where individuals with disabilities can participate alongside others and continue their journey within their local community.



Partnership Working

Throughout the year, Ability Shetland has continued to work in partnership with local organisations, community groups and national charities to improve opportunities, promote inclusion and ensure the voices of disabled people are heard.

We supported the Shetland Amenity Trust Junior Rangers Programme, enabling young people with additional support needs to participate in outdoor learning and environmental activities alongside their peers.

Working alongside artists Jane and Anna Cockayne and the New Life Church Youth Group, we took part in the Putting Shetland on the Map project. Participants from our Whalsay Youth Club, Walls Saturday Club and ASN Holiday Club enjoyed a range of creative arts and crafts activities before taking the project's iconic "pink chair" to places that were special to them across Shetland. Their photographs and stories were brought together in a book, which was published in December.

In partnership with Shetland Community Connections and Inclusion Scotland, we facilitated a Disability Hustings event at Islesburgh Community Centre. The event gave disabled people, individuals with long-term conditions and unpaid carers the opportunity to hear from election candidates, take part in a locally facilitated question and answer session chaired by Jane Moncrieff, and ensure that the Disability Manifesto was presented directly to candidates. This helped place the experiences and priorities of disabled people at the centre of local election discussions.

Our team organised a conference in partnership with the Scottish Coalition for ADHD, attended by around 40 professionals from a range of sectors. The charity also presented at the Third Sector Forum, raising awareness of the support and services the coalition can offer to individuals, families and partner organisations.

Our Sports Team continued to promote inclusive physical activity by delivering Boccia training sessions and demonstrations across both adult and children's services. Training was provided to groups including Project Search, Over 60s groups, the Scottish Women's Institute and teachers in rural schools. By equipping staff and volunteers with the skills and confidence to deliver Boccia independently, we have helped create more inclusive opportunities for people to take part in physical activity across Shetland.

Governance

Our Board of Trustees continues to provide strong leadership and strategic direction for the charity, as well as ongoing support and advice to the staff team based in Market House.

During the year we were delighted to welcome two new trustees:

Fiona Nicolson
Michelle Hughson



Michelle has taken on the role of Board Secretary, while Fiona brings valuable expertise to help develop our fundraising strategy.

We look forward to benefiting from their knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment in the years ahead.

Volunteers

Ability Shetland would not be where it is today without the dedication, commitment and generosity of our incredible volunteers. They play a vital role across every area of the organisation, contributing their time, skills and enthusiasm to help us deliver high-quality services and opportunities for people with disabilities.

Our volunteers support us in a wide variety of roles, including assisting at clubs and activities, skippering our accessible boat, serving as Trustees, helping at events, and providing invaluable behind-the-scenes support. Their contribution enables us to reach more people, offer a broader range of activities, and continue making a positive difference throughout Shetland.

We are proud that many of our volunteers are recognised through the Saltire Awards Scheme, which celebrates the achievements of young volunteers. For those outside the Saltire age range, Voluntary Action Shetland's Peerie Trows and Willin Haands awards provide well-deserved recognition of the valuable contribution volunteers make to our community.

To every one of our volunteers – thank you. Your passion, kindness and commitment are at the heart of everything we do, and we are truly grateful for the difference you make.

What our volunteers say

“..because it’s voluntary it’s not something you’re bound to do forever, and there are so many benefits to volunteering. Like gaining experience, collecting hours to go towards earning saltire awards, or even getting a job through volunteering.”



“You don’t need to commit to every week, but that hour you put aside to volunteer could be one of the best hours of your week.”

“Being a volunteer is part of my identity.. Without volunteers, groups wouldn’t be able to run and I feel lucky to have the opportunity to be a small part in someone’s sporting journey.”

“It’s very rewarding, seeing how much of a difference you can make to someone’s day”

Our Funders



Ability Shetland gratefully acknowledges the generous support received during 2025–2026 from:

- Shetland Islands Council
- Shetland Charitable Trust
- BBC Children in Need
- Bank of Scotland Foundation
- Shared Care Scotland
- Whalsay Community Council
- Scottish Children's Lottery
- National Lottery
- Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (VAS)
- Shetland Community Benefit Fund
- Three Guineas Trust
- RS Macdonald Charitable Trust
- Tesco Groundwork
- Early Adopter Communities Project
- People's Health Trust
- Coastal Communities Fund
- Zetland Educational Trust Fund

Alongside these grants, Ability Shetland has continued to benefit from the generosity of our local community through collecting tins placed in businesses across Shetland, community fundraising events, donations from individuals and support from local businesses, organisations and community groups.

Every contribution, no matter the size, makes a real difference.

Incredible Fundraising Support

Once again, our supporters have gone above and beyond in raising funds for Ability Shetland.

Members of the Shetland Ravens took on the challenging Hams o Roe Roll Challenge, demonstrating teamwork, resilience and determination while raising awareness of inclusive sport.

A special mention must go to Anita Rose Georgeson, whose remarkable fundraising challenge saw her trek through the Everest region despite battling altitude sickness. Anita reached Ama Dablam Base Camp at 14,578 feet, completing the emotional challenge in memory of her son, Stevie, while raising over £6,000 for Ability Shetland.

We also extend our sincere thanks to:

Sanjeev, who represented Ability Shetland in the Great Scottish Run, Laurence, Lynne and Ellie, who completed the London Landmarks Half Marathon in support of our work, and the following groups and organisations for their fundraising activities and donations:

Scholes (previously RSM)

Lerwick Celtic FC

Shoard

Walls Methodist Church

Shetland Caravan Club

Unite

Whalsay School

Bristows Helicopters

Levenwick Surgery

and the individuals donating in memory or celebration of others.



Every mile covered and every pound raised helps ensure we can continue delivering life-changing services throughout Shetland.

Financial Review

	2025/26	2024/25	Change
Total income	£497,141	£425,592	+£71,549
Total expenditure	£461,561	£389,672	+£71,889
Net movement in funds	£35,580	£35,920	-£340
Unrestricted funds	£113,799	£76,151	+£37,648
Restricted funds	£31,003	£21,999	+£9,004
Restricted capital funds	£24,263	£35,335	-£11,072
Total funds	£169,065	£133,485	+£35,580

Ability Shetland experienced continued growth during 2025/26, with total income increasing by £71,549 to £497,141. This included a significant increase in income from charitable activities, reflecting the development and expansion of services delivered during the year. Expenditure also increased, to £461,561, as the organisation continued to invest in the delivery of its charitable activities and respond to the needs of disabled children, adults and families across Shetland.

Overall, total funds increased from £133,485 to £169,065 at the year end.



Who have we supported

80 adults with disabilities through clubs and group activities!

Number of children and young people supported through clubs and group activities

125

159

parents and carers.

18 individuals through direct 1:1 outcome based support.

Participant Feedback

“As my son’s full time unpaid carer I find the weekends and Holidays particularly challenging as we don’t have the routine or break from our caring role that we get from school days, and as our caring role is 24/7 this can become intense and exhausting. Ability Shetland offers a safe, reliable and fun environment for our kids where they can be themselves and take part in a whole range of activities they love which therefore allows us as their carers to have an opportunity to either rest, get ontop of our other responsibilities and also gives our non-disabled son an opportunity to spend quality time with his parents that we otherwise struggle to have. He can choose to do activities with us that are inaccessible or difficult to do with his brothers, and have a rare opportunity to have our full attention. He relishes in these days and we are so thankful that Ability Shetland supports us as a whole family. We would be lost without them!”

“A great example of an appropriate ASN space being utilised for the inclusion of bairns of all needs! Done right, it looks like this! Ability Shetland are the gold standard in Shetland, others should take notice”.

“Just a quick message to say how much the Shetland Stroke Support Group enjoyed our Boccia Taster session with Avril this afternoon at Quoys. We had lots of fun, and Avril explained everything to us well, encouraging everyone to join in and feel involved”.

“I've been mam to neurodiverse bairns for over 20 years and worked in schools even longer, and never have I had training as valuable as this. So much so that I have been nagging workforce development to get in contact with Corrie!!”

Looking Ahead



As we look ahead to the coming year, we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. We will continue to strengthen our relationships with community groups, businesses and local organisations, working together to create a more inclusive Shetland where everyone has the opportunity to take part, contribute and belong. By building these partnerships, we can reduce barriers and ensure people have the right support to live active, connected and fulfilling lives.

We remain committed to growing our support and expanding our social and sporting opportunities. We will continue to develop services that respond to the changing needs of disabled people and their families. Everything we do is driven by our belief that everyone should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Looking back over the past year, we are incredibly proud of all that has been achieved. None of it would have been possible without the dedication of our staff, the generosity of our volunteers, the encouragement of our families, the commitment of our partners and funders, and, most importantly, the determination and enthusiasm of the people we support. Every achievement, whether big or small, represents someone gaining confidence, making new friendships, learning new skills or enjoying experiences that may once have seemed out of reach.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of Ability Shetland's journey this year. Your support, kindness and belief in what we do make an enormous difference. Together, we are helping to build a community where disabled people are valued, included and empowered to live the lives they choose.



Staff Team

Stephanie Bain – Team Leader

Catriona Thomson – Family Support Coordinator

Holly Leask – Fieldworker

Megan Keppie – Sports Support Worker

Ingrid Isbister – Admin Assistant

Marc Robertson – Sports Development Coordinator