

TOGETHER

thistle
Foundation

For Thistle Supporters • Summer2021

Dear Thistle Supporters,

On behalf of everyone at Thistle, a heartfelt thank you for your continuing support.

Because of you, we've kept going, supporting people with long-term health conditions throughout the pandemic. For many months, this support has been online and by phone, but now we're delighted to be welcoming small numbers of people back to our Centre of Wellbeing for classes and support in a Covid-secure space. Thank you.

Over the past sixteen months, we have seen a health crisis – Covid-19 – become a life crisis for many people. Loneliness and isolation have contributed to widespread poor mental health. Whether due to the loss of a loved one or through illness, shielding, physical distancing, self-isolating, or ill-health, the pandemic has affected all of our

lives and has had most impact on those who were already struggling with a long-term health condition.

At Thistle we believe that people deserve more than just surviving with a long-term health condition – we believe life is for living. And, thanks to your ongoing support, we're still here so that a person's health crisis doesn't become a life crisis.

With best wishes for a safe and relaxing summer.

Mark Hoolahan
CEO



WELCOME

BACK!

We are delighted to have been able to gradually reopen our Centre of Wellbeing and start welcoming you back to our gym, exercise classes and social groups.

We continue to observe government guidelines and are ready to adapt to any future changes in restrictions, but we hope that we can continue to increase capacity and welcome as many of you back as possible to experience that 'little bit of Thistle' that we have missed so much!



“It’s been a long wait but it’s good to be back and I’m feeling the benefits”

“Being back is helping me move better”



If you want to find out what wellbeing support and classes are available – both in-person and remotely – you can get in touch at **0131 661 3366**.

Support for Long Covid

We have seen an increasing number of referrals from people struggling with persistent, debilitating fatigue after having Covid in recent months.

Since December 2020, people living with Long Covid have made up 15% of all our referrals, and this continues to increase. Symptoms can also include breathlessness, muscle pain, and difficulty concentrating.

Thistle has supported people with other post-viral syndromes and ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome for over 15 years and offers personalised support to help people develop strategies to cope with their situation and find their own path to recovery.

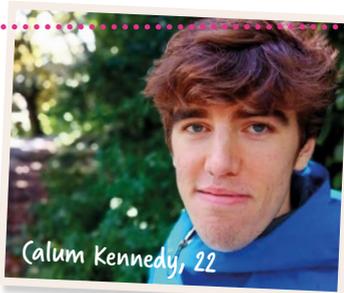
Those already supported by Thistle to cope with living with Long Covid include Callum O'Dwyer, Calum Kennedy and Elspeth McKenzie, whom you might have seen sharing their experiences in the press in July.



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It was extremely reassuring to be able to talk to someone about my fears with regards to my condition, alongside becoming aware of techniques and strategies to manage symptoms and improve my mental health.

Calum



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If you or anyone you know is looking for support, we offer support in-person in Craigmillar (when possible) and remotely across Scotland. Email referrals@thistle.org.uk to find out more.

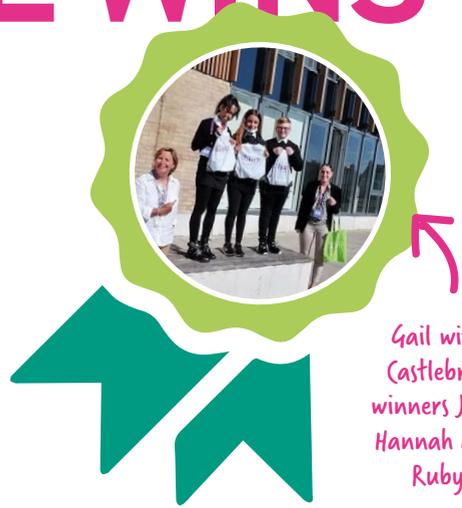
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DOUBLE WINS AT YPI!

A huge thank you and congratulations to students from Castlebrae Community High and Knox Academy who chose to represent Thistle in their schools' Youth and Philanthropy Initiative – and whose presentations each won £3000 for Thistle!

Miss Boak, teacher at Castlebrae, said, "Thistle is well known in the community, and Josh, Hannah and Ruby were keen to learn more and do their best for Thistle. YPI encourages the students to find out about local social issues and the charities working within their communities and exploring the difference their YPI contribution can make."



Gail with Castlebrae winners Josh, Hannah and Ruby

Gail Begg, Thistle's Community Partnership Lead, shared, "We love supporting teams taking part in the YPI initiative. It's amazing to see the enthusiasm the students have for their charities. These last 18 months have been so difficult for charity fundraising and £6000 will go a long way to help us in providing support that is needed now more than ever."



Knox Academy winners Heather, Bethany, Katie and Maya

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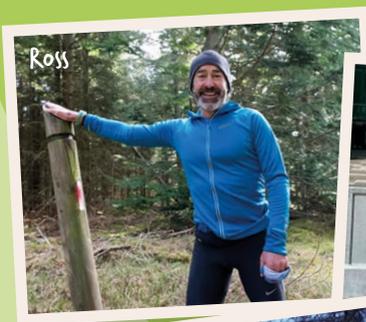
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Kiltwalk

A huge thank you is also in order to our Kiltwalkers Ross, Clare, Dawn, Janette and Sandra, who took part in Scotland's Virtual Kiltwalk in April.

With the generous 50% top up from The Hunter Foundation, they raised a phenomenal £7754 in support of Thistle. This will go a long way in supporting people around Scotland living with long-term health conditions or facing challenging life circumstances. Thank you to everyone who spread the word, donated, and cheered them on – and special thanks to the 40 people who ran with Ross at various stages of his challenge in Glentress Forest and helped him to his amazing achievement.



A health crisis doesn't have to mean a life crisis



Ross Grieve, our Health and Wellbeing Manager, ran an ultramarathon for the Kiltwalk to raise vital funds for our health and wellbeing service. Ross' achievement was all the more remarkable as just a few years ago he underwent heart surgery.

"I've been running for years and love getting out onto the trails. A few years ago, I discovered I had a racing heart and needed surgery. It made such a difference, and I was able to get back to endurance running.

During my ultramarathon, heat and dehydration made it difficult for me to take on food. After 84 miles, we decided to call it a day. I felt much better on Sunday morning though, and started running again, completing a further 40 miles.

In our self-management sessions at Thistle, we often talk about 'fear avoidance'. This is when the worry about something bad happening, or something coming back, stops

people from doing the things that matter to them in life. Fear avoidance is one of the biggest factors leading to disability and reduction in quality of life. Successful self-management is where people are supported to take life-enhancing risks – not unnecessary risks – but being aware enough and knowledgeable enough to weigh up their options and find workarounds to keep living their lives.

I used the lessons I've learned from people I've met who successfully self-manage their health condition – making life enhancing decisions on a day-to-day basis, listening to fear but not giving in to it – to get me back on the trails and ultimately, to reach a distance of 124 miles across the weekend."

"Fear avoidance is one of the biggest factors leading to disability and reduction in quality of life."

Ross during his ultramarathon with his daughter Katie, 16

Planning for **their future**

Thistle's Young People's project is delighted to have run our first ever online Big Plan. Running over eight sessions, we were joined by five young people (along with their family, friends and group supporters) who are looking at leaving secondary school in the next year or so.

The Big Plan looks at what a person wants for their life by focusing on their gifts, strengths, dreams and what really matters to them. It then takes all of this great stuff and considers what it would take to turn the plan into reality. We had lots of fun learning so much about the young people in the group and making plans for their future.

Don't just take our word for it though; here's what some of the young people had to say:

"I feel able to say what I want and need in my life. I feel more in control of my choices."

"It's shown me those little things I have full control over that will get me where I want to be. It was always really friendly, it never felt like there was any pressure."

"I feel I can be listened to."



Until our next newsletter you can keep up to date with all things Thistle by following us on our social media platforms.

www.thistle.org

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