

# 2025/26 Funding Criteria

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults (the Fund) was established in October 2021 and to date has distributed around £66 million to community initiatives supporting mental health and wellbeing across Scotland. Funding for a fifth and sixth year (£15 million each year) was announced in March 2025.

The Fund has a strong focus on prevention and early intervention and aims to support grass roots community groups in tackling mental health inequalities and addressing priority issues of:

- social isolation and loneliness
- suicide prevention
- tackling poverty and inequality.

There will be a continued emphasis in Year 5 and 6 on responding to the ongoing cost of living crisis and on those facing socio-economic disadvantage, with local priorities identified as:

- Suicide Prevention
- Befriending (including one to one befriending/group befriending)
- Friendship/Social Connections
- Address the Cost of Living (whole family poverty/ mitigating child poverty)
- Additional Support Needs activities/services (16+)

The overarching aim of the Fund is to: Support community based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population (aged 16 or over), with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention.

Specifically, it aims to:

1. Tackle mental health inequalities through supporting a range of 'at risk' groups
2. Address priority issues of social isolation/loneliness, suicide prevention and poverty/ inequality with a particular emphasis on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and support to those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
3. Support small 'grass roots' community groups and organisations to deliver such activities.
4. Provide opportunities for people to connect with each other, build trusted relationships and revitalise communities.

The Fund also seeks to contribute to the following national outcomes from the National Performance Framework:

- We are healthy and active.
- We will live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.

Specifically, the intended outcomes of the Fund remain the same as in previous years, and are to:

- Develop a culture of mental wellbeing and prevention within local communities and across Scotland with improved awareness of how we can all stay well and help ourselves and others.
- Foster a strategic and preventative approach to improving community mental health.
- Support the resilience of communities and investing in their capacity to develop their own solutions, including through strong local partnerships.
- Tackle the social determinants of mental health by targeting resources and collaborating with other initiatives to tackle poverty and inequality

### **One-Year and Two-Year Funding Options**

As in previous years, applicants are welcome to apply for one year of funding for their projects. However, for this round, the Scottish Government have included the fund in their Fair Funding Pilot and has introduced the option for organisations to apply for a two-year funding period, subject to the continued availability of grant funding. This pilot has been set up to provide more certainty and allow for longer-term planning, aiming to improve stability and cost-efficiency for organisations and services. You can find out more information about this at: <https://www.gov.scot/news/fairer-funding-for-charities/>

While existing projects are eligible to apply, it is essential that the fund also supports the development of new initiatives. This strategic emphasis is intended to help identify and support new initiatives that were not funded during the first four years.

To promote fairness, innovation, and long-term learning, Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire (VAER) may allocate a proportion of funding specifically for two-year projects. This approach helps to ensure that the benefits of pilot initiatives are sustained, that their longer-term impact can be effectively evaluated and is in line with the new Government guidelines for year 5/6.

VAER recognises that ongoing services delivering strong and demonstrable outcomes may see only modest changes year on year. However, in Years 5 and 6 of the fund, there should be a renewed focus on reaching underrepresented and at-risk groups across East Renfrewshire.

## Who can apply?

The ambition of this Fund is to support initiatives which promote mental health and wellbeing at a small scale, grass roots, community level. It must be accessible, no matter how small or inexperienced they are.

National organisations undertaking initiatives in East Renfrewshire are not excluded but are not the main focus of the Fund and may only be funded by exception i.e where local partnership groups identify a need that cannot be met by applications from grass roots, community level organisations.

Organisations applying do not need to have to have mental health and wellbeing as their sole focus, but, as this is the purpose of this Fund, their application does have to clearly outline how it benefits the mental health and wellbeing of people in their community.

Applications must only be accepted from a range of voluntary, 'not for profit' organisations, associations, groups and clubs or consortiums/partnerships which have a strong community focus for their activities. The range of organisations eligible to apply are:

- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIO)
- Unincorporated Associations
- Companies Limited by Guarantee (must be registered with OSCR)
- Trusts
- Unconstituted groups (for small fund)\*
- Community Interest Companies (CIC) Limited by Guarantee
- Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies
- Community councils
- Parent councils\*\*

\* We can consider funding unconstituted groups, either by supporting them to become constituted, or by allowing a constituted entity (that meets criteria above) to hold a grant for the unconstituted group. The TSI as grant giver would require to be satisfied with arrangements in terms of assurance around monitoring and accountability of spend.

\*\*Please note that parent councils are eligible to apply, subject to the following conditions: -

- The funded activities must meet the aims of the Fund and specifically must focus on supporting young people aged 16 or over or supporting adults rather than their children.
- Any Parent Council applying to this fund must have a statutory duty to keep proper accounts, for which there may already be legal and regulatory requirements for them to do so depending on the status of the Parent Council, for example, some parent councils are registered with OSCR as a charity

## **What type of project can be funded?**

The focus of the Fund is on prevention and early intervention and we would expect all funded projects to focus on one or both of these themes. The focus of the Fund is also on supporting the adult population, which is considered to be members of the population aged 16 and over. Community-based initiatives that promotes and develops good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigates and protects against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population will be considered.

In addition, local partnerships should ensure that funding is allocated to initiatives which have a focus on the priority issues outlined above, i.e.

1. Tackling mental health inequalities, including support to 'at risk' groups (those identified in the Equalities section and any local priority groups) as well as support to the general population.
2. Addressing priority issues of social isolation and loneliness, suicide prevention and poverty and inequality with a particular emphasis on responding to the cost of living crisis and support to those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

Community groups/organisations applying for funding must be involved in collaborative work to deliver the project in some form. Low level collaboration can include:

- Registering on community directory
- Engaging with the VAER
- Sharing experiences via Learning Hub

## **Additional Information**

The Fund must not be seen as a way to replace other funding streams. Granting funds to projects previously funded through statutory bodies is at TSI discretion, however projects must demonstrate value added relative to statutory provision. This will allow projects that meet the Fund's objectives to be considered, but only granted funding if they can demonstrate clear additionality. For instance, a project adds value by addressing unmet needs beyond statutory provision.

Projects must also have a specific community focus rather than providing regional or national coverage. We ask applicants to declare in their application forms whether they are seeking funding from any other TSI area so that this can be considered by the panels and any relevant connections made.

This fund is not intended to replace funding for direct therapeutic interventions such as counselling or CBT, or to fund treatment focused services/projects. The main intention of this fund is to provide a range of broader community supports that can complement clinical care and is an opportunity to support a wide range of approaches to providing emotional and practical support to individuals (for example peer support practices).

## **Fair Work Policy**

There is a requirement for all grant recipients awarded a public sector grant on or after 1 July 2023 are to pay at least the real Living Wage and provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, subject to limits on devolved competence.

With regards to the real Living Wage, the guidance notes that:

All UK-based staff aged 16 and over, including apprentices, whom the grant recipient directly employs, must be paid at least the real Living Wage of £12.60 per hour; and any UK-based workers who are not directly employed but are directly engaged in delivering the grant-funded activity, whether they be sub-contractors or agency staff, must also be paid at least the real Living Wage.

A key condition –is that the real Living Wage policy applies to employers commissioned by grant recipients to deliver an aspect of the grant-funded activity. This means that staff working in the funded community projects should be paid at least the real Living Wage. For more information on the FairWork Policy, please visit: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-2/pages/9/>

## **Who should benefit**

- Women, particularly women experiencing gender-based violence;
- People with a long-term health condition or disability;
- People from a Minority Ethnic background;
- Refugees and those with no recourse to public funds;
- People facing socio-economic disadvantage;
- People experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage;
- People with diagnosed mental illness;
- People affected by psychological trauma (including adverse childhood experiences);
- People who have experienced bereavement or loss
- People disadvantaged by geographical location (particularly remote and rural areas)
- Older people (aged 50 and above)
- People with neurological conditions or learning disabilities, and from neurodiverse communities;
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities;
- Young people aged 16–24.

## **How much can be applied for?**

Small grants up to £2,000. If you are applying for two year funding, the maximum you can request each year is £2,000, meaning you can access up to £4,000 over a two-year period, subject to conditions

Project grants from £2,001 up to £15,000 can be applied for. If you are applying for two-year funding, the maximum you can request each year is £15,000, meaning you can access up to £30,000 over a two year period, subject to conditions\*

\*Second year funding is subject to the following conditions:

- The value of the grant payable in year two is an indicative confirmation and cannot be taken as a guarantee: all indicative funding commitments are subject to the outcome of any spending review by the Scottish Government and approval of the annual Budget Bills by the Scottish Parliament during this period.
- Grantees will be asked to fill out an interim report after the first year, this must be received by the deadline set out in your funding agreement.

## **What can be funded (this list is not exhaustive)**

- Equipment
- One-off events
- Hall hire for community spaces.
- Staff costs (these should be one off or fixed term)
- Training costs
- Transport (to assist participants to access group activities)
- Utilities/running costs
- Volunteer Expenses
- Small capital spend up to £5,000. Applicants can request funding for capital expenditure such as the construction, refurbishment and/or purchase of buildings, amenities or vehicles. The benefits of the capital expenditure must demonstrably contribute to the Fund outcomes. This limitation does not apply to the purchase of small items of equipment.

## **What cannot be funded (this list is not exhaustive)**

- Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest
- Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment
- Political or religious campaigning (please note that faith-based organisations are eligible to apply with the exclusion of any religious campaigning activities or activities restricted only to members of the faith based organisation.
- Profit-making/fundraising activities
- VAT you can reclaim
- Statutory activities
- Overseas travel
- Alcohol

## **Application Process**

Organisations applying for one-year funding can do so via our website after reading this Funding Criteria and our accompanying Application Guidance. Applications are submitted through MS Forms (which does not have a save function). To draft responses in advance, Word templates are available on our website.

Organisations interested in two-year funding are required to discuss their project idea before applying. This helps ensure that the proposed project aligns with the funding criteria. VAER can be contacted at [funding@va-er.org.uk](mailto:funding@va-er.org.uk).

## **Funding Deadlines**

Small grants up to £2,000 will be open from 5pm on Wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2025 and will be accepted on an ongoing basis until the funding runs out.

Project grants will adhere to the following deadline dates:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Deadline: 10am, Monday 14th of July 2025
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Deadline: 10am, Monday 25th of August 2025
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Deadline: 10am, Monday 6th of October 2025

Please note that a strict 10am deadline will be observed on these dates.

## **Grant Conditions**

### **1. Acceptance and Banking Details**

Grantees must sign and return the offer letter within 14 days of receipt, along with their bank account details.

### **2. Participation in Learning Hubs**

Grantees are expected to actively engage with the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Learning Hubs.

Failure to participate may impact eligibility for future funding.

### **3. Media and Promotion**

Grantees will receive a media pack and are required to use it when posting on social media about funded activities.

### **4. Midway Review**

Grantees will be contacted by Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire (VAER) at the midpoint of each year to review project progress and provide support.

### **5. Project Changes**

Any changes to the original project or budget must be approved in advance by VAER. Do not implement changes without prior consent.

### **6. Fair Work Policy**

Grantees must comply with the Fair Work Policy as detailed in the Funding Criteria.