



## West Lothian

COMMUNITIES MENTAL HEALTH &  
WELLBEING FUND FOR ADULTS - Year 5 & 6



# Fund Guidance – Year 5 (2026-27)

## Contents

### **Part 1**      **Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults**

Introduction  
Fairer Funding Pilot  
Fund criteria  
Funding arrangements  
Application process  
Reporting and Evaluation  
Fair Work First Guidance

### **Part 2**      **FAQs**

### **Part 3**      **Further information**

**September 2025**

# Part 1: Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults

## Introduction

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; and
- 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 a particular focus on supporting the six priority family groups identified under [Best Start Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#).

The Fund will continue to be delivered through a locally focused and coordinated approach via local partnership groups (building upon existing partnerships and with TSIs as lead partner), working together to ensure that support to community-based organisations is directed appropriately and in a coherent way. This collaborative approach is more important than ever, giving increasing budget and capacity constraints within individual sectors.

This guidance outlines information on delivery of the Fund for Year 5.

---

## Funding Pilot

For the first time, the opportunity to grant funding across two years has arisen as part of the Scottish Government's [Fairer Funding pilot](#), as part of their commitment to deliver fairer funding for the third sector. The 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.

The main implications of the pilot for the Communities Fund for Years 5 and 6 are as follows:

1. Flexibility to award a mix of 1 and 2 year grants to projects.
2. Around 80% of funding will be reserved for 2-year projects, to ensure the benefits of the pilot are passed on and so that the impact of the pilot can be properly evaluated nationally.

The information gathered will feed into evaluation of the Fairer Funding pilot.

## Fund value

**£465k** is available for West Lothian based 'voluntary and Third Sector' organisations for activity in 2026/27.

- £93k will be available for Year 5 only projects
- £372k will be available for Year 5 and 6 projects.

For projects awarded two-year funding, organisations should note the following condition which will be included in the grant offer letter:

*"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."*

## Fund ambition

The ambition is to support initiatives which promote mental health and wellbeing at small, grassroots and community level. The majority of funding will go to smaller scale community projects (Small Grants up to £10k).

National and large organisations with an income of over £1M undertaking initiatives in the local area are not excluded but are not the main focus of the fund and will only be funded by exception.

## How much organisations can apply for

With the above in mind, we have developed one application where you can choose to apply for one year or 2-year funding in either the small grant (£1k-£10k) or large grant (£10k-£35k).

Note: If you apply for one year funding (Year 5) only, you will be ineligible to apply for funding in Year 6 for the same initiative.

### **Small Grant** (£1k-£10k)

For community-based activities that support good mental health and wellbeing of adults who have been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and on those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

### **Large Grant** (£10k-£35k)

To fund activities that increase the capacity of community-based organisations to provide a service to local people. Communities may be geographical areas within and across West Lothian or communities of interest. Applications should set out;

- how you identified a need for this activity or service you seek funding for
- who you involved and when this occurred.
- We expect you to use recent evidence and feedback gathered in the last two years and particularly want to understand how people who are to benefit from your project have been part of the process.

Note: We also anticipate that a smaller proportion of bids may be supported for collaborative partnership bids up to the value of £40,000.

[Link to Application Form](#)

## Application Timeline

Fund opens **9am Monday 1 September 2025** and closes **Noon, Monday 6 October 2025**.

Milestone	Details
<b>Go live</b>	Monday 1 September 2025
<b>Closing date for applications</b>	Noon, Monday 6 October 2025
<b>Panel assessments</b>	- Large Grant: November 2025 - Small Grant: November 2025
<b>Funding decisions confirmed</b>	Mid December 2025
<b>Project activity</b>	- <b>1-year (Year 5):</b> 1 April 2026 - 31 March 2027 - <b>2-year (Years 5 &amp; 6):</b> 1 April 2026 - 31 March 2028
<b>Evaluation deadlines</b>	- <b>Year 5 only:</b> 30 April 2027 - <b>Years 5 &amp; 6:</b> 30 April 2027 (interim) and 30 April 2028

Monies will be issued to successful applicants in early February 2026 covering activity from 1 April 2026- March 2027.

The value of the grant payable in the second year (Year 6) 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.

---

## Aims and Outcomes

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 (as outlined in the Equalities section).
2. Address 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.
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 directly contributes to Outcome 4 of the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) published in June 2023:

"Better equipped communities to support people's mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities to connect with others"

It also clearly supports the three key areas of focus in the Strategy:

- **Promote** positive mental health and wellbeing for the whole population, improving understanding and tackling stigma, inequality and discrimination;
- **Prevent** mental health issues occurring or escalating and tackle underlying causes, adversities and inequalities wherever possible; and
- **Provide** mental health and wellbeing support and care, ensuring people and communities can access the right information, skills, services and opportunities in the right place at the right time, using a person-centred approach.

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.

## 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.

Funded organisations do not need 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
- Trusts

- Not-for-profit company or asset locked company or Community Interest Companies (CIC)
- Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies
- Community councils
- Parent councils

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.

While existing projects are eligible, it is important that the funding allows space for new projects to be funded.

### What can be funded?

The following list is not exhaustive and local partnership groups are expected to apply due diligence to the exact conditions they set locally - please also see Q&A for further details.

What can be funded	What cannot be funded
Equipment	Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest
One-off events	Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment
Hall hire for community spaces.	Political or religious campaigning ( <i>please note that faith based organisations are eligible to apply</i> ).
Staff costs (these should be one off or fixed term)	Profit-making/fundraising activities
Training costs	VAT you can reclaim
Transport	Statutory activities
Utilities/running costs	Overseas travel



Volunteer expenses	Alcohol
Small capital spend up to £5,000.	

### **Funding of counselling and other therapeutic treatments**

The Fund is primarily aimed at a range of **preventative community supports** for improved mental health and wellbeing and the allocation of funding should reflect this. However, the Fund also aims to support early intervention approaches and support to those with existing mental health and wellbeing issues. We also appreciate there are cases where support and treatment are hard to distinguish and recognise that some community based complementary supports as part of their offer also provide counselling, as well as other therapeutic treatments.

As such, counselling and other therapeutic treatments are not excluded from the Fund, but should be considered on a case by case basis. Applicants should bear in mind that:

The **main intention** of the Fund is not about projects that are primarily “treatment” focused and it is not meant to replace funding for direct therapeutic interventions in the community, such as counselling, or CBT. Instead, it aims 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).

### **Equalities considerations and supporting at risk groups.**

The funding is inclusive of the following priority ‘at risk’ groups:

- *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.*

### **Promotion of funded projects**

To improve signposting to the wealth of community supports afforded by the Fund, all successful applicants must register their projects with Westspace, <https://westspace.org.uk/>, the West Lothian Directory of Mental Health support Directory.

### **Reporting and Evaluation**

The application form is more detailed than in previous years. This is to aid reporting requirements from those organisations that receive an award to enable Scottish Government to collate national impact.

Organisations must report on their progress in April 2027. A further update will be required in April 2028. VSGWL will provide a reporting template in advance.

## Fair Work First Requirements

Fair Work First is the Scottish Government's flagship policy for driving high quality and fair work and workforce diversity across the labour market in Scotland.

Their [Fair Work First Guidance](#), updated on 18 November 2024, explains our Fair Work First approach, provides good practice examples to guide employers' approaches and, importantly,

explains the benefits of fair work for workers and organisations. It is designed to encourage and support employers to adopt fair work practices within their organisation, focusing on the Fair Work First criteria.

Through Fair Work First the Scottish Government is asking employers in receipt of public sector grant funding to adopt the following criteria:

### **Mandatory**

- payment of at least the real Living Wage;
- provide appropriate channels for effective workers' voice, such as trade union recognition

### **Desirable**

- investment in workforce development;
- no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts;
- address workplace inequalities, including pay and employment gaps for disabled people, racialised minorities, women and workers aged over 50;
- offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment; and,
- oppose the use of fire and rehire practice

The mandatory criteria are the minimum standard required for a grant award, and grant applicants should also confirm that they are committed to working towards the five remaining desirable criteria.

With regards to the real Living Wage, the guidance notes that: The real Living Wage condition requires that the following groups of workers who are 16 and over, including apprentices, are paid at least the real Living Wage:

- All staff who are directly employed by the grant recipient and work in Scotland.

- All staff who are directly employed by the grant recipient and directly engaged in delivering the funded activity but based elsewhere in the UK.
- All workers (in a third party organisation) not directly employed by the grant recipient who are directly engaged in delivering the funded activity and based anywhere in the UK.

The Fair Work First Guidance states that where the cumulative value of grant funding received by an organisation from an individual funder over a single financial year is below £100,000, self-declaration is sufficient.

It should be noted that fair work guidance around effective workers' voice does not apply to the funded projects.

## Part 2: FAQs

### 1. CONTINUATION OR RECURRING FUNDING

#### **Will there be any continuation or recurring funding?**

This is a 2 year funding cycle however there is no confirmation of funding beyond Year 6 of the Fund. We will update you on this through the Scottish Government's Spending Review process. It should be noted that funding will be time limited and, therefore, applications to the fund should be sought for time limited projects and tests of change.

#### **Are Year 5 and 6 priorities the same as Year 4?**

In the main, the core fund priorities as outlined in the fund aims have not changed. All projects should have a prevention or early intervention theme, therefore are not identified as 'priorities' as such in the Year 5 and 6 guidance.

The Fund was initially set up to respond to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and this is now not a priority theme. Year 3 and 4 of the Fund sought to also respond to the cost of living crisis and provided increased emphasis on one of the 'at risk' groups - those facing socio-economic disadvantage. Year 5 and 6 will see a continued and important emphasis on supporting mental health and wellbeing of communities through the ongoing cost of living crisis, with a particular focus on supporting the six priority family groups identified in the Best Start Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

### 2. THE SIZE OF ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN APPLY TO THE FUND

#### **What size of organisation can apply for the fund?**

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults aims to provide grants to small, grassroots community groups and organisations (i.e. voluntary or community organisations; registered charities; groups or clubs; not-for-profit companies or Community Interest Companies, and community councils).

The majority of grants will go to small to medium sized groups with incomes less than £1 million to ensure grassroots organisations are supported.

### **3. WHAT TIMESCALE DOES THE RECIPIENT ORGANISATION HAVE TO USE THE FUNDS BY?**

12 months, or this can be extended slightly if agreed with VSGWL in advance.

### **4. CAN THE FUND BE USED FOR EXISTING PROJECTS?**

**Does the fund have to be used for new projects, or can it be used for expanding projects or continuing existing projects?**

The funding is to support new and expanding projects

### **5. CAN YOUNG PEOPLE BE ENGAGED TO DELIVER A PROJECT?**

**The Fund is intended to benefit adults. If a proposal includes young people as volunteers in delivering support to adults is this still eligible?**

The Fund is intended to support people aged 16 and above therefore includes support to young people.

### **6. WHAT CAN THE FUND PAY FOR?**

The Fund is primarily focused on supporting operational and revenue costs – e.g. volunteer and one off fixed term staff costs, expenses, equipment, etc. – to fulfil the activity.

Applicants must be awarded no more than £5,000 for such capital expenditure. This limitation does not apply to the purchase of small items of equipment.

### **7. CAN THE GRANT BE USED AS A PART OF A MATCH FUNDING PROCESS?**

Yes. We are aware that match funding occurs in some areas and is very much welcomed.

### **Can an organisation use this fund to match fund another project that is already funded by Scottish Government?**

Yes, but it must be for additional activity and activities cannot be double funded.

### **8. CAN WE USE AI TO HELP WITH OUR APPLICATION?**

We understand many groups use AI writing tools in creating applications, particularly as an accessibility tool. The content of applications will be judged on merit regardless of whether AI is used, but applications must remain authentic and accurate to an organisation's ambitions. We would also encourage groups to consider the environmental impact of using AI and to limit usage appropriately

### **9. CAN CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS BODIES APPLY FOR THE FUND?**

#### **Promotion of religion is ruled out; does this prevent churches and other religious bodies applying?**

No. Churches and religious bodies can apply for the Fund, but the activity must be consistent with the aims of the fund and cannot be used to fund religious or campaigning activities. Activities must not be restricted only to members of the faith-based organisation.

### **10. DO APPLICANTS HAVE TO COMPLETE A MINIMAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE DECLARATION AS PART OF SUBSIDY CONTROL?**

Yes. Minimal Financial Assistance is a specific provision within the UK Subsidy Control Act 2022 which does not apply to this Fund.

### **11. HOW IS FUNDING CHANGING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY SUPPORTS?**

From 2025-26, the £15 million per annum funding provided to local authorities by the Scottish Government in relation to children and young people's community mental health and wellbeing supports and services will be baselined into the local government finance settlement.

## Part 3: Further information

If you have any questions about the fund, please email [vsg@vsgwl.org](mailto:vsg@vsgwl.org) or call 01506 650111.

An online Question and Answer (Q&A) session about the fund will be held on **Wednesday 3 September at 9.30am**. Joining details will be shared separately.

The session will be recorded and made available to those unable to join on the day.