

Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults Small Grants Programme

Year 6 Fund Guidance for Aberdeen City, 2026/27



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Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults

Guidance for Aberdeen City



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About the Fund

Since 2021, the Scottish Government's Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults has made a significant contribution to the lives of people across Aberdeen City - with ACVO TSI distributing over £2.65 million of grants and supporting 314 local projects to promote and improve mental health and wellbeing in the city.

For Year 6, ACVO TSI is pleased to continue managing the Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government for Aberdeen City, working with the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Partnership Group to support local third sector organisations to deliver projects and activities that promote good mental health and wellbeing and help prevent and reduce the impact of poor mental health within our communities.

ACVO TSI is delighted to be managing the distribution of £167,007 through the Year 6 Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Small Grants Programme.

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About the Fund

Since 2021, the Scottish Government's Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults has made a significant contribution to the lives of people across Aberdeen City.

More than £3 million has been invested in hundreds of local projects, enabling communities to respond to local needs, create connections, reduce isolation and give people greater opportunities to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

The Fund has supported ideas that have grown from within communities themselves, helping people build confidence and resilience, strengthen relationships, access activities and support, and tackle some of the inequalities and challenging circumstances that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The Fund focuses on:

- prevention and early intervention;
- reducing mental health inequalities;
- tackling loneliness and social isolation;
- building resilience and stronger communities; and
- addressing wider factors that influence mental health and wellbeing.

For Year 6, ACVO TSI is pleased to continue managing the Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government for Aberdeen City, working with the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Partnership Group to support local third sector organisations to deliver projects and activities that promote good mental health and wellbeing and help prevent and reduce the impact of poor mental health within our communities.

Year 6 Funding Available

A total of £167,007 is available for new Year 6 grants in Aberdeen City.

This funding will be distributed through the Year 6 Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Small Grants Programme.

The funding available for new grant awards is lower than in previous years because approximately 70% of the total allocation provided by the Scottish Government for Aberdeen City has been committed to continuing multi-year awards approved in Year 5.

For context, the Scottish Government selected the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund as part of its two-year Fairer Funding Pilot Programme and advised that between 60% and 80% of each area's allocation should be used to support multi-year projects. This approach provides greater funding certainty for funded organisations and supports the longer-term sustainability of services and activities that contribute to mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Partnership Group has agreed that organisations currently receiving multi-year funding through Year 5 will not be eligible to apply for a new Year 6 grant through this round of the Small Grants Programme.

However, if any of these organisations are not awarded funding for Year 6 following the evaluation of their multi-year funding, they will have the opportunity to apply for a second round of Small Grants Programme funding in the New Year. This second round will only take place if funding originally ringfenced for the second year of multi-year awards becomes available.

Through a robust assessment scoring process, the Partnership Group will seek to ensure that the available funding reaches projects that make the strongest contribution to the Fund's aims and Aberdeen City's Year 6 priorities, with a particular focus on communities experiencing significant mental health inequalities and unmet need.

What is the Fund for?

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

Projects should have a clear focus on prevention and/or early intervention.

The Fund can support activity that:

- helps people build positive relationships and connections;
- reduces loneliness and social isolation;
- strengthens resilience and confidence;
- creates opportunities for participation and belonging;
- improves access to community support;
- addresses inequalities that affect mental health; and
- helps people and communities develop their own strengths and capacity.

Aberdeen City's Year 6 Priorities

Because funding for new awards is limited, Year 6 will have a particular focus on adult communities experiencing disproportionate mental health inequalities. Priority will be given to projects supporting one or more of the following communities.

Adults experiencing poverty, financial insecurity, socio-economic disadvantage or the impact of the cost-of-living crisis

Including people experiencing:

- significant financial hardship;
- debt or financial crisis;
- food or fuel poverty;
- unemployment, underemployment or insecure employment; or
- other economic pressures that negatively impact their mental health, wellbeing and quality of life.



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Women

Particularly women experiencing gender-based violence, domestic abuse, trauma, discrimination, inequality, social isolation, caring responsibilities, or other factors affecting mental health and wellbeing.

Refugees, asylum seekers, New Scots and minority ethnic communities

Particularly where racism, discrimination, social exclusion, isolation, language barriers, cultural barriers, poverty or trauma affect mental health and wellbeing.

LGBTQ+ adults

Particularly where stigma, discrimination, exclusion, minority stress or social isolation contribute to poorer mental health and wellbeing.

Disabled, neurodivergent adults and people with long-term health conditions

Including people experiencing barriers to participation and inclusion because of:

- disability;
- sensory loss;
- neurodivergence;
- learning disability; or
- long-term physical or mental health conditions.

Unpaid carers

Particularly where caring responsibilities, social isolation, loneliness, financial pressures or barriers to accessing support are affecting mental health and wellbeing.

Older people supported by unconstituted grassroots groups

Small community groups working to reduce loneliness and isolation among older people through social connection and community activity.

Adults within the priority family groups identified in the Best Start, Bright Futures Delivery Plan

Priority will also be given to projects supporting adults and families within the priority groups identified in the following Best Start, Bright Futures Delivery Plan, where they experience circumstances that place them at greater risk of poor mental health and wellbeing:

- Lone parent families
- Families with a disabled adult or child
- Families with three or more children
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a child under one
- Families where the mother is aged under 25

What Will Make a Strong Application?

When completing the application form, use your answers to clearly demonstrate how your project meets the aims and priorities of the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund.

Demonstrate alignment with the Fund

Use your answers throughout the application to explain how your project aligns with the aims, outcomes and priorities of both the national Fund and Aberdeen City's local priorities. Make it clear which communities you support and how your project will help address mental health inequalities.

Demonstrate a mental health and wellbeing benefit

Explain how your activities will promote, protect or improve the mental health and wellbeing of the adults taking part. Clearly describe the difference your project will make and how this relates to prevention, early intervention, reducing isolation, tackling inequality, or building community connections.

Demonstrate need

Use the application questions to explain why your project is needed. Describe the challenges, inequalities or barriers affecting the people you support and provide evidence where possible, drawing on local data, community knowledge, feedback from participants, or lived experience.

Demonstrate community involvement

Tell us how the people who will benefit from your project have helped identify the need, shape the project or influence its delivery. Applications that are informed by communities and lived experience are encouraged.

Demonstrate clear outcomes and impact

Your answers should clearly explain:

- what you will do;
- who will benefit;
- what difference you expect to make;
- how your activities will achieve that difference; and
- how you will measure and evidence success.

Demonstrate good value for money

Use your budget and project description to show that costs are realistic, necessary and proportionate to the activities and outcomes you are proposing. Assessors will look for a clear link between the funding requested and the impact the project will deliver.

Demonstrate sustainability and partnership working

Where relevant, explain how your project complements existing services, works with local partners, builds on community strengths, or creates lasting benefits beyond the funding period.





Complementary, not duplicating existing services

Explain how your project complements existing services and activities. The Fund should not replace statutory services or duplicate existing provision.

Partnership and Collaboration

Consider how you can build on existing relationships, share knowledge and resources, and connect people with other appropriate sources of support. This could include working with community organisations, voluntary sector partners, public services, health and social care, local authorities, education, housing or other relevant partners.

Partnership working should add value to the project and help ensure that activity complements existing provision, responds to local need and avoids unnecessary duplication.

What Can You Apply For?

The Fund can support a wide range of community-led activities where there is a clear connection to adult mental health and wellbeing.

Examples include:

- peer support;
- befriending;
- community activities and groups;
- social connection activities;
- nature-based activities;
- arts and cultural activities;
- physical activity;
- community events.

What Can Be Funded?

We Can Fund	
• Hall hire for community spaces • Transport • Volunteer expenses • Training costs	• Equipment • Fixed-term or one-off staff costs • Utilities/running costs; and • Small capital spend up to £3000.

All proposed activity must make a clear contribution to adult mental health and wellbeing, with a focus on prevention and/or early intervention.

What Cannot Be Funded?

We Cannot Fund

- Political campaigning
- Religious campaigning
- Profit-making activity
- Statutory services or statutory responsibilities
- Redundancy costs
- Loans
- Contingency funding
- Overseas travel
- Alcohol
- Reclaimable VAT
- Activity where the primary beneficiaries are under 16; or
- Activity that duplicates existing statutory provision

Counselling and Therapeutic Support

The Fund is primarily intended for prevention and early intervention, rather than ongoing treatment.

Counselling or therapeutic support may be considered where it:

- has a clear preventative or early-intervention purpose;
- addresses an identified need or gap;
- contributes to the aims of the Fund;
- has appropriate safeguarding and governance arrangements; and
- is delivered by appropriately qualified or trained practitioners with suitable professional supervision.

Where formal counselling is proposed, applicants should demonstrate alignment with relevant professional standards and good practice.

The Fund cannot be used to replace statutory or commissioned mental health services.

Who Can Apply?

Applications can be submitted by eligible voluntary, not-for-profit and community organisations, including:

- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs);
- unincorporated associations;
- companies limited by guarantee;
- charitable trusts;
- Community Interest Companies (CICs);
- asset-locked not-for-profit companies;



- co-operative and community benefit societies;
- community councils;
- parent councils; and
- unconstituted community groups.

Where an unconstituted group does not have its own bank account, an eligible constituted organisation must have a constituted organisation willing to host the grant on their behalf.

Year 6 Application Rules

Please make sure you understand these requirements before applying to the Small Grants Programme.

One application only

Each organisation or group can submit one application only to the Year 6 Small Grants Programme.

Maximum grant: £5,000

You can apply for any amount up to £5,000. You do not need to request the full amount.

Capital: maximum £3,000

No more than £3,000 of the total grant can be spent on capital expenditure.

Project length: 12–18 months

Projects should be designed to be completed within 12–18 months.

Multi-Year Funded Organisations

As mentioned earlier in this guidance document, organisations currently receiving multi-year funding through Year 5 will not be eligible to apply for a new Year 6 grant through this round of the Small Grants Programme.

How Applications Will Be Assessed

Eligible applications will be assessed by a minimum of two members of the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Partnership Group.

Applications will be scored against the following criteria, with assessors considering the quality of evidence provided in each area.

Assessors will consider:

1. Challenges and Impact on Mental Health and Wellbeing

How clearly you explain the challenges, hardships or inequalities experienced by the people you support and the impact these have on their mental health and wellbeing. Assessors will look for a strong understanding of the needs and circumstances of your target group.

2. Project Activities and Intended Outcomes

How clearly you describe what your project will do, who will take part, and the difference it will make. Assessors will consider whether activities are realistic, appropriate and linked to positive outcomes for participants.

3. Evidence of Need and Community Involvement

How well you demonstrate that the project has been shaped by the people who will benefit from it. Assessors will consider evidence gathered through engagement, consultation, feedback, previous delivery experience, or learning from partners and local services.

4. Prevention and/or Early Intervention

How clearly your project supports mental health and wellbeing through prevention or early intervention. Assessors will consider how activities help maintain wellbeing, reduce the risk of problems developing or worsening, and provide support at an early stage.

5. Partnership Working and Added Value

How well your project works alongside other organisations, groups or services. Assessors will consider how partnerships strengthen delivery, improve access to support, and complement existing provision rather than duplicate it.

Applications will be scored on a scale from 0 to 5 for each criterion, with higher scores awarded where there is clear, relevant and compelling evidence. The strongest applications will provide a clear rationale for the project, demonstrate a good understanding of local need, show how communities have influenced the project design, and explain how the proposed activities will improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes

Because funding is limited, meeting the eligibility criteria does not guarantee an award.



Funding Timetable

Stage	Date
Applications open	16 September 2026 at 12noon
Applications close	30 October 2026 at 5pm
Assessment	November 2026*
Funding decisions	December 2026*
Grants Awarded	January 2027 onwards*

Projects should be completed within 12–18 months.

****Please note that these dates may be subject to change depending on the volume of applications received.***

Before You Apply

Before submitting your application, make sure your project:

- Supports adults aged 16 or over.
- Supports one or more of Aberdeen City's Year 6 priority communities.
- Addresses a clear mental health and wellbeing need.
- Has a preventative and/or early-intervention focus.
- Is community-led or informed by the people who will benefit.
- Has clear and realistic outcomes.
- Represents good value for money.
- Complements rather than duplicates existing services.
- Can be delivered within 12–18 months.

And make sure your application:

- Is your organisation's only Year 6 application.
- Requests no more than £5,000.
- Includes no more than £3,000 capital expenditure.
- Meets the national eligibility requirements.
- Is not being submitted by an organisation currently receiving Year 1 of a Year 5 multi-year award.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in your Grant Application

It is your responsibility to make sure the information provided in an application is a genuine and honest reflection of your organisation and the community you support.

ACVO recognises that organisations may choose to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to support the development of funding applications. While AI can be helpful in drafting content, it often produces generic responses that do not fully reflect your organisation's unique experience, strengths, or the voice of the community you support.

If you use AI-generated content in your application, it is important that you carefully review and edit it to ensure it accurately represents your organisation, your proposed activities, and the needs of the people you work with.

When assessing applications, the Fund's Partnership Group want to see clear evidence that your organisation understands the mental health and wellbeing challenges experienced by adults in Aberdeen City. Assessors need to understand who you are, what you plan to deliver, why it is needed, and the difference the funding will make for the people and communities you support. Applications that clearly demonstrate this understanding are likely to score more strongly.

Please also be aware that AI tools do not always provide accurate information. You should take care when entering information into AI platforms and ensure that doing so does not compromise your legal obligations relating to confidentiality, personal data, intellectual property, or other sensitive information. Further guidance on data protection and AI is available from the [Information Commissioners Office](#).

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure that all information included in your application is accurate and provides a genuine and honest reflection of your organisation, your work, and the community you support.

Support for Applicants

ACVO TSI is committed to making the Fund as accessible as possible to eligible community organisations and groups. You don't need to be an experienced fundraiser to apply, and you don't need to have everything in place before you get in touch.

If you'd like to talk through your project idea, need some support with your application, or aren't sure whether your project is eligible, you can arrange an informal chat with Claire Shaw, ACVO's Funding Officer.

You can book a time to chat with Claire online at a time that suits you. The booking link is available on the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund page of the ACVO website. You can also email Claire at claire.shaw@acvo.org.uk with any questions.

Find out more and apply now at acvo.org.uk/cmhwfund

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