

1. Background to the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

As part of the Recovery and Renewal Fund, the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care announced a new Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund (the Fund) for adults on 15 October 2021, with £15 million being made available in 2021- 22. This was the first year of a two-year fund to support mental health and well-being in communities across Scotland. Year two's fund will open on 17th October 2022, the application process will close on 5th December 2022 and funds will be disbursed in January 2023.

The Fund is distributed by Third Sector Interfaces (TSI's) to community groups and organisations and reflects the importance the government places on community support as part of the overall mental health infrastructure and the commitments given by Scottish Ministers to increase direct mental health investment, in both the NHS Recovery Plan and this year's Programme for Government.

For year two Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (AB TSI) has been allocated £282,303.16 to distribute to third sector and community organisations by the end of March 2023. Year two funds will need to be used by the end of August 2024 at the very latest and reported by September 2024.

This guidance document outlines in more detail what the Fund is about, how it might be delivered, who could apply and how to do this. A consultation event was held on September 22nd 2022 with community groups and on 26th September a consultation event was held with those with lived experience to inform the updating of the year two guidance document. The Scottish Government also published their updated guidance to support the year two fund.

Whereas in 2021 Argyll and Bute was awarded an additional one-off amount of £411k meaning that circa £700k was available, extra funds in 2022 will not be available and competition for funding is therefore likely to stiffer. This is reflected in the maximum amount that can be applied for which has dropped from £50k to 10k for single applicants. If applying for a partnership you can bid for up to £10k per partner up to a maximum of £30k. **Scoring is weighted towards partnership bids.**

2. Fund outcomes

The intended outcome of the Fund is 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.

The Fund seeks to contribute to the four key areas of focus from the Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan:

- Promoting and supporting the conditions for good mental health and wellbeing at population level
- Providing accessible signposting to help, advice and support
- Providing a rapid and easily accessible response to those in distress
- Ensuring safe, effective treatment and care of people living with mental illness

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

3. Fund aims and priorities

In line with the government's long-term outcomes for mental health in communities, this Fund intends to provide stable investment for:

- Fostering a **strategic and preventative approach** to improving community mental health
- Supporting the **resilience of communities** and investing in their capacity to develop their own solutions, including through strong local partnerships
- Tackling the **social determinants of mental health** by targeting resources and collaborating with other initiatives to tackle poverty and inequality

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, with a particular focus in 2022/23 on:

1. Tackling priority issues within the **Transition and Recovery Plan** such as suicide prevention, social isolation and loneliness, prevention and early intervention
2. Addressing the mental health **inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic** and the needs of a range of 'at risk' groups¹ locally
3. Supporting **small 'grass roots' community groups** and organisations to deliver such activities
4. Providing **opportunities for people to connect** with each other, build trusted relationships and revitalise communities
5. Supporting **recovery and creativity** locally by building on what is already there, what was achieved through the pandemic, and by investing in creative solutions

4. Fund criteria

The fund criteria set out the broad parameters for how funding should be allocated to community organisations. However, this is intended to be flexible in order to allow local partnership groups to identify their own priorities for spend within the terms of the fund criteria and in line with their local partnership plan (see below). Funding decisions should reflect the broad principles of the fund criteria as well as local priorities.

Local priorities

Following the local discussion sessions in November/December 2021 and September 2022 local Argyll and Bute priorities were identified to complement the national priorities listed at section 3.

¹ List of 'at risk' groups is outlined at in the *Equalities considerations and at risk groups* section

1. Reducing and preventing mental ill health – with a focus on prevention and early intervention
2. Tackling social isolation and issues faced by rurality
3. Addressing inequalities following the pandemic and exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis – poverty, trauma, supporting unpaid carers and suicide prevention
4. Promoting community wellbeing and increase local connectivity and resilience
5. Helping disadvantaged young people (16 plus) make positive changes in their lives.

Capacity building and co-production – using the Expression of Interest application route to start a conversation

ABTSI, with support from wider partners, has a key role in building capacity with individual community groups, from support to completing Expression of Interests (EoI) to making full funding applications to providing advice, support and making connections throughout the project. To ensure funding reaches the groups who need it most, ABTSI and the Fund Reference Group will actively encourage and support less experienced small-scale organisations who support the mental health of priority groups. Particular care will be taken to ensure that more marginalised groups, who may not be as used to funding processes and are less able to respond quickly, are not disadvantaged.

To do this ABTSI will continue to take a proactive approach in co-producing successful funding applications that complement local and national priorities, plans and strategies as well as meet local needs. In practice this will mean establishing 1:1's with applicants and to ensure transparency this process will be documented. The EoI process is designed to facilitate early collaborative conversations and as such applicants are encouraged to apply by early November 2022. This process worked well in 2021 and of 51 applications received 49 were awarded funding.

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 should be accessible to all groups, no matter how small or inexperienced they are. It can support both new and existing groups or projects. These do not have to have mental health and wellbeing as their main focus, but their application does have to clearly benefit the mental wellbeing of people in their community.

Applications can 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 that can 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

The Argyll and Bute Local Fund partnerships will also consider funding unincorporated groups, either by supporting them to become constituted, or by providing small value grants (for example up to £2,000) for wellbeing support and capacity building purposes. We will also consider allowing a constituted entity (that meets criteria above) to hold a grant for the unincorporated group. Argyll and Bute TSI as grant giver would need to be satisfied with arrangements in terms of assurance around monitoring and accountability of spend.

For Year 2, there is additional emphasis on ensuring funding reaches the groups who need it most. As a local partnership we will actively encourage and support less experienced small-scale organisations who support mental health of priority groups.

Type of projects we can support

The focus of the Fund is on the adult population and on projects which help whole communities and/or community groups, in turn making a difference to the lives of individuals. The adult population is considered to be those 16 and over, in that a wide range of community supports (such as an art club focusing on mental wellbeing) will be open to this age group. We recognise that there is some overlap with children and young people community support funding although that funding is focused on targeted CYP projects.

Applicants should not be seeking to replace statutory funding and in addition the fund is not intended to support therapeutic treatment as it is primarily focused on support and prevention in the community. However, the local fund reference group will take a case-by-case approach based on the strength of each proposal and the level of need identified.

As outlined in the fund aims, it should fund 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. In addition, local partnerships should ensure that funding is allocated to initiatives which have a focus on:

- Tackling priority issues within the Transition and Recovery Plan such as suicide prevention, social isolation and loneliness, prevention and early intervention
- Addressing the mental health inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic and the needs of one or more of the 'at risk' groups locally

While the Fund can support the expansion of existing activities, it is intended to provide additionality, not replacement funding.

Projects should also have a specific community focus rather than providing regional or national coverage. Therefore, applications should be funded for initiatives based only within your local authority.

What we can fund

It is not intended to support specific clinical treatment services, such as counselling, or CBT however do seek advice from your local TSSA. The following list is not exhaustive – please also see the Q&A for further details.

We will fund	We cannot fund
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
Small capital spend up to £5,000 (i.e. land or building projects – see details here ¹)	Profit-making/fundraising activities
Staff costs (noting this is a 2 year fund therefore one off or fixed term)	VAT you can reclaim
Training costs	Statutory activities
Transport	Overseas travel
Utilities/running costs	Alcohol
Volunteer expenses	
Helping people to stay safe (PPE for small gatherings/group activity)	

Organisations funded in year 1

The Fund can support both **existing and new** projects. Projects funded through Year 1 of the Fund are eligible to apply again but must clearly show how they will develop and improve in Year two (for example, in increasing accessibility and reach to different groups) and where possible, they should demonstrate early impacts from Year 1.

While existing projects are eligible, it is important that the funding overall does not lean too heavily towards existing projects and allows space for new projects to be funded. TSIs should consider ringfencing a proportion of the funding for new projects, to ensure fairness and innovation continues. We are keen to ensure additional emphasis for Year 2 on reaching harder to reach, at risk groups by promoting and making the Fund accessible to wider networks which should in turn unearth further ‘new’ projects not funded in Year 1.

How much organisations can apply for

We want to make sure the process is accessible to all, and focused on outcomes and funds projects which best meet the identified need. We have proposed that there are two funding streams, with a lighter touch ‘fast track’ application and monitoring process for smaller amounts.

This ensures an approach where the level of effort in the application and monitoring and evaluation process is proportionate to the amount applied for and awarded.

- **Small grants can be from £500 to £2,000;**
- **Larger grants can be from £2,001 to £10,000.**

Given the limited size of the fund applicants are encouraged to speak with a TSI Third Sector Support Advisor before applying for grants at the upper limits of the larger grant range.

The maximum amount that can be applied for which has reduced from £50k to 10k for single applicants in 2022. However, partnerships can bid for up to £30k for a minimum of three partners. The lead partner will apply but must name the other partners and no partner is permitted to receive more than 10k.

When organisations can apply and key deadlines

The Argyll and Bute application processes will be live on 17 October 2022 at which point community groups can submit applications via the TSI's website.

Expression of Interest forms must be submitted by 10am on 21st November 2022 with full applications submitted by 10am on 5th December 2022.

You are encouraged to make early contact with TSI staff (support@argylltsi.org.uk) to ensure your application has the best chance of meeting the funding criteria.

Equalities considerations and at risk groups

Ensuring equality of access and full participation from all relevant and at risk communities is a priority. The Argyll and Bute local fund plan will take into account equalities considerations. This should identify mechanisms to publicise the Fund widely, involve groups and communities from across all at risk groups and ensure provision of sufficient support to enable equality of access for generally excluded/seldom heard from communities.

Evidence shows that the pandemic has exacerbated existing mental health inequalities and has had a disproportionate impact on the mental wellbeing of a range of groups in society. Local fund allocations should ensure a focus on initiatives which are inclusive of the following priority 'at risk' groups:

Women (particularly young women, and women and young women affected by male sexual violence); people with a long term health condition or disability; people who are or have been on the highest risk (previously shielding) list²; 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 illness³; 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; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities

Where possible, applicants should outline how they will address intersectionality (i.e. multiple-marginalisation, such those experiencing both poverty and disability) and how their project specifically benefits any given community in an intersectional way. Applicants should also be asked to consider how their proposal contributes to promoting people's human rights. Consideration could be made around supporting advocacy for people at a local level to access care and help with signposting of the community supports being funded.

Evidence from year 1 nationally showed that too many applicants ticked all the categories and instead this year the fund is intended to demonstrate a more meaningful approach to equalities. This means that applicants are expected to show how their application is meeting the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. You are not expected to tick all the groups! Instead you are

² For more information on this category – please see Part 3 Examples section on the highest risk group

³ As outlined earlier, the funding is not to support clinical treatment services in the community, rather to provide the broader community supports that can complement clinical care.

asked to show a focus on no more than three categories and you will be asked to evidence what specific steps you will take to improve access to your services, remove barriers and improve equality.

In other words your project could either be established for a particular target group or the project could have a broader focus and the project demonstrates steps taken to provide meaningful accessibility to local target communities that may need support in accessing the project.

There will be further workshops in October and November 2022 to explore these aspects.

Involving those with lived experience

Ideally all parts of the fund administration process should be informed by people with lived experience and the Fund Reference Group includes a place for someone with lived experience. In the context of this Fund, lived experience could, for example, include experience of mental health challenges, of being part of a marginalised group or of benefiting from mental wellbeing initiatives. In terms of your application, you are encouraged to identify how people with lived experience have been involved from an early stage in ongoing planning and decision making. By engaging with lived experience, better outcomes can be achieved.

Local partnership plans for the Fund

Argyll and Bute TSI will coordinate the co-production of a Fund local partnership plan (October 2022) which should set out priorities for spend locally within the parameters of the fund criteria. The purpose of our local partnership plans is to:

- Ensure coherence of approach locally
- Tie into existing planning for mental health and community wellbeing
- Provide a strategic approach to addressing identified priorities locally in line with fund criteria
- Take account of current provision and address evidence on gaps in support
- Agree a set of outcomes for community mental health and wellbeing support locally and identify the contribution the Fund will make to these

Nationally the Fund is being encouraged to look to new and imaginative solutions using the knowledge of those working in other sectors, where possible in order to expand the opportunities which the Fund presents for doing things differently. However, following consultation in 2021 and in September 2022 we are also aware that important projects that are not necessarily new still need funding.

The format for the local partnership plans will be decided locally, although we will provide a framework for sharing and reporting on these plans to contribute to national monitoring of local progress, narrative of achievement and highlighting any learning for future years. A draft will be published in October 2022.

In order to connect up the system at a local level, information on what has been funded through the Communities Fund and its impact (i.e. numbers using the support, impacts on individuals and so on) should be shared by each TSI with their integration authority who should update local mental health strategies and plans in line with this. To measure impact of the Fund and ensure connections

are made across the system, the TSI and local partnership (where possible) should draw on local data and statistics relating to mental health and wellbeing held by General Practitioner practices and NHS services - such as numbers referrals for mental health difficulties, numbers of people rejected for therapeutic support.

5. Accountability and monitoring

As the grant holders, Argyll and Bute TSI will have overall accountability for spend at a local level and will lead on reporting to national monitoring processes as well as to local evaluation.

These are expected to be light touch as follows:

- Provide an interim update and end of year report
- Provide evidence of achievement against fund criteria and outcomes
- Share best practice and feedback on what has worked

6. Timeline

August - September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fund announced by the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care ▪ Fund allocation letter to TSIs outlining funding allocation to each partnership group ▪ National Guidance issued ▪ Argyll and Bute consultation events
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grant award letter and administration award letter to TSIs ▪ Commencement of Fund discussion and planning by local partnership groups (to assess local need, consideration of existing plans, gap analysis) ▪ Ongoing collaboration by local partnership groups to agree local plans ▪ Fund monitoring process and template issued to local partnership groups ▪ Local partnership groups begin to develop high level local plans for use of the Fund in their area and setting overarching aims for use of the Fund locally ▪ Network meeting to share experiences ▪ ABTSI staff start working with local groups to build awareness of the fund, stimulate applications, provide application support and identify collaboration opportunities ▪ Fund application/assessment/distribution process published (TSI led) ▪ Capacity building support for potential applicants that need this ▪ Fund goes 'live' for community groups to start on 17th October 2022 ▪ Ongoing collaboration by local partnership groups around Fund decisions ▪ Draft Local Partnership Plan published and submitted 21st October 2022

November - December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Year 1 outcomes and evaluation report to be submitted to Scottish Government ▪ Fund application/assessment/distribution process continued ▪ Ongoing collaboration by local partnership groups around Fund decisions ▪ Network meeting to share experiences/progress in setting up Fund ▪ Finalised high level local plans (informed by early engagement around potential funded organisations) submitted to the National Oversight Group ▪ 21st November 2022 – deadline for Expressions of Interest ▪ 5th December 2022 – Final deadline for Full Applications ▪ ABTSI staff commence the sift process for applications ▪ TSI to submit interim report on the delivery of the Fund by 17 December 2022 ▪ National Oversight Group review of local plans
Jan 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ABTSI Fund Reference Group considers applications and notifies all applicants about the outcome of their application (16th January 2023). ▪ Fund allocation begins 23rd January 2023
March/April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ABTSI completed allocation of all funds ▪ TSI to submit report of spend (and evidence of impacts to date) this financial year
Autumn 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reporting on outcomes will be required in autumn 2023 (emerging outcomes) with final information on outcomes no later than 18 months from receipt of grant (the maximum duration for projects),
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final evaluation report to Scottish Government

7. FAQs

1. Continuation or recurring funding

Will there be any continuation or recurring funding?

There is no confirmation of funding beyond year 2 of the Fund although the government will update local partnerships on this through the 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. Any funding towards core revenue costs will be short-term to support additional demands resulting from the COVID pandemic. In relation to core revenue costs, this should be made clear to organisations funded, who should be asked to provide details of their exit strategy to ensure ongoing funding can be found from another source.

Are Year 2 priorities the same as Year 1?

The core priorities as outlined in the fund aims have not changed. The initial priority of the fund was responding to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. While the effects of the pandemic on mental health will be long lasting, and still emerging, it is important to recognise that there are also other societal challenges affecting communities and their mental health and wellbeing such as the cost-of-living crisis. This issue deepens the importance of initiatives that support one of the 'at risk' groups – those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

2. What size of organisation can apply for the fund?

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund has been established 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).

We would expect the majority of grants in each local area will go to small to medium sized groups and organisations – with incomes ranging from under £25,000 per annum up to £1 million per annum.

3. What size of grant can awarded to applicants?

Following discussion it is proposed that the minimum grant be set at £500 and the maximum at £10,000.

We want to make sure the process is accessible to all, and focused on outcomes and funds projects which best meet the identified need. We propose that there might be two funding streams, with a lighter touch 'fast track' process for smaller amounts. This ensures an approach where the level of effort in the application and monitoring and evaluation process is proportionate to the amount applied for and awarded. The two streams are £500-£2000 and £2001 to £10000.

4. When does the Fund have to be spent by?

This Fund covers financial year 2022-23 and ABTSI will not hold any funds allocated by the Scottish Government for 2021-22 beyond 31 March 2023. In practice this means dispersed funding to agreed projects by 31 March 2023 at the latest and be able to provide evidence of this through the agreed monitoring process. The local partnership has agreed to disburse funds in January 2023. Groups must spend 2022 funds by August 2024 at the latest.

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

This was a matter reserved for discussion locally and following discussion it was agreed that existing projects could be funded as long as it was not used to replace statutory funding. It however should be noted that whilst the Fund can support the expansion of existing activities, it is intended to provide additionality, not replacement funding. The local partnership will however actively seek to support smaller less well funded groups that meet target group needs.

6. What can the Fund be used for - i.e. rent, equipment, staff costs, materials, etc.?

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. For this year of funding, small capital spend up to £5,000 is eligible.

7. Can grants be used as a part of a match funding process?

The application process seeks to identify whether other funding has been applied for and whether it is needed to make the project viable. There is no requirement for match funding but the Argyll and Bute Fund Reference Group will want to be satisfied that the project is financially viable.

8. How will the Fund be monitored?

We will require interim and year-end reports on the Fund's progress.

Local Argyll and Bute processes will be adopted to monitor grant awards and progress. These should aim to be light touch. We will aim to reference the good practice Harmonising Reporting template – found at: [Harmonising Reporting - Evaluation Support Scotland](#).

Further information on requirements and templates to follow.

9. Once funding has been issued to a third sector group or organisation, within what timeframe does that funding has to be spent?

All funds would need to be spent by the end August 2024.

10. Are school Parent Councils eligible to apply for the fund? They aren't third sector organisations (as they are statutory).

Yes they are eligible to apply, subject to the following conditions:

Condition 1: The funded activities should meet the aims of the Fund and specifically should focus on supporting adults not children.

For information their functions are around:

- collaborating with the school in supporting children's schooling and learning;
- representing the views of parents;
- promoting and supporting contact between the school, parents, pupils, providers of nursery education and the community, and;
- communicating or reporting to the Parent Forum.

Condition 2: Any Parent Council applying to this fund should 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 OSCA as a charity.

For information, Parent Councils are not statutory. Education authorities have a statutory role in establishing a parent council, however once the council is established, the education authority does not control it, nor can it be said that a parent council acts on behalf of the education authority or a school under the authority's management in relation to which the Parent Council has been established; it acts on behalf of the parent forum, i.e. the parent of the pupils in attendance at the school.

11. 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 things cannot be double funded.

12. Promotion of religion is ruled out, does this prevent churches and other religious bodies applying?

No, but the activity must be consistent with the aims of the fund and cannot be used to fund religious or campaigning activities.

13. Can counselling and therapy services be supported by the fund? Is there any further guidance on what other types of therapeutic interventions (other than therapy and counselling) might be eligible?

The funding is intended to support small scale, grassroots community projects, activities and initiatives that promote good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population. The focus of the Fund is not about supporting clinical treatment services in the community – which may include counselling and CBT for instance - rather to provide a range of broader community supports that can complement clinical care.

However, we recognise that some community based complementary services as part of their offer also provide counselling, as well as other therapeutic services. Therefore, these are not excluded from the fund.

It is worth bearing in mind:

- the Fund is an opportunity to support a wide range of approaches to providing emotional and practical support to individuals for example peer support practices.
- there are other funding streams which can support counselling services in various realms (for example, the Scottish Government Survivors of Childhood Abuse Support Fund and Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Fund)
- Any proposals that do involve potential for clinically trained staff delivering therapeutic interventions, there should be clear arrangements in place for clinical supervision and governance. Specifically with regards to counselling support, it should conform to agreed professional standards, such as those provided by COSCA and BACP. Formal counselling should be undertaken by a professional counsellor, acting in their specialist role, and in accordance with a strict code of ethics, which requires confidentiality, accountability and clinical supervision. The TSI needs to ensure that funded organisations are aware of these arrangements.

14. The guidance states that unconstituted groups can apply. How can that happen?

ABTSI can support unconstituted groups either by supporting them to become constituted, or by providing small value grants (for example up to £2,000) for wellbeing support and capacity building purposes.

We can also allow a constituted entity (that meets criteria set out in guidance) to hold a grant for the unconstituted group. ABTSI as grant giver would need to be satisfied with arrangements in terms of assurance around monitoring and accountability of spend.

15. Is it legitimate for TSIs to transfer funding to another organisation who would then distribute small grants to other organisations?

It is considered not appropriate for TSIs to transfer funding to another organisation for distribution.
