

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 and to date £36m has been distributed. Year three's funding was announced in April 2023 following successful evaluations of years one and two. The national evaluation of year two can be found here:- [Evaluation of the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for adults - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/plain-language/evaluation-of-the-communities-mental-health-and-wellbeing-fund-for-adults-2021-22.pdf).

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 the Programme for Government.

“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 address priority issues of social isolation and loneliness, suicide prevention and tackling poverty and inequality. There will be a continued emphasis in Year 3 on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and on those facing socio-economic disadvantage.” (CMHWP Fund national guidance 2023-24 page 2)

For year three Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (AB TSI) has been allocated £281,900.15 to distribute to third sector and community organisations by the end of March 2024 but we will do this earlier in January 2024. Year three funds will need to be used by the end of August 2025 at the very latest however the government will require evaluation returns by March 2025.

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. Local consultation events were held on 14th, 25th and 26th September 2023 with nearly fifty groups represented across the sessions. It was agreed that the local priorities for year three should remain the same as for year two with a slight increase in emphasis on the continuing cost of living crisis. The Scottish Government also published their updated guidance to support the year three fund.

In 2022-2023 there were 57 applications for funding, and it is expected that competition will continue to be intense as needs have continued to increase. This need to share out the funding is reflected in the maximum amount that can be applied for which will stay at £10k for single applicants. Partnerships can bid for up to £20k for a minimum of two partners.

2. Fund aims and priorities

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 2023/24 on:

1. Tackle **mental health inequalities** through supporting a range of ‘at risk groups’¹ (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.

3. 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 overarching aim 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.

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

Specifically, the intended outcomes of the Fund remain the same as in Years 1 and 2 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.
- 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.

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 years one, two and three local Argyll and Bute priorities were identified to complement the national priorities listed at section 3.

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 as early as possible in October 2023. This process worked well in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 and the quality of applications received was high.

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 the local area are not excluded but are not the main focus of the Fund. Funded organisations 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 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 unconstituted groups, either by supporting them to become constituted, or by providing small value grants (for example up to £5,000) 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 unconstituted 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 3, there is continued 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 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.

We recognise that there is some overlap with the children and young people's community mental health and wellbeing supports and services funding, distributed by local authorities, although that funding is focused on targeted projects for those aged 5-24 (26 if care-experienced) and their family members. We would encourage TSIs to work in partnership with local authorities on the planning, communications and alignment between the two funds.

Projects can be funded if they are a community-based initiative 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. In addition, local partnerships should ensure that funding is allocated to initiatives which have a focus on:

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.

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. It is also appreciated 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 will be considered on a case-by-case basis

The Fund must not be seen as a way to replace other funding streams. 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 Argyll and Bute. Whilst multi-authority delivery models are not excluded there are additional evaluation criteria that must be included so please do speak with your TSSA before proposing such a model.

What we can fund

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 ²) | Profit-making/fundraising activities |
| Staff costs (these should be one off or fixed term) | VAT you can reclaim |
| Training costs | Statutory activities |
| Transport | Overseas travel |
| Utilities/running costs | Alcohol |
| Volunteer expenses | |

² Local partnerships can allow applicants to 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..

Organisations funded in year 1 and year 2

The Fund can support both existing and new projects. Projects funded through the first 2 years of the Fund are eligible to apply again but should clearly show how they will develop and improve in Year 3 and where possible, they should demonstrate early impacts from Year 1/2.

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. For Year 3 there should be a continued effort to reach underrepresented at-risk groups in your local area networks which should in turn unearth further 'new' projects not funded in the first 2 years.

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 £5,000;**
- **Larger grants can be from £5,001 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 2023. However, partnerships can bid for up to £20k for a minimum of 2 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 29 September 2023 at which point community groups can submit applications via the TSI's website.

Expression of Interest (EOI) forms must be submitted by 10am on 27th October 2023 with full applications submitted by 10am on 24th November 2023.

The earlier an EOI is completed and approved by your TSSA the longer you will have to complete the full application form!

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

Equalities considerations and at risk groups

The Fund should be 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); and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities.

Local partnerships can consider which of these groups and any locally identified groups will be a priority for the Fund in your local partnership plan, in line with local needs.

Ensuring equality of access and full participation from all relevant and at risk communities is a priority of this Fund. Our local plans will take into account equalities considerations. Projects should also be encouraged to consider the accessibility of the funded activity for all groups and any specific target groups relevant to the activity. All of this work should build upon the approaches developed over years 1 and 2 of the Fund. The Year 2 Monitoring and Reporting Summary report outlines a wide range of good practice adopted by TSIs in reaching target groups and by projects through actions to improve accessibility.

There will be further workshops in October and November 2023 to explore these aspects where we will share good practice toolkits.

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. For year three we will extend this approach and offer additional financial support so if someone needs a support worker to help with the process we will fund that. Please contact info@argylltsi.org.uk if you would like to recommend someone for this role but more publicity will be forthcoming in due course.

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 2023) which will 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.

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. FAQs

1. Continuation or recurring funding

Will there be any continuation or recurring funding?

There is no confirmation of funding beyond year 3 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 3 priorities the same as Year 1?

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 3 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 2 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 3 will be a continued and important emphasis on supporting mental health and wellbeing of communities through the ongoing cost of living crisis.

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-£5000 and £5001 to £10000.

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

This Fund covers financial year 2023-24 and ABTSI will not hold any funds allocated by the Scottish Government for 2023-24 beyond 31 March 2024. 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 2024. Groups must spend 2023 funds by August 2025 at the latest but will need to provide evaluation reports to Scottish Government by March 2025.

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 2025.

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 £5,000) 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.