

Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults Round 6

Introduction

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults (the Fund) was established in October 2021 and to date has distributed around £96 million to community initiatives supporting mental health and wellbeing across Scotland, with around £400,000 of that supporting projects and activities in Orkney.

In 2025 the Scottish Government announced that the Fund would be included in the Fairer Funding Pilot, which saw organisations able to apply for 2 years of funding. This means that, in Orkney, 12 projects have already been funding for this round and do not need to make fresh applications. This leaves £25,500 in the pot, left to be disbursed, for one year projects taking place between 1 March 2027 and 28 February 2028.

Any organisation with confirmed two-year funding awarded in Round 5 is ineligible to apply to this round of the Fund.

The maximum grant that can be applied for is £7,500, and a maximum of £5,000 in any application can be requested towards capital items. There is no minimum level that organisations can apply for, and in previous rounds the smallest grants allocated have been around £400.

For further information and an application form please contact the Community Development Team at development@vaorkney.org.uk or phone 01856 872897.

Fund Aims

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 on:

- Tackling **mental health inequalities** through supporting a range of 'at risk' groups
- 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
- Supporting **small 'grass roots' community groups** and organisations to deliver activities
- Providing **opportunities for people to connect** with each other, build trusted relationships and revitalise communities

At Risk Groups

Evidence shows that the Covid pandemic and the Cost of Living Crisis exacerbated existing mental health inequalities and had a disproportionate impact on the mental wellbeing of a range of groups in society. These 'at risk' groups are prioritised by the Fund and include:

- Women (particularly young women and women affected by 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)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities
- People with neurological conditions or learning disabilities and those from neurodiverse communities
- Young people aged 16-24

In addition, the Scottish Government has prioritised families most at risk of poverty:

- Lone parents
- Families with a disabled family member
- Families with 3+ children
- Minority ethnic families
- Families where the youngest children are under 1 year old
- Mothers aged less than 25

Local Priorities

Local priorities, in addition to those above, have been identified in collaboration with statutory and third sector partners and experts through experience as being:

- Reduction of Poverty
- Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Prevention of Suicide
- Support for Unpaid Carers
- Support for Older People

Local Outcomes

We are looking for projects to deliver at least one of the three local outcomes, to:

- Increase opportunities for people to engage with activities/services within their own local communities
- Increase opportunities for people to take part in activities that are purposeful and meaningful to them
- Increase opportunities to embrace and enable the conversation around suicide

Grant Awards

Applications can be made for a maximum of £7,500. Applications can include requests for funding towards small capital items up to a maximum of £5,000. The deadline for applications is **5pm on Friday 11th December 2026**.

Projects must be completed by 28 February 2028.

Eligibility

The ambition of this Fund is to support initiatives which promote adult mental health and wellbeing at a small scale, grass roots, community level. For the purposes of this Fund, the adult population is considered to be those 16 and over. It is accessible to all groups, no matter how small or inexperienced they are. It can support both new and existing groups or projects. Your group does not have to have mental health and wellbeing as your main focus, but your application does have to clearly benefit the mental wellbeing of people in your community.

Applicants must be members of VAO, with the exception of new groups who are not yet constituted. To find out more about becoming a member of VAO, please visit

<https://www.vaorkney.org.uk/who/become-a-member>.

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, including:

- 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)

- Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies
- Community Councils
- Parent Councils*

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

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

The Fund can also support an un-constituted group to become constituted, or a constituted entity (that meets criteria above) can hold a grant for an un-constituted group. VAO will have to be satisfied that appropriate arrangements have been put in place. Whilst the Fund can support the expansion of existing activities it is intended to provide additionality, not replacement funding.

Previously funded projects

Organisations that received funding from Rounds 1 to 5 of the Fund are welcome to apply to Round 6. The exception is organisations that were awarded 2 year grants in 2026 for projects taking place between 1 March 2026 and 28 February 2028.

Where an organisation is applying for funding for the same or a similar project previously supported by the Fund, the application should show how the project has developed or improved. Where possible, applicants should also include evidence of the project's impact to date.

If funding is requested for ongoing revenue costs or staff costs, applicants should explain how these costs will be sustained after the grant ends. This should include an exit strategy and/or details of potential future funding sources.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention and Early Intervention are the key themes of the Fund. We define prevention and early intervention as stopping mental health problems before they start and/or stopping existing mental health problems from worsening. We know that non-clinical interventions like building community, having structure, learning new skills or being in nature can improve mental health.

The Fund is aimed at projects that are primarily support and prevention focused within the community. The Fund is not aimed at projects that are primarily treatment focused and is not meant to replace funding for direct therapeutic interventions such as

counselling or CBT. It aims to provide a range of broader community supports that can complement clinical care.

What we will and will not fund

We will fund	We cannot fund
• One-off events • Hall hire • Small capital spend (e.g. equipment, up to £5,000) • Staff costs (one off or fixed term) • Training costs • Transport • Utilities / running costs • Volunteer expenses	• Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest • Electricity generation and feed in tariff payment • Political or religious campaigning or activities • Profit-making / fundraising activities • VAT you can reclaim • Statutory activities • Overseas travel • Alcohol

Fair Work

Any organisation applying for a grant which either currently employs staff or will employ staff using the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund grant, must have a **Fair Work Action Plan** and be able to demonstrate their commitment to the Fair Work Agenda. The Fair Work Action Plan must be included with your application along with a copy of your constitution and most recent annual accounts. The Fair Work Action Plan must cover the following Scottish Government priorities:

- Effective voice
- Opportunities
- Security
- Fulfilment
- Respect

If you would like support to develop a Fair Work Action Plan to accompany your application, please contact the Community Development Team at development@vaorkney.org.uk or phone 01856 872897.

Payment of Grant

We aim to ensure that applicants will receive payment of their grants by 1st March 2027.

If your application is on behalf of a partnership of organisations, a successful grant will be paid to the lead partner.

If you are a small group without a bank account do not let this put you off applying. Please get in touch to discuss how we can support you.

Help and Support

VAO will provide one to one advice, support and resources to help you develop your project/activity ideas and complete your application form.

We will also keep in close contact with you during the delivery phase of your project/activity and will support you with any concerns or difficulties you may face. Please do not hesitate to contact the Community Development Team at development@vaorkney.org.uk or phone 01856 872897.

Reporting

At the end of the project the applicant will be required to report on the delivery of the project. We will seek the following information:

- What did you expect to do with the funding and what did you actually do against your original plan
- How many activities were planned?
- How many activities were undertaken?
- How many participants benefited?
- Who were the main beneficiaries?
- Please let us know of any achievements to date that you are particularly proud of, or that demonstrate the difference made to individuals
- Please tell us how you achieved each of your proposed outcomes
- What methods were used to gather evidence?
- Did you achieve your outcomes? What are the indicators that demonstrate success?
- What were the challenges? Did you encounter any problems that slowed the progress or stopped the outcomes from happening, or did you need to make any changes to the project in order to deliver against your outcomes?
- What did we need to change to make the project work
- Is there anything else you want to add?
- What was your final project budget?

Submitting your application

Please ensure that you complete the application form correctly, with support if required, and attach the required documents. Completed application forms should be submitted

to: development@vaorkney.org.uk or posted to Voluntary Action Orkney, 6 Bridge Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1HR marked CMHWF by **5pm on Friday 11th December 2026.**