



LOCAL COMMUNITY PROJECT SUPPORT

**CommUnity Grants Scheme
2026/2027 – Fifth Round
Application Guidance**



**Refugee
Resettlement Service**
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

The CommUnity Grants Scheme continues into its second year and will award grants to organisations and community groups in 2026/2027 to enable them to play a role in the integration of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced persons in St Helens.

This grant scheme is operated by the Council's Refugee Resettlement Service and is fully funded by central government grants that support refugee and similar programmes in St Helens, including the Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, and the Asylum Seeker Dispersal schemes.

The CommUnity Grants Scheme is predicated on the Council's Our Borough Strategy vision of "Working together for a better borough, with people at the hearts of everything we do by improving people's lives together and creating distinct, attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive, and accessible places in which to live, work, visit and invest."

We also believe in empowering and enabling residents and community organisations to play a more active role in delivering our vision and priorities.

This grant scheme is also based on some fundamental principles that inform our work:

- The successful integration of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced persons in St Helens benefits all our communities and the local economy.
- Integration is a two-way process in which our communities play a significant role in helping refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced persons to rebuild their lives in St Helens.



Who Can Apply?

You can apply to the CommUnity Grants Scheme if you satisfy the following criteria:

- You are a constituted group or organisation in the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector (e.g. registered charity; charitable trust; community interest company; unincorporated association; company limited by guarantee; charitable incorporated organisation; community benefit society)
- You have an active business bank account in the organisation or group's name.
- You are based and/or operate in St Helens (exemptions from this condition may be given in exceptional circumstances; please contact us before applying)
- You are able submit your organisation's governing document or constitution if requested

Priority Areas for 2026/2027

The Refugee Resettlement Service sets a small number of priorities for the grant scheme each year. This is to ensure that the grant scheme complements our commissioning and delivery. The priority areas for 2026/2027 are:

Community Cohesion:

Whether developing more welcoming communities in the borough, creating safe environments for integration and conversation, or promoting meaningful interaction between people from different backgrounds, the CommUnity Grants Scheme invites bids that aim to foster community cohesion between refugees, asylum seekers and other communities in St Helens. Examples of community cohesion projects include myth busting resources, awareness raising workshops and meetings, cultural exchange groups, befriending, and any projects that target interactions between people from different backgrounds.

Typical outcomes of the community cohesion priority area include:

- increased participation of refugees, asylum seekers and other migrant communities in community life in St Helens
- events celebrating cultures and traditions (especially with the participation of the wider community)
- A more welcoming environment for refugees and other people who have experienced forced migration, with increased sense of belonging
- meaningful interactions between people from different backgrounds

Informal ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

Informal ESOL provision typically refers to activities and projects that do not necessarily lead to accreditation or qualification and are not necessarily delivered by qualified tutors or teachers who follow set curricula. Informal ESOL is often more relaxed, is tailored to individual needs, makes use of community resources, but can also complement formal classes. Informal does not mean 'unstructured'. On the contrary, effective informal ESOL provision is often based on sound language learning theory and established models such as Creative English. Examples of informal ESOL include conversation sessions, language cafés, family-focused learning, employment-related ESOL, language exchange schemes, guided self-study. Most of all, informal ESOL allows for innovative approaches and for community participation in the language learning process.

Typical integration outcomes of informal ESOL projects include:

- more confidence in the use of English
 - improved spoken English
 - ability to perform everyday tasks in English
 - meaningful local connections
 - quicker progress in formal provision
 - improved mental health
 - better knowledge of, and access to, the local community and services
 - meaningful and/or impactful volunteering opportunities
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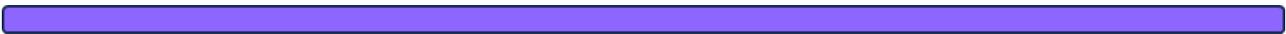
How Much Money is Available and How Many Bids May an Organisation Submit?

The Refugee Resettlement Service has set aside up to £70,000 for the fifth round of awards in 2026/2027, the maximum funding available for individual grants is £10,000.

Individual organisations and groups may submit as many bids as they wish. Only one award will be allowed per organisation or group in any individual round. We encourage joint bids, however, only one award per organisation will be allowed.

Applicants may submit a bid to continue a project currently funded by the CommUnity Grants Scheme; however, there is no guarantee that a project will be funded again in this way. In any case, the same project may not be funded more than twice (i.e. in two application rounds).

The Refugee Resettlement Service reserves the right to change the total amount available for grants in one particular year and will endeavour to communicate any changes as soon as a relevant decision is made. Please note that the grants scheme is a competitive process, and your proposal may not be accepted for funding.



The Application Process

We encourage bidders to contact us to discuss ideas and proposals informally before submitting their bids by e-mailing Michael Melia, Refugee Resettlement Project Officer: michaelmelia@sthelens.gov.uk. Please note that we cannot review and discuss full draft application forms before formal submission.

The fourth application round in 2026/2027 will open on Monday 16th March 2026, with a deadline for applications on Friday 15th May 2026. Completed application forms should be submitted electronically, together with any relevant backing evidence, to: resettlementgrants@sthelens.gov.uk.

The Application Form contain the following parts:

- Information about your organisation, including contact details
- Project summary, including main priority area covered, intended outcomes, and timeline
- Management, delivery, and costs
- Engagement and accessibility
- Evaluation and legacy

Once your bid is submitted, we may contact you to discuss it before deciding on whether to make an award. We may ask you for clarifications or further information, and we may make suggestions if we feel that the proposal can be improved. As we may be assessing several bids at the same time, we may look, for instance, to combine aspects of different proposals or ways to avoid duplication of efforts. We may also seek to negotiate project delivery schedules. In some cases, we may also ask you to re-submit your application.

All bids will be assessed by a Grants Assessment Panel. The Panel's decisions are final and there is no process to appeal against decisions. We will endeavour to provide feedback to all unsuccessful bidders, including the reasons why their applications were unsuccessful.

We aim to make all grant award decisions and communicate them to successful bidders in the first round of 2026/2027 by Friday 29th May 2026. It is expected that all projects awarded as part of this round will be delivered from July 2026.



Guidelines for Completing the Application Form

The CommUnity Grants Scheme application form is your opportunity to explain why you think that the Council's Refugee Resettlement Service should fund your proposal. Please ensure that you cover all required points as comprehensively as possible.

The scheme is one of the ways for the Refugee Resettlement Service to hear new ideas from the community about how to support the integration of refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced persons in the Borough. We are inviting to proposals that are relevant to the Scheme's priority areas for 2026/2027. While we encourage bidders to have regard to best practice in integration, we are also keen to see innovative approaches, including pilots.

When completing your application, please:

- Ensure that you provide all the required information about your organisation, including contact details.
- Keep to the maximum word count in each section; please note that if the number of words in a particular section exceed that count, we will disregard all the words above it.
- Be concise and to the point, avoiding any unnecessary information. As a guide, avoid any information that you know that we know already!
- In section 2a, please include, at the very least, the rationale and aims of your project and a brief description of activities.



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- In section 2c, please provide evidence that the project will meet existing needs or demands. This may include evidence from research or consultation with people who have lived experience, for instance.
- In section 2d, please provide details about intended impacts and outcomes of the proposed project, including the type and number of service users to benefit from the project and how they will benefit from the project. Please include any risk assessments that identify potential risks or negative impacts, if relevant.
- In section 3b, provide full details of individual costs, or categories of costs, that the project will incur. Please use, where possible, standard cost categories such as staff/freelancer salaries or fees, equipment (if applicable), consumables, venue hire (if applicable), and travel. Please itemise costs within each category as much as possible. If you intend to outsource an element of the project (say, 'training' or 'workshop'), please make ensure that you itemise the costs involves in those as much as possible. If you include indirect costs, please provide details and justify why these should be covered by the CommUnity Grants Scheme. Please make sure that the costs include all project activities, including engagement.
- In section 3d, describe any resources that will be coming from sources other than this grant scheme to support the delivery of the project, including cash, in kind, volunteering resources, donations and other project funding.
- In the part about 'engagement and accessibility', please explain how you are going to engage with service users to ensure that they participate in, and benefit from, the project. Please include details about how you will communicate with people who do not speak English, if applicable, and how you are going to make activities (including venues, information resources, etc.) accessible to different groups of refugees.
- In section 5a, please describe how you are going to evaluate the impacts of the project, including the kinds of information that you will be collecting and using during and after project delivery.





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- In the 5b section, please describe what you will do to ensure that the positive impacts of the project outlive the duration of the project. This could include how you intend to raise funds for the project, or similar activities, to continue, be repeated, etc. We encourage bidders to think beyond the life of the awarded project to think how they can, for instance, sustain the proposed project after the funding from the CommUnity Grants Scheme runs out.



The criteria that will be used to assess proposals include whether there is a need for that kind of project, the intended impact, value for money, quality of planning (i.e. it has realistic timeline, resources have been thought through), proposed engagement and accessibility, and legacy potential. Match-funding is welcome but is not strictly required.

If you have a query or for any further information, please e-mail Michael Melia, Refugee Resettlement Project Officer: michaelmelia@sthelens.gov.uk.

Refugee Resettlement Service

March 2026