


# CommUnity Grants Scheme

# 2026/2027

# Application Guidance

ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

CommUnity Grants
LOCAL COMMUNITY PROJECT SUPPORT

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# Introduction

The CommUnity Grants Scheme continues into its third year and will award grants to organisations and community groups in 2026/2027 to enable them to play a role in the integration of newly resettled families and individuals and local communities in the Borough.

This grant scheme is operated by the Council's Integration and Cohesion Service and is fully funded by central government grants.

The CommUnity Grants Scheme is based 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."

At the heart of the CommUnity Grants Scheme is a commitment to strengthening community cohesion. We recognise that strong, connected communities are built when people from different backgrounds have opportunities to come together, develop mutual understanding, and participate fully in community life. Funded projects should promote positive relationships between newly resettled families, individuals, and established local residents. This helps to break down barriers, reduce isolation, challenge misconceptions, and create a stronger sense of belonging. Activities should encourage meaningful interaction, shared experiences, and active participation in community life, contributing to safer, more inclusive, and welcoming neighbourhoods across the Borough.

## 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; or community interest company).
- You have an active business bank account in the organisation or group's name.
- You are based and/or operate in St Helens.
- You are able to submit your organisation's governing document or constitution, including:
    - Safeguarding Policy
    - Health and Safety Policy
    - Data Protection Policy
    - Public Liability Insurance Policy
    - Risk Assessment of Project

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## Priority Areas For 2026/2027

The Integration and Cohesion Service sets a small number of priorities for the grant scheme each year.

The scheme is one of the ways for the Integration and Cohesion Service to hear new ideas from the community about how to support the integration of newly resettled families and individuals in the Borough. We are inviting projects that are relevant to the Scheme's priority areas for 2026/2027 to apply. While we encourage applicants to have regard to achieve community cohesion, we are also keen to see innovative approaches, including pilots.

Priority will be given to projects that are delivered in, or directly benefit residents living in the following wards:

- Newton-le-Willows
- Thatto Heath
- Sutton
- Bold
- Haydock

The priority areas for 2026/2027 are:

**Community Cohesion:**

Community cohesion is the process of bringing people from different backgrounds, cultures, faiths, ages, and experiences together to build positive relationships, increase understanding and respect, reduce isolation, and create a stronger sense of belonging within the local community. Projects that promote community cohesion encourage meaningful interaction, shared activities, mutual support, and participation in community life.

Outcomes of the community cohesion priority area include:

- Bringing together people from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds through shared events or activities.
- Promoting understanding of different cultures, traditions, and faiths.
- Reducing social isolation and increasing community participation.
- Encouraging volunteering and peer support opportunities.
- Creating opportunities for residents to work together on common goals.
- Supporting integration of newly resettled families and individuals, and established communities.
- Improving relationships between different groups within the community.

Applications should demonstrate how the proposed project will create opportunities for people from different backgrounds to meet, interact, learn from one another, and build positive relationships that contribute to a more connected and inclusive community.

**Informal ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages):**

Informal ESOL refers to English learning activities and programmes that aren't accredited (leading to a formally recognised qualification) and may not be delivered by qualified teachers or tutors following a prescribed curriculum. Informal ESOL is often delivered in a more flexible and accessible format, tailored to the needs of individual learners and making use of community-based resources. The term 'informal' should not be interpreted as meaning unstructured; it can complement formal ESOL. For example, 'pragmatics' is the use of language in context and acknowledges how culture contributes to meaning, focusing not just on what words literally mean, but how they are used in real-world communication. 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.

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

**Employability and Skills:**

Newly settled residents in the borough often face significant barriers to accessing employment and skills opportunities; unfamiliarity with the UK labour market, limited professional networks, language barriers and challenges in demonstrating overseas qualifications and experience. Employability and skills-focused projects can play an important role in supporting long-term integration, independence and economic participation.

Activities under this priority area may support participants to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to access education, training, volunteering and employment opportunities in the United Kingdom. Particular value is attached to activities that provide practical exposure to UK workplace environments and help participants understand local employment practices, expectations and opportunities. UK work experience can be especially important in helping individuals demonstrate their skills to employers, gain familiarity with workplace culture and develop relevant professional references.

Examples of employability and skills projects include employability workshops, careers guidance, mentoring schemes, volunteering programmes, work experience placements, job clubs, interview preparation, digital skills development, sector-specific training, confidence-building activities and initiatives that connect participants with local employers, training providers and community organisations.

Outcomes of employability and skills projects include:

- increased participation in volunteering, training and work experience opportunities
- improved employability, job-search, application and interview skills
- progression into education, training, volunteering or employment opportunities
- greater confidence in seeking employment and career progression
- increased knowledge of employment rights and responsibilities
- improved professional and social networks

- enhanced digital and workplace skills
- increased contribution to community life and the local economy

This priority area recognises that economic integration extends beyond employment alone and includes enabling individuals to understand how society and the economy operate, develop meaningful connections, contribute their skills and experience, and participate fully in community life.

## How Much Can Organisations Apply For?

Only one award will be allowed per organisation or group per year.

The funding will provide the initial investment needed to establish and develop the project, with clear focus on long-term sustainability. During the grant period you will build volunteer capacity, strengthen community participation, develop partnerships and explore opportunities to generate income and secure additional funding. This will enable the project to continue providing benefits to the community after the grant has ended.

Project funding expectation:

Organisations can apply for up to £10,000. However, it is expected that organisations meet the following criteria when delivering their project:

- If an organisation applies for £5000 or less, the project must be delivered for a minimum period of 6-months.
- If an organisation applies for over £5000, the project must be delivered for a minimum period of 12-months.

## The Application Process

Applications will open on the 20/11/2026 with a closing date of **Friday 1st January 2027**. Applications will be electronic and a link will be available on the Integration & Cohesion Service website.




We aim to make all grant award decisions and communicate them to successful applicants by **Friday 15th January 2027**. It is expected that all projects awarded as part of this round will be delivered from **Monday 1st March 2027**.

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# Guidelines For Completing The Application Form

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

When completing your application, please:

- In question 12, please include evidence of the need, e.g. feedback from service users, surveys, discussions with community groups.
- In question 14, please explain the gap that your project will address.
- In question 31, evaluation, how will you monitor the project against agreed KPIs? Sustainability, how the project can be used as a foundation that can continue beyond the grant?
- In question 32, in-kind contribution, e.g. volunteer time, project co-ordination, administration.

If you have a query or for any further information, please e-mail: communitygrants@sthelens.gov.uk.

CommUnity Grant Scheme Application Form 2026/2027:

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# Funding Requirements

Funded community grant projects are required to include and adhere to the following requirements as part of their grant award:

- Volunteers will support the delivery of project activities, participant engagement helping to ensure the project is accessible and community-led.
- Integration & Cohesion Service members are welcome to drop-in and participation in project activities without prior notice.
- Attend the Integration & Cohesion Service drop-in to promote project and engage with service users as and when required
- Attend and actively participate in the Integration and Cohesion Service Multi-Agency Forum (MAF) to support partnership working, information sharing, and community engagement.
- Provide promotional material for project.
- Provide up-to-date promotional information and materials to the Integration & Cohesion Service throughout the project.

Integration and Cohesion Service

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