**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND 2025-2026**

**GUIDANCE AND CRITERIA**

**Applications for Community Development Funding should be completed in line with this guidance and criteria. Awards are subject to budget availability.**

**THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FUND 2025-2026 IS SOLELY FOR RUNNING COSTS AND PLEASE READ THIS GUIDANCE CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION.**

**A short video is available on our YouTube channel to help you complete the application form. Watch it here** (Ctrl & click to launch): [https://youtu.be/ClAPliWP1us](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fyoutu.be%2FClAPliWP1us&data=05%7C02%7CNicola.McClurg%40ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk%7C8e22a53264bc43d638f508dd7768ab12%7C39416dee5c8e4f5cb59d05c4bd0dd472%7C0%7C0%7C638798013614847892%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=2N75x%2BLHQikc0FEEk3g6QXjqxwwPRRpoilyHyJRUQOI%3D&reserved=0)

**The Fund is open for applications from 9am on 16 April 2025 and closes at 12 noon on 9th May 2025.Unfortunately applications received after this deadline will be deemed as ineligible.**

**NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:**

We will only accept one application per group/organisation. To make the process as fair as possible, questions will only be scored up to the maximum word count. Scoring is based on content of answers. Applicants do not need to reach the full word count.

**The purpose of the Community Development Funding**

The Community Development Fund (CD) is jointly provided by Ards and North Down Borough Council and the Department for Communities, under the Community Support Programme.

The purpose of the Council’s Community Development Fund is to support local Community groups who:

* Require running costs for local community bases, and groups (e.g. insurance, utilities, rent/venue hire etc.), which aim to improve the quality of life in our communities.

**Objectives of the Fund**

The objectives of the Community Development Fund are as follows:

* to strengthen local communities
* to increase community participation
* to promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups
* to encourage and promote community activity

The expected outcomes for the Community Development Fund reflect those of the Community Support Programme:

* an active and organised community
* an influential community
* an informed community
* a sustainable community

**What is Community Development?**

The aims and objectives which underpincommunity development practice include:

* Organising and working together
* Identifying community needs and aspirations
* Influence decisions which affect community life
* Improve the quality of life in communities and society in general

**Community Development Grant**

The scheme will support the following types of Community Development activity subject to the availability of funding:

* **Up to £2,500 - Running Costs** for local community bases/resource centres and groups which aim to improve the quality of life in our communities.

This is a competitive process, and all grant awards will be determined on the basis of merit, using the information provided in the application form. Council reserves the right to reduce the maximum amount of funding available if the programme is oversubscribed and/or budget depending. **Only one application per group is permitted.**

**General Principles which apply to the Community Development Grant**

* This Funding is specifically for grassroot Community Groups.
* The group must be based and operate within the Ards and North Down Borough area.
* This is a competitive scheme and applications will be determined on the basis of merit.
* Applications to this scheme will be opento all eligible applicants who can meet the minimum requirements and core criteria of the Community Development Fund.
* Applicants can apply to other sources of funding to enhance their application. However, applicants must ensure that the funding from the Council is not duplicated from other funding sources.
* Organisations in receipt of a grant must comply with all statutory obligations regarding the delivery of and access to their events, including council procurement/ Health & Safety/Safeguarding and licensing requirements.
* Funding must be spent between the date on the Letter of Offer and 31st March 2026.
* Applicants can apply to other sources of public support, outside of the council, but must declare this in their application form.
* Future funding may be withheld if any required closing documentation is still outstanding for previous grants administered by Ards and North Down Borough Council, including invoices, receipts, accounts, bank statements and evaluation reports.
* It is a prime responsibility of Council to be accountable for public monies. To this end, successful applicants will be required to provide the relevant supporting information when claiming funding e.g., original receipts, original invoices, and bank statements.All expenditure being claimed must be verified by the relevant receipt/invoice and the corresponding bank statement and were possible we discourage Cash Payments/Transactions including Petty cash payments.
* The financial support available through this grant may not cover all costs associated with the requirements of the group. Where this is the case, the criteria will require the organisation to cover any shortfall from their existing resources.

**Eligibility & Exclusions**

The Community Development Fund is open to all Community Groups / organisations based in the Ards and North Down Borough Council area who meet the criteria of the funding.

To be eligible to apply, the applicant must meet the following minimum requirements:

* To provide appropriate governance documents and Constitution.
* Must be a grass roots Community group delivering Community Development outcomes in line with the aims and objectives as outlined in the group’s Constitution.
* Be democratically accountable, through regular public meetings, annual general meetings and be managed by a publicly elected committee.
* Demonstrates a fair and equitable ethos through the applicants aim and objectives, in accordance with Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75)**.**
* Demonstrates how the funding will improve the quality, capacity, and collective action of the community.
* Applications that are not completed accurately and in full will be deemed as ineligible and not scored. Please ensure the 2025/26 application form is used, applications completed on older versions will be deemed ineligible and not scored.

**The Community Development Grant will NOT provide funding for the following:**

* Groups whose primary aims and objectives are **not** Community Development, this includes groups who deliver community development outcomes however have a different core focus. i.e., sports, arts, religious, heritage and culture.
* Schools/Nurseries or groups affiliated with schools/nurseries or pre-schools
* Groups who promote a particular religion or political belief cannot be funded
* Individuals
* Community groups / organisations from outside the Ards and North Down Borough
* Groups submitting applications on the behalf of other groups.
* Arts/Crafts Groups (refer to Arts and Heritage)
* Sports clubs/organisations (refer to Sports Development)
* Regional groups/organisations are not eligible to apply
* Trade or professional conferences/conventions
* Awards ceremonies or industry events
* Residential courses and associated events
* Retrospective payments or repayments of loans
* Social events for groups – including lunches/dinners or bus trips
* Organisations who have previously received funding from us that was not managed satisfactorily or was not completed. This includes if you did not send us the monitoring or evaluation forms within the agreed timescale.
* Applications (including all essential documents requested) that are not fully complete or submitted after the grant deadline.

**In addition to the above exclusions, examples of eligible and ineligible expenditure are outlined below:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Eligible expenditure** | **Non-eligible expenditure** |
| Utilities – Electric, Heating, Water & Internet costs | Gratuities, gifts, prizes & awards |
| Insurance (for the period of Grant – 01/04/2025 - 31/3/2026) | Charitable donations |
| Rent/Venue Hire | Staff salaries/Professional fees e.g. Consultancy fees, Facilitator fees, travel expenses/fuel costs |
| Accountancy or Audit Fees – only for year-end audit requirements **(capped to £400)** | Any related catering costs for social events, this includes the purchase of alcohol |
| Administration related to the running of the group | Maintenance relating to the inside and outside of the building. |
| Catering – for EGM/AGM meetings only **(capped to £100)** | Any costs not detailed in the application form or approved by the assessment panel |
| Advertising, Marketing, Website and Subscription services e.g. Text Local but these ***must be specific to the running of the Group* (capped to £500)** | Purchase of equipment / capital purchases |
| Stationary, postage & printing costs related to the running of the group **(capped to £400)** |  |

Please note, the above list is not exhaustive, if you have any queries please contact [communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

**Grant Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scheme advertised - Newspapers | 17th April 2025 |
| Scheme open | 9am on 16th April 2025 |
| Scheme closes | 12 noon on 9th May 2025 |
| Date of Assessment | Week commencing 12th May 2025 |
| Award and regret letters issued | TBC – awaiting DfC funding confirmation |
| Letter of acceptance received | TBC – awaiting DfC funding confirmation |
| Completion of grant period | 31/03/2026 |
| Claim to be submitted | Final claims by 31/03/2026 |
| Grant Evaluation Form | With final claim submission |
| Close of Scheme | 31/03/2026 |

**Application Process**

The Community Development Team administers the Community Development Grant scheme.

Applications to the 2025-2026 Community Development Grant scheme will open at **9am on** **16th April 2025 and closes at 12 noon on 9th May 2025**.

Calls for Community Development Grant applications will be advertised in the local press and on the Council’s website and Facebook page. The Council will also notify those groups/organisations registered on the Community Information Register.

Application forms, guidance notes and criteria will be made available on the Council's website - <https://www.ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk/grants>

Copies can also be requested from the Community Development Team - [communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Please do not alter the layout/format of the application form in anyway as this may result in your application not being scored. Also please ensure you are completing the 2025/26 application and not an older version. Unfortunately incorrect application versions will be deemed as ineligibleand not scored.

Applicants must complete all three sections of the application form

**Section 1 - About your group / organisation and the eligibility of the application**.

This section must be completed but is not scored.Please provide relevant details about your Community group / organisation as outlined in the application. Tell us about the main aims and activities of your group. Please note that if you are requesting rental costs in your grant application you must ensure that the information about your community base, hall or venue is completed in the box provided. (Refer to pages 2&3 of this guidance)

**Section 2 - Running Costs, Objectives of the fund and Finance**

**2.1** *Applicants must detail what running costs your group is applying for by outlining why they are essential for the group* *(scored 0-5).*

Question 2.1 is looking for the detail around the running costs for your group, in this section you need to outline what costs the group are applying for, for example this may be things like Rent, insurance, heating or stationery. You should also include detail on why these things are essential costs for your group. There are some grant exclusions which are detailed on pages 4 & 5 of the guidance notes.

**2.2** *What location is the main catchment area for your group?* ***Please include***

***postcode of area****.* This question is to determine the 10% of the most deprived wards in the council area. A score of 5 will be awarded only to groups that fall within the top 10% most deprived wards in the Borough. *(scored 0-5)*

**2.3** *How does the Community benefit from your group and what do you plan to achieve*

*this year?* Tell us about the benefits to the wider community and what the outcomes are that will be achieved. *(scored 0-5)*

For example, what programmes are offered, who can attend and how far reaching the programmes are, as well as what outcomes the group hopes to achieve throughout the year

**2.4** *Please explain what steps your group / organisation will take to be more economically*

*independent in the future*. Other than this grant, tell us how you plan to become more economically independent and how will you do that e.g. fundraising, other grants etc. *(scored 0-5)*

**Objectives of the Community Development**

**2.5** *How does your group target poverty and social exclusion?* i.e. How does your

group encourage people to attend, what activities do you offer and how do these tackle poverty and social exclusion *(scored 0-5) (refer to pages 2-4 of this guidance)*

**2.6** *How does your group promote health and wellbeing?* Please tell us about what your group does to promote health and wellbeing and what outcomes you see. *(scored 0-5) (refer to pages 2-4 of this guidance)*

**2.7** *How does your group promote equality and good relations (Section 75*

*Legislation)?* Tell us about the accessibility of your base, hall or venue, how your group complies with Section 75 legislation and how do you encourage everyone regardless of religion, race, gender etc. to be involved *(scored 0-5) (refer to pages 2-4 of this guidance)*

**Finance**

**2.8** *Please give a detailed breakdown of your projected costs, including details of any other funding you have applied for or secured (for this question only, you can continue on a separate page if necessary). (refer to pages 4&5 of this guidance)*

Please complete the finance table on page 5 of the application form. Applicants must detail each budget heading and the expected costs to be incurred. The budget table must add up, cover only essential running costs & be proportionate to the nature & needs of the group. Please put the total amount being requested from this grant in the box provided under the expenditure table. (*Please note that the table in 2.8 is not scored but must be correctly completed for context to the questions at 2.9 and 2.10).*

* 1. *Please describe any contribution your group/organisation is making towards the*

*running costs (financial or in-kind e.g. money, how many people volunteered and*

*how many hours and any materials/services provided in kind)?* *(scored 0-5) max 250 words.*

In-kind contributions can include:

* Volunteer time: You can calculate this by using the minimum wage and   
  multiplying by the number of hours worked.
* Donated equipment/goods/services: How much the equipment, services or goods would cost to purchase or hire
* Services donated from other companies or organisations: How much this service would cost if you were to pay for it
* Use of premises or office space

You can calculate the value of volunteer time as this is benefit in kind and it shows value for money and include this in your answer. To calculate volunteer time it is the amount of volunteer hours multiplied by the minimum wage rate per hour – 4 volunteers doing 6 hours each would be 24 volunteer hours so the calculation is 24 hours x £11.44 = £274.56

* 1. *Please explain how value for money will be achieved*. *(scored 0-5) max 250 words*

Value for money means getting the best possible benefits or results for the amount of money you spend on running costs. Tell us about the different ways you try to achieve value for money e.g. volunteer roles, sponsorship, donations, shopping around for quotes etc.

**Assessment Criteria and Scoring of Applications**

Applications will be considered on the following **core criteria**. Applicants must clearly demonstrate in the application form how they meet these criteria.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scoring Measure** | **Score** |
| Excellent response that meets the requirement. Indicates an excellent response with detailed supporting evidence and no weaknesses. | 5 |
| A good response that meets the requirement with good supporting evidence. Demonstrates good understanding of the requirement. | 4 |
| The response generally meets the requirement with acceptable detail but lacks sufficient detail to warrant a higher mark. | 3 |
| A response with reservations. Limited detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement. | 2 |
| An unacceptable response with serious reservations. Very limited/poor detail to demonstrate that the proposed response will meet the requirement. | 1 |
| The applicant failed to address the question. | 0 |

A pass mark of 60% has been set for the CD Running Costs Fund 2025/26.

**Oversubscription to the Fund -** Where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

**Section 3 - Government Funding Database Declaration** **(GFD), Freedom of Information , Data Protection and Section 75**

Ards and North Down Borough Council has adopted the Northern Ireland Executive’s Best Practice Principles to reduce bureaucracy through the use of Government Funding Database. The GFD requires the Council to input details of all successful applicants onto the database. We can upload the documents you attach for you if they are not already on the GFD.

Your GFD profile requires the following essential information to be uploaded:

* Constitution/Memorandum of Association
* List of Office Bearers/Board of Governors
* Annual Accounts/Financial Statement

If you received Council Community funding in the last 6 months, the above documents would have already been checked and uploaded onto the GFD. **If any of these documents have been updated since they were submitted last, we will need the most recent versions please.**

Please submit any essential documentation not on the GFD with your application. Please tick the boxes to indicate on page 6 which documents are already on the GFD or being submitted with your application. Please ensure the declaration on page 7 has been completed confirming the documents are up to date and fit for purpose and also that 2 committee members have signed the application consent section on page 7.

The information entered on to the Government Funders Database can then be shared across funding organisations. All subsequent funders who wish to fund the same community organisation can then access this information, rather than applicants providing multiple copies to each funder.

Please contact the Community Development Team if you need any more information on the Government Funding Database or help with uploading your essential documents.

Council officers **will not** complete application forms on behalf of applicants.

**Submitting applications**

Completed application forms and any supporting documentation should be submitted to the Community Development Team by the closing date of **12 noon on 9th May 2025**. Emailed applications should be submitted in PDF Format**.** We would encourage you to submit your application via e-mail but if this is not possible, please either hand deliver or post your application to the address below before the deadline.

We will only accept one application per group/organisation. To make the process as fair as possible, questions will only be scored up to the maximum word count. Scoring is based on content of answers. Applicants do not need to reach the full word count.

**APPLICATION CHECKLIST –**

* In regard to the 6 essential documents we request, please ensure you have completed the GFD section on page 6&7 of the application and have ticked to indicate which documents have been included with your application or are already on GFD.
* Please ensure you have completed all three sections of the application. Check that it is the 2025/26 version of the application form.
* Please ensure the declaration on page 7 of the application has been signed and dated by 2 committee members.
* Have you ticked the box on page 10 of the application to confirm you have read the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Equality statements?

If you are emailing your application and documents we advise you to password protect emails that contain sensitive data in order to keep you and your personal information safe and if requested we can forward you instructions on how to do this. Council also now use Zivver for safe transfer of information and we can assist applicants with doing this.

**Return to:**

Email (preferable) [communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:communitygrants@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

Hand delivery or post to:

**ANDBC Community Development**

**CD Running Costs Grant 25/26**

**Signal Centre**

**2 Innotec Drive**

**Balloo Road**

**Bangor**

**BT19 7PD**

**Following submission of applications**

* Application forms received will not be reviewed until after the closing date deadline. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that all necessary documentation is submitted before the closing date.
* All applications received will be acknowledged by email within 3 working days of receipt.
* Eligible and fully completed applications, received by the closing time/date, will be assessed by a grant assessment panel against the criteria outlined.
* Your application will be assessed by an assessment panel that will comprise of at least 3 officers of which one will be from the service delivering the grant. At least 2 other officers that have experience in administering grants will make up the panel.
* Late or incomplete applications will be deemed as ineligible and not scored. Please also ensure the correct application form (**2025/2026**) is submitted. Incorrect versions of the applications will unfortunately not be scored.
* Oversubscription to the Fund **-** where the amount of grant funding requested exceeds the available grant budget, all successful grants will be reduced by an equal percentage.

**Procedures for making funding award**

All grants awarded are subject to the allocation of Central Government funding through the Department for Communities (DfC) to Ards and North Down Borough Council. Letters of Offer to successful applicants will be subject to confirmation of DfC funding.

* Each application will be assessed and scored against the information provided in the application form only.
* Funding Awards are subject to budget availability and confirmation of DfC funding.
* If your application is **unsuccessful**, you will be notified via email with the reasons clearly stated.  You will be sent a copy of Council appeal procedure. Feedback on your application can be provided on written request. However, an appeal can only be made where an applicant can evidence that the process of assessment was not followed in accordance with the criteria detailed in the Guidance Notes.  The aim of the appeals process is to ensure a fair and transparent process for the assessment of grant applications.  Grants will be assessed based on the criteria set out in the Guidance Notes.
* A Letter of Offer (LoO) will be issued to all **successful** applicants, outlining the details of the funding and the conditions of the award including adhering to publicity requirement, evaluation and monitoring returns.
* Applicants will be required to sign and accept the LoO within four weeks of the date of the LoO. If the signed LoO is not received in this time, the funding offer may be withdrawn.
* The period of funding award will be from 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026.
* Advance payments of up to 50% may be paid to the applicant, subject to a written request outlining the need of an advance along with the submission of the most recent bank statements and a projected cashflow statement.