**Section A: Funding Guidance**

**A.1 Fund Purpose, Beneficiaries and Priorities**

**A.1.1 Purpose**

To contribute to:

* improved mental health and wellbeing
* reduction in mental health inequalities
* reduction in mental health inequalities caused by the cost-of-living crisis
* reduction in stigma around mental health and illness

for “at risk” groups in North Lanarkshire through community-based support provided by the community and voluntary sector (CVS).

**A.1.2 Beneficiary (“at risk”) Groups**

Projects supported through this fund must benefit people over the age of 16 living in North Lanarkshire in one or more of the following “at risk” groups.

* Women (including 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
* People with neurological conditions or learning difficulties, and from neurodiverse communities
* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) communities
* Young People aged 16-24

Groups previously under represented within the funds which would be encouraged to work with should an applicant’s project align with include:

* Women (including women experiencing gender-based violence)
	+ Across most aspects of mental health, outcomes for women and girls are poorer than those for men and boys. These include, but are not limited to- stressors and trauma experienced by women in gender segregated key worker jobs; continuing and increased pressure on women in unpaid caring roles, the disproportionate emotional and physical burden on women of caring for relatives of all ages, and (although not exclusively an impact on women) home schooling children, living with domestic violence, abuse, coercive control and toxic masculinity, loneliness and isolation felt by women at different stages of life (e.g. women with young babies or children, and older women living alone), the effects on mental wellbeing of young women and girls in a culture where they are encouraged to compare their lives to others, including the impact of social media and body image on young women.
	+ Last phase, his group received its first small cohort of funded projects and would be encouraged to see continual growth in this phase of the fund.
* People from a Minority Ethnic background
	+ There is considerable evidence of the disproportionate influence of underlying inequalities and experiences negatively impacting the mental health of minority ethnic communities. These include experiences of poverty and deprivation, racism, Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination, as well as instances of gender-based violence, FGM and other deeply rooted cultural practices.
	+ This group has seen an increase in applications over the last few phases however continual development of supports would be encouraged.
* Refugees and those with no recourse to public funds
	+ Asylum seekers and refugees are at risk of developing mental health problems both due to their exposure to trauma in the home countries from which they have fled, and from a range of post-displacement stressors, including social isolation, poverty, lack of access to resources, racism and discrimination. Asylum seekers and refugees are more likely to experience poor mental health than the local population, including higher rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other anxiety disorders.
	+ This group has received minimal support from applicants over the lifespan of this fund.
* People with neurological conditions or learning difficulties, and from neurodiverse communities.
	+ Neurodivergent people face inequalities across all spheres of life including Education, Health and Social Care, Employment. People with a learning disability have a life expectancy 20 years less than the general population. Last year, new evidence was published by the Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory that adults with learning disabilities are twice as likely to die from preventable illnesses. They also face barriers in accessing support and services due to a lack of accessible information.
	+ This group was added to the beneficiary list for this fund last year and as a result has seen some uptake through this fund, which would be encouraged to continue.
* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) communities
	+ There is a wealth of evidence which indicates that LGBT+ people in Scotland are at much higher risk of mental health problems than heterosexual/cisgender people. There are higher rates of anxiety, depression, substance use, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide amongst the LGBT population.
	+ This group has seen one successful application over the last four phases.
* Young People aged 16-24
	+ Scotland’s Census 2022 found the percentage of young people self-reporting a mental health condition (a “condition which affects emotional, physical or mental wellbeing” over previous 12 months) increased from 4.4% in 2011 to 11.3% in 2022 - the largest increase across condition types. Younger people are now more likely to report a mental health condition than older people.
	+ This is a new priority group for the Scottish Government which NL has seen one project engage with already in phase 4 would be continued to encourage support for.

Applicants who wish to apply to support an under represented group should show evidence of prior engagement with one or more of these groups. Applications should cater to the specific needs of the groups and an understanding should be well evidenced. Applications will not be scored based on the number of beneficiary groups they can support but instead on the evidence that they can support the groups they include within their application.

**A.1.3 Priority Activities**

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 addressing priority issues of:

**Social Isolation and Loneliness**

Social Isolation and loneliness have been a key priority issue tackled by funded projects through this fund over all four previous phases and are key factors in poor mental health and wellbeing throughout North Lanarkshire. Below is a list of potential delivery methods which could be delivered through this fund (this list is not exhaustive):

* Befriending
* Facilitated peer support groups
* Building accessibility supports for communities isolated by needs which limit their access to mainstream supports
* Intergenerational work with socially isolated communities
* Cultural integration-based activities

**Suicide Prevention**

Suicide rates across many of the groups this fund aims to support are on average higher than overall average rate for the Scottish Population. As a result of the Scottish Government identifying this as a priority area for the fund, applications taking a prevention and early intervention model to this area are encouraged, below is a list of potential delivery methods which could be delivered through this fund (this list is not exhaustive):

* Facilitated peer support groups
* Facilitated Peer support groups for bereavement by suicide
* Supports focusing on building relationships, support networks and greater awareness of suicide in local communities
* Supports aiming to build and develop emotional resilience
* Signposting supports to suicide prevention services

Supports within this priority, as with the fund as a whole, must not be clinical in their delivery model. Where individuals supported would be deemed level 3 or 4 risk cases by NHS partners (level 3 referring to individuals who have plans of suicide, with level 4 being individuals who have both plans and intent for suicide) if successfully funded the organisation would be expected to demonstrate within their application a clear plan for collaboration with NHS colleagues to escalate when risk is identified. Multi-Agency Suicide Prevention training is offered to any individuals or organisations working in this area to ensure a collaborative approach to public protection.

**Tackling Poverty and Inequality**

Similarly to isolation and loneliness this is another area which the fund has consistently supported over all previous phases which poverty indicators such as financial challenges, homelessness and employment status in addition to inequality factors such as race, gender, sexuality, age and religion all impacting on mental health and wellbeing. Below is a list of potential delivery methods which could be delivered through this fund (this list is not exhaustive):

* Cultural integration-based activities
* Financial advice and signposting supports
* Health and wellness groups supporting groups with limited access to mainstream supports
* Advocacy supports
* Essentials pantry (clothes, toiletries etc.)

**A.1.4 Community Solutions Programme Outcomes**

Projects supported through this fund must support one or more of the Community Solutions programme outcomes. These include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **No.** | **Outcome**  |
| Adults | 1 | People feel more connected, included and safe |
| 2 | Improved health and wellbeing |
| 3 | People feel more informed and aware |
| Carers | 4 | Carers feel more informed and aware |
| 5 | Carers health and wellbeing are improved |
| 6 | Carers are more able to have a life outside of caring |
| Children, Young People & Families | 7 | Health and wellbeing improved |
| 8 | Family relationships are strengthened |
| 9 | Children, young people and families become more resilient |

**A.2 Applicant Guidance**

**A.2.1** **Who Can Apply**

Any community and voluntary organisation serving residents of North Lanarkshire can apply for this fund as long as they demonstrate in their application how their project would meet the purpose, beneficiaries and priorities of the fund.

Single organisation applicants can apply for between £10,000 and £30,000 (Applicants will not be penalised if their application is below £10,000).

Multiple organisations can collaboratively apply for funding in one application for between £10,000 and £50,000.

Organisations can apply for funding for one or more projects, with a separate application for each project. However, given the high number of applicants to this fund year on year, only one project can be approved for funding per organisation.

**A. 2.2 Types of organisations that can apply for this fund:**

* 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

**A.2.3 Funding Applicants**

In Phase 4 of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, there were three separate but complementary funding streams. For this phase VANL have taken the decision to merge these into one singular funding stream. This decision has been taken with the hope of avoiding confusion between the funding streams and equally to allow all applicants to be evaluated on an equal basis. There are questions within the application which can be answered in different ways depending on the project i.e. if a project previously ran through this fund, answers should include feedback from previous delivery.

All applicants should submit using the same form which can be found on the [Community Solutions website.](https://www.communitysolutionsnl.org.uk/applications-and-guidance/)

**A.2.4 Multi Year Applications**

As a part of the [Scottish Government Fairer Funding Charter,](https://www.gov.scot/policies/third-sector/fairer-funding/) this fund can now be applied for as either one-year or two-year applications. 60% of the fund over the next two phases will be reserved for two-year projects with the remaining 40% of each being held to support one year projects. If an applicant wishes to apply for a two-year project, please include within your application details around:

* How your project budget divides across the two years applied for- the amount requested must be equal over the two years
* Anticipated impact across a longer time period
* Why the project requires two years rather than one
* If the project would be willing to accept one year if two years funding was not an option

**A.2.5 Project Duration**

Projects applying for one-year funding can still apply to deliver for between 6 and 12 months however two-year projects may only apply to deliver for two years (24 months):

* One-year delivery period- 1st April 2026 and 31st March 2027
* Two-year delivery period- 1st April 2026 and 31st March 2028

**A.2.6 Eligible Expenditure**

You can apply for funding to cover the following types of expenditure:

* Staff and volunteer costs, including pay, training and travel expenses
* Office costs
* Equipment and safety provision
* Events
* Capital spend of up to £5,000

You cannot apply for funding to cover expenditure on the following:

* + Alcohol
	+ Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest
	+ Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment
	+ Political or religious campaigning
	+ Profit-making/fundraising activities
	+ Any Value Added Tax (VAT) reclaimable by the Grantee
	+ Statutory activities
	+ Overseas travel.
	+ Clinical interventions such as counselling

The Fund must not be seen as a way to replace other funding streams. Granting funds to projects previously funded through statutory bodies is at the discretion of the funding panel, however projects must demonstrate value added relative to statutory provision. This will allow projects that meet the fund’s objectives to be considered, but only granted funding if they can demonstrate clear additionality.

Organisations cannot apply for funding to support the core running costs. Core running costs in this context meaning any work the applicant’s organisation consistently delivers as a part of its day to day operations in line with all Community Solutions Funds.

**A.2.7. National Organisations**

National organisations applying in North Lanarkshire are not excluded from applying but are not the main focus of the Fund per Scottish government guidelines and will only be funded by exception. Where panel members identify a need that cannot be met by applications from grass roots NL-based organisations, the option is there to accept applications from national organisations who are able to meet that need.

**A.2.8 Fair Work Requirements**

Applicants must:

* pay the [real living wage](https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage) to all staff they employ and any sub-contractors they use
* state their commitment to other Fair Work practices and that provide information about current or planned measures to support these (for more information see the [Scottish Government’s Fair Work First Guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-work-first-guidance-2/pages/2/))

**A.2.9 Funding Application**

Organisations must only apply using the fund’s [application form available online here.](https://www.communitysolutionsnl.org.uk/applications-and-guidance/)

**A.2.10 Word Count**

It is important to note that if you do not include a sufficient word count, you will likely get scored down. Likewise, if you exceed the word count by too much, then the purpose of the application may be lost.

 **A.2.11 Sustainability**

Applications should demonstrate sustainability beyond their requested funding.

Examples of sustainability can include:

* Adding reasonable charges to services
* Encouraging donations
* Negotiating with statutory partners for mainstream funding using the impact of the initial project
* Securing sponsorship
* Highlighting one-time equipment costs
* Fundraising events

Applicants are also welcome to attach their organisation’s sustainability plan (if their organisation has created one) to support in evidencing this.

If you have any queries regarding your application, please contact Gordon Watson on gordon.watson@vanl.co.uk or Marta Szczepanska on marta.szczepanska@vanl.co.uk at Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire (VANL)

**A.2.12 Submission**

Please submit your application to cmhw@vanl.co.uk. **Applications may be submitted at any time before 5pm on Friday 31st October 2025. No applications can be accepted after this point.**

Applicants will receive an auto-response email confirming receipt of their application. If you don’t receive this, please contact marta.szczepanska@vanl.co.uk immediately.

**A.2.13 Assessment and Decision**

An Assessment Panel involving representatives from NHS Lanarkshire; North Lanarkshire Council; the community voluntary sector (CVS), specifically members of the NL mental health and wellbeing network, and VANL will assess all applications and agree the projects to be awarded funding. You will be advised of the outcome in early February 2025, with funding award letters issued to successful applicants by February 27th 2026.

If you don’t receive this information by the dates above, please contact gordon.watson@vanl.co.uk.

**A.2.14 Inappropriate conduct**

The below statement was released within the national guidance sent from the Scottish Government to all 32 TSI’s across Scotland:

“We are aware that in Year 4 some unsuccessful projects have been demonstrating their frustration in a range of ways, including subjecting TSI staff members to inappropriate comments. Whilst it is understandable that projects not being funded will feel disappointment, especially in the light of wider financial constraints, we recognise the impact this can have on TSI staff. As such TSIs may wish to consider proactive communications on this at the beginning of the bid process, setting out the constraints they work within and any penalties that might be imposed on organisations acting inappropriately, for example, disqualifying projects from future funding rounds”

As a result, VANL will be taking this approach in line with national guidance and should inappropriate behaviour be shown towards VANL Staff, the applicant/unsuccessful organisation will be disqualified from either the current or next phase of the fund (timeline dependent) and in more extreme circumstances may be disqualified from applying for all Community Solutions funds released during the next financial year. Behaviours towards VANL Staff included as a part of this would include:

* Swearing
* Sarcastic comments
* Criticism of the process in direct response to being turned down for funding (VANL would still welcome feedback on our processes but this should be done in a positive and solutions-focused manner)
* Raised voices or generally angry behaviour
* Inappropriate communication towards VANL staff in person, over the phone or by email to vent frustration
* Bullying
* Harassment (both general and sexual)
* Violence or threats of violence
* Threatening behaviour such as gestures, body language or words intending to intimidate or cause harm
* Inappropriate or unwanted physical contact
* Discrimination- racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, ageist or otherwise discriminatory comments or behaviour
* Malicious allegations - knowingly making false or unfounded complaints against staff
* Damage to property - deliberate damage to facilities, staff belongings, or organisational property.

**A.2.15 Evaluation and Reporting Requirements for Successful Applicants**

Successful applicants will be provided with guidance and support to evaluate and report on their project’s progress. These requirements will be proportionate to the funding amount received.  You will be asked to report on:

* Impact
* Outcomes
* Learning and improvement
* Case studies and stories

All projects complete a brief 3 month check in to identify any early issues with delivery and allow VANL to offer support.

For one-year projects, progress reporting is due at the mid- point, and a full report at the end of the project (six and 12 months).

For two-year projects, reporting is due quarterly. Progress reporting is due at six, 12 and 18 months, and full two-year reporting is due at 24 months.

Each report builds on the previous ones, and should reflect the current status of the project.

VANL will also host a mid-point Learning and Improvement event. This event facilitates an informal, two-way conversation between VANL and funded projects to discuss what is going well, any challenges or improvements, and any learning.

The reporting and learning feeds into a wider system of improvement, which includes:

* Your project
* The fund
* The Community Solutions Programme
* The sector

VANL will also participate in a national network to share our learning and share learning from others beyond North Lanarkshire.

VANL provides a range of supportive evaluation resources available on the [Community Solutions website](https://www.communitysolutionsnl.org.uk/pmeli-resources/), as listed in question 2.5.5.

These resources include:

* Service User Feedback Survey - Funded projects can use the Service Users Feedback Survey to gather feedback from service users about the support they received. The survey is not mandatory; however, it is a helpful tool which can be shaped to suit your project and is designed to support you to answer the CS evaluation form
* Funded Project JotForm Guide – A practical guide to navigating JotForm
* Guidance for Funded Projects – Guidance on preparing Case Studies and Preparing Personal Stories with templates
* Funded Project Reporting Guidance – A guidance document which outlines the reporting process for Community Solutions funded projects
* Demonstrating Impact Evaluation Toolkit – An introduction to the basics of evaluation with links to more detailed resources

**Section B: Background**

B.1.This funding is provided by the Scottish Government as part of its [Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-scotlands-transition-recovery/) through [Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire](http://www.voluntaryactionnorthlanarkshire.org/) (VANL), supported by our [Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire’s](https://hscnl.org.uk/) successful and respected partnership [Community Solutions Programme](https://www.communitysolutionsnl.org.uk/), which is hosted by VANL.

B.1.2 The total funding for Phase 5 of the CMHWB Fund in North Lanarkshire is £955,000 which must be awarded to North Lanarkshire Community and Voluntary Sector (NL CVS) organisations by the end of March 2026. Our funding is part of a larger national fund which is being distributed across Scotland through our sister “Third Sector Interfaces” in each of the 32 local authority areas.

B.1.3 This funding complements separate, additional funding awarded to local councils by the Scottish Governmentt. to support children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing across Scotland, including in North Lanarkshire. In 2025-26, VANL is also managing distribution of a further £304,571 to the NL CVS to support children and young people’s mental health, building on previous phases which saw £416,00 distributed. You can find out more about this fund [here](https://www.communitysolutionsnl.org.uk/children-young-people-families-phase-5/).

(Document ends)