

Social Connections Grant Guidance Notes

For activity from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

This is a rolling grant programme and will remain open throughout the year until the budget has been exhausted. There will be regular assessment points, each with a deadline by which applications must be submitted in order to be considered for assessment in that period.

Applications will be considered on a fortnightly basis with cut off points of:
12 noon on the 1st and 15th of each month.

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Date Guidelines Revised	

SUMMARY

Grant Programme Name	Social Connections Grant
Programme Dates	For activities from 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 This is a rolling grant programme. Applications will be considered on a fortnightly basis with cut off points of 12 noon on the 1st and 15th of each month.
Brief Description	This Programme will provide small grants to community and voluntary organisations to address loneliness and isolation and build social connections. Example projects might be delivering programmes with a warm and friendly welcome, such as an arts and craft programme or nutrition and cooking programme. Your group might wish to extend your activities and open up for more people.
Programme Objectives	Your project should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create more opportunities to bring people together to make connections doing something they enjoy. • help to reduce the social isolation that can be a result of living in poverty. • reach people who may be less likely to attend community activities. • enable local activities to become more accessible. • involve the people who will benefit from the project in shaping your project.
Grant Amount	Up to £500
Who can apply	Constituted community and voluntary organisations in Causeway Coast and Glens or who have their main activities based in the Causeway Coast and Glens. Must have a bank/building society account. (Organisations not formerly constituted may wish to speak to a constituted organisation to lead on your behalf.)
Ineligible Organisations	Organisations with fundraising as their focus. Umbrella organisations that do not have a separate local constitution. Organisations that have substantial demonstratable reserves. See Section 1.8 for full list.
What will we fund	100% of project/ activity costs relating to the project, for example: tutor or facilitator fees, venue hire, materials, refreshments costs (up to a maximum of £250), transport & volunteer travel expenses (up to a maximum of £250). Essential operating costs may be eligible in some instances. Please read full Guidance Notes for details of items that we will not fund.
Contact for further information	Lisa Harris, Community Development Officer lisa.harris@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk Catherine Farrimond, Community Development Officer catherine.farrimond@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

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1.0 Introduction

These guidelines provide information about the financial support available through the Social Connections Grant Programme. They will help you and your organisation decide if the financial assistance offered is appropriate to support the project or activities that you are planning.

You may find it helpful to discuss your project with the following officers within the Community Development Team before submitting your application:

Lisa Harris lisa.harris@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Catherine Farrimond catherine.farrimond@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Covid-19

Please note responsibility remains with you, the applicant, to ensure that all event activities are permitted and comply with current and any future changes in Northern Ireland regulations, as set out in the Government's Coronavirus guidance at the time of planning/delivery.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-and-guidance-what-they-mean-you>

1.1 Purpose of Grant Programme

The purpose of the Social Connections Grant Programme is to provide small grants to community and voluntary organisations to address loneliness and isolation and build social connections.

1.2 Overview of fund

Council recognises the important role that community groups and voluntary organisations play in creating connecting opportunities and reaching out to people who are experiencing loneliness in our communities.

Loneliness and related mental health problems can affect anyone, at any stage in life. There is growing recognition of the impact being socially isolated or feeling lonely has on your physical and mental health.

Mental Health Foundation research suggests that some groups of people are especially likely to feel lonely. They include young adults, people with existing mental health problems and people from some minority ethnic groups. Other groups more likely to be affected by loneliness include older people, in particular, those who are digitally excluded, people living with long-term health conditions, people who are unemployed, and people who identify as LGBTQIA+. Poverty also intensifies loneliness. The impact that lack of money has on the ability to take part in get-togethers that others take for granted intensifies loneliness. This is particularly intensified during the current cost of living crisis.

The Objectives of the Social Connections Grant Programme are to:

- create more opportunities to bring people together to make connections doing something they enjoy.

- help to reduce the social isolation that can be a result of living in poverty.
- reach people who may be less likely to attend community activities.
- enable local activities to become more accessible.
- involve the people who will benefit from the project in shaping your project.

1.2.1 Some Useful Links and Resources

Loneliness and isolation

Here are some useful links for information about loneliness and isolation:

<https://www.marmaladetrust.org/connectionideas>

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

Setting up a Warm Space initiative

Here are some useful links where you can find resources and tips for setting up a Warm Space initiative.

The Warm Welcome Campaign: <https://bit.ly/3rU0fjr>.

A Warm Welcome; Setting up a Warm Space in Your Community: <https://bit.ly/3VuAJ1N>

Public Living Rooms: <https://camerados.org/set-up-a-public-living-room/>

1.3 Levels of grant award

Social Connections Grant Programme	Maximum Grant Amount
Applicants can apply for grants of 100% of costs, towards project revenue costs.	£500

- Council reserves the right to reduce the amount of funding awarded if we do not consider that the amount applied for represents value for money.
- **Organisations can only hold one award from the Social Connections Grant Programme, covering 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.**

1.4 General Principles

In line with Council's Grant Funding Policy the overarching principle for all Council grant funding is that of meeting local needs which have been identified and prioritised by Council or by others but acknowledged by Council. Any activity that cannot be shown to meet the following basic requirements will not be provided with funding:

- Have a clearly identified need.

- Can deliver outcomes which meet this need.
- Deliver cost effective and quality service provision, fitting with the purpose and remit of the funding.
- Be delivered by a credible organisation with the capacity to deliver the project as stated.
- Reflect the statutory remit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, aligning with Council's Corporate Plan, the relevant Service plan and that they can meet the specific criteria of the fund, in this instance the Social Connections Grant Programme criteria.
- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to promoting Good Relations and Equality of Opportunity.
- In the interests of transparency, equality and accountability, all applicants will have a right of appeal should their application be rejected.

1.5 Who Can Apply?

To be eligible for grant-aid, you will have to show that your organisation is a bona fide organisation that is well run and that it:

- Has a properly adopted "Governing Document" such as a constitution or memorandum and articles of association which clearly show that it is non-profit making and taking. Evidence that a constitution has been formally adopted must be supplied.
- Organisations must demonstrate that they are well run and that they provide a voice for local concerns. The initiatives in which they are seeking funding for must be inclusive, open to the whole community and adhere to democratic principles.
- Sports Clubs and Youth Clubs can apply to the grant programme as long as the project you are applying for is a social connections project that is in addition to and separate from your regular activities.
- Faith based organisations can apply to this grant programme, as long as the activity applied for does not involve promotion or advancement of religion.
- Organisations that intend to apply for a Community Festivals Fund Grant can apply to the Social Connections Grant Programme as long as the project they are applying for is different to the community festival event.
- **Organisations that are successful in an application to the Community Development Support Grant (CDSG) from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council can apply for a Social Connections Grant but must use the Social Connections Grant for project/ activity costs and not essential operating costs (which can be covered through the CDSG).**

If an organisation is satisfied that it is an eligible formally constituted organisation as outlined, it **MUST** be in a position to meet the following criteria:

- Be based in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area or have their main activities based in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area.
- Be committed to Equal Opportunities in terms of organisational policies and the delivery of services to those being served or represented.
- Have a constitution / governing document that has been adopted at a public meeting showing clearly defined purposes that are for the public benefit in line with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.
- Be non-party political and open to the full range of local opinion.
- Be able to demonstrate a fair and equitable ethos through established aims and objectives in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).
- Be able without prejudice to the obligations of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), to demonstrate regard to the desirability of promoting Good Relations between persons of different religious belief, political belief, political opinion or racial group.
- Be accountable through an established constitution, open membership, committee elections, accounting procedures and Annual General Meetings. The Office Bearing positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer should be held as a minimum.
- Have appropriate and adequate insurance cover for all activities and all actions proceeding such as costs, claims, demands and liabilities whatsoever, arising from all or any of the group activities. To also ensure that any individuals or organisations worked with are properly insured.
- Ensure that all group activities abide by the law and that the necessary permissions are obtained for activities from the appropriate body/authority.
- Ensure that Child Protection Policy / Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedures are in place and adhered to as and where appropriate.
- Have a bank/building society account and keep a proper record of group accounts.
- Be able to produce an annual statement of independently audited or certified accounts or be able to present a bank statement in the case of newly established groups.
- Have arrangements in place for dispersing the group's funds if they dissolve/ end.
- Agree to Causeway Coast and Glens Council's promotion, monitoring, evaluation, and training procedures as required.

1.6 What can be funded?

Applicants can apply for grants of 100% of costs up to a maximum of £500 towards project/activity costs.

The types of expenditure that the grant can contribute towards include:

- Venue hire

- Activity costs, such as facilitator or tutor fees
- Materials and small items of equipment (up to a maximum of £250)
- Marketing and publicity (up to maximum of £100)
- Refreshment costs (no more than 50% of grant up to maximum of £250)
- Transport costs including volunteer travel expenses (transport outside of Causeway Coast and Glens will only be considered if the activity cannot be accessed within the Borough. The amount applied for towards transport costs must not exceed £250)
- Organisations that are applying for Warm Space type projects can apply for essential operating costs such as heating and electricity (no more than 50% of grant up to maximum of £250), as long as they don't have a Community Development Support Grant in place.

1.7 What cannot be funded?

In general, the following will not normally be eligible for funding from the Social Connections Grant Fund:

- Proposals that do not directly benefit Causeway Coast & Glens Council residents.
- Applications for funding which are considered to be the responsibility of another statutory organisation or Council fund.
- Retrospective expenditure where services/items have already been obtained and paid.
- Applications where the applicant will have a personal financial benefit.
- Costs that are not auditable e.g., cash payments unsupported by an approved petty cash system.
- Costs towards banking charges and / or repayment of debt.
- Costs that can be claimed back from elsewhere e.g., VAT.
- Festivals and Fun days (as there is a separate Community Festivals Fund).
- Salary costs
- Alcohol
- Gratuities, gifts or prizes
- Large pieces of equipment or maintenance of equipment
- Admission fees
- Overnight trips
- Food parcels or fuel vouchers

If you are unsure if the project, you have in mind is eligible please contact one of the Community Development Officers who will discuss your project with you.

1.8 Exclusions

In general, it is important to note that this funding programme will not normally award grants to the following:

- Individuals
- Groups operating outside the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area.
- Organisations with charitable fundraising as their main focus.
- Organisations who have substantial, demonstrable reserves
- Umbrella organisations that do not have a separate local constitution.
- Schools, pre-school or nursery provision (however Parent Teachers Associations and 'Friends of' organisations are eligible to apply as long as they have a constitution and can meet the other eligibility criteria)
- Political Organisations

2.0 How to answer the questions.

Applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens should be submitted online at www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

Guidance on completing the application online is provided on the web-site link.

Hard copies can be made available. Please contact the Central Funding Unit on email grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

All questions must be completed as fully and concisely as possible. Please see below for help in completing your application:

Q1a: Please provide details of the project or range of activities that you are planning, including details of when the project will take place and who is expected to participate.

Q1b: Please tell us how the project will support people that are experiencing loneliness or social isolation within the community?

In this question we would like you to tell us about the project or activities that you are planning. The purpose of the Social Connections Grant Programme is to provide small grants to local community and voluntary organisations that are involved in activities that encourage people within their community, particularly those that are experiencing loneliness or social isolation, to participate in social and recreational activities.

Q2: Please indicate the District Electoral Area (DEA) and the Electoral Ward that your project will take place in; you can identify these from the map below:



Q3: Please tell us about the people who will benefit from your project.

Please tell us about the groups of people who will benefit from your project. Please estimate the total number of people that will benefit as well as providing a breakdown of the number of people from the categories listed that will benefit i.e. Children and young people, older people, Ethnic minority groups, Carers, People with a disability or long term health condition, People living in households on a low income, People living in rural areas. Please provide details of any others not listed.

Q4: Please provide a breakdown of all costs for your project and how much you are requesting from Council.

Please refer to 1.6 of these guidance notes for what can be funded. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will contribute up to 100% of the total project costs, up to a maximum of £500.

3.0 How we assess and score your application

Every application that is received requesting a grant will be assessed initially to ensure that the organisation is eligible to apply to this particular Grant Programme.

Every application that is received requesting a Social Connections Grant will be assessed for the following:

- To ensure that the organisation is eligible to apply to this particular Grant Programme.
- for reassurance of each organisation's capability to deliver the proposal, and

- how well the proposal meets community needs and contributes to Council’s Strategic Priorities

An acknowledgement receipt will be electronically issued to you once your submission has been received. The Funding Unit will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid, it will be forwarded to the relevant section for a full assessment against the stated criteria.

3.1 Eligibility assessment

The assessments in respect of Part A of the application form are awarded a pass or fail eligibility rating. If the organisation, based on the information supplied is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant, they will progress to the next part of the process.

If the organisation, based on the information supplied, is not able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant from the fund, they will be advised of specific omissions / shortcomings and how these can be addressed to help prepare them for any future funding requests.

3.2 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified immediately and the reasons will be outlined to you, it will not proceed to assessment and scoring.

If an organisation is not eligible for funding through the Social Connections Grant, the Community Development Team will help signpost to alternative sources of funding.

If an organisation or its activities are deemed to be the responsibility of other Council Departments, statutory agencies or voluntary bodies then you will be signposted to who you should apply to. If signposted elsewhere you will be required to complete and submit the relevant application form.

3.3 Assessment

Part B of the application form will be assessed on a Pass/ Fail basis as indicated in the table below.

Will the project provide activities for people that are experiencing loneliness or social isolation within the community? (Application Q1)	Yes/ No
Have the beneficiaries been identified? (Application Q3)	Yes/ No
Has a full itemized breakdown of costs been provided (Application Q4)	Yes/ No

3.4 How decisions are made.

The fund will remain open throughout the year until the budget is expended.

Council Officers will assess and score the applications at various times throughout the year. Contact the Community Development Team for advice on when the next assessments will take place. This will help you plan your project to ensure that grant-aid is awarded in time, should you be successful. When the assessments are finalised, the officers will return the applications to the Central Funding Unit who will inform you of the decision within 7 days of your application being scored. It will be at this point that all successful/unsuccessful applicants will be notified.

3.5 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue a letter of offer which is a legal agreement with the organisation to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form.

Signed Letters of Offer will need to be returned before any funding is released

If successful, group members can avail of training that will explain the processes and procedures that relate to programme monitoring, submitting a financial claim, requesting a change to programme, promoting Council's support for the programme, monitoring and evaluation requirements and the process of verification

The grant will be paid in full upfront. Successful organisations will be required to submit an annual/ end of funding evaluation report along with records of expenditure to vouch for the grant spend, which will be outlined in the letter of offer. Officers may discuss the monitoring information with the groups that were funded and also with some of the people who have benefited from the community activity.

3.6 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If an application is not successful, officers from the relevant service area will be available to meet with the organisation to go through their application, develop a working relationship and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process / Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed by Committees for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The Review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the Review Panel that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable or
- that the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

3.7 Fraud and Corruption

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to carrying out business fairly, honestly and openly and has a zero tolerance towards fraud, bribery and corruption. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council expects full compliance with the requirements of both the Fraud and Corruption Policy and Bribery Act 2010 from Groups or Individuals applying for, or in receipt of grant aid. This is also relevant to Councillors, Employees, Agents, Partners and Suppliers involved in your project/event. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining effective procedures and controls to prevent any occurrence of fraud and corruption. The Fraud and Corruption Policy can be found on the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council website.

All cases of irregularities or anomalies involving attempted or suspected fraud will be reported to appropriate authorities, including the Northern Ireland Audit Office, PSNI and any other relevant funding body (if applicable) or departments within the Council (if applicable).

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council reserves the right to disallow any other grant applications and claims submitted by a group or an individual member of a group in respect of the financial year and to apply a moratorium on Council funding to any group or individual member of a group where fraudulent activity has been identified within the current financial year and for at least two forthcoming financial years. This also applies to individuals applying or claiming for bursaries.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council will inform the group's Chairperson where attempted or suspected fraud has been identified.

3.8 Government Funding Database

Please be aware we are required to check the Government Funding Database (GFD) prior to making awards in order to avoid duplication of funding.

If registered on GFD we ask you to state your organisation's Unique Reference Number (URN) to help with this process. Details of grants awarded will be uploaded to the GFD, it is the responsibility of the applicant group to ensure that the organisation details held on GFD are up to date.

3.9 Late Applications

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing. Applications received after the closing time/date for that assessment period will be carried over to the next assessment period, provided that there is still budget remaining.

Note: Council Officers will assess and score the applications at various times throughout the year for this programme. Contact the Community Development Team for advice on when the next assessments will take place. This will help you plan your project to ensure that grant-aid is awarded in time for your activity.

Appendix 1

Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.
- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.
- We may also share information with other government departments, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.
- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of Information Act we will release it, subject to exemptions; although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk