**Midlothian Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults**

**Fund Application Guidelines – 2025 and 2026**

This guidance applies to Micro, Small, and Large Grants regardless of the size of the grant or length of the project. The Micro grant application form is slightly shorter with evaluation requirements proportional to the size of the fund awarded and a ‘light touch’ approach.

1. **About the Fund**

The Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing (CMHW) Fund for Adults aims to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population (aged 16 or over), with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention.

Specifically, the Fund aims to:

1. Tackle mental health inequalities through supporting a range of ‘at risk’ groups.
2. Address priority issues of social isolation and loneliness, suicide prevention and poverty and inequality with a particular emphasis on responding to the cost-of-living crisis and support to those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
3. Support small ‘grass roots’ community groups and organisations to deliver such activities.
4. Provide opportunities for people to connect with each other, build trusted relationships and revitalise communities.

Midlothian Community Action (MCA) has been appointed by the Scottish Government to distribute funding in Midlothian. The fund is overseen by a team of staff and volunteers from MCA, Midlothian Council, Health in Mind‘s Lived Experience Working Group, and Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

For Year 5 and 6 of the fund in Midlothian, there will be £249,914.16 available each year (\*subject to Scottish Government budget approval) across three separate grant streams:

* Micro grants to the value of £2,500 (min £500).
* Small grants up to £10,000
* Large grants up to £30,000

Up to additional £5000 per organisation will also be available for capital spend to compliment the small and larger grant streams.

The fund directly contributes to Outcome 4 of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy published in June 2023: “better equipped communities to support people’s mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities to connect with others”

1. **Who can apply?**

The fund will mainly support initiatives which promote mental health and wellbeing on a small scale, at grassroots community level. The Scottish Government has advised that the funding should be accessible to all groups, no matter how small or inexperienced they are.

The CMHW Fund can support both existing and new projects.

New projects should demonstrate added value within the theme of mental health and wellbeing, rather than simply continuing existing work.

Projects funded through the first four years of the Fund are eligible to apply again.

Existing projects should clearly articulate how they will build on learning from previous years to develop and improve their project and, where possible, they should demonstrate early impacts from previous years. Partnership working and joint projects can be examples of this learning, and a step to further develop a project.

Existing projects that were previously funded by the Midlothian HSCP can apply. However, the fund must not be seen as a way to replace previous funding streams from different providers. Projects **must** demonstrate value added relative to statutory provision.

Large and Small grant projects are welcome to apply for two-year funding; Micro grant projects can apply for one year but are welcome to apply again in 2026.

MCA has flexibility to award a mix of 1 and 2 year grants to projects and therefore plan to open the fund for applications in both 2025 and 2026.

60-80% of the funding granted to MCA will be reserved for two-year projects. This is to ensure that the benefits of the pilot are passed on and that the impact of the pilot can be properly evaluated nationally.

Midlothian Community Action has £249,914.16 to allocate in Year 5. £199,931.20 will be allocated for the two-year projects and £49,982.80 for one-year projects. Within this, £12,500.00 will be ringfenced for micro projects, leaving £37,482.00 for small one-year projects.

This fund invites applications with projects that include capital spend. More information can be found in section 8 of this document.

Applications will be accepted from voluntary organisations, charities, groups, clubs, consortiums, and partnerships – Provided they have a strong community focus for their activities and are responding to local need.

The types of organisations that can apply are as follows:

* 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
* Parent councils\*

*\*The funded activities must meet the aims of the Fund and must specifically focus on supporting young people aged 16 or over or supporting adults rather than their children.*

Groups that apply do not need to have mental health and wellbeing as their main remit, but proposals do have to clearly benefit the mental wellbeing of people in the community.

MCA will consider funding un-constituted groups provided they develop their activities according to an agreed plan. This may include working with a nominated representative from a larger organisation to oversee handling and management of the funds given. An organisation can in-theory apply more than once for different activities. However, we are seeking to spread the money proportionately across different priority areas and projects.

We can only fund activity that takes place in Midlothian.

1. **What is the protocol for one-year projects and two-year projects?**

3.1 If you are applying for a one-year project and you are successful; the panel will release the full requested sum or will discuss with you an acceptable offer for that year.

3.2 If you are unsuccessful in applying for a one-year project in 2025, you can still apply for one in September 2026.

3.3 If your project application for two years is successful, we will release the full requested sum or consult with you an acceptable offer for Year One. Year Two funds are not guaranteed and will be subject to approval in the Scottish Government Budget Bill. Only after the Scottish Government budget approval we will release the funds for the second year.

1. **Can large organisations apply in Midlothian?**

Applications are preferred from organisations with a turnover below £1m.

We may be more likely to consider bids from larger organisations in excess of this if they are using the funding to support local or emerging groups in their own thematic areas of work.

Larger organisations wishing to apply, particularly those with a regional or national remit, must clearly show how their work will be locally embedded in Midlothian.

If you are a larger organisation putting in a proposal, you will need to be very clear about how you will involve people from Midlothian in the planning and implementation of the activities concerned. You will also need to demonstrate strong awareness of the existing landscape of third sector provision in Midlothian.

Bids that incorporate partnership working will be welcomed and given extra weighting in the scoring process.

1. **What kind of activity will be funded?**

The focus of the CMHW Fund is on prevention and early intervention, MCA would expect all funded projects to focus on one, or both, of these themes. The fund supports the adult population, aged 16 and over.

Applications must include activity in one or more of the following nationally agreed priority areas:

1. Tackling issues of social isolation and loneliness, suicide.
2. Work related to bereavement/loss, trauma.
3. Addressing mental health inequalities exacerbated by the recovery from pandemic and lockdowns, the cost-of-living crisis, and supporting those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
4. Meeting the needs of a range of at-risk groups in Midlothian.
5. Supporting small grassroots community groups to deliver activities, thereby strengthening the local third sector in Midlothian.
6. Providing opportunities for people to connect with each other, build trusted relationships and revitalise their communities, including active and green prescribing.
7. Supporting recovery, resilience and wellbeing through investing in creative solutions to current challenges.

**In Midlothian**, **our CMHW Fund Partners** (Midlothian Council, Health and Social Care Partnership, Midlothian and East Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership, Midlothian Women’s Aid, NHS Lothian and Midlothian Community Action, - Police Scotland TBC & Scottish Fire and Rescue Service TBC) **agreed to encourage applications for projects that will address the following priorities, target groups and services:**

**Groups:**

* Younger people (56 years old and younger) with early diagnosis of dementia or those awaiting dementia assessment.
* Older women addicted to substances, or parents who support adult children addicted to substances.
* Individuals affected by cultural stigma of addiction and substance misuse.
* Individuals affected by loneliness or isolation due to stigma associated with being a family member of those who are addicted to substances – parents of adult children
* Young people (16- 24) living in poverty, deprivation affected by lack of choice and social isolation.
* Parents affected by poor mental ill health who have young children’
* Men between 25-45 years old living in deprivation who are single, separated or divorced especially those reporting suicidal thoughts.
* Group support to 1:1 care for older people to access community resources that promote mental health and wellbeing
* Adults with mental ill health affected by bereavement
* Older men experiencing mental ill health - specific support for men
* Women-only support, particularly those experiencing mental ill health
* Carers including peer support and emotional/psychological input

**Services:**

* Community transport to enable attendance at groups and other social activities that promote mental health and wellbeing
* Independent advocacy for people
* Accessible community supports and spaces for people with disabilities
* Projects that would help reduce stigma and promote equitable support for those with mental ill health and/or who misuse substances

Recommendations:

* All staff supporting projects funded by CMHW Fund to receive **free Trauma Informed Training** including receptionists, front office staff, and core group of volunteers.

To arrange free training for staff please contact Ciara Burke ciara.burke@midlothian.gov.uk .

* Peer support\*, a powerful approach that can help people with their mental health.

*\*Peer support is a mutual relationship where people with shared experiences support each other, especially as they move through challenging times. Through peer support, people living with mental health challenges are seen as part of the solution. They have a significant and active role to play in supporting their own and others’ recovery. Walking alongside someone who understands, who ‘gets it’ helps people to feel less alone. It offers them the opportunity to explore their feelings and what will help them live the life they choose.*

These themes are not exclusive, so **please don’t be put off applying if your idea doesn’t fall under any of these categories**. The use of creative approaches such as the arts, sport, or physical activity can be included (and welcomed) and could even be the main vehicle for project delivery, so long as clear links are made to mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Match funding will be considered, provided it is to add value to other grant funded work with similar objectives.

In connection with Trauma Informed environment – Midlothian services encourage local projects to consider sensory considerations, accessibility (facilities and language), non-clinical, safe, clean, with access to water, furniture contributing to feeling of safety and security and promoting de-escalation by the use of colours and lights.

1. **What is the Fair Work First requirement?**

Through [Fair Work First](https://www.mygov.scot/fair-work-first), the Scottish Government is asking employers in receipt of public sector grant funding to adopt the following criteria:

Mandatory:

* payment of at least the real Living Wage;
* provide appropriate channels for effective workers’ voice, such as trade union recognition.

Desirable:

* Investment in workforce development;
* no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts;
* address workplace inequalities, including pay and employment gaps for disabled people, racialised minorities, women and workers aged over 50;
* offer flexible and family friendly working practices for all workers from day one of employment;
* and, oppose the use of fire and rehire practice.

The mandatory criteria are the minimum standard required for a grant award, and grant applicants should also confirm that they are committed to working towards the five remaining desirable criteria.

1. **Which disadvantaged or ‘at-risk’ groups should activities be targeted towards?**

Applications must demonstrate that they will address the needs of certain key groups of adults (16+), including but not limited to:

* 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 socioeconomic 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 (aged 50+)
* People with neurological conditions or learning disabilities, and from neurodiverse communities
* Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) communities
* Young people aged 16-24
1. **What can the money help to pay for?**

The money can fund the following things:

Equipment, one-off events, hall hire for community spaces, staff costs (these should be one off or fixed term), training costs including the trauma informed training, transport costs, utilities and running costs, volunteer expenses.

We can also allow **capital spend** (e.g. land or building projects) up to £5000 in Year 5 and 6 respectively. Local partnerships can allow applicants to request funding for capital expenditure such as the construction, refurbishment and/or purchase of buildings, amenities or vehicles. The benefits of the capital expenditure must demonstrably contribute to the Fund outcomes. Applicants must be awarded no more than £5,000 for such capital expenditure. This limitation does not apply to the purchase of small items of equipment.

The money cannot fund:

Contingency cost, loans, endowments or interest, costs for one-to-one clinical or therapeutic interventions where this is the sole or main focus of the project\*, electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment, political or religious campaigning, please note that faith based organisations are eligible to apply with the exclusion of any religious campaigning activities or activities restricted only to members of the faith based organisation. (due diligence will apply) profit-making or fundraising activities, reclaimable VAT, statutory activities, overseas travel, alcohol.

\*A note about counselling and other individualised mental health therapeutic treatments:

The Fund does not exist to provide clinical treatment services in the community. The Fund is primarily aimed at a range of preventative community supports for improved mental health and wellbeing and the allocation of funding should reflect this.

However, the Fund also aims to support early intervention approaches and support to those with existing mental health and wellbeing issues. We also appreciate there are cases where support and treatment are hard to distinguish and recognise that some community based complementary supports as part of their offer also provide counselling, as well as other therapeutic treatments.

As such counselling and other therapeutic treatments are not excluded from the Fund but should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The fund is not meant to replace funding for direct therapeutic interventions in the community, such as counselling, or CBT. Instead, it aims to provide a range of broader community supports that can complement clinical care and is an opportunity to support a wide range of approaches to providing emotional and practical support to individuals (for example peer support practices).

1. **What reporting will be required?**

Years 5 and 6 reporting requirements will continue to have a focus **who** has been funded, for **what purpose** and the **impact** this funding has had on peoples’ mental health and wellbeing.

Standard evaluation questions will be shared with projects for completion for:

• Year 5 one-year projects by the end of April 2027;

and

• Year 6 one-year projects and all two-year projects by the end of April 2028.

We appreciate that some projects may be running past this date, however, it will be helpful to have a record of impact at this point in time. While we understand that most feedback on impact won’t be available until the dates above, we are keen to gather early examples of impact where they exist. TSIs are encouraged to share examples of emerging impact as they arise, with Scottish Government.

Reporting requirements will be in keeping with the level of grant offered. Microgrant recipients will be asked to complete a simplified form (via Microsoft Forms) about their activities and what was achieved. Small and Large grant holders may also be asked to **provide case studies**, key figures or statistics, stories and photos as well as the mid-term and final reporting. Projects and promotional activity will be encouraged.

When evaluating your project in the final stage, you will be asked to provide:

* How many activities were undertaken
* How many participants benefited
* List or describe any achievements that demonstrate the difference made to individuals mental health and wellbeing, something that you are particularly proud of
* Describe how you have achieved each of your proposed outcomes (methods used to gather evidence, demonstrate success)

In addition, you will be asked to forward a standardised Scottish Government **survey, that your project’s participants will be requested to complete**. The participants will be asked questions about how the participation in the group has helped them with improvement of mental health and wellbeing, connections, confidence etc.

1. **When does the fund need to be spent by?**

Projects usually run for 12 months. MCA has a responsibility to disperse the funds by the 31st of March 2026 in year 5 (and 31st March 2027 for Year 6). Regardless of project start date, all funds have to be spent within the 18-month period.

We strongly encourage project leads, to contact us as soon as possible for advice if you anticipate an underspend. MCA may be able to suggest solutions which would enable you to repurpose the underspent within your project in line with the main fund criteria. This is particularly relevant in respect of very small, less experienced organisations.

1. **What is meant by capacity building activity?**

The CMHW Fund is about helping community groups and third sector organisations to develop their activities, making them more likely to be sustainable in the long term. This could involve groups becoming constituted and taking on a legally recognised organisational structure, getting better at dealing with money by opening a bank account, employing staff, or thinking in more detail about how to recruit and retain volunteers. MCA staff will work with applicants to identify what is needed. You may be offered one to one support and/or asked to attend training or networking events. You may also be asked to connect with other groups or organisations whose work has similar aims and objectives in the Midlothian area.

1. **Should training be included in bids?**

Yes, all applicants should consider including training activities within their bid as capacity building is an important element of this fund. The Trauma Informed Training is written into the Award Letters with an agreement. Some training can often be sourced for free, however it may need to be purchased from external providers, this should be written into the project budgets. A list of potential sources of training can be found at the end of this document. Forming partnerships with other organisations in this respect can also be helpful in obtaining the courses.

It is required for staff to attend Trauma Informed Training and recommended to attend peer support training where appropriate, a powerful approach that can help people with their mental health. Please see section 5 of this document.

We recognise that running training for staff and volunteers is different to running training for project participants and service users. Either or both can be included in a bid. Few of the bids we received in previous years, were entirely training focused for the end user. Others included a training budget around a specific topic, mainly for staff and volunteers but sometimes also for community members. Either way, care should be taken to avoid duplication and to make use of free opportunities where possible.

1. **What is A Local Information System for Scotland**

All organisations funded by the CMHW Fund are required to add details of your project to the [ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland)](https://www.aliss.org/) database.

ALISS is a digital tool operated by Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (The Alliance) that allows groups and organisations to find or share information on local resources, services, groups, and support.

Find out more and watch MCA’s past ALISS training session [here](https://mca.scot/2024/03/aliss-a-local-information-system-for-scotland-training/).

1. **Do we need PVG’s for staff?**

This relates to the project Target group. In the process of designing your project it is advisable to ask the following question: Is the project for general population (general), or open to all but with a focus on particular target groups (targeted) or aimed directly at particular target groups (restricted)? Answers to these will suggest the course of action, for the staff delivering activities and being in position of influence. In case of an existing project, new role descriptions (volunteers) or job descriptions (paid staff) would need to be drafted, and enough time allowed for the PVG check before the project start.

Contact [Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services](https://www.volunteerscotland.net/disclosure-services) for more guidance and details on this issue.

1. **Can I involve volunteers?**

One of Midlothian Community Action’s key values is that it should not cost anyone to volunteer. Therefore, we will be asking projects to confirm that any volunteers participating in your project will be offered expenses (you can include these as a project cost). Similarly to the Fair Work First, projects are encouraged to sign up to the [Volunteer Charter](https://www.volunteerscotland.net/volunteer-practice/volunteer-charter) to ensure Fair treatment of volunteers.

1. **What is meant by partnership working?**

All applications should demonstrate an awareness of partnership working. As a rule of thumb, the larger the grant request, the more this should feature as part of the proposal. There are several things the panel will look for when scoring an application in relation to partnership working:

* Evidence of having researched the existing range of providers or groups in the locality you are targeting.
* Evidence of having spoken to other groups who are doing similar things.
* Identification of gaps in provision.
* Recognition of shared goals or plans.
* Proactive steps being taken initiate or strengthen collaborative practice prior to submitting a bid.
* Joint bids, potentially with a partnership agreement in place, or with staff from different organisations working on the same initiative towards the same outcomes.

Please don’t just submit a list of other groups or organisations you work with or who you know operate in the local area. This will not tell the panel enough to support the application, particularly for larger grant requests. Try to provide examples of what you mean by partnership working, such as co-delivery of a specific service with another organisation, joint communications initiatives, shared staff roles across different teams or agencies, shared premises to promote more collaboration, strategic planning together, involvement in partnership groups, or sharing of volunteers.

1. **Can Year 1, 2, 3 and 4 recipients apply again in Year 5 for multi-year funding?**

Yes, if you applied in Year 1,2, 3 and/ or 4 you can also apply in Year 5&6, for either a new or continuation project. We will be looking to achieve a balance of existing and new projects. If you are applying for funding to continue developing a project that was funded in previous year(s):

* You must show clear evidence of impact and progression.
* You must demonstrate how you will develop the project further.
* You will need to report separately on Year 5 and Year 6 activities.
* Funding must be spent by projects within 18 months of receipt of funding.

\*multi- year funding grants are subject to Scottish Government budget approval.

1. **How and when will funding decisions be made?**

Decisions for small and larger grants will be made via a funding panel in the end of November 2025, using pre-determined marking criteria and scoring. A copy of a scoring cards is included in each application form.

Decisions about microgrants will be made in early December.

Due diligence

Due diligence processes will be proportionate, taking account of how much funding is being sought. For larger grants, due diligence processes will include an assessment of applicants’ funding arrangements, particularly in the case of 2 year awards. MCA/ TSIs will seek assurance regarding a project’s viability for the duration of the Communities Fund grant and sustainability in the longer term.

All applications will be considered against the [Four-Limbed Subsidy Test](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/four-limb-test-it-subsidy) to determine if funding constitutes a subsidy. This will be in a form of a brief check, to ensure four limbs are considered and determine whether the funding being provided is a subsidy or not.

1. **Where can I find the application form and how do I apply?**

Year 5/6 of the Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund opens for applications on **Friday 19 September 2025, 12PM.**

The deadline for applications is **Thursday 31 October 2025, 12PM.**

Application forms are available website: [Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults - Midlothian Community Action (MCA)](https://mca.scot/funding/communities-mental-health-well-being-fund/)

We would prefer applications to be submitted digitally using the application form in Word Document format (.docx), do not submit as PDF.

All application forms should be sent to BOTH e-mail addresses: magdalena.clark@mca.scot AND info@mca.scot.

If you are unable to submit the application digitally, please contact us and we can advise on how to submit a paper copy.

All enquiries should be directed to magdalena.clark@mca.scot

1. **Do I need to use specific logos in my publicity?**

In your publicity and communication, the Fund should be referred to as the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults.

The Scottish Government logo and Midlothian Community Action logo need to be visible on any publicity/ comms relating to your funded project.

These logos are available to download on our [website](https://mca.scot/funding/communities-mental-health-well-being-fund/) and will be sent to successful applicants with the award letter.

**Appendix 1**

**List of Potential Training Providers**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Who** | **What** | **Link** |
| Volunteer Scotland | Volunteer development, volunteering research and Disclosure/PVG. | <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/training-courses/volunteer-practice-training/> |
| Just Enterprise | Business start-up and development support for third sector organisations and social enterprises, various topics covered. | <https://justenterprise.org/learning-calendar/> |
| Business Gateway | Business start-up and support with lot of different topics covered. | <https://www.bgateway.com/events> |
| SCVO | Various related to charity development and the third sector. Membership may be required and not all courses are free. Also includes a training search function across other Scottish training providers.  | <https://scvo.scot/events?type=training-course><https://scvo.scot/about/community/membership/fees> |
| Scottish Community Development Centre | Experts on all things related to community development, such as community leadership, co-production and participatory action research. Would include a fee for a half or full day. | <https://www.scdc.org.uk/training> |
| Open University | Many different free online training courses that could be relevant to the work of third sector groups and organisations | <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/> |
| Midlothian Council Communities and Lifelong Learning Courses | Various courses to boost people’s skills, help them return to learning, and gain learning credits. Courses are updated periodically.  | <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/communities-and-lifelong-learning-midlothian-12452159200> |
| Chex - Pockets and Prospects | As part of a separate scheme (not applicable to this Fund), anyone can browse the training opportunities on offer, some of which could be free and/or online. Courses are run by social enterprises across Scotland. Some are in person and not local. | <https://communitywellbeingexchange.scot/> |
| Community Food and Health Scotland | Worth checking for links to food and nutrition related courses, some of which are free. Includes links to REHIS accredited food courses (e.g. food hygiene) and Public Health Scotland’s new weight stigma learning hub. | <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/category/news/training/> |
| Scottish Association for Mental Health | Various online resources with information about mental health and wellbeing that could be useful for project development or your application. | <https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health> |
| British Red Cross | First Aid and other training. | <https://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/> |
| Health in Mind | Various types of training related to mental health. HiM are the main provider for suicide prevention training in Midlothian and should be your first port of call if you are looking for training input around this topic. Check that you are not duplicating if you are considering buying this in. | <https://www.health-in-mind.org.uk/training/d2/> |
| Evaluation Support Scotland | Lots of different courses related to evaluation. Most will incur a charge, but some events are free.  | <https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/events/> |

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and there are other reputable training providers you could approach. If you have not done so already, please sign up to Midlothian Community Action’s email bulletin by emailing info@mca.scot

The bulletin often contains links to training opportunities as well as useful third sector updates related to Midlothian and beyond.

MCAI also regularly runs training courses, which will be advertised when our local training programme opens. Some training may also be offered by MCA specifically as part of the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, but you would only be contacted about this once you have received your grant and have started working on your project.