

Service Support Grants to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector: Criteria and Guidance Notes for the April 2026 - March 2029 Scheme

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is dedicated to creating strong and supportive communities. Working closely with our partners, including the National Health Service (NHS), we aim to support local groups and organisations that deliver services to residents within their neighbourhoods.

This Service Support Grant funding scheme is a key part of this commitment. It offers three-year funding agreements to eligible Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to help them deliver more proactive, personalised care and community-based support. This document provides all the guidance you will need to apply and help us build a healthier, more connected South Cambridgeshire.

Timescales and Deadlines

The grant programme can support activities provided in the following years:

- Year 1: 01 April 2026 - 31 March 2027
- Year 2: 01 April 2027 - 31 March 2028
- Year 3: 01 April 2028 - 31 March 2029

The following table outlines the various stages of the application and decision-making process:

Applications invited from	Any VCSE Organisation delivering a service for South Cambridgeshire residents
Total available	Year 1: 300,000 Year 2: 300,000 Year 3: 300,000
Maximum grant available	Dependent on indicative allocation per theme and number of applications received
Grant scheme open	Monday 8 September 2025
Application deadline	Friday 31 October 2025
Applications assessed and panel meets	November 2025
Allocation of funding decided	December 2025 (following 5-day call-in period)
Grants paid	April 2025

Eligible Activities by theme

The themes of this grant programme are aligned with our corporate objectives and for each a description of activities supported and indicative funding allocations per annum are given below. Applications are welcome from individual organisations or consortia across

all themes, except for 'PLACE' where only consortia applications are invited, and where the focus should be on collaboration between multiple organisations, delivering for an area (to be defined) or across a theme, e.g. young people's mental health or older people's independent living.

Theme	Indicative allocation	Service area	Activities supported
Mental Health and Wellbeing	£50,000	Area serviced could be an individual parish, a group of parishes or all of South Cambridgeshire	<p>The delivery of services that help the mental health and wellbeing of South Cambridgeshire residents. Applications that support the following are welcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. • The mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable residents.
Advice Services	£120,000	Area serviced could be an individual parish, a group of parishes or all of South Cambridgeshire	<p>The provision of free, independent, confidential and impartial advice and advocacy to South Cambridgeshire residents. Applications that support the following are welcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generalist advice and advocacy on rights and responsibilities in the following areas: debt, benefits, employment, housing, legal, relationship and family matters. • Specialist advice and advocacy to those who are disabled, have caring responsibilities, to families with disabled children and those who would otherwise be unable to live independently. <p>Applicants must describe how residents will access the services offered and demonstrate that they have capacity to meet the needs of those unable to travel to district centres utilising outreach (in-District) service delivery.</p>

<p>Independent Living</p>	<p>£50,000</p>	<p>Area serviced could be an individual parish, a group of parishes or all of South Cambridgeshire</p>	<p>Organisations providing support to South Cambridgeshire residents to maintain their independence and reduce rural isolation, either through service provision or a means of access to services. Applications that support the following are welcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setup, continuation and expansion of neighbour support schemes (excluding Mobile Warden Schemes) • Support and services for carers needing respite, resources, or emotional support • Support for those suffering from loneliness, isolation and/or living with dementia • The setup, continuation, expansion and or promotion of high-quality community transport services and networks, Community Car schemes and demand responsive transport. • Support for people with disabilities (physical, learning, or sensory impairments) requiring accessible services and inclusive opportunities. • Support for ethnic minority groups facing systemic inequalities, racism, or barriers to accessing services.
<p>Support for the voluntary and community sector</p>	<p>£20,000</p>	<p>Area serviced could be an individual parish, a group of parishes or all of South Cambridgeshire</p>	<p>Organisations providing support to local community groups and charitable bodies who themselves wish to provide services for South Cambridgeshire residents. Applications that support the following are welcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of services and support to enable effective, sustainable and legal operation in

			<p>the provision of services and activities for South Cambridgeshire residents, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practical assistance and support including fundraising and training ○ General support on governance, management and employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing an online platform for organisations to search for grant funding ● The representation of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector at a strategic level, facilitating third sector involvement in shaping the delivery of public services. ● Facilitating consultation and communication. This includes providing an effective liaison function between the District Council and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector in South Cambridgeshire. ● Assist with the capacity building of the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector
Cost-of-Living	£30,000	Area serviced could be an individual parish, a group of parishes or all of South Cambridgeshire	Delivery of services that support low-income families struggling with the cost of living, including food insecurity, childcare access or access to work.
PLACE (People, Location, Assets, Culture, and Enterprise)	£30,000	Area not defined but could include a parish, a cluster of parishes or a thematic boundary such as 'rural communities within South Cambridgeshire with	We are looking for projects that provide proactive and personalised support, which engage with other VCSE's and groups and empower communities to support their own wellbeing, whilst reflecting a specific identified need within South Cambridgeshire. Applications invited from consortia, with a lead

		<p>limited access to public transport’.</p>	<p>organisation. Applications are welcome from those wishing to pilot something new, or grow an existing idea.</p> <p>The pilot/project/services will need to actively seek to reach new users and develop relationships with local groups, local assets or local organisations and address the wider determinants of health and well-being. This holistic approach recognises that health and wellbeing is influenced by more than just medical care; it's also shaped by our living conditions, social connections, and the environment around us.</p> <p>Where a consortium is not yet in place, your application should demonstrate how you plan to establish and develop that consortium (led by a single organisation) within the first year. We will also accept applications from those ready to deliver from the outset. Once established, the consortium will be expected to begin delivering outcomes aligned with one or more of the following four themes no later than April 2027.</p> <p>We are particularly interested in applications that demonstrate an intention to work in a more integrated and collaborative way with others, including their local Primary Care Network.</p> <p>1. Mental Health and Wellbeing: Target Population: We welcome projects that focus on the mental health of children, young people, and vulnerable residents, or those living with multiple disadvantage</p>
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			<p>Accessibility: Services should be delivered in local, accessible locations such as schools, community hubs, and rural areas and address transportation issues to ensure everyone can access the support they need</p> <p>Community Assets: You should leverage existing community resources, such as community centres, for therapy and support groups</p> <p>Cultural Responsiveness: Services must be culturally sensitive, promoting mental health awareness through campaigns and inclusive practices that respect all backgrounds</p> <p>Examples: Services may include counselling, peer support, and mental health education, with a focus on early intervention and prevention.</p> <p>2. Advice Services: The provision of free, independent, confidential and impartial advice and advocacy to South Cambridgeshire residents.</p> <p>Target Population: We welcome projects that focus on supporting residents experiencing financial hardship, as well as carers, disabled individuals, and families with complex needs</p> <p>Accessibility: You must describe how residents will access the services offered and demonstrate that they have capacity to meet the needs of those unable to travel to district centres utilising outreach (in-district) service delivery</p> <p>Community Assets: You should utilise familiar community spaces like libraries, mobile units, or shared spaces for drop-in advice sessions</p>
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		<p>Cultural Responsiveness: Services must be culturally competent and accessible to all, including minority groups.</p> <p>Examples: Services may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generalist advice and advocacy on rights and responsibilities in the following areas: debt, benefits, employment, housing, legal, relationship and family matters • Specialist advice and advocacy: to those who are disabled, have caring responsibilities, to families with disabled children and those who would otherwise be unable to live independently. <p>3. Independent Living</p> <p>Organisations providing support to South Cambridgeshire residents to maintain their independence reduce rural isolation, building community connections either through service provision or a means of access to services.</p> <p>Target Population: We welcome projects that focus on supporting older and/or vulnerable adults, carers, people living with disabilities, or multiple disadvantage and those experiencing loneliness. The aim is to help people live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible</p> <p>Accessibility: Services should specifically target rural and isolated communities that often have limited transport or access to services</p> <p>Community Assets: You should leverage local resources like community halls, volunteer networks, and transport schemes to build a strong local support system</p> <p>Cultural Responsiveness: Service design should respect diverse needs,</p>
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		<p>including different languages, faiths, and cultural practices.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and services for carers facing burnout and needing respite, resources, or emotional support • Support for those suffering from loneliness, isolation and/or living with dementia • The setup, continuation, expansion and/or promotion of high-quality community transport services and networks, Community Car schemes and demand responsive transport such as Dial-a-Ride schemes • Support for people with disabilities (physical, learning, or sensory impairments) requiring accessible services and inclusive opportunities • Support for ethnic minority groups facing systemic inequalities, racism, or barriers to accessing services. <p>4. Cost-of-Living Delivery of services that support low-income families struggling with the cost of living, including food insecurity or childcare access.</p> <p>Target Population: We welcome projects that focus on low-income families, especially those with children or caring responsibilities, who are most affected by financial hardship.</p> <p>Accessibility: Services could target areas identified as having higher levels of deprivation and/or limited access to affordable food and childcare and address transportation issues to ensure everyone can get the support they need.</p>
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			<p>Community Assets: You should leverage and strengthen existing local resources such as food banks, community kitchens, and childcare hubs to provide immediate, tangible support.</p> <p>Cultural Responsiveness: Service design should respect diverse needs, including different languages, faiths, and cultural practices.</p> <p>Example: a project that teaches low-income families and children how to budget and/or how to cook a nutritious meal with limited resources.</p>
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Framework for Assessing Project Proposals:

The table below outlines the weightings that will be used to score applications:

Proposal Assessment Headings	Weighting
Extent proposals align with the eligible activities	20%
<p>Value for money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent that proposals will benefit South Cambridgeshire residents and communities • The extent of additionality the proposals provide to known existing or future service support in the district 	30%
<p>Extent that the need for the proposals has been evidenced</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance, pertinence and accuracy of evidence • Extent of community involvement in determining need • Extent of risk to the South Cambridgeshire residents and communities of not funding proposals (specifying priority groups at greatest risk) • Extent to which proposals would not be realised without financial support from the District Council 	20%
Extent to which the proposals constitute a sound, resilient and sustainable business plan	10%
Extent and quality of monitoring offered to measure outcomes and outputs	10%
Extent to which organisational capacities, resources and timescales for delivery of the proposals are considered realistic	10%

Previously funded organisations included:

- **Home-Start Royston, Buntingford & South Cambridgeshire and Home-Start Cambridgeshire** to deliver a project to improve the mental wellbeing of 10 families in South Cambridgeshire
- **Citizens Advice** to develop, publicise and deliver advice services to South Cambridgeshire residents in a manner which takes account of the rural nature of the district, with delivery via outreach wherever possible
- **REACH Community Projects** to help tackle poverty in and around Haverhill, providing outreach debt advice, and income maximisation services via home visits.
- **Disability Huntingdon (DISH)** to provide advice, information and advocacy services to people with disabilities, carers and families with disabled children in South Cambridgeshire, via outreach wherever possible.
- **Cambridge Dial-a-Ride** to expand unscheduled Dial-a-Ride services to more of the South Cambridgeshire area
- **Care Network Cambridgeshire** to support 26 Community Car Schemes across South Cambridgeshire
- **Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise (COPE)** to disseminate news and information of interest to older people in South Cambridgeshire
- **Royston & District Community Transport (RDCT)** to develop, deliver and publicise flexible community transport services across South Cambridgeshire in conjunction with other service providers
- **The Voluntary Network** to develop, publicise and deliver flexible community transport services to South Cambridgeshire residents in the Haverhill area
- **Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS)** to provide independent support services to community and voluntary groups in South Cambridgeshire

How will the grant be paid?

Grant payments are provided subject to satisfactory performance. This will include:

- monitoring performance at six monthly intervals for those organisations in receipt of funding sums of £15,000 or greater per annum.
- monitoring performance annually for organisations in receipt of funding sums less than £15,000 per annum unless specifically requested by the Committee Members.

Grants of £15,000 or more will be paid in six monthly instalments and only on receipt of approved monitoring information.

Grants of less than £15,000 will be made in yearly instalments and only on receipt of approved monitoring information.

A funding agreement will be prepared for all successful applicants. This will include arrangements for payment of the grant.

The SCDC budgets for the financial year periods of this grant remain unconfirmed until February of each respective year and are subject to on-going review. In applying to this scheme, VSCE organisations are doing so in full acknowledgement of this.

What we fund

We can support the following costs:

- Revenue costs
- Marketing and publicity for the project.
- Equipment.
- Capital costs.
- Engagement activities.

We cannot pay for the following:

- Activities, events or services which have ***already taken place***, including staff development time.
- Activities that generate profits for private gain.
- Loan repayments.

What are the conditions of funding?

Organisations that are awarded grant funding will be expected to comply with the following conditions as a minimum:

- 1) Only one application per organisation will be accepted (applications from consortia – or those with a plan to develop a consortium - will also be accepted where one lead agency has been identified).
- 2) Activities relating to more than one theme may be funded, where the sum from each strand has been specified, and changes cannot be made after the closing date for the scheme.
- 3) For consortium applications, details must be given throughout of all partners involved and how grant funding will be allocated. The lead agency must consider funds held on behalf of partners as 'restricted'.
- 4) A clear description of how and when this funding will be spent must be included.
- 5) Any requests to amend the project or to use the grant for other purposes, will need to be agreed with the grants officer in writing.
- 6) Be independently set up for charitable (not for profit), benevolent or philanthropic purposes.
- 7) Decide policy and overall management practice through a committee of elected, unpaid volunteers (a management committee or board of trustees).
- 8) Have a constitution, mission statement or set of rules, aims and procedures.
- 9) Join [CCVS](#) ready for when grant funding will be received or clearly explain why this will not be done.
- 10) Meet relevant legal responsibilities, including those of an employer, and adopt, implement and monitor good employment practices, including having relevant insurances to cover operations.
- 11) Prepare budgets, keep relevant financial records, monitor income and expenditure at least quarterly and prepare proper accounts. Current audited accounts and annual report to be provided (if part of a national or regional organisation, this information will need to be relating to your branch).

- 12) Provide evidence of a 'business' account for the organisation, with relevant signatories and financial safeguards.
- 13) Grant funding can be used for core costs and project costs where there is an identified and evidenced need. Applicants must state whether sums applied for relate to core costs, project costs or full cost recovery. Details of the organisation's policy on unrestricted reserves, based on [Charity Commission guidelines](#), will be required.
- 14) Acknowledge that grants will be given subject to annual review as part of Council budgeting processes and that inflationary increases year on year are not guaranteed (it is advised that organisations conduct their financial planning without reliance on such increases).
- 15) Provide details of other funding sources for the project in question and state whether those funds are confirmed or pending (please note SCDC does not expect to be the sole source of funding). SCDC endeavours to put in place joint funding agreements and monitoring processes with other relevant funders where this is of benefit to the funded organisation.
- 16) Research, understand and meet the needs of South Cambridgeshire residents and be open to all eligible users as defined by the organisation's constitution or rules.
- 17) Have systems and structures in place to manage their affairs effectively and efficiently, hold regular meetings to plan and monitor activities, keep minutes and circulate information to group members.
- 18) Illustrate user and member involvement in policy-making and management as appropriate.
- 19) Illustrate how volunteers are recruited and supported as appropriate.
- 20) Adopt appropriate child and vulnerable adult protection, health and safety, DBS checking and GDPR policies as appropriate.
- 21) Charge service users where applicable at an appropriate rate in line with other local services. SCDC will not subsidise projects that are deemed to be under or over-charging clients.
- 22) Publicity and all promotional literature must acknowledge the award provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council. Logos will be provided.
- 23) Submit monitoring information, details of which will appear in accompanying funding agreements and grant paperwork. Lead agencies in consortium applications will be responsible for monitoring project and financial information on behalf of partners.
- 24) Agree to return any unused annual grant to South Cambridgeshire District Council (funding agreements will include a termination / variation clause which may result in the recouping of unused or misused funds).

Supporting documentation required

- A copy of your organisation's constitution or mission statement (except parish councils)
- A copy of your latest accounts (audited if available)
- A breakdown of costs and/or quotes
- Equal opportunities policy
- Health and safety policy
- Policy for the protection of the environment

- Child and vulnerable adult policy, including details of your DBS checking and safer recruitment procedures and your policy on appropriate training for wardens.
- A copy of your volunteers policy, where relevant
- Evidence of a business account with to 2 authorised signatories
- Insurance policies such as Employer's liability insurance

Making your application

1. Applicants are encouraged to complete an online application form via the SCDC [Service Support grant webpage](#). If this is not possible, please contact us for assistance, on Tel: 01954 713070 or e-mail partnerships@scambs.gov.uk
2. Applicants are asked to complete all relevant sections of the online form rather than attaching reports. This enables us to make a fair assessment of your organisation and eligibility for funding.
3. Applicants needing to complete hard copy application forms and accompanying information should send this to: **Emma Dyer, Communications and Communities Team, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA.**
4. When posting your completed application form, please keep a copy for your files and keep evidence of posting. Please keep a copy of any documentation you send us, as we cannot guarantee returning hard copies of documents.
5. Your application form must be received by the deadline of **5pm, Friday 31 October 2025**. We regret that applications received after this date will not be processed.
6. If you do not receive an automated acknowledgement, and if sending your application by post, you should email partnerships@scambs.gov.uk to check that your application has been received.

Contact Details

If necessary, applicants should seek clarity about these criteria and ask for advice *before* submitting their application.

Contact details: emma.dyer@scambs.gov.uk or 01954 713344

7. Framework for Assessing Project Proposals

	Proposal Assessment Headings	Weighting
1.	Extent proposals align with the eligible activities	20%
2.	Value for money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent that proposals will benefit South Cambridgeshire residents and communities • The extent of additionality the proposals provide to known existing or future service support in the district 	30%
3.	Extent that the need for the proposals has been evidenced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance, pertinence and accuracy of evidence • Extent of community involvement in determining need • Extent of risk to the South Cambridgeshire residents and communities of not funding proposals (specifying priority groups at greatest risk) • Extent to which proposals would not be realised without financial support from the District Council 	20%
4.	Extent to which the proposals constitute a sound, resilient and sustainable business plan	10%
5.	Extent and quality of monitoring offered to measure outcomes and outputs	10%
6.	Extent to which organisational capacities, resources and timescales for delivery of the proposals are considered realistic	10%
	Total	100

Evaluation of answers under each heading	Scoring
Proposals meet the required standard in all material respects	5
Proposals meet the required standard in most material respects, but are lacking or inconsistent in others	4
Proposals fall short of achieving expected standard in a number of identifiable respects	3
Proposals significantly fail to meet the standards required, contain significant shortcomings and/or are inconsistent with other proposals	2
Completely fail to meet required standard	1
Nil response (no answer provided)	0

Post-assessment feedback to applicants

Total assessment scores and rankings will be made available to all applicants following the conclusion of the Council's assessment of all eligible applications.

Further feedback on the breakdown of scoring under the above six headings will be made available to all applicants on request.