

**UOK East Sussex Community Wellbeing Grants Programme;
Supporting wellbeing where you are**



Guidance notes for applicants

Applications open: 22 September 2026

Closing date: 6 November 2026

The UOK East Sussex Community Wellbeing Grants Programme is offering grants of up to **£10,000** to support community-led activities that improve wellbeing, reduce isolation and strengthen connections across East Sussex.

We want to support organisations and groups that understand their local communities and can help people access wellbeing support **where they live, work and spend their time**.

We are particularly interested in projects that reach people and communities experiencing greater inequalities, isolation or barriers to accessing existing wellbeing support.

1. About the programme

The UOK East Sussex Community Wellbeing Grants Programme will distribute **£115,000 during 2026/27 and 2027/28**.

The programme aims to:

- support grassroots and voluntary organisations already working in and connected to local communities
- reduce barriers that prevent people from accessing wellbeing support
- improve social connection, inclusion and community resilience
- support people who may not access more traditional wellbeing services
- complement the redesigned UOK wellbeing offer
- help ensure funding reaches communities experiencing the greatest disadvantage and inequality.

We are looking for **flexible, community-led approaches** rather than highly formalised service delivery.

You do not need to be a large organisation or an established service provider to apply. We particularly welcome applications from smaller organisations and community groups with strong local knowledge, trusted relationships and a clear understanding of the people they want to support.

How much funding is available?

You can apply for a **one-off grant of up to £10,000**.

The funding is for activity delivered during the agreed grant period. There is **no commitment to ongoing funding beyond the grant period**.

Any additional agreed underspend identified during the two financial years may be added to the Community Wellbeing Grants Fund.

2. What are we looking to fund?

We want to fund projects that make a positive difference to people's **mental wellbeing, social connection and resilience**.

Your project could help people:

- feel less lonely or isolated
- build confidence and self-esteem
- connect with other people in their community
- take part in activities that support their wellbeing
- develop new skills, interests or relationships
- access support in a way that feels comfortable and accessible to them
- feel more connected to their local community
- overcome barriers that make it difficult to access existing support.

We are particularly interested in activities that are **local, welcoming, inclusive and shaped by the communities they are intended to support**.

Examples of activities that could be funded

This is not an exhaustive list. We are open to different ideas and approaches.

Examples include:

- **Nature-based wellbeing** – gardening, walking, outdoor activities or connecting with nature
- **Peer support and mutual aid** – groups where people can share experiences and support one another
- **Creative wellbeing** – arts, music, crafts, writing, dance or other creative activities
- **Community outreach and engagement** – taking wellbeing activities into places where people already live, meet and spend time
- **Culturally specific activities** – approaches designed with and for particular cultural or community groups

- **Activities tackling loneliness and isolation** – including volunteer-led activities and befriending approaches
- **Community activities that build resilience and connection** – bringing people together and strengthening local networks
- **Wellbeing activities linked to the redesigned UOK priorities** – particularly where they help people access support in their local community.

We recognise that wellbeing looks different for different people. **If you have an idea that does not fit neatly into these examples but you think it could make a positive difference to people's wellbeing, we would still like to hear from you.**

3. Who are we particularly interested in supporting?

We want the programme to reach people and communities who may experience greater barriers to wellbeing and social connection.

This could include:

- people living in rural or isolated communities
- people experiencing loneliness or social exclusion
- marginalised or seldom-heard groups
- people who experience barriers to accessing existing wellbeing support
- communities experiencing greater levels of inequality
- people who may be less likely to access traditional or formal services.

You do not need to work exclusively with one of these groups. However, your application should explain **who will benefit from your project and why the activity is needed.**

4. Where will we prioritise funding?

We welcome applications from across East Sussex.

However, priority will be given to activity based in or supporting communities where there is evidence of greater inequality, rural isolation, transport barriers or barriers to accessing services.

Rural communities

We particularly welcome applications supporting **rural communities across Rother, Wealden and rural Lewes.**

Hastings

We particularly welcome applications supporting communities in:

- Central St Leonards
- Castle
- Baird
- Hollington.

Eastbourne

We particularly welcome applications supporting communities in:

- Shinewater
- Devonshire
- Hampden Park.

These geographic priorities reflect evidence relating to rural isolation, transport barriers, unequal access to services and the **Indices of Deprivation 2025**.

Applications from elsewhere in East Sussex are still welcome where they clearly meet the wider aims and priorities of the programme.

5. Who can apply?

We welcome applications from:

- voluntary and community sector organisations
- charities
- community groups
- grassroots organisations
- social enterprises operating on a not-for-profit basis.

We particularly welcome applications from **smaller, community-led organisations** that have strong local connections and trusted relationships with the people they want to support.

To apply, your organisation or group must:

- operate within East Sussex
- have a safeguarding policy appropriate to the work you are proposing
- have a bank account in the organisation's name
- be able to spend the funding within the agreed grant period.

If you are unsure whether your organisation or group is eligible, please contact us before applying.

6. How much can I apply for?

You can apply for **up to £10,000**.

We encourage applicants to request an amount that is appropriate for the scale of their project rather than automatically applying for the maximum available.

Your budget should clearly explain what the funding will pay for and how those costs will help you deliver the proposed activity.

7. What can the grant pay for?

The grant should be used for reasonable costs that are directly related to delivering your proposed project.

For example, this could include costs such as:

- venue hire
- materials and equipment
- activity costs
- sessional or freelance staff
- volunteer expenses
- training directly related to the project
- outreach and engagement costs
- transport costs where these are important to overcoming barriers to participation
- other reasonable costs directly associated with delivering the activity.

Your application should explain **what you are spending the money on and why it is needed**.

8. What won't we fund?

The programme is intended to fund community wellbeing activity rather than general organisational costs.

We will therefore consider carefully whether proposed costs are directly connected to the project and provide value for money.

We will not normally fund:

- activities taking place outside East Sussex
- activity that has already taken place before the grant is awarded
- ongoing funding commitments beyond the agreed grant period
- activity that does not relate to the aims and priorities of the programme.

If you are unsure whether a particular cost or activity is eligible, please ask us before submitting your application.

9. How do I apply?

The application form will be available on the **UOK East Sussex website from 22 September 2026**. www.uok.org.uk

We have designed the application process to be as **straightforward and proportionate as possible**, particularly for smaller organisations and community groups.

You will be asked to provide:

- some basic information about your organisation or group
- a short description of your proposed activity
- information about who you want to support
- an explanation of how your project meets the programme priorities
- a simple breakdown of your proposed budget
- relevant safeguarding, governance and due diligence information.

You do not need to produce a lengthy business plan or detailed evaluation framework.

Need help with your application?

We recognise that applying for funding can be difficult, particularly for smaller community organisations.

Support sessions and additional guidance may be available during the application period.

Applications can also be accepted in accessible formats where required.

10. How will applications be assessed?

We will look at your application as a whole and consider whether your project is likely to make a meaningful difference to the people and communities you want to support.

We will consider:

Community reach

Does the project reach people or communities that the programme is particularly seeking to support?

For example, does it reach a priority geographic area or people experiencing isolation, exclusion or barriers to support?

Equity and inclusion

Will the activity help reduce barriers to wellbeing support or participation?

We are interested in projects that make it easier for people who may not currently access support to take part.

Alignment with programme priorities

Will the project improve wellbeing, social connection or community resilience?

Community trust

Is the organisation or group rooted in the community it wants to support?

We want to understand your local knowledge, relationships and experience.

Deliverability

Can the proposed activity be delivered safely, realistically and within the available budget and timeframe?

Value and impact

Is the funding likely to make a meaningful local difference?

You do not need to promise large numbers of participants. We are interested in the **quality and potential impact of the activity**, as well as its reach.

11. What happens after I apply?

All applications will start to be considered, after the **closing date of 6th November 2026**, by a joint panel involving:

- UOK East Sussex
- East Sussex County Council (ESCC)
- East Sussex Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG) representatives.

The decision-making process will aim to be:

- transparent
- fair
- proportionate
- informed by VCSE sector insight
- inclusive of different community perspectives.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome following the panel's decision-making process.

Dialogue with voluntary and community organisations may also help shape the implementation and learning from the programme.

12. How will we monitor the grant?

We want to spend our time and resources on **delivering activity and making a difference**, rather than unnecessary paperwork.

Monitoring will therefore be **light-touch and proportionate to the size of the grant**.

If you are successful, we will ask you to provide a short report at the end of your funded activity.

This is likely to include:

- the number of people who took part
- a brief summary of what you delivered
- simple feedback from participants
- examples or short stories showing what difference the project made
- anything you learned or would do differently.

You will not be expected to undertake a complex evaluation.

We are interested in both **what happened and what you learned**.

13. Key dates

Stage	Date
Programme launches	22 September 2026
Applications open	22 September 2026
Application closing date	6 November 2026
Panel decision-making	November 2026
Applicants informed of decisions December 2026	
Grant delivery period	12 months from award of grant
Light-touch reporting	At the end of funded activity

14. Before you apply – a quick checklist

Before submitting your application, make sure you can answer **yes** to the following:

☐ We operate in East Sussex.

- ☐ We understand the community or group we want to support.
- ☐ We can explain why our project is needed.
- ☐ Our activity will improve wellbeing, social connection or community resilience.
- ☐ We can explain how our project will help people who face barriers or inequalities.
- ☐ We have a realistic plan for delivering the activity.
- ☐ We have a simple and realistic budget.
- ☐ We have appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place.
- ☐ We have the correct documentation and policies in place, as stated in section 8 of the application form
- ☐ We have a bank account in our organisation's name.
- ☐ We can deliver the project within the agreed grant period.
- ☐ We have completed all sections of the application form.

15. What makes a strong application?

There is no single type of project we are looking for.

A strong application will clearly explain:

Who?

Who will benefit from your project?

Why?

What is the need or issue you are responding to?

What?

What will you actually do?

Where?

Where will the activity happen and how will people access it?

How?

How will your approach reduce barriers and support wellbeing or connection?

What difference?

What do you hope will change for the people taking part?

How much?

What will the funding pay for?

You do not need to have all the answers or predict exactly what will happen. We recognise that community projects can develop and adapt as you learn what works for the people you are supporting.

Supporting wellbeing where you are

The UOK East Sussex Community Wellbeing Grants Programme is about supporting **local ideas, local organisations and local communities**.

We want to help create more opportunities for people to connect, participate and improve their wellbeing in places that feel familiar, accessible and welcoming.

If you know your community and have an idea that could make a difference, we want to hear from you.