



# Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults **Round 4**

## Local Delivery Plan for Aberdeenshire

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## Introduction

AVA is delighted to announce that the Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults has returned for Round 4. This round will see £629,749 being made available for disbursement across Aberdeenshire to community, voluntary and third sector organisations to deliver valuable projects that respond to local mental health and wellbeing challenges. To date, £1.983m has been made available through this mechanism and 199 Aberdeenshire-based projects have been supported.

## AVA's Approach to Managing Aberdeenshire's Fund

AVA is working in partnership with other organisations to deliver the fund, including third and public sector organisations. Whilst ensuring that governance of the fund is of a high standard, it is also AVA's aim to make payments as quickly as we can once the application has been approved and the grant letter has been signed and returned to us so that the funding can get to work faster. Ongoing support delivered by our team of Development Officers will be available to groups and organisations who are eligible to apply for the funds, including assistance with completing the application form where this is required for legitimate reasons (such as not having access to the required digital means and capabilities).

Building on the partnerships and processes developed since the fund launched in 2021, AVA has worked hard to acknowledge and incorporate the voices of people with lived and living experience of the effects of poor mental health and wellbeing. We are also continuing with democratisation around some of the decision making within the fund by running a public vote element within the awards process.

## Fund Aim & Outcomes

The overarching aim of the Fund is to support community based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and/or mitigate and protect against 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, it aims to:

1. Tackle **mental health inequalities** through supporting a range of 'at risk' groups (as outlined in the Equalities section).
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.

The Fund directly contributes to Outcome 4 of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy published in June 2023, which is "**better equipped communities to support people's mental health and**

***wellbeing and provide opportunities to connect with others***".

It also clearly supports the three key areas of focus in the Strategy:

- **Promote** positive mental health and wellbeing for the whole population, improving understanding and tackling stigma, inequality and discrimination;
- **Prevent** mental health issues occurring or escalating and tackle underlying causes, adversities and inequalities wherever possible; and
- **Provide** mental health and wellbeing support and care, ensuring people and communities can access the right information, skills, services and opportunities in the right place at the right time, using a person-centred approach.

In addition it delivers on strategic action 3.2 of the accompanying [Delivery Plan](#) published in November 2023: ***"We will continue to build capacity in local services and third sector community groups, in order to ensure everyone in Scotland, particularly people most at risk, are able to access mental health and wellbeing support within their local communities"***.

Additionally, it has an important contribution to make to the delivery of strategic action 3.3: ***"We will drive a shift in the balance of care across mental health to ensure a focus on prevention and early intervention in the community, including a focus on providing high quality mental health care in General Practice"***.

The Fund also seeks to contribute to the following national outcomes from the National Performance Framework:

- We are **healthy and active**.
- We will live in **communities** that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.
- We **tackle poverty** by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.

Specifically, the intended outcomes of the Fund remain the same as in Years 1, 2 and 3, and are to:

- Develop a **culture of mental wellbeing and prevention** within local communities and across Scotland with improved awareness of how we can all stay well and help ourselves and others.
- Foster a **strategic and preventative approach** to improving community mental health.
- Support the **resilience of communities** and investing in their capacity to develop their own solutions, including through strong local partnerships.
- Tackle the **social determinants of mental health** by targeting resources and collaborating with other initiatives to tackle poverty and inequality.

## Fund Criteria

The fund aims, principles and priorities set out the broad parameters for how funding should be allocated to community groups and organisations. Funding decisions will reflect the broad principles of these fund criteria as well as local priorities.

## Who Can Apply?

The ambition of The Fund is to support initiatives which promote good mental health and wellbeing at a small scale, grass roots, community level. It will be accessible to all groups, no matter how small or

inexperienced they are (including unconstituted groups). It can support both new and existing groups or projects, and it is AVA's intention that new and unconstituted groups will be supported with governance, funding and volunteering advice that facilitates them to build internal capacity. These do not have to have mental health and wellbeing as their main focus, but their application does have to clearly benefit the mental health and wellbeing of people in the community that they serve, be that a community of geography or a community of interest.

Applications can be accepted from a range of community & voluntary, 'not for profit' organisations, associations, groups and clubs or consortiums/partnerships who have a strong community focus for their activities. The range of organisations that can apply are:

- 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<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that Sole Traders are not eligible to apply for to this fund.

### Types Of Projects That Can Be Funded

The focus of The Fund is on the adult population and on projects which help whole communities and/or community groups to make a difference to the lives of individuals. For the purposes of The Fund, **the adult population is defined as being people aged 16 years and over.**

Through the assessment process, AVA and the external assessors will ensure that funding is allocated to initiatives which have a focus on delivering against the aims and principles of The Fund as described previously. Whilst The Fund will support applications for the expansion of existing activities (including for projects that were supported in 2023-24), emphasis will be placed on applications that provide additionality (i.e. new and innovative projects) and not on simply providing replacement funding.

### Identified 'At Risk' Populations

The Scottish Government has identified that evidence shows the pandemic has exacerbated existing mental health inequalities and has had a disproportionate impact on the mental wellbeing of a range of groups in society. Applications are strongly encouraged from groups and organisations that are delivering projects which are inclusive of (but not necessarily exclusive to) the following priority 'at risk' groups:

- Women (particularly young women, and women affected by male sexual violence).
- People with a long-term health condition or disability.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that parent councils are eligible to apply, subject to the following conditions:

- The funded activities must meet the aims of the Fund and specifically must focus on supporting adults rather than their children.
- Any Parent Council applying to this fund must have a statutory duty to keep proper accounts, for which there may already be legal and regulatory requirements for them to do so depending on the status of the Parent Council, for example, some parent councils are registered with OSCR as a charity.

- People from a Minority Ethnic background.
- Refugees and those with no recourse to public funds.
- People facing socio-economic disadvantage.
- People experiencing severe and multiple disadvantages.
- People with diagnosed mental illness (applications that support people who have a Dementia diagnosis are particularly welcome).
- 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 and above).
- People with neurological conditions or learning disabilities, and from neurodiverse communities.
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) communities.

Additionally, applications that seek to support men at risk of suicide, and the mental health and wellbeing of carers and unpaid carers are particularly welcome.

Where possible, applicants should outline how they will address intersectionality (i.e. multiple-marginalisation, such as women who are experiencing both poverty and disability) and how their project specifically benefits any given community in an intersectional way. Consideration will be given to applications from groups to support advocacy for people at a local level to access care and help with signposting of the community supports being funded.

### **Specific Examples of What Can be Funded**

AVA understands that much of the work carried out by groups within the community, voluntary and third sectors contributes in some way to supporting people in their communities, with outcomes that can loosely relate to promoting better mental health and wellbeing outcomes for people. However, because of the broad nature of community-based work, it is not intended to support delivery of specific clinical treatment services such as counselling or other therapy-based interventions. The following list outlines what can and can't be supported by this fund; it is not exhaustive, and we encourage groups to contact AVA to seek further guidance if applications don't easily fit into one of the categories that we can fund.



We Can Fund	We Cannot Fund
Equipment	Contingency costs, loans, endowments or interest
One-off events	Electricity generation and feed-in tariff payment
Hall hire for community spaces	Profit-making/fundraising activities
Small capital spends of up to £5,000 (i.e. land or building projects*)	VAT you can reclaim
Staff costs (noting this is a 1.5-year fund therefore one off or fixed term contracts only)	Statutory activities
Training costs	Overseas travel
Transport	Alcohol
Utilities/running costs	Political or religious campaigning ( <i>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. AVA will undertake due diligence around these matters</i> ).
Volunteer expenses	

\*Evidence must be provided that the applicant will have unhindered access to the land or building for 5 years after the funded project has ended, and where it may possibly be required, that full planning permission has already been granted and the property owner has granted full permission.

Any organisation applying for staff costs must be able to demonstrate that anyone directly employed to deliver any activity funded by the grant they are applying for is paid at a rate that is equal to or higher than the Real Living Wage level. At the time of writing, this level is set at £12.00 per hour. The new rate will be announced during w/c 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 with the expectation that it is implemented by employers within 6 months of that date. Any staff costs calculations will be required to demonstrate that the rise in costs has been considered, along with the resultant changes to any employer national insurance contributions and employer pension costs. Information about the new level will be available via the Living Wage Foundation (<https://www.livingwage.org.uk/>).

**It is strongly recommended that no application that is to include staff costs is submitted until the new Real Living Wage level has been announced so that the increased costs can be included with the application.**

### Funding Levels

To enable groups and organisations to manage any grant that they secure, and to facilitate access to smaller grants for small groups and organisations, the following levels are being applied to The Fund:

Funding Level	Funds Available	Maximum Income of the Group/Organisation
1 (inc. unconstituted groups)	£0 to £2000	Usually £100,000 in the most recent financial year
2 (constituted groups only)	£2000.01 to £10,000	Usually £500,000 in the most recent financial year
3 (constituted groups only)	£10,000.01 to £50,000	£1m in the most recent financial year

Unconstituted groups will have the opportunity to apply for grants of up to £2,000, and where a group does not have access to a bank account for their organisation, constituted groups and organisations will be able to hold a grant for them (providing a letter of agreement is provided with their application). This is to enable smaller, 'heart of the community' type groups to benefit from The Fund and deliver

their services/projects within their neighbourhoods.

Due to the ambition of The Fund being to support local community activity, it is anticipated that the **majority of applications will be considered under funding levels 1 and 2**. However, we understand that organisations and partnerships of similarly minded organisations may wish to apply for grants, so we do expect a smaller proportion of bids, for example, up to the maximum value of £50,000.

Unless the applicant is newly formed, applications will not be considered without evidence of audited/independently examined accounts for the most recent financial year. For clarity, financial information should be supplied for the most recent financial year based on your organisation's filing cycle. If this is not available, management accounts for the year-to-date must be supplied.

## The Application and Assessment Process

### The Applications Process

The Fund will be open for applications from midday on **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024** to Midday on **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024**.

An applications portal has been created on the AVA website which provides the following for applicants:

- **An eligibility form.** This will enable potential applicants to see if they are likely to be eligible to apply to the fund. If the answer is yes, a full application form will be sent to you. If AVA already holds details about your group, the application form will include the details we hold and you are invited to check/amend these rather than start the application from scratch. If we don't hold information about your group, you will be sent a blank application form. If the answer through the eligibility checker is no, you will receive a message telling you why, and you will be invited to ask for support to understand this further if you would like to. Applications will only be accepted online using the designated form.
- **A link to AVA's support request form** where potential applicants can ask for the help of an AVA Development Officer should the need arise. During the application phase, and specifically for equalities purposes, a team of AVA's Development Officers will be available to provide support to groups who, for legitimate reasons require additional help to complete the application form. They will be available to discuss applications with groups and organisations, although engagement in those discussions will not form any guarantee that applications will be successful during the assessment process. This team of Development Officers will not be involved in assessing any applications and will have no input to the assessment process to influence any decisions.

The applications portal can be accessed by visiting the following web page:

<https://www.avashire.org.uk/cmhwfund>.

Whilst at first glance, the full application form looks to be long and complicated, most questions are about the organisation making the application, or are check boxes. Only a small number of questions specifically relating to the substance of the project require a longform answer. For information only, the questions that you will be asked are included in Appendix 1 of this document.

Once an application has been received, AVA will check to ensure that all key pieces of information are complete (including but not limited to bank details and declarations) and check that the required attachments have been received and are able to be opened (including but not limited to your constitution, annual accounts, and a recent bank statement). AVA will endeavour to contact groups and organisations as soon as possible if there is a need for clarification or additional information. A date by which any additional information is needed will be provided.

### **The Assessment and Fund Allocation Process<sup>2</sup>**

Once an application is received, a member of AVA's staff will be allocated to check its eligible for consideration and check that the project is aligned with the overall outcomes of the fund. The project finances will also be checked for accuracy and eligibility to proceed. If any questions arise from this process, the named applicant will be contacted to seek clarity.

### **Level 1 and 2 Applications**

Assessment of level 1 and level 2 application will be by designated assessment teams. All assessors will be required to declare any interests prior to any applications being considered during each panel meeting. Where there is a material conflict of interests, that assessor will not be able to assess the application and will be excluded from discussion of that individual application.

The Assessment Panel will be made up of the following as a minimum for all level 1 applications:

- The Chief Executive Officer of AVA who will act as Chair of the Panel
- Head of Development of AVA
- One Development Officer from AVA who have not acted as a part of the team of officers to have advised any groups throughout the applications process

The Assessment Panel will be made up of the following as a minimum for all level 2 applications:

- The Chief Executive Officer or Head of Development of AVA who will act as Chair of the Panel.
- Two external panel members from the available team who have received full briefing on The Fund and its assessment criteria.

Once assessment of level 1 and 2 applications is complete, applicants will be notified with an outcome that will normally be one of the following:

1. Your application has been approved and a grant offer letter is sent for you to sign and return to AVA before we can make a payment to your group/organisation.
2. Your application is on hold because we need a clarification from you before we can proceed. We will ask for any specific information that we need, and your application will be considered again when we have received everything we have asked for.
3. Your application has not been approved, and we are not able to offer you a grant from this fund. If this is the case, we will provide some brief feedback on why this decision has been made.

### **Level 3 Applications**

Allocation of funds for level 3 applications will be via a participatory budgeting process, meaning that the general population of Aberdeenshire will be asked to vote on the eligible applications to allocate

<sup>2</sup> Neither Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, its staff, or any external member panel member will be liable for any loss (real or perceived) should a group or organisation's application not be successful during the assessment process.



the funds that remain unallocated. This will allow a democratic process to be used to allocate funds and enable residents and potential service users to make decisions about how funds should be used by community groups to support adults with their mental health and wellbeing.

Following a quality assurance process to ensure that all relevant information has been received, a decision will be made regarding eligibility to enter the voting process. If we feel that we require further information before allowing the application to proceed, we will ask for it.

Voters will be required to vote for 5 projects, meaning that they will be required to support a range of projects, and not just one single project. A communications pack will be provided to organisations whose project will be decided by the public vote and whilst AVA will promote the voting opportunity through its social media channels and other distribution methods, it will also be the responsibility of the applicant organisation to promote the opportunity for its supporters to vote for its project. Voting will take place online using a tried and tested voting platform; it will open on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at midday and close on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at midday. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the public vote by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

### **The Payment Process**

AVA is aiming to make payments for any approved grants as soon as possible. For level 1 and 2 awards, we would encourage a quick return of signed acceptance of grant letters so that payments can be complete before the Christmas break. For level 3 awards, payments will be made in January providing the acceptance of grant letters have been returned to us.

For clarity, no payments will be made during the period between Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

### **Project Evaluations and Reporting**

All grants that are provided by The Fund will require an evaluation to be undertaken.

For all projects, the evaluation will be required to have been received by AVA within 30 days of the end date of the project. This end date will be assumed to be the expected end date as provided in the application form unless the applicant has notified us otherwise.

Interim reports will be sought for any project lasting more than 6 months in duration, at the 6-month point. This will be assumed to be six months after the start date as provided in the application form unless the applicant has notified us otherwise.

AVA will be required to report on fund activities to the Scottish Government (The Funder).

### **Accessing Support and Further Information**

To access support relating to The Fund, the application process, or for any other reason, please use the following methods:

- Visit <https://www.avashire.org.uk/development.html> and complete the Support Request Form. Your enquiry will be passed to the most appropriate person, and you will be contacted via the method you have requested within the form.
- Phone 03718 110008 between 10am and 2pm, Monday to Thursday.

## Appendix 1: Completing the Application Form

The application form is split into a number of sections:

### 1. Data Protection and Privacy Notice

This ensures that you have access to AVA's policy on data protection and privacy of your information.

### 2. About You and Your Organisation

This asks for contact details, along with general information about your organisation including your charity number (if you are a registered charity). You will be asked towards the end of the form to submit a copy of your organisation's constitution or governing document, along with a copy of your audited or independently examined accounts for the financial year 2023/24, and a copy of a recent bank statement (no older than 3 months) which clearly shows the account name, sort code, and account number.

### 3. About Your Application

In this section, you will be asked to identify who your project is likely to benefit and how, along with the costs associated with delivering it. You should be as clear as you can be when identifying how costs have been calculated. Costings where the calculations are unclear may lead to your application being rejected.

### 4. Funding Level Specific Questions

You will only see the questions that are relevant to the funding level you are applying for in this section. As you might expect, applications for larger grants are expected to provide more detail than those applying for smaller grants and there are word limits on the questions in this section. The exact questions are below, and particular attention should be paid to the questions relevant to the amount of money you are applying for. You will also be asked in this section to upload the following documents:

- Constitution/Governing Document
- Accounts for 2023/24
- Bank Statement
- Partnership agreement (if this is applicable to your application)
- Full and final approval of planning permission (if this is applicable for an application asking for a small capital spend)
- Cashflow spreadsheet for Level 3 applications only.
- Any other relevant materials.

#### Funding Level 1 Questions (£0-£2,000 grants)

1. What hardships have your service users experienced over the last 12 months that have had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing? You may wish to consider things like poverty, disability, social isolation, or rural isolation, and also describe the impact that those hardships have had (text answer, 100 words max).
2. Please describe the activities that this grant would enable you to deliver (text answer, 100 words max).
3. Who have you spoken to about the need for the activities you plan to deliver? You should briefly describe any conversations you have had with local partners, service users, and/or statutory services about the need for these activities (text answer, 100 words max).
4. Please describe how the activities will help to improve the mental health & wellbeing of your service users (text answer, 100 words max).
5. How many people do you think will take up the offer of the activity(s) that you will offer over the course of the funding period? (Numbers answer)
6. Will there be a charge for service users to access these activities? (Yes/No answer)
7. How much will service users have to pay to access the activity? (Cost per user, please identify whether it is a recurring cost or a one off cost)

8. How do you plan to continue delivering this service once this grant has been spent? This might include allocating any unrestricted reserves that your organisation holds (text answer, 100 words max).

### **Funding Level 2 Questions (£2,000.01-£10,000 grants)**

1. What hardships have your service users experienced over the last 12 months that have had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing? You may wish to consider things like poverty, disability, social isolation, or rural isolation, and also describe the impact that those hardships have had (text answer, 100 words max).
2. Please describe the activities that this grant would enable you to deliver (text answer, 150 words max).
3. Who have you spoken to about the need for the activities you plan to deliver? You should briefly describe any conversations you have had with local partners, service users, and/or statutory services about the need for these activities (text answer, 150 words max).
4. Please describe how the activities will help to improve the mental health & wellbeing of your service users. You should make direct reference to each of the hardships that you described your service users as having experienced (text answer, 150 words max).
5. With the help of this grant, how many people do you think will take up the offer of the activity to over the course of the funding period? (Numbers answer)
6. Will there be a charge for service users to access these activities? (Yes/No answer)
7. How much will service users have to pay to access these activities? (Cost per user, please identify whether it is a recurring cost or a one off cost)
8. How do you plan to continue delivering this service once this grant has been spent? This might include allocating any unrestricted reserves that your organisation holds. You should describe what you will be doing to try and secure the continuity of the activity that you are requesting funding for (text answer, 150 words max).

### **Funding Level 3 Questions (£10,000.01-£50,000 grants)**

1. Please describe your project in a way that you think will help you secure the highest number of votes possible (text answer, 100 words max).
2. What hardships have your service users experienced over the last 12 months that have had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing? You may wish to consider things like poverty, disability, social isolation, or rural isolation, and also describe the impact that those hardships have had (text answer, 100 words max).
3. Please describe what your organisation would like to do with this grant. You should outline the activities that you intend to carry out, and make reference to any specific service(s) that will be delivered (text answer, 200 words max).
4. Who have you spoken to about the need for the service you are seeking support for? You should briefly describe any conversations you have had with local partners, service users, or statutory services about the need for what this grant will enable you to do (text answer, 200 words max).
5. Please describe how this grant will tackle some of the hardships you identified previously, and how it will help to improve the mental health & wellbeing of your service users. You should make direct reference to any of the hardships you described in a previous question that this application is aiming to reduce. You should also indicate how you think the grant will enable you to do this (text answer, 200 words max).
6. With the help of this grant, how many people do you think will take up the offer of the activity to over the course of the funding period? (Numbers answer)
7. Will there be a charge for service users to access these activities? (Yes/No answer)
8. How much will service users have to pay to access these activities? (Cost per user, please identify whether it is a recurring cost or a one off cost)
9. How do you plan to continue delivering this service once this grant has been spent? This might include allocating any unrestricted reserves that your organisation holds. AVA wishes to support

as many projects as possible through this fund. We are however conscious that when this grant runs out, the service may stop. You should describe what you will be doing to try and secure the ongoing nature of the project/service that you are seeking funding for (text answer, 200 words max).

10. What do you believe will be the lasting legacy of this grant for your service users? You should describe how the project/services offered as a result of this grant will enable people to take control of their mental health & wellbeing, and learn how to recognise the signs of any future decline that they may experience (text answer, 200 words max).
11. How do you plan to measure the lasting legacy that you have described in the previous question? You should describe what monitoring and evaluation you will set up to understand the success (or otherwise) of the project/service that this grant is to support (text answer, 200 words only).

## **5. Declarations**

All declarations must be selected before you can submit your application.