

**The
UK Youth
Fund**

In partnership with:
UK YOUTH | **Pears
Foundation**

Grant Information Pack



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Programme Overview

We are proud to announce the launch of our new £10 million open grant round for youth and outdoor learning organisations, delivered in partnership with the Pears Foundation.

Youth work has never been more vital, yet many grassroots organisations are facing challenges. The need for funding is increasing, and organisations report workforce burnout and that access to opportunities remains limited.

Following the launch of the National Youth Strategy (NYS), this fund forms part of a wider effort to strengthen and future-proof youth provision across the UK. While the NYS sets out a national vision for accessible, high-quality youth work, the UK Youth Fund focuses specifically on supporting smaller, grassroots organisations that are often under-resourced yet critical to the delivery of youth provisions.

The UK Youth Fund aims to provide meaningful financial support alongside organisational development opportunities, enabling more small youth organisations to remain stable and deliver the consistent, inclusive youth work that young people depend on. Our goal is to expand the reach and quality of youth work across the UK, at a time when safe, dependable spaces for young people are needed more than ever.

Through this multi-year unrestricted grant, we aim to help youth organisations strengthen their financial position, stabilise provision, and plan confidently for the future—ensuring that safe, dependable spaces for young people continue to be available at a time when they are needed more than ever.

About UK Youth

Who we are

As the UK's infrastructure body for youth work and outdoor learning, we exist to widen the reach and deepen the impact of youth work and outdoor learning. We support a network of thousands of youth organisations across the UK to improve young lives every day.

At the same time, we are transforming the policies, investment, and ideas needed to future-proof youth work for generations to come.

- We back youth leaders with the evidence, connection, and investment they need to thrive
- We keep youth work effective with research, large-scale pilot programmes, and professional development initiatives
- We work with young changemakers to inspire lasting change in the attitudes of the public and funders

Together, through our new strategy we hope to build a society that backs every young person – through each spark, struggle, and success.



About UK Youth

Why we do this work

Young people are facing multiple challenges – including severe pressures on their mental health, employment prospects, and even physical safety. Youth work is proven to change lives. But despite this, millions of young people are still isolated from the support they need.

Access to youth work remains deeply unequal, with young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds more likely to receive support.

The UK Youth Fund aims to directly tackle this by ensuring funding reaches young people in the most under-resourced communities across the country. Through this Fund, we seek to direct funding towards organisations that deliver high-quality youth provision in communities with greater socio-economic need and support young people most at risk of being excluded from youth provision due to where they live, work or study.





About UK Youth

Our Partnership with the Pears Foundation

Over the past five years, UK Youth and Pears Foundation have built a strong partnership rooted in a shared belief in the power of youth work to transform young lives. Together we have delivered major national grant programmes, including the Covid Relief Fund (£2.2m) and the Cost-of-Living Fund (£7m), which have demonstrated the impact that flexible, multi-year investment can have on small grassroots youth organisations.



The funding helped us strengthen our operational capacity. We were able to improve our planning, evaluation, and partnership work, ensuring that the support we offered was effective, targeted, and responsive to the needs of the community.



This grant enabled us to remain faithful to our values in the face of new adversity. It served our people, safeguarded our offer, and ensured that every young person, no matter their background or need, could continue to belong, create, and thrive.

These programmes have provided hundreds of organisations with stability and hope during a period of profound uncertainty. At a time when dependable youth spaces are needed more than ever, we aim to continue to extend the reach and quality of youth work through the UK Youth Fund.

UK Youth's Grant Making Principles and Funding Priorities

Our Approach

We have supported more than 300 youth organisations across the UK, distributing over £20 million in grants to help them strengthen their infrastructure, invest in their teams, and deliver support to the young people who need it most. At UK Youth, we are committed to IVAR's principles of open and trusting grant making to ensure we champion flexible funding.

We know that when organisations have the security to invest in their core operations, they can innovate, plan long term, and respond effectively to challenges young people face. Alongside unrestricted, multi-year funding, we provide capacity-building support through structured masterclasses and peer-to-peer youth work practice sessions.

We also share opportunities to connect within the sector through our network, in which organisations can strengthen themselves and develop the confidence and skills to sustainably deepen their impact beyond the grant period.

Our Aims and Priorities

The aim of the Fund is to strengthen the financial resilience and capacity of small youth organisations across the UK.

We aim to achieve this through two key outcomes:

Outcome 1:

Improved Financial Sustainability, supporting grantees to invest time and resource in strategic, organisational development through our multi-year unrestricted grant-funding programme

Outcome 2:

Increased Capability and Organisational Resilience through our capacity building programme



Eligibility: Who we Fund

The UK Youth Fund is a three-year grant programme supporting youth organisations with an **annual turnover of under £500,000** through unrestricted grants equivalent to approximately 10% of their annual income.

As part of our wider strategy to broaden the impact and reach of youth work, we aim to direct funding towards organisations delivering high-quality youth provision in the top 30% of under-resourced areas, based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. **You can find the map of eligible Local Authorities in [England](#) and in [Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland](#).**

Our approach to this grant round is guided by the direct needs of young people and wider sector insights. Data from [the National Youth Agency](#) census shows that 47% of youth organisations in the England are located within the top 3 deciles of most under-resourced areas. Many youth organisations already deliver in these communities with often limited funding and resources. Our funding criteria has been developed to precisely support these organisations.

We understand that drawing geographical restrictions can be unfair and fail to reflect the realities of how young people move, meet, and access opportunities in their local areas. We know organisations can deliver across many geographical areas, operate from shared venues, or support young people who travel beyond their home area to take part in activities and provision.

To avoid restricting organisations already delivering for young people for these communities, eligibility criteria have been designed to reflect the communities and young people you serve, rather than the location of your head office. There will be no threshold on the number of young people an organisation supports for eligibility.

For example, if you support one young person from any of the eligible locations listed, you will be eligible to apply.

We aim for this fund to be practical, fair, and responsive to how youth provision is delivered in 2026 and we encourage all eligible organisations to apply, even if your reach extends across multiple areas.

Eligibility: Who we Fund

UK Youth will check eligibility criteria across the Expression of Interest and Application Stage.

Eligibility Criteria

- 01 Must be delivering services for young people who are based within key geographical areas (top 3 deciles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation – IMD). This focuses on the communities and young people you serve rather than your head office location. See eligible locations [in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland](#) and [in England](#).
- 02 Turnover of less than £500,000 in the last financial year.
- 03 Must be a charitable organisation, not-for-profit, or Community Interest Group (CIC) and able to provide supporting documentation.
- 04 Must not currently be receiving unrestricted funding from UK Youth.
- 05 The primary purpose of the organisation must be to benefit young people, with at least 70% of beneficiaries aged 8–25 years old.
- 06 Must have been operating for a minimum of two years.
- 07 Must provide at least one full year of accounts.
- 08 Must have Safeguarding and Health & Safety policies in place.
- 09 Must have relevant insurances or qualifications, such as public liability insurance, and comply with the Equality Act, GDPR and Data Protection Act, and other relevant statutory or regulatory requirement

Funding

Funding Available

Organisations can apply for multi-year unrestricted funding of up to 10% of annual turnover. This approach ensures that funding is proportional to the size and capacity of your organisation to help ensure sustainability and resilience. **Example: An organisation with a turnover over £250,000 can apply for up to £25,000. Total grant across the 3-year fund will be £75,000.**

What We Fund

As this is multi-year unrestricted funding, we adopt an open and flexible approach to use of funding. Organisations are encouraged to apply the funding where it will have the greatest impact whether that is strengthening core operations, supporting sustainability, or investing in innovation to enhance outcomes for young people. Examples of what you could use funding for are as follows:



Core costs: overheads + essential equipment (utilities, bills, rent, IT equipment, etc)



Staffing costs: staffing (pay rises for existing staff, hiring additional staff, offering staff more hours, etc)



Service delivery: general youth work provision (workshops, project costs)



Providing basic necessities for young people: (e.g. food and snacks, hygiene and sanitary products, school supplies)



Training and development: for you/your organisation's staff



Development/sustainability work for your organisation: (e.g. fundraising, attending events, networking and connecting with other youth organisations, updating your policies and procedures)

Multi-year funding provides organisations with the flexibility to allocate resources in the ways that best meet their priorities and the needs of the young people they support. We recognise that organisations have the deepest understanding of their own circumstances, challenges, and opportunities, as well as those of the communities they work with, and we want to continue to support the important work you are doing.

Application Process

Our Two-Stage Application Process

We are committed to an open and proportionate grant making process that takes into consideration the capacity and needs of smaller organisations in a competitive, and ever-changing funding landscape.

We want to ensure that our application process is both simple and accessible to eligible organisations, which is why our application process consists of a two-stage process. This includes:

- **Expression of Interest (EOI) stage:** This stage includes a short set of multiple-choice questions and an eligibility checklist. It is designed to be simple and accessible, allowing you to confirm your eligibility. Following this eligibility check, those that fully meet the criteria will be invited to the second stage.
- **Full Application:** Organisations shortlisted from the EOI stage will be invited to complete a full application, providing supporting documents such as accounts, policies, and further details on how you intend to use the funding.

1. EOI Stage

Expressions of Interest (EOI) submitted



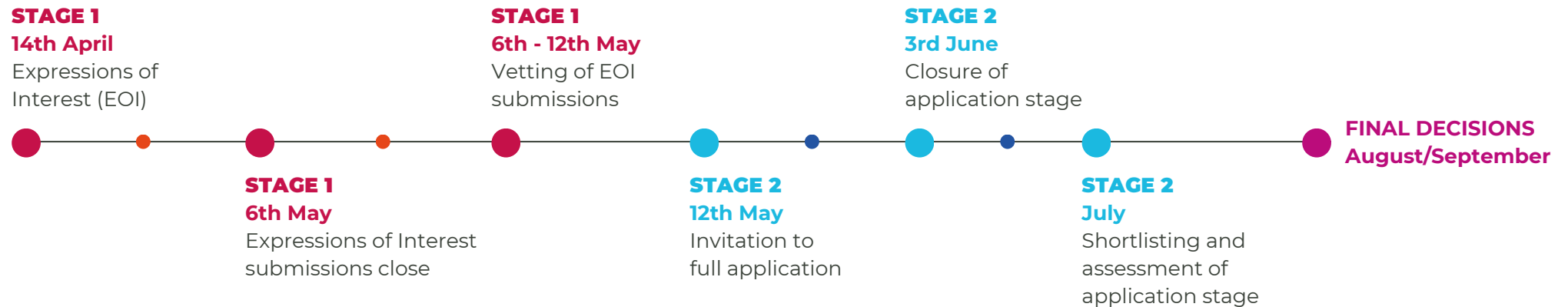
2. Second Stage

Full applications from organisations that submit a successful EOI.

You find out more about our application process here in FAQs [here](#). Please see the full guidance on the Expression of Interest (EOI) questions, as well as the full application questions, in our Application Guidance [here](#).

Application Process

Key Dates and Timeline



STAGE 1: EOI Submission

- Expression of Interest form open 2pm, Monday 14th April
- Information webinar: 2pm, Tuesday 21st April
- Expression of Interest Form closes: 11:59pm, Wednesday 6th May

STAGE 1: Notifications

- Notification for successful and unsuccessful EOI: 2pm, Tuesday 12th May

STAGE 2: Invitation to Second Stage Application

- Invitation to second stage application: 2pm, Tuesday 12th May
- Information webinar: 2pm, Tuesday 19th May
- Full application closure: 11:59pm, Tuesday 3rd June

STAGE 2: Shortlisting, Assessment and Awards

- Shortlisting throughout June/July
- Decision making and assessment July
- Notification of award from August/September

Application Process

How to Apply

All applications will be submitted online via our online grant management system, Plinth. You will need to create an account and sign in to access the application forms. You can [apply here](#).

At each stage, applicants will receive email notifications confirming when your submission is complete and when any updates or outcomes are available. You will also be able to see the status of your application on Plinth as well.

To learn more about how to create an account, start your application, and navigate the Plinth system, please review the [How to Apply on Plinth Guide](#).

AI in Applications

At UK Youth, we recognise the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing the digital infrastructure of youth organisations in 2026. AI can help with grant applications, reporting, and automating tasks such as payments, registrations, and other administrative processes.

It can also support smaller organisations with limited fundraising experience and reduce barriers for people with disabilities, making opportunities like fundraising, training, and other support more accessible.

At the same time, it is important to understand the risks of relying on AI. These include biased outputs, data protection issues (as many tools may not comply with UK GDPR), and content produced by AI can be inaccurate, generic, or not tailored to your work.

You are welcome to use AI to help draft or refine your answers, improve structure, or check clarity. However, we still want to hear your voice. Your lived experience, institutional knowledge, and understanding of the nuances of your work with young people are essential, and AI cannot provide this. These unique insights about your organisation are very important to us and will help us to inform our funding decisions.

All applications, whether AI-assisted or not, are assessed using the same criteria and reviewed for quality, authenticity, and alignment with our funding aims.

You can find more information in our [AI statement](#).

Assessment

At EOI stage, all submissions will be reviewed and verified before heading to the second stage application.

After the second stage, all applications will be assessed against the same criteria, and each criterion will be weighted equally. This balanced approach is designed to reflect the nature of unrestricted multi-year funding, where the focus is on strengthening the whole organisation rather than a project or provision.

All applications will be assessed against the same criteria, and each criterion will be weighted equally. This balanced approach is designed to reflect the nature of unrestricted multi-year funding, where the focus is on strengthening the whole organisation rather than a project or provision.

Applications will be assessed by panels made up of external assessors, young people, and UK Youth staff, after the second stage. Panels will be designed with geographical balance in mind, so that assessors collectively understand the key regions highlighted in this fund, and provision is fairly represented across areas.

Our assessment approach will focus on the overall needs, capacity, and sustainability of an organisation rather than a single project or provision an organisation delivers.

Assessment Criteria

We are using equal weighting as it ensures a fair and balanced assessment that values youth voice, organisational impact and value, and quality of service all equally.

Criteria	Key Application Section
<p>Youth Participation and Voice <i>Are young people meaningfully involved in shaping services, leadership, or decision-making?</i></p>	<p>Section 1: Needs and involvement <i>Question 1 (needs and involvement): What is the need you are meeting for young people and how do you ensure that young people are involved in the design and implementation of the service you provide?</i></p>
<p>Organisational Impact and Value <i>Will funding strengthen the organisation and sustain youth benefits long-term</i></p>	<p>Section 2: Amount and Use <i>Question 1: How much grant funding are you requesting per year?</i> <i>Question 2: How will you use this funding?</i></p> <p>Section 3: Financial need and Impact <i>Question 1: What has caused this financial need?</i> <i>Question 2: What have you already done to address those financial needs?</i> <i>Question 3: What will happen if you do not secure this funding?</i></p> <p>Section 4: Previous Funding <i>Question 1: What other unrestricted grant funding have you received in the last three years?</i></p>
<p>Quality of Youth Provision <i>Are the services high-quality, and inclusive to young people and their communities?</i></p>	<p>Section 1: Youth Work including outdoor learning <i>Question 2: What does high quality youth work, including outdoor learning, mean to you? Please give examples of how you deliver this</i></p>

All successful organisations will be subject to due diligence checks before grants are disbursed, further information is available in [our FAQs](#).

Grant Requirements

Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

All successful grantees will be required to submit a yearly light-touch report via Plinth. As part of our grant management, we aim to share questions three months in advance of reporting so that grantees are aware of what will be asked.

Report form questions will focus on use of funding, benefits of funding for the organisation and young people, financial information, and engagement with our Grants + capacity building support. Reporting takes place across a one month period.

We expect this to take place in August 2027, 2028, 2029. Year 2 and Year 3 payments will be made within six weeks after receipt of the report form to allow time for review and payment processes.

Data Protection

All data collected under the grant round will be processed in compliance with UK GDPR laws and the [Data Protection Act 2028](#).

Data will be held securely in our grant management system, Plinth, for the duration of the grant programme for monitoring, evaluation and reporting purposes. We will also share information about who we funded with our funder and other organisations, such as [360 Giving](#).

If you have any questions you can refer to our Data Protection Policy and [Privacy Policy](#).

Grant Requirements

Complaints Policy

At UK Youth, we are committed to providing high-quality programmes, services, and support for young people, partners and stakeholders we work with. We aim to get things right, but we know that sometimes concerns arise. When they do, we want to hear from you. We value complaints and see them as an important way to learn, improve, and ensure we are delivering the best possible experience for everyone who interacts with us.

Where possible, complaints should be raised directly with the UK Youth Grants Team or a UK Youth staff member. If you do not feel comfortable raising a complaint directly, you can use [this page](#) to submit a complaint and learn more about how we will respond. For further information about complaints or issues, please refer to our [Complaints Policy](#).



Contact, Support and FAQs

If you have any questions, we encourage you to go through [our FAQs](#), which answers common questions about the funding.

We're holding an information webinar Q&A on Tuesday 21st April (2pm), where we'll provide further information and give you a chance to ask questions. [Register for the session](#) to secure your place.

If you still have questions, you're welcome to reach out to the UK Youth Grants Team at grants@ukyouth.org.

Due to our small team size, we are only able to respond to enquiries via email but will respond within 48 hours.



UK YOUTH

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