**Rochdale Communities Fund – Prevention Fund**

**Guidance Notes**

The Rochdale Communities Fund is a mutual fund to invest in and strengthen Rochdale Borough’s VCFSE sector. It funds groups and projects which directly benefit local people and communities, delivered by VCFSE organisations with roots in the borough.

The Rochdale Communities Fund can support groups to try out a new project or sustain one that already exists. Action Together provides members with development support, training and other infrastructure alongside grant funding.

Thanks to funding from Rochdale Borough Council Public Health team, Action Together is offering grants of up to £18,000 to help the VCFSE sector to embed preventative support alongside an existing emergency support offer.

The fund priorities have been co-produced by a group of representatives from the Anti-Poverty Network, Welfare Advice Forum, Food Solutions Forum, Ethnic Communities Network and the Digital Inclusion Forum.

**The priorities for grant investment**

The aim of this fund is to embed holistic preventative support in places with existing ‘crisis offers’. Places with a ‘crisis offer’ could be a foodbank, a warm space, a community centre, or anywhere with a track record of providing an emergency support offer to people living in poverty.

The fund is to support these places to offer support to address the root causes of poverty and help people break cycles of poverty. Prevention can include advice, assistance with form filling, increasing digital inclusion, or a whole range of other offers. These are just a few starting points, and we recognise there are many more ways to provide proactive support to help individuals before they reach a crisis.

Demonstrating the impact of prevention can be challenging – it is hard to prove that something didn’t happen because of your support. But we expect organisations to develop ways to measure and track the difference you make.

We welcome applications in collaboration between larger organisations and smaller grassroots groups. Please get in touch if you are interested in a partnership bid and would like support to connect with other local groups.

As the Household Support Fund is a time limited government fund, projects need to be no longer than 6 months and completed by June 2025.

**Funding priorities:**

* Embedding Holistic Support and Advice Alongside Crisis Support:Providing advice alongside crisis support such as about finances, benefits or housing.
* Form Filling Assistance:Offer support for filling out forms, especially for disability benefits, or train volunteers to assist with form completion.
* Digital Inclusion:Provide digital literacy training, multilingual digital training, or providing access to free Wi-Fi or expanding infrastructure such as Mesh networks.
* Other Prevention Support:Implement strategies to prevent individuals from falling into or further into crisis.

**Grant amount:** Grants of up to £18,000 are available

**What we can fund:**

* Equipment, project resources and running costs
* Staff time and staff and volunteer expenses

Projects must be completed by June 2025.

Please note, we encourage all groups submitting an application form to include your management costs within the budget for your project.

For a clear and simple introduction to calculating the full costs of a project, read the [National Lottery Community Fund’s full cost recovery guidance](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-guidance/full-cost-recovery).

**Who is the funding for:**

* you are a voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) group locally rooted or actively working in the borough of Rochdale; ***and***
* you are a member of Action Together CIO (you can register for free to become a member [here](https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/become-member))
* you are formally constituted.

To ensure limited funds reach as many groups as possible, there is also a limit on the number of times groups can apply to the Rochdale Communities Fund.

Action Together members can apply to our funding if you have already received funding through the Rochdale Communities Fund as long as:

* The applications are for different projects, or you can show the project needs to continue
* You have submitted all monitoring for previous projects
* You are in contact with your Community Development Worker
* You have not already received a grant from the categories above the one you are applying for (i.e. a small grant and you’re applying for a micro grant)

**Decision making process:**

Grant decisions will be made by Action Together’s Community panel. Decisions will be made once the fund has closed for applications.

You may be asked for further information or to redevelop aspects of your proposal.

All applications must be sent to hayley.tomlinson@actiontogether.org.uk and you will receive the decision via email.

Please note:

* We will only accept applications from organisations who have completed monitoring for any previous funds received from Action Together.  If you have any queries about monitoring, please email hayley.tomlinson@actiontogether.org.uk
* Action Together is an accredited Living Wage Funder. This means we encourage organisations that employ staff to become an accredited [Living Wage Employer.](https://www.livingwage.org.uk/become-a-living-wage-employer)

**Monitoring:**

At the end of your project, we will ask you to fill out a monitoring form to tell us:

* The story of your project
* How many people benefitted
* Any other plans you have for your community following the project
* Photos, feedback sheets, promotional materials or anything else relevant to the project.

For grants of over £5,000, you will be expected to show in your application what metrics and measures you will be collecting to demonstrate the impact and learning from your project.

You will be asked to provide quarterly monitoring data as well as a final report on impact.

Our Community Development Workers will check in with you during the project and can help you plan how you want to share the impact and success of your project.

**Completing the application form**

* Please ensure that ALL boxes on the application form are completed.
* When completing your budget, please clearly evidence how you have arrived at your costings and use exact figures.
* Please ensure you include information in your application about how you will measure the impact and success of your project.
* If you have any queries about the application form or application process, please contact Hayley Tomlinson on 0161 339 2345.
* Please note, we can only accept one application per organisation.

**The use of AI within your application**

We recognise that AI can be a valuable tool in various aspects of project development, such as brainstorming or editing responses. However, we strongly discourage its use for the drafting of answers within funding applications, as it can compromise the integrity of the application process.

It is often clear when an organisation uses AI to draft their application as we notice similar or identical language and content within numerous funding applications. Strong applications help us understand your organisation and your community, but when they are drafted by AI the generic language which is used makes it hard to understand what your organisation is planning to do and why.

AI written responses often claim to have taken certain steps to develop their project idea, such as a needs assessment, focus groups or consultation with users. Unless the group includes statistics and quotes in their bid, it raises doubt about whether these steps have actually happened. This can affect the decision-making process and an outcome of an application as the authenticity of the application can be called into question.

Where there is doubt about if your application has been drafted by AI, we will ask for some additional information to support your application.

**Please note that the Rochdale Communities Fund is ongoing therefore our approach will be under constant review. If there are any changes, these will be communicated appropriately.**