



Lewes District Council

Lewes District Council Community & Social Cohesion Grants Programme

1. Introduction and purpose

Cohesive communities are safe, resilient and thriving places where people feel connected, respected, that they belong, and can participate fully in local life.

This programme is designed to strengthen social cohesion in Lewes district by supporting voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver both small grassroots and/ or longer-term projects which bring people together, reduce tensions, and build trust across communities.

In designing this grant programme, we recognise that:

- Trusted local organisations are best placed to understand specific issues in their area.
- Local authorities can act as collaborators, funders, facilitators and stakeholders, but that ownership and accountability should be shared with partners.
- Cohesion is built through trust, participation, and impact which should continue beyond the lifecycle of this funding.
- This programme is aimed at local organisations irrespective of size or length of time that the group has existed. Support will be given to less experienced and/or new groups that would like to be involved.

2. Strategic Context

As well as building resilient and connected communities, this grant programme seeks to address inequality, which often compound tensions and deepen divides. The programme also aligns with the council's [Corporate Plan](#) and [Community Grants Policy](#) as well as broader commitments around:

- Equality, inclusion, and safeguarding principles
- Community Safety
- Civil Society
- Community wealth building and social value

The Belong Network's [Common Ground - Building cohesive communities](#) report has informed this work including the 'Theory of change', which recommends a focus on:

- **Bonding social capital** – Strengthening ties within similar groups.
- **Bridging social capital** – Connecting different groups.
- **Linking social capital** – Connecting communities to institutions.
- **Social contact theory** – Reducing prejudice through meaningful contact.
- **Shared identity** – Fostering inclusive local belonging and challenging 'us vs. them' narratives.

Although this programme will not alone be able to fulfill all of the above aims, applicants should think about how their proposal might help us achieve one or more of them.

Essentially, the Council and partners hope to support projects, activities and plans which local people believe will help them to connect to others and help them understand one another.

3. Funding categories

This one-off fund will provide grants of between £500 - £10,000 which are available to organisations and community groups that are (or have recently been) established in the district. Applicants can apply under one or both of the categories:

a) **Community connections & well-being**

Initiatives or activities which help people to understand and respect each other and their local environment. This may include:

- Physical/ sport/ artistic activities for children / specific age groups.
- English and language support which build confidence and reduce feelings of isolation.
- Environmental initiatives (e.g. enjoying green spaces, learning to grow, tidying and looking after the environment).
- Cultural 'exchanges' (e.g. food fairs, history, crafts, music, and open days).
- Media/ artistic projects with a focus on belonging and mutual respect.

b) Social Cohesion and resilience

Longer-term projects which aim to address division, identify and challenge harmful messages (mal/mis/disinformation) and build resilience among communities. This may include:

- Community development plans.
- Restorative Justice approaches.
- Media/ artistic projects.
- Stable, safe and inclusive spaces which welcome and engage a range of residents (e.g. community centres, youth clubs, community cafes).
- School/ nursery engagement and education around tolerance, respect and civil society.
- Online safety e.g. social media and malignant algorithms, the 'echo chamber' of views, hateful content.

4. Eligibility criteria

Applicants must:

- Be a VCSE organisation based in the [Lewes District](#) .
- Be a registered charity, CIC, CIO, or constituted community group.
- Have appropriate governance, safeguarding, and financial systems.
- A clear commitment to principles of equality and safeguarding.
- A commitment to [Community Wealth Building and Social Value](#).
- The use of secure data systems which are GDPR compliant.
- Evidence of a sound financial footing (not at risk of closure, dissolution or debts).

✓ We are particularly keen to see projects, initiatives and activities with a focus on the coastal strip (Peacehaven, Newhaven, Seaford, Telscombe).

✓ Collaborative bids are welcome and evidence of secured match funding or other contributions should be included in the application.

✓ Applicants must state on their application form if they have also applied for a grant from the [Community Safety Partnership](#) .

- ✓ The panel may decide to award a grant outside of the set limits at its discretion.

5. Deadlines and Decision-Making

A dedicated panel will be established to consider applications and ensure that funds are allocated in line with the ethos and principles underpinning Community & Social Cohesion. The panel will consist of representatives from Lewes District Council (both officer and Elected Member), the Community Safety partnership, Police, East Sussex County Council and a local Voluntary Action representative.

The application window will remain open until midnight on **5th August 2026**. If after this round the panel are unable to allocate the fund in its entirety to eligible projects, applications will be invited for an additional opportunity in the autumn.

Please note: Applicants may be invited to present to the panel.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

Grant recipients should be prepared to provide:

- End-of-project reports and case studies (where applicable).
- Budgets and accounts (to be submitted with application with proof of spend (if applicable)).
- Feedback and testimonials as requested.
- Photos/ promotion in collaboration with LDC.
- Transparency and openness throughout the life of the grant.