

# OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

This notice is to be used for the following types of officer decisions. (Select one option).

**A.** Decisions taken by officers under a specific express delegation from Council or a Committee.

**B.** Decisions taken by officers under a general delegation from Council or a Committee, which relates to (i) a permission or a licence, or (ii) the rights of an individual, or (iii) a contract or expenditure over £100,000.

<b>1. Title of decision:</b>	Award of Reading Borough Council Small Grants Fund (Round 2) 2023/24
<b>2. Date of the decision:</b>	01 March 2024
<b>3. The decision maker:</b>	Assistant Director Policy, Performance & Customer Services

#### 4. Decision details:

Reading Borough Council agreed as part of its budget for 2023-24 to allocate £200,000 p.a. for small grants to the voluntary sector.

The aim of the Small Grants Fund 2023/24 to encourage grassroots and innovative community action and the criteria is non-prescriptive to enable communities to apply for funding to support activities that are right for their community, but applications should demonstrate how they support the following key elements of the Tackling Inequality Strategy.

Grants of up to £5,000 are available for individual organisations, which can be increased to £10,000 for bids made in partnership, to support the infrastructure and/or additional capacity needed by organisations to expand existing service, deliver services in a different way or to develop new service.

The fund is administered in 2 rounds of £100,000, in Aug 2023 and later in Feb 2024. Applications are through an online/offline form with guidance for applicants.

The funding window for Round 2 was from 27<sup>th</sup> Nov 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024. 81 applications were received.

In Round 2 of the 2023/24 awards totalling £115,544 were made. Additional funding of £15,544 has been identified from the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme as being suitable to support three bids recommended for funding. The additional budget has been vired into the small grants budget.

81 applications, totalling above £400k, were received. Each of the applications were evaluated and scored against the grant criteria. The highest possible score was 30 and the lowest 0. The panel agreed that the applications scoring between 20 and 30 should be recommended to be awarded.

The criteria were:

- Enable everyone within the borough to share in Reading's success
- Drive attainment in skills, education and training and access to quality employment
- Support people in the areas of the town where need is greatest
- Support the diverse personal life experiences of our residents and how

**5. Reasons for the decision:**

This decision is made under general delegated powers but in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources.

An award panel comprising the Community Safety Team Leader, Public Health Neighbourhood & Partnership Manager, BFfC Family and Information Manager, Culture Development Officer and Voluntary Sector and Social Inclusion Manager assessed the applications against the fund criteria and set out in the guidance to applicants.

Following the assessment by the Panel, it is recommended that grants be awarded to 21 organisations totalling **£115,544** as shown in the table at Appendix 1.

**6. Alternative options considered (if any) and rejected:**

Award fewer grants and retain budget for potential future allocations. This is not recommended as the Council has already made provision for further awards in 2023/24 within the budget.

**7. List of open Background Papers:**

Appendix 1- RBC Small Grants Fund 2023-24 (Round 2) – Awards

Appendix 2-SGF 2023-24 Round 2 Equality Impact Assessment

**8. List of confidential or exempt Background Papers:**

None

**9. Any other matters taken into consideration:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Legitimate expectation of consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedural requirements
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health implications	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental or Climate Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management implications

<input type="checkbox"/> Transparency of Information (FOI etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Privacy Impact Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Act Duties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality Impact Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory duties	<input type="checkbox"/> EU withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces Covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<b>Details of the matters taken into account:</b>	

### 10. Legal considerations

None to note as part of this decision

### 11. Financial considerations

The budget for the allocation of grant funding is contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

### 12. Internal consultations

Officers from Resources, Public Health, DENS and Brighter Futures for Children were involved in the scoring of the grant applications.

Unsuccessful bids will be shared with other Council departments to determine if they align with other potential funding opportunities.

Sections 13- 18: To be completed only for Decision A (express delegation from a Committee)

**13. The name of the Committee:**

**14. Date of the meeting:**

Click or tap to enter a date.

**15. Minute number:**

**16. The delegation given by the Committee:**

**17. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:**

**18. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.**

**NB: Those shaded in yellow are funded through the budget virement from the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme**

<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Reading Community Learning Centre</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To part fund the sessional crèche worker salaries for the summer 2024 term for approximately 18 children which offers important support for children from 4 months to 5 years old. To enables migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women to attend regular classes, which helps to decrease their isolation and loneliness and access improved wellbeing and mental health.
<b>Food4families (Partnership with WCDA)</b>	<b>£10,000</b>	To enable the implementation of a sustainable action plan for extending the Incredible Edible Reading (IER) concept across Reading's community, business and learning sectors to support local action to improve access to planet-friendly food, reduce food poverty and encourage healthy lifestyles
<b>Refugee Support Group</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To provide staff and volunteer resource for ESOL drop-in sessions once a week on a Wednesday. To develop the group, build attendance and have a positive impact on attendees. Running weekly 2-hour sessions, where refugees and asylum seekers from a range of different countries (including Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea), will be supported by trained and supervised volunteers to learn and practice English. To employ a staff member 7.5 staff hours a week – to recruit volunteers, coordinate the drop-in sessions, prepare materials and resources, publicise the activity, register participants, train and supervise volunteers during the classes, complete monitoring and evaluation etc.
<b>Readipop (Partnership with Jelly)</b>	<b>£10,000</b>	To support two of Reading's established arts organisations to collaborate to boost community engagement linked to summer festivals that promote and celebrate Reading's creativity and diversity
<b>Caversham Muslim Association</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To support Community Workshops and expansion of existing services 12 youth sessions (12-20 attendees) and 3 community gatherings for ladies to meet in a social context and network (40-50 attendees). to the community of Caversham.
<b>The Rising Sun Arts Centre (Partnership with Reading Refugee Support Group and</b>	<b>£5,544</b>	To enable a successful dressmaking project for refugees to continue to meet and to develop its work.

<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Reading City of Sanctuary</b>		
<b>Starting Point (part of The Mustard Tree Foundation)</b>	<b>£4,231</b>	To provide an additional Starting Point 'Hub' specifically to support young people under 16 to support the transition into adulthood. To provide opportunities and create pathways towards further education, training, employment, and community integration. To support an additional 20 young people over 2 terms up to December 2024
<b>Berkshire Women's Aid</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To fund Choices - a vital project designed to support survivors of domestic abuse who can benefit from the educative sessions and peer support provided, to help reduce the likelihood of re-entering an abusive relationship in future.
<b>Home-Start Reading</b>	<b>£4,622</b>	To delivery of a 4-month targeted home-visiting programme, run as a pilot, aimed at helping vulnerable and disadvantaged families in Reading prepare their children for nursery / pre-school. The beneficiaries of this programme will be families with one or more child aged 18 months to 4 years.
<b>AutAngel CIC</b>	<b>£4,850</b>	To continue providing a venue for our autistic community to meet.to continue to develop this work, we need to maintain our community meeting space and office. This space is vital for the local autistic community. It's a space that we have been able to tailor as best we can to the sensory and access needs of our community
<b>Parents And Children Together</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To support Bounce Back 4 Kids project which aims to extend support for domestically abused children and adults in Reading; increasing skills and knowledge in healthy relationships, school attendance and attainment for children, and economic independence and self-confidence in adults.
<b>RABBLE Theatre</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To established programme of delivery in schools, which focusses on bringing drama and theatre provision to schools in the Whitley area of Reading. The aim of the project is to engage with up 600 young people and a wider community of staff and parents through free-to attend theatre based after school clubs.
<b>Gabriels Wellbeing and Education CIC</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	To provide a range of opportunities for children and their families to improve quality of life through education and play, to offer space and time for social and emotional development opportunities, and to offer evidence-based programmes to hone life skills, in order to tackle inequalities now and in the longer term.
<b>Sport in Mind (in partnership with Get Berkshire Active)</b>	<b>£10,000</b>	To support pregnant mothers and new mothers in the more deprived areas of Reading, be active for their mental health and provided with a support group. Sessions are aimed at those who have mental health problems, low mood or are isolated.

<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Weller Centre</b>	<b>£4,750</b>	To expand the learning opportunities for under 5s through play within our 4 weekly sessions at Weller Centre to improve communication and understanding, increase language to bring children up to expected levels (e.g. 2-year-olds average 75-225 words or sounds), expand socialisation and problem-solving skills.
<b>Remap Berkshire</b>	<b>£1,000</b>	Helping disabled people with special needs in Reading. The Social Services, Occupational Therapists and other health professionals in Reading are not able to help disabled people who need some special gadget or adaptation which is not provided by the main manufactures. The above-mentioned professionals do not have the time, funding or expertise to deal which these requirements. Remap Berkshire is a group of trained engineers who are able to analyse the disabled persons needs and design and build a bespoke solution.
<b>The Count Me In Collective</b>	<b>£5,000</b>	For setting up a nano brewery at The Castle Tap in Reading. The brewery will train and eventually employ local people with learning disabilities and/or autism/ADHD and other similar groups who currently face barriers to work.
<b>THE ENGINE SHED</b>	<b>£3,900</b>	To create a rich and unique permanent Reading-based resource that is available for the community to use, and which meets many of the social and support needs of the autistic community.
<b>Real Time</b>	<b>£4,800</b>	The funding will be used for The Exploring Stories project- to implement a series of workshops in the most deprived areas, alongside mentoring support sessions. The Exploring Stories project is seeking to specifically target the most marginalised and isolated residents, in the most deprived areas of Reading
<b>Nature Nurture CIC</b>	<b>£9,950</b>	To respond to the needs of the residents of Dee Park. We have a long history of working in the area and recently, while delivering a Dee Park Wild Wellbeing event, local residents approached us expressing their wish for more community activities, particularly at Dee Space, that will bring together residents of all ages
<b>City Life</b>	<b>£1,897</b>	Family Summer Activities in Victoria Park – To fund a family play worker to facilitate regular family ‘stay and play’ activities for families living in central Victoria Park area of Abbey Ward during the summer school holiday in 2024.

## Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For advice on this document please contact Mark Redfearn [mark.redfearn@reading.gov.uk](mailto:mark.redfearn@reading.gov.uk)

Please contact the Project Management Office at [pmo@reading.gov.uk](mailto:pmo@reading.gov.uk) for advice and/or support to complete this form from a project perspective.

---

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: Small Grants Fund 2023/24 Round 2

Directorate: Resources

Service: Data, Intelligence & Policy

Name: Mark Redfearn

Job Title: Social Inclusion and VCS Partnerships Manager

Date of assessment:12/02/2024

---

### Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1	Updated SGF Process	MR	12 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2024	MR / GH

## Scope your proposal

---

- **What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?**

---

Reading Borough Council agreed as part of its budget for 2023-24 to allocate an ongoing £200K for small grants to the voluntary sector. This grant funding is to be awarded in two rounds, first round was awarded in August 2023 and second round to be awarded on March 2024.

The expectation is that the small grants fund is focussed on supporting the broader objectives of the Tackling Inequality Strategy to create further opportunity for local voluntary and community organisations to play an active role in making Reading a more equal place to live for its residents.

---

- **Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

---

The intention is to encourage grassroots and innovative community action and the criteria is non-prescriptive to enable communities to apply for funding to support activities that are right for their community, but applications should demonstrate how they support the following key elements of the Tackling Inequality Strategy:

- Enable everyone within the borough to share in Reading's success
  - Drive attainment in skills, education and training and access to quality employment
  - Support people in the areas of the town where need is greatest
  - Support the diverse personal life experiences of our residents and how these can contribute to their equal enjoyment of life and achievements within the borough
  - Provide additionality by complementing existing strategies, work, and partnerships aimed at making Reading a more equal place to live
- 

- **What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

---

The specific scope of the Tackling Inequality Strategy is to go beyond the Council's existing activities and strategies to achieve a more consistent quality of life for our residents in our most deprived areas.

The SGF is providing funding to grassroots projects that support and guide our residents to become more self-sufficient, built on a bedrock of valued educational attainment, strong skills and practical knowledge that enables them to realise their potential through accessing suitable employment opportunities.

---



- **Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

---

The SGF is focused on supporting residents living within the most deprived areas of the borough, with the initial activities delivered in areas identified as consistently having the most acute and highest levels of deprivation within the borough.

Outputs and learning from the SGF will be available to all Council services to be utilised across the whole of the borough.

Details of the SGF will be shared and promoted by key VCS organisations to ensure grassroots groups are aware of the opportunity for funding and advice and guidance on how to apply. Council officers are also available to respond to specific requests for information and advice.

---

## Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

---

- **Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some groups may be affected differently than others (due to race, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age, religious belief or due to belonging to the Armed Forces community)? Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.**

No. The SGF is focused on addressing issues which may limit residents' abilities to participate and enjoy the benefits of living within the borough, including all the protected characteristics detailed within the Equality Act, and residents belonging to the Armed Forces community.

---

- **Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.**

No. The SGF supports activities to improve inclusivity within the borough, with a strong element of delivering improvements within communities and building capacity for further improvements in the future. Details of the SGF and how to apply will be widely promoted across local communities by VCS leaders, and Council Officers are available during the application window to answer enquiries on the application process.

---

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement.

**An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:**

---

The SGF is directly focused on addressing issues which may limit residents' abilities to participate and enjoy the benefits of living within the borough, including all the protected characteristics detailed within the Equality Act, and residents belonging to the Armed Forces community.

---

Mark Redfearn

X

---

Lead Officer