

OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



Reading
Borough Council
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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.

1. Title of decision:	Award of Reading Borough Council Small Grants Fund 2025/26
2. Date of the decision:	19 December 2025
3. The decision maker:	Assistant Director Policy, Change & Customer Services

4. Decision details:

Reading Borough Council agreed as part of its budget for 2025/26 to allocate £150,000 for small grants to the voluntary sector.

The aim of the Small Grants Fund 2025/26 is to encourage grassroots and innovative community action. The criteria were non-prescriptive to enable communities to apply for funding to support activities that are right for their community, but applications needed to demonstrate how they support the key elements of the Tackling Inequality Strategy.

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

Grants of up to £5,000 were available for individual organisations. Organisations with an annual income of over £100,000 and organisations that have received more than £20,000 of funding from the Council were not eligible to apply.

The fund was administered in one round of £150,000 in November / December 2025. Applications were through an online/offline form with guidance for applicants.

The recommendations for funding have been made following the scoring of the bids against the set criteria by Officers from Policy, Sustainable Communities, Culture, Children's Services, and New Directions College.

The highest possible score was 30 and the lowest 0. In total, 45 bids were received for a total value of £185,600 worth of grant funding.

Following the consensus scoring meeting between officers, 25 bids representing a total funding of **£124,892** are recommended for funding.

During the consensus scoring, five bids were identified as being for the same activities which were funded during SGF 2024/25. Therefore, these bids are not recommended for funding as the criteria does not allow bids which would be a continuation of activities funded in the previous year.

As a result, of the above decisions, there is a balance of £25,108 remaining in the Small Grants Fund budget. This balance is to be utilised on Tackling Inequality / Place Based activities. The potential use of this remaining budget would be informed by engagement activities with local stakeholder groups in December and January.

5. Reasons for the decision:

This decision is made under general delegated powers but in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

The recommendations for funding have been made following the scoring of the bids against the set criteria by Officers from Policy, Sustainable Communities, Culture, Children's Services, and New Directions College.

Following the consensus scoring meeting between officers, 25 bids representing a total funding of **£124,892** are recommended for funding, as shown in the table at Appendix 1.

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

Reduce the funding available and make a subsequent reduction in the number of bids funded. This is not recommended as the Council has already made provision for these awards within the budget for 2025/26.

7. List of open Background Papers:

Appendix 1- RBC Small Grants Fund 2025/26.

Appendix 2-SGF 2024/25 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
Details of the matters taken into account:	

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 and service budgets.

12. Internal consultations

Officers from Resources, DENS and Children's Services, and New Directions College 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.

Appendix 1 – Bids Recommended for Funding

Recommended for Funding						
Organisation Name	Annual Income	Bid Amount	Ward (Location)	Organisation Core Focus	Purpose	Funded in prev SGF rounds
Rank & File Theatre CIC	£50,000.00	£4,800.00	Abbey, Battle, Katesgrove, Norcot, Southcote, Whitley	Rank & File CIC is a Community Theatre of Sanctuary working with refugees, asylum seekers, survivors of abuse, and people with visible and non-visible disabilities.	To support Sanctuary Voices, a new community theatre programme bringing together refugees, asylum seekers, survivors of abuse, disabled and other marginalised residents to explore identity, belonging and connection through creative collaboration. The project responds to a clear local need: many Reading residents facing social and economic disadvantage experience isolation, language barriers and limited access to inclusive, skills-based activities.	Yes
Graft Thames Valley	£75,000.00	£4,962.00	Reading (All Wards)	Employability/ Disability	To empowers neurodivergent young people (aged 19–25) in Reading to build confidence, develop practical employment skills, and move successfully into meaningful paid work. Through tailored workshops, supported work experience, and outreach with schools, colleges and careers events, the project bridges the gap between education and employment, helping young people who might otherwise be excluded from Reading’s economic success.	No

Radically Hopeful	£15,000.00	£5,000.00	Coley, Southcote, Whitley	Community education, publishing, engagement strategies	Funding will establish coordination infrastructure for IER in support of Reading's food-growing communities by testing sustainable governance and support services through creative engagement. Three years of research shows initiatives in areas of greatest need operate in isolation, unable to share knowledge effectively or speak collectively to influence policy.	No
Real Time Video	£74,869.00	£4,860.00	Norcot, Southcote, Whitley	Education	The Making Places project will connect young people and older residents from Whitley Wood, South Reading, and Norcot. The project has been designed to meet several local needs. Providing creative community development work in the most deprived wards in Reading. Reconnecting young people with their communities and offering meaningful real world work experience.	Yes
Torch Help Hub	£40,060.00	£5,000.00	Coley, Southcote	Inequality, wellbeing, poverty, health	To improve the diet of residents who use the food Pantries in Coley and Southcote, by coaching them in new cooking skills in a relaxed community setting. This will enable them to make good choices and equip them with new skills so that they can prepare food for their families using the fresh produce and food types normally available at the Pantries.	No
Reading Bike Hub	£30,000.00	£5,000.00	Abbey	Increasing access to active travel and decreasing poverty transport in the community through providing affordable cycles, tools	The project will help provide people with skills they can use to get employment and enable us to provide more affordable bikes to the community. If funded, we aim to run 20 days with trained mechanics where volunteers will be given a bike to work on to learn skills.	No

				for maintenance, and upskilling people.		
The Engine Room	£4,860.00	£5,000.00	Norcot	mental health & wellbeing, refugees, community, arts	The Creative Kitchen is a community project led by The Engine Room on Dee Park Estate, Reading. It blends high-quality arts sessions with shared meal preparation, creating a safe, inclusive space for adults facing mental health challenges to connect, express themselves, and build wellbeing and community through creativity and food.	Yes
Nail It DIY CIC	£15,000.00	£4,635.00	Reading (All Wards)	Community, Education, Skills, Women's Empowerment	To equip 'Nail It DIY' CIC with the essential portable tools and safety equipment required to deliver 12 months of women only DIY workshops. Funding will enable us to provide two free of charge workshops for a total of 24 women across Reading's most deprived wards. In addition, we will provide 2 subsidised places for every 10 standard places. The free and subsidised places would be via community referral from established, local organisations.	No
Green Ways	£16,802.00	£4,620.00	Caversham	Provide free goods to all, saving items from landfill and helping residents save money.	To extend the opening hours of our successful community 'Waste Not' Free Shop which receives unwanted items and makes them available free of charge to the community. Our unit is open 2 days a week and we support around 1500 people a year with clients coming from across Reading to choose items free of charge.	No

The RAFT Club (Reading Autism Families Together)	£4,300.00	£2,850.00	Tilehurst	disability, children, community, reducing isolation.	To increase provision to support more families with an AS diagnosis in the Reading borough and to employ 6 x Play Workers to support autistic children who struggle to access mainstream play settings due to their neurodivergent traits and challenging behaviour. In parallel with the play club, we provide a support group/ respite for the parents/carers.	No
Project Salama	£33,328.00	£5,000.00	Battle, Caversham, Coley, Katesgrove, Park, Southcote, Tilehurst, Whitley	Domestic and Sexual Abuse Prevention	Chai, Chat and Play is a community-led wellbeing and empowerment programme designed by Project Salama to support survivors of domestic abuse, particularly women from refugee, migrant, and minoritised backgrounds, along with their young children. The programme combines trauma-informed peer support, social connection, and early years play in a culturally sensitive and inclusive environment	No
Chattertots	£26,797.00	£5,000.00	Caversham, Caversham Heights, Coley, Norcot, Park, Southcote, Tilehurst, Whitley	Disability, education and early intervention for children with Down Syndrome	To provide expert educational consultancy visits to Reading schools supporting children with Down Syndrome, ensuring teachers understand the specific learning profile and can deliver effective, evidence-based teaching strategies that enable inclusion and academic progress.	No
Becalm Foundation CIC	£14,000.00	£5,000.00	Katesgrove	People, Mental Health	To support neurodivergent young people by delivering a board game club within Reading. The club will aim to help neurodivergent YP make friends, help with social and life skills and form an identity.	No
Gabriels Wellbeing & Education CIC	£42,189.00	£5,000.00	Reading (All Wards)	Children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, outdoor education.	To provide a specialist training package for primary schools to set up and run outdoor learning and play opportunities that support staff professional development and nurture children's social and emotional skills and mental health	Yes

22nd Reading St Johns Scout group	£2,000.00	£2,038.98	Caversham, Caversham Heights, Emmer Green	Youth education, skills for life & community engagement	To establish a year-round youth archery range providing the opportunity for young people from the Reading community of ages 4-18 (+ adult volunteers), irrespective of physical or mental ability to experience archery for the first time as well as providing the opportunity for skills to be developed by those who wish to take their participation in the sport further	No
The Rising Sun Arts Centre	£51,539.00	£4,660.00	Katesgrove	Arts and Culture	Zap Magazine 8. Magazine produced by a collaboration of groups of people with learning disabilities for over 20 years. Initially a what's on guide for young people being moved on from youth provision it has become a glossy full colour magazine containing news, articles, reviews, and information for people with learning disabilities in the town. It aims to encourage people to be active and healthy	Yes
Amber Bee CIC	£39,150.00	£3,055.00	Norcot, Tilehurst	Mental Wellbeing - Children - Community - Community Safety - Education	To purchase project materials which will allow 470 children and approximately 705 adults to participate on the project.	No
Angels Outreach CIC	£250.00	£5,000.00	Abbey, Battle, Coley, Norcot, Tilehurst, Whitley	Mental health, Community wellbeing	The funding will support While You Can, a community wellbeing project by Angels Outreach CIC that promotes Advance Care Planning (ACP) as a key aspect of mental and emotional wellbeing in Reading. Many residents particularly those from ethnically diverse communities find it difficult to talk about illness, dying, and future care. This often leads to anxiety, family conflict, and emotional distress when health crises occur.	No
Career Horizons 360 Employment CIC	£0.00	£4,995.00	Reading (All Wards)	Employment support and skills (inclusive of work-readiness, coaching,	Deliver a 12-week micro-pilot to engage residents furthest from work in Reading, provide practical job-readiness workshops, fast employer brokerage & supported starts. Focus on claimants (incl. 18-24s) in wards with higher need.	No

				employer engagement, and light-touch wellbeing to sustain starts).		
Childfree in Reading	£0.00	£4,906.00	Reading (All Wards)	Community inclusion and mental wellbeing.	Building Belonging: Childfree in Reading reduce loneliness and increase community connection among adults without children in Reading by funding inclusive meetups, volunteer support, and sustainable coordination for our growing social group.	No
Saving Generations Foundation	£0.00	£5,000.00	Battle, Coley	supports vulnerable communities,	Saving Generations Foundation supports vulnerable communities, focusing on refugees and asylum seekers. We empower participants through practical skills like cooking with surplus food, promoting nutrition, sustainability, confidence, and social inclusion, while fostering community integration and pathways to employment or volunteering opportunities.	No
9th Tilehurst Guides	£4,860.00	£3,500.00	Tilehurst	Youth work with girls aged 10-14	To take 24 girls and 5 adults from around Tilehurst to WINGS2026, an international camp in Windsor Great Park, from 25th July to 1st August 2026. The camp is expensive compared to our usual camps, and we would like to support parents in paying for it, as well as adding to our equipment.	No
Reading Sudanese Community	£8,000.00	£5,000.00	All Reading Wards	Community development, education, health & wellbeing, refugee inclusion	To strengthen social inclusion and wellbeing among Sudanese refugees and new migrants in Reading through Ramadan community Iftars, youth awareness workshops, and psychosocial family support sessions.	No

Reading Cancer Champions Support Group	£0.00	£1,670.00	Abbey, Church, Park, Redlands, Whitley	Spreading well-informed cancer awareness among minority ethnic groups	Spreading well-informed cancer awareness among minority ethnic groups, in particular where language may be a barrier to understanding prevention and to accessing timely diagnosis and treatment, also supporting referred cancer patients; all using trained volunteers from the same groups. Extending to wider health promotion. Reading-wide scope but existing beneficiaries live mostly in South and East Reading.	No
Reading Male Voice Choir	£17,850.00	£2,500.00	Reading (All Wards)	Music Education	To raise awareness among young people to develop and further their interest and expertise in music generally and singing. To encourage young people in their musical ambitions - help develop confidence and expertise in terms of young peoples' musical talents - provide a public platform to display.	No
Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA)	£0.00	£1,840.00	Abbey	Community	To deliver Building Bonds – A Year of Community Events with BSANA, a programme designed to strengthen connections and wellbeing within the Baker Street area, where residents experience higher levels of deprivation and limited access to shared community spaces.	Yes
89th Reading Scouts	£47,530.00	£5,000.00	Caversham	Children	WINGS contingent - taking around 30 young people to an international Scout and Guide camp in Windsor Great Park for a week of cultural enrichment, broadening horizons, and learning new skills through adventure.	No
Reading Green Wellbeing Network	£2,000.00	£2,500.00	RGWN works across Reading - projects in Abbey, Battle, Park, Redlands, Southcote, Whitley plus others	Health and mental wellbeing	The funding will be used to engage a Green Engagement Worker who will attend 80 hours of public events over a 12-month period, to engage with the public in person.	No

Al Huda Network CIC	£1,000.00	£5,000.00	Coley	Community	Community based project with the aim of strengthening community ties and relationships locally. We organise regular weekly initiatives as well as annual residential trips and aim to expand our offering.	No
Barbados and Friends Association (Reading)	£6,000.00	£1,500.00	Katesgrove	Community, Children & Afro-Caribbean	Bringing together different communities this event will host live choirs and individual performers. The main target audiences are the Barbadian and wider West Indian communities alongside any others who enjoy the sounds of the Caribbean.	Yes
			Total Recommended Funding	£124,891.98		

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For advice on this document please contact Mark Redfearn mark.redfearn@reading.gov.uk

Please contact the Project Management Office at 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 2025-26

Directorate: Resources

Service: Data, Intelligence & Policy

Name: Mark Redfearn

Job Title: Social Inclusion and VCS Partnerships Manager

Date of assessment:18/12/2025

Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1	Updated SGF Process	MR	29 th Jan 2025	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 2025/26 to allocate £150k funding for small grants to the voluntary sector. This grant funding is to be awarded on 7th Jan 2026.

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