



The Cavamh Small Grants for Small Groups scheme aims to provide short term, mental health and well being grants of up to £500 to new and small grassroots organisations in Cardiff and The Vale of Glamorgan .

The eligibility criteria were flexible to encourage applications from grassroots groups. Organisations were able to apply as long as they could provide a basic set of rules; unincorporated organisations, registered charities, and social enterprises such as Community Interest Companies were also eligible.

Due to internal constraints, the timeframe for spending the grants was limited—six months for round one and four months for round two. Applicants were permitted to spend on both capital and revenue costs, with the exception of salaries.

Our local insight and established networks played a key role in enhancing the grant delivery process and supporting broader capacity-building efforts. The grant-making process itself was centred on building relationships and strengthening community capacity.

Local relationship building, capacity building, and sustainability

Encouraging Formalisation: The grants process required applicants to engage in basic planning, governance, and evaluation, incentivising groups to become more formalised and laying the foundation for future access to a wider range of funding opportunities. We are now in the process of developing constitutions for two groups as part of this journey.

Boosting Confidence: While applicants typically knew what they wanted funding for, many felt unsure or lacked confidence in developing the narrative for their applications. We provided support to five applicants, including three Black and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) groups and two neurodivergent individuals. Our support process encouraged applicants to tell their stories, celebrate and document achievements, and plan for the future—with a budget attached.

Pathway to Larger Funding: The application process was designed to prepare groups for accessing larger-scale funding. By demystifying application forms, we aimed to make the process more approachable. Successfully managing a small grant helps build credibility with funders, while also enabling groups to develop essential skills in budgeting, reporting, and compliance. These skills lay the groundwork for applying for, and managing, more substantial funding in the future.

Building Trust, Relationships, and Networks: The support process has allowed Cavamh to connect with groups we might not have encountered otherwise 50 % of the 14 successful applicants were not known to us. In terms of group connections, one group applied following a community outreach and introduced us and another potential free meeting space provider to another new group. The two groups now meet regularly, strengthening both their and our community networks.

Our learning so far

Tailored local support de-mystifies the application process & unlocks potential :

Dedicated guidance throughout the application and delivery process allows groups to build confidence, develop essential governance skills, and establish sustainable foundations. Notably, the encouragement to formalise structures—combined with practical help in areas such as constitution writing—has enabled 2 groups to take significant steps forward.

Flexibility is vital for inclusion: By keeping eligibility criteria broad and the application process accessible, we welcomed a diverse range of small and new groups –at least 3 of whom were engaging with formal grant funding for the first time.

Relationship-building pays mutual dividends: Connections made through outreach events and peer referrals have broadened our reach. The process of working with communities is one of mutual learning and relationship building - we never cease to be amazed at the breadth and depth of community support and inclusion : a DJ and lyric writer who has mental health challenges showing young people to write songs ; women's groups creating welcoming spaces for isolated women ; a veterans group that provides weekly meals ; an allotment group supporting wellbeing sessions open to all; a disabled people's swimming group encouraging inclusion.

Applying for funding can be stressful for most of us : The bespoke support enabled at least 3 applicants experiencing mental health challenges to apply and reflect their organisational and community connection skills whilst developing their application skills.

Use of AI One group used AI to develop their funding application - our learning with them was that ownership of the narrative is essential.

Local grants, lasting impact: Even modest funding, delivered with the right support, can initiate meaningful change. Managing a small grant has given organisations the experience needed to work with larger funders in the future, while successes—both large and small—have contributed to a growing sense of achievement and community pride.

Appreciating in kind support from larger established local organisations: Three of the groups we have worked with have been able to set up and grow because of the offer of free space and holding grants until the groups formalise , including South Riverside Community Development Centre (SRCDC) , Action for Ely and Careau (ACE).

[Grant funding programmes enable grassroots organisations to tackle mental health inequalities, new evaluation shows - Centre for Mental Health](#)