Main Grants 2026 – 2029 Consultation

1. About This Consultation

1.1. This consultation is about the proposed priorities for, and approach to, Lewisham Council's Main Grants Programme 2026 - 2029. We want to seek views on the proposed priorities for the grants and the process for letting them.

1.2. This consultation targets voluntary and community organisations providing services in the borough, along with feedback from residents. We seek their opinions on our proposals and welcome input from other stakeholders and partners working with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Lewisham.

1.3. The consultation will be open for eight weeks from 31st March to 25th May 2025, the same duration as the consultation for the current programme.

1.4. There are several ways to respond to this consultation:
- Via the online portal (preferred option)
- By post to: Community Development Team,
  3rd Floor, Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, London SE6 4RU
- By attending an online consultation meeting

There will be consultation meetings both in-person and via MS Teams on the following dates, with further sessions to be confirmed:

- 3rd April 2pm - 3.30pm (online)
- 9th April 11am - 1pm, Orchard Gardens Community Centre, SE13
- 22nd April 2pm - 4pm, Bellingham Leisure Centre, SE6 3BT
- 24th April 10am -12pm, Evelyn Community Centre, SE8
- 29th April 10am - 12pm, Forest Hill Library, SE23 3HZ
- 1st May 6pm - 7:30pm (online)

Places at these consultation meetings must be booked in advance by emailing main.grants@lewisham.gov.uk.

1.5. We want to ensure that this consultation is accessible to all organisations and individuals who want to take part. We will therefore ensure that any residents or representatives of the VCS who need support to fill in the responses can do so by speaking directly with a member of our team. Please e-mail us at main.grants@lewisham.gov.uk or call us on 020 8314 7249 and we will get back to you to arrange a suitable time.

1.6. Once the consultation has closed all responses will be considered and a summary of responses collated and included in a report to Mayor and Cabinet in July 2025. This report will seek approval for the criteria and approach for the Main Grants Programme 2026 – 2029, and confirmation that Mayor & Cabinet are happy for us to invite applications for funding

2. Overall timeline for the letting of the Programme

Date	Action
February 2025	Stronger Communities Partnership Board meeting
31st March- 25th May 2025	Consultation
July 2025 (date tbc)	Post- consultation Report to Mayor & Cabinet
14th July 2025 (estimated date)	Launch of Main Grants
14th July – 5th October 2025	Open Call Process (12 weeks)
October – November 2025	Assessments of applications
January 2026	Allocation recommendations to Mayor & Cabinet. Contact organisations to communicate proposed recommendations
April 2026	Delivery commences

3. Current Context

3.1. The Council's Finances

3.1.1. The current financial context for the Council, and the wider public sector, continues to be extremely challenging.

3.1.2. The Local Government Association states that councils face a funding gap of £6.2bn over the next two years, in the context of an estimated £24.5bn cuts and efficiencies in service spending between 2010/11 – 2022/23. It states that if net service spends had grown in line with inflation, wage growth, demographics, and demand drivers that the 2022/23 service spend would have been 42% higher than actual spend.

3.1.3. The Institute for Government estimates that in 2024/25, local authorities in the most deprived decile of the country have seen their CSP fall by 24.4% in real terms compared with 3.1% in the least deprived local authorities. Lewisham ranks 63rd most deprived local authority in the 2019 English Indices of Deprivation.

3.1.4. Further details on the financial context for Councils, presented to Mayor and Cabinet in December 2024, can be found here.

3.1.5. In Lewisham, since 2010, the Council has experienced significant budget reductions due to ongoing underfunding of public services. We are currently facing substantial financial challenges, with an anticipated overspend of £22 million in 2024/2025, even after utilising £9m in one-off measures. Additionally, there is a projected budget shortfall of £30 million for 2025/2026, to bring down this figure there is a comprehensive series of transformation programmes aimed at making services more efficient and reducing costs.

3.2. Data on Lewisham Residents

3.2.1 Data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, the Lewisham Data Observatory and 2021 census identify the following key highlights about Lewisham's population:

- Lewisham has a population of 300,600 and is the 14th largest borough in London by population size and the 6th largest in inner London. Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of Lewisham increased by 8.9%.
- In 2021, Lewisham was among the top 5% most densely populated English local authority areas at the last census.
- 45,855 people were claiming Universal Credit in Lewisham in Jan 2025. For the latest month available (Dec 2024) 28,013 of these claimants were not in employment, whilst 17,105 were in employment.
- There were 13,724 housing benefit recipients in Lewisham in November 2024, 10.15% of all households in Lewisham.
- In 2024/25 Q2, there were a total of 2,729 households in temporary accommodation in Lewisham.
- 14.4% of Lewisham residents are living with a long-term condition that limits their daily activities.
- Lewisham's Black and Minority Ethnic communities are at greater risk of conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and stroke.

3.2.2 The [Trust for London's poverty and living standard indicators](#) show additional information about Lewisham, including:

- In 2022/23, 29% of people in the borough lived in households with an income of less than 60% the UK median after housing costs have been subtracted. This was around the same as the average London Borough.
- 33% of children in the borough lived in households with an income of less than 60% the UK median after housing costs have been subtracted in 2022/23. This was around the same as the average London Borough.
- In Lewisham, 17.3% of residents were estimated to be earning below the Living Wage in 2024. This was around the same as the average London Borough.
- Infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births in Lewisham were around the same as the average London Borough at 2.6 in 2022
- Average rent for a one-bedroom house or flat on the private market was at least 41.5 percent of median pre-tax pay in London in October 2022 to September 2023. This was around the same as the average London Borough.
- Premature death rates per 100,000 in Lewisham were worse than the average London Borough at 381 in 2023
- The proportion of 19-year-olds without a level 2 or level 3 qualification in 2022/23 was 36.8%, worse than the average London Borough

3.3 Cost of Living

3.3.1 Since the last letting of the main grants in 2021 there have been significant changes both nationally and locally. Across the country we have experienced levels of inflation unseen in many years and a 'cost of living crisis' which has caused the level of demand for certain services to increase significantly.

3.3.2 This crisis has disproportionately impacted poorer and more vulnerable residents in Lewisham, and further exacerbated existing inequalities such as those highlighted through the Council's recent BLACHIR review - [Lewisham Council - Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR).](#)

3.3.3 In response to the cost-of-living crisis, a comprehensive cost-of-living programme was initiated in Lewisham, utilising both internal and external resources. The programme has been delivered by council staff, voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners, and local anchor

institutions in collaboration. By leveraging resources, including five iterations of the Household Support Fund, and by strengthening strategic partnerships, the programme has provided critical support to residents in crisis and aimed to prevent further exacerbation of existing issues. The June 2024 "Cost of Living and Household Fund Full Impact Report" outlines the progress achieved to date and details its overall impact.

3.3. Alleviating the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis

Lewisham undertook a range of approaches to alleviate the impacts on residents and funded programmes of work under the following themes:

3.3.1.   Maximising Incomes
- Funding of nearly £200k from Public Health to Citizens Advice Lewisham resulted in £360k income gains for 655 residents.
- Initiatives to increase Pension Credit uptake secured up to £1.6m in annual additional income for 444 households.
- Campaigns to boost Healthy Start benefit participation have led to at least 100 families gaining access.
- Employment support for residents experiencing in-work poverty was bolstered with £75k in funding, aiding over 50 individuals in achieving higher incomes or improved job security.
- The launch of the "Better Off Lewisham" tool has seen over 600 registrations, assisting residents in assessing and improving their benefit uptake.

3.3.2.   Food Poverty and Hunger
- Over £6m allocated to extend Free School Meals (FSM) into holidays, aiding 10,000+ children.
- £3m in support for 17,000+ children in low-income families not meeting FSM eligibility criteria.
- £1.3m distributed through schools for food-related support.
- Investments of £150k for school infrastructure to deliver universal FSM and £200k to extend holiday food programmes.
- £200k directed towards food justice initiatives, including grants for 19 food projects that supported over 12,000 individuals.
- Energy-related support schemes delivered £300k in assistance and coordinated efforts with South London authorities for energy efficiency measures, benefiting 2,500 households.

3.3.3.   Support Through Hardship

- Two small grant schemes (total £175k) enabled 600+ residents to access essential items like appliances and bicycles.
- Cash payments totalling £2.5m provided targeted hardship relief to thousands of households.
- A debt consolidation scheme was funded via the Lewisham and Bromley Credit Union to support residents in resolving complex debt.

3.3.4   Warm Welcomes Programme
- Delivered over two winters, this initiative supported over 18,000 visitors in 2022-23 and 40,000 visits in 2023-24 via free spaces offering warmth, refreshments, and activities. Surveys and case studies highlighted positive impacts on reducing isolation, enhancing connectivity, and improving mental health.

3.4. A Placed-based approach

3.4.1. There is a move within the Council and health and care system to a more place-based/neighbourhood focus. This move recognises the need for residents to access services close to where they live, and aspires to support community activation, community cohesion and develop local pride.

3.4.2. The following are examples of a movement towards locality and neighbourhood approaches:
- Development of Family Hubs
- Integrated Care System Neighbourhoods
- Economic Development Town Centre focus
- Healthy Neighbourhoods and Sustainable Streets
- Focused activity such as the Catford Forum
- Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding
- Adult Community Mental Health pilot

3.4.3. The Lewisham Strategic Partnership (LSP) also recognises the value of joint working between organisations at a neighbourhood/community level and has been exploring the concept of Radical Place Leadership across the system. A core tenet of this joined up approach is building trusting relationships within communities and between organisations so that the Council can delegate authority to residents and organisations in the spaces they feel most comfortable to pick it up. It is not about doing things for people, but more about working with people so they can retain more control over how they access support from systems while maintaining positive outcomes.

3.4.4. This approach is grounded in trusted relationships held in the community, which the VCS is central to supporting. Often, the ability to develop these relationships can be hampered by bureaucratic and, in some cases, paternalistic barriers which mean that services fail to meet the individual needs of residents. This process of systematically shifting institutional power out, and drawing community power in, is a core aspect of what the public sector in Lewisham is keen to explore further in partnership with the VCS.

3.4.5. The voluntary sector is key to the delivery of all 6 of the Southeast London Integrated Care System's (ICS) priorities, and those of the Lewisham Health and Care Partnership and Mental Health Alliance. The ICS has a stated commitment to 'work in partnership to create healthier environments and use the power of our voluntary sector and communities to support healthier living and happier lives'. At times when the system may have funding available, grant making can support the development of the Lewisham voluntary sector to support these aims and to deliver specific initiatives.

3.5. Lewisham's priorities

3.5.1. The key priorities for the different elements of the public sector in Lewisham are set out in the following documents:
- [Lewisham Council Corporate Strategy](#)
- [Lewisham Strategic Partnership](#)
- [Southeast London Integrated Care System](#)
- [Southeast London Integrated Care System Joint Forward Plan](#)

3.6. Our partnership with the VCS

3.6.1. A proposal to extend the Main Grants Programme by 1 year to March 2026 was agreed at M&C on 13th March 2024. A cut of £130,000 was agreed to become effective from 1 April 2025 with further reductions of £217,000, agreed in November 2024, from 1 April 2026. This reduces the overall programme value to £2,112, 308. While this is a 14% reduction to the Main Grants Fund in cash terms, it represents a reduction of approximately 30% in real terms when factoring in inflation since 2021.

3.6.2. Notwithstanding these reductions it is important to remember that the Council and the wider health and care system continue to invest in the voluntary sector in numerous and significant ways beyond the main grants programme. In 2024/25 alone this funding exceeded £15,000,000 for adult services to deliver services as diverse as mental health advocacy and support for rough sleepers.

3.6.3. We are consulting on the best use of the Main Grants funding in this context; of high levels of need (particularly in relation to financial pressures), an increased focus on the delivery of services at a local level, and an overall reduction in resources. The consultation is designed to ensure that the priorities we set for the next round of funding recognise the unique strengths of grant making and the power of the sector to mobilise local passions and resources.

4. The current Main Grants Programme

4.1. The priorities for the current programme were heavily informed by review of all the available evidence on the impact of COVID and the needs of the borough during the recovery phase. The review was followed by a consultation with the sector in early summer 2021.

The review resulted in three new priorities in addition to an Arts and Culture fund:

An economically sound future
- Borough-wide Advice Services
- Digital Access for All

A healthy and well future
- Coordinated Social Prescribing
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing

A future we all have a part in
- BAME Infrastructure
- Volunteer Brokerage
- Community Directory
- Community Fundraisers

4.2. The Arts and Culture Fund was closely aligned with the London Borough of Culture (LBoC) Programme. The two themes within this funding were *Investing in Cultural Infrastructure* and *Investing in Diversity.*

4.3. Small partnership grants of £10,000 were available to organisations who could demonstrate commitment to working in partnership with the Council. These grants will end on 31 March 2025.

4.4. Our approach to funding the sector considered several factors and with endless resources, we would support both a robust infrastructure and provide grant funding to the voluntary and community organisations working with our most vulnerable communities. With significant reductions in the funding available we were faced with a choice between:

- Spreading grants across a range of themes and the many (800+) valuable, charitable organisations in our borough
- Creating a network and infrastructure that enables our VCS to survive and thrive beyond the period of recovery from Covid and financial hardship.

4.5. We also knew that if Lewisham's VCS was to cope with ever-diminishing funds direct from the Council, they needed to increase their ability to access the full range of funding from other sources.

4.6. Lewisham organisations raised approximately £3,691,201 from external funds through the pandemic to March 2021. But, compared to other London boroughs with similar demographics and levels of need, this figure was comparatively low.

4.7. For the reasons identified above, we invested in infrastructure and support that would enable our VCS to be the independent, strong advocate of our residents that it was set up to be, with a legacy that lasts beyond the funding we can provide.

4.8. Fifty-one grants were awarded in total:
- 3 x Projects under An Economically Sound future inc. Advice front door
- 17 x projects under A Healthy and Well Future inc. Social Prescribing front door
- 7 x projects under A Future We All Have a Part including 3 x community fundraisers namely: Equalities, Cold Spots and Arts/Sports
- 13 x partnership grants
- 11x projects funded through the Arts and Culture Fund

5. What have we have learnt from the current programme?

5.1. To evaluate the programme overall, a monitoring and evaluation framework was developed based on a Theory of Change encompassing the key strands of the programme.

5.2. An annual impact review has been conducted each year since the programme delivery commenced in 2022. The framework has enabled us to regularise the data as far as possible and identify what comparable data can be provided across all organisations, by theme, size and type of grant.

5.3. Details of the findings are summarised in Appendix 1.

5.4. Positive Impacts

5.4.1   Despite the many challenges faced by VCSOs because of the funding environment and the cost-of-living crisis, the sector remains resilient and motivated to work together, providing high-quality services to Lewisham residents and communities. Positive impacts include increases in the following areas:

- Beneficiaries due to the accessibility of local organisations
- Partnerships created and more enthusiasm to collaborate.
- Community support and assistance
- Numbers of volunteers in some projects
- Support between Lewisham's voluntary organisations, community projects, and initiatives – networking, sharing resources, venues, knowledge and skills
- Support from larger organisations to smaller organisations
- Inclusion and engagement

Additional benefits include:

- Good working relationships with the council and officers
- Greater awareness of the needs and rights of older people as well as of the emotional, well-being, and health risks associated with loneliness and isolation.
- Greater awareness around dementia and provision of services for the quality of life of people living with dementia
- Greater understanding and acceptance neurodiversity and mental health

5.5. Sector Challenges

5.5.1. However, the VCS has faced significant challenges throughout the period of the grant programme, including:

- Increasing demand across all programmes/projects due to cost of living, increased need across all social strata
- Increased complexity of need and higher levels of casework
- Highly competitive funding environment – many funders are extremely oversubscribed with less funding available for core costs
- A more focused and targeted funding landscape, making it difficult for place-based and more generally focused services to raise funds
- Financial pressures to meet increasing core costs: utilities, rent, and staffing costs & increased NI employers contribution from 1 April 2025
- Recruitment & retention: highly competitive to recruit & retain quality, skilled staff – particularly in some sectors like advice and fundraising.

- Being able to identify and provide place-based services in areas of greatest need – there is less capacity for delivering services flexibly across a range of settings
- Venues: identifying venues, increasing rental costs, lease length, and the need for flexibility due to new models of working including working from home.

5.6. Added Value Brought in by the Sector

5.6.1. The first three years of the programme have shown Voluntary and Community Sector organisations add value by continuing to deliver core services and flexing to respond to the needs of communities during the 'cost-of-living crisis'. VCS organisations deliver at relatively low cost and are often supported by local volunteers to enable their organisations to run.

5.6.2. Additionally, the sector is trusted, flexible, knowledgeable, and reactive to the needs of its client base. Providing specialist support either hyper locally, locally or across the borough, they are often the link between individuals and statutory services, becoming the trusted 'go to' when people face difficulties or in need of support.

5.6.3. The VCS in Lewisham generate funds to deliver a myriad of services across the borough; everything from providing support with loneliness, managing mental health and well-being, developing new or increased digital skills to provide assistance to claim benefits. In 2022-2024 main grant funded organisations generated additional income of almost £14 million. 2,362 volunteers have supported main grant funded organisations, offering 232,295 volunteer hours at a financial cost benefit of nearly £3 million.

5.6.4. During this period almost £25 million has been secured for Lewisham residents by Citizens Advice Lewisham [source: Casebook national data system].

5.6.5. The Community Fundraiser programme supports smaller organisations to increase their knowledge, confidence and ability to apply for external funding and organisations are becoming more robust and sustainable.

6. Key considerations for setting priorities

6.1. The insight from our existing programme shows that:
- Cost of living and financial hardship have an ongoing impact on residents

- There is increasing demand for advice and support that is more complex – on average advice telephone calls take 20% longer than they did due to the level of complexity of need
- There is ongoing need for preventative services on health and well-being that support residents to remain well and be engaged in their communities, and reduces the need for more intensive Adult Social Care and Health services
- The Community Fundraiser programme shows the value of capacity building and support to bring in external income
- There is ongoing need for support of Black-led organisations to develop and thrive but work to date proves the benefit of supporting specific communities/types of services directly
- There is often a disconnect between the 'funded' VCS and the wide variety of activity that happens at a local level through organisations such as Churches or less formal voluntary groups
- Arts and Culture funding needs to be more closely aligned to the wider programme and Cultural Strategy action plan
- There is a need for capacity building and advocacy for provision both geographically (i.e. in areas with limited provision overall) or for certain groups (i.e. people or groups of people who needs are not met well locally)

6.2. Beyond this, there are calls from Lewisham's Integrated Neighbourhood Model for the VCS to be more effectively embedded with their teams to support and mobilise residents at local level.

6.3. However, this can be affected by the fact that some areas of the borough have strong VCS presence and infrastructure, enabling more community activism and engagement and the ability to leverage in external resources and funds whereas other areas (such as the south of the borough) have relatively lower levels of infrastructure.

6.4. It is likely that Council funds will continue to decrease over the next few years. In this context, there is a question as to whether the Main Grants programme needs to focus on diminishing frontline services or build the capacity of the VCS by funding infrastructure.

6.5. As the Assemblies Programme comes to an end in April 2025, what capacity should we build in local areas for communities to lead?

7. Proposals for Main Grants Programme 2026-29

7.1. Overall, there are two key questions which form the basis of this consultation.

7.2. Firstly, we are seeking views on our continued investment in advice services.

7.3. In the previous two rounds of the programme, we have invested a significant proportion of the grant pot (25%) to funding advice services. In this round we are proposing to invest a similar proportion to advice services. This is because we believe advice services offer the most effective support for the increasing number of people facing financial hardship and are able to offer this support at scale (supporting approx. 20-25k residents per year).

7.4. In this round, we will be removing advice services from the main grants programme and moving it to a direct commissioning model. This is in recognition of both the scale and complexity of these services and the need to ensure that they are fully integrated within wider Council services.

7.5. Our view is that grant making works best when the programme offers flexibility in how the sector meets the challenges we face, allowing organisations to develop proposals that draw on their strengths and knowledge of the local community services. We also believe it works best when services can:
- Be developed and led directly by the sector,
- Be responsive to hyper local needs,
- Nurture local strengths
- Foster social connections,
- Encourage working in collaboration with other local organisations.

7.6. We also want our approach to grant-making to enable co-design of services with our VCS partners, based on needs identified over time. The Stronger Communities Partnership Board has been a good example of a place where collaboration and cross-sector working has enabled the development and resourcing of services.

7.7. Advice services on the other hand have been designed over the last 10 years to respond to the needs of residents facing financial challenges, offering front door telephone advice, casework and outreach in various settings designed to reach those most in need, who are unlikely to access front-door services. We know that the cost-of-living crisis will continue and already have evidence nationally and locally that people previously unaffected by this crisis are now impacted by it. As funders we recognise that we need to specify this service very clearly in order to meet the ongoing needs of residents. We therefore propose to move advice services to a commissioned rather than grant-funded service. But we want to hear from you about the continued level of investment in advice as our key solution to supporting those in financial hardship and how we might balance the specification of these services between face to face and telephone/on-line provision.

7.8. The second key question relates to whether the programme continues to attempt to provide a network of direct services across the borough as well as supporting links into statutory services and specific infrastructure projects or moves more explicitly towards focusing on local networks and capacity building to ensure local needs are met aligning the grants to the wider development of ICS Neighbourhoods, Family Hubs etc.

7.9. As such the below consultation is split into two sections:
- Advice
- Service delivery and Infrastructure

8. Consultation

- About You

- Basic information – demographics

- Who do you work for – sector, work area, job title

- Are you completing personally or on behalf of your org

8.1. Advice

8.1.1. Due to the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis on residents, we believe that advice services delivered at scale and supporting those most in need are essential. We propose to procure rather than grant fund advice service moving forward, to define tighter specifications in relation to advice. These will include:
- The provision of legal advice services is fully customer-focused and achieves value for money from the resources available
- Services respond flexibly to the multiple and complex legal advice needs of people who live, work or study in the borough
- Delivery of services is flexible to ensure increased choice in the way in which clients access services – encompassing direct access, partner referrals, and access and support through digital channels
- Clients are empowered to address their own advice needs through utilising digital technologies
- Services are delivered comprehensively and innovatively across the borough, using outreach as required, so that all geographies and groups are served
- Services are delivered in a joined-up way ensuring effective cross-referral routes support residents with multiple needs.

- Provision of a website and webchat advice and information services
- Provision of drop-in and face to face hub services, with outreach work to be integrated into the health hubs to generate holistic responses for residents with improved outcomes.

8.1.2. The Council proposes to fund a mixture of generalist, specialist and client specific legal advice services. Organisations offering basic advice and casework will require or need to be working towards the appropriate Advice Quality Standard (AQS) Advice or Advice and Casework accreditation. Organisations offering more specialist advice, casework and representation will need to employ supervisors and caseworkers who are appropriately qualified and who individually meet the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) for their area of competence. Where appropriate, organisations may also require the Lexcel quality mark or be registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

8.1.3. We propose that organisations will be required to deliver advice in the following priority areas:
- Welfare rights
- Debt and money advice (including multiple debts and arrears)
- Housing advice (including homelessness, repairs, possession proceedings and tenancy issues)
- Immigration, compliant at OISC Level 1 (Basic Advice)
- Employment advice
- Energy and consumer advice

8.1.4. The current service model is built on an initial triage service provided over the telephone. This was developed to ensure equality of access for those who might struggle to travel to face-to-face appointments or physically queue to be seen. It also allows the service to effectively triage those seeking support and prioritise face to face appointments for those that really need them. However, we are aware that there have been increasing calls for more initial face to face services to be available. We are keen to hear your views on this.

8.1.5. Currently nearly 25% of the main grants funding is allocated to this priority. Due to the potential scale of need, the major impact of financial insecurity on individuals, and the associated impact of financial hardship on existing inequality, we propose that this proportion of funding would be similar in the new grants programme.

8.2. Advice Questions

1. Do you agree that Advice services offer the best solution to support the majority of residents facing financial hardship? YES/NO
2. If no, please tell us why not – free text
3. Do you agree with the areas of advice that we have highlighted as priorities – yes/no
4. If no, please tell us why not – free text
5. Please rank these areas in order of importance
   - Welfare rights
   - Debt and money advice (including multiple debts and arrears)
   - Housing advice (including homelessness, repairs, possession proceedings and tenancy issues)
   - Immigration, compliant at OISC Level 1 (Basic Advice)
   - Employment advice
6. Please tell us why you've given this ranking – free text
7. Do you agree that we need to, as a minimum, retain the proportion of funding going to advice services YES/NO
8. If no – please explain your reasons – free text
9. Do you agree with the current model of telephone triage with follow up appointments where necessary?
10. If not, why not – free text
11. Given the limited resources available and that demand is always likely to exceed the supply of advice services please let us know your preferred model for the delivery of advice services – free text.

8.3. Service Delivery and Infrastructure

8.3.1.   In this area we are consulting on two options:
   A. Maintaining the current priorities, offering similar project and service delivery grants, and continuing to fund specific infrastructure projects that have been successful in the last round
   B. Moving to a focus on integration with neighbourhood teams, locality-based infrastructure and coordination including local capacity building

8.4. A - Maintaining current priorities

8.4.1. This option recognises the valuable services delivered by our VCS and provides preventative services for our most vulnerable residents. Our impact reports show cases the excellent work of our funded organisations and the case studies capture the important impact of this work on improving people's lives.

8.4.2. This option proposes funding based on the successes of the current programme, offering continuing but reduced funding for services delivering against the same criteria as in the last round. This also proposes to continue to fund those infrastructure programmes that we have assessed as meeting an ongoing need. This option therefore includes:

- Social Prescribing
- Community Fundraisers
- Voice and Representation of the VCS
- Digital Inclusion support
- Black-led Infrastructure Programme
- Grants to support Health and well-being
- Arts and culture grants with a closer alignment to the cultural strategy

8.4.3. Due to the cut to the budget of approximately 14% (30% in real terms), there will be less funding available to invest in grants for service delivery.

8.5. B - Place-based and infrastructure funding model

8.5.1. In this option we propose moving to a focus on integration with neighbourhood teams, locality-based infrastructure and coordination including local capacity building.

8.5.2. This option recognises that funding frontline services with ever-diminishing Council resources is not a sustainable solution. Therefore, it is based on the principle of building capacity within local areas or across particular types of service to have a longer-term impact through a stronger and more integrated VCS.

8.5.3. This option would seek to align our VCS more closely to the place-based approach, and specifically the four Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) – see appendix 2 for further details on the neighbourhoods.

8.5.4. We recognise that the VCS brings invaluable expertise, local knowledge, and community trust, making them essential partners in delivering person-centred, proactive, and preventative care. Their involvement will help bridge gaps between statutory services and the communities they serve, ensuring support is accessible, culturally competent, and tailored to residents' diverse needs. By embedding the VCS within the INT model, we can foster stronger collaboration, enhance service reach, and create a truly integrated system that empowers individuals and communities to thrive.

8.5.5. The grant funded provision within each neighbourhood would seek to ensure that local community assets and wider support networks and services are mobilised in order to provide:

- One-to-one support to navigate health and social care challenges and prevent the escalation of issues.
- Promoting warmer, safer homes.
- Assisting residents in attending appointments and remaining engaged with their local community.
- Connection for residents into community resources and support networks to reduce social isolation and promote community cohesion.
- Encouragement and facilitation to participation in health and wellbeing activities.
- Benefits advice and hands-on support with form-filling and applications.
- Support to multidisciplinary teams to develop holistic and person-centred support plans.
- Advocacy on the need for specialist services and providing fundraising support.
- Support to local residents or groups who want to establish their own group or organisation
- Representing the area and advocating for action in the locality

8.5.6. In delivering these services the grants support the neighbourhood teams in meeting the priorities of the Better Care Fund, see appendix 3. Some of this may be delivered directly but others will be developed through the establishment of strong local networks bringing in commissioned services e.g. Lewisham Intensive Housing Advice & Support Service (IHASS), local charities or other voluntary groups such as parks' friends groups or other important institutions in the local area such as churches, libraries, sports clubs etc.

8.5.7. Beyond this the grants would aim to support the provision of support to enable the wider network of organisations to develop their structures, strengthen their volunteer base, access funding, link to key statutory partners and services, collaborate with others and build their capacity to deliver services at local level. These grants would also support work with individuals and resident organisations to support local activism and place-based initiatives.

8.5.8. It could be that grants are awarded to single organisations or consortiums that work together closely to deliver the different aspects of the work, but it is vital that they operate as a coherent whole and that there is a consistent

and trusted presence within the INT structure. Likewise, each neighbourhood could be served by separate organisations/groups or there could be some formal infrastructure linking them – we are keen to hear views on both aspects of the proposal.

8.5.9. We recognise there is likely to continue to be a need for borough-wide infrastructure and capacity building services. Based on the review of the currently programme and the current provision elements which might be deliver boroughwide include:
- Fundraising
- Support for the Black led VCS
- Digital inclusion
- Capacity building for Arts and Sports organisations
- Capacity building for equalities groups e.g. services for people with learning disabilities or the LGBTQ+ community
- Single point of contact for residents to find out about services

8.5.10　Capacity building in this context can be for voice and representation of specific communities, as well as capacity building development for organisations working with specific communities. In both cases, we would need funded organisations to work with us attending strategic boards and helping us bring the sector together for collaboration and co-design.

We recognise that the Arts and Culture sector have been funded in the last round through separate criteria and not through the 3 criteria of the Main Grants programme. In this round we see Arts and Culture organisations delivering against the same criteria as the rest of the VCS. We want Arts and Culture organisations to provide capacity building support to the sector and undertake work to build infrastructure and represent the arts and culture sector as a whole. This can include support for freelancers as well as smaller cultural organisations.

This can also include specific communities of interest within the sector. All proposed work must be within the framework of the Cultural Strategy Action plan, as we want to ensure that all our funded organisations are proactively engaged in driving forward Lewisham's Cultural Strategy.

8.5.11 We are keen to hear views on which elements of the above might best be done within a neighbourhood model or at a borough wide level as at present.

8.5.12 Finally, it is important to re-iterate that we are undertaking this consultation with significantly lower levels of funding than the last time the programme was

let. As such, difficult choices are inevitable, regardless of the outcome of the consultation. We urge you to respond with this in mind with a clear indication of what you think we should prioritise and why, rather than simply highlighting the benefits of all, or specific, services or suggesting the status quo. If advocating for a specific service or model, please try to ensure it is clear why you believe this to be more important than other possible approaches or services. All responses will be treated with strict confidence.

8.6   Service delivery and Infrastructure: Questions

1. In the context of 30% real terms cut to the grants programme which of the two options do you favour:
    - Maintaining the current priorities, offering similar project and service delivery grants, and continuing to fund specific infrastructure projects that have been successful in the last round
    - Moving to a focus on integration with neighbourhood teams, locality-based infrastructure and coordination including local capacity building
2. Please explain your choice – free text
3. Regardless of the option you prefer please rank these priorities in order:
    - Social Prescribing
    - Community Fundraisers
    - Voice and Representation of the VCS
    - Digital Inclusion support
    - Black-led Infrastructure Programme
    - Grants to support Health and well-being
    - Arts and culture grants with a closer alignment to the cultural strategy
4. Please tell us why you've given this ranking – free text
5. When considering Option 2 please rank these deliverables in the order in which you feel the sector is best able to deliver them:
    - One-to-one support to navigate health and social care challenges
    - Promoting warmer, safer homes
    - Assisting residents in attending appointments and remaining engaged with their local community
    - Connection for residents into community resources and support networks to reduce social isolation
    - Encouragement and facilitation to participation in health and wellbeing activities
    - Support to local residents or groups who want to establish their own group or organisation
    - Representing the area and advocating for action in the locality
    - Advocacy on the need for specialist services and providing fundraising support
    - Benefits advice and hands-on support with form-filling and applications.

- Housing-related support
- Support to multidisciplinary teams to develop holistic and person-centred support plans

6. Please tell us why you've given this ranking – free text
7. In Option 2, we propose that the Arts and Culture sector is given grants under the same infrastructure priorities outlined for the whole VCS, rather than have a separate Arts and Culture grant programme. Do you agree with this proposal?
8. Please explain your answer to the above – free text
9. Do you feel the sector as a whole is ready to move to a more 'place based' model – yes/no/in some areas
10. Please explain your answer to the above – free text
11. Please rank these services in order of priority:
    - Fundraising
    - Support for the Black led VCS
    - Digital inclusion
    - Capacity building for Arts and Sports organisations
    - Capacity building for equalities groups e.g. services for people with learning disabilities or the LGBTQ+ community
    - Single point of contact for residents to find out about services
12. Please tell us why you've given this ranking – free text
13. Regardless which option you prefer, do you think the following services would be best delivered at borough-wide or at local, neighbourhood level?
    - Fundraising
    - Support for the Black led VCS
    - Digital inclusion
    - Capacity building for Arts and Sports organisations
    - Capacity building for equalities groups e.g. services for people with learning disabilities or the LGBTQ+ community
    - Single point of contact for residents to find out about services
14. Please explain your answer to the above question – free text
15. Is there anything else that you feel we should be considering as part of this consultation? Free text.

Appendix 1: Highlights of Main Grants Programme Impact Years 1 & 2

An annual impact review has been conducted each year since the main grant programme delivery commenced in 2022. The framework has enabled us to regularise the data as far as possible and identify what comparable data can be provided across all organisations, by theme, size and type of grant.

The data collected includes:

- Number of clients accessing services
- Beneficiary by ward
- Number of volunteers
- Number of volunteer hours
- Number of funding applications submitted
- Income generated – funds raised
- Clients on mailing lists
- Clients accessing websites
- Added value brought in
- Positive experiences
- Sector challenged

The data that has been collated is presented across several types of grants including:

- Advice Services
- Social Prescribing
- Community Fundraisers
- Black Infrastructure Programme
- Partnership grants

Highlights of Year 2 annual impact findings

- Total number of unique individuals accessing services: 72,239

- Total number accessing websites: 298,000

- Total number on mailing lists: 12,324

- Total number of volunteers: 1290

- Total number of volunteer hours: 11,057

- Equivalent wages for volunteers: £1,894,352

- Total income generated: £5,379.160

Category	Number
Total number of unique individuals accessing services	72,239
Total number accessing websites	298,000
Total number on mailing lists	12,324
Total number of volunteers	1,290
Total number of volunteer hours	11,057
Equivalent wages for volunteers	£1,894,352
Total income generated	£5,379.160

Theme	Unique Individuals
Healthy and well future	39,397
An economically sound future	20,827
A future we all have a part in	716
Partnership Grants	11,299

Sub Theme	Clients Accessing services
Physical	29,258
Borough wide	18,748
Partnership Grants	11,299
Connecting People	6,438
A coordinated social	3,701
Equalities	1,229
Digital Inclusion	850
Community Directory	600
Volunteer Brokerage	60
Building strong communities	56

Year 1 to Year 2 Delivery Comparison

The number of unique beneficiaries accessing funded services increased from 39,359 in year 1 to 72,239 in year 2. This rise correlates with feedback about high demand and more complex cases needing longer-term interventions and more intensive casework.

Volunteer numbers increased from 1,072 in year 1 to 1,290 in year 2, with volunteer hours rising by over 60%, from 88,238 to 144,057.

Income generated decreased from £8,453,832 in year 1 to £5,379.160 in year 2, this is due to a number of factors. Many organisations have found it more difficult to generate income in 2023-2024 due to several factors; post covid factor – funding available has now reduced or disappeared. The competition for funding is high, with most funders oversubscribed by over 600 per cent. Additionally, funders have ring-fenced funding for specific cohorts, leaving less available for core costs amongst other factors.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Number of beneficiaries	39,359	72,239	111,598
Number of volunteers	1072	1290	2362
Number of volunteer hours	88,238	144,057	232,295
Volunteer equivalent salary	£1,054,444 [11.95] – London Living wage	£1,894,349.53 £13.15 - London Living wage	£2,948,793.53
Total income generated	£8,453,832	£4,810,408.48	£13.832,992
Income generated for main grant project	£3,874,258	£2,125,390	£5,999,648
Income generated for Organisation	£4,579,574	£2,685,018.48	£7,264,592.48

Appendix 2 - South-East London Integrated Care System – Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) are designed to meet the holistic needs of their local population, teams based in the neighbourhood are drawn from a range of partners across the community. INTs are a way of working together as professionals and as a local community to ensure people get the right care, at the right time, in the right place, from the right people, first time and to tackle health inequalities.

By using our local data and insights and working together more closely will allow us both to identify when people need our help at the earliest point, and then to know who on the team to contact to agencies the right support.

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams:
- are organised around population health needs.
- have the right skills in the right places.
- routinely measure impact.
- help partners with their own priorities.
- avoid unwarranted variation.
- support residents to exercise their power and agency
- are a way of working and a model of care, and not a programme of discrete projects.
- Increase the proportion of resources used to support people to stay well for longer.
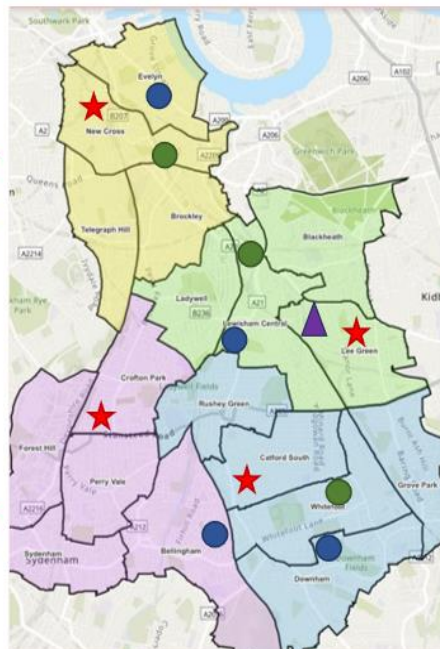- create capacity which is reinvested to scale the model sustainably

South East London
Integrated Care System

Neighbourhood 1
- INT for Health & Care Support (location TBC) ★
- Waldron Health Centre (inc. Community Wellbeing Space) ●
- Deptford Family Hub ●

Neighbourhood 2
- INT for Health & Care Support (location TBC) ★
- Lewisham Shopping Centre CommUNITY Space ●
- Lewisham Centre for Children and Young People (Kaleidoscope) ●
- Mental health pilot ▲

Neighbourhood 3
- INT for Health & Care Support (location TBC) ★
- Goldsmiths Community Centre (inc. Appletree Community Café) ●
- Downham Family Hub ●

Neighbourhood 4
- INT for Health & Care Support (location TBC) ★
- Bellingham Family Hub ●

Appendix 3 - Key Areas for BCF Investment:

- Early Intervention and Prevention Services
- Falls Prevention Programs – Community-based exercise and home safety assessments to reduce falls, particularly among the elderly.
- Frailty Pathways – Proactive identification and management of frailty to prevent deterioration and emergency admissions.
- Social Prescribing – Linking individuals with non-medical support, such as community groups and lifestyle programs, to address social determinants of health.
- Integrated Community Care & Support
- Community-Based MDTs (Multidisciplinary Teams) – Strengthening integrated working between health, social care and voluntary sector partners
- Care Navigation and Coordination – Supporting individuals with complex needs to access appropriate services before reaching crisis point.