



## **Lewes District Food Partnership Community Small Grants Programme & Charter Notes for Applicants**

As part of the Crisis & Resilience Fund, East Sussex County Council is funding Lewes District Food Partnership to run a Small Grants programme for projects that improve **access to food**, as well as helping to build **financial resilience**. Grants of up to **£1,500** will be available to projects operating within Lewes District.

**The deadline for applications is 11<sup>th</sup> December 2026.**

In order to apply for a small grant you must:

- Be a not-for-profit organisation
- Have a governing body with at least three people who are unrelated and who are volunteers. (For social enterprises, CICs and Companies Limited by Guarantee, the majority must not be paid.)
- Provide support/activities that benefit communities in Lewes District
- Complete funded activities by 31st March 2027

Your organisation does not have to be a charity but it does need to have:

- A bank account in your organisation's name with at least two unrelated signatories (not related by birth, marriage, relationship or living at the same address)
- A constitution or governing document with a minimum of three trustees or committee members, and at least two who are unrelated
- Accounts or records of expenditure
- Relevant policies in place (e.g equal opportunities, safeguarding, health and safety)

If you are unsure about your eligibility, please contact [info@lewesdistrictfoodpartnership.org](mailto:info@lewesdistrictfoodpartnership.org)



## Background

Lewes District Food Partnership have been partnering with Church Action on Poverty, Fitzjohns Community Food and Malling Foodbank for the past two years on a project called **Pinch Points**, funded by the Lloyds Foundation. This project brings together people from across Lewes District with lived experience of poverty, to help influence local policy and decision makers around what good support services look like and how they should be designed to have the maximum impact for those accessing them.

As part of Lewes District Food Partnership's commitment to having the voice of lived experience at the heart of our work, we wanted to take the opportunity to have a grants programme that is co-designed with 'experts by experience'. We worked with participants of

Pinch Points to co-design the funding priorities for this Small Grants programme and a Community Grants charter for potential applicants, to help ensure funding is directed where it's most needed.

## Our aims:

- To identify types of projects that best reflect the priorities identified by our 'experts by experience' through the Pinch Points project.
- To reflect on how funding should be prioritised in order to have maximum impact and target areas and groups identified by participants as being underserved currently.
- Develop a Community Grants Charter that reflects the above, for applicants to sign up to, in order to be considered for funding.

## Pinch Points Workshops

As part of the Pinch Points project, a number of workshops have been held in order to identify what good support services look like, focusing particularly on community food projects and advice services. As part of this work, participants have identified the following key priorities for how effective local food projects should operate:

- Provide **social connection** and a sense of **belonging**
- Promote ways to improve **mental health** and **wellbeing**
- Be a **reliable** and **welcoming** place to go



- Embed **advice, information & navigation** to wider services - no wrong doors
- **Prevention** and **support**, rather than crisis focused

### **What do each of these priorities look like in practice?**

We are looking for applicants to demonstrate how they will embed these principles in their projects. Below is intended to be guidance for how this might be achieved, rather than an exhaustive list. You do not need to show that you are doing all of the below, but use this guide to help show how your priorities align with ours.

#### **Provide social connection and a sense of belonging**

What this might look like in practice:

- Ensuring people feel a sense of place, inclusion, and belonging within their local environment, not just as service users but as part of a community.
- Creating welcoming spaces where people can take part in shared social activities alongside food, rather than food provision being the only focus.
- Offering a mix of fun, informal and meaningful activities, for example community meals, environmental or nature-based activities, and hands-on learning experiences, such as creative arts.
- Providing opportunities for local outings and shared experiences, for example accessible trips or community-led excursions.
- Creating clear ways for people to share feedback and shape services, so their views are listened to and visibly influence how activities and support are designed.

#### **Promote ways to improve mental health & wellbeing**

What this might look like in practice:

- Providing access to someone to talk to when needed, who can listen but is also able to offer guidance or signposting. This could be trained staff, volunteers, or trusted community members.
- Creating safe, supportive spaces where people feel able to speak up, share concerns, and be heard without judgement.
- Ensuring there are opportunities for group conversation and peer support, where people can talk together, share experiences, and build mutual understanding.



- Embedding wellbeing support, combined with practical information and shared learning in an accessible, community setting.
- Running wellbeing-focused activities that help people to feel supported with mental health, connection and resilience. This could include things like shared growing spaces, cooking classes, community meals or trips.

### **Be a reliable and welcoming place to go**

What this might look like in practice:

- Designing services so there are minimal barriers to access, including not requiring a referral, ensuring people can come directly when they need support and that they can access for as long as they need to.
- Creating a warm, welcoming atmosphere, including simple comforts such as tea, coffee and biscuits, so people feel welcomed and valued when they arrive.
- Providing a consistent, dependable offer that people can rely on, including clear and transparent opening times and expectations, so people know when and how they can access support.
- Supporting people to feel comfortable staying and engaging socially, while also being sensitive to those who may initially find it difficult to attend or remain.
- Ensuring the space is inclusive, respectful, and welcoming to all, helping people feel safe, comfortable, and able to participate at their own pace.

### **Embed advice, information & navigation to wider services**

What this might look like in practice:

- Helping people maximise their income by improving access to benefits, grants, debt advice, energy support, employment opportunities, and other financial wellbeing services.
- Ensuring there is a “no wrong door” approach, where anyone can ask for help and be supported directly or safely referred on without barriers or confusion.
- Supporting people to navigate complex systems, including benefits, healthcare, and other statutory services, with trusted guidance and step-by-step help.
- Providing clear, accessible advice and guidance on a wide range of issues and helping people find the right information and connect to the right services quickly, reducing stress and confusion and improving confidence in seeking support.



- Providing accessible and inclusive support for neurodiverse individuals, including trained advisers and adapted communication approaches to meet different needs or signposting to the right support.
- Ensuring people feel listened to and taken seriously, with time and space to explain their situation and receive thoughtful, respectful responses.

### **Prevention and support, rather than crisis focused**

What this might look like in practice:

- Prioritising consistent, preventative support over one-off crisis responses, helping people build stability, confidence, and independence gradually.
- Focusing on consistent access to food, advice, wellbeing activities, and community connection.
- Supporting people to address financial difficulties early through access to advice, budgeting support, income maximisation services, and trusted referral pathways, helping prevent future hardship and crisis.
- Using shared activities, social opportunities, and food to reduce isolation and strengthen social networks, helping people feel more supported in everyday life.
- Embedding practical advice and navigation to wider services (money, benefits, health, housing, and local organisations), so people can address issues early and avoid escalation.
- Designing services so people feel known, listened to, and supported over time, rather than only being seen when they are in urgent need.

### **Types of projects we would like to fund**

As this grants programme is funded by the Crisis and Resilience Fund, we are looking for projects that combine **access to healthy, affordable food**, whilst building **financial resilience**. This may include support with budgeting, income maximisation, benefits access, debt advice, digital inclusion, fuel poverty, employment support, or practical help to access wider services that improve long-term financial wellbeing.



Examples of projects we would like to support include:

- Projects that combine food support with advice, budgeting, financial capability, employability support, income maximisation, or referral pathways to specialist services.
- Community cafés, breakfast clubs, community meals, and other welcoming spaces that provide access to healthy, affordable food whilst providing access to signposting, advice and wider services that can build financial resilience.
- Intergenerational and cross-cultural projects that use food as a way of bringing communities together by sharing knowledge and skills.
- Outdoor and nature-based activities, including community growing initiatives that improve access to healthy food whilst developing practical skills, improving wellbeing, and building community resilience.
- Cooking, food skills, budgeting, meal planning, and practical learning opportunities that help people access, prepare, and make the most of healthy, affordable food, whilst helping to reduce food waste.
- After-school, holiday, and family-focused activities that improve access to healthy food whilst providing opportunities for learning, connection, confidence-building, and practical support for children, young people, and families.

Participants also highlighted several groups who may be underserved by existing provision. We therefore particularly welcome applications that demonstrate how they will engage and support the following groups:

- households experiencing financial hardship or at risk of poverty
- people affected by welfare changes, insecure employment or rising living costs
- neurodiverse children and adults
- older people
- people experiencing loneliness or bereavement
- people suffering with mental health challenges, including anxiety and PTSD
- minoritised ethnic groups and multicultural communities
- those with specific dietary needs or diet related illnesses

### **What outcomes are we looking for?**

Funded projects will be expected to contribute to one or more of the following outcomes in line with the Crisis and Resilience Fund guidance:



- Improved access to healthy and affordable food.
- Increased financial resilience and household stability.
- Increased access to advice, information and support services.
- Improved income maximisation through benefits, grants or other support.
- Increased confidence in managing food and household budgets.
- Reduced social isolation and improved community connection.
- Improved health, wellbeing and resilience.
- Increased awareness of, and engagement with, wider community services.

Applicants should explain which outcomes they expect their project to contribute towards and how they will measure this.

### **What can't we fund?**

- Organisations or activities which don't benefit communities in Lewes District
- Organisations that discriminate unlawfully under the provisions set out by the Equalities Act 2010
- Organisations where the service provided is used as a vehicle or means to promote religious beliefs
- Applications from organisations that are part of central, local or regional government
- Political activities
- Small contributions to major capital appeals or campaigns
- Grants which will be used to make awards to a third party
- Projects which only benefit animals
- Organisations who have not returned monitoring from previous grant awards
- Retrospective funding for activities or projects that have already taken place

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Successful applicants will be required to provide a short end-of-project report outlining how funding was spent and the outcomes achieved. Further guidance on monitoring requirements will be provided to successful applicants and will include information relating to food access, financial resilience, advice and support, community connection and wellbeing.



## Community Grants Charter

This Charter has been co-designed with people with lived experience through the Pinch Points project. By applying to the Lewes District Food Partnership Community Small Grants Programme, we agree to deliver projects that are welcoming, respectful, and shaped by the people who use them.

### We will:

#### ☒ Be welcoming and inclusive

We will create spaces where everyone is welcome and are greeted and supported to feel comfortable and included from the moment they arrive.

#### ☒ Offer choice and dignity

We will provide food and activities that respect individual needs, and ensure people can take part in ways that work for them.

#### ☒ Create safe, trusting environments

We will prioritise wellbeing, confidentiality, and respectful, non-judgemental support.

#### ☒ Listen and involve people

We will involve people in shaping and improving services, and use feedback to guide how we work.

#### ☒ Be open and accountable

We will be clear, honest, and transparent about what we do and how we do it.

#### ☒ Support and train our teams

We will ensure staff and volunteers are well trained, including in safeguarding and inclusive practice.

#### ☒ Focus on wellbeing and hope

We will aim to create positive spaces that build confidence, connection, and hope for the future.