



Creating Connections Grants Programme 2025

Guidance for Applicants

We're pleased to announce that the McCarthy Stone Foundation is awarding grants of up to £7,500 to support over 20 charitable organisations working to reduce loneliness and isolation among older people in England, Wales, and Scotland.

We are looking to fund initiatives that help create meaningful social connections for people aged 65 and over, including:

- Befriending services, including meal delivery for those living independently
- Social groups, such as art classes, dance sessions, lunch clubs, and coffee mornings
- Community transport, connecting older people to local activities and services

Please note: Dementia-specific charities and groups will not be eligible in this grant round, as we have a dedicated Dementia Grants Programme launching in Spring 2026. In May 2025, this programme awarded £130,000 to dementia-related causes.

However, charities that serve a broad older population — including individuals with dementia — are still welcome to apply for a Creating Connections grant.

Key Dates & Timescales

Please refer to the **Timescales** section for detailed information on application deadlines and other important dates.

We know that applying for funding can often feel time-consuming and challenging, so we've worked hard to simplify the process, reduce paperwork, and ensure an efficient turnaround.

To make the process easier for both you and us, we've put together some simple guidance below. Please take a moment to review it, and feel free to reach out if you have any further questions.

Are you eligible?

- a. You **must** be a registered charity, community group with constitution or Community Interest Company working in England, Scotland or Wales with a turnover under £250,000 p.a. as evidenced in your recent annual report. We also consider exempt charities, but do not make grants to individuals. If you are a CIC, you must be limited by guarantee and you cannot apply for core cost funding.
- b. Your organisation must be working with adults aged 65 and over, delivering services that help reduce loneliness and isolation and creating social connections. This may include (but is not limited to):

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- Befriending services, both in the community and in care homes – including meal delivery for those living independently
 - Social groups for older people – such as art sessions, dance classes, lunch clubs, coffee mornings, and similar activities
 - Community transport, helping older people stay connected to local services and activities
- c. You *should* be working in an area of deprivation affecting older people. While we will consider applications from all areas in England, Wales and Scotland, evidencing a high level of local need is important as part of your application. When all else is equal, priority will be given to those applications working in more deprived areas.

See appendix a. for areas with the highest levels of deprivation affecting older people.

If you can answer YES to the above, then we would love to see an application from you. To do that you will need to complete our online application, which can be found here. Applications open on 1st August 2025 and closes 29th August. [Application Form - McCarthy Stone Foundation](#)

- a. Most of the questions are self-explanatory, but please check you have entered your details correctly. I know you have 10 other applications to do before the end of the day, but it slows everything down if details are entered incorrectly.
- b. For your address, please use that of your registered office. If you don't have an office, please use your primary postal address. We do not publish addresses in full, only postcodes are used on our grant map. All data for 360 Giving is converted to a geocode format.
- c. Please reference our divisional map to identify your region of operations. You can find a link for this on the application form.
- d. The term 'free reserves' can sometimes be confusing. We define this as your unrestricted funds, minus any tangible fixed assets, programme-related investments or designations. As our funding is relatively small, you must have less than 12 months of running costs in your reserves and a clear reserves policy in place. For any organisation holding more than 3 months, but less than 12 months, we will ask to see this (it should be in your annual report).
- e. Whether a project or core costs will not affect the outcome of the application, it simply allows us to better understand demand and where funding is used. Project funding is where all the funds applied for are used for the direct costs of a particular charitable activity, while core costs are those that are shared across a number of activities or programmes.
- f. If you are applying for project funding, we encourage a 'full cost recovery' approach. Please contact us if you are not familiar with this budgeting format.

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- g. We understand you may want to use information from other grant applications, which is absolutely fine, but please don't just cut and paste your governing documents into the answer fields.
- h. Please give us enough information to understand what you do and how our funding would help. Bullet points can really help to present information concisely and clearly. We read hundreds of applications, so it really helps when key information is presented clearly.
- i. Feel free to link to an external document that adds further evidence of need.
- j. Funding for this programme is a maximum of £7,500. There is no minimum.
- k. If you are shortlisted for funding, we will ask for a recent bank statement and if you are not a registered charity, either your constitution and/or articles of association. You will also be asked to supply your policy for safeguarding.
- l. Lastly, if you need support with any aspect of the application process, please get in touch. We are a small team (just the two of us), but we will get back to you.

Further information can be found in our Grant Policy, or by contacting our team through the website.

Key Dates and Timescales

- a. Grant applications open on Friday 1st August 2025, and close on Friday 29th August at 5 p.m. Please note that we cannot accept applications past this time once shortlisting has commenced.
- b. Foundation team carries out initial shortlisting and due diligence.
- c. Our sub-committee meets on 25th September to review shortlisted applications.
- d. Recommendations are agreed by the Trustees on 2nd October.
- e. All applicants informed within 2 working days of the trustee meeting. Please note that for applications not shortlisted initially we may contact you sooner.

Feedback:

We receive hundreds of applications and so to prioritise communicating outcomes to those who apply to our programmes and to ensure we can turn around funding quickly and efficiently, we do not provide feedback as a matter of course.

We do recognise that feedback can be useful for future applications, so will, on request, try to provide feedback whenever possible.

Appendix a. Areas of Deprivation Affecting Older People

To help ensure an equitable allocation of funds and to help with selection of grant applicants, we have taken the decision this year to adopt a place-based approach to reviewing grant applications. Funding will be prioritised to organisations able to demonstrate they are working in specified locations across our six grant-award regions.

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Locations have been selected based on data from the ONS, Age UK, and the Centre for Ageing Better, with a key focus on areas where income deprivation and loneliness affecting older people is most acute.

Please check the list and ensure you are operating in these locations prior to applying. These areas are defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and you can check if you are in the nominated areas by using the map at this link: [Indices of Deprivation 2015 and 2019 \(communities.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/indices-deprivation-2015-and-2019).

The list below indicates the town/nearest town. Please note that we will ask you to supply either a ward/s or town your services cover, applications not including this information will automatically be rejected. Areas with an * please contact us for further details as to the specific areas of the town/city you work in.

Southern Region:

- Bournemouth and Poole
- Brighton and Hove
- Bristol*
- Cornwall *
- Exeter
- Havant
- Oxford
- Plymouth
- Portsmouth
- Rushmoor
- Sedgemoor
- Southampton
- Swindon
- Torbay
- Weston Super-mare
- Weymouth and Portland

Midlands Region:

- Birmingham
- Boston
- Cannock Chase
- Charnwood
- Cheltenham
- Cherwell
- Coventry
- Derby
- Dudley
- East Lindsey
- East Staffordshire
- East Suffolk/Waveney
- Gloucester
- Great Yarmouth
- Ipswich *
- Kettering
- Kings Lynn
- Leicester
- Lincoln
- Luton
- North and North-East Lincolnshire
- Northampton
- Norwich
- Nottingham
- Nuneaton and Bedworth
- Peterborough
- Redditch
- Sandwell
- Solihull
- Stoke on Trent
- Tamworth
- Telford and Wrekin
- Walsall
- Wellingborough
- Wolverhampton
- Worcester

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- Wyre Forest

London and South-East Region:

- Ashford
- Aylesbury Vale
- Barking and Dagenham
- Barnet
- Basildon
- Bedford
- Bexley
- Brent
- Bromley
- Broxbourne
- Camden
- Colchester *
- Croydon
- Dover
- Ealing
- Eastbourne *
- Enfield
- Folkestone and Hythe
- Gravesham
- Greenwich
- Hackney
- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Haringey
- Harrow
- Hastings
- Havering
- Hertsmere*
- Hillingdon
- Hounslow
- Islington
- Kensington and Chelsea
- Kingston upon Thames
- Lambeth
- Lewisham
- Medway
- Merton
- Milton Keynes
- Newham
- Reading
- Redbridge
- Slough
- Southend on Sea
- Southwark
- Sutton
- Swale
- Tendring
- Thanet
- Thurrock
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest
- Wandsworth
- Westminster
- Windsor and Maidenhead *
- Woking
- Wycombe

Northern Region:

- Ashfield
- Barnsley
- Barrow in Furness
- Bassetlaw
- Blackburn with Darwen
- Blackpool
- Bolton
- Bradford
- Burnley
- Bury
- Calderdale
- Cheshire West and Chester
- County Durham
- Darlington

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- Doncaster
- East Riding of Yorkshire *
- Gateshead
- Halton
- Hartlepool
- High Peak
- Hyndburn
- Kingston upon Hull
- Kirklees
- Knowsley
- Lancaster
- Leeds
- Liverpool
- Manchester
- Mansfield
- Middlesbrough
- Newcastle upon Tyne
- North Tyneside
- Northumberland
- Oldham
- Pendle
- Preston
- Redcar and Cleveland
- Rochdale
- Rotherham
- Salford
- Scarborough
- Sefton
- Sheffield
- South Ribble
- South Tyneside
- St Helens
- Stockport
- Stockton on Tees
- Sunderland
- Tameside
- Trafford
- Wakefield
- Warrington
- West Lancashire
- Wigan
- Wirral
- Workington – Moss Bay
- Wyre
- York

Wales:

- Abercynon
- Aberteifi/Cardigan
- Bridgend
- Cardiff *
- Cwn Clydach
- Darren Valley
- Ebbw Vale
- Newport *
- Gilfach Goch
- Glyncoch
- Gurnos
- Hirwaun
- Holywell Central
- Maerdy
- Merthyr Vale
- Moriah
- Nantyglo
- Peblig (Caernarfon)
- Pen-y-graig
- Pen-y-waun
- Rhydyfelin
- Rhyl West
- Sealand
- Swansea *
- Tredegar Central and West
- Treherbert
- Tylorstown
- Ynshir
- Ystrad

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Data source: <https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/welsh-index-of-multiple-deprivation-wimd-2019/view#/>

Scotland:

Please note that funding available for Scotland is very limited and only available to organisations working in the following areas:

- Alloa South and East
- Altonhill Kilmarnock
- Ayr North Harbour
- Barlanark and Easterhouse
- Bingham, Magdalene and the Christians
- Carntyne West
- Cowlares and Port Dundas
- Craigneuk Wishaw
- Cranhill, Lightburn and Queenslie South
- Dalkeith
- Drumchapel
- Drumry
- Dundee, Linlathen and Midcraigie
- Dundee, The Glens
- Dundee, Whitfield
- Glenwood
- Govan and Linthouse
- Greenock
- Irvine Central and Fullarton
- Keppochill
- Methil
- Motherwell South
- Murrayburn and Wester Hailes North
- Muirhouse Paisley Ferguslie
- Paisley Northwest
- Parkhead
- Pollock
- Port Glasgow
- Possil Park
- Raploch, Stirling

Data Source: https://simd.scot/#/simd2020_5pc/BTTTTFTT/8/-4.1224/56.0093/