

LB Tower Hamlets VCS Small Grants Programme

Mayor`s Covid Recovery Fund: Recovery from Covid-19 Loneliness and Social Isolation

The aim of this programme is to identify ways to help people that have been impacted by the additional loneliness and isolation that the Covid-19 pandemic, with its accompanying social distancing and lockdown measures, has caused. We are looking for exciting, creative and innovative ways to enable people to re-engage and reconnect with other people in ways that are safe, supportive and fun and we can offer grants of up to £25,000. The grants are available to help people of all ages across the community and for different types of approaches. There are some ideas about the types of projects we could support below but we want to invite you to use your creativity and understanding of community needs to put forward something new and exciting.

As the pandemic control measures are relaxed and life becomes more normalised those who experienced serious isolation and its impacts including mental health impacts may need extra support and encouragement to re-engage with social contacts and to regain the confidence to re-enter the social world. This is likely to be most needed by people that already experienced feelings of loneliness before the pandemic including people with health conditions and physical or mental disabilities.

Multiple surveys and data sources have shown that one of the most damaging impacts of Covid-19 on population health overall has been to exacerbate loneliness and social isolation, especially amongst the most vulnerable. The ONS found that the “lockdown lonely” were over 30% of the population. This has been particularly noticeable amongst young adults living alone (over 50% said they were lockdown lonely) and people with health conditions and disabilities’ (including but not exclusively the clinically extremely vulnerable) where high levels of isolation have been felt.

Through the Mayor`s Covid Recovery Fund grants we want to encourage and support local organisations to identify and mobilise innovative and creative ways to address the pandemic legacy of loneliness and isolation helping people to move gradually back to connecting with each other, enjoying each other`s company and restoring or enhancing their quality of life.

Funding can be used flexibly but is primarily intended to cover revenue costs. Funds can be used to fund a whole project or to pay for elements of a wider project but there must be a quantifiable contribution to the proposed activity either in cash (other funding) or in kind (volunteer time, rent free premises etc). However, we do not require match funding. Projects should be deliverable within 12 months.

The total grants budget for this programme is £166,000 to be expended between September to 2021 to March 2022. We anticipate that this theme will fund 7-10 projects with a range of funding levels up to a maximum of £25,000.

Tower Hamlets Plan and Strategic Plan Priorities

C1	Strong, resilient, and safe communities	✓
C2	Better health and wellbeing	✓
C3	Good jobs and employment	✓
C4	A better deal for young people	✓

S1	People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities	✓
S2	A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in	✓
S3	A dynamic outcomes-based Council using digital innovation and partnership working to respond to the changing needs of our borough	

Theme priorities (Links to Tower Hamlets Plan and Strategic Plan Priorities listed above)

1. **A welcoming and friendly Tower Hamlets** (links to THP C1 and SP S2)
2. **Neighbourhoods that are rich in opportunities for people to enjoy each other's company and where residents can be part of creating these opportunities** (links to THP C1 and SP S1)
3. **Reducing the loneliness and social isolation experienced by Tower Hamlets residents** (links to THP C2/C4 and SP S2)

Theme outcomes

1. Reduced impact on Tower Hamlets residents of isolation and loneliness caused or increased by the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Help and support accessible to the vulnerable groups in the community, who are particularly impacted by loneliness.
3. Identification of the people most at risk of loneliness and isolation and support to help them make confident, informed choices.
4. One to one support available for people of all ages to overcome the psychological impacts of lockdown and social distancing.

Examples of projects and activities

Some examples of the type of activities we would support are shown below but don't be limited by this list as we are looking for creative proposals that we might not have thought of!

- Projects that will help vulnerable people to overcome the fears, anxieties, and barriers about engaging with others that have built up during the Covid pandemic and accompanying social distancing and lockdowns
- Innovative and creative ways of building new friendships, friendship networks and broader community connection in ways that address the pandemic legacy.
- Projects that draw on the arts, cultural practice or educational activities to offer ways to connect up, overcome barriers and do things together
- Support for people who have mobility issues to connect with others in a safe and supported environment, whether by getting out and about or in other ways
- Community online platforms that help those who are continuing to shelter at home and are continuing to be at risk of isolation and loneliness
- Projects that link people across social barriers such as health status, age, and

ethnicity to support people of all ages to get together to enjoy life whether in person (safely) or remotely

- Creative ways of connecting with the digitally excluded

Eligibility

1. Size of organisation

We welcome applications from Tower Hamlets organisations and from other organisations that have a track record of delivery in the borough.

Individuals are not eligible.

2. Not for Profit

The grants programme will only support activities run by groups which can demonstrate they are set up as not for profit groups. The types of organisation which the Council considers to be not for profit are set out in the VCS Strategy and included in the Tower Hamlets Grants Policy framework

3. Locally based

The grants programme is intended to support the local VCS and community activity. The eligibility criteria for all grant themes reflect this principle.

Organisations based outside the borough are not excluded from eligibility but they must show very clear connections to Tower Hamlets either through existing activity or local leadership of the proposed project. Applications will be encouraged from organisations based across the borough.

4. Good governance

Organisations will be expected to achieve an acceptable level of governance with appropriate policies for the activities they propose to undertake. The acceptable level will be proportionate to the size of organisation and type of activity. The Council will accept applications from organisations in the process of developing appropriate policies but funding will not be paid until they are in place.

Levels of Funding Available

1. Up to £25,000 to be expended on delivery of the project completing within 12 months. The funding is not recurrent.
2. The total budget for this programme is £166,000 per annum. We anticipate that this theme will fund 7-10 projects depending on the level of awards.

Monitoring arrangements

1. Monthly reporting against agreed outcome measures will be required.
2. Six monthly progress report and annual/end of project report and visit.