

Funding opportunities

There are many funding opportunities for groups, from small local initiatives to national projects, but knowing where to go, and what to do to get funding, can feel overwhelming. While there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to finding and applying for funding, we provide some general tips and advice below.

Having a clear idea of what it is that your group needs and how you would spend the money will make it much easier for you to find funding; this is covered in the 'What do we need?' part of this section. It is also a good idea to draw up some rough costs, based on actual quotes from suppliers if appropriate. Knowing how much money you will need will make it much easier to decide where to apply for funding.

Benefits and Challenges of Seeking Funding

There are advantages and disadvantages to applying for funding. The main benefit is, of course, that money can be used to start, expand, or sustain a group in different ways. It can also give you greater flexibility in what you can do together. The process of applying for, or requesting, funding can teach you new skills and introduce you to new contacts who may be helpful in future. However, finding out about funders and filling in application forms can take considerable time and effort, and you may also need to supply reports to the funder. You need to find the right balance for your group between the effort required to seek funding and the ability to sustain yourselves without it. There might be local organisations who can support you with the application process.

Different Types of Funding

There are many different types of funding, but the most relevant ones for peer support groups include:

-  **Micro grants** – smaller sums of money (usually up to £500/£1,000) which are often distributed by local organisations or larger charities.
-  **Small grants** – larger sums of money (usually up to £5,000) which are also often distributed by local organisations or larger charities. You can get small grants from grant making organisations too.
-  **Donations** – gifts (usually money) given to a group by an individual or organisation. These sometimes come from businesses or privately from members of the public. They can include fundraisers from groups such as sports clubs or similar.
-  **Gifts in kind** – Businesses and organisations can give resources rather than money as 'gifts in kind'. This could include space, equipment, or a person's time or skills, food, or anything that the project needs.

Sources of Funding

There are local charities across the country that give support to voluntary and community groups, advocate for them, and foster contacts between them. Often these are known as councils of voluntary service (CVS), voluntary action, or volunteer centres. They usually have funds to support local groups and projects. They may even provide a funding search service: this means you can provide them with details of what you are looking for and they will generate a report outlining what funding is available. Your local council will know if there is a CVS in your area – or you can try a simple search on the internet.

Larger charities, both local and national, sometimes provide micro/small grants as well as wider support to groups through their own funding from larger contracts or programmes. An example of a larger charity that provides small grants is The National Lottery Community Fund (tnlcommunityfund.org.uk). They offer the Awards for All Programme for England, which can distribute grants of between £300 and £10,000. This programme has equivalents for Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

For smaller amounts of money, or for accessing resources other than money, it is often better to look closer to home. Applying through larger programmes such as the National Lottery Awards for All fund (information on the national lottery website) can require more work than may

be feasible for some groups. Your local authority website is often a good starting point as they may offer micro-grants or small amounts of cash for voluntary groups with application processes that are not too onerous.

Local businesses sometimes offer micro-grants for community groups, and they may even offer community spaces or donations of equipment and refreshments. One example is Tesco community grants (tescocommunitygrants.org.uk). This offers local groups the opportunity to access grants of between £500 and £2,000 through a voting system, wherein the public votes for three nominated applicants. This can be a good way to generate publicity about a group or project as well as to access funding.

