

South Yorkshire Health and Growth Accelerator Community Grants August 2025 – March 2026

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the South Yorkshire Health and Growth Accelerator Community Grants programme. This is a new programme, and you are asked to read this guidance information before completing a grant application form.

Background

Pathways to Work (P2W) programme

South Yorkshire is delivering a Pathways to Work (P2W) programme to reduce economic inactivity which affects 25.5% of the working age population. This is higher than the wider Yorkshire and Humber region (23.3%) and the national average (21.8%).

The P2W programme includes both the economic inactivity **Trailblazer programme** (funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and managed by local authorities in South Yorkshire) and the **Health and Growth Accelerator Programme** (NHS funded and managed by NHS South Yorkshire ICB).

The main aim of the Trailblazer is to bring people back into employment and the main aim of the Health and Growth Accelerator is to prevent people from becoming economically inactive by providing support for their health needs.

The most prevalent condition among those economically inactive because of long-term sickness, is depression or anxiety followed by musculoskeletal problems with legs and feet, and problems with back and neck. Data on employment support allowance (ESA) claims support this view, with almost half of those claiming incapacity benefit through ESA reporting mental health conditions, followed by musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions.

There are excellent support services across South Yorkshire and within each Place. However the current approach lacks a joined up response and as such, there is too much reliance placed on the individual to navigate a complex system. Pathways to Work will therefore focus on achieving a systemic shift towards enabling work, fostering a healthier, more inclusive, and economically active population in South Yorkshire and serving as a model for other regions.

Health and Growth Accelerator

The Health and Growth Accelerator programme aims to integrate employment and health interventions, ensuring people can stay in, or return to work while improving overall workforce wellbeing. The key outcome of the whole programme is to prevent 950 people from becoming economically inactive in 2025/26 through:

- Improving workplace health support and early intervention
- Integrating employment and health services to provide a cohesive support system
- Improving workforce retention by helping employers and employees manage long-term health conditions

- Enhancing collaboration between NHS, Local Authorities, employers, and voluntary sectors
- Improving the health of people and families living in South Yorkshire and supporting more people to stay in work or return to work sooner

The Health and Growth Accelerator focuses on three priority groups:

1. Ensuring early intervention for employees at risk of leaving the workforce due to mental health or musculoskeletal conditions
2. Providing targeted mental health support to help young people transition into sustained employment
3. Expanding occupational health and wellbeing resources, particularly for SMEs

What is this funding for?

Applications are invited from voluntary and community organisations who can demonstrate that they can deliver activities in 2025-26 that will support Health and Growth Accelerator priorities 1 and 2 as follows:

Priority One: To support adults (18+) in work who have had recent history of absences from work due to mild to moderate mental health and mood disorders, musculoskeletal conditions, and chronic pain.

Priority Two: To support young people aged 16 – 24 who have a self-reported or diagnosed low to moderate anxiety or depression, and either:

- are in education, but have had periods of absence (e.g. missing 5-15% of school days)
- are in employment, but have had periods of absence (e.g. 3 or more fit notes)
- are struggling to enter the workplace (e.g. been actively looking for a job for 4 months or longer)

due to their health needs. This includes young people who are neurodiverse.

Support for young people should consider relational approaches to mental health which are grounded in a clear understanding of symptoms of depression and anxiety, and the unique challenges faced during this life stage. This could include supporting the young people to

- Build confidence in themselves and their abilities
- Explore their identity and understand how this could support their mental wellbeing
- Develop trusting relationships with adults who understand mental health challenges
- Access safe spaces where they can talk, create, and connect without pressure

This offer is especially suited to young people who may not feel comfortable accessing traditional mental health services, and who could benefit from a more informal, person-led approach.

Applications can address either or both priorities.

The types of activities that the programme will fund are **community led nature-based connections, creative health approaches, and other activities** that can deliver the programme outcomes. The next section provides more information on what these themes mean and the types of activities that we might expect to fund.

Community Led Nature Based Support

Over the past four years, South Yorkshire has delivered a successful green social prescribing test and learn programme. Building on the success of this programme, we would like to fund community led nature-based projects.

Social prescribing is the practice of supporting people to engage in a range of community-based activities and services, often delivered by the voluntary and community sector, which will benefit their mental, emotional, physical, or social health.

Green social prescribing, (or green-blue social prescribing) builds on this, and is the practice of supporting people to engage in nature-based interventions and activities and includes both green and blue (water) environments. The activities which people may be linked to include local walking schemes, community gardening projects, conservation volunteering, green gyms, fishing, paddle sports, waterside walks, eco-therapeutic activities, arts, and cultural activities which take place outdoors and any physical activity sessions which encourage people to move more.

Creative Health Based Support

South Yorkshire is rich in Creative Health expertise, leading impactful work that supports our diverse communities and reduces health inequalities.

Creative Health is defined as creative approaches and activities which have benefits for our health and wellbeing. Activities can include visual and performing arts, crafts, film, literature, music, cooking and creative activities in nature.

Creative Health can be applied in homes, communities, cultural institutions and heritage sites, and healthcare settings and can contribute to the prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long-term conditions, and treatment and recovery across the life course.

Other Activities

The VCSE sector delivers a breadth of support and impact for adults and young people. Applications that are for any other activities with a track record in delivering support and impact for people in priorities one and two are welcome.

Referrals Pathway

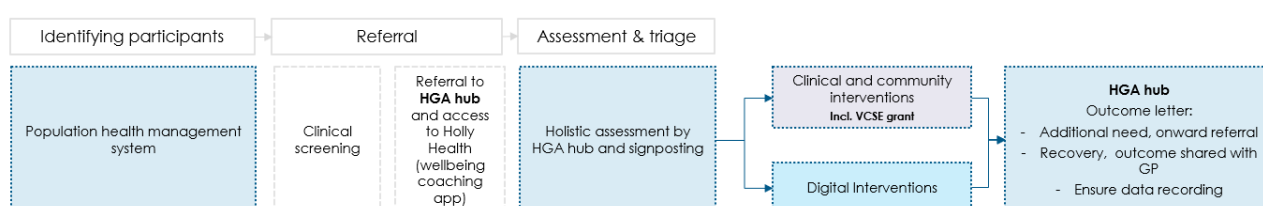
Successful grant applicants will receive referrals from the Health and Growth Accelerator (HGA) Hub. Participants will already have received an assessment. It is expected that voluntary and/or community (VCSE) providers will provide the HGA Hub with their relevant organisation information so the Hub can signpost participants appropriately to their support offer.

We expect that all groups we fund will be supporting individuals through other referral routes as well which may include self-referrals, but crucially, your activity **must** be able to prioritise referrals from this HGA Hub Pathway and offer timely support. This will be a condition of your grant award.

Priority One Pathway

- People will be identified through a population health management approach and referred to the Health and Growth Accelerator pathway
- They will receive an holistic assessment by the Health and Growth Accelerator Hub
- The coach in the Hub will signpost them to appropriate interventions

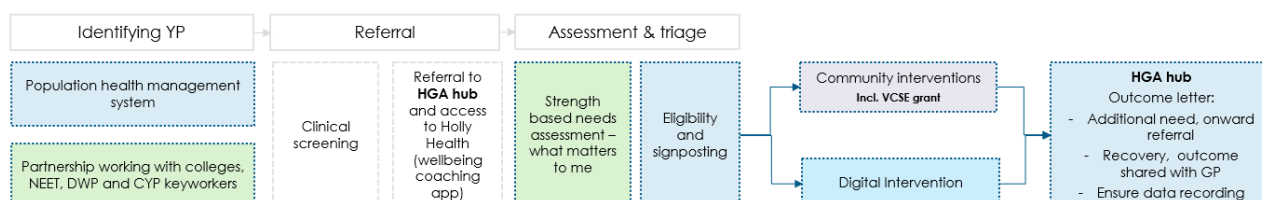
High-level overview of Health and Growth Accelerator pathway for priority 1



Priority Two Pathway

- Young people will be identified and referred to the Health and Growth Accelerator Pathway
- They will receive a strength-based assessment
- They will be signposted to appropriate support, including community interventions (incl. VCSE provision and digital interventions)

High-level overview of Health and Growth Accelerator pathway for priority 2



Grant Objectives and Outcomes

Activities supported through this Grant should seek to meet:

Priority One - Adults (18+) in work who have had recent history of absences from work due to mild to moderate mental health and mood disorders, musculoskeletal conditions, and chronic pain.

Priority Two - Young people aged 16 – 24 who have a self-reported or diagnosed low to moderate anxiety or depression, and either:

- are in education, but have had periods of absence (e.g. missing 5-15% of school days)
- are in employment, but have had periods of absence (e.g. 3 or more fit notes)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> are struggling to enter the workplace (e.g. been actively looking for a job for 4 months or longer) <p>due to their health needs. This includes young people who are neurodiverse.</p>
OBJECTIVES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the person's mental health and wellbeing to enable them to remain in work Build the person's confidence and resilience to enable them to remain in work Improve the person's management of chronic pain or reduce chronic pain to enable them to remain in work Improve the person's functional fitness to enable them to remain in work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the young person's mental health and wellbeing to enable them to return to or enter work or education Build the young person's confidence and resilience to enable them to return to or enter work or education Motivate the young person and build on their strengths and areas of interest to enable them to return to or enter work or education Support the young person's personal development to return to or enter work or education
OUTCOMES	
Successful grant applicants could propose their own measure to track these	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An improvement in mental health and wellbeing An improvement in self-reported confidence and resilience. An improvement in functional fitness. An improvement in pain management Positive engagement with people Good satisfaction from participants, measured through a feedback survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An improvement in mental health and wellbeing An improvement in confidence and resilience. Positive engagement with young people, measured through % of appointments attended Good participant's satisfaction, measured through a feedback survey

Monitoring Requirements

Monitoring, evaluation and capturing learning is essential to this programme of work. There are both local and national evaluation requirements that VCSE grantees will have to comply with. Learnings and outcomes from this programme will inform local and national policies. Good quality information and evaluation could support the system to secure more funding in the future. We will discuss and work with you to set-up the detailed reporting requirements.

As a minimum, successful grantees will be expected to share:

- Date referral was received for each participant
- If participant started intervention and if they completed intervention (yes / no)
- Intervention start and end date for each participant
- If participant did not complete intervention, reason they did not
- Number of appointments offered for each participant
- Number of appointments attended for each participant

This information will be requested monthly by the Health and Growth Accelerator Hub, through an online questionnaire. The Hub is central and non-clinical, and will coordinate referrals and interventions for all participants in the Health and Growth Accelerator programme. The Hub will also hold all data for participants and ensure the programme complies with the national and local data evaluation requirements. The Hub will work with VCSE grantees to ensure they receive the information required. The data sharing needs to comply with all relevant information governance laws and processes.

You should also be prepared to welcome at least one site visit by programme partners during the course of the project.

Who can apply?

Grants are specifically to support voluntary and community organisations of any size, working in South Yorkshire.

- We will need to see that you/your project has a track record of success working with the priority one and/or priority two cohorts and that you can clearly meet the Health Growth Accelerator priorities.
- We also need groups/projects to be able to start work and receive referrals shortly after funding decisions are released and will therefore not be looking to fund brand new projects and/or organisations or work that will take a significant lead in period to begin.
- Your projects should be planned to run throughout the project term up until March 2026.

In addition, applicants must be experienced in the fields mentioned above and:

- Be constituted as a not-for-profit organisation, with the appropriate documentation
- Have a board or management committee of at least three unrelated people,
- Have a bank account in the name of the group requiring at least two unrelated signatories,
- Have beneficiaries who live in South Yorkshire.
- Be locally led and run in South Yorkshire.
- Have comprehensive and up-to-date Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Further terms and conditions will be supplied with the application form.

How much can I apply for?

Total funding available through this grant will be £585,000 for projects running from autumn 2025 – March 2026.

The majority of successful grants will be one-off support of up to £15,000. If your project is in collaboration with another delivery partner and/or can clearly meet more than one of the Health and Growth Accelerator outcomes, and/or works across more than one Place we can consider exceptional grants of up to £30,000 but you should contact us for a discussion about this before submitting an application.

To discuss applications between £15,000 - £30,000 Please contact Jess O'Neill or Emma Mallinson by Telephone [0114 242 4857](tel:01142424857) or via Email grants@sycf.org.uk

Grant funding can support project operating and revenue costs including a contribution to overhead costs.

Because of the monitoring requirements in this programme, we will expect that you have included appropriate costings in your project budget to support this. Please do not apply if you do not think you will have capacity to provide this.

Categories of spend that cannot be supported:

- Statutory fines and penalties, criminal fines and damages, legal expenses in respect of litigation, debt interest, other fines, or financial penalties
- Recoverable VAT
- Retrospective activity (i.e. work that has already taken place)

When can I apply?

Applications will be open to groups in South Yorkshire from Tuesday 5th August. Submissions should be received before 9am, Monday 1st September.

Projects should be ready to start from Monday 29th September.

Please note, it is a requirement of this funding that your grant should be spent by **31st March 2026**. Please keep this in mind when deciding how much your organisation applies for.

Selection process

Some groups who have previously and successfully delivered projects will be sent an application by invitation only and may be in a position to begin their projects sooner.

Both invitation only groups and those applying via the wider call-out, will be considered by a panel of community and health leaders in the four local authorities of South Yorkshire using the same criteria and assessment processes.

On receipt of your application form, we will check your eligibility against the programme outcomes and undertake due diligence to review your governance, and financial records. You should therefore be available to answer any questions we may have throughout the assessment period and ensure all required information is sent with your grant application.