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**Near Neighbours**

**Small Grants Fund**

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Contents

[Introduction 2](#_Toc183618134)

[Near Neighbours 3](#_Toc183618135)

[Initial Contact 3](#_Toc183618136)

[Eligible Geographic Areas 3](#_Toc183618137)

[Criteria 4](#_Toc183618138)

[Priorities 4](#_Toc183618139)

[What We Will Not Fund 5](#_Toc183618140)

[Safeguarding 5](#_Toc183618141)

[Resources and Toolkits 6](#_Toc183618142)

[Small Grant Application Procedure 6](#_Toc183618143)

[Small Grant Terms and Conditions 6](#_Toc183618144)

[Contact Details 6](#_Toc183618145)

# Introduction

Near Neighbours brings people together from communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust and collaborate on initiatives that improve the local community they live in.

Near Neighbours’ small grants programme which is part of Near Neighbours is administered by our partner organisation, Church Urban Fund. This work is funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. We work with those of any faith or none.

Near Neighbours is a registered charity, no. 1142426, and a company limited by guarantee, no. 07603317. Church Urban Fund is a registered charity, no. 297483, and a company limited by guarantee, no. 02138994.

**Small Grants Criteria and Guidance, 2025 Version**

This version of the Small Grants Criteria and Guidance will supersede all previous guidance issued by Near Neighbours. It has been developed as a resource and will be reviewed and reissued annually or at any other time as required. The latest version of the Small Grants Criteria and Guidance will always be available for download from the Near Neighbours website. For additional information, please contact us using the details below.

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# Near Neighbours

Near Neighbours brings people together from communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in.

We have two key objectives:

* Social interaction - to develop positive relationships in multi-faith and multi-ethnic areas i.e. to help people from different faiths and ethnicities get to know and understand each other better.
* Social action - to encourage people of different faiths and of no faith and of different ethnicities to come together for initiatives that improve their local neighbourhood.

**Grants between £500 and £4,000 are available for local groups and organisations who are working to bring together neighbours, to develop relationships across diverse faiths and ethnicities in order to improve their communities.**

These must be local initiatives which have a specific local impact. Initiatives must be planned by local people and the planning group must be diverse and inclusive. We will look especially favourably on applications from diverse neighbourhoods and those with issues of deprivation and other challenges, as well as where there is the intention and likelihood of deep and lasting relationships of trust between people, in order to transform communities.

**The final deadline for applications is Friday 21st February. Applicants will likely be notified of the outcome of their application by mid-late March.**

**Projects may start as soon as the funding has been approved, and must finish all their activities by 31st July 2025.**

# Initial Contact

Applicants must speak to their local Near Neighbours Coordinators before filling out the application form. Our local Coordinators are there to support you in developing your project idea and help you through the application process. They can also suggest potential partners and assist you in identifying what activities you could run as part of your project.

**We will not accept any applications that have not been discussed with them first.**

Applicants may simply have an idea to bring local people together that will need developing into a project plan, or they may already have a plan in place and would like to confirm if it is eligible for funding.

# Eligible Geographic Areas

The programme works in several key locations across England. We have Hubs in Birmingham, East London, Nottingham, Leicester, Luton, Liverpool, Middlesbrough and West Yorkshire.

However, we are also only working within specific areas of these places. Please refer to our website to see eligible areas: [Local Hubs — Near Neighbours (near-neighbours.org.uk)](https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs)

# Criteria

Below is an exact list of our grants criteria. A project should:

* Bring together peoples of two or more different faiths and/or ethnicities, to build friendships and develop relationships of trust.
* Work locally: We want to see people who are living very locally (i.e. in the same street, estate or neighbourhood) come together.
* Work sustainably: We want to see long term and natural relationships grow, that will last beyond the period of funding.
* Work to improve the community: We want to see people working to make their communities a better place to live.
* Involve a diverse group of people in planning and implementation: People from more than one faith group and/or ethnicity are involved in running the project.

In addition, a grant must be for:

* New or developed work: We will not support repeat or ongoing activities.
* Specific activities: Funding is given for a specific project or activity.
* Immediate activities: Grants should be claimed within three months of approval, and projects should aim to finish before the end of July 2025.
* Small initiatives: We like to fund small projects, so the overall cost of the project needs to be £15,000 or less.
* Grassroots organisations: We particularly seek to fund emerging local groups as well as charities, religious organisations and other not-for-profit organisations whose focus is on local work. We will look especially favourably on small organisations with an annual turnover of less than £200,000.

We welcome applications from faith groups, places of worship, partnerships of different faith groups, and informal local groups comprising people of different faith groups and backgrounds. We also encourage applications from secular organisations that are working with faith communities.

Funding cannot be granted to individuals but may be given to small groups without a constitution or bank account where there is a reputable local community or faith organisation willing to act as the accountable body for the funds.

We will consider applications from Community Interest Companies and other social enterprises if their membership is from the neighbourhood they are seeking funding for, and if the activity they seek to deliver has involvement from local people of more than one faith and ethnicity in planning and running it.

# Priorities

In addition to our criteria, we also assess applications by a few priorities. Applications showing

the following qualities will be prioritised for funding:

* Where the purpose is first and foremost to bring neighbours of different faiths and ethnicities together to build trusting relationships through an activity or project.
* Projects that help local people develop leadership and organising skills.
* Projects that focus on:
  + Supporting the integration of migrants and refugees and developing a positive narrative about integration and immigration
  + Supporting women who face barriers or who are underrepresented in civic leadership
  + Supporting young people, especially those who are disenfranchised and vulnerable to grooming eg. to extremism, gangs, through engagement in positive and healthy activity
  + Promoting cohesion through linking up isolated or segregated communities
* Organisations which have been given Near Neighbours funding before and have demonstrated local impact.
* Projects that take place in neighbourhoods with deprivation or disadvantage.
* Proposals from minority faith communities.
* Proposals from small faith or community organisations or groups.
* Where a project shows sustainability; with relationships, sustainable change and/or further work together likely to continue naturally beyond the period of funding.
* Where the organisation can clearly demonstrate the difference the activity will make to the local community.
* Proposals that are run by volunteers or have a strong volunteer base.
* Projects that source goods and services from businesses in the local community or use ethically sourced goods and services, such as Fairtrade refreshments.
* Proposals that pay staff the Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation.
* Where a proposal shows value for money.

# What We Will Not Fund

There are also several things that Near Neighbours does not fund. These are:

* Projects that will not run in one of our eligible areas (see pg.3 Eligible Areas).
* Repeated activities (such as an annual summer camp or regular training sessions that have happened previously).
* Activities open only to one faith/ethnic group.
* Activity promoting a specific faith.
* Projects that are the normal curriculum work of schools and colleges, would fall under statutory health care provision, or are steered by local authorities.
* Faith leaders’ salaries.
* Individuals.
* Organisations with a high annual turnover (more than £200,000), with significant free reserves, or with a weak financial position.
* National organisations that are working locally.
* Existing salary costs, except where there is a significant increase in hours in order to begin new work or expand an existing project to new people.
* Organisational costs not associated with the funded project.
* Major capital costs (though small items of equipment will be considered i.e. the cost of a kettle but not the cost of a kitchen).
* Unspecified or excessive volunteer expenses or high staff costs/expenses.
* Work that has already been completed or started (retrospective funding).
* Deficits or loans.
* Campaigning and fundraising activity.
* Revenue and capital funding for national voluntary/community organisations and public and private sector organisations.
* General repairs and refurbishment of buildings, or internal re-ordering of places of worship, maintenance or DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliance.
* General appeals.

# Safeguarding

Near Neighbours takes the safety and wellbeing of people of all ages seriously and expects grant applicants to do likewise. For this reason, we expect any projects working with children and young people or vulnerable adults to have the appropriate safeguarding policies in place, and we will often ask to see them during the application process.

The NSPCC provides guidance on setting up and following safeguarding policies and procedures for working with children and young people. To access them, please visit: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/>

# Resources and Toolkits

For some smaller groups and organisations, we recognise that this might be the first time that you have applied for external funding or developed a project. To guide you through this process, we have various resources and toolkits on our website to help you with planning your project, working with volunteers, and promoting your activities to local people.

You can find the resources and toolkits here: <https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/resources>. Our local Near Neighbours Coordinators are also there to provide you with advice throughout the application process and support you in developing your project.

# Small Grant Application Procedure

If you wish to apply for our funding, please follow the following procedure:

1. Read through our criteria and guidance in detail and ensure you are based in an eligible area. You can check geographic eligibility here: [www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs](http://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/local-hubs)
2. Speak to your local Near Neighbours Coordinator, as they are there to help you through the process. You can find their contact details at the end of this document. They will be able to give you a list of the application questions.
3. Draft your application and send it, along with the additional required documents, to your local Near Neighbours Coordinator. They will review it and offer you feedback and recommendations.
4. Once you have finalised your application and additional required documents, your local Near Neighbours Coordinator will give you the link to complete the online application form.
5. The Near Neighbours Grants Team will assess your application. If necessary, they will contact you for additional information. Once they have all the necessary information, they will work to make a decision on your application.

# Small Grant Terms and Conditions

If you are awarded a grant, we will outline several conditions that you must agree to in order to receive payment, which is a legally binding agreement. This will include using your grant only for the purposes laid out in your application. Additionally, we include details about transferring funds, our grant evaluation process and publicity. Please be aware that additional conditions may be attached as required. These will always be stated at the time a funding offer is made. In accordance with our privacy policy we will safely store your contact details. For further information on our privacy policy, please see the link - <https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/privacy-policy>

# Contact Details

Your key contact for the Near Neighbours programme is your local Coordinator. You can also contact the Grants Team at Near Neighbours using the email address – [grants@cuf.org.uk](mailto:grants@cuf.org.uk)

1. **Birmingham**  
   Rabiyah K Latif, Thrive Together Birmingham, Balsall Heath Centre, 100 Mary Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9JU / [rabiyah@nearneighbours.com](mailto:rabiyah@nearneighbours.com) / 07503 711 333
2. **West Yorkshire (Leeds, Bradford, Dewsbury)**Kaneez Khan, Wellsprings Together, Trinity Centre, John Escritt Road, Bingley, BD16 2ST / [kaneez.khan@wellspringstogether.org.uk](mailto:kaneez.khan@wellspringstogether.org.uk) / 07958 470 590
3. **Leicester**Tom Wilson, St Philip’s Centre, 2A Stoughton Drive North, Leicester LE5 5UB / 07708 733338 / [nn2@stphilipscentre.co.uk](mailto:nn2@stphilipscentre.co.uk)
4. **Luton**David Jonathan (Johny), Grassroots Programme, 47 High Town Road, Luton, Beds, LU2 0BW / [near.neighbours\_luton@btconnect.com](mailto:near.neighbours_luton@btconnect.com) / 01582 291520
5. **East London**Marzena Cichon-Balcerowicz, The Centre for Theology & Community, St George-in-the-East, 14 Cannon Street Road, London E1 0BH / [marzena.cb@ctclondon.org](mailto:marzena.cb@ctclondon.org) / 07437 985 793
6. **Nottingham**Samra Kanwal, Transforming Notts Together, Unity House, 35 Church Street, Nottingham, NG7 2FF / [samra@transformingnottstogether.org.uk](mailto:samra@transformingnottstogether.org.uk)
7. **Liverpool**

James Green/Joseph Cottrell; [james.green@togetherliverpool.org.uk](mailto:james.green@togetherliverpool.org.uk); [joseph.cottrell@togetherliverpool.org.uk](mailto:joseph.cottrell@togetherliverpool.org.uk)

1. **Middlesbrough**

Suganya Subramaniaraja, Bobbie Bailey, Julie Harrison

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