

## Loneliness Community Microfunding FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

### Introduction and Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted on the nations' mental health. Successive lockdowns have damaged social connections, jobs, finances, and disrupted peoples' ability to engage in their usual coping mechanisms, as well as reducing access to mental health and other support services. WCC (Warwickshire County Council) has recognised the importance of responding to this surge in mental distress through its Recovery & Restoration Plan, which prioritises a commitment to improving the mental health and wellbeing of residents.

As part of the 'Improving Mental Wellbeing in Warwickshire - Responding to the Covid Pandemic' project – PR000694, a small section of this project has been specifically targeted at addressing Loneliness and Social Isolation. As part of this section, a Loneliness and Social Isolation Action Plan has been developed which aims to raise awareness of the help available to residents and staff alike and to fund small projects within the community.

It is agreed that £17.5k be distributed towards the implementation a series of robust, practical projects, which are community-led with driven actions to tackle the issue of LSI (Loneliness and Social Isolation) using a micro-funding approach.

### ***What is microfunding?***

Microfunding uses small amounts of money to empower people to design, deliver and fund local projects. For example, covering the cost of a venue and materials can kick-start a valuable community group. The funding targets niche community needs, putting people in control as decision-makers and activity leaders. This allows the funding to get to where it needs to be in order to make the greatest impact.

A recent report published by Ageing Better included these citations about the use of Micro-funding:

- “It's superb because it's all bottom-up. This is about encouraging the groups to have the confidence so they can decide what they need, what they want, what they think will work in their areas. From what I'm seeing, it's been very successful...” Councillor, project partner
- "... [project staff] are able to provide extra information ... but I feel as though we are really empowered to make the decisions." Decision maker micro-funding
- “Micro-funding underpins the whole approach – it's given control of the spending to people in communities to make lots of changes in the place they live – to make it easier to keep and build connections. We're investing in communities; we're not delivering services.” Programme Manager

### ***What is the process for the distribution of the Microfunding?***

This process has been designed to make it as easy as possible for individuals/groups to apply.

- Each individual or group is expected to work through this document, responding to each to point to form the basis of their bid.
- Any individual or group, incorporated or not, can apply to run events/event with the aim of reducing loneliness and social isolation and improving community cohesion and resilience.
  - The funding that can be awarded to individuals and/or unincorporated groups is for an amount between £100 and £500.
  - Incorporated groups can bid for an amount between £100 and £1,000.
- There are three ways for an individual or group to submit an expression of interest to obtain funding:
  - A video bid

- An online application form
- An email/word document.
- The fund will be promoted through a comms campaign and through existing networks, including Community Development Workers, WCAVA and Village Newsletters.

### ***How do I/we apply?***

Individuals/groups can apply by filling in this [application form](#), or sending written responses in an email to [rachelknight@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:rachelknight@warwickshire.gov.uk) (max two sides a4). Alternatively they can video themselves on a smartphone and send a link to the above email address. **You must include all the information required below in order that we can score your bid correctly.**

### ***What do I/we need to tell you?***

**We will need to know the following:**

**You must answer these questions in your video or email if you are not filling out the google form. If you don't answer them all your bid will be discounted.**

**1. Who are you?**

*Individual, Unincorporated Group, Incorporated Group*

**2. How much money are you asking for?**

*Individuals/informal groups are restricted to £100-£500, Incorporated groups can apply for £100-£1000*

**3. Which area of Warwickshire are you specifically targeting?**

**4. What do you plan to use that money for?**

*Please include a rough breakdown for materials, room hire, staff costs, timings etc*

**5. Is this a new project or an extension of an existing project?**

**6. Have you received other funding towards it?**

**7. How will this activity/activities reduce loneliness and social isolation in your community?**

*Please include details about how many and the type of people you hope to reach.*

**8. What plans do you have around making this sustainable?**

*I.e., how will activity continue when the funding runs out?*

**9. Are you willing, in principle, to attend a mandatory workshop to meet other recipients of the microfund and find out about how this fund helps the council to achieve its aims in a wider context?**

**10. Will you be able to spend the money by end of August 2022? (assuming all goes to plan)**

**11. Your contact details so that we can get in touch**

***Is there anything else I/we need to know when applying?***

**It will be mandatory for all recipients of this fund to attend one workshop** where they will meet other recipients of the fund and find out about how this fund helps the council to achieve its aims in a wider context. We hope this workshop will be mutually beneficial as it will provide you with a chance to network and ask questions and it will provide us with a chance to explain all that the council is trying to do to reduce loneliness and social isolation.

***If I/we don't apply now will there be another chance?***

This fund is open until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Projects will then be selected to fund. If there are insufficient projects to use up the fund, then remaining monies will be distributed via another process.

***What evidence/monitoring do I/we need to provide to show what has been achieved?***

There will be a light touch monitoring, so you won't need to provide lots of detailed data, all we ask is that you invite us to attend any group or event you put on using money from the fund. We will then gather the data needed whilst at the group or event. This may be through interviewing, with consent, attendees, counting attendees, recording case stories. For unincorporated groups or individuals, we may ask to see receipts as evidence of expenditure. We will ask for a brief summary report of what you did and the impact it had towards the end of August.

We recommend that you use the following measures to monitor the impact of your project on the feelings of loneliness of your participants. We recommend asking your participants during the first session as a benchmark and then repeating this as you see fit.

Measures	Items	Response categories
The three-item UCLA Loneliness scale	1. How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	Hardly ever or never, Some of the time, Often
	2. How often do you feel left out?	Hardly ever or never, Some of the time, Often
	3. How often do you feel isolated from others?	Hardly ever or never, Some of the time, Often
The direct measure of loneliness	How often do you feel lonely?	Often/always, Some of the time, Occasionally, Hardly ever, Never

[Source: Office for National Statistics](#)

### ***When do I/we need to spend the money/complete the activity by?***

You will have 4 months from receipt of the money to spend it, or until the end of August 2022, whichever is sooner. We will want to attend your event before end of August so that we have time to evaluate it and write up our report.

### ***What happens if I don't spend the money?***

You will be asked to return any unspent monies after August 2022. However, we will work with you to try to maximise the opportunity for you to spend this money. We want your project to be a success.

### ***How will the decision to distribute the Micro-funding be made?***

It is proposed that a panel of WCC staff will make the decision as to how the money is awarded and to which bids. This panel will include Mike Slemensek, Delivery Lead for Communities and Localities, Abi Culley, Rural Policy and Commissioning Officer and Rachel Knight, Loneliness and Social Isolation Development Worker. Consideration was given to involving people with lived experience with the decision-making process, however it was felt that there were too many limitations and risks as well as insufficient time to undertake this meaningfully, as the project is due to be concluded in September 2022.

### ***How will the applications for Micro-funding be scored?***

Each panel member will score each bid according to the criteria as detailed below. These scores will then be collated up and awards made until such time as the funding is exhausted. If there are insufficient bids submitted to exhaust the £17.5k, a decision will then be made whether to hold a second round or distribute the remaining money through the communities and localities team to top up existing projects.

### ***What are the Scoring Criteria?***

#### *Extent to which project targets Loneliness (max score 2)*

- Sole focus is reducing LSI 2
- Part of a wider focus 1
- Not a focus at all (projects that do not explain how they have a focus on LSI will be rejected)

#### *Area (max Score 5) (Ranked according to prevalence of LSI. Higher score = higher LSI prevalence)*

- North WARKS 4
- Nun/Bed 5
- Rugby 3
- War/Leam 1
- Stratford 2

#### *Target group of people (multiple groups increase score)*

- Older men specifically 3
- Young, first time, parents 3
- Young people (16-25) 3
- BAME background 3
- LGBTQ+ background 3

- Long term health conditions 3
- Digital inclusion 3
- All older people 2
- Other population groups 1

*How many people will the funding reach (max score 4)*

- 0-5 people 1
- 6-20 people 2
- 21-50 people 3
- 51+ people 4

*What type of intervention is proposed (max score 3)*

- Long term support or mix of long and short term 3
- Good sustainability/longevity plan 3
- Short term support ie 6-week intervention 2
- One off activity or session 1

*Status of Project (max score 4)*

- New project with no other funding in place 4
- New project with other funding in place 3
- Extension of existing project with no other funding in place 2
- Extension of existing project with other funding in place 1

***How will monitoring take place to ensure the funds are spent effectively and not fraudulently?***

Monitoring of the impact of the fund will be achieved by reports submitted by the successful projects and by the attendance of a council employee to every event/project funded. Comms will also attend some of the projects to capture case studies and record the event.

## Additional Supporting Information

Locally both mental health and loneliness and social isolation have featured strongly in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, and in the Covid Health Survey, where people with self-reported pre-existing mental health conditions said that they were twice as likely than the general population to report feeling lonely sometimes, often or always. Recent data from ONS (Office for National Statistics) shows that across Warwickshire the average % of adults (16+) who report feeling lonely often/always is 6.9%. This equates to a figure of around 40,000 people who are living in Warwickshire with chronic loneliness. There is a higher incidence of chronic loneliness reported in the northern areas of Warwickshire with North Warwickshire reporting 7.9%, Nun/Bed reporting 8.6%, and Rugby reporting 7.6%. Although figures for southern areas of Warwickshire are lower, they are still significant with Warwick reporting 5.1% and Stratford reporting 5.3%.

The effects of living with chronic loneliness are extensively researched and are likened to the health effects of smoking 15 packs of cigarettes a day. According to The Campaign to End Loneliness, loneliness increases the likelihood of mortality by 26% and is comparable to the impact of well-known risk factors such as obesity. It is associated with an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease, stroke and increases the risk of high blood pressure. Loneliness puts individuals at greater risk of cognitive decline and dementia and, lonely individuals are more prone to depression.

The impact of this on Health and Social Care is great, older patients living alone are 50% more likely to access emergency care services, and 40% more likely to have more than 12 GP appointments. By releasing funds into the community in order to address the root causes of loneliness and social isolation it is hoped that demand for institutional care and support will be postponed for longer, or, avoided entirely.

### Reports which support the principles behind this proposal for Micro-funding

Warwickshire County Council Plan 2022 -2027

<https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/s20936/>

Warwickshire voluntary and community sector strategy 2020-

2025 <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-966-2006>

Tackling Social Inequalities in Warwickshire strategy 2021-

2030 <https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/s18725/Appendix%201%20for%20Tackling%20Social%20Inequalities%20in%20Warwickshire.pdf>

Warwickshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2026 (including associated strategies) <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/healthandwellbeingstrategy>