

Support While Waiting Grant Scheme 2026/27

Guidance Notes for Applicants

1. Introduction

The Support While Waiting Grant Scheme provides funding to organisations which are registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland to deliver projects that support people currently on Health and Social Care (HSC) waiting lists. The aim of the scheme is to help individuals maintain and improve their health and wellbeing while waiting for treatment, recognising the impact that long waiting times can have on physical and mental health, as well as social wellbeing.

This guidance should be read carefully before completing the application form. It explains:

- Eligibility requirements
- What funding is available
- Programme delivery requirements
- The application and assessment process
- Finance
- Payment of grants
- Monitoring and reporting obligations

2. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for funding, organisations must meet **all** of the following requirements:

- i. Be a registered charity operating in Northern Ireland.
- ii. Have relevant experience in providing support to individuals through the delivery of health and wellbeing projects.
- iii. Propose a project that directly supports individuals currently on HSC waiting lists (inpatient, daycase, outpatient) in Northern Ireland with the aim of optimising their health, wellbeing, or daily functioning during the wait.
- iv. Confirm appropriate governance as follows:

a) Legal Status and Governance

- Be a registered charity with a clear constitution or rules that set out its aims, objectives, and how it operates.
- Have appropriate organisational policies and governance arrangements in place, including, where relevant, safeguarding, current AccessNI checks, equality, health & safety and complaints procedures).

b) Financial Management

- A bank account in the organisation's name.
- Annual accounts and appropriate financial controls to manage and report on grant funding.

c) Risk & Assurance

- Appropriate insurance cover.

d) Capability to Deliver

- Experience of providing health, wellbeing or social support services.
- Systems for monitoring outcomes and reporting to funders.

3. Funding Available

- 3.1 Applicants can apply for between £5,000 and £30,000 to deliver projects that support individuals on HSC waiting lists.
- 3.2 Funding is a one-off payment which will be awarded by the end of March 2027, and projects should start as soon as feasibly possible thereafter. All funds must be fully spent and activity completed by 31 March 2028. Recipients must notify the Department as soon as any underspend is identified, and all underspend must be repaid to the Department no later than 31 March 2028.
- 3.3 Applicants must also confirm that the funding requested does not duplicate any other sources of funding already secured for the same purpose.

4. Programme Delivery Requirements

- 4.1 Funded projects must demonstrate how they meet the following requirements:

a. Target Group

- Participants must be currently on an HSC waiting list for inpatient, outpatient, or daycase treatment.
- Applicants must clearly state how individuals on waiting lists will be identified and engaged. Acceptable methods include:
 - Referral partnerships with HSC Trusts or GPs.
 - Verification through appointment/waiting list letters.

b. Free at Point of Access

- All sessions and activities must be free for participants.

c. Accessible Delivery

- Sessions should be designed to reduce barriers to participation (e.g. accessible venues, online/hybrid delivery options, consideration of transport costs).

d. Person-Centred Practical Support

- Projects should complement, rather than replace or duplicate, existing statutory HSC provision.
- Projects should provide support that helps participants maintain or improve their health and wellbeing while waiting. Examples include:
 - Physical activity and mobility projects
 - Nutrition and healthy lifestyle support
 - Pain management or condition-specific self-care
 - Mental health support and stress reduction
 - Peer support groups and social connection

e. Accessibility, Inclusivity and Safety

- Projects must be accessible and inclusive for participants with diverse needs (disabilities, language needs, carers, families).
- Safeguarding policies and risk assessments must be in place.
- Projects should actively work to reduce health inequalities and promote equality of opportunity.

5. The Assessment Process

Applications will be assessed against the following seven questions, each with a set weighting. Responses will be scored from 0 to 10. To achieve a high score, applicants should provide clear, detailed, and evidence-based answers. Please ensure that you adhere strictly to the stated word limits as any content submitted beyond the word count will not be considered.

(i) Project Description, Target Participants and Anticipated Benefits (20%)

Question:

Describe your proposed project, the people it will support, and the benefits it will deliver for them as they wait for Health and Social Care (HSC) treatment.

Maximum word count: 600

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. What activities, services or support your project will provide.

2. Which patient groups, conditions, specialties or HSC waiting lists will benefit
3. Why these participants have been identified as a priority group.
4. What evidence demonstrates that the project is needed.
5. The need or gap in support your project is seeking to address.
6. How the project complements, rather than duplicates, existing HSC or voluntary and community sector services.
7. How the project will improve participants' health, wellbeing, independence, self-management, resilience or readiness for treatment while they wait for HSC services.

(ii) Experience and Capacity for Successful Delivery (10%)

Question:

Describe your organisation's delivery experience and operational capacity to successfully implement the proposed project and support the target participants.

Maximum word count: 400

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. Your experience delivering similar projects, services or support activities.
2. Your experience working with the proposed participant group or people with comparable needs.
3. The skills, qualifications and expertise of the staff, volunteers or practitioners who will deliver the project.
4. The resources, facilities, equipment or infrastructure available to support delivery.

(iii) Project Delivery, Partnerships and Delivery Model (20%)

Question:

Explain how the project will be delivered, managed and coordinated to ensure successful outcomes for participants.

Maximum word count: 600

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. How eligible participants will be identified, verified, recruited, referred and engaged.
2. Any existing referral pathways that will support access to the project.
3. Any established delivery partnerships or collaborations that will support successful implementation.
4. How day-to-day project delivery will be managed and coordinated.
5. How the project will operate in practice, including the participant journey and delivery model.
6. Any key delivery risks and how they will be managed.

(iv) Value for Money (10%)

Question:

Explain how the project represents an effective, efficient and proportionate use of public funding.

Maximum word count: 400

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. The total amount of funding requested.
2. The number of participants who will benefit from the project.
3. How existing resources, partnerships, venues or volunteers support delivery.
4. How the funding requested is proportionate to the activities delivered and outcomes expected.
5. How the proposed staffing and resources are proportionate to the number of participants being supported, and the intensity of support being provided.
6. Any wider benefits to communities or health services.
7. How the project will maximise impact from the funding available.

(v) Outcomes, Impact and Evaluation (20%)

Question:

Explain the outcomes your project will achieve and how you will measure, evaluate and report its impact.

Applicants should set out clear project outcomes supported by SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound). This will help demonstrate how success will be measured, monitored and evidenced throughout the project.

Maximum word count: 600

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. The benefits participants are expected to experience.
2. How the project will improve health, wellbeing, independence, resilience, self-management or readiness for treatment.
3. What baseline information will be collected.
4. How participant engagement, attendance and progress will be monitored.
5. The indicators, measures, tools or evidence you will use to assess success.
6. Any targets you intend to achieve.
7. How outcomes and impact data will be recorded and analysed.
8. How learning, feedback and participant experiences will be captured.
9. How results and achievements will be reported during and at the end of the project.
10. Any measures that will support sustainability or continuation of benefits beyond the grant period, where applicable.

(vi) Accessibility, Inclusion and Reducing Health Inequalities (10%)

Question:

Explain how your project will be accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of people who may face barriers to participation or experience poorer health outcomes.

Maximum word count: 400

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. How you will identify and support people who may experience barriers to participation.
2. How you will support people with disabilities, long-term conditions, sensory impairments or communication needs.
3. How you will engage people who experience health inequalities.
4. How the project will reach and support any communities or groups relevant to your project who may experience barriers to participation or poorer health outcomes.
5. Any adjustments, adaptations or additional supports you will provide.
6. How the delivery model has been designed to accommodate diverse needs and circumstances.

7. How participants will be supported to engage safely, confidently and with dignity.

(vii) Organisational Governance and Assurance (10%)

Question:

Describe your organisation's governance, management and assurance arrangements and how you will ensure appropriate management of public funds.

Please focus on governance, accountability, compliance and assurance arrangements rather than project delivery experience.

Maximum word count: 400

Guidance

Please tell us about:

1. Your organisational structure and governance arrangements.
2. The roles and responsibilities of senior management, trustees, directors or governing bodies.
3. The roles and responsibilities of any partner organisations involved in project oversight.
4. How project performance and grant compliance will be monitored.
5. How organisational and project risks will be managed.
6. The financial controls and management arrangements in place to ensure accountability and appropriate use of public funds.
7. Your safeguarding arrangements.
8. Your data protection and information governance arrangements.
9. Your equality, diversity and inclusion policies and practices.
10. Any other policies, procedures or assurance measures relevant to the successful management of the project.

Additional Considerations (not scored)

- 5.1 Some sections of the application are not formally scored but provide additional information to support eligibility checks, statutory requirements and portfolio planning. These include:
 - (i) Section 75 Equality Compliance is a **mandatory requirement** which is not scored. Applicants must demonstrate how they will meet applicable equality obligations and promote equality of opportunity and good relations. Failure to

meet any mandatory eligibility requirement may result in an application being deemed ineligible.

- (ii) Geographic Reach – used to understand the geographic distribution of proposed and funded activity, identify gaps in provision and support portfolio planning.

5.2 Unscored sections allow the Department to ensure that funding is distributed fairly and that projects meet statutory obligations. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide full and detailed responses in these areas.

6. Funding Requested

6.1 The Support While Waiting Grant Scheme provides funding to enable organisations to deliver projects that directly benefit people on HSC waiting lists. It is essential that all funding requested is necessary, proportionate, and clearly linked to your proposed activities.

6.2 When completing the finance section of the application form, you should provide a transparent budget that breaks down costs clearly, explains how each cost supports delivery, and demonstrates value for money. The Department must be satisfied that funding will be used appropriately and in line with programme aims.

6.3 Please note that up to 25% of the annual salary cost of an individual permanent member of staff may be included where that proportion of their time is directly attributable to delivery of the proposed project and is not funded from another source.

6.4 All applicants are required to:

- Provide a detailed breakdown of costs by category (e.g. staff, project delivery, publicity).
- Justify each item requested, showing how it will contribute to participant outcomes.
- Confirm that no other funding is being used to duplicate the same costs.
- Ensure requested amounts fall within the grant limits (£5,000 minimum, £30,000 maximum).

6.5 **Please note:** The Department reserves the right to reduce or refuse funding for costs it considers excessive, unclear, or not directly linked to supporting people on waiting lists. Applicants should therefore make sure their budget is both realistic and well-justified.

Eligible and Ineligible Costs

- 6.6 The grant scheme can only fund activities and resources that are directly linked to delivering projects for people currently on HSC waiting lists. To ensure public money is used responsibly, applicants must carefully check which costs are eligible before completing their budget.
- 6.7 Eligible costs are those that directly support programme delivery - for example, session costs for qualified practitioners, volunteer expenses, or materials needed for participants. Reasonable project-attributable overheads are permitted but must not exceed the cap set out in the guidance.
- 6.8 Ineligible costs are those that fall outside the scope of the scheme, for example, costs linked to other projects, costs already supported through other grants or funding sources, capital expenditure (e.g. building works or equipment purchase), general running costs that are not directly attributable to the funded project, or retrospective spending on activities that have already taken place. The scheme also cannot cover items that are harmful to health, such as alcohol or cigarettes, or costs unrelated to supporting people on waiting lists.
- 6.9 Applicants should note that all expenditure must represent value for money and contribute directly to project outcomes. The Department reserves the right to refuse or recover funding for any costs that are excessive, not justified, or not clearly linked to supporting the target group.

6.10 Eligible Costs

- Volunteer expenses
- Up to 25% of a permanent member of staff's annual salary, where the cost is directly attributable to the delivery of the proposed project
- Session costs for qualified practitioners and/or therapists
- Materials and resources required for project delivery
- Reasonable general running costs/overhead, e.g. light and heat – capped at 10% of total grant
- Venue hire for project delivery
- Direct cost of marketing, promotional, educational or awareness activity (leaflets, posters etc.) provided this is proportionate and targeted

6.11 Ineligible Costs

- Capital costs, such as building purchase, construction or major refurbishment
- Capital equipment, such as mobile phones or laptops
- Property running costs, i.e. rent and rates
- Salary costs already supported through other grants or funding sources
- Costs incurred before the grant award letter is issued (retrospective costs)
- Alcohol, cigarettes or other substances or activities considered harmful to health
- Gifts or entertainment
- Costs not clearly linked to supporting individuals on waiting lists

- Loan repayments or debt servicing costs

7. Assessment of Applications

Submitted applications are checked to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria. If an application does not meet the criteria, it will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered.

Eligible applications will then be assessed against the assessment criteria by a panel, made up of three members. Depending on the number of applications received, more than one assessment panel may be required. Where multiple panels are used, all panels will assess applications against the same assessment criteria and scoring framework to ensure a consistent approach. The panel(s) will then meet and agree a consensus score for your application, to ensure all applications have been assessed fairly, objectively and consistently.

The panel will then produce a rank-ordered list of the applications, and working from the highest scoring application downwards, subject to the available budget, identify those organisations that may be considered for funding.

Organisations being considered for funding may be asked to provide further information for due diligence purposes, including financial, governance, eligibility or assurance information. A request for further information does not constitute an offer of funding.

Funding decisions will be subject to satisfactory completion of all required eligibility, due diligence and assurance checks.

8. Payment of Grants

- 8.1 Article 71 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 authorises the Department to make grants to voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland which provide services similar or related to any of the health or social care services.
- 8.2 Successful applicants will receive their funding as a single, one-off payment following confirmation of award. Given the level of funding available (£5,000–£30,000), payments will not normally be made in stages.
- 8.3 In exceptional circumstances, and only where there is a clear case for doing so, the Department may consider releasing funding in instalments linked to agreed delivery milestones. Any such arrangements will be set out in the grant award letter.

9. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

- 9.1 Organisations must:
 - Submit monitoring reports to the Department of Health as required.

- Retain invoices/receipts and evidence of expenditure for at least 7 years.
- Provide agreed monitoring and outcome information, which may include anonymised or aggregated participant-level data where appropriate (e.g. wellbeing questionnaires, activity logs).
Report on equal opportunities and inclusion practices.
- Report any unspent funding as soon as it is identified and repay any underspend by 31 March 2028.

10. Information Retention and Sharing

- All Government Departments, Agencies and other funding bodies may share information to enable them to prevent and detect fraudulent applications and to co-ordinate the processing of complementary applications. Accordingly, information provided by the Organisation during the application and assessment process, monitoring returns and any other information provided by the Organisation may be made available to other Departments/Agencies for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of information and preventing or detecting crime. The Department may publish information relating to successful awards, including the name of the funded organisation, project description and value of the award. Personal, confidential or commercially sensitive information will be handled in accordance with applicable legal and information governance requirements.
- If grant application is successful, all records and information relating to Grant expenditure must be retained by the organisation for a period of not less than 7 years following the last payment of Grant. Any such record shall be made available for inspection upon request by the Department or the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland.

11. Declaration and Conditions

11.1 Applicants must sign the declaration, confirming:

- Accuracy of information provided;
- No duplication of funding;
- Agreement to monitoring, evaluation, and audit processes;
- Adherence to safeguarding and financial control requirements;
- Understanding of repayment conditions; and
- Compliance with the terms and conditions of any Letter of Offer/Grant Award Letter.

12. Submitting Your Application

12.1 Organisations must:

- Complete all sections of the application form; and

- Submit by **12 noon on Friday 6 November 2026**
 - by email to: WaitingWell@health-ni.gov.uk
 - or by post to:

Support While Waiting Grant Admin Team
Elective Care & Cancer Policy Directorate
D1
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BT4 3SQ

Late applications will not be accepted.

Please direct any queries you may have in relation to the Support While Waiting Grant Scheme to WaitingWell@health-ni.gov.uk