

Support While Waiting Grant Scheme 2026/2027 Fact File

Introduction

The Department of Health has produced this Q&A document following the announcement of the 2026/27 Support While Waiting Grant Scheme.

The Support While Waiting Grant Scheme is in addition to the tens of millions of pounds of health and social care funding provided annually to the sector for the delivery of important services.

What is the Support While Waiting Grant Scheme?

Reducing waiting times is a key priority for the Department of Health. It is also important that people receive appropriate support while they wait for treatment.

The Support While Waiting Grant Scheme was established to provide funding to organisations to deliver programmes 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, mental, and social wellbeing.

Who is eligible to apply to the Grant Scheme?

Applicants must be registered charities operating in Northern Ireland.

They must have relevant experience of delivering health, wellbeing or social support services and have appropriate governance, financial management, safeguarding and monitoring arrangements in place.

Applicants should review the full eligibility criteria in the Applicant Guidance before applying.

What are the programme requirements?

Programmes must directly support people who are currently on an eligible HSC waiting list in Northern Ireland.

Applicants must explain how eligible participants will be identified and engaged. Any collection or use of participants' personal information must comply with relevant data protection requirements.

Full details of the eligible target group and programme requirements are set out in the Applicant Guidance.

What types of programmes can be funded?

Programmes should provide person-centred, practical support that helps people maintain or improve their health, wellbeing or daily functioning while they wait for treatment.

Examples may include:

- physical activity and mobility programmes;
- nutrition and healthy lifestyle support;
- pain management or condition-specific self-management;
- mental health and emotional wellbeing support; and
- peer support and opportunities for social connection.

Programmes must complement, rather than replace or duplicate, existing statutory HSC services.

All funded activities must be free for participants. Programmes should also be accessible, inclusive and designed to reduce barriers to participation.

What funding is available?

The Department has allocated £500,000 to the Support While Waiting Grant Scheme in 2026/27.

Eligible organisations may apply for grants between £5,000 and £30,000.

Funding will be provided as a one-off grant. All funded activity must be completed, and all funding fully spent, by 31 March 2028.

What costs are eligible?

Funding must be used for eligible costs directly associated with delivering the proposed programme.

Salary costs must not exceed 25% of the grant requested and must be directly attributable to the delivery of the proposed programme.

Reasonable overhead costs must not exceed 10% of the grant requested.

Ineligible costs for this Scheme include rent and rates and the purchase of capital equipment, such as, for example, mobile phones and laptops.

Applicants must confirm that the funding requested does not duplicate funding already secured from another source for the same activities or costs.

Full details of eligible and ineligible expenditure are provided in the Applicant Guidance.

How do I apply?

Applicants must complete the application form and submit it in accordance with the instructions set out in the Applicant Guidance.

Applications must be complete and received by the closing date and time. Late applications will not be considered.

What if I have a query about the application process

Applicants should carefully read the Applicant Guidance before completing the application form.

If you require further clarification on a particular issue, please email

WaitingWell@health-ni.gov.uk.

What are the key dates for the Grant Scheme?

The Grant Scheme will open on 25 September 2026.

The deadline for applications is 12 noon on 6 November 2026. Applications received after the closing time and date will be automatically rejected and will not be assessed.

All fully completed and successfully submitted applications will be acknowledged by email.

Assessment will begin after the application window closes, and it is expected that Letters of Offer will be issued to successful applicants in January 2027, with funding following in due course. All funding will be committed before the end of March 2027.

How will applications be assessed?

Demand may exceed the funding available. Meeting the eligibility and programme requirements does not guarantee an award.

Applications will be assessed by a panel consisting of Departmental officials. Each application will be marked according to a weighted scoring matrix and ranked in order of merit.

Eligible applications will be ranked in order of merit.

Grant awards will be based on applicants' scores and subject to the funding available, satisfactory due-diligence checks and acceptance of the terms and conditions of funding.

Previous receipt of funding does not guarantee an award under this scheme.

When will applicants be notified of the outcome of the assessment process?

The Department expects to notify all applicants of the outcome of the assessment process in January 2027.

Successful applicants will receive a Letter of Offer setting out the amount awarded and the terms and conditions of funding.

What monitoring and evaluation will be required?

Successful applicants will be required to participate fully in the monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements set out in the Applicant Guidance and Letter of Offer. Recipients must notify the Department as soon as they identify any potential underspend. All unspent funding must be repaid to the Department no later than 31 March 2028.

Failure to comply with these requirements may result in action being taken in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant, including, where appropriate, the recovery of funding.