



Croydon Loves You 2025 Application Guidelines Creative Health Programme

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Background

Croydon Loves You 2025 (CLY 2025) is a grants programme for community groups, organisations and individuals that would like to deliver creative, arts-based projects that support the health and wellbeing of Croydon residents.

The programme builds on previous Croydon Loves You grant rounds (last awarded summer 2024) which funded 29 different projects engaging a total of 4,098 people with activities ranging from creative writing to sewing and steel pans.

Croydon Loves You 2025 has been re-developed by the Creative Health team in Croydon Council, with funding from Public Health. Funded projects will need to demonstrate the ways in which their activity is supporting health and wellbeing outcomes for those experiencing health inequalities (see further information below).

We know there is much exceptional, responsive work already taking place within our creative and health communities. Communities possess the deepest understanding of their own needs and the most effective approaches to addressing them. CLY 2025 is committed to supporting and fostering the growth of this vital work.

New applicants as well as previous CLY recipients are welcome to apply.

We want you to have the best chance of getting a grant. These guidance notes have been developed to support your application. Please read them carefully.

Potential or interested applicants are welcome to speak to a member of the council's Creative Health team at any stage of the application – whether it's for help thinking of an idea, connecting with potential partners, or answering application questions. Email us on creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk and we will arrange a time to speak to offer further support or advice.

Funding Opportunity

Applications are open to individuals and organisations who want to use creative arts or culture to support health and wellbeing for people in Croydon. Please see full eligibility conditions under the [Eligibility](#) section below.

A total grant pot of £185,000 is available across 2025. You can apply for a grant at three different levels based on your project size and prior experience:

- **Micro Grants** of £500-£1,500 are available to support:
 - Projects to test a new idea; or
 - Projects predominantly led by volunteers; or
 - Projects by groups who haven't worked in Creative Health before.
 - Projects in this range will likely run for 1-3 months.
 - The CLY panel will review applications at four times during the year.
Deadlines for submission are 5pm on Friday 28th March, 6th June, 19th September and 12th December.
- **Project Grants** of £1,500-£5,000 are available to:
 - Projects to roll out previously tested micro-grants work; or
 - Projects that build on existing work or practice.
 - Projects in this range will likely run for around 3-6 months.
 - The CLY panel will review applications at four times during the year.
Deadlines for submission are 5pm on Friday 28th March, 6th June, 19th September and 12th December.
- **Step-change Grants** of £5,000-£10,000 are available to:
 - Projects that will create lasting change in quality, reach and/or depth of impact of Creative Health delivery for an organisation or local area.
 - Projects in this range must last between 8-12 months.
 - This grant strand may include artist training or other methods of making ongoing delivery possible after the lifetime of the grant.
 - Applicants must demonstrate a track record of delivering or hosting creative health work or be a consortium of locally based organisations working together to improve local opportunities to apply at this level.
 - Lead organisations must be formally constituted to apply for this grant level.
 - The CLY panel will review applications in two rounds. Applications must be submitted by 5pm on Friday 28th March or 6th June to be considered.

*Grants for one-off events will not be considered. There is a separate [programme](#) of support to co-produce cultural events promoting health information or services.

****All projects should be completed, including evaluation, by 31st of March 2026.**

*****If you have personal access needs that incur costs to enable you to deliver your programme, you can apply for up to £500 on top of the grant levels listed here towards support. Please see the [Access Support Funding](#) section below.**

Funding Criteria

Successful applicants will meet all of the following four grant criteria.

- 1. Activity must support one or more of the following health and wellbeing needs, by achieving one or more of the listed outcomes.** These needs were identified as priorities for Croydon residents during the Creative Health team's consultation with more than 180 people from the Council, VCFS, arts and health sectors.

Health and wellbeing needs:

Projects must support at least one group listed here.

- People experiencing low mood or low self-esteem
- People with mental health needs, including depression or anxiety
- People who are experiencing or are at risk of social isolation and/or loneliness
- People living with dementia and/or frailty
- People who need support with healthy weight management
- People who need support to manage long term health conditions (these are conditions without cure, such as diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Sickle Cell Anemia, stroke, or others)

Health and wellbeing outcomes:

Projects must achieve at least one outcome listed here.

- Bringing people together to improve feelings of connection and belonging
- Reducing social isolation
- Reducing symptoms of anxiety or depression
- Improving mood
- Developing confidence or self-efficacy
- Developing self-esteem
- Improving feelings of resilience
- Peer support for shared conditions
- Keeping people physically active
- Keeping people cognitively stimulated
- Respite and/or support for family carers
- Information on health condition management, weight management or healthy lifestyles

2. **Projects should primarily aim to work with people who are at risk of or experiencing health inequalities.** Health inequalities are avoidable, unfair and systematic differences in health between different groups of people. For a brief overview please read The King's Fund article '[Health Inequalities in a nutshell.](#)'

We know Croydon has high levels of health inequalities (see Director of Public Health Report 2022 in resources at end of pack). In Croydon, these may include:

- People experiencing low socio-economic status or deprivation, including people currently unemployed, living in poverty or on low incomes
- People from global majority backgrounds
- LGBTIQ+ or non-binary people
- People with physical or learning disabilities, sensory impairments or neurodivergence
- People who do not speak English fluently
- Children in care or with experience of care
- Informal family carers
- People experiencing homelessness
- Young people not in education, employment or training
- Asylum seeker, refugee or migrant communities

Please note, grants will be split across the borough; however, we expect around 80% of delivery to reach people in New Addington, Central West and Thornton Heath as these areas have the highest levels of health inequalities in Croydon.

3. **Proposals must be focused on Creative Health,** and use creative or arts-based activities to improve an aspect of participants' physical, mental health or wellbeing. Successful projects will demonstrate how they support participants to be creative and express themselves.

Example art forms include:

- Visual art: painting, drawing, print-making, sculpture, collage, textiles, ceramics, glass art, jewelry, fashion design, crafts, design, street art (graffiti), photography, film, animation
- Performing arts: music, singing, dance, theatre, comedy, spoken word, puppetry
- Literary arts: creative writing, poetry, literature, drama

- Creative skills: garden design, creative cooking/baking, woodworking, upcycling
- Creative activities in nature: any of the above taking place in nature

Creative Health activities should consider the desired health and wellbeing outcomes for participants (Criteria 1), and be designed to maximise these outcomes in a way that works for participants.

Because each project is designed with participants in mind, activity can take many shapes and forms. A few examples of activity that would be considered Creative Health could include:

- Collage workshops with non-binary young people experiencing low mood: led by a visual artist, workshops support young people to use colours, pictures and text cut out of media materials to create original pieces of artwork expressing their current thoughts, feelings and/or emotions. Participants are able to share their stories in a supportive environment, meet others in similar circumstances and examine their thoughts from a new perspective. Participants leave sessions feeling less socially-isolated, with improved self-esteem and higher mood.
- Story-telling sessions with people with dementia from global majority communities: led by a professional story-teller, participants are encouraged to reminisce and share stories from their childhood, bringing elements of their identities and cultures to the group. Stories are then re-mixed or added to, creating a novel group story. Participants listen back to their old and new stories, and find enjoyment and connectedness with the story-teller, other participants and carers.
- Singing group for people with long-term respiratory conditions: led by a trained Singing Leader, warm up activities help participants become aware of and correct their posture, practice breath control and engage cognitively with instructions about how loud or soft, fast or slow, to sing. Songs from around the world are specially selected to challenge participants to improve their breath control. Social activities such as tea breaks and small group activities help participants feel part of a safe and supportive community, relieving stress and loneliness experienced with long-term respiratory conditions.

- Weekly meet ups for men currently out of work: a community centre offers volunteer-led sessions with a member of the team leading a short activity based on their personal hobby. Activities might include woodworking, sculpting or songwriting. Volunteers support participants to take part, encouraging them to try something new and contribute ideas, introducing men to each other and providing a listening ear. Refreshments and breaks allow participants to socialise, and men are able to take home meals for their families. Men leave sessions feeling better connected, less anxious, with higher self-esteem and more resilience.

4 . Successful applications must agree to complete monitoring and evaluation of grant activity.

CLY 2025 is funded by Public Health and we must demonstrate the programme's impact on the health and wellbeing of participants.

The Creative Health team will work with successful applicants to design and agree evaluation plans during a (not more than) 30min meeting upon notification of success. This is to ensure all evaluation will feed into the wider outcomes the Creative Health programme must report on.

For all grants, a minimum expectation of collecting attendance data, demographic details of participants, and qualitative feedback (in appropriate ways) will apply. More rigorous evaluation such as base-line/post-activity questionnaires and case studies may be required for Project and Step-change grants where appropriate. We will work together to ensure the plan is appropriate and realistic for your project.

Please ensure you include funding and time in your project plans to allow you to attend the planning meeting and complete the level of required evaluation estimated above. Projects will have 5% of funding retained by Croydon Council until evaluation reports have been completed and submitted (remember to cash flow accordingly).

Assessment Criteria: Creative Health Quality Framework

CLY 2025 will use the [Creative Health Quality Framework](#) to assess applications. This Framework outlines a set of principles which underpin good practice.

The list below includes selections and adaptations from the [Creative Health Quality Framework Recommendations for Creative Practitioners](#). We encourage applicants to use these as a guide when they are designing their projects. You will be asked to explain how you are ensuring these principles are met as part of your application.

Is your project:

- Person-centred
 - Have you, or could you, develop the project from the start with people who have lived experience of the need or group you are aiming to support?
 - Do you need more information about the people you are working with? For example, do you understand how their health needs, circumstances or experience might affect how they want to work with you?
 - Are you able to adapt and tailor your approach to suit people's preferences, strengths and abilities?
- Equitable
 - Have you considered what barriers people might face to getting involved?
 - Is the idea for the work culturally appropriate for the audience?
 - Do you need further training in relation to equality and diversity, or cultural competency and humility, anti-racism or anti-ablism?
- Safe
 - How do you ensure participants are safe?
 - Are there policies and systems in place to manage risk and ensure safeguarding and safety? Have you read and signed up to these?
 - Do you have appropriate insurance (including public liability) in place?
 - What risk assessments might you need to carry out?
 - Are you satisfied that the environment, the activities and the materials are safe and appropriate for the context?
 - Is the group size appropriate for the nature of the work, and the level of your skills and experience?
 - If it is not you, do you know who is responsible for Health and Safety, First Aid and Mental Health First Aid? Do you have up to date contact details including telephone numbers for these people?
 - How will you keep yourself safe? Do you feel clear about your competency and the limits of your responsibility?

- Creative
 - Will the project create something that people will find engaging, exciting, and inspiring, as well as purposeful, meaningful, and relevant?
 - Does the activity plan allow people to experiment and take risks, as well as appropriate support to ensure safety and success?
 - Are the plans open enough to give you space to experiment and adapt in response to people's needs? If not, how can you build this in?
- Collaborative
 - Have you worked with others to develop joined-up approaches? This might include people with lived experience, health, care or community sector workers, or other creatives.
 - Have you budgeted enough time and resources for this process?
 - Do all parties come together at key intervals to review progress and reflect openly and honestly on the process of working together?
- Realistic
 - Are the timescales for the work realistic and achievable?
 - Have you had enough time to understand the context, to get to know people and develop the work prior to delivery? Is this time budgeted for?
 - Is there time to allow for trust and relationships to develop between participants and between yourself and participants?
- Reflective
 - How has learning from previous work (your own or others') helped you plan?
 - Have you included space to reflect and learn from failure and success?
- Sustainable
 - Have you considered the environment in your choice of materials, transport, and equipment? Are you able to reuse or share spaces or equipment?
 - Have you considered how the work will support participants beyond the end of the project – for example, will there be further activities, peer-led groups, or signposting to ongoing offers?
 - Consider how this work will support the long-term sustainability of your practice or professional aims.

Eligibility

Please check if you and your project are eligible against the following criteria.

Who can apply?

Applications are welcome from any of the following:

- Individual practitioners
- Artists or artist collectives
- Community and/or arts organisations
- Residents' associations
- Registered charities
- Limited companies and/or CICs (with no profit made from this project)
- Schools, or work with schools, may only apply for extra-curricular activity that takes place outside the school timetable
- Religious groups may only apply for non-religious activities
- Statutory agencies, such as the police, health or other Croydon Council departments. Applicants must demonstrate a strong link with the community they propose to work with, and why they are best-placed to hold the funding
- Collaborative projects: for example between creatives, voluntary, community or social enterprise organisations, social care, health and wellbeing organisations, education providers. In this case, one organisation will need to make the application on behalf of the group, and list all partners in the application

*Applications for activity with children or vulnerable adults must hold suitable safeguarding policies and procedures. Please submit these with your application.

**Individuals must be over 18 years old and have a bank account to apply.

We cannot fund:

- Projects that do not use arts or creative activities to support health and wellbeing
- Projects that do not primarily benefit Croydon residents. We welcome submissions from organisations and practitioners who are based outside of the borough provided that the project benefits Croydon residents.
- Projects that state they wish to work with a target group with whom they do not already have a relationship or have not already engaged in initial scoping conversations. If you need support reaching a new target community, get in touch on creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk before submitting your application.
- Projects that do not have a clear start and end date.
- Projects that happen or start before we confirm the grant

- Projects that finish after March 31st 2026
- One-off events
- Projects that generate profit
- Capital expenditure – such as IT, office or kitchen equipment, or building repairs
- Core funding, except for reasonable overhead costs to support delivery of projects
- Acquisition of land, buildings, or heritage items
- Political (including lobbying) or religious activities
- Work that is already part of an existing contract (with the council or anyone else)
- Projects working with or receiving funding from companies or individuals who may bring the Council into disrepute
- Individuals or organisations may only hold one Croydon Loves You grant at a time. Successful grantees must submit all evaluation and other required materials in advance of submitting an application for another grant.

Making an application

To apply you will need to complete either:

- an online application form; or
- an audio or film recording of your responses to the application form questions (please submit by WeTransfer or other free email transfer link to creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk); or
- submit responses to the application form questions as a Word Doc or PDF to creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk

In addition, all applicants will need to complete and submit (via the online application form, or email if submitting an audio/video or word/pdf application):

- a completed budget template outlining how you will spend the grant
- a completed project timeline template to indicate key milestones
- child and/or vulnerable adult safeguarding policies and procedures where relevant

Find the link to the application form, download application questions to help you prepare your responses, and the budget template and timeline template which you will need to complete to submit on the [CLY2025 website](#).

If you wish to apply by recorded audio or filmed responses to the application questions, please submit the recording and additional documents to creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk via WeTransfer or another free file transfer platform. If you are unable to use the online form, please email your documents to creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk.

If you need any support, or experience any technical issues while making an application, please email creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk

**We aim to ensure that CLY 2025 and the wider Creative Health Programme are accessible to everyone. In order to check how we are doing and make improvements, we would appreciate if you would take the time to complete this [anonymous equality and monitoring survey](#) upon submission of your application. Your responses to this survey will not be connected to your application or influence outcomes in any way.

Applications will first be assessed for eligibility by a panel of Council officers. Eligible applications will be assessed by a panel made up of Council officers from teams including Creative Health and Public Health, as well as trained volunteers from community partners.

This panel will meet the week following each submission deadline. Notification of outcomes will take place by the end of this week (one week after relevant submission deadline). You may be contacted during the assessment week if we need more information about an aspect of your application.

In addition to the merits of each application and its match to the Funding Criteria and Assessment Criteria listed above, the panel will take into consideration the need to ensure a balanced programme which takes place across the borough (see geographic priorities above) and reaches a diverse range of residents.

All successful applicants will be required to:

- Agree and complete monitoring and evaluation of your activity. Final grant payments will not be released until agreed data has been submitted;
- Acknowledge Croydon Council funding on all public materials, adhering to Croydon Council brand guidelines (a pack will be shared with successful applicants);
- Supply, along with all appropriate permissions, photos or recordings of projects to be used by Croydon Council.

Support Available

We understand that Creative Health or applying for grant funding may be new experiences for some people. In order to help with your application, the following support is available.

- The Creative Health team is available for 30min conversations to support at any stage of applications. E-mail us at creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk to book.

- On 28th January, a **Creative Health Network** launched for people in Croydon interested in Creative Health. Monthly newsletters and periodic meetings enable members to come together and access training, peer-support and networking opportunities. If you wish to join the Network and mailing list, [please register here.](#)
- A programme of free training including evaluation, fundraising and project management skills will be made available to local providers throughout 2025. Visit the Creative Health webpages to keep up to date and join any sessions of interest.
- You will find a list of useful Creative Health resources and Croydon-specific health information at the end of these guidelines.

Access Support Funding

We are committed to removing barriers to delivering arts and cultural experiences; if you require personal support to deliver your proposed project, you may apply for up to £500 above your grant level upper limit in support costs from our Access Fund.

You may require additional support due to a disability, long-term health condition, carer responsibility, low income, language barrier, being a single parent, or other need. Funding might include contributions towards the cost of travel, care support for a dependent, a translator/interpreter or other reasonable adjustments to support your delivery. For example, you may require taxi transport due to mobility issues that make public transport challenging, and find this additional cost prohibitive to your situation.

Please ensure that you include any Access Support Funding requests in the designated section of the budget template when submitting your application. Requesting this funding will not influence the assessment of your application.

Timeline

- Applications open 1st February 2025
- Four application rounds are available throughout the year:
 - Round 1: Submit by 5pm 28th March; outcomes notified by 5pm 4th April
 - Micro Grants
 - Project Grants
 - Step-change Grants
 - Round 2: Submit by 5pm 6th June; outcomes notified by 5pm 13th June
 - Micro Grants

- Project Grants
- Step-change Grants
- Round 3: Submit by 5pm 19th September; outcomes notified by 5pm 26th Sept
 - Micro Grants
 - Project Grants
- Round 4: Submit by 5pm 12th December; outcomes notified by 5pm 19th Dec
 - Micro Grants
 - Project Grants
- Successful applicants book in and attend (not more than) 30min meeting with Creative Health team to design and agree evaluation plan
- Grant agreements sent and returned
- First grant payment made
- Project delivery (timeline varies based on application)
- Evaluation materials completed and returned
- Final grant payment made
- All projects completed by 31st March 2026

Document Checklist

Here is a list of the documents you will need to complete your application:

- Application guidelines (this document)
- Creative Health Quality Framework for Creative Practitioners – download [here](#)
- Application Question Overview – download [here](#)
- Budget template – download [here](#)
- Timeline template – download [here](#)
- Application online form – available on [CLY 2025 news site](#)

Other Resources

[Creative Health Quality Framework](#)

This tool outlines what “good” looks like for Creative Health activities. It includes a set of downloadable PDF resources based around eight Creative Health Quality Principles.

[The National Centre for Creative Health Creative Health Review](#)

This review gathers evidence of the benefits of Creative Health in supporting health and wellbeing of people in the UK. It includes examples of work already underway.

[The Baring Foundation Case Studies](#) give examples of creative and participatory arts projects with a mental health focus, across different settings and with different audiences and groups of people.

[The Impact of Arts and Cultural Engagement on Population Health](#)

Research findings on the impacts of arts and cultural engagement on health and wellbeing in the UK/US, especially re: children and young people, mental health, and healthy ageing.

[Health Inequalities in Croydon, Director of Public Health Report 2022](#)

Read more about health inequalities in Croydon.

[Croydon Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2029](#)

This newly launched strategy explains how Croydon will work together to improve health and wellbeing for everyone over the next five years.

[Croydon Schools Health & Wellbeing Survey Results, 2022/23](#)

This report shares the results of the latest schools' health and wellbeing survey and students' responses.

[Guidance for working online, and online safeguarding](#)

A guide from the Culture, Health & Wellbeing Alliance to help you run safe and welcoming workshops online, including safeguarding children or vulnerable adults.

[Croydon Creative Health Network](#)

Join the Croydon Creative Health Network mailing list and be kept up to date of what's going on in the borough, attend networking events to meet others, access training and support.

[Understanding Creative Health in London](#)

Read about the development of Creative Health in London, what it means, how the arts and health sectors contribute, and the sectors' main challenges and opportunities.

[London Arts and Health](#)

Support for creative practitioners and health professionals across London and beyond. Their website includes resources, they run events and training, and share a newsletter.

[Arts and Health Hub](#)

Support for artists exploring health & wellbeing to connect, learn and share through a range of professional development programmes, socials, workshops and events.