



Croydon Loves You 2026

Application Guidelines

Now in its third year, **Croydon Loves You** provides small grants to individuals or organisations delivering creative arts and cultural activities that support residents at risk of health inequalities to improve their health or wellbeing.

You can see examples of previously funded work on the Culture Croydon webpage:

- [2025 Round 1](#)
- [2025 Round 2](#)
- [2025 Round 3](#)

A total of £185,000 has been secured from Public Health and the Community Infrastructure Levy for Croydon Loves You 2026, which will be distributed in two grant rounds in April and September 2026, for projects completed before 31 March 2027.

While similar to previous years, there are differences to the programme in 2026.

Please read the following guidance carefully before applying.

The Creative Health team are happy to offer an advisory call to applicants at any stage of the process, from developing an idea, to finding partners to work with, or advice on budgeting. Please email the team on creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk to schedule a 30-minute conversation.

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What kind of activity do we fund?

This fund specifically supports work that engages Croydon residents in creative activities to benefit their health and wellbeing. Activities might include:

- Visual art: painting, drawing, print-making, sculpture, collage, textiles, ceramics, glass art, jewellery, fashion design, crafts, 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

Projects should support participants to actively engage in creativity, rather than act as audience members or recipients.

What kind of activity do we not fund?

This fund is not able to support activity that is not mainly focused on artistic activities.

Projects delivering the following activities are not eligible:

- Yoga
- Mindfulness, unless included as an addition to a creative activity
- Reiki
- Sound baths/healing, as participants are not themselves being creative
- Pet therapy
- Martial arts
- Football or other sports
- Nature walks, unless creative activities are a main feature of these walks
- Advice and/or information, unless offered alongside a creative programme
- Mentoring, unless offered alongside a creative programme

This fund does not support one-off events. If you are interested in putting on a cultural event promoting health messages, see our [Creative Health Information Events](#) programme instead.

Who are projects for?

This fund specifically focuses on reaching communities at risk of 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.](#)'

Your project **must** be designed to support one of the following groups:

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

Projects aimed at the general public, or without clear routes to primarily engage one of the groups above, are unlikely to be successful.

In addition, projects should support people facing one or more of the health or wellbeing challenges outlined in the '[What should projects do?](#)' section.

What should projects do?

Projects should support residents facing health or wellbeing challenges to engage in creative activity that achieves one or more of the following outcomes:

- Improves low mood or low self-esteem
- Reduces symptoms of depression or anxiety
- Decreases social isolation and/or loneliness
- Increases physical activity
- Keeps people with dementia cognitively stimulated and physically active
- Supports people to manage long term health conditions (i.e., conditions without cure, such as diabetes, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, or stroke)

Who can apply?

Applications for Micro and Project grants are welcome from individuals and organisations of all sizes and types. Applicants for Programme grants must be formally constituted organisations.

This fund is regrettably unable to support activity that takes place within the school timetable or as part of the school curriculum.

Projects must also meet certain criteria. See full eligibility criteria [here](#).

How much can I apply for?

There are three levels of grant available.

- **Micro Grants – £500 to £1,500**
 - Micro grants are available to support people to try out new things and prove whether they work. If you or the project you are proposing do not have a track record, you should apply for this level of grant:
 - People who wish to deliver creative health work for the first time
 - People wanting to test a new project idea
 - Projects that don't yet have an evidence base
 - Micro grant projects should run for 1-3 months.
- **Project Grants – £1,500 to £5,000**
 - Project grants are for people with experience delivering creative health work who wish to propose a project based on this experience, such as:
 - Rolling out a previously tested micro grant project
 - Building on an existing project that works well
 - Creating a new project based on a proven format
 - Project grants should last for a minimum of 3-6 months.
- **Programme Grants – up to £15,000**
 - Up to 5 grants are available for programmes providing ongoing support for the following needs, currently identified as priorities by health partners:
 - **Healthy lifestyles** – support for people to increase physical activity and healthy eating through creative activities
 - **Mental health & social isolation support** – support for residents experiencing depression, anxiety, stress or social isolation, particularly people with long term conditions or other barriers
 - **Support for people experiencing housing issues** – support for people in temporary accommodation, poor-quality private tenancy or housing insecurity to improve physical and/or mental health.
 - Programmes must provide regular activity from June 2026 to March 2027. Applications must therefore be submitted in Round 1 (see [dates](#) below).
 - Applicants must demonstrate qualifications or partnerships with health experts to ensure programmes (e.g., physical fitness, nutrition or mental health advice) adhere to best practice. If you require a link with a health expert, reach out to the Creative Health team.
 - Programmes must be open to referrals from health and social care partners throughout (links with partners provided by Creative Health).
 - This grant level is expected to be highly competitive. Applicants **must** schedule a prior call to discuss their application by emailing creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk before 02/04/26.

Personal Access Support Funding

We are committed to removing barriers to facilitating creative health, and invite practitioners who face specific, additional needs to apply for up to £500 personal access support.

This funding is separate to your activity application, and is to cover costs related to a disability, long-term health condition or care responsibility that makes delivering the proposed project more expensive for you as compared to another provider. 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 Personal 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 wider application.

When can I apply?

Grants will be assessed in two rounds in 2026.

- Round 1
 - Applications accepted for Micro, Project and Programme grants.
 - Deadline to submit applications: **5pm on Thursday 16 April 2026**
 - Applicants will be notified whether their application has been successful by end of the day on Friday 24 April.
 - Successful applicants must attend an evaluation planning meeting to agree how they will evaluate their grant before starting activity. Therefore, planned activity must not start before the middle of May.
 - All projects must be fully delivered, evaluated and reported to the Creative Health team by the end of March 2027.
- Round 2
 - Applications accepted for Micro and Project grants only.
 - Deadline to submit applications: **5pm on Thursday 17 September 2026.**
 - Applicants will be notified whether their application has been successful by end of the day on Friday 25 September.
 - Successful applicants must attend an evaluation planning meeting to agree how they will evaluate their grant before starting activity. Therefore, activity must not start before the middle of October.
 - All projects must be fully delivered, evaluated and reported to the Creative Health team by the end of March 2027.

How do I apply?

To apply you will need to complete an application in one of the following formats:

- an online form
- an audio or film recording of your responses to the application questions
- written responses to the application questions as a Word Doc or PDF

Applications must include:

- a completed budget template outlining how you will spend the grant
 - **NB:** please see the [Charging Fees](#) section below if you intend to charge fees or membership costs for your project
- a completed project timeline template to indicate key milestones
- safeguarding policy and procedure where activity works with children and/or adults at risk

The link to the online application form, application questions, budget and timeline templates and other materials to help with your application are available at [Croydon Loves You 2026 - Culture Croydon %](#)

If you wish to apply by recorded or written responses to the application questions, please submit all files to creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk via WeTransfer or another free file transfer platform by the stated deadline for your grant round.

All successful applicants will be required to:

- Attend a 30-minute evaluation planning meeting with the Creative Health team and complete agreed 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 brand guidelines (a pack will be shared with successful applicants).
- Supply, along with all appropriate permissions, photos or recordings of project activity to be used by Croydon Council.

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

How do we decide what to fund?

Applications are assessed by a panel of referees made up of members of the Creative Health and Public Health teams, as well as volunteers from the community.

Panel members score each application individually. They give scores based on the following criteria:

- Does the application clearly demonstrate how the proposed activity aligns with the Creative Health Quality Framework? (See section [below](#).)
- Does the application clearly demonstrate who the project is aimed at?
 - Is this one of the fund's identified priority groups (groups at risk of health inequalities)?
 - Is it clear how the applicant has developed the project with this group in mind/with their involvement?
 - Is there a clear marketing route to engaging this group?
 - Do the number of participants seem realistic for the target group to achieve the intended outcomes? Take into consideration any specific needs or barriers of groups.
- Does the activity identify what health or wellbeing outcome(s) it will achieve?
 - Is it clear how participating in the proposed activity will achieve this?
- Is the creative activity likely to be high quality?
 - Do facilitators have good artistic practice?
 - Do facilitators have experience working with the participant groups?
- Are participants themselves supported to be creative?
- Does the project timeline make clear logical sense, and include sufficient time for planning, marketing, delivering and evaluating the project?
 - Will applicants realistically be able to complete and report on the project by the stated deadline of end of March 2027?
- Does the project budget make clear logical sense, and include all expected costs to deliver the activity described in the application?
- For Programme grants, does the application demonstrate appropriate qualifications, experience or expert partners to ensure best practice?

Individual panel member scores for each project are then combined and an average taken. Applications are ranked against other applications for the same level of grant in order from highest average score to lowest average score. The panel then meets to discuss applications, ensuring there are no significant discrepancies between scores and that the selected applications will provide a balanced portfolio of activity.

Creative Health Quality Framework

Croydon Loves You uses the [Creative Health Quality Framework](#) to assess applications. The list below includes questions to ask yourself to determine if your project aligns with the Quality Framework. These are adapted 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 developed the project with people who have lived experience of the need you are aiming to support?
 - Do you understand how your target group's 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**
 - 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?
 - 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 achievement?
 - Are your plans open enough to leave 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 working in this field to develop joined-up approaches?
 - Have you budgeted enough time and resources for this process?
 - Do all parties involved in the project come together at key intervals to review progress and reflect 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 prior 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 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?

Full Eligibility Criteria

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

Who can apply?

Applications are welcome from any of the following:

- Micro and Project grants:
 - Individuals (must be 18+ and hold a bank account)
 - Artists or artist collectives
 - Constituted or non-constituted organisations
 - Residents' associations
 - Registered charities
 - Limited companies and/or CICs (with no profit made from this project)
- Programme grants:
 - Applicants must be formally constituted organisations
- Schools, or any 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, including Croydon Council departments, may apply. However, they will need to be clear why they are best-placed to hold the funding rather than a community partner (preferred).
- Collaborative projects, for example for an arts organisation and health provider to work together are welcome. In this case, one organisation will need to make the application on behalf of the activity, and list all partners in the application.

Additional requirements

- Applications for activity with children or vulnerable adults must demonstrate suitable safeguarding policies and procedures.

We cannot fund:

- Activity that doesn't use arts or creative activities to support health and wellbeing
- Activity that does not primarily benefit Croydon residents
- Activities that state they wish to work with a target group with whom they have not already engaged with. If you need help to reach a new target community, get in touch on creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk before submitting your application.
- Activities that do not have a clear start and end date
- Activities that start before we confirm the grant
- Activities that will be completed and/or evaluated after March 31st 2027
- One-off events
- Activities that generate profit – if your activity will charge fees for participation, please read carefully the [Charging Fees](#) section below
- Capital expenditure – such as IT, office or kitchen equipment, or building repairs
- Core funding, except for reasonable overhead costs to support delivery of activity
- 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)
- Activity working with or receiving funding from companies or individuals who may bring the Council into disrepute
- Individuals or organisations who hold another Croydon Loves You grant at the time of application. Successful grantees must submit all evaluation and other required materials and receive confirmation of satisfactory receipt from the Creative Health team in advance of submitting an application for another grant.

Charging Fees

We understand that providers may charge fees for a variety of reasons, including to ensure sustainability or that registered participants actually attend on the day. If you are planning to charge fees or otherwise generate income from your activity, you must make this clear in your application and budget.

Please make clear:

- The reason you are charging fees
- How much you will charge per person
 - It is important that fees remain at a level that people can reasonably be expected to pay. Applications charging more than nominal fees for activity are unlikely to receive funding, as we expect grant funding to be heavily subsidising costs of delivery.
- What provisions are in place to ensure people who cannot pay are still able to take part
 - Applications that do not have provision for free places for people with a demonstrated need are unlikely to receive funding.

You will need to include all expected income in your budget, and show how this is helping cover delivery costs rather than generating a profit.

Please note, if you do not declare that you will be charging for activity or generating income in your application and are later found to be doing so, your grant will be void and all moneys repayable to the Council.

Support Available

We understand that delivering creative health activity 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 30-minute support conversations at any stage of the process. E-mail us at creativehealth@croydon.gov.uk to book.
- The **Creative Health Network** brings together people interested in creative health in Croydon. Monthly newsletters and periodic meetings enable members to come together for 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 other relevant skills, is available to Croydon-based creative health practitioners: [Creative Health Training - Culture Croydon](#)
- There are links to the Creative Health evidence base, Croydon statistics and 'how to' guides available online: [Evidence & Resources - Culture Croydon](#)
- There is a database of local venues available online: [Creative Health Venue Database - Culture Croydon](#)
- The Creative Health team will be holding online and in-person Q&A sessions related to the Croydon Loves You 2026 grant scheme and Creative Health Quality Framework. Sign up for the following sessions via: [Creative Health Training - Culture Croydon](#).
 - **Croydon Loves You 2026 Q&A:** Monday 26 January, 5-6pm, online
 - **Creative Health Quality Framework workshop:** Wednesday 25 February, 5.30-7.30pm, in person (Braithwaite Hall, Katharine Street, CR0 1NX)
 - **Croydon Loves You 2026 Q&A:** Friday 6 March, 1.30-2.30pm, online
 - **Croydon Loves You 2026 Q&A:** Wednesday 3 June, 12.30-1.30pm, online
 - **Creative Health Quality Framework workshop:** Tuesday 16 June, 5.30-7.30pm, online
 - **Croydon Loves You 2026 Q&A:** Thursday 3 July, 5.30-6.30pm, online
 - **Croydon Loves You 2026 Q&A:** Thursday 3 September, 12.30-1.30pm, online
 - **Creative Health Quality Framework workshop:** Tuesday 8 September, 10.30am-12.30pm, online

Application Checklist

Before submitting your application, please make sure it:

- ☐ Delivers creative arts activity as outlined in '[What kind of activity do we fund?](#)'
- ☐ Clearly targets people at risk of [health inequalities](#) experiencing one of the included health needs. Applications should NOT be for the general public.
- ☐ Demonstrates the project is designed for and will reach intended participants
- ☐ Demonstrates which health outcome(s) (from the '[What should projects do?](#)' section) your project is addressing
- ☐ Demonstrates any prior experience delivering relevant arts activities and/or working with the groups you are targeting
- ☐ Demonstrates alignment with the [Creative Health Quality Framework](#)
- ☐ Includes a clear CLY 2026 Timeline Template, finishing before 31 March 2027

- ☐ Includes a completed CLY 2026 Budget Template with necessary costs for all planning, delivery and evaluation of the project