

# Open Programme

## Fund guidelines 2026

### About The Deptford Challenge Trust

The Deptford Challenge Trust (DCT) is a charitable trust that makes grants to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in a defined area of Lewisham, which covers Deptford and parts of New Cross (please see the [map](#) on the [DCT website](#)). DCT started out as part of the national City Challenge regeneration programme in the mid-1990s when part of the funding was invested in student accommodation. Rental income from the student accommodation is still providing income to DCT and is used to provide grants to support voluntary and community organisations for activities within the DCT area. The Trust's grant-making programmes are managed by The London Community Foundation.

For more information about the Deptford Challenge Trust and its work please visit [www.deptfordchallengetrust.org.uk](http://www.deptfordchallengetrust.org.uk).

### Fund Themes

The Trustees welcome applications for projects which work with residents of any age, gender and ethnic background

Organisations are invited to apply for funding to deliver work against the following themes. Applications may address one theme or multiple themes:

1. **Education and skills** – helping those who need extra support to either stay in education or return to it later in life, in particular:
  - Initiatives aimed at preventing exclusions in school
  - Increasing attainment in local schools in particular between KS1 and KS2
  - Work supporting Gypsy / Roma children
  - Supporting migrant and new communities to access ESOL and digital literacy skills.

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2. **Community cohesion and social inclusion** - celebrating the diversity of the DCT area and welcoming new arrivals into the community, in particular:
    - Celebration events or skills sharing activities that focus on the diversity of North Lewisham
    - Information, Advice and Guidance including housing and homelessness support
  3. **Health and wellbeing** – improving the health and wellbeing of residents including mental health, in particular:
    - Young Black men
    - Older people at risk of isolation
    - People from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds
  4. **Strengthening the DCT area** – building capacity and connecting local organisations, creating a stronger, more resilient voluntary and community sector. In particular:
    - Projects building collaboration and professional networks in the local voluntary sector
    - New ways for organisations to share information, resources or skills
  5. **Crisis support** – to provide services to support people in poverty or crisis in the DCT area. Particularly:
    - Foodbanks and community meal providers which show strong collaboration or collocation with other support services or which offer mobile support to hard to reach households
    - After school activities providing access to food
    - Debt or financial advice services targeting older people

**Please note that arts based projects will only be considered for funding if they have a clear social purpose.**

## **What Can I Apply For?**

Funding is available **for organisational core costs, capital costs or for project costs.**

The following gives some examples of costs that could be applied for:

**Core Costs** examples: core staff salaries, rent, utilities, staff training, systems development, insurance, central administration costs etc.

**Capital Costs** examples: repairs, maintenance, decoration, building / electrical surveys, planning costs, refurbishment costs, contribution to building costs, security systems, accessibility adaptations, furniture, IT equipment etc.

**Project Costs** examples: project worker costs, venue hire, project related equipment, project related admin /management costs, refreshments etc.

The board is able to receive applications towards **core costs**. If you have any questions about applying for **core costs** or would like to discuss how to do this before submitting your application please contact [sam@londoncf.org.uk](mailto:sam@londoncf.org.uk)

## **Key Criteria**

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### Applications must meet the following criteria:

- Proposed activities must benefit residents of the DCT area (please refer to the [map](#)). Projects based outside of the area must have a clear recruitment plan for engaging residents of the DCT area.
- Proposals must respond to identified local need.
- Applicants must demonstrate how the proposed work meets a gap in provision and complements existing services.
- Where activities are to benefit particular sections of the community, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have the support, confidence and involvement of the people concerned.
- Organisations providing Information, Advice and Guidance services must have appropriate accreditation.

### Priority will be given to:

- Projects which will have long-term impact/legacy within the DCT area.
- Organisations based within the DCT area will be given priority but organisations based outside of Deptford may apply if they can demonstrate prior experience of working with the community within the DCT area.
- Partnership applications, i.e. from more than one organisation working together. In this instance, the organisation that applies will be the lead organisation, and will be accountable for any grant awarded.

## Grant Size & Eligibility Criteria

### How much can you apply for?

**Grants are available from between £1,000 to £30,000.** Please ensure that the amount of your request is proportionate to the size and experience of your organisation.

Trustees welcome applications from both existing and new organisations.

### Who can apply?

The following **not-for-profit organisations** are eligible to apply:

- Constituted community and resident groups
- Registered charities
- Companies limited by guarantee
- Community Interest Companies (CICs) Limited by Guarantee - **not** Limited by Shares
- Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)
- State Schools may apply directly or via a PTA / Friends of group but any funding must not be used for activities which would normally be a statutory responsibility

There must be a signed governing document in place appropriate to the legal structure which includes an asset lock (or equivalent clause), and the purpose of all funded activities must be charitable (not for profit).

Applicants must have:

- **Governance:** You must have at least three unrelated members legally responsible for the governance of the organisation; Trustees/Directors/Management Committee as appropriate to your structure. Please note that this refers to the highest level of governance, a Management Committee that sits below a board of Trustees (e.g. charities, CIOs) or Directors (CLG or CICLG) does not count towards this.

- **Bank account:** A bank account in the same name as the organisation applying with a minimum of two unrelated signatories must be in place by the start of the grant.
- **Safeguarding:** You must have a safeguarding policy in place that has been reviewed in the last **12 months** – the date of last and next review must be clearly stated on the policy.
- **Previous LCF funding:** All conditions from any previous London Community Foundation grants must be completed and there must be no overdue (late) monitoring at the time of application.
- **Registration:** If the income for charitable purposes is more than £5,000 at the point of application, organisations must have submitted an application to register to Charity Commission or the relevant regulator (e.g., Companies House, CIC regulator or Financial Conduct Authority).

If the LCF grant will take the organisation over £5,000, please visit [this website](#) for guidance on setting up a charity, including information on legal structures.

### When is the grant to be spent?

Funding is available for projects of up to one year. The board are open to awarding continuation funding to successful projects or organisations in future years.

### What cannot be funded through this programme

Grants will not be provided to:

- Individual sponsorship, or redistribution of a grant to individuals or other organisations
- NHS Trusts or Local Authorities
- Activities which would normally be statutorily funded
- Purely commercial ventures (for profit)
- Community Interest Companies (CICs) Limited by Shares
- Spending that has already taken place (i.e. retrospective funding)
- Activities promoting religious beliefs or political in nature
- Activities where people are excluded on the basis of religion, sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity (unless the issue is group-specific)
- Organisations who have overdue or incomplete monitoring on a previous grant from The London Community Foundation
- The organisation must not have two years of late submissions to the Charity Commission/Companies House within the last two completed financial years
- Organisations who are in receipt of loans from Directors/Trustees
- Organisations where Trustees are paid, unless evidence of approval is provided from the Charity Commission and/or this arrangement is referenced in the governing document
- Arts project will only be funded if they have a clear social purpose

### How to Apply

In response to applicant feedback the Deptford Challenge Trust is trialling a two stage application process. Initially all applicants should complete a short online form which gives basic information about the proposed work. The DCT Board will review these proposals and

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invite those which best fit the fund priorities to submit a full proposal, budget and supporting documents.

**To apply for a grant please visit:** <https://londoncf.org.uk/grants/deptford-challenge-trust-open-programme>

If you are invited to submit a full proposal you will be asked to provide the following supporting documents, please ensure that you have these ready and up to date:

- Your governing document (e.g. your constitution or memorandum and articles)
- Annual accounts OR bank statement if you are a new group
- Safeguarding policies

## Application Deadline

**Midday Friday 13th February 2026** (no late submissions will be accepted).

## Timeline

Stage 1 opens for application	<b>January 8<sup>th</sup> 2026</b>
Deadline for Stage 1 applications	<b><u>Midday Friday 13th February</u></b>
Successful groups invited to submit a full (stage 2) application	<b>13th March</b>
Deadline for Stage 2 applications	<b><u>Midday Friday 3rd April</u></b>
Assessment follow up with applicants	<b>April-May 2026</b>
Final decisions announced and projects can start	<b>June 2026</b>
Awards ceremony – to be attended by all successful applicants	<b>July 2026 – date tbc</b>

We aim to let you know the outcome of your application by June 2026. Successful applicants will have a maximum period of a year to spend the grant, with the monitoring report due within two weeks after the project has been completed.

**Please note:** The Trustees host an annual award ceremony, normally in July, to celebrate the work of the voluntary and community sector in the DCT area, highlight the work of the organisations who have received grants and to give organisations within the DCT area an opportunity to network. **If your application is successful there is an expectation that you send one or more representatives to participate in the award ceremony.**

## Living Wage Funder

The London Community Foundation is a Living Wage Funder. This scheme, run by the Living

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Wage Foundation, means that The London Community Foundation aims to pay all grant-funded staff posts at or above the real Living Wage.

### **What does this mean for applicants?**

If you are applying for funding for any staff costs (this could include existing staff members, sessional workers, part time or full-time posts, freelance workers), you should budget these at the real Living Wage or above. We are sensitive to circumstances where organisations feel that taking up the Living Wage would cause difficulties; in these instances, please explain the circumstances in the Living Wage section of the application form. You can find out more about The Living Wage Funder Scheme by clicking here: <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/living-wage-funders>

### **Contact Us**

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The Deptford Challenge Trust is a registered charity number 1070483 and company limited by guarantee number 03390541.

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