

Highland Children and Young People Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund 2026/2027

Funding Framework

Strategic Purpose

The Fund will support prevention, early intervention, and community-based mental health and wellbeing supports for children, young people (5–26), and their families across Highland.

It will:

- Deliver against the [Highland Children Services Partnership 2026–2029](#)
- Align with the Scottish [Government CYP Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework](#) (early intervention, accessible, relationship-based services)
- Build on [evidence from 2025/26](#) showing strong impact in:
 - ✓ Early intervention and prevention
 - ✓ Emotional wellbeing and resilience
 - ✓ Social connection and belonging
 - ✓ Whole-family support

Total Budget: £733,000

Recommended Allocation Model

Funding Stream	Budget	Funding Amount per Grant (up to)	Purpose
Small Partnership Grants	£300	£25K	Grassroots, early intervention, innovation
Large Community Partnership Locality Grants	£300	£50K	Scaled place-based delivery
Large Strategic / Thematic Grants (CYP Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group)	£120	£40K	System-level change, pilots

This balances:

- Breadth (community reach)
- Depth (local system delivery)
- Transformation (strategic outcomes)

Core Funding Principles (All Streams)

All funded activity must demonstrate alignment to:

a. Scottish Government CYP Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework Principles:

- Prevention and early intervention focus
- Accessible, visible, and inclusive services
- Relationship-based and trauma-informed practice
- Whole-family approaches
- Co-design with children, young people, and families
- No “wrong door” access and clear pathways

b. Highland Priority Practice (CYP MH&WB Thematic and Quantitative Analysis Report – based on 2025/2026 fund activity):

Projects should prioritise approaches shown to be effective:

- Safe spaces and trusted relationships
- Group-based / peer support
- Creative and activity-based interventions
- Reducing isolation and building belonging
- Practical supports (transport, food, access)
- Early-stage support (Tier 1)

Funding Streams and Criteria

Stream 1: Small Partnership Grants

Purpose

Support grassroots, preventative, early intervention activity delivered through collaboration between 2+ partners.

Budget

Up to £25K per project (one application per collaborative partnership)

Delivery Model

- Consortium / partnership approach required, involving:
 - ✓ Third sector (who will receive all funding)
 - ✓ Statutory partners (Education, Health, Social Work (collaboration and pathways))

Eligibility Criteria

- Minimum 2 delivery partners (e.g. third sector + school / youth work / community org)
- Demonstrate:
 - ✓ Early intervention focus
 - ✓ Community-based delivery
 - ✓ Direct reach to CYP and/or families

Priority Activities

- Peer support / group-based programmes
- Creative, sport, or community wellbeing activities
- Family-based or parenting supports
- Access-based wellbeing initiatives
- Targeting isolation, confidence, and emotional wellbeing

Assessment Criteria

- Collaboration and partnership quality
- Early intervention impact
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Evidence of need
- Sustainability / legacy

Stream 2: Locality Partnership Grants (Community Partnership Localities)

Purpose

Enable place-based, coordinated mental health and wellbeing delivery within locality, aligned to local needs.

Budget

- Up to £50K (one application per Locality Partnership)

Delivery Model

- Consortium / partnership approach required, involving:
 - ✓ Third sector (who will receive all funding)
 - ✓ Statutory partners (Education, Health, Social Work (collaboration and pathways))

Core Requirements

Each locality proposal must:

- Demonstrate integrated delivery model
- Combine:
 - ✓ Therapeutic / relational approaches
 - ✓ Community / prevention offers
- Show clear pathways into and out of support

Expected Outputs

- Coordinated locality offer (not isolated projects)
- Increased visibility of support
- Improved access pathways
- Reduced duplication

Assessment Criteria

- Strength of partnership and governance
- Whole-system integration
- Accessibility across geography (incl. rurality)
- Alignment with local need
- Evidence-informed delivery
- Outcomes and measurement plan

Stream 3: Strategic / Thematic Grants (CYP Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group led activity – aligned to Delivery Plan Priorities)

Purpose

Deliver targeted system-wide impact, pilots, or scale projects aligned to the [Highland Children Services Partnership Delivery Plan 26-29](#), specifically the CYP Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group Delivery Plan Priorities and Outcome Statements.

Budget

- £40K per project/pilot

Led by

Children & Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group.

Focus

Projects must clearly align to one or more of the three outcome pillars, developing new approaches to:

1. Clear Pathways and Navigation
2. Equity and Inclusion
3. Prevention and Early Help

Supported by:

- Digital infrastructure
- Workforce development
- Strong multi-agency governance

1. Starting Out (Early Years and Families)

Fund activity that:

- Identifies trauma early and provides relationship-based support
- Builds resilient early years environments
- Strengthens parent understanding of mental wellbeing

Examples:

- Perinatal and infant mental health community pathways
- Parenting and attachment programmes
- Early years workforce capacity building

2. Growing Up (System Navigation and Equity)

Fund activity that:

- Creates clear, visible pathways across services
- Reduces barriers for under-represented groups
- Improves universal and digital access

Examples:

- Providing accessibility for under-represented/marginalised groups through community-based outreach programmes, such as remote and rural communities, Care-experienced young people, young carers and neurodiverse CYP
- Strengthens school-based supports and create stronger links to community-based approaches with flexible access models, such as digital, in-person, extended hours and drop-in sessions that have formal referral pathways
- Integrated referral / self-referral model
- Co-design anti-stigma campaigns with children and young people, such as peer ambassadors, social media campaigns with a focus on normalising seeking help, promoting early support availability

3. Moving On (Transitions & Young Adulthood)

Fund activity that:

- Supports transitions (school to college/employment)
- Reduces stigma and increases early help-seeking
- Builds resilience for 16–26 age group

Examples:

- Transition support hubs
- Peer-led stigma reduction campaigns
- Skills & resilience programmes linked to employability

Assessment Criteria

- Strategic alignment to ICSP outcomes
- System-level impact and scalability
- Partnership depth (multi-agency)
- Innovation and evidence base
- Evaluation and learning plan

Cross-Cutting Priorities (All Funding Streams)

All applications must demonstrate:

Equity & Inclusion

- ✓ Targeting under-represented groups
- ✓ Reducing barriers (transport, cost, stigma)

Whole Family Approach

- ✓ Direct or indirect support to families/carers

Participation & Co-Design

- ✓ CYP involvement in design and delivery

Trauma-Informed Practice

- ✓ Staff trained / approach embedded

Rural Access

- ✓ Practical solutions to Highland geography

Monitoring and Outcomes Framework

All projects must report against shared outcomes, aligned to:

Scottish Government Outcomes

- ✓ Improved wellbeing
- ✓ Earlier access to support
- ✓ Clearer pathways
- ✓ Whole-system working

Highland Local Outcome Measures

- ✓ Emotional wellbeing improvements
- ✓ Reduced isolation
- ✓ Increased confidence / help-seeking
- ✓ Family wellbeing improvements
- ✓ Reduced escalation to CAMHS

(Reflecting 25/26 evidence of impact)

Expected Strategic Impact of the Fund

By structuring the fund this way, Highland will achieve:

System-Level Benefits

- Stronger early intervention ecosystem
- Reduced demand on specialist services
- Improved pathways and access visibility
- Stronger statutory-third sector collaboration

Community-Level Benefits

- Increased reach and participation
- Reduced isolation and inequality
- More resilient children, young people, and families

Summary Model

- Small projects → innovation + reach
- Locality projects → system coordination
- Strategic projects/pilots → transformation

Together, this ensures:

The right support, in the right place, at the right time across Highland, through collaborative partnership approaches.