



Harpur Trust Grants Strategy

2025-2030

Introduction

At the Harpur Trust, we believe in a Bedford where everyone can thrive. Our grants programme is a key part of our long-term strategic plan, *Together for Bedford*, and is designed to support a resilient, inclusive, and opportunity-rich community.

Over the past few years we've listened to hundreds of local people and organisations and looked long and hard at data about our Borough. We've used all this information to focus our grantmaking to best support community sector to meet local needs and tackle the cyclical relationship between disadvantage, lack of opportunities, low educational outcomes and future poverty in Bedford Borough. We're excited to share our plan for achieving that through our grants for the next five years.

Our Approach to Grant Making

We are fundamentally place-based grantmakers, proud to be part of a truly special community and committed to using our people, networks, knowledge and funding to support positive change in Bedford. Our grants programme works alongside our strategic initiatives - [Bedford Giving](#) and the [Accelerator Programme](#) - to build layers of impact and learning across Bedford Borough.

We:

- Have a flexible approach to grantmaking, making space for emerging ideas and diverse voices.
- Listen to the community to ensure our strategy remains relevant.
- Fund a wide range of community activities, recognising varied community needs.
- Focus on evidence and learning.
- Share knowledge, bring people together and collaborate with others who share our ambition for Bedford.
- Provide grants as well as support, advice and capacity-building for funded organisations.



"We would like to extend our sincere thanks to The Harpur Trust for supporting this project. The process was straightforward, and the guidance we received was extremely helpful in enabling us to deliver meaningful outcomes. We particularly valued the flexibility of the grant, which allowed us to respond to the evolving needs within our community."

Grant recipient

How We Learn From Our Funding

Understanding and sharing information about what approaches make lasting, positive change for people in Bedford Borough is key to our approach. So all funded projects are asked to share their learning through reports. We don't want to create extra work for busy organisations, so we will work with you to agree a proportionate approach.

Our Priorities & Focus Areas

When demand is high, we focus our funding on projects that address *inequality* and *disadvantage* and address two key priority areas; **Poverty and Disadvantage** and **Stronger Communities**.

These priorities tackle issues where data and community voice tell us there is the greatest need and the most potential for our funding to make a difference to the lives of local people.

Poverty and Disadvantage

Financial, health, housing and educational inequalities are growing in our Borough. They're all interlinked and individuals and families can become all too easily trapped in a cycle of poverty and inequality. We aim to break the cycle by funding projects including:

- **Poverty alleviation** - e.g. credit unions, financial education.
- **Food security** - e.g. community pantries, foodbanks.
- **Advice services** - e.g. welfare benefits advice, debt advice.

Building Stronger Communities

Bedford has a well deserved reputation for positive cross-community relationships. But growth in our population is putting pressure on our services, and there are significant inequalities between more and less affluent areas, so some people feel left behind and left out. We support projects that build on Bedford's unique strengths and foster resilience, including:

- **Community facilities** - e.g. village halls.
- **Community cohesion and development** - e.g. bringing different parts of the community together and developing communities so that people feel they belong.
- **Inclusion initiatives** - e.g. enabling people who don't normally have the opportunity to take part in community life to get involved.
- **Helping the voluntary and community sector to become stronger and more sustainable** - e.g. supporting organisations like the Community Voluntary Service Bedfordshire to provide training and advice for voluntary groups.
- **Youth work** - with a focus on disadvantage.



We also fund projects in the following core categories:

- Housing and homelessness
- Health and wellbeing
- Mental health
- Education and training
- Crime and safety
- Sport and recreation
- Disability



A Note About Funding in Schools

We believe that education plays a crucial role in helping to break cycles of disadvantage. So unlike many independent funders, as well as funding community based education initiatives we do fund work in schools. But any educational initiative we fund should:

- Raise aspirations, broaden horizons, and break the link between inequality and unfulfilled educational potential.
- Be sustainable or have long term impact once funding has ended.

Types of Grants

We offer a range of funding opportunities to meet different needs. We may add new funding streams in response to changes in community needs but our core offer is:

Grants to Organisations

- **Micro Grants:** Up to £2,000 and 1:1 support to develop an application for small groups with no experience of grant applications.
- **Small Grants:** Up to £5,000 for new and emerging groups or small projects. We set aside £100,000 each year for this purpose.
- **Larger Grants:** Up to £50,000 per year. We know that multi-year funding is important for stability and planning so will consider this subject to availability of funds.

We may consider larger amounts over £50,000 per annum in special circumstances.

We enter into a small number of longer term **Strategic Partnerships** with organisations providing essential services and data insights. These partners deliver significant impact in the community against our key priority areas.

Grants to Individuals

Most of our grants are for organisations, but we support economically disadvantaged young people to achieve their potential through two partnership schemes:

- **School Uniform Scheme** for children transferring from primary to secondary school.
- **Undergraduate Bursaries** for students from state schools and colleges.



Further Information



Further guidance on what we do and don't fund is available in our [Guidance for Applicants](#) on our website - www.harpurtrust.org.uk.

Other Grants Requests

Sometimes projects don't fit neatly in our priority areas or one of our categories. We'll consider these requests if they have potential for significant impact in areas of need and support our three charitable objects. Just check our grants policy to see if you are eligible and talk to our grantmaking team.

Looking Ahead

We will review our strategy every three years, with key elements expected to remain in place until 2030.