

Westminster Advice Grants Prospectus 2024

✓ Please make sure you also read the [Application Guidance](#) document for details on what to expect in the application process.

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1. Introduction

For the last two years the council has committed to providing additional capacity for residents to access qualified advice services, due to the impact of the Cost of Living price rises. This is in addition to the main advice contract with the Westminster Advice Service Partnership, made up of Citizens Advice Westminster, Age UK, Asylum Aid and Deaf Plus.

The intention is to continue with the additional grant-funded advice capacity for a further 3 years, from April 2025-March 2028.

In particular we are looking for services in the following three areas:

- Same language advice workers for Somali, Bengali and Arabic speaking communities
- Apprenticeships or traineeships in advice work, supporting residents into employment and increasing the supply of trained and qualified advice workers from the local community
- Triage and/or extended casework

2. Critical information

Minimum criteria for applicants

To be able to apply for this funding, your organisation must meet the following criteria:

- The charitable objects of the organisation must align with the Fairer Westminster Strategy. This can be [viewed here](#). The strategy sets out the council's priorities to build fairer communities, fairer housing, fairer environment, fairer economy, and a fairer council.
- Applicants must be registered charities, CIOs or community interest companies (CICs). However, any organisation with more than a £200k annual expenditure must be a registered charity.
- Organisations should be registered and physically based in Westminster, providing services to Westminster residents. Organisations that are not registered in Westminster but have an established service for Westminster residents in the borough which has been operating for at least one year can also apply.
- Organisations applying must have been fully operational (and delivering services to Westminster residents) for at least 12 months prior to applying.
- Organisations must have prior experience with receiving grant funding (either from the council or any other funder).
- Organisations must already be delivering advice work to communities and have qualified advice workers.

Grants available

This is a 3-year funding programme. The total amount committed by the council to this fund is £400,000 per year, totalling £1.2 million for the full three-year programme.

There will be one application window in December 2024 -January 2025 in which organisations should apply for 3 years of funding. The amount requested should be an equal

amount for each year, for example, £25,000 per year for 3 years (£25k x 3), totalling £75k for the total time period.

The maximum size grant available is £50,000 a year, £150,000 for the three years.

Important note on part funding

Successful organisations will receive the amount they request, as detailed in the 3-year cost breakdown submitted with the application. Therefore, except for an exceptional circumstance, this programme will **not** offer part funding. Organisations are therefore encouraged to be intentional with their budgeting. Please seek advice from your partners or from One Westminster at support@onewestminster.org.uk if needed. This will help to ensure that budgets are as accurate as possible.

Key dates

The anticipated timeline for the application, deliberation and award process is:

Stage 1: Launch

- The programme opens for applications on Friday 13th December 2024.

Stage 2: Application period

- Online applications will be open for 6 weeks, from Friday 13th December 2024 until Friday 24th January 2025 1pm.
- Individual support with your application will be available from One Westminster with the exception of the Christmas break between 24th December 2024 to 2nd January 2025

Stage 3: Decision-making

- A panel of council staff will assess applications between 27th January-31st January 2025
- We aim for provisional offers to be made to successful grantees by the end of February 2025. This provisional offer will then be subject to a due diligence process.

Stage 4: Grant award

- Following due diligence processes, we aim to have grant payments processed by the 1st of April 2025.
- This will be accompanied by formally signed grant agreements.
- Payments over the three years will be made 3 months in advance, on receipt of invoices.

How to apply

- Applications must be completed online. Applications will be open from Friday 13th December 2024.
- Visit <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/westminster-advice-grants> to apply
- If, for accessibility reasons, you require the application form in an alternative format, please contact communitypartnerships1@westminster.gov.uk.

- In addition to the programme prospectus, please remember to also read the Application Guidance document before applying. The Application Guidance provides information on what to expect in the application form and how best to complete it.

Need help with your application?

One Westminster are able to support applicants. Please contact them directly at support@onewestminster.org.uk.

For technical details on the funding programme, please contact the council at communitypartnerships1@westminster.gov.uk.

3. Purpose and aims

Aims of the programme

The aim of this grant fund is to increase access to professional advice services.

Due to the ongoing Cost of Living crisis, there is increased demand for advice services to support access to benefits, reduction in debts, support with energy costs and prevention of homelessness. In particular, more access is needed for people who struggle to access other services because of language barriers, including specifically Bengali speakers, Somali speakers and Arabic speakers in the south of Westminster.

Increased demand has also raised demand for the need for challenges to benefit decisions where the first application has not been successful, leading to the need for more casework and also more streamlined triage so that people dealing with the casework are not also dealing with the more straightforward requests for support.

All advice services have reported challenges to recruitment of qualified and experienced advice workers. This fund seeks to support traineeships or apprenticeships for local residents so that they can become qualified advice workers and gain employment in the future.

What changes we want to see as a result of this funding

We appreciate that this funding will have different impacts on different types of organisations, depending on the need and use of funding requested. However, to achieve the key aims of the programme, we expect to see changes in at least one of the following areas as a result of the grant received:

- Arabic speaking residents living in the South of Westminster, Somali speaking residents and Bengali speaking residents can access advice workers who speak their own language.
- Traineeships or apprenticeships are offered to community members who are representative of Westminster communities. They gain experience as well as training, increasing the capacity of the service they are in and increasing their own employability.

- Organisations who deliver casework are supported to deliver more casework and/or increase their initial triage process to streamline the work within the organisation to be able to support residents more appropriately.

4. What can be funded

Organisations should think carefully about what would help them to deliver the advice services and serve local communities. The main areas that will be covered by this fund are as follows:

✓ **Staff costs relating to the delivery of the advice service**

It can include existing or new staff posts to deliver the advice as well as proportionate organisation management/administration costs.

✓ **Running costs that, being covered, allow the organisation to deliver the advice**

This could include rent, bills, or essential equipment.

The following areas will not be funded under this programme:

- ✗ 100% equipment costs (equipment costs can be included in the applications as a running cost but should not be the sole costs)
- ✗ Building repairs
- ✗ Capital projects (such as landscaping or building works)

5. Eligibility and requirements of applicants

Eligibility criteria

In summary, the fund is open to voluntary and community sector organisations that are already delivering advice services in Westminster to Westminster residents. This means not-for-profit, non-governmental, community-based organisations that are value driven and reinvest surpluses into charitable objectives.

We will accept applications from the following types of voluntary and community sector organisations:

- registered charity
- community-interest company (only if has an annual income of less than £200k)
- charitable incorporated organisation

Your organisation must:

- have charitable objects that align with the Fairer Westminster strategy
- have been delivering services to Westminster residents for at least the last 12 months
- have prior experience receiving advice grant funding
- be constituted and have a bank account in the organisation's name
- have at least two directors or trustees that are not related to each other
- not distribute any of your surpluses or assets through share dividends to individuals or shareholders

- not be a political, government or local authority body
- not provide services or activities whose aims are religious or political in nature (please note that charities that are faith-based can still apply - their activities must be community-oriented)
- not be under any criminal or safeguarding investigation

Important note on expectations

The Westminster Advice Grant Funding Programme cannot meet all types of advice need and is not intended to be a 'first time' funding opportunity. Westminster City Council provides other sources of funding which may be more appropriate for new or not yet well-established local community groups. Visit our website for further information [Grant funding opportunities | Westminster City Council](#) Westminster's VCS infrastructure organisation, One Westminster, also has details of a wide range of other funding opportunities currently available [Funding Opportunities | One Westminster](#).

6. Applications and decisions

Apply online

Applications must be completed online when applications open. You may find it easier to complete a word document of the application first and then copy it onto the online application.

Decision-making and assessing

A panel of multi-disciplinary council staff will shortlist applications and come to a consensus on which to recommend for funding.

Applications will be largely assessed against the following key areas:

- The breadth and depth of your reach into Westminster Communities
- The difference the advice work will make to Westminster Communities
- The experience and expertise your organisation has in delivering advice services

Due diligence

Following the offer of a grant, Westminster City Council will carry out checks to make sure that the information given in the application form is accurate. Applicants will be asked to produce all documents and other evidence mentioned in the application. See the Application Guidance document for what to expect in the application form and once grant offer is made. If all the checks are satisfactorily passed, a final grant agreement will be made and funds released.

7. Ongoing relationship

Westminster City Council wants to maintain and build high-quality relationships with organisations that are funded. The intention of the council is to create a relationship with grant-holders based on a culture of collaboration, open dialogue and trust.

This includes:

- giving feedback on monitoring forms

- bringing organisations together to promote learning and exchange
- signposting organisations to access support and information when needed
- informing organisations about Westminster's strategies, policies and developments relevant to the work they do

All organisations that receive a grant must agree to:

1. be open, transparent and co-operative
2. complete monitoring and other required forms in a timely manner
3. comply with additional requests for information, including from external evaluators if required

Monitoring requirements

Successful grantees will be asked to complete quarterly online monitoring and an annual report. These reports will be designed to track the success of the intended outcomes laid out at application stage, and any other unintended outcomes. The reporting template will be provided by the local authority. Grantees may also be asked to attend peer-learning meetings to discuss organisational progress and reflect on the effectiveness of the funding programme as a whole, as well as changing needs in the community.

8. Data sharing

Successful grantees will be expected to share outcomes data and demographic data of service users. No personal data will be shared, and it will be stored securely in line with our [privacy notice](#). Successful grantees will also be expected to be members of Refernet, managed by Citizens Advice Westminster, to make appropriate referrals to other organisations.