

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Delegated Officer Decision – 19 March 2025

Report Title

Children's Capital of Culture 2025 – Community Micro-Grants Programme

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Council's Children's Capital of Culture and Events teams have jointly received a grant via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) under the Community Recovery Fund. The purpose of the grant is to support community cohesion activities, including key focus areas For Rotherham of educational initiatives and youth outreach with children, young people and skills and supporting and promoting intracommunity relations in priority areas.

Part of this grant has been allocated to the delivery of a Community Micro-Grants programme by Children's Capital of Culture. An open call for applications to this programme was widely promoted to grassroots and community-led groups and organisations across the borough. These Community Micro-Grants of £250 enable groups to run creative or active events for children, young people, families, and/or intergenerational audiences between March and June 2025. This celebratory public programme marks Rotherham becoming the world's first Children's Capital of Culture, while also increasing youth outreach, promoting community relations and supporting local infrastructure.

The open call for this programme received 33 applications, of which 15 fully met the criteria and are recommended for approval and 13 partially met the criteria and are recommended for approval following a satisfactory response to a request to organisers for further information.

Recommendations

1. The proposed awards of Community Micro-Grants of £250 to 15 community organisers to deliver free, creative and participatory events across the Rotherham borough between 1st March and 30th June 2025 are approved.
2. The proposal to award Community Micro-Grants of £250 to a further 13 community organisers to delivery free, creative and participatory events across the Rotherham borough between 1st March and 30th June 2025 is approved, pending officers agreeing that satisfactory responses to requests for further information have been received.
3. The proposal that any grant money not awarded during this funding round is utilised later in 2025 to support targeted activity in wards where Community Micro-Grants activity has not previously taken place is approved. Payment will be made to Creative Lives in the 2024/25 financial year, to ensure these micro-grants remain available to local organisations during the 25/25 financial year while also fulfilling the terms of the Community Recovery Fund grant.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equalities Impact Assessment Part A & Part B
Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

RMBC Year Ahead Delivery Plan, 2024/25
Rotherham Cultural Strategy, 2019-2026
Rotherham Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2025
Cabinet Report: Community Recovery Fund Allocation

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

N/A

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Children's Capital of Culture 2025 – Community Micro-Grants Programme

1. Background

1.1 In 2025 Rotherham will become the world's first Children's Capital of Culture. Children's Capital of Culture is one of seven 'game-changers' set out in the Rotherham Cultural Strategy, which was approved by Cabinet in June 2019.

1.2 The Cultural Strategy sets out the vision as follows:

"By 2025 Rotherham will be the world's first Children's Capital of Culture, a place people want to visit, where everyone can enjoy Rotherham through the eyes, ears and actions of children and young people...We will support our young people in their ambition to create an amazing programme of events and activities for everyone."

1.3 Children's Capital of Culture is a title bestowed upon Rotherham by its young people. It was devised by them as a way to change the narrative about their hometown and create positive opportunities for children and young people across the Borough.

1.4 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council is the lead delivery partner for Children's Capital of Culture. The project is delivered with Rotherham's Cultural Partnership Board, as well as a wide range of other public, private, and VCS sector organisations, who are working in collaboration with children and young people from Rotherham to co-produce a year-long festival in 2025. This will include the delivery of activities across all of Rotherham's 25 wards.

1.5 Children's Capital of Culture and the Council's Events team has received a grant via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) under the Community Recovery Fund. The purpose of the grant is to support community cohesion activities, including key focus areas of educational initiatives and youth outreach with children, young people and skills and of supporting and promoting intracommunity relations in priority areas. This grant will fund Children's Capital of Culture and Events to deliver a range of activities aligned with these focus areas, including a Community Micro-Grants programme.

1.6 The Community Recovery Fund has therefore enabled Children's Capital of Culture to make up to 40 x "micro-grants" of £250 available to grassroots and community-led groups and organisations across the borough. These "micro-grants" will fund groups to run celebratory public events in their neighbourhood to mark Rotherham becoming the world's first Children's Capital of Culture, while also supporting youth engagement and community cohesion.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Grants Programme Criteria

- 2.1.1 The Community Micro-Grants opportunity was widely promoted as an open call to Rotherham-based community groups and organisations.
- 2.1.2 The criteria for the grants programme included:
- The group delivering the activity must be based in Rotherham or demonstrate a genuine connection to the area.
 - The activity the group proposes to deliver must take place within the Rotherham borough.
 - The activity the group proposes to deliver must take place between 1st March and 30th June 2025.
 - The activity must have a creative or active focus; this can include gardening, cooking and sports.
 - The activity must be aimed at children, young people (up to 25), and/or families.
 - The activity must be in addition to the group's regular programming, and must be open to people outside the group's regular members.
 - The group must take full responsibility for all issues relating to health and safety, insurance, financial risk and any other matters relating to spending the grant.
- 2.1.3 Applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible:
- Successful applicants must provide current and appropriate Public Liability Insurance
 - Successful applicants must provide their safeguarding policies and procedures
 - Successful applicants must display all relevant partner logos on all promotional material, and must display Children's Capital of Culture bunting, banners, and/or posters at their activity.
 - Successful applicants must agree to take part in an evaluation programme

2.2 Community Micro-Grants Selection Process

- 2.2.1 The open call for this round of applicants received 33 applications.
- 2.2.2 Five applications did not meet the criteria. One was a duplicate application. Two were received from an internal council service and two were from educational institutions, who were not eligible to apply for this grant opportunity as explained in the guidance document.
- 2.2.3 As such, 28 eligible applications were considered by the assessment panel.
- 2.2.4 An independent assessment panel of five consultees reviewed the 28 eligible applications. The five consultees were three staff members at Creative Lives, an independent charity commissioned by Children's Capital of Culture to help develop, promote and administer the Community Micro-Grants programme; a staff member from Voluntary Action Rotherham; and the Children's Capital of Culture Programme Manager. In line with Children's Capital of Culture's commitment to co-production with children

and young people, a young person sitting on the Children's Capital of Culture Youth Programming Panel had been invited to join the assessment panel, but was unable to attend at short notice due to a medical appointment. The five consultees all confirmed that had no Conflicts of Interest before commencing the assessment process.

2.2.5 15 applications fully met the criteria for awarded the grants. The assessment panel agreed that these were strong applications that they approved to be funded, pending confirmation of these decisions through the Officer Decision Report process.

2.2.6 The approved applications are:

Organisation	Activity	Ward Where Activity Will Take Place
Bright Stars Play CIC	Free baby yoga and baby massage session for parents and carers with young families.	Rawmarsh West
Wickersley Youngstars	Free performing arts workshops open to young people across Rotherham.	Thurcroft & Wickersley South
Bramley Village Trust	Funding for an artist and materials for young people to make and display Sunflowers (representing hidden disabilities).	Bramley and Ravenfield
Rother Valley Riders MTB Club	Open free ride coaching sessions for novice, beginner and advanced mountain bike riders.	Wales
Breakout Arts	Creation and performance of a short performing arts show by young people, themed around the 'You're Not From New York City, You're From Rotherham' Children's Capital of Culture programming theme.	Boston Castle
Rotherham United Community Trust	Delivery of a free, creative and engaging reopening event for Parkgate Astro.	Rawmarsh West
Blaze Youth Group	An intergenerational celebration evening entitled 'Wath Revisited', celebrating the ward's history through games, recipes, and shared memories.	Wath
Aston-Cum-Aughton Youth Club	A youth workshop programme producing bird	Aston & Todwick

	boxes, bug hotels and hedgehog homes, to be donated to local schools and nursing homes and the local mental health unit.	
ArtWorks SY	Contributing to the delivery of ArtsWorks' summer gala, a free family fete featuring creative workshops and performances.	Keppel
Apna Haq	Funding to run a workshop called 'My Heritage and Belonging', enabling intergenerational families to share thoughts around heritage and belonging while creating a book of collages.	Boston Castle
Manvers Residents Association	Funding of free, open Easter craft sessions for local children.	Wath
Fitzwilliam Estate TARA	Funding of a free, creative Easter egg hunt for local children.	Kilnhurst & Swinton East
Clifton Learning Partnership	Celebrating Roma Day through an intergenerational meal and creative art project.	Rotherham East
8th Rotherham Rashidun Scouts	Run a 'Scout's Day', inviting families, children and young people to experience a range of creative and active Scouting activities.	Boston Castle
14th Rotherham Scouts	Run a communities celebration event for St. George's Day, including supporting the props, costume, and rehearsal time needed for children to create a creative performance re-enacting the story of St. George.	Bramley and Ravenfield

2.2.7 13 applications either did not fully meet the criteria for the grants programme or required clarifications in their application form responses. The assessment panel felt that all 13 of these applications had merit, and the organisers could be supported to deliver quality creative or active events. As such the assessment panel 'Requested Further Information' from these applicants. Upon receiving adequate responses, the panel hope to fund all 13 organisations through the Community Micro-Grants programme.

2.2.8 Requested Further Information:

Organisation	Activity	Query	Ward Where Activity Will Take Place
Critters Community Network CIC	To further their work of offering pet food, hygiene products, clothing and baby items to people suffering financial hardship.	Encourage the group to deliver an activity or event related to the priorities of this specific grant.	Hellaby & Maltby West
Rotherham Parent Carers Forum	Fund an open soft play session for children and young people with additional needs.	Check with organisers on suitability of venue (they have suggested a soft play centre attached to a pub). Ensure the session is advertised to families outside of the groups' existing members.	Rawmarsh East
Thurcroft Community Events Group	Delivery of a free Easter craft morning for children and families.	Clarify how this event is different from the group's regular activities and what additional provision the Micro-Grant will enable.	Thurcroft & Wickersley South
Bramley Junior Youth Group	Fund young people to work with an artist to create quality street art that will be displayed in the centre.	Clarify whether the Micro-Grant can fund the artist they've specified. If not, link the group with local artists who can deliver a similar workshop within budget.	Bramley & Ravenfield

Rotherham Hindu Community	To fund hiring coaches, pitches and equipment for their cricket group.	Support the group to reframe this as a public event (e.g., an open cricket taster day). Ensure it is delivered at a suitable location within the Rotherham borough.	Sheffield ward specified.
5th Rotherham Maltby Scouts	To offer subsidised places at their annual group camp.	Encourage the group to deliver an activity or event related to the priorities of this specific grant (e.g., a taster day or celebration event). Ensure the funded delivery takes place within the Rotherham borough.	Sheffield ward specified.
Wath Morris Minors	To purchase costumes and equipment for their dance group.	Encourage the group to deliver an activity or event related to the priorities of this specific grant. Suggest proposal of an event (e.g., a dance performance); equipment and costumes could be purchased in order to deliver this..	Wath
Swinton Community Focus Group	To deliver a community gala to celebrate VE Day, including children's entertainment.	Clarify that their event will have a children, young people or families focus, and that the	Swinton Rockingham

		Micro-Grant will fund creative or active provision.	
46th Rotherham Scouts	To deliver fun outdoor events to engage all ages, including the families of the group's participants.	Clarify the outdoor events include ones with an active and/or creative focus. Clarify that the events are in addition to the group's usual programming.	Wickersley North
The Big Sisterz	To deliver an intergenerational baking and cake decorating session.	Clarify which organisation with a bank account they will partner to manage the funding.	Rotherham West
Toddletime: parent/carers baby and toddler group	Funding of holiday craft activities.	Confirm these activities will be in addition to their usual programming.	Wath
Cristina's Crafting Club	To run craft sessions incorporating the Children's Capital of Culture yellow and black colour schemes. Crafts created will be donated to Children's Capital of Culture.	Confirm the group has a young people's focus, and support the group to attract more children, young people and families to engage with their activities.	Swinton Rockingham
Friends of Brampton Graveyard	Run a children and families community day, with activities including creating nest boxes and name signs for the green site's 100+ trees and wildflowers.	Support the group to engage children and young people, including through connecting them with local youth provision.	Hoover

- 2.2.9 If all 'Approved' and 'Requested Further Information' applications are supported, funded activity through the Community Micro-Grants programme will take place in at least 16 of Rotherham's wards.
- 2.2.10 As well as receiving a grant, all funded groups will be permitted to use the Children's Capital of Culture logo and branding, including use of physical marketing assets such as banners, bunting, posters and merchandise. All funded groups will also be invited to join a networking session, so they can connect with people, spaces, and other resources that can help make their projects happen.
- 2.2.11 £10,000 of Community Recovery Fund monies have been allocated to be awarded through the Community Micro-Grants programme. If 28 grants of £250 are allocated (totalling £7,000), £3,000 will therefore remain unallocated. Following discussion with the assessment panel and the Council's Head of Creative Programming and Engagement, it is proposed that the remaining £3,000 is used to deliver a further small grants programme later in 2025. It is proposed that this programme should have a targeted focus on supporting delivery of events and activities in wards where Micro-Grants-funded activity has not previously taken place.
- 2.2.12 If this report is approved, Children's Capital of Culture will therefore pay the Community Recovery Fund monies in full to Creative Lives during the 2024/25 year, following appropriate internal processes with regards to Payment In Advance and issuing grants. This will ensure the service can continue to fund the delivery of a targeted grants programme in the 2025/26 while ensuring the Community Recovery Fund grant is spent in full by the end of the 2024/25 financial year, as per the terms of our grant agreement.
- 3.

Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Do nothing – failing to allocate the Community Recovery Fund funding to community groups and organisations using an open and accessible process would mean Children's Capital of Culture is unable to fulfil its agreement with the funder around the purpose and timescales of spending this funding. This would be a substantial reputational risk to the Council and its partners and could mean that the grant is withdrawn and that the Council is unable to access future rounds of funding allocated through the MHCLG. Failing to allocate the Community Recovery Fund funding through the Community Micro-Grants could also affect the reputation of Council with local residents, community groups and grassroots organisations. Without support from the Council through the Community Micro-Grants programme, these organisations may not have the means to run a creative and active events programme that supports youth engagement and community cohesion.
- 3.2 Adoption of the proposal as outlined above – the above proposal will fund 15 approved groups to run creative and active events in their communities as part of the Children's Capital of Culture Festival Year between 1st March and 30th June 2025. Upon receipt of satisfactory responses to the assessment panel's request for further information, a further 13 groups will also be supported to run events during this period. Any unallocated funds

will be used to run a further grants programme later in 2025, which will focus on funding in activities in wards that have not previously benefitted from the Community Micro-Grants programme. All funded groups will also benefit from support with marketing and promoting their events, developing community organisers' knowledge and experience of event organisation. The activities supported will bring a varied programme of creative and active events focused on youth engagement and community cohesion to the Borough, delivering against the objectives of the Community Recovery Fund grant.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The Leader for the Council was consulted on the proposed delivery of a Community Micro-Grants programme and was supportive. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member of Social Inclusion & Neighbourhood Working and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People were consulted on the specific detail of the Community Recovery Fund-supported Community Micro-Grants proposal and are supportive of the recommendations.
- 4.2 Extensive consultation regarding the broader Children's Capital of Culture programme has been undertaken with children, young people and adults in their lives. During the first stage of the Children's Capital of Culture programme, Chapter 1: Starting the Conversation, consultation was undertaken with more than 1,300 children, young people and adults. This consultation was in the form of in-depth workshops and discussions held in schools, at public events, and in community settings providing youth provision. The aim of the consultation was to understand children and young people's perspectives about Children's Capital of Culture, how they felt about the concept four years on from its initial inception, and what aspirations they had for the programme, and begin to build a series of themes that they would like to celebrate or explore as part of the programme.
- 4.3 The consultation revealed a desire for the following:
- A wide variety of cultural and creative events and activities ensuring that people feel there is 'something to do' in Rotherham
 - A cinema was a key ask from many young people, which has now been realised as part of Forge Island developments
 - Greater access to high-quality training and employment opportunities for young people, including more access to paid work for young people within the borough's creative and cultural industries
 - Greater access to different sports and physical activities
 - Celebration of nature and green spaces, including playgrounds, skateparks and pitches
 - Safe spaces for difficult conversations e.g., around gender diversity, safety in public spaces, and better quality-built environments
 - A strong desire to ensure that young people can become decision makers and co-deliverers, and that this is maintained and central to the delivery of the programme

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The Community Micro-Grants programme was widely advertised as a borough-wide opportunity, allowing all communities to participate. The Community Micro-Grants programme has now closed for applications. Successful applicants will be notified in the w/c 3rd March, with the advice that decisions remain provisional subject to final approval through Council decision-making processes. This programme will be managed and administered the Council's Children's Capital of Culture team in partnership with Creative Lives.
- 5.2 The service will report on the financial management of the programme through the Council's monthly financial monitoring systems.
- 5.3 A Service Level Agreement is being finalised by colleagues within the Communities team, which will manage the funding from the Community Renewal Fund. The service will report in line with this Service Level Agreement on expenditure and the outcomes against the funding allocation.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 6.1 The proposals outlined in the report ensure that all monies will be defrayed by 31st March 2025 and therefore complies with the grant terms and conditions.
- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report, as it is proposed to enter into grant agreements which fall outside the scope of the procurement legislation.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

- 7.1 The awarding of a grant is not a "public contract" as defined in Section 3 of the Procurement Act 2023 and not a "covered procurement" as defined in Section 1 of the Act and therefore the award of the Community Micro Grants is not subject to those provisions. However, grants are subject to the Council's Financial Procurement Procedure Rules. In relation to the grant from the Community Recovery Fund from MHCLG to the council, the service must ensure that the claims, reporting, and monitoring arrangements set out in the terms and conditions of that grant are followed in accordance with Rules 14.10 to 14.14.
- 7.2 The proposed onward Community Micro Grants to community led groups and organisations and the open process call for applications complies with Rule 12 of the Financial Procurement Procedure Rules.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Children, young people and the adults in their lives have been considered at all stages of the design and development process of the overarching Children's Capital of Culture programme. Children's Capital of Culture is designed and delivered through co-production with children and young people, investing in the skills and talent development required for all groups to actively participate in all levels of the programme from decision making to front-line delivery.
- 9.2 The Community Micro-Grants programme will increase the range of free, accessible and participatory creative and cultural activities available to children, young people, and families across the borough. All activities recommended for support through the Community Micro-Grants programme are aimed at ensuring community members feel welcome and able to participate. To be eligible for the grants, groups and organisations must evidence both up-to-date and relevant PLI and appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Screening for the Community Micro-Grants programme has been undertaken, with advice from the Equalities team; this can be found at Appendix 1 Part A.
- 10.2 An Equalities Impact Screening for the overarching Children's Capital of Culture programme has been completed and updated with recent progress made and actions taken; this can be found at Appendix 1 Part B.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment for the overarching Children's Capital of Culture programme has been completed and can be found at Appendix 2.
- 11.2 The events and activities supported by the grants are relatively small in scale and therefore their impact is considered to be low.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1. The proposed events are delivered by community groups and organisations with support facilitated by the Council and Creative Lives. The recommended proposals in this report are of benefit to community partners across the borough.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 **Funded events and activities are not delivered safely** – The responsibility for the safe management and delivery of all events lies with the community group or organisation in receipt of the micro-grant. Although the Council is collaborating with Creative Lives to facilitate support to community event organisers, each organiser is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate levels of insurance and safeguarding policies and procedures are in place. All community event organisers confirmed upon submission of application that they understood and agreed that all issues relating to health and safety, insurance, financial risk and any other matters relating to how they spend the micro-grant is the sole responsibility of the group or organisation. All groups must provide satisfactory evidence of appropriate and up-to-date PLI and appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures prior to being award a grant. Event organisers will be supported by Creative Lives to ensure they can purchase appropriate PLI if needed. Creative Lives will also offer a networking session to all funded groups, as well as bespoke advice and guidance, supporting all groups to deliver safe and successful events.
- 13.2 **A wide range of groups and organisations are unable to access funding** – the Community Micro-Grants fund was open for applications for three weeks, and this opportunity was widely and publicly promoted. Promotional routes included: through both Creative Lives' and Children's Capital of Culture's websites, social media channels, and mailing lists; through Voluntary Action Rotherham's mailing lists and community networks; through the Council's Neighbourhoods team; and by officers within Culture, Sport and Tourism, as well as the wider Council. 33 applications were received, of which 28 were eligible for the fund. Any monies not allocated during this funding round will be allocated to deliver targeted work later in the year in wards that have not already benefitted from Community Micro-Grants funding.
- 13.3 **Events and activities do not effectively promote Children's Capital of Culture** – funded groups and organisations will be provided with the brand guidance, logos, and brand asset pack for Children's Capital of Culture. Ongoing advice and guidance from Creative Lives and the Children's Capital of Culture team will ensure the brand is used correctly and impactfully. Children's Capital of Culture have committed to providing event organisers with physical marketing assets, such as posters, banners, feather flags and merchandise (e.g., stickers, badges, pencils) in order to effectively promote the programme across Rotherham's wards.

14. Accountable Officers

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