Accessibility Fund Information Pack

A new two-year funding programme managed by Barnwood Trust, 2025-2027

March 2025

barn wood

Contents

1. Introduction

This pack contains information about a new funding programme managed and delivered by Barnwood Trust, the Accessibility Fund. This programme will operate over four six-month funding 'rounds' between 2025 and 2027.

From 2015 to 2020 Barnwood Trust awarded Community Spaces grants. These were for projects which aimed to make 'spaces', including both buildings and outdoor spaces, more accessible for disabled people and people with mental health conditions. In total, 88 Community Spaces awards were made with an overall value of £739,838. Applications ceased in 2020 as a result of the pandemic – nobody was using community buildings or meeting in outdoor spaces – and at the same time Barnwood Trust restructured its funding programmes. Our current funding programmes for organisations are focussed on providing unrestricted funding to support organisations' core and running costs and project funding: we currently do not make any capital awards for improving spaces.

We had also become aware that simply making improvements to the physical structure of a building, or improving the physical access to a playground or other outdoor space, was not enough: we also needed to encourage the managers of spaces to consider the experience of disabled people when they used or visited the space, and what might be done to make them feel welcome and that the space was genuinely 'for them'. The Funding Team had begun to develop a learning event on this issue, with assistance from Experts with Lived Experience, but this work was halted by the pandemic and then never resumed because of the subsequent restructure.

In 2023 Barnwood Trust's Board identified a sum of £2 million for an 'Accessibility Fund', to be used to improve the accessibility of spaces in Gloucestershire for disabled people and people with mental health conditions. In line with our current practice, we invited members of the Barnwood Circle to work with us as Experts with Lived Experience (EbLEs) to co-design this funding programme, ensuring that they would have a central role both in designing the process and in awarding the funding.

As planning got under way it quickly became clear that funding should be about 'the whole package' – including not just physical improvements to the space but ensuring that the people managing the space would be trained, skilled and confident and able to provide a welcoming and rewarding experience for disabled people visiting or using the space. Our EbLEs also wanted to make sure that disabled people had been involved in designing the projects we were asked to fund.

Drawing on our experience from the Digital Inclusion Fund and Short Breaks funding programmes, we will use a 'test and learn' approach to our Accessibility Fund: we will encourage applicants to take the opportunity to try both new and existing ways of working and to share their learning with Barnwood Trust and with other organisations in Gloucestershire. To this end we will ask successful applicants to commit to joining a Learning Group, which will meet regularly to share experiences and learning.

This pack includes:

- a brief overview of Barnwood Trust

- how we developed the brief for the Accessibility Fund

- details of the funding opportunity: what we'll fund

- the application process

- timescale

We recommend you read this information pack in full before beginning your application, and refer to sections 5, 6 and 7 (pages. 12-24) when writing your application. If you require assistance at any time, or you would like to receive this information in a different format, please contact **Ged Cassell, Funding Policy and Evaluation Manager** at ged.cassell@barnwoodtrust.org

2. About Barnwood Trust

Overview

Barnwood Trust acts as an agent of social change, working alongside disabled people and people with mental health conditions to create that change. Our strategy is to fund and influence change. We listen and learn, test what works, and share our learning for lasting impact.

Mission and Vision

Gloucestershire will be a better place when disabled people and people with mental health conditions are equal, empowered, and their rights are upheld. Barnwood's long-term goals are that disabled people and people with mental health conditions:

- have choice of opportunities to meet their hopes and passions

- are included and involved in their local communities and the places where they live

- access their rights and see positive change on disability issues.

Values

All the Trust's work is guided by four values:

Focused
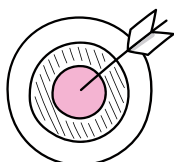
Disabled people and people with mental health conditions across Gloucestershire are at the heart of everything we do

Inclusive
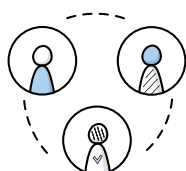
Connecting and collaborating with openness and honesty, we ensure all voices are respected, heard and valued

Bold
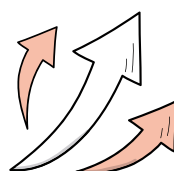
In the face of change and uncertainty we are flexible and confident in finding ways forward

Forward Thinking

Using our independence, we explore long-term solutions to everyday challenges

Barnwood Trust's Funding Principles

The Funding and Influencing Team is guided by our Funding Principles, which align directly with those developed by IVAR, a charity which supports funders to become more open, transparent and inclusive in their funding:

We don't waste time:

We will make clear what kind of organisations and proposals we can and can't fund, and will ensure applicant organisations pass our due diligence checks before completing a full application. This means organisations will not waste time writing a full application which may have a lower chance of success.

We ask relevant questions

We will only ask applicants for the information that we really need to inform our decision making, in line with our published process. Once funding has been awarded, our learning relationships are guided by agreed, relevant and mutually beneficial questions that both Barnwood and a funded organisation wish to answer.

We accept risk

Barnwood now offers unrestricted funding to certain organisations, which means we trust them to spend the Trust's funding in a way that will benefit our vision. We are also open to funding new organisations and new ways of working and manage associated risks through our relationships with these organisations.

We act with urgency

We regularly review our processes and try to make sure that applying for funding from Barnwood Trust is straightforward, simple and quick. Where delays are anticipated, we communicate this to applicants and grant recipients speedily, and work with them to manage any adverse impacts.

We are open

We publish information on our funding via 360 Giving, where all our grants are recorded on a national database which is searchable and open to everyone. We work collaboratively with the organisations we fund to share best practice and learning with others in the county.

We enable flexibility

We work with funded organisations to agree the best way to evaluate the impact of their work, and we won't ask them to collect and provide unnecessary data. We accept applications in a variety of formats, and offer appropriate support to applicants to make their application, without affecting the robustness of our decision making.

We communicate with purpose

We work with organisations to ensure they know what we need to make our decision and why we manage our funding in the way that we do. Our interactions with funded organisations have a purpose, and our relationships should be mutually beneficial.

We are proportionate

The information we ask organisations to provide, and the checks we make on their application, will be appropriate for the level of funding. The Trust will never require an applicant to commit to doing work that they have not applied to do.

3. Developing the Accessibility Fund
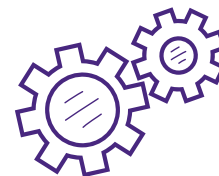
Involving Experts with Lived Experience (EbLEs)

In line with our value of putting disabled people and people with mental health conditions at the heart of all that we do, Barnwood Trust aims to involve EbLEs in the award of funding.

The Accessibility Fund has been developed by a group of Experts with Lived Experience drawn from the membership of Barnwood Circle. The group agreed the following key points:

- The overall purpose of the Accessibility Fund should be to fund projects that would help to create accessible and welcoming spaces in communities, where disabled people and people with mental health conditions would feel welcome, comfortable and that the space was 'for them' and managed with due consideration for their needs.

- Funding should be focused on capital projects and all projects should include an element of physical improvement to the space.

- Funded projects should offer 'the whole package', including, for example, training to ensure staff were skilled and confident in understanding disabled people's needs. They should also consider providing relevant and accessible information so that disabled people would know what to expect before they visited the space.

- Funded projects should be co-designed with disabled people from within the local community.

The funding criteria agreed by the group are set out in detail below (see Section 5).

Please refer to the criteria when making your application. Applications will be scored and funding awarded according to the criteria.

4. Funding criteria and scoring matrix

Criterion 1: the space

Question on application form: How will the proposed work enhance the accessibility of the space for disabled people and people with mental health conditions?

We will consider evidence that the proposed work:

- will improve the accessibility of the space

- responds to clearly identified community needs

- is informed by a thorough understanding of the specific needs of disabled people and/or individuals with mental health conditions, incorporating best practice and current standards in accessibility

- addresses a range of issues including physical access, sensory issues and the needs of neurodiverse people

- considers the wider 'environment' of the space (e.g. for a building, the exterior, external access, car parking, whether the venue is easily accessed by public transport and adapted vehicles, etc as well as interior access)

Score:

Criterion is exceeded: 5

Criterion is met: 3

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

Criterion 2: communications

Question on application form: How will you ensure that disabled people and people with mental health conditions know what to expect before they visit the space?

We will consider evidence that the applicant:

- plans to provide comprehensive information on their website such as a map showing both the interior and exterior, access information, walk throughs or details of facilities

- has provided, or plans to provide, ways for people to find out information before they visit

- has provided, or plans to provide, details of the kinds of activities that already take place at the space

- has provided, or plans to provide, information on the people who manage the space and are available to help visitors when they arrive

Score:

Criterion is exceeded: 3

Criterion is met: 2

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

Criterion 3: staff training and awareness

Question on application form: How will you ensure that people working at the space have the skills, knowledge and experience to meet the needs of disabled people and neurodivergent people and ensure that they feel welcome in the space?

We will consider evidence that staff at the space:

- are themselves experts with lived experience, or have experience of working with disabled people and neurodivergent people and are aware of their needs

- have received formal training in awareness of disability, mental health and neurodiversity: or the work to be funded includes this training

- understand how to make disabled and neurodivergent visitors feel welcome in the space: or the work to be funded will contribute to this understanding

Score:

Criterion is exceeded: 3

Criterion is met: 2

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

Criterion 4: co-design

Question on application form: How have you drawn on the experiences and views of experts with lived experience in designing and planning the work?

We will consider evidence that:

- the applicant has researched, or plans to research, the needs of disabled people, people with mental health conditions and neurodivergent people, in the local community

- the applicant has directly consulted, or has clear plans to consult, experts with lived experience

- the applicant has consulted, or plans to consult, local groups working with disabled people, people with mental health conditions and neurodivergent people

- the approach to doing the work was designed, or will be designed, with experts with lived experience or based on their views

- the plan takes account of, or has changed in response to, feedback from disabled people, people with mental health conditions and neurodiverse people

Score:

Criterion is exceeded: 5

Criterion is met: 3

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

Criterion 5: local context

Question on application form: Is there evidence of the local need for this project?

We will consider evidence that:

- the applicant has discussed the proposed work with people already using the space

- the applicant has discussed the proposed work with local community groups, especially those working with disabled people, people with mental health conditions and neurodivergent people

- the applicant has provided information on the accessibility of other local spaces

Score:

Criterion is exceeded: 3

Criterion is met: 2

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

Criterion 6: Financial planning

Question on the application form: Is the project well-planned and financially sustainable?

We will consider evidence that:

- the applicant has provided a budget and timescale that appear reasonable, achievable and sustainable. The budget should include estimated running costs for the project and where appropriate, details of an ongoing revenue stream

Score:

Criterion is met: 2

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

Criterion 7: Learning and evaluation

Question on the application form: What will the applicant and Barnwood Trust learn from this project?

We will consider evidence that:

- the applicant has provided a plan setting out how learning from the project, including feedback from users of the space, will be collected and shared with Barnwood Trust

Score:

Criterion is met: 2

Criterion is partially met: 1

Criterion is not met: 0

The maximum possible score is 23.

Any application scoring 15 or higher can be considered for funding.

Applications scoring less than 15 will be declined. Any application which scores 0 on any criterion will also be declined.

Ranking of applications

We expect that in any one funding round, the total sum requested will be greater than the budget available. We will therefore rank all applications by their score.

The highest ranking application will be funded for the full sum requested; then the second highest scoring; and so on until all the available funding has been allocated.

Applications which reached the threshold for scoring but were not funded can be reconsidered in a future funding round, where they will be ranked with the applications received in that round. They might therefore be unsuccessful in one round but then successful in a later round.

This practice is in line with our usual practice of encouraging applicants to request the sum they actually need, rather than what they think might be available: and funding the sum requested as far as possible. We believe that this is a more effective use of our resources than sharing the available funding between applicants.

5. Funding available
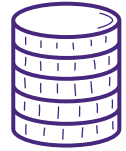
What we'll fund

This funding is intended to support managers of community spaces, including both indoor and outdoor spaces, to make those spaces more accessible and welcoming for disabled people and people with mental health conditions.

We expect applications to include at least an element of physical improvement to the space although they could also include a range of other initiatives such as:

- carrying out research or audits to ensure the managers of the space understand what might need to be done to make the space more accessible

- initiatives to make the space more usable by disabled people as well as accessible (e.g. setting work surfaces at the correct height for disabled people to use them);

- addressing sensory issues, such as ensuring that signage is accessible;

- training staff in understanding how to make disabled people feel welcome in their space and feel that it is 'for them'

We expect applications to be for 'the whole package' – i.e. comprehensive applications delivering a range of outcomes. We don't anticipate funding relatively small scale initiatives such as installing a single ramp.

We will fund new buildings or improvements or existing buildings but not repairs or routine maintenance.

Successful applications will need to show how disabled people and people with mental health conditions within the local community have been involved in the design of the project.

Eligibility

This funding is available to not-for-profit organisations. Charities, community interest companies, social enterprises and community groups can apply. Your organisation should be constituted and subject to a governing body, such as the Charity Commission or Companies House.

Commercial organisations, statutory organisations and individuals are not eligible.

Religious groups are eligible for consideration provided the project will have a wider community benefit.

Your project must be based within Gloucestershire or benefit residents of Gloucestershire.

Funding available

Because we are looking to fund relatively large and comprehensive projects through the Accessibility Fund, we will consider applications for up to £150,000 in overall cost. We think it is unlikely that we will fund any applications below £50,000 (apart from access audits or researching needs, which may cost significantly less than this).

We will not require match funding, i.e. we will fund up to 100% of your overall project cost up to £150,000, although if you do also secure funding from other sources that is fine.

We will fund projects with a duration of up to three years and because we are seeking to fund relatively substantial projects, we are unlikely to fund anything with a duration of less than a year.

We will consider access audits or other feasibility studies on the understanding that the findings from the project will be used to shape a full application at a later stage. Please bear in mind that funding an access audit does not guarantee that we will then fund the full project.

6. Applying to the Accessibility Fund

Before you apply

We recommend that before applying you attend one of our drop-in information sessions. These will be held online and are an opportunity to learn about this funding in detail and to ask any questions you may have.

Please do talk to us about your project before you apply – we don't want you to waste time making an application which turns out to be ineligible.

Please refer to our website where you will be able to find all the information to complete your application.

Online drop-in information sessions

We will hold drop-in sessions where you will be able to find out more about the funding and how to apply. These sessions will be held online at the following times:

- Monday 17 March: 2.30-3.30pm

- Thursday 20 March: 9.30-10.30am

- Tuesday 25 March: 2.00-3.00pm

- Friday 28 March: 10.30-11.30am

If you would like to join any of these meetings, please contact Ged: ged.cassell@barnwoodtrust.org

The application form

You can find the application form [here](). If you have not previously applied for funding from Barnwood Trust, you will first need to register on our Flexigrant system – you will need a valid e-mail address and a password. Once registered you will be able to navigate to the application portal and complete your application.

You will see that for some questions there is a word limit for your answer. This is partly to help the awards panel to compare one application against another, but we also think it helps to make the process fair – clearly it would not be fair for one applicant to feel they have to limit their answer to 500 words while another has used 1,000 or more. Please try to stay within the word counts – they will give you enough words to make the case for your project.

We also ask you to upload some documents, including an outline budget for your project and written quotes for capital items. Please follow the instructions on the form to upload your documents.

When your application is ready just click the 'submit' button to send it to us.

Please note that the deadline for applications is 5pm on Friday 2 May 2025. We will not be able to accept any applications which are submitted after the deadline.

When we receive your application, we will acknowledge it and check that your proposal is eligible for consideration, then carry out our due diligence check.

Due diligence

We carry out a due diligence check on all funding applications. For this check we do not look at the details of your project – it is a check to ensure that funding your organisation would represent an appropriate use of Barnwood Trust's resources.

Please refer to our website for more information on how we conduct our due diligence checks.

We will contact you if we need any additional information from you to complete our due diligence check.

Preparing applications for the Panel

When we have checked your application is eligible, and completed the due diligence check, we will then prepare the application for consideration by the Panel.

We will redact your application and remove any information which identifies you as the applicant. The Panel will only see anonymised applications so they will not know who the applicants are when they consider the applications.

The Panel members will have four weeks to consider all the applications before their meeting.

The Panel meeting

The Panel will consider each eligible application in turn. Your application will be scored on each of the criteria (see above, section 5) and the Panel will agree an overall score for each application.

Our funding practice is to invite applicants to ask us for the actual sum they need for their project, so as far as possible we grant successful applicants the sum they requested. We think that this is more effective than 'sharing out' the funding between a larger number of applicants.

The applications will be ranked from highest score to lowest. The highest scoring will be awarded the sum requested, then the second highest and so on until the budget is fully allocated.

We expect that we will receive more applications than we can fund in full, so there might be applications that meet the criteria but we can't fund because we don't have sufficient budget.

The Panel's recommendations will be considered by the Funding Committee, which has the power to award the funding. We will let you know the outcome of your application as soon as we can following the meeting of the Committee.

If you are unsuccessful

If your application was unsuccessful, we will let you know and give you some feedback on the reasons for our decision. You are welcome to try again with the same project in a future funding round. We will need to treat this as a completely separate application, so you will need to provide all the information and we will need to complete a new due diligence check.

If you are successful

We will send you an award letter and Terms and Conditions for the grant offer, which you will need to sign and return before your grant can be paid.

We'll aim to pay your grant as soon as we can. If you have also applied for funding from other sources, we'll need you to confirm that you have all the necessary funding in place for your project, but in the meantime we can provide you with an award letter setting out the sum awarded by Barnwood Trust. This might help you to secure funding from other sources.

For projects which are very large or long term, we might need to pay your grant in phases over the lifetime of the project.

The Learning Group

As a condition of your grant, we ask you to join a Learning Group. This will meet four times per year. The group will be a forum where you can share the learning from your project and discuss issues you may be facing and solutions you have found. Our experience is that our funded partners find these meetings very useful and rewarding.

We'll also meet with applicants individually to ensure we're giving you any support we can with the delivery of your project. We'll begin our ongoing working partnership with you with a 'kick off' meeting once your grant has been paid.

Evaluation

At the end of your project, or at the end of each year if your project is longer than one year, we'll ask you to complete an evaluation of your project, setting out what you achieved and what impact your work has had within your community. Full details of what we require will be provided at the time the grants are awarded.

7. Timescale

Jan/Feb 2025	Pre-application: information on grants programme available on Barnwood Trust website; online drop in information sessions; team available to help with enquiries.
21 March 2025	Open for applications.
2 May (5 pm) 2025	Deadline for applications – applications close.
10 July 2025	Panel considers applications and makes recommendations.
14 August 2025	Funding Committee considers Panel's recommendations and awards funding.
September 2025	Grants paid. 'Kick off' meetings with funded partners.
From October 2025	Quarterly Learning Group meetings.
January, April and July 2026	Learning Group meetings
September 2026	Evaluation due.