

Sovereign Network Group: Winter Wishes Fund 2025 guidance notes

What is the Winter Wishes Fund?

SNG (Sovereign Network Group) is committed to improving customers' wellbeing and developing thriving and resilient communities. Our Winter Wishes Fund provides grants of up to £1,000 to help support our communities over the festive period. For many, Christmas is a time of joy and celebration. But for others, it can bring financial strain, loneliness, emotional challenges, and feelings of social isolation.

Our Winter Wishes Fund supports not-for-profit groups and organisations to deliver projects that help our communities and customers during the festive season. Grants of **£300 to £1,000** are awarded to initiatives and projects that actively provide support to those most vulnerable in our communities.

This winter we will be focusing our Winter Wishes Fund on the following priorities -

- **Magic moments for children** – Projects that create joyful, magical Christmas experiences for children who might otherwise miss out. Funding will ensure every child feels seen, celebrated, and surrounded by love and Christmas spirit. Examples include special gifts, festive outings, warm meals, or unique holiday experiences.
- **Food insecurity and food poverty** – Projects that support those struggling with basic needs during the festive season. Examples include food hampers, warm packs, hot meals, advice and support services.
- **Mental health** - Projects that promote emotional wellbeing during December. Examples include support groups, creative therapy sessions and drop-in wellbeing services.
- **Loneliness and isolation** – Projects that connect people who may feel alone or disconnected during winter. Examples include Christmas dinners, creative community hubs, intergenerational activities, befriending schemes.
- **Community-led action** – Community-led initiatives that bring people together and tackle hardship or loneliness. Examples include volunteer-led initiatives, neighbourhood support schemes, festive community events.

Projects must be taking place in an SNG community and be actively promoted to SNG customers.

Who is SNG?

We're a leading housing association, striving to provide quality, affordable homes and communities with over 85,000 homes across the South of England. Core areas include Berkshire, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, London, Oxfordshire, the Isle of Wight, the West of England and Wiltshire.

We're driven by our social purpose, with customers at the heart of everything we do. We build homes and provide great services, but our work doesn't stop at the front door – we invest for the long-term, creating great places to live, working with customers and partners to support them in realising their potential. [Read more about who we are.](#)

Eligibility criteria

To apply for this fund, you must meet the criteria below **and** be able to demonstrate how you will engage with and benefit SNG customers in the target regions.

1. Eligible groups include:
 - Not for profit
 - Registered charities
 - CIO's
 - CIC's limited by guarantee
 - Community and voluntary groups
 - Community benefit societies.
 - Social Enterprises (not for profit)
2. Groups must have a written constitution or governing document. The governing document must include the groups aims or purpose, objectives and a dissolution clause or asset lock which states what would happen to any funds should the group have to close.
3. Groups must be governed by a voluntary trustee or management committee, with a minimum of three members, with at least two of whom are unrelated.
4. We cannot accept applications from:
 - Individuals
 - Organisations based outside of the UK
 - Companies that pay profits to directors, shareholders, members
 - CIC's limited by shares
 - Organisations applying on behalf of another organisation
 - Groups with no written governance (e.g. a group of volunteers without a written constitution)
 - Statutory services (e.g. schools, Town and Parish Councils) unless the group can evidence that their project in question is not statutory in nature and has a wider community benefit.
5. Activities we won't fund include:
 - National appeals
 - Activities which are of a wholly political or religious nature
 - Retrospective funding
 - Activities that are statutory in nature
6. Groups must have a bank account in its name, with at least two unrelated signatories.

7. Groups must have relevant and up to date insurances and policies in place for its work including safeguarding, health and safety, GDPR and equality and diversity and we may request copies of these documents for due diligence purposes.
8. We do not set an upper organisational income limit; however, we will prioritise funding groups with smaller incomes.
9. If you have an existing funding relationship with SNG this will be taken into consideration when our panel makes its funding decisions. We are unlikely to make multiple awards through our grant programmes unless groups can evidence clear need and distinction from an existing funded programme.
10. We welcome applications from existing SNG partners and grantees as well as new organisations to SNG.

What will we need to know about your organisation?

At the point of applying, you will be required to provide data about your organisation, including your charity/company number (where applicable, or equivalent) and contact details.

If your project is successful, you will also need to provide additional organisational data, including additional contact details and banking information.

SNG Communities

We will prioritise funding groups who are delivering in the following SNG communities and demonstrate the impact on SNG customers and communities within their application.

London	
Area	Number of homes
Brent	Over 5000 homes
Westminster	Over 1000 homes
Lambeth	Over 1000 homes
Ealing	Around 700 homes
Barnet	Around 500 homes
Harrow	Around 500 homes
Hackney	Around 300 homes
Newham	Around 300 homes
Tower Hamlets	Around 300 homes
Hounslow	Around 200 homes
Kensington and Chelsea	Around 200 homes
Islington	Around 100 homes
Hammersmith	Around 100 homes
Haringey	Around 100 homes
Richmond upon Thames	Around 100 homes
Three Rivers	Around 100 homes
Newbury & Reading	
Area	Number of homes
Newbury	Over 500 homes
Hungerford & Kintbury	Over 500 homes
Greenham	Over 500 homes
Thatcham	Over 500 homes
Burghfield & Mortimer	Over 500 homes
Lambourn	250-500 homes
Downlands	250-500 homes
Ridgeway	250-500 homes

Hertfordshire	
Area	Number of homes
East Hertfordshire	Around 4000 homes
Oxfordshire	
Area	Number of homes
Faringdon	Over 500 homes
Abingdon	Over 500 homes
Didcot	Over 500 homes
Blewbury & Harwell	Over 500 homes
Watchfield & Shrivenham	250-500 homes
Ridgeway	250-500 homes
Wantage & Grove	250-500 homes
Steventon & the Hanneys	250-500 homes
Botley & Sunningwell	250-500 homes
North Hampshire	
Area	Stock density
Basingstoke	Over 500 homes
Kempshott & Buckskin	Over 500 homes
Hatch Warren & Beggarwood	Over 500 homes
Whitchurch, Overton & Laverstoke	Over 500 homes
Bramley	250-500 homes
Oakley & The Candovers	250-500 homes
South Hampshire	
Area	Number of homes
Southampton	Over 500 homes
Test Valley (Mid)	50-250 homes
Four Marks & Medstead	50-250 homes

Theale	250-500 homes
Tilehurst	250-500 homes
Reading	250-500 homes
Ise of Wight (IOW)	
Area	Number of homes
Ryde	Over 500 homes
Newport	Over 500 homes
Cowes	250-500 homes
Pan	50-250 homes
Osborne	250-500 homes
Carisbrooke & Gunville	250-500 homes
BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole)	
Area	Number of homes
Burton & Grange	Over 500 homes
Christchurch	Over 500 homes
Commons	250-500 homes
Kinson	250-500 homes
Canford Heath	250-500 homes
Creekmoor	250-500 homes
Poole	250-500 homes
Weymouth	250-500 homes
Ringwood	50-250 homes
Ferndown	50-250 homes
Bearwood & Merley	50-250 homes
Hamworthy	50-250 homes
Newton & Heatherlands	50-250 homes
Alderney & Bourne Valley	50-250 homes
Bournemouth	50-250 homes
Branksome	50-250 homes
Boscombe & Pokesdown	50-250 homes
Highcliffe	50-250 homes
Milton	50-250 homes
Fernhill & Hordle	50-250 homes
Binsted, Bettleu & Selborne	50-250 homes
Central Meon Valley	50-250 homes
Lymington	50-250 homes

Dorset	
Blandford town	Over 500 properties
Blandford outer and Tarrents	250-500 properties
Chickerell and Chesil Bank	50-250 properties
Child Okeford and Irwene Minster	250-500 properties
East Verwood	50-250 properties
Ferndown Town	50-250 properties
Gillingham	250-500 properties
Milbourne, Winterbourne and Okeford Fitzpaine	Over 500 properties
Parley and Hampreston	50-250 properties
Shaftesbury	Over 500 properties
St Leonards	50-250 properties
Sturminster Newton & Stalbridge	Over 500 properties
Wareham, Sandford and Holton Heath	50-250 properties
West Moors	50-250 properties
West Verwood	50-250 properties
Wimborne	50-250 properties
Devon	
Area	Number of homes
Plymouth	Over 500 homes
Exeter	Over 500 homes
Torquay	50-250 homes
Paignton	50-250 homes
Honiton	50-250 homes
Tiverton	50-250 homes

Wiltshire	
Area	Number of homes
Andover	250-500 homes
Swindon	250-500 homes
Chippenham	50-250 homes
Devizes	50-250 homes
Trowbridge	50-250 homes

Bristol & Gloucestershire	
Area	Number of homes
Bristol	Over 500 homes
Chipping Sodbury	50-250 homes
Gloucester	50-250 homes
Cheltenham	50-250 homes

For more details, please view this [map of SNG homes](#) which shows our properties by location.

If you have a potential project within these areas but you would like more information about our grant eligibility or the location of our communities, get in touch with us at - grants@sng.org.uk

What will we support?

This winter we will be focusing our Winter Wishes Fund on the following priorities -

- **Magic moments for children** – Projects that create joyful, magical Christmas experiences for children who might otherwise miss out. Funding will ensure every child feels seen, celebrated, and surrounded by love and Christmas spirit. Examples include special gifts, festive outings, warm meals, or unique holiday experiences.
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Priority will also be given to applications that can clearly demonstrate their objectives, the outcomes that their project will achieve and the difference that will be made by their project. We want to see how your organisation's work will have a positive and long-lasting impact on the local community.

Examples of what we've funded previously

- Christmas meals for older people attending a loneliness cafe
- Christmas breakfast hampers for children and young people attending SNG partnered youth sessions
- Preloved gifts and clothes distributed to parents/carers to wrap and give to their children for Christmas
- Additional hot beverages and refreshments for a community club for older people over the winter period
- Christmas event for low-income families, ensuring every child receives a high-quality gift tailored to their age and interest.

When is funding available?

- **Applications open:** 1 October 2025
- **Deadline to apply:** 29 October 2025
- **Successful applicants notified by:** 21 November 2025
- **Projection completion deadline:** Please note all projects must be completed by 28 February 2026 (all funds must be spent by this date)

How to apply

To apply for funding, you will need to register your project on the [ActionFunder website](#). ActionFunder is a digital community engagement platform that connects funding bodies with non-profits with the goal of supporting thriving local communities. By launching your project on ActionFunder, you will have the potential to match with multiple different funding pots, not just this fund.

When registering your project, you will be asked for the following information, so please have this on hand when starting your application:

The pitch

The first section of the application is where you will identify why your project is needed and what you intend to deliver. **You have the option to provide this information in written form or submit a video pitch** describing your project idea, why it is needed and why you are best placed to deliver.

For written applications, you will be asked to answer the following three questions:

1) Problem statement

Your problem statement should identify the issues or barriers that your community faces and why your project is needed. Using quotes and statistics can help us understand the specific needs of your community.

Example:

Our community is ranked the second most deprived neighbourhood in our city. It is characterised by high levels of deprivation, with many families struggling with the financial pressures of Christmas and the winter period. Many families will find it difficult to afford presents and activities for their children. Families (many of which live in SNG properties) have told us that this is a real worry for them, and they don't want their children to miss out on the magic of Christmas. In addition to the expense of food and gifts, families will also need to keep their children entertained in the holidays which can be difficult to do on a low income.

2) Solution

This answer should summarise your project idea and key outputs. By reading this, you should be able to understand what exactly the applicant intends to deliver.

Example:

Our project will deliver a Christmas event which is free for families in our community to attend, with the aim of relieving some of the financial burden that Christmas can bring, ensuring that all children can experience the magic of Christmas. We would like to host a visit from Santa with presents, Christmas activities and festive food. This will provide families with the opportunity to come together and celebrate Christmas, receive presents and provide food and activities for children for the day. We hope this will lift spirits, reduce financial pressures, and strengthen community connection.

3) Why are we best placed to deliver?

Here you should tell us why your organisation will be able to deliver this project well. Do you have specific relevant experience? A team of volunteers? Any relevant qualifications?

Example:

Our Youth Club is based at Compton Primary School which is in the centre of an SNG Housing area. We have been established since 2018 and are well known in the community. We have been running event activities in our community for 10 years which are attended by 20 families. Our team are experienced at running inclusive, impactful community events. Many of the children that attend our youth group are living in nearby SNG housing. We also have strong partnerships with local organisations, including the school where we are based, who will be able to identify families who would benefit most from the event. We are well placed to deliver a successful festive event.

Delivery plan

The second section of the application is where you provide more detailed information about how much your project will cost and what the impact of your activities will be.

1) Budget breakdown

This section is for you to record your project budget. Whilst we are looking for budgets to represent good value for money, we also want them to be realistic. It is important to know exactly how much you will need to carry out your activities effectively, and not underestimate costs, as this can lead to long-term financial problems and can impact project delivery.

What we will fund:

- Staffing/volunteer costs
- Transport
- Venue hire
- Refreshments and health food provision
- Other direct project costs
- Core costs/overheads (up to a maximum 10%) of your total project cost
- Capital/equipment items associated with your project

What we will not fund:

- Expenditure not clearly linked to project activities
- Items that do not appear to have been costed
- Activities that fall outside of your delivery timeframe

Example:

Breakdown of costs:

- *Staff time to co-ordinate. 15 hours @ £13.77 = £205*
- *Gifts for children (30 children at £10 per child) = £300*
- *Wrapping paper, gift bags and card @ £2 per family = £40*
- *Food for 80 people (£5 per head) = £400*

Total budget: £945

2) Beneficiaries

Here please specify the total number of beneficiaries you will engage with during your project. You will then have the option to choose specific groups from a multiple-choice list below.

3) Expected impact

This answer should explain what impact you hope to achieve from your activities. Try to be as specific as possible with your outcomes and link this back to your problem statement.

Example:

We hope the event will provide much needed relief to 20 low-income families in our community. Children will receive a Christmas gift; they will have the opportunity to take part in fun Christmas activities and families will be able to celebrate and eat together. The event will create meaningful memories, enhance community connection and enable parents to save some money to help with the financial pressures of Christmas. As a result, we hope this will positively impact emotional wellbeing of the whole family and reduce stress for parents. It is likely that SNG customers will benefit from the project due to our location and current engagement in an SNG community.

4) Track record

This is an opportunity to give us additional details about what your organisation has previously delivered and could include quotes from previous beneficiaries or partners.

Example:

In the 10 years that we have been delivering Christmas events we have developed a strong relationship with local organisations and the local school, who identify families that would benefit most from our project. We support 20 families per year, and the activities have become a much-loved part of the Christmas period for children, and a big support for parents. A parent that attended last year said 'We had so much fun attending the Christmas event. My son loved seeing Santa and all the Christmas activities which I would otherwise struggle to afford to book in the Christmas holidays. We made some lovely memories as a family, and it really eased some of the financial pressure of Christmas. It was something to look forward to in an otherwise stressful time for us.

Application top tips

Here are some of our top tips to consider when completing your application:

- **Do you meet the eligibility criteria?**

Your application will not be considered if you do not meet the key eligibility criteria listed above. Please carefully consider if you are eligible to apply before submitting your application. If you are unsure, please don't hesitate to contact us at grants@sng.org.uk.

- **Pay close attention to your budget**

One of the main reasons that funding applications are unsuccessful is due to poor budgeting. Above we identify the things we will and won't fund, please read these carefully before producing your project budget. It is good practice to plan your budget for the whole year and get quotes for all the items included. The more detail you can include the better, but we also understand that some things may change over the course of your project and will work closely with you to resolve any issues that arise.

- **Evidencing need and linking to SNG communities**

We want to know how the money they provide will make a positive difference. Using statistics, quotes and other testimonies can help bring your application to life and showcase why you are best placed to deliver the project. This can be figures to show why the project is needed in your community (through using local surveys, council websites, Government reports) or through testimonies of how your previous work has benefited the community.

Particularly important for this fund is demonstrating **how your activities will directly benefit SNG communities**. This means understanding whether we manage homes in the area your project takes place in, and if so, how your project can offer support to local customers. [See where our homes are here.](#)

- **Be clear and concise in your language**

Try to avoid using complex jargon and abbreviations. If you are submitting a written application, keep your writing concise and stick to the key details of your organisation and project. It can be helpful to share a draft with someone who doesn't know about your project to see if they understand what you are aiming to achieve. If you would prefer to submit a video application, you can do this via the ActionFunder platform.

- **Embed sustainability**

We want to ensure that funding has a long-lasting impact, so we recommend embedding sustainability into your project design. For an environment and place project, this may look like incorporating maintenance costs into your project budget. For a project focusing on employment support, this could include providing training qualifications or electronic devices for long-term use.

- **Consider how you will monitor and evaluate progress**

It is important to read over what will be expected of you in terms of reporting on your project and incorporate this into your project model to save you time and difficulty later (see more details regarding reporting expectations below). Consider how you will track financial information as well as other key project data both numerical and qualitative.

Selection process

All projects that meet the criteria set out above will be reviewed and assessed by our grants panel to determine which projects will be offered funding. If your project does not meet the eligibility criteria, it may be rejected before the panel meeting, and you will receive a notification of this via ActionFunder.

We may request further information from you following the panel discussion, and in some cases, may encourage you to reapply for funding with amendments to your project.

The fund will close on 29 October 2025. All applications will need to be submitted for consideration by this date. Successful applicants will be informed by 21 November 2025. We will focus on ensuring funding is distributed equitably, particularly in terms of geographic location and types of beneficiaries.

Should we offer you funding, you will have the opportunity to accept or reject the grant via the ActionFunder platform. Before a payment can be approved and released to the applicant, all checks will need to be completed in respect of relevant permissions, policies, and insurances.

We will provide feedback to all shortlisted applicants who are unsuccessful at the panel. Please note, we will be unable to provide feedback for applicants do not progress to the shortlist for panel.

Communications and branding

By uploading your project to ActionFunder, you consent to ActionFunder's terms and conditions which allows for the material you upload to be used for marketing and promotional purposes by both SNG and ActionFunder. Please read [ActionFunder's terms of use](#) for more information.

Successful applicants must acknowledge financial support of SNG in its documentation and publicity material by following our communications protocol and brand guidelines. If you are successful in securing funding, our Grants Team will be in touch to share the guidelines.

Reporting requirements

If your application is successful and you receive funding from us, you will be required to meet our reporting requirements for your grant. You will be asked to complete a light touch update mid-way through the project, and an end of project report. You will be notified about the reporting requirements through the ActionFunder platform when the funding has been awarded.

We would also love to hear updates throughout the duration of the project, which you can do via ActionFunder, including what has gone well and any challenges. You will be able to post comments, videos and photos to keep us updated.

At the point of funding being awarded, we will also put you in touch with one of our Community Investment and Partnership Leads for your location. They will be in contact to introduce themselves and discuss potential future partnership opportunities.

Timescales

The fund will open on 1 October 2025, and close on 29 October 2025. Successful applicants will be informed by 21 November 2025. You will be notified via the ActionFunder platform if your application is successful.

Task/activity	Date
Fund goes live	1 October 2025
Application window closes	29 October 2025
Successful applicants are informed	21 November 2025

Useful Links and Resources

- [SNG homes map](#)
- [ActionFunder resource materials](#)
- [Our Actionfunder web page](#)
- [Our Winter Wishes Fund web page](#)