

# Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	<b>Community Inclusion Grants – Window 1 (part 2) funding awards</b>
Divisions Affected:	All
Key Decision:	Yes
Reason Key:	Affects two or more Divisions
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Cabinet 25 June 2024, Min ref: 92/24

## Summary

On 25 June 2025, Cabinet approved the investment of £500k in 2024/25 in the development of an inclusive, community-based offer of mainstream play and leisure provision for children with additional needs and disabilities (AN&D). This supports the Council’s overall ambition that “no one is left behind”, with some children currently struggling to access everyday opportunities that their non-disabled peers might take for granted. Currently around 1,100 children each year access specialist play and leisure short breaks commissioned by SCC, but these are oversubscribed, with more than 300 children currently on waiting lists. These challenges were highlighted in feedback from SCC’s Ofsted and CQC Local Area Inspection in 2023, as follows:

*“Too often, children and young people with SEND and their families do not feel valued or visible in their communities. Many children and young people are unable to access mainstream after-school and holiday clubs, and these are not routinely adapted to their needs. Children and young people on waiting lists for Short Breaks programmes wait too long to access the provision they want. Children and young people in older age groups feel there is a lack of support and suitable opportunities for them, such as safe spaces or groups outside of education.”*

By investing in inclusive provision, children with lower levels of need will be enabled to access other local provision that delivers improved independence and social outcomes, whilst also mitigating pressure on the existing specialist short breaks service.

The £500k funding is being allocated through a grants process, which will fund short-term pilot initiatives to rapidly test and learn about what works in delivering inclusive services in local communities across Surrey, whilst also seeking to bring about changes that have a sustainable impact on children with additional needs and/or disabilities. These pilots could include both proposals that are focussed on direct-delivery and proposals focussed on training and development to support inclusion within mainstream provision. The learning generated will inform the development of a longer-term strategy in 2025/26 and beyond.

The types of services in scope for this funding include (but are not limited to): leisure centres; sports clubs; holiday schemes; youth clubs; and uniformed groups.

The kinds of changes we are proposing to fund to support inclusion include: improvements to accessibility, lay-out and equipment (non-capital costs); staff training; tailoring of activities to meet different needs; levels of staffing; and improved range of methods of communication.

The grants process was launched on Monday 25 November 2024, with the first deadline for applications closing on 11 December 2024. Following this first evaluation, which reviewed 23 complete and compliant applications, 17 initial grant awards were approved for award on 20 December 2024. Two further applications were assessed as meeting the minimum standards required, but outstanding clarifications about the grant proposals meant that the decision on these was deferred.

Following receipt of the clarifications requested, the purpose of this further report is to confirm the award of these two remaining grants, as listed below:

- £65,000 to Star Player Ltd
- £27,000 to Surrey Youth Focus

Approving these further awards leaves a total of up to £176k grant funding still to be allocated. Surrey County Council is in the process of reviewing the next round of applications, received ahead of the second application deadline of 5pm on 8 January 2025, and our expectation is that applications received in this window are likely to require the remaining balance of grant funding. If, however, we do not receive sufficient applications that meet the required quality standards, we will run a final application window with a deadline of 22 January – with all final awards proposed to be made by 31 January 2025.

## **Decision made**

### Decision made:

It was AGREED that:

1. 2 further grant awards are to be made through evaluation window 1 of the Community Inclusion Grant programme, totalling £92,000. This includes the following awards to the below organisations:
  - £65,000 to Star Player Ltd
  - £27,000 to Surrey Youth Focus

### Reasons for Decision:

Grant applications have been reviewed by a panel of SCC officers, in line with the published grant guidance. Each evaluator reviewed the applications individually against a set of quality questions and then a moderation panel was held to review all individual scores and agree a consensus score for each application. As part of this process (in line with published guidance) evaluators have particularly considered the:

- proportionality of the response given to the level of grant funding sought and the level of impact on beneficiaries created;
- deliverability of the proposals set-out by 31 March 2025;

- potential for ongoing sustainability of changes made and impact beyond 31 March 2025;
- other funding or revenue streams that contribute to the cost of delivering the proposal, adding value to the funding available to SCC; and
- response to the priority groups for the funding, including children who are currently on the waiting list for children who are on the waiting lists for short breaks;
- focus on geographic priority areas, based on current distribution of both waiting lists for short breaks services and existing short breaks services; and
- mix and balance of different types of services and support offer across the county as a whole.

The above proposals all met or exceeded the minimum required standards and (in the view of the evaluation panel) further support the provision of a good distribution of opportunities across the county, in response to agreed priorities and identified needs across the county.

The table below provided as Annex 1 includes a summary of the grant applications proposed for award, including: a short description of each proposal; the boroughs and districts proposed for delivery; the value of the proposed award; and the evaluation score achieved by each applicant.

Decision taken by:	Rachael Wardell, Executive Director Children and Families
Decision taken on:	10/01/2024
To be implemented on:	10/01/2024

### **Alternative options considered**

The alternative option in this case was to not award the grant funding. This would mean the funding for inclusive play and leisure provision allocated by SCC's Cabinet in June 2025 would not be spent in this financial year and therefore was judged to be not a viable option.

### **Summary of any financial implications**

None

### **Declarations of conflicts of interest**

None

### **Consultation/Process Followed**

Decision taken in consultation with Clare Curran, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (09/01/2024)

### **Background Documents**

Exempt:

N/A	
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## Appendix 1: Community Inclusion Grants 2024/25 - Summary of proposed awards

Provider	Type of provision	Description	Delivery borough(s)	Grant value	Moderated bid score out of 100
Star Player Ltd	Sport and physical activity delivery	Delivering a programme of weekend and February half-term multi-sport and creative activities in Spelthorne.	Spelthorne	£65,000	72.5
Surrey Youth Focus	Training and support for mainstream	Delivering a programme of training, networking and peer support to promote inclusion within mainstream providers in Surrey.	Countywide	£27,000	70.0

