South Yorkshire Mayor's Youth Impact Fund

South Yorkshire's Mayor has created a charitable fund focused on supporting exceptionally gifted and talented young people living in South Yorkshire, aged 11–19, to help remove the financial barriers preventing them from achieving their potential.

Hosted by the South Yorkshire Community Foundation (SYCF) in partnership with The King's Trust, the Fund identifies and supports exceptional young talent across South Yorkshire who face substantial economic barriers to success. This first phase has been carefully designed, including input from young people, and the Fund is intended to run long-term; it will keep developing so it can reach South Yorkshire's most talented young people.

Why was the Fund created?

This is a cause close to the Mayor's heart. Throughout his time in South Yorkshire, Oliver has seen too many talented young people unable to pursue opportunities because of the costs involved; this was also true of one of Oliver's closest friends growing up. The Mayor's Youth Impact Fund aims to remove those barriers and ensure that talent, ambition and potential are not limited by family income.

Who can apply?

The Fund is for young people aged 11–19 who permanently live in Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham or Sheffield.

- Applicants should turn 11 by the time their application is received and should still be 19 when decisions are communicated.
- There may be some exceptional circumstances where supporting a young person younger than 11 or older than 19 is considered (for example, neurodiverse young people or those with special educational needs) — please contact the Grants Team to discuss this before applying, or if you're unsure.
- Care-experienced young people can also be included, even if currently placed outside South Yorkshire, provided their home authority is one of the South Yorkshire places.
- Applicants should be from family units[1] who qualify for Free School Meals, or where Universal Credit is the main source of income (or the equivalent, if not in education).[2] Please note that care experienced young people are exempt from the financial criteria. A referral in this instance will be important, please contact us with any concerns or queries.
- Families, guardians or carers may write or submit the application on the young person's behalf, but the voice of the young person themselves must come through clearly. Video submissions are also supported if the individual is nervous about expressing themselves verbally.

The Fund particularly welcomes applications from young people from global majority backgrounds and/or individuals with disabilities. If a young person already receives other financial or support, they can still apply, as long as the request to this Fund is for something new or additional.

What talent areas are eligible?

Exceptional talent can be demonstrated in any field; sport, arts and culture, science and technology, engineering, entrepreneurship and more. The Fund is open to supporting as many variations of talent as possible.

Example: a talented runner cannot fulfil her potential because she cannot afford the right equipment, travel or club fees. Nominated by her PE teacher, a grant helps provide the support she needs to progress. The same principle applies to talented musicians, actors, scientists, fashion designers.

How much can I apply for?

Grants range from £2,000 to £10,000, to support things like equipment, travel, training, fees and other resources needed to pursue the young person's talent. This is intended to remove barriers to opportunity; it is not a general hardship fund, and applicants will need to provide a quote or evidence of what the money is for (the Fund is not a sponsorship arrangement).

The inaugural Grants Panel is expected to select just a handful of young people in this first round, with further funding rounds to follow.

Alongside financial support, successful applicants may also have opportunities to connect with ambassadors, mentors and other sources of support. More detail on this offer will be shared as the programme develops.

What can't be funded?

The Fund cannot be used for or by:

- Individuals who do not permanently live in South Yorkshire (except care-experienced young people placed outside the area whose home authority is here).
- Individuals from family units who do not qualify for Free School Meals and/or where Universal Credit is not the main source of income.
- Retrospective funding. i.e. activity or costs that have already taken place, or repayment of money already spent.
- Grant-making to other organisations and/or individuals.
- Activities primarily for the benefit of animals rather than people.
- Activity that promotes a particular political or religious point of view.
- Sponsorship.

When can I apply?

Applications open at 9am Wednesday 7th October and close at 5pm on Friday 4th December 2026.

Decisions will be made by a local and expert panel committed to supporting children and young people in South Yorkshire. The panel will meet in February, and decisions will be communicated by email soon after. Activities and expenditure should start no earlier than 1 March 2027.

How do I apply, and what do I need to supply?

Applications are made via the online application system on the Fund's website*. A read-only Word version of the form is also available on the website so you can see the questions in advance. If you think you might struggle using the online system, please contact the Grants Team and they'll help you find another way.

Alongside the form, you'll need to provide:

- A short video (no more than 5 minutes) from the young person, telling us about themselves and what the Fund would mean to them. Format guidance is on the website. If a video is difficult to arrange, a short, filmed interview can be arranged instead.
- A letter of recommendation from a teacher, tutor, accredited coach, mentor or group leader who can verify the individual's talent and explain why they should qualify for the Fund. A template is available on the website. Please let the Grants Team know if a paper copy is needed instead.
- Evidence of family unit income. For example, a Universal Credit statement and/or payslips/tax returns from all working, contributing adults in the household.
- Proof of identity confirming the individual's age, address and residence in Great Britain (a passport, birth certificate or photocard driving licence would all be fine).
- Quotes for any items, resources or activity the grant would pay for. Quotes need to remain valid for the length of the decision-making timeline, so please check the key dates above.
- If an organisation is applying on behalf of the young person: a governing document, latest accounts, and a link to a website or social media presence; if the organisation will hold the money, a redacted bank statement in the organisation's name will also be needed.

Please contact the Grants Team with any questions or concerns about this paperwork.

How will talent be identified?

The team is currently inviting a number of Ambassadors, made up of individuals successful in their field with a connection to South Yorkshire, to help identify exceptional local talent. Suggestions for potential ambassadors are welcome. SYMCA, South Yorkshire Community Foundation and the Kings Trust will also utilise their networks to promote the fund to find local talent.

Youth workers are often best placed to spot potential that others may miss, so their help in identifying talented young people, and in promoting the Fund through their networks, is also very welcome. Young

people can apply directly, but nominations and referrals from trusted adults such as youth workers, teachers, coaches and community leaders are strongly encouraged.

What happens after I apply?

The Grants Team at SYCF reads and watches every application received before the deadline, and assesses it against the Fund's criteria, aims and priorities. They may contact you for further information — please make sure all essential documentation is attached or sent with your application to avoid delays, as applications missing required information cannot be put forward for a decision.

If an application doesn't meet the Fund's criteria, it will be withdrawn from consideration, and clear feedback will be given as to why. Eligible applications go to a panel of independent volunteers, who spend dedicated time discussing each one and deciding where the money should go, aiming to spread funding fairly across South Yorkshire, age groups and types of talent. Because applications are expected to exceed available funding, some will be turned down.

The Grants Team will contact every applicant before the deadline to communicate the outcome and will provide feedback where an application is unsuccessful. The panel's decision is final.

What happens if I'm successful? (Monitoring and reporting)

Successful applicants will be contacted with the good news and told when to expect payment and will be asked to send a thank you letter or video. The individual can then go ahead with the agreed activity or purchases. Receipts should be kept and shared, and a record of activity (photographs, feedback, results, progress) built up so the individual can tell the Fund what it has helped them achieve.

A progress update is requested halfway through the funded activity, and again once the funding has been spent or the activity has ended, sharing photographs, feedback and results. Successful individuals may also be asked to attend a celebration event organised by the Mayor's team. If anything changes about what the funding will be used for, please contact the Grants Team to discuss this first.

Anything else?

Working with SYCF and The King's Trust, the team will try to signpost applicants to alternative sources of funding where available, and a mentoring offer is also being explored.

Terms

1. 'Family unit' means any household setting where the individual lives — this could be a traditional set-up of one or two parents and siblings, or a household with adopted parents, carers, guardians, or a supervised care setting.

2. Successful applicants will need a suitable bank account for the grant to be paid into. For children under 16, this money would need to be paid to a parent, carer or guardian, and the Fund will need to be able to clearly

identify the account as connected to the young person (evidence may be requested, along with confirmation of agreed spend as part of the grant terms).

3. The Fund uses the Gov.UK eligibility criteria for children who qualify for Free School Meals.

** Online application system utilises AI capability. Please see the website's AI use policy for more detail, including advice for anyone considering using AI to help with their application.*

Contact us

For more information or to discuss an application, contact the Grants Team at grants@sycf.org.uk. They're happy to talk on the phone, meet in person or meet online.

There's also an open drop-in session every Wednesday on Teams between 4pm and 5pm. All are welcome to join with questions or to discuss an application. The joining link is available from the Grants Team or on the Fund's website.