

Funding Applications Policy and Procedures

Guidelines and Procedures for Equitable and Efficient Funded Services Allocation

1. Introduction

Access to quality self-help services assisting with mild to moderate mental health concerns is fundamental to community wellbeing and individual recovery. This policy sets out the principles, procedures, and standards for the processing of funding applications from individuals seeking funded spots for services. The aim is to ensure that funding is distributed fairly, transparently, and in a manner that upholds the dignity, privacy, and unique needs of each applicant.

2. Scope and Objectives

This policy applies to all applications for funding submitted by individuals or their representatives to support access to our services.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure equitable access to funded spots for services
- Establish a transparent and accountable application process
- Maintain confidentiality and respect the rights of applicants
- Promote timely decision-making and communication with applicants
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of funding distribution

3. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a resident of the relevant jurisdiction Shropshire, Telford or Staffordshire
- Demonstrate a need for our services
- Provide appropriate documentation as per the funding application form

Special considerations may be given to individuals facing more urgent help as per the scale on the funding application, those from underserved or marginalised communities, and applicants with disabilities or complex needs. Bearing in mind that not all applicants with complex needs and disabilities may be able to fully participate with our services. We are not a mental health provision service, we work only with mild to moderate mental health issues and participants must be mentally stable and able to participate in all training opportunities and services provided.

4. Application Process

4.1 Submission of Applications

Applications must be submitted using the official funding application form, available online or in paper format if required. The form requires:

- Personal identification and contact information
- A description of the services required
- Supporting documentation (as outlined in Section 3)
- Consent to collect and process personal information in line with privacy legislation

Assistance with the application process will be provided to individuals who require support due to language barriers, disabilities, or other accessibility needs.

Online or Paper Application

1. All applicants must complete the online application via the Stay Mentally Healthy website or paper application which is emailed to the participant.
2. The application needs to be checked by the Hub Lead Consultant and Trainer ensuring all compulsory boxes have been ticked including the box stating they have read our medical disclaimer. Applications must also ensure they provide evidence of benefits if this box was ticked.
3. In cases where the funding application process does not involve means testing such as those at the Stay Mentally Healthy Hub, determining an individual's capacity to contribute to the cost of Hub services requires a sensitive and balanced approach. Rather than focusing on financial thresholds, the assessment may consider factors such as:
 - a. the applicant's willingness to make voluntary contributions with any surplus funds either monthly or as a repayment plan.
 - b. their personal engagement with self-help strategies,
 - c. applicants may be invited to indicate, on a voluntary and confidential basis, whether they are able and willing to contribute towards service costs, either through financial donations (as given in point a.), participation in peer support activities, or by sharing feedback to enhance the programme.
4. Any offers to contribute shall not affect eligibility for funding, nor will they be compulsory; instead, they serve to foster a sense of mutual investment and community within the service. This approach ensures that access to our services remains equitable and inclusive, regardless of an individual's financial situation, while still recognising the value of collaborative participation.
5. All applicants must attend an online or in person Wellbeing Assessment to ensure the service they are applying for is most appropriate for them and to determine answers to the questions in point 3.

During the Wellbeing Assessment a decision must be made to ensure the applicant is able to take on board the teachings stressing it is not a substitute for psychological services, talking therapy or counselling. We offer self-help services, including our one-to-one appointments which are also self-help services using the SEJ Process the applicant must fully understand this.

4.2 Receipt and Acknowledgement

Upon receipt, each application will be assigned a unique reference number, and an acknowledgement will be sent to the applicant within 5 business days offering them a Wellbeing Assessment online or in person. Note we endeavour to respond to applications as soon as possible. Applicants will be informed of the expected timeline for review after their Wellbeing Assessment of 10 working days.

4.3 Preliminary Assessment

Applications will first be screened for eligibility. Incomplete applications or those lacking required documentation will be returned to the applicant with a clear explanation of what is missing and guidance on how to complete the process.

4.4 Detailed Review

Eligible applications will be reviewed by the Stay Mentally Healthy Hub Lead Consultant and Trainer initially, all applications will then be reviewed by any other Directors/Members to ensure audit and quality assurance within 30 days of applications being granted. As the organisation develops Directors may include mental health professionals, financial experts, and community representatives. The review will consider:

- The urgency of the applicant's needs
- The appropriateness and evidence base of the requested services
- The applicant's financial situation
- Potential outcomes and impact of funding
- Any previous funding received

Reviews will be conducted in a non-discriminatory and culturally sensitive manner, adhering to relevant anti-discrimination laws and policies.

4.5 Decision and Notification

Decisions will be communicated to applicants within 10 working days of Wellbeing Assessment. Notifications will include:

- The outcome of the application (approved, partially approved, or declined)
- The service awarded (as may not be what was requested based on their Wellbeing Assessment)
- Any conditions attached to the funded provision
- Information on how to appeal or request a review of the decision
- Accept / Decline within 21 days or before agreed start date of service.

All decisions will be documented, filed and retained for audit and quality assurance purposes.

5. Funding Disbursement

There is no funding given directly to the applicant. All funded services are provided for free by the SEJ Consultants and Trainers. Funded services are provided on the basis of criteria being met as stated in this policy. Services are provided through partial or fully funded provision.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

Recipients of funded spots are required to complete the User Feedback Form as outlined in their funding agreement. These reports are used for accountability, evaluation of service effectiveness, and improvement of future funding processes. Failure to comply with reporting requirements may affect future eligibility.

7. Privacy and Confidentiality

All personal information collected as part of the application process will be handled in accordance with prevailing privacy legislation and best practices. Only authorised personnel will have access to application materials, and information will not be shared with third parties without explicit consent, except as required by law.

8. Appeals and Complaints

Applicants have the right to appeal funding decisions or lodge complaints concerning the application process. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 20 business days of notification. An independent review panel will consider all appeals in accordance with the principles of fairness and natural justice.

In circumstances where there may be only one company director/member and no other employees, any appeals or complaints will still need to be submitted in writing within the specified timeframe. The sole director is required to oversee and manage the appeals process personally, applying the principles of fairness and natural justice to the fullest extent possible. While the process will lack a multi-person review panel, the director will maintain transparency and document all decisions thoroughly, ensuring the process remains as impartial and equitable as possible under the circumstances.

9. Reviews of Decisions

Applicants who wish to request a review may do so by following the established Appeals and Complaints Procedures. This process is facilitated by the Review Panel, which ensures that all appeals are handled impartially and in accordance with organisational policy. To initiate an appeal, applicants should submit a written request outlining their reasons and any supporting information within the timeframe stipulated in the procedures. The panel will review the submission, consider any additional evidence, and communicate its findings to the applicant in a timely manner. Throughout this process, the organisation is committed to maintaining transparency, fairness, and open communication, ensuring that all concerns are addressed appropriately and constructively.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

- Applicants: Responsible for providing accurate, complete information and for adhering to reporting requirements if funding is granted.
- Funding Officers: The Hub Lead Consultant and Trainer is responsible for receiving, acknowledging, and initially screening applications.

- Review Panel (Other Directors/Members): Responsible for assessing applications, making funding recommendations, and ensuring decisions are fair and unbiased. Directors/Members are also responsible for audit and quality assurance and will report on each individual application and overview the financial aspects monthly. They will oversee the overall process, ensure adherence to policy, and facilitate appeals and complaints procedures.
- Service Providers: to ensure delivery of services in accordance with this procedure and any further guidance given by Directors/Members.

11. Review and Continuous Improvement

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness, relevance, and equity. Stakeholder feedback—including from applicants, service providers, and advocacy groups—will be incorporated into policy updates.

12. Policy Communication

This policy will be made publicly available via the organisation’s website and in accessible formats upon request. Training will be provided to all staff involved in processing funding applications.

13. Service Withdrawal

The organisation reserves the right to withdraw a funded service if an applicant is not participating fully in the agreed programme or activities. This measure ensures that resources are allocated responsibly and that the intended benefits reach those actively engaging in self-help initiatives. Prior to any withdrawal, applicants will always be notified of the concerns and given a fair opportunity to respond or adjust their participation, maintaining a transparent and equitable process. See also *Reasons the Organisation May not Allocate a Funded Service* and *Refund Policy* for those asked to withdraw or looking to leave the service of their own volition.

14. Guidelines for Supporting Documentation

By establishing clear criteria and procedures, the organisation not only safeguards the effective use of funded services but also fosters trust among service users and stakeholders. These measures create a framework where transparency and accountability are prioritised, allowing applicants to understand their responsibilities and the reasons behind any decisions affecting their access to funded services. In this way, the organisation seeks to balance compassion with prudent management, ensuring that all actions taken are consistent with its mission and values.

15. References and Supporting Documents

- Official Funding Application Form
- Privacy Statement
- Medical Disclaimer
- Appeals and Complaints Procedures

- Reasons the Organisation May not Allocate a Funded Service
- Refunds Policy

Conclusion

By following these guidelines, the organisation commits to supporting individuals in accessing our services, reducing financial barriers, and contributing to the overall health and resilience of the community. This policy reflects a commitment to fairness, respect, and continuous improvement in the delivery of self-help service provision.

Policy Review Date:

"This policy was created on December 2024, updated August 2025 and is scheduled for review in August 2026.

Reasons the Organisation May Not Allocate a Funded Service

Ensuring Responsible Resource Allocation and Fairness

In line with the organisation's commitment to responsible stewardship and equitable access, there are certain circumstances under which a funded service may not be allocated to an applicant. These reasons are designed to ensure that resources are directed to those who will benefit most and that the principles of fairness, accountability, and community impact are upheld.

1. Lack of Full Participation

The organisation may decide not to allocate or may withdraw a funded service if an applicant does not participate fully in the agreed programme or activities. Active engagement is essential to achieving the intended benefits of the service and to maintaining the integrity of self-help initiatives.

2. Failure to Meet Eligibility Criteria

Applicants who do not meet the established eligibility requirements, as outlined in the official guidelines and funding application documents, may be deemed ineligible for funded services.

3. Incomplete or Insufficient Documentation

Failure to provide all required supporting documents with the funding application can result in non-allocation. Accurate and complete documentation ensures that assessments are conducted fairly and transparently.

4. Misuse of Services or Non-Compliance

Evidence that an applicant has misused provided services, or has not complied with the terms and conditions of the services, may lead to denial of further funding or withdrawal of existing support.

5. Resource Constraints

In situations where resources are limited which may include availability of service providers, the organisation may need to prioritise applicants based on need, level of engagement, or other criteria, which could result in some eligible applicants not receiving funded services. In some cases we may need to put individuals on a waiting list.

At times, the demand for funded services may exceed the organisation's available resources, such as funding or the capacity of service providers. In these circumstances, it is not always possible to accommodate all eligible applicants immediately. To manage this fairly and efficiently, a waiting list system is implemented.

Applicants who meet all eligibility criteria and have provided complete documentation, but cannot be offered services right away due to resource limitations, will be placed on a waiting list. Placement on the list ensures that applications are held in order of receipt or priority of need, according to the organisation's established criteria. As resources become available—whether through increased funding, expanded service capacity, availability of service providers, or the conclusion of support for other participants—individuals on the waiting list will be contacted in turn and offered the opportunity to access services.

Applicants are encouraged to stay in communication with the organisation to receive updates about their status. This approach helps maximise fairness and ensures that assistance is provided as promptly as possible when resources allow.

6. Failure to Respond or Address Concerns

If an applicant, after being notified of concerns regarding their participation or documentation, does not respond or take appropriate action to resolve these issues, the organisation may decide not to allocate or may withdraw the funded service. A transparent and equitable process will always be maintained, giving applicants a fair opportunity to respond.

7. Changes in Programme Requirements

Occasionally, programme guidelines or funding priorities may change. When this occurs, previously eligible applicants may no longer qualify for funded services under new regulations. The organisation has the right to cancel services due to unforeseen circumstances however they will do their best to provide alternative services, dates and/or times.

8. Discretion to Cease Funding

The organisation retains the right to discontinue funding services as part of its operations or support for programmes or services at any time, at its sole discretion. While every effort will be made to give advance notice and minimise disruption, there may be situations—such as changes in organisational priorities, unforeseen circumstances, or external factors—where continued provision of funding is no longer possible or appropriate. In such cases, the organisation will communicate clearly with affected applicants and, where feasible, seek to offer information about alternative sources of support or services.

Conclusion

The organisation is committed to fairness, transparency, and the responsible allocation of resources. By adhering to these principles, the aim is to maximise benefits to the community while ensuring that funded services are distributed to those who are most engaged and in need. All applicants are encouraged to participate fully, provide accurate information, and communicate openly with the organisation to support successful outcomes.

Policy Review Date:

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