



Small Grants Fund 2024 Impact Report

Background

The Small Grants Fund offered grants of up to £10,000 over a twelve-month period. It is one of a number of funding streams under Cloudesley’s Health Grants Programme 2019-24 which aimed to reduce health inequalities in Islington by improving health outcomes for people experiencing multiple disadvantage.



YES Outdoors

The 2024/25 round launched in October 2023, with projects starting from March 2024 onwards. The round was promoted through Cloudesley’s website, Voluntary Action Islington’s (VAI) newsgroup, and by direct email. A Meet the Funder session was held in partnership with VAI.

The Fund focused on three areas: work with young people; work with people with learning disabilities and/or autism; and work by organisations led by and for marginalised communities. Organisations had to be based in Islington and have an income of under £500,000. Projects had to support Islington residents with health problems or who are disabled and on low or no income.

Applications

Applications	
Applications received	22
Amount requested	£209,098
Organisations new to Cloudesley	11

Grants	
Grants awarded	11
Amount awarded	£104,360
Organisations new to Cloudesley	3

50% of applications were successful

64% of funded organisations also received a grant in the previous round

Grants

Organisation	Project Name	Grant Amount
Scarabeus Aerial Theatre	Take Flight - Circus and aerial theatre for young people with mental health problems	£10,000
Islington Somali Community	ISC Connect service	£10,000
One True Voice	BAME mothers with children with autism	£10,000
Artbox London	SEN Practitioner and RSE and BSL training	£10,000
Minority Matters Ltd	Special Mums Support Plus	£10,000
YES Outdoors	CLIMB: Climbing, Mentoring & Bicycles	£10,000
Mildmay Community Partnership	Mildmay Youth Club	£10,000
Jannaty Women's Social Society	Habibi Hub: a safe and supportive space for disadvantaged women	£10,000
Memory Gardens	Hand and Sky Project	£9,100
Angel Shed Theatre Company	1 to 1 support for performance arts activities with young people with disabilities	£8,330
Urban Forest Tribe CIC	SEND Nature Connection Home Education Programme	£6,930

Themes

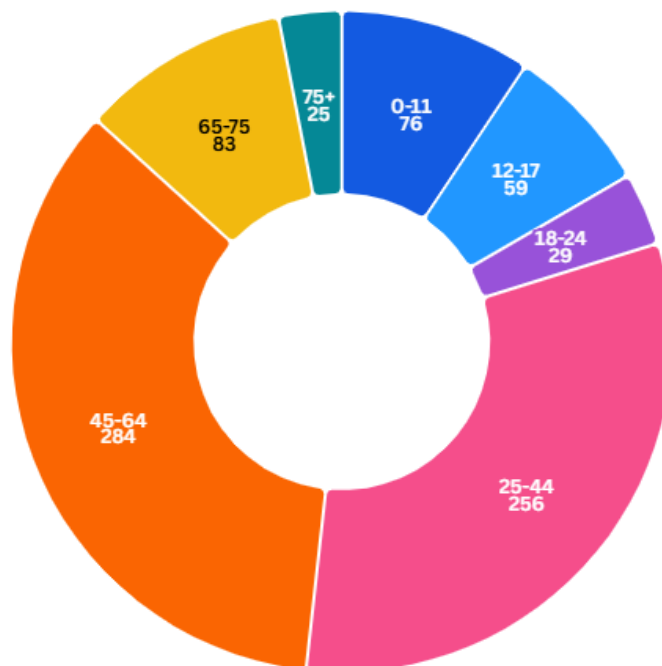
Organisation	Young people	Led by and for marginalised communities	People with learning disabilities or autism
Scarabeus Aerial Theatre			
Islington Somali Community			
One True Voice			
Artbox London			
Minority Matters Ltd			
YES Outdoors			
Mildmay Community Partnership			
Jannaty Women's Social Society			
Memory Gardens			
Angel Shed Theatre Company			
Urban Forest Tribe CIC			

Created with Datawrapper

Beneficiaries

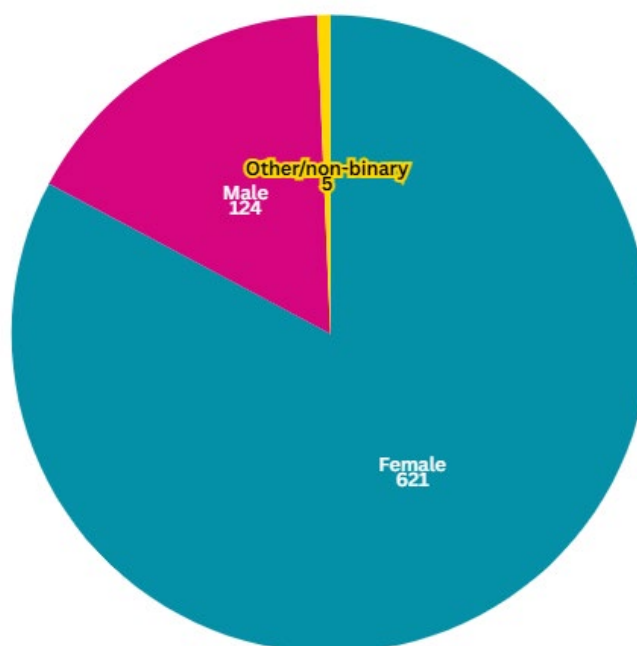
The Small Grants Fund reached **812** Islington residents overall. The charts below give a breakdown of who was reached by the Fund. Not all of the groups reported against each category, so the total number will vary.

Age



Gender

The gender figures are skewed by Jannaty Women's Social Society, who reached 413 people, all women, more than half of the total number of people reached by the Fund overall. Without Jannaty, 61% of the residents reached by the Fund would be women rather than 82%.



Ethnicity

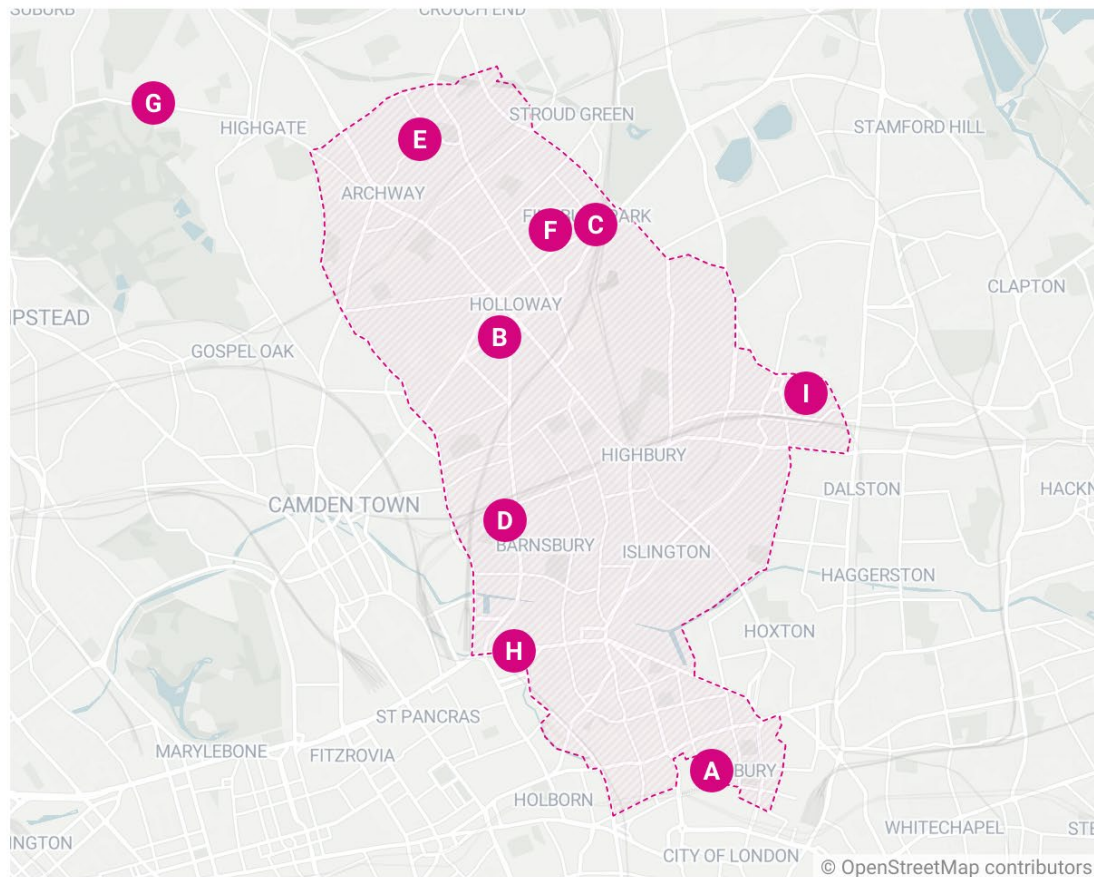
	Ethnicity	Total
Asian	Bangladeshi	54
	Chinese	0
	Indian	0
	Pakistani	1
	Any other Asian background	1
Black	Black Caribbean	7
	Somali	217
	Eritrean	52
	Nigerian	0
	Ghanaian	0
	Other Black African	68
Mixed	Any other Black background	44
	Asian and White	0
	Black African and White	1
	Black Caribbean and White	1
	Any other Mixed background	12
White	White British	13
	White Irish	0
	Turkish/Turkish Cypriot	57
	Greek/Greek Cypriot	0
	Kurdish	0
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
	Any other White background	57
Other	Arab	56
	Latin American	0
	Any other ethnic group	77
	Prefer not to say	2

The high number of Somali residents reached can partially be attributed to Islington Somali Community, who reached 101 Somali residents. The “Any other category” in each section includes monitoring returns that only reported against the broader categories.

Location

The table below shows where each organisation is located, or if they do not have a permanent office, where the service takes place. It does not necessarily reflect where the service users come from, with many organisations attracting people from across the borough. In some cases, they may also work across multiple locations, with only the primary location or office base being marked on the map.

Small Grants Fund 2024



- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| A Memory Gardens | B Angel Shed Theatre | C Islington Somali Community & Jannaty Women's Social Society |
| D Artbox London | E Scarabeus Aerial Theatre | F Minority Matters & One True Voice |
| G Urban Forest Tribe CIC | H YES Outdoors | I Mildmay Community Partnership |

Created with Datawrapper

Outcomes

Each individual project has unique outcomes, making overall measurement a challenge. However, there are some common themes that span a number of projects. These outcomes are summarised below.

- **Improved mental health and wellbeing**

This was a stated outcome for seven of the organisations. At Mildmay Community Partnership, young people reported feeling calmer, happier, and more hopeful, with regular attendance reducing stress and anxiety. At Scarabeus, 96% of participants said they felt less anxious and stressed after participating in the sessions. Meanwhile, Artbox saw improved wellbeing for both the artists and their families.

- **Increased social connections and reduced isolation**

This was a stated outcome for nine organisations. Minority Matters helped foster a community feeling amongst mothers who have children with autism or disabilities, enabling them to support each other. The women reported feeling more engaged in the community and less isolated. Islington Somali Community's befriending programme helped older people engage with community activities such as yoga, swimming, sauna sessions, and mosque visits. Urban Forest Tribe empowered children to cook shared meals, creating a joyful, social hub for the children and their families.

- **Equipped with new skills and learning**

This was a stated outcome for six organisations. The projects equipped service users with a wide range of new skills and knowledge. This included ecological knowledge and forest skills, such as fire building, foraging and tree identification, at Urban Forest Tribe; creative and artistic skills at Artbox London; and advocacy skills at One True Voice.

- **Increased confidence and self-esteem**

This was a stated outcome for nine organisations. Artbox London reported that their artists with learning disabilities had improved confidence and self-esteem as a result of the opportunity to express themselves through art and the chance to build a positive identity as an artist. One True Voice reported a 40% increase in participants' confidence in addressing challenges related to their children's autism, and Angel Shed reported that 100% of their participants had increased in confidence.

Learning

The funded groups also reported on the key learning points from the projects, as well as the challenges they faced. Common learning points included:

- **Partnership working** – many groups highlighted opportunities they had to work in partnership with other organisations. Some cited existing partnerships that helped them deliver enhanced services or make limited resources go further, whilst others referenced future partnerships or opportunities to replicate their model at other organisations.
- **Peer support** – a number of groups highlighted the value of offering opportunities for peer support as part of their service, explaining that such support can engender a sense of belonging and empowerment.
- **Culturally sensitive services** – some groups emphasised the importance of culturally tailored and responsive services, and the ability of such services to improve engagement and build trust among their client groups.



Jannaty Women's Social Society

Challenges experienced by the groups were:

- **Funding** – the ongoing challenge of securing sustainable funding was flagged by a majority of the organisations. A lack of core and unrestricted funding impacts on the organisation's ability to cover essential costs and provide stability. Limited funding also prevents organisations from expanding and reaching more people.
- **Increasing needs and demand** – many organisations highlighted the increased demand for their service, whilst others flagged that the needs of their client base are increasing and becoming more complex. Some groups were keen to grow to meet demand, but were not currently in a position to do so.
- **Cost of living** – the cost of living continues to affect both organisations and residents in a number of ways. For instance, it has made it difficult for some service users to travel in order to access services.

Case studies

Some case studies have been edited for brevity and names have been changed.

Aden, Islington Somali Community

Aden, a 61-year-old Somali former taxi driver, suffered a stroke in early 2024, leaving him with mobility issues and severe speech difficulties. After hospital discharge, his family contacted ISC's Elder Outreach Service, unsure how to access the right care. Due to limited understanding of services and communication challenges, they struggled to manage his needs. Aden was visited by the Connect Support Worker, with a trusted advice worker present to support communication. He had become frightened by unfamiliar carers who did not speak his language, increasing confusion and distress.

ISC contacted his allocated social worker to raise concerns, and successfully advocated for a culturally appropriate care package with Somali-speaking carers providing daily support. ISC helped the family understand Aden's care and therapy options and referred them to the Islington Stroke Organisation for peer and recovery support. Aden also joined a local Somali men's group, which improved his confidence. Though unable to return to driving, he now volunteers at a community café, staying active and socially connected. With the right support, both he and his family have regained confidence and stability.

Family supported by Urban Forest Tribe

When one family reached out to Urban Forest Tribe (UFT), they were at breaking point. Their child was struggling in school, and the school environment wasn't meeting their needs. The family felt completely lost and unsure where to turn. After learning about the SEND Forest School sessions, they asked if UFT could support them by working alongside the school to create a flexible schooling arrangement. Together, they shaped a plan where the child could attend UFT's nature based sessions one day a week, giving them the space to regulate, build confidence, and feel understood, while continuing to attend school for the remainder of the week.

Since joining UFT, the child has been attending school more regularly and is finding it easier to focus and engage in the classroom. Most importantly, the child now feels comfortable and at home during the sessions and enjoys engaging in all the activities, from cooking around the fire to exploring the woodland with the other children in the group. The family told UFT that they were so relieved to have found them at a time when they felt completely overwhelmed. They now feel supported, hopeful, and grateful for the positive changes they've seen, not just in their child, but in their family life as a whole.

Peter, YES Outdoors

Peter is autistic and has also been diagnosed with ADHD. At school, he has been unable to access the curriculum and has been working on a reduced timetable of two days a week, although most weeks he doesn't manage two days as he is unable to read or write and finds it very difficult to sit still in a classroom. His mother shared with us her desperation at the lack of support available. Peter had not climbed before but quickly demonstrated his ability, strength and resilience. He was accomplishing difficult climbs within four weeks and continued to show determination to improve on his personal best.

His mentor made a strong connection with him, and the trust has given him an outlet for his frustration and an opportunity to receive recognition for his endurance and skill at climbing. Peter is shy and lacks social skills, he was struggling in the group as the others teased him and he was unable to respond. When we offered an abseil from the top of the Castle, Peter offered to go first and without any fuss made the descent. The group was slightly in awe and the dynamic clearly shifted to a more respectful approach to Peter. Peter said "I love climbing, every Tuesday when I wake up and remember it's climbing day. I am so excited, I can't wait!" Youth workers and his parents observed an improvement in his motivation, self-esteem, confidence levels and social skills that they attributed to the programme.

Ella, Mildmay Community Partnership

Ella is a single mother of three, living in overcrowded accommodation and navigating the daily challenges of parenting alone. Since enrolling her 12-year-old daughter into the girls' group and her younger child into the afterschool arts club, this mother has not only seen improvements in her children's wellbeing but has also built her own support network through our project. One of her children is autistic, and the mother expressed how reassured she feels knowing her child is in a space that is both neurodiversity-aware and emotionally safe. Her younger child has emerging behavioural challenges, and through Mildmay's partnership with Bright Futures, she was able to access parental support and guidance via the weekly drop-in sessions. Through their extended network, she received:

- Access to the food bank and support services
- Christmas gifts for her children
- Free tickets to the zoo
- Enrolment into a wellbeing class
- Peer support

Additionally, she also agreed to a referral to Prospex, which enabled her daughter to access 1:1 support and therapeutic services. This has had a transformational effect on her daughter's self-confidence and emotional regulation. Ella told Mildmay that she feels more connected, supported, and hopeful than she has in years. She has formed friendships with other local parents, feels her children are thriving, and is grateful for a space that understands and supports her family's complex needs.

Quotes from service users

"This space is so magical. Your approach is exactly what our child needs, they look forward to coming each week and have made friends they now see outside of the sessions. Thank you for making this possible, and for being so flexible."
Urban Forest Tribe

"Living with kidney failure is tough, but the weekly group gives me something to look forward to. I've started yoga and love seeing friends – it helps me feel stronger and more positive."
Islington Somali Community

"Thank you... for this amazing fitness class. It's a life changing activity and it boosts the energy up."
Jannaty Women's Social Society

"Our experience at Angel Shed has been brilliant. ...She is always eager to come and always tells me she has had a good time ...the staff are just so brilliant at making her feel included and welcome and like a regular teenage girl. ...I think attending Angel Shed has definitely improved her speech and language and confidence. ...Thank you so much for everything you do. Thank you for existing. You have honestly improved her quality of life so much. As a parent, this means the world"
Angel Shed Theatre

"The workshops helped me understand my child's needs and how to support him. I no longer feel alone in this journey."
One True Voice

"You are not just doing activities; you are looking after our whole family. You've helped us in ways you don't even know."
Mildmay Community Partnership

"I have been struggling with agoraphobia for a while, and Take Flight is one of the few things that I will 100% be able to leave the house for. My attendance has improved significantly since I started. I'm also so much more confident moving my body than I have ever been, I'm much less embarrassed about moving my body"
Scarabeus Aerial Theatre

Conclusion

The 2024 round of the Small Grants Fund supported a wide range of projects across its three key areas of young people, people with learning disabilities and organisations led by and for marginalised people. From befriending support, through forest school, to creative activities, the fund covered a range of work stretching across Islington.

This round saw a higher proportion of repeat funding for previous Small Grant holders. New applicants were on a level playing field with previously funded applicants, but a large proportion of the applications that we received were from previously funded organisations.

There were common challenges across organisations, with central issues being increased demand and, critically, sustainable funding in order to meet that demand and provide a stable service. Issues with staff retention and wellbeing also continued to be an issue.

The Small Grants Fund will now be rested for a few years, with our Health Grants funding directed towards our Large Grants – which are bigger, multi-year grants – instead. We hope to bring the Small Grants Fund back in future to extend our reach in the Islington community.



Artbox London