

VCFSE Funding Newsletter September 2026

In this issue, we are pleased to share that our VCFSE Funding Videos are now live, designed to help organisations strengthen their funding applications. We also feature an article exploring the Government's proposed Earned Settlement reforms and what they could mean for learners, ESOL providers and digital inclusion. In addition, we highlight our upcoming Earned Settlement & ESOL: Six Months On webinar, providing an opportunity to revisit key themes from our March conference and reflect on developments across the sector. As always, we share the latest funding opportunities locally, regionally and nationally 😊

VCFSE Funding Training Videos – Now Live on Our Website



We are pleased to share that our VCFSE Funding Training Videos are now live.

Developed in partnership with Sector 3 Stockport CVS, these videos are designed to help VCFSE organisations feel more confident when applying for funding. They cover the full funding journey, including where to find funding, how to describe your organisation and project, how to reach service users and top tips for developing strong applications.

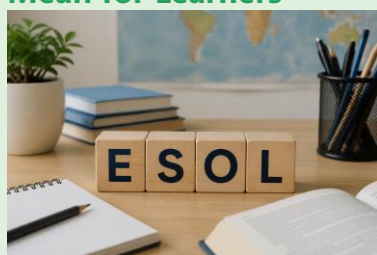
While some examples focus on English language support, the content is relevant to all types of VCFSE funding.

 Each video is supported by clear, downloadable step by step resources.

 Please click the link below to access all videos:

[Introduction to funding mini course - Northwestrsmp](#)

ESOL & Earned Settlement: What the Proposed Changes Could Mean for Learners



The UK Government is proposing major reforms to the settlement system through a new Earned Settlement model. If introduced, the changes could place greater emphasis on contribution, integration and English language proficiency, with some applicants potentially needing to demonstrate B2-level English rather than the current B1 requirement. While the proposals are still under consultation and no final decisions have been made, they could have significant implications for learners, employers and ESOL providers. The article explores the proposed changes, what they could mean for learners, and the potential impact on ESOL provision and digital inclusion.

For further information, please see the link below:
[ESOL & Earned Settlement: What the Proposed Changes Could Mean for Learners - Northwestrsmp](#)

Webinar: Earned Settlement & ESOL – Six Months On

 **9 September 2026 |
12pm–1pm**

In March, we hosted a conference on Earned Settlement and ESOL, bringing together stakeholders from across the sector to discuss opportunities, challenges and the practical implications for ESOL delivery, capacity and learners.

Six months on, this follow-up webinar will revisit the key themes from those discussions and explore developments since the conference. While there have been relatively few formal updates, the session offers a valuable opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, reflect on key messages and consider what they mean in the current landscape, including emerging challenges, opportunities and examples of good practice.

Whether you attended the March conference or are joining the discussion for the first time, you are very welcome to attend.

Please click the link below to join:

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/347716887147907?p=bOdNw4Thc4VDBDoOc>

Funding Opportunities in the North West and Nationally

In the following section, we will share new **external** funding opportunities available across different regions in the Northwest and nationally that may be useful and worth considering. Please note that some of the funding opportunities from the newsletter I sent previously are still open. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Please Note – the funding below is external to the RSMP and is shared with you after researching funding across the region and nationally. The RSMP has no role in the drafting, commissioning or awarding of funding. Please ensure you read all eligibility criteria associated with each funding opportunity.

Crisis and Resilience Fund (Salford)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support VCSEs delivering activities and services for people experiencing sudden financial emergencies or struggling to afford everyday essentials. The fund also aims to address the underlying causes of financial hardship, build resilience and reduce future reliance on emergency support through holistic, wraparound services
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Open to VCSEs • projects must support people experiencing financial crisis or hardship • funded organisations must participate in the Salford support network and adopt a 'no wrong door' approach, making referrals to appropriate services where needed • activities should address both immediate needs and longer-term causes of financial hardship
Grant amount	£5,000 to £20,000
Location	Salford
Deadline	12pm, Friday 11 th September <i>closing soon!</i>
Contact	grants@salfordcvs.co.uk
Website	Crisis and Resilience Fund Salford CVS

The Halton Foundation (Halton: Widnes and Runcorn)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support people experiencing need, hardship or distress across Halton by funding voluntary and community organisations delivering charitable projects that benefit local residents
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Voluntary and community organisations working in the Halton area. Beneficiaries must be from Halton • organisations must have at least three unrelated trustees, directors or committee members • funding is for specific projects and activities rather than core salaries or general running costs, although sessional worker costs and an element of full cost recovery may be considered • additional funding is available for education projects supporting young people under 25 in Widnes
Grant amount	Up to £1,500
Location	Halton (Widnes and Runcorn)
Deadline	14 th September 2026
Contact	applications@cflm.org.uk
Website	The Halton Foundation - CFM

Alice's WonderDance Foundation (Liverpool City Region)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Continue the legacy of Alice Aguiar by helping children and young people access dance opportunities. The fund aims to remove financial barriers to participation in dance, promoting creativity, confidence, inclusion, wellbeing and personal development through movement
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Open to community organisations and schools within the Liverpool City Region • organisations must have at least three unrelated trustees, directors or management committee members • applicants must demonstrate local delivery and impact • individuals can apply separately for grants of up to £250 • the fund encourages applications that include staff costs based on the Real Living Wage (£13.45 per hour minimum at the time of publication)
Grant amount	• Up to £2,000 for community organisations and schools • Up to £250 for individual applicants
Location	Liverpool City Region (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral)
Deadline	2 nd October 2026
Contact	applications@cflm.org.uk
Website	Alice's WonderDance Foundation - CFM

Pots of Possibility – Your Pots Fund (Lancaster District)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support community-led projects that generate positive outcomes for people and the environment by reducing waste, encouraging reuse and building community resilience. The fund forms part of the Closing Loops programme, which aims to create a zero-waste, circular and regenerative local economy in North Lancashire
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Open to voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations delivering projects in the Lancaster District • eligible organisations include unregistered community groups, constituted groups, sports clubs, registered charities, CIOs, CICs, not-for-profit companies, schools, colleges, universities (where projects provide wider community benefit) and faith-based groups • projects must align with at least one of the fund themes: Repair, Shared Resources & Community Space, Communications, Arts & Festivals, or Food-related Projects
Grant amount	£5,000 to £10,000
Location	Lancaster District
Deadline	30 th September 2026, 11:59 pm (Expression of Interest deadline)
Contact	hello@lancastercvsvs.org.uk
Website	Funding Opportunities - LDCVS - Lancaster District Community & Voluntary Solutions

Alice's WonderDance Foundation (Lancashire)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Remove barriers preventing children and young people from accessing dance opportunities. The fund supports participation in dance as a means of promoting creativity, confidence, connection, wellbeing and personal development, while continuing the legacy of dancer Alice Aguiar.
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Open to community organisations and schools in Lancashire. • projects must benefit children and young people and improve access to dance opportunities • available across all Lancashire local authority areas • organisations must have at least three unrelated trustees, directors or management committee members • applicants must demonstrate local delivery and impact • applications including staff costs based on the Real Living Wage (£13.45 per hour minimum at the time of publication) are encouraged
Grant amount	• Up to £2,000 for community organisations and schools • Up to £250 for individual applicants
Location	Lancashire (all local authority areas)
Deadline	2 nd October 2026
Contact	applications@cflm.org.uk
Website	Alice's WonderDance Foundation - CFL

Christal Foundation (Lancashire)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support charities and community groups that improve the lives of people in Burnley. The fund particularly supports new ideas, test and learn projects, feasibility studies, gaps in local provision and projects that may struggle to secure funding from other sources
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Must benefit Burnley residents • open to charities and community groups, including those based outside Burnley if beneficiaries are Burnley residents • priority for small grassroots organisations. • projects should support new ideas, feasibility studies, test and learn activity, or unmet local needs • must have at least three unrelated trustees, directors or committee members
Grant amount	Up to £3,500
Location	Burnley, Lancashire
Deadline	11 th September 2026 <i>closing soon!</i>
Contact	applications@cflm.org.uk
Website	Christal Foundation - CFL

Blackburn with Darwen Community Fund (Blackburn with Darwen)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support small grassroots community groups that encourage volunteering and develop local solutions that make a positive difference within neighbourhoods across Blackburn with Darwen. The fund forms part of the Community Pledge and aims to strengthen community-led activity

Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Constituted voluntary, community or not-for-profit groups with a governing document and a committee of at least three unrelated individuals • must have a bank, building society or credit union account requiring two signatories (or an agreement with another eligible organisation to hold funds on their behalf) • must not be a statutory body or private sector organisation • must be volunteer-led, with no directly employed paid staff • activities must take place within Blackburn with Darwen and benefit local residents
Grant amount	Up to £1,000
Location	Blackburn with Darwen
Deadline	12pm on Monday 28 th September 2026
Contact	cvsgrants@communitycvs.org.uk
Website	Blackburn with Darwen Community Fund – Community CVS

Cheshire Community Foundation – Open Grants Programme (Cheshire and Warrington)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support community projects of up to 12 months that address issues important to local communities across Cheshire and Warrington. Priority themes include tackling poverty and disadvantage, building stronger and more resilient communities, improving mental health and wellbeing, developing education, skills and employment and increasing awareness of climate change
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Open to organisations that meet the Foundation's grant-making principles and minimum requirements and work with people in eligible areas across Cheshire and Warrington. Main Grants are generally aimed at more established organisations with a strong track record of delivery • for Micro Grants, priority is given to smaller organisations that have not previously received funding from Cheshire Community Foundation
Grant amount	• Micro Grant: Up to £1,000 • Small Grant: Up to £2,500 • Main Grant: Up to £15,000
Location	Cheshire and Warrington
Deadline	14 th October 2026
Contact	office@cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk
Website	Open Grants Programmes - Cheshire Community Foundation

Peak District National Park Foundation – Connect Fund (England)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Remove barriers that prevent disadvantaged and marginalised communities from accessing, understanding and enjoying the Peak District National Park. The fund supports trips that help people learn about the National Park, build confidence in accessing the countryside, and experience the benefits of connecting with nature
Specific Eligibility Criteria	• Open to schools, registered charities, charitable incorporated organisations (CIOs), community interest companies (CICs), community groups, societies and associations and companies limited by guarantee with an asset lock or charitable status

	- the trip destination must be within the Peak District National Park boundary - applicants must have completed any outstanding evaluation forms from previous grants, waited at least one year since receiving a previous Connect Fund grant, and the Peak District must be their nearest National Park - projects must focus on at least one of the fund's learning, confidence-building, or nature connection objectives
Grant amount	Up to £500
Location	England
Deadline	16 th October 2026
Contact	hello@peakdistrictfoundation.org.uk
Website	https://www.peakdistrictfoundation.org.uk/connect-fund/

Henry Smith Foundation – Maternity Equity Fund (The UK)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Support organisations providing preventative maternity support during pregnancy and birth, with the aim of reducing maternity inequities, improving access, experiences and outcomes, and strengthening trusted community-led organisations. The fund focuses on trauma-informed, culturally safe support and sharing learning across the sector
Specific Eligibility Criteria	- Open to UK-based charitable organisations, including registered charities, CIOs, not-for-profit CICs and other charitable not-for-profit organisations - applicants must have an annual income between £20,000 and £1.5 million - organisations must have proven experience of supporting communities facing maternity inequities and focus on pregnancy and birth (conception up to and including birth) - projects should support one or more of the following: Black, Asian and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; communities in areas of high deprivation (including rural areas); and people experiencing complex disadvantages, including antenatal mental health needs
Grant amount	£185,000 over three years (£61,600 in Year 1 and £61,700 in Years 2 and 3)
Location	The UK
Deadline	Expression of Interest deadline: 14 th October 2026, 5pm
Contact	Contact - Henry Smith
Website	Maternity Equity - Henry Smith

Henry Smith Foundation – Holiday Grants for Children (The UK)	
Focus/Aims of Fund	Provide recreational trips and holidays for children aged 13 and under who experience financial hardship, systemic inequity or disability, helping them access fun and memorable experiences they would not otherwise have the opportunity to enjoy. Priority is given to activities such as camping, outdoor adventures and seaside trips
Specific Eligibility Criteria	- Open to UK schools, youth groups and UK-based not-for-profit organisations with an annual income below £2 million - trips must be for children aged 13 or under - trips must be recreational in nature and take place within the UK

	• priority is given to projects benefiting disadvantaged and disabled children, particularly in areas within the 20% most deprived areas of the UK • trips must be at least six weeks away at the time of application • educational, curriculum-based, religious, family trips, overseas trips and high-cost attractions are not eligible
Grant amount	£500 to £3,000 per trip
Location	The UK
Deadline	19 th November 2026 (for trips taking place between 1 October and 31 December 2026)
Contact	Contact - Henry Smith
Website	Holiday grants - Henry Smith