



Ards and  
North Down  
Borough Council



# Ards and North Down **SPORTS FORUM**

**2026-2027**

**Schools/Sports Club Pathway**

**Guidance Notes**

## 2026-2027 Schools/Sports Club Pathway, Guidance Notes

### Aim of Grant

The aim of the school/sport club pathway is to encourage new partnerships between sport clubs and schools, to encourage young people in primary and post-primary education to participate in sport and to create pathways for young people to sustain their involvement within sports clubs.

Affiliated Sports Clubs can apply for financial assistance towards the cost of delivering an after-school coaching programme to primary and post-primary school groups and can avail of funding towards; equipment, venue hire and transport.

### Funding Limits

A maximum of £500 per Sports Club (per financial year) is available, please note a maximum of £300 out of the £500 can be for fundamental equipment.

### Funding Allocation

Ards and North Down Sports Forum have allocated £2,000 for 2026/2027. Should the programme be oversubscribed and due to limited funds available, a reduction in funding percentage will be applied to pending applications at that time.

### Application Timeline

School/Sport Club pathway grants are open all year round from 1 April 2026 – 23 February 2027. Applications are assessed monthly by the Ards and North Down Sports Forum.

Submission Deadline (12 noon)	Assessment Date
28 April 2026	5 May 2026
26 May 2026	2 June 2026
30 June 2026	7 July 2026
28 July 2026	4 August 2026
25 August 2026	1 September 2026
29 September 2026	6 October 2026
27 October 2026	3 November 2026
24 November 2026	1 December 2026
29 December 2026	5 January 2027
26 January 2027	4 February 2027
23 February 2027	2 March 2027

All completed applications must be submitted by 12 noon prior to submission deadlines above along with essential documents. Submit completed applications to email: [sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk).

### Applicant Eligibility

Sports Clubs **must** meet the following eligibility requirements. Should an application be received that does not meet the minimum requirements below, the application will not proceed to the assessment stage of the process:

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- Be affiliated to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum
- Take part in a sport affiliated to a Governing Body recognised by Sport NI / Sport Ireland.
- Have a Safeguarding Children and/or Vulnerable Adult Policy
- Have an Equality Policy
- Have valid public liability insurance (for coaches & venue)
- Submit a full programme Risk Assessment.

### Project Criteria

- The programme must be a NEW partnership between the club and school. The applicant must demonstrate the need of the programme and the benefits to school/club.
- The applicant demonstrates HOW the programme will increase participation, build sustainable pathways between the club and school.
- Demonstrate how the club will signpost pupils to further sports participation opportunities e.g. a final session at the Club's venue, invite participants and their families to an Open Night or help school obtain experience and qualifications for teachers.
- The programme must be a minimum of 6 sessions and maximum of 12 sessions in duration (final day of delivery must be prior to 31 March 2027)
- Be delivered at venues within the Ards & North Down Borough
- Engagement & approval must be sought by school prior to submission of application
- Applications must be submitted one month minimum prior to the programme commencing.

### Below an example of an eligible Project:

A six-week Schools/Sports Club Pathway programme for Key Stage 2 (P4-7) from 3-4pm at the local leisure centre, followed by an Open Evening at the Club, to invite programme participants along to try the Club.

<b>Project breakdown (Coaching costs, equipment costs, venue hire or transport costs).</b>	<b>Net Costs (excluding VAT)</b>	<b>VAT Costs</b>	<b>Total project costs</b>	<b>Amount requested from funding</b>
Coach Costs 6 weeks @ £25 per week x 1 Coach	£150	£0	£150	£150
Purchase of size balls for this age group 10 balls @ £5 each	£50	£10	£60	£60
Hire of Sports Hall for 6 weeks @ £40 per week	£240	£48	£288	£288
<b>Total Costs</b>				<b>£498.00</b>

### General Guidelines for Applicants

Applications will be considered in line with the eligibility criteria above.

- All applications must be completed in full, signed and submitted with all mandatory supporting documentation. Incomplete applications will not proceed for assessment,
- **Only typed form applications** will be accepted.
- Changes to the expenditure or nature of the project **MUST** be approved by the Sports Development Officer before the Club proceeds.
- All expenditure must be within the financial year.
- Successful applicants will receive an emailed 'Letter of Offer'. The letter of Offer contains the following information:
  - What the funding is for
  - What we need from you to reimburse costs
  - Deadline by when documents are required
  - Attached to the LoO are several forms which need to be returned by the deadline: 1) grant claim and 2) payee form

### Guidelines for Returning Documents

1. Agree any changes to the project applied for and its funding arrangements with the Sports Forum before implementation
2. Return the completed grant claim form, bank form and evidence of cost incurred
3. For 'Proof of Payment', submit all original receipts and bank statements for each cost associated with your application
4. For auditing purposes, bank statements must show clearly account name, payment date and details as well as recipient. (Note: cash payment receipts cannot be accepted)
5. Only costs which correspond with the application and Letter of Offer will be reimbursed

**Failure to submit all required information will result in funding being withdrawn.**

### What we WILL fund

- Specific Additional Equipment (fundamental equipment) associated with any given sport such as balls, bats, racquets, sticks etc up to a max of £300.
- Coaching costs
- Venue Hire (Except hire of own venue)
- School Travel Costs (to/from venue).

### What we will NOT fund

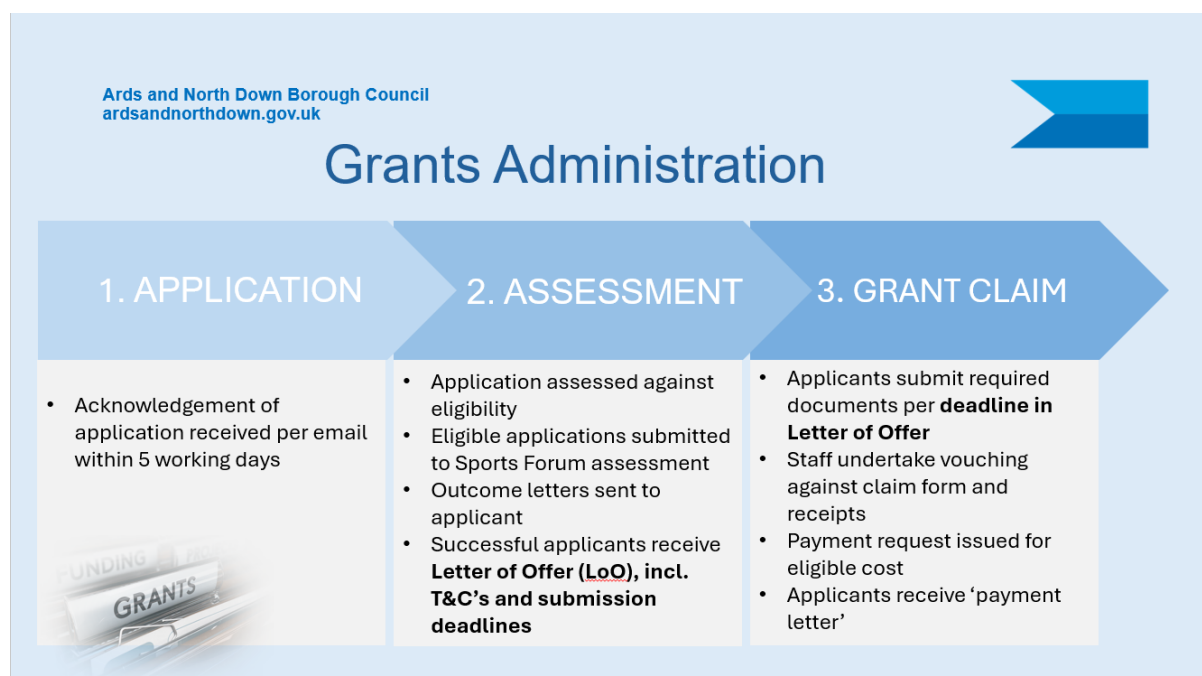
- Existing initiatives
- Curriculum time school programmes.
- Sports or projects for sports not listed by Sport Northern Ireland / Sport Ireland

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- Organisations that do not have a Safeguarding Children and/or Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Retrospective funding or costs that will be incurred after the deadline for receipts.
- Costs incurred before successful Letter of Offer issued.
- Activities promoting religious or political beliefs.
- Access NI registration fees
- Items which only benefit individuals (e.g. prizes; personal clothing or equipment; water bottles, boots, kits etc.)
- VAT that can be recovered from HM Revenue and Customs
- Publications, marketing.
- Projects, events, activities undertaken or equipment purchased outside of the specified award period.
- Projects, events, and activities where the primary benefits outside of the Borough.
- Events, projects or activities which conflict with any Council run project, event or activity.
- Organisations not legally established in the UK
- Projects, events, activities not compliant with the Council's aims and objectives.

**The list above is not exhaustive. The Council reserves the right to fund/not fund any project which is deemed suitable/unsuitable for the Ards and North Down Sports Forum grant scheme.**

### Grant Administration Process



**Incomplete applications, and applications received without the accompanying mandatory supporting documentation, will be deemed ineligible and not proceed for assessment.**

## 2026-2027 Schools/Sports Club Pathway, Guidance Notes

### Application forms

Schools/Sports Club Pathway grant guidance notes and applications are available at:

[Grants and Funding | AND Leisure \(leisureardsandnorthdown.com\)](https://www.leisureardsandnorthdown.com/grants-and-funding) or by emailing [sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

### For queries contact the Sports Development Team

**Email:** [sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk](mailto:sportsdevelopment@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk)

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