



Social Impact Gateway - Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQ are a work in progress as we pilot this new model – please contact us if you have any additional questions that you feel should be included here and if you feel any of the responses below could be improved. Thank you for your support and understanding.

Last updated: 3rd June 2025

1. What is the focus of the Gateway?

The Social Impact Gateway (SIG) has been developed to create an easier way for VCSEF organisations to access funding from a range of different funders working across the ‘system’, focused on the many aspects that affect health and wellbeing also known as the wider determinants of health. This includes things like inclusion, work, housing, education, money, air quality, safety, transport, social and community connections alongside health and care advice, support and services. These building blocks of society are ones which any organisation, large or small, can contribute to and improve.

On an ongoing basis, any specific focus or priorities through the SIG will be determined by funders or investors social impact/service goals.

These may include agreed by Health and Care Partnerships in East Kent and Medway & Swale. A Health Care Partnership (HCP) brings together partners from across the NHS, local government and VCSEF sector to improve health and care outcomes for its population by focusing on prevention, reducing health inequalities and supporting social and economic development.

East Kent HCP Priorities are currently: Prevention and Wellbeing, Urgent & Emergency Care and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.

Medway & Swale HCP priorities are currently: Social Regeneration, Frailty, Transforming Flow & Discharge, Integrated Neighbourhood Teams.

2. Who are the SIG delivery lead partners?

To help future-proof the model and ensure it could be adapted to respond to any future system/local government boundary changes, we are working to ensure interoperability across Kent. We aim to do this by developing and piloting this SIG model and application processes in tandem and conjunction with other SIG model delivery leads in Kent.

Currently the SIG delivery leads are:

- Social Enterprise Kent – currently working across East Kent and with the East Kent Health & Care Partnership
- MVA – currently working across Medway and Swale

We hope to expand the partnership in the future to reflect changes in the political landscape or geographical reach.

3. What is the VCSEF sector?

VCSEF means a Voluntary, Community or Social Enterprise or Faith organisation which has the following common features:

- **Beneficial and accountable to the community:** They have social objectives to benefit the community and are accountable to the community.
- **Formal:** They have a formal and recognisable structure that is described in a constitution or a formal set of rules. They are registered with the relevant register or regulator.
- **Non-profit making:** They do not distribute profits to owners or directors but reinvest them in the sustainability of the organisation or use them for the benefit of the community.

- **Self-governing:** They are truly independent in determining their own course, with at least three trustees or directors or management committee members (who are not related to each other and are not paid shareholders) and a bank account in its own name.
- **Independent:** They are separate from the state and private sector.
- **Supported through volunteering and embrace community action:** They involve a meaningful degree of voluntary participation through having, for example, a trustee board/committee, volunteers, and donations.
- **Non-party political.**

4. Who can become a Social Impact Gateway affiliate?

The Social Impact Gateway is for VCSEF organisations of all sizes across Kent and Medway who meet the eligibility criteria, which are:

- A registered charity, unincorporated association, Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), Community business (company limited by shares with a clear community purpose and benefit), Community Interest Company limited by guarantee (CIC, the common form of social enterprises), Community Interest Company limited by share (Schedule 2 with 100% asset lock), Community Benefit or Industrial Provident Society, or company limited by guarantee.
- Have robust governance and sound financial management proportional to organisation size, as set out in the Social Impact Gateway Quality Assurance requirements.
- Based in and/or already delivering services and conducting activities within Kent and Medway.
- Focused on at least one of the building blocks that affect health and wellbeing – including things like inclusion, work, housing, education, money, air quality, safety, transport, social and community connections alongside health and care advice, support and services.
- Be willing to collaborate with other organisations on the Framework.

We encourage all VCSEF organisations, even the very smallest, to apply. The joining process has been intentionally designed to be proportional to size.

5. Can large national charities apply to join the SIG?

Yes, as long as they can demonstrate how they are ‘locally rooted’, as this is a key criterion for framework participation, and meet all other affiliation criteria.

6. Why should I join the Social Impact Gateway? What’s in it for my organisation?

For VCSEF organisations, the SIG offers the following benefits:

- Easier funding applications – upload standard information such as accounts/policies etc once, not each time you apply
- Support to develop policies if needed.
- Proportionate requirements depending on the size of your organisation
- Networking and relationship building with VCSEF peers
- Skill and practice sharing
- Greater community voice in public sector decisions
- Collaborative system reform and service design

7. What are the benefits for people and communities?

- A range of wellbeing and health activities and support designed to meet the diversity of the population.
- Activities delivered by peers and organisations of the community.
- Trusted relationships with local and connected VCSEF organisations.

8. What are the benefits for Social Impact Gateway investors/funders?

- Ability to reach diverse, quality assured VCSEF organisations that are place, identity and practice based.
- A ready to go, robust, inclusive process.
- Health and wellbeing activities and support linked to programme and system outcomes.
- Two options – either a fully managed service including outcome measurements and contract management or a service managing the application process only.
- A managed way to deliver your social value.

9. What are the tiers of SIG and what do they mean?

There are three categories, or ‘tiers’ for the Gateway. All three tiers are equally important to achieving the aims of the Social Impact Gateway, which is about drawing on the strengths and capabilities of the local VCSEF sector as a whole, to improve quality of life for people across the districts.

The purpose of the tiers is to help reduce barriers to participation for smaller organisations by making the requirements proportional to their size.

Tier 1 members

This tier of membership is ringfenced for small/micro groups with an annual turnover of up to £24,999 who meet the minimum qualifying criteria. The Gateway is designed to be an enabling tool for smaller organisations and groups, so they have access to funding they might not otherwise. Help and support are available not only at the application stage, but to develop and grow once affiliated to the SIG.

Organisations in Tier 1 may also not yet have ‘contract ready’ status, perhaps because they have a gap in their Quality Assurance policies and practices, for example, but which have the capability and intention to become ‘contract ready’ in the near future.

Tier 2 members

These are organisations have demonstrated ‘contract readiness’ by successfully evidenced Quality Assurance policies and practices. Annual turnover of £25,000 to £99,999 and meeting all other qualifying criteria.

Tier 3 members

These are locally rooted, typically larger-scale VCSEF organisations that could be described as ‘contract-ready’, i.e., in a position to take on contracts (and large-scale grant funding) from statutory bodies for the delivery of specified services. Annual turnover of £100,000+

The graphic below gives an overview of the information and supporting evidence that organisations would be expected to provide at the application stage.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Governance document	Governance Document	Governance Document
Evidence of Bank Account with 2 signatories	Evidence of Bank Account with 2 signatories	Evidence of Bank Account with 2 signatories
Financial documents	Financial record/Accounts (previous year)	Financial record/Accounts (previous year)
Safeguarding policy	Policies: Safeguarding,	Policies: Safeguarding,

	EDI Complaints	EDI Complaints
	Delivery Experience (last 3 years) Ability to provide referee for 1 - 2 contracts/grants delivered (ideally over £30k in value but can be smaller)	Delivery Experience (last 3 years) Ability to provide referee for 1 - 2 contracts/grants delivered (both over £30k in value)
Insurance H&S compliance	Insurance H&S compliance	Insurance H&S compliance

10. How do I become part of the Social Impact Gateway?

You can apply to become a Social Impact Gateway affiliate by visiting our SIG webpage and clicking on the 'Apply Now' button to start your online application.

Your initial application will be reviewed on the basis of the information you supply and whether it meets the eligibility criteria and the tier criteria.

There are no costs to join the Social Impact Gateway. If you need support with any aspect of your application, contact us using the information on the SIG webpage.

11. What happens if my organisation fails to be awarded SIG affiliation?

Applications to the Gateway are not judged as Pass or Fail.

The criteria for joining are available and are designed to be a simple yes/no process. If any of the criteria aren't met, you may be asked for more detailed information on a particular question in the application form, or to provide us with specific documentation. We'll support you in completing any further actions and with resubmitting your revised application. There are no deadlines associated with Gateway applications, and we'll work with you to ensure that you have adequate time to make any changes.

12. What happens if there are changes to our organisation after we join the Gateway?

Gateway members will be expected to maintain their affiliation by continuing to demonstrate that they meet the relevant criteria.

If you are awarded funding through the Gateway and subsequently secure funding, you will be asked to supply updated policies if those held on SIG records are over 1 year old – you will be required to do this before funding is awarded.

If there are any significant changes to the information originally submitted, organisations should contact us at their earliest opportunity. If these changes affect affiliation of the Gateway, you will be supported to minimise any disruption to your affiliation.

If an organisation or group is unable to demonstrate ongoing compliance with the relevant criteria and consequently has its affiliation suspended, it will be referred to appropriate capacity building support to address identified gaps. Once any compliance failures are rectified, it will be able to re-apply for Gateway affiliation.

13. What sort of funding is available through the Gateway?

We are working with Health Care Partnership partners to support the funding opportunities available through the Gateway.

We are also approaching private sector business to support them to develop their social value offerings.

14. How do I apply for funding?

Opportunities for funding will be made available on the Social Impact Gateway. These opportunities will clearly outline what the funding is for, who can apply and where the projects need to be delivered. It will also talk about outcome measures and the reporting that is required after the award is made.

Each opportunity can be applied for through an application form process which will be proportional depending on the size of funding available.

Applications will be received by the SIG team who will do an initial longlist of applications and complete criteria/evidence matrix. This will then be passed to an *independent decision panel to select successful funding applicants*.

The decision panel will likely consist of:

- Funder representative
- VCSEF representative
- Local relevant stakeholder (eg HCP, local council, GP)
- Any other relevant interested person eg person with lived experience

SIG delivery leads (currently SEK and MVA) will not be part of the decision panel or take an active role in assessing applications or awarding funding.

Where funding allows, there will be 'involvement' payments for VCSEF and lived experience panel members to support participation.

15. Can you tell me more about the five Cs of the SIG?

The five Cs are the broad benefits the SIG aims to deliver:

1. Co-ordination

The SIG provides a single, coordinated approach for funders and commissioners to distribute their funds to VCSEF organisations. This also offers a clearer way to identify the impact of funding and of the sector's contribution to addressing health and wellbeing needs in the district.

2. Coproduction

One of the aims of the SIG is to develop and source opportunities to engage local VCSEF organisations and groups in the coproduction of services, so that on-the-ground knowledge of VCSEF organisations informs commissioners' objectives and shapes service design where appropriate.

3. Confidence

One of the focuses of the SIG is quality assurance, through strict eligibility criteria and rigorous application and evaluation processes. This due diligence gives commissioners, statutory partners and other funders, confidence that affiliate organisations have the capacity, knowledge and experience to deliver high-quality services. Equally, Gateway affiliates can have confidence that any funding they apply for will go through the fair and transparent process that is integral to the way it operates.

4. Capacity building

The SIG aims to support members to develop their organisational capacity and in doing so build the capacity of the local VCSEF sector as a whole. SIG affiliates have access to support such as training and workshop sessions, and we also encourage skills, expertise and best practice exchange between member organisations.

5. Cohesion

The SIG is being trialled in East Kent and Medway and Swale. We recognise that the ability to connect and be interoperable across each regional framework is important. The SIG will remain agile and adaptive in response to future changes in the statutory and county landscape – together we can achieve more.

16. How will the Social Impact Gateway consider the Public Services (Social Value) Act?

In order to secure funding through the Gateway, organisations will typically be expected to deliver social value as part of any service or project they deliver. Social value in this sense equates to wider social, economic and environmental benefits, such as enhanced levels of volunteering, increased spend in the local economy, reduction in practices that are detrimental to the environment and so on. Consideration around this will be built into the application process where appropriate.

The SIG model will improve ‘public benefit’ outcomes under the Procurement Act 2023 - Section 12 requiring public contracts to consider public benefit and Section 13 emphasises transparency and accountability.

17. Other than funding, how else might the Social Impact Gateway be used?

In addition to funding, statutory and corporate bodies might engage with the SIG’s VCSEF affiliates on topics such as:

- Proposals to provide community preventive activities.
- Data, insights and/or intelligence on a particular issue
- Co-production of new services.
- Research invitations

18. Will the SIG have an impact on my current income generation activities?

The SIG has been designed to support the sector to gain access to new income opportunities in addition to those they already hold; diversifying their income streams and improving financial resilience in the face of present and future socioeconomic challenges.

What the SIG is and is not:

The SIG is:

- ✓ Model aimed at opening up new funding opportunities for the sector
- ✓ Creating new pathways for statutory and business sector stakeholders to achieve social impact; including a facilitation function for channelling system level funding into hyper-local solutions and services
- ✓ Free to all VCSEF groups to become affiliates
- ✓ Aimed to reduce sector workload in relation to funding – organisational information only needs to be entered once, then any information specific to funding opportunities of interest
- ✓ A vehicle for local businesses and contractors to achieve effective and wider spread ESG and social value goals
- ✓ Partnership building support – SIG affiliates undertaken the same quality assurance checks, improving ability to identify potential partners
- ✓ Enabler for commissioner / buyer co-design conversations; helping to shape tenders/contracts that will achieve better outcomes for local people.

The SIG is not:

- ✗ A substitute for existing funding channels – if they already exist and are effective, there is no intention to divert them through the SIG
- ✗ Gatekeeper to opportunities – the SIG model provides an impartial function for distributing funding that would otherwise not be allocated due to practical/policy restraints
- ✗ An ‘exclusive’ club- it is hard wired into the SIG model to support/upskill organisations to reach minimum requirements to participate (moving them closer to being ‘contract ready’)
- ✗ A ‘top slice’ platform for lead partners - if collaborative bids require a lead partner, they will be encouraged to bid on FCR basis. Similarly, SIG management fees will be commensurate with the work required, born by the commissioner/buyer, and transparent to SIG affiliates.
- ✗ In competition with the sector – the SIG is aimed at securing income that would otherwise be inaccessible to the local sector.

19. Who will undertake any contract management of grants awarded?

This will depend on the preferences of any investor / commissioner. For example, they may prefer to:

- Contract manage the grants directly themselves and will have only used the SIG as brokerage support.
- Delegate contract management to the SIG delivery leads (currently SEK and MVA).
- Request a 'lead partner' collaboration arrangement, in which a SIG affiliate with specific specialisms/experience would apply to become the lead partner and contract manage accordingly.

-Ends-