

Expressions of Interest Information Pack

Barrow-in-Furness

July 2026



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1. Introduction

About Collective Futures

[Collective Futures](#) is a philanthropic foundation dedicated to improving lives and building stronger communities. We focus on early childhood development because the first five years of life are foundational, yet this phase from conception to reception remains underfunded and often overlooked. By investing earlier, thoughtfully, and in partnership with others, we believe philanthropy can help shift outcomes for a generation. See our Theory of Impact [here](#).

Why we've designed the Local Ecosystems Fund

Every child's life is shaped by the world around them: the people who care for and educate them, the services that support them, and the places they grow up in. Together, they form an ecosystem around the child. But too often, individuals and organisations within it don't realise they're part of something bigger — so missions stay narrow, opportunities to collaborate go unnoticed, and the joined-up support families need never quite materialises.

These systems are often underfunded, or resources are short-term and disconnected from the realities of family life. The Local Ecosystems Fund is our response to this challenge.

2. Local Ecosystems Fund

About the Local Ecosystems Fund

The [Local Ecosystems Fund](#) will invest up to £1.2m over three years in Barrow-in-Furness to strengthen the local early childhood ecosystem so that it is more integrated, relational, and less reliant on short-term, restricted funding.

The Local Ecosystems Fund tests a more holistic, multi-year approach to funding – building the connective tissue within communities so children can be safe, healthy, happy, learning and engaged. Our approach is grounded in evidence, gives real agency to local people, and fosters collaboration between charities and public services. We want to shift the conversation from “what can my organisation do?” to the question that matters most: “what does it take for babies and children in this community to thrive?” See [Appendix A](#) for our Theory of Change.

How the community was selected

The [Funding Futures](#) research identified how to target early investment and the conditions that enable places to most effectively have a positive impact on children’s life chances. We used the research to identify where early childhood disadvantage gaps are largest, and the conditions for change are strongest: committed local leadership, trusted frontline relationships, and an engaged community sector. We selected Barrow through a combination of data, local intelligence and community insight. Our funding is intended to be additive to what’s present in the community, avoiding duplication and amplifying what already works locally.

3. Barrow: funding priorities

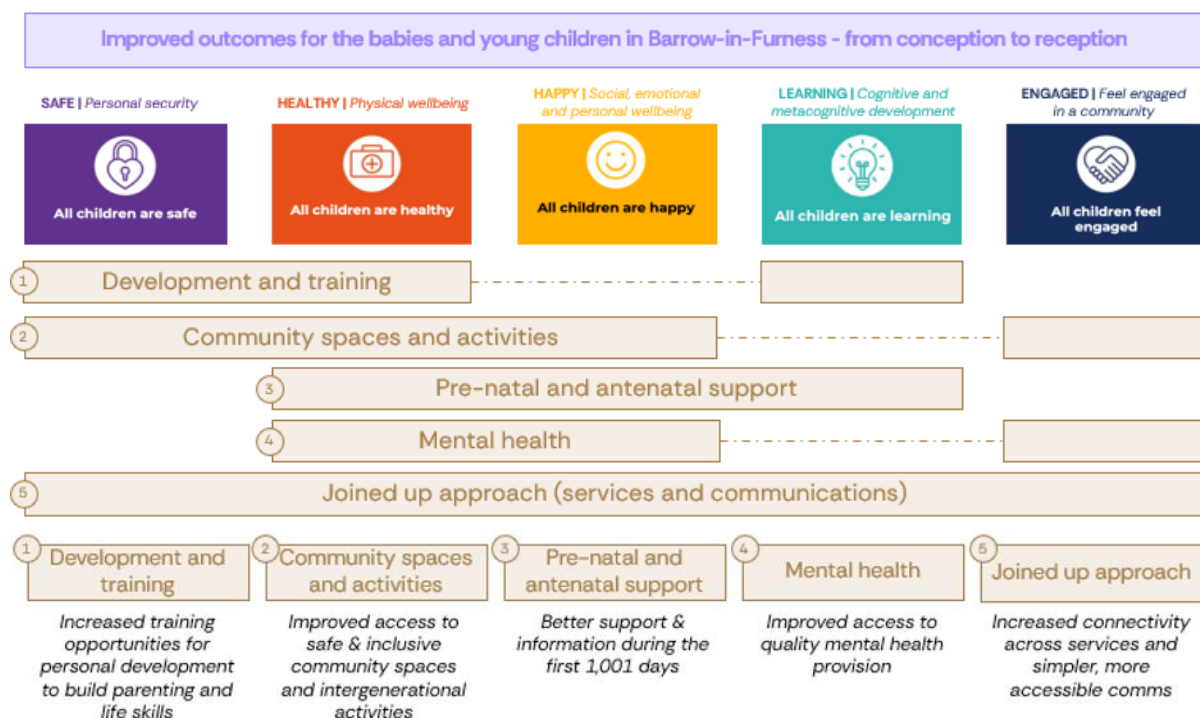
How we arrived at the priorities

In Spring 2026 we ran workshops in Barrow with a group of local parents and carers – our Parent and Carer Advisors. These were co-designed with local facilitators [Cumbria Development Education Centre](#) and our learning partners, [Dartington Service Design Lab](#), and structured around the [Common Outcomes Framework](#).

Across the workshops, the group built a shared picture of the local early childhood landscape, heard from local professionals, reviewed [evidence on what works](#), and shortlisted and voted on their final priorities.

The priorities

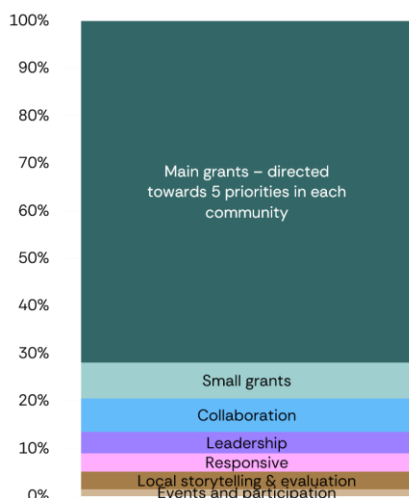
The five priorities below reflect the breadth of what local parents and carers told us matters most for babies and young children growing up in Barrow, mapped across the [Common Outcomes Framework](#).



4. Barrow: Partnership plan

What this means for the local ecosystem

Our grant-making will predominantly focus on grassroots charitable organisations already working in Barrow on the five priorities, or those with the potential to expand into the area. We are not looking to duplicate or replace what already exists – our aim is to ensure our funding is additive. [Evidence](#) shows the fund should also support early childhood infrastructure, capacity building, and community-based relational work: often the provision grassroots organisations and families consistently identify as least well-funded.



- **Main grants:** Specifically targeting the 5 priorities in each community; mostly unrestricted grants to charities (or restricted to under 5s / location) – plus, partners will receive:
 - **Small grants:** Catalyst grants to onward distribute to unlock opportunities and increase wellbeing and Innovation funds to support new ideas from parents & carers
 - **Leadership funding:** To invest in your own or your team's social leadership development
 - **Collaboration funding:** Investment in local ecosystem connectivity and a funding pot to be spent locally as decided by partners collectively.
 - **Responsive funds:** Funds held to respond flexibly to opportunities throughout the year.
- **Local storytelling & evaluation:** Training for parents and community members to collect local stories and support with evaluation.
- **Events and participation:** Two parent & carer workshops per year as part of our ongoing community engagement, feedback and learning.

The below allocation illustrates how we intend to distribute the **main grants**.

Priority	1 Development and training	2 Community spaces and activities	3 Pre-natal and antenatal support	4 Mental health	5 Joined up approach
Aim	Increasing training opportunities for personal development to support parenting and life skills.	Improved access to safe and inclusive spaces and intergenerational activities.	Better support and information during the first 1,001 days.	Improved access to quality mental health provision.	Increased connectivity across services and simpler, more accessible communications.
Funding Allocation	Main grants to 5 charities – £125,000 (£25,000 per charity)				£35,000 restricted
	£115,000 in 3 open Expressions of Interest (EOIs)				

Expressions of Interest

We have three open Expressions of Interest (EOI) across the priorities where there is not an obvious local partner, or where there are multiple potential local partners. Those priorities are:

1. Development and training
2. Community spaces and activities
3. Pre-natal and antenatal support

We are open to collaborative Expressions of Interest submitted by multiple organisations and we are not limited by types of organisations (legal status) submitting Expressions of Interest.

Full details are set out [below](#).

5. Asks of our partner organisations

We'll be asking all organisations we partner with to work collaboratively with us and the wider ecosystem. The core time commitments in Year 1 of the partnership are expected to be:

- Four shared learning sessions each year (approximately 2 hours each).
 - One of these sessions will include our learning partners at Dartington Service Design Lab as part of our ongoing learning and evaluation of the Fund.
- A survey to be completed once a year (approximately 30 minutes) which can be combined with a check-in call if preferred.
- One annual online session where we will share learnings from the year.

6. Express your interest in becoming a partner

To submit your expression of interest please e-mail one Word document per priority to sophie@collectivefutures.org that provides the following information:

- You/your organisation's name, location and website if you have one.
- Your primary purpose and activities.
- Your safeguarding policy.
- Your high-level budget associated with the priority area(s), including all staff costs and other costs you anticipate incurring.
- How you would approach working in Barrow, the quality and depth of your existing relationships locally. If you are not currently working in Barrow, please tell us about any networks you already have there, or what you would need to get set up successfully if you do not yet have them.
- How you would approach collaborating with the other partners that are also providing support locally.
- How you would approach working with statutory services, including Family Hubs, Health Visiting, Midwifery and wider Family Help services, to ensure work is additive to what is already happening locally.
- We encourage you to consider sustainability and how successful approaches could become embedded within the wider local system beyond the life of the grant.

Please ensure you:

- a) Map the proposed activities onto the [Common Outcomes Framework](#) relevant to the priority you're expressing interest in.
- b) Demonstrate links to the [evidence review](#) of 'what works' to support early childhood development.
- c) Reference how you think this priority and your proposed activity also link to the other four community priorities.
- d) Use AI as is helpful to make the process of preparing your EOI as efficient as possible for you. We are keen, however, to hear your unique ideas about how to support the local priorities. Some good guidance on using AI in applications can be found [here](#).
- e) Keep the EOI concise and clear. We are expecting EOIs to be between ~2-4 pages per priority area.
- f) Submit your EOI by **12pm on Tuesday 1st September**. We cannot accept any submissions after this date.

7. Key dates

- **EOI deadline:** 12pm, Tuesday 1st September
- **Organisations contacted - next steps:** w/c Monday 7th September
- **Due diligence:** throughout September
- **Organisations notified of final decisions:** by end of September
- **Grants awarded:** from October

1. Expression of Interest | Development and training

Funding value	Up to £40,000 per year for three years for this priority area. This may be split across up to two organisations, depending on EOIs received.
Funding term	Three years initially, with a potential extension confirmed after Year 1.

The funding opportunity: Development and training

The aim: Increased training opportunities for personal development to build parenting and life skills.

There is a strong desire for practical training and development opportunities linked to parenting and improving resilience of families, in familiar and comfortable community spaces. Training priorities identified by parents and carers include first aid, neurodiversity awareness (ADHD/Autism), financial management, family support and professional training for police and teachers on domestic abuse. However, we are looking for a partner(s) who will be flexible and evolve their offer as training and development priorities shift.

What parents told us 'good' would look like

From our parent & carer workshops, we started to understand what would be appreciated within this priority – mapped across the Common Outcomes. We are sharing this to spark ideas about what delivery could include – not because we expect everything listed below to be possible within the available budget.

Safe: A community space is described as a necessary 'base' where people feel safe to speak, ask for advice, and learn life skills; and a focus on safeguarding.

Healthy: Cooking lessons for cheap, healthy meals (requiring a kitchen in the community space); regular pop-up visits from health professionals (e.g. once a fortnight) for advice.

Happy: Education about multiculturalism; and increasing knowledge of neurodiversity (e.g. ADHD, Autism) so people can better understand and communicate with others. Support for parents regarding their children's use of technology, particularly in helping parents to create routines.

Learning: Online safety and mental health courses (noting that online isn't for everyone – some prefer group settings with reading help); SEND courses for individual needs; and potential sign language courses. Developing ways to support schools and parents to link better.

Engaged: Community space for courses on first aid, outside safety, and 'stranger danger'; training for professionals (nurses, police, teachers) on issues like domestic abuse; and courses for both parents and teachers to improve in areas from finances to family support.

2. Expression of Interest | Community spaces and activities

Funding value	Up to £30,000 per year for three years for this priority area. This may be split into more than one grant across different organisations, depending on EOIs received.
Funding term	Three years initially, with a potential extension confirmed after Year 1.

The funding opportunity: Community spaces and activities

The aim: Improved access to safe and inclusive community spaces and intergenerational activities.

There is a desire for more opportunities for parents, carers, babies and children, including; more variety in activities across different days of the week and at different times e.g. mornings, afternoons, after school, weekends. Parents and carers would like to see more intergenerational activities, including activities that are appropriate for both their 0-5 year olds, but also older children and older family and community members.

What parents told us 'good' would look like

From our parent & carer workshops, we started to understand what would be appreciated within this priority – mapped across the Common Outcomes. We are sharing this to spark ideas about what delivery could include – not because we expect everything listed below to be possible within the available budget.

Safe: Visibility of indoor and outdoor supervised venues (e.g. park wardens); creating safe spaces. Creating community spaces and opportunities for people to help others in the community. Safe places for children to play.

Healthy: Activities for example on oral health and cooking; potty training; and multicultural education.

Happy: Playgroups and activities scheduled outside of working and school hours, including afternoons, weekends, and school holidays; and sessions for art and music. Inclusive community space with professional mental health support. Groups where parents can share and feel less alone.

Learning: A variety of workshops and training sessions including first aid, cooking, parenting workshops, internet safety, budgeting, and preparing for a baby; and women's wellbeing, life coaching, and women-only sport classes.

Engaged: Music and arts festivals for younger ages (micro-festivals); welcoming environments like friendly playgroups. More children's clubs for arts and sports.

3. Expression of Interest | Pre-natal and antenatal support

Funding value	Up to £45,000 per year for three years for this priority area. This may be split into more than one grant across different organisations, depending on EOIs received.
Funding term	Three years initially, with a potential extension confirmed after Year 1.

The funding opportunity: Pre-natal and antenatal support

The aim: Better support and information during the first 1,001 days

This priority focuses on making parents and carers feel more supported and confident. What emerged during discussions was that some services existed, but parents and carers didn't know about them or found out too late. This priority focuses on providing support to enable parents to feel well prepared, supported, and confident during the early stages of parenthood.

What parents told us 'good' would look like

From our parent & carer workshops, we started to understand what would be appreciated within this priority – mapped across the Common Outcomes. We are sharing this to spark ideas about what delivery could include – not because we expect everything listed below to be possible within the available budget.

Safe: Support for mental health for parents with babies in NICUs; awareness and support for domestic abuse; and education on safe sleep e.g. [Safer sleep information | The Lullaby Trust](#), 'shaken baby' syndrome e.g. [ICON](#), and domestic abuse.

Healthy: Post-natal and pre-natal support with more involvement from midwives and health visitors; free antenatal classes, exercise info, and swimming classes; and more support during birth and labour; and support with breastfeeding.

Happy: Breaking down the stigma surrounding mental health when pregnant; offering more support for health and wellbeing; and providing breastfeeding support.

Learning: Delivering information about existing services and what can be accessed; specific training for breastfeeding; more information on planned C-sections to reduce anxiety and judgment; and providing help earlier.

Engaged: An automatic opportunity for all new mothers to join pre/ante-natal group classes, encouraged by community midwives. Dad's groups for expectant dads.

Requirements and eligibility

- Experience of supporting parents and young children, including perinatal mental health.
- Enhanced DBS checks with a children's barred list check, as this is regulated activity which may involve children.
- Up-to-date safeguarding children training to a minimum of Level 2 for staff leading this work.
- Knowledge of and understanding how to link with the wider system, including statutory services, maternity and mental health.

Appendix A: Theory of Change

Theory of Change developed in partnership with Dartington Service Design Lab.

