

Connecting Three Rivers Fund – Grant Agreement Report 2026

1. Introduction

The Connecting Three Rivers Fund supports a variety of projects that make a positive, lasting difference to the residents of Three Rivers. Through partnership and collaboration, the Fund invests in initiatives, outlined below, that help create safer, healthier, more inclusive and connected communities. The funding priorities for 2025 were Health Inequalities or Health Promotion, Adult Skills and Training and Cost of Living.

2. Funding Allocation

In Q3 of 2025-26, the below organisations were successful in their application to the Connecting Three Rivers Fund. Initial meetings to structure Grant agreements were scheduled towards the end of 2025 and funds were then awarded respectively in early 2026.

Organisation	Funds Awarded	Project status
3. Grand Union Community Energy	£841.55	Project ongoing
4. Inflammatory Arthritis	£1500	Project ongoing
5. Mission EmployAble	£2500	Project ongoing
6. New Hope	£1500	Project completed and presentation delivered at C3R board meeting
7. Rennie Grove Peace Hospice	£2500	Project ongoing
8. Say It With A Smile	£2500	Project ongoing
9. Three Rivers District Council	£2500	Project ongoing
10. Watford and Three Rivers Trust	£2500	Project completed, awaiting presentation delivery at C3R board meeting.
Total	£16,341.55	

3. Grand Union Community Energy

3.1 – Introduction to project – The funding awarded will support Grand Union Community Energy (GUCE) to provide energy starter kits and practical advice to households and organisations in Three Rivers, helping residents improve energy efficiency, reduce costs, and build confidence in managing energy use.

3.2 – Successes of project – The project has already succeeded in achieving its goal of providing 60 energy packs to residents, with 79 being handed out to date. GUCE have also achieved their goal of attending 4 events – within Three Rivers - where they are a

key attendee, either speaking or holding a prominent space as a stakeholder. This includes holding an energy related talk to a ladies group in Carpenders Park, holding pop-ups at the Community Learning Partnership and attending Big Green Week at Croxley Green Fair. Lastly the goal to achieve 18 sessions at the Healthy Hubs in the district is on track to be achieved by October 2026 with 13 accomplished to date, way ahead of the project completion date in January 2027.

3.3 – Challenges and resolutions of project – The project to date has been a success, however challenges have arisen. Without external storage, the project lead's home is being used to store all resources including energy packs and literature, meaning events and pop ups by other people under GUCE have had to be carefully organised around this. At the moment, external space isn't needed, but GUCE is looking with Watford and Three Rivers Trust at having a central base in the future and is in discussions with the Library of Requirements regarding future collaborations which will also provide additional space / collection points.

Finding volunteers has also been a challenge for GUCE and as a result resource and time has been stretched covering scheduled events and drop-ins. Summer is also a slower time for GUCE as the weather is typically warmer and therefore residents are less concerned about utility costs so uptake in services is reduced.

4. Inflammatory Arthritis

4.1 – Introduction to project - Inflammatory! Is a podcast run by Inflammatory Arthritis UK (IAUK) and seeks to broaden knowledge, understanding and community for those affected by inflammatory arthritis. The funding supplied will help Inflammatory Arthritis UK maintain and improve the success of their podcast with relevant equipment and guest speakers and complement NHS care by covering topics such as medication, exercise, mental health, and family life. By reaching people from all backgrounds, particularly those in deprived communities where support is often limited, the podcast also helps reduce isolation, improve confidence, and empower individuals to better manage their condition.

4.2 – Successes of project - The project has generated a number of positive outcomes and has helped to raise awareness of inflammatory arthritis (IA) across professional, community and national networks. As of 6 July 2026, there have been 62 episodes with 599 listeners, one live podcast completed with another scheduled and 1000 followers on Instagram.

Another key success has been collaborating with the British Society of Rheumatology. This has included potential sponsorship from a private company outside of the

pharmaceutical sector, as well as invitations to deliver short presentations at local and national multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings. An invitation to speak at the National Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, Stanford Hall, also provided an important opportunity to raise awareness of IA and share the project's work with a wider professional audience.

The project has strengthened collaboration with other charities supporting people living with IA and associated comorbidities, including organisations focusing on hypermobility, fibromyalgia and PMR-GCA. These relationships have helped broaden the reach of the project and support a more holistic approach to the needs of people living with IA.

Further successes include interest in collaborating with developing further podcast series. Attending an international conference has led to opportunities to expand the podcast network, with plans to feature more medical professionals, researchers and people with lived experience from across the globe.

Attending local events, including the Three Rivers Discovery and Connect Event and Community Connect, has strengthened relationships and raised awareness of the project.

Comment made by listener: "I've just been diagnosed with RA (rheumatoid arthritis) at the age of 45. I knew very little about the disease and even less about what life could look like with it. Whenever anyone hears arthritis, we all get the image of an old person with wear and tear, but this is nothing like that. Katy and Debbie helped me to put everything in perspective and stopped me imagining the worst. Their humour and warmth really make a difference. Thank you. Just the information I needed at exactly the right time".

4.3 – Challenges and resolutions of project - A key challenge has been developing effective partnerships and ensuring that people involved in supporting physical activity understand the needs of people living with inflammatory arthritis. This has been addressed through collaboration with local and national charities, including Home-Start Three Rivers, and by engaging with professionals such as personal trainers (PTs) to improve their awareness and confidence in supporting people with inflammatory arthritis.

Ongoing discussions with Active Together are exploring potential funding opportunities to support this work. We are also benefiting from the expertise of a trustee who is a physiotherapist, is undertaking a PhD in this area, and has lived experience of psoriatic arthritis, providing valuable insight into both the clinical and personal aspects of the project.

The project has contributed to discussions around changes to the national audit, helping to ensure that the experiences and needs of people with inflammatory arthritis are reflected. IAUK have worked to raise awareness of opportunities for movement and physical activity, including Pilates in the Park, and to promote relevant local events and support available through community organisations such as Herts Directory.

To further understand the project's impact and identify areas for improvement, an Impact Survey will be circulated in September 2026. The findings will help inform future activity and ensure that the project continues to respond effectively to the needs of the community.

5. Mission EmployAble

5.1 – Introduction to project - The Woodoaks Farm Project delivered by Mission EmployAble supports young adults with learning disability to get paid employment. As part of their supported internship programme, interns learn about regenerative agriculture and land management at Woodoaks Farm on a weekly basis. The aim is to increase employment opportunities in the horticultural and land management area as well as improving both physical health and mental wellbeing. The interns work in teams of around 5 with a ranger to learn new skills including hedge cutting, tree planting and tree care and cultivation

5.2 – Successes of project – All 14 interns graduated on 3 July 2026. Completion of project will be in January 2027 when the longevity and sectors of employment will be recordable.

5.3 – Challenges and resolutions of project - At the start of the academic year, recruiting interns proved challenging, with limited opportunities available. There is a shortage of agricultural placements and training opportunities, prompting continued efforts to identify a wider range of work experience opportunities for graduate interns, including roles in retail and office administration.

Looking ahead, there are ongoing concerns about the availability of suitable employment opportunities to support interns as they progress into the workforce. To address this, opportunities to increase the number of employment offers for interns were explored, including the use of promotional materials and promoting opportunities through newsletters and social media channels.

It was agreed that joint efforts with partners over community engagement would be made to support identifying suitable employment opportunities and promote the 2026/27 internship programme, with enrolment taking place in September 2026.

Further networking opportunities will also be explored with partners to introduce Mission EmployAble to local businesses and raise awareness of the internship programme. One potential opportunity is through Communities Connect, which is a networking event between the voluntary, community and business sectors, which is held bi-monthly.

6. New Hope

6.1 – Introduction to project - New Hope's Tenancy Sustainment Team have utilised the funds received in this project to support residents to successfully maintain and thrive in their tenancies. Clients supported by the project will have experiences of homelessness, whether rough sleeping, sofa-surfing or living in unsuitable and insecure accommodation. The majority of clients supported were in poverty, in receipt of benefits or in-work poverty.

6.2 – Successes of project - The project ended April 2026. Funding from the Connecting Three Rivers Fund supported New Hope's Tenancy Sustainment Team in giving people the information and tools they need to be secure and to thrive in their own homes as they move on from temporary accommodation services.

9 residents remain supported, who with the help of the Tenancy Sustainment Team have overcome multiple disadvantages, including homelessness, addiction, physical health difficulties or learning disabilities, alongside diagnosed mental health challenges. Additionally, 16 families received support in temporary accommodation services, mostly situated in South Oxhey.

This funding allowed for expenditure on salaries and other core costs that are extremely valuable to New Hope. Due to the complexity and challenges faced by those supported, having specialist trained employees is fundamental to New Hope's success. The further benefit to having paid staff undertake these roles is that they have a more consistent presence in client's life which improves rapport and trust in their professional relationships with clients.

6.3 – Challenges and resolutions of project – Concerns were raised about the affordability of shopping / groceries for service users; arrangements were then made for New Hope to visit the Community Supermarket located at The Holywell Community Centre to see the variety of products and understand the membership requirements for their clients. New Hope created a flyer to lay out what the service provided and promote this to their clients.

7. Rennie Grove Peace Hospice

7.1 – Introduction of project - Rennie Grove Peace Hospice run a series of welcoming CompassionArt Cafes which are drop-in sessions held across the district that offer a safe,

supportive space for people to express themselves through art. The sessions are designed for anyone who has experienced bereavement or feels isolated due to illness to connect with others facing similar challenges, build friendships, unleash creativity, and receive compassionate support from Rennie Grove Peace Hospice.

We are awaiting further updates on the progress on the CompassionArt Café project.

8. Say It With A Smile

8.1 – Introduction to project - The Memory Steps Course, run by Say it With A Smile supports people living with dementia and their carers by providing practical knowledge, information, and coping strategies to help them better understand and manage the condition, while improving confidence in accessing the support available.

8.2 – Successes of project – With the funding, Say It With A Smile have delivered 2 rounds of courses in the district, with another planned for September. Each course consists of 4 sessions that highlight a different topic, ensuring that the information and support provided is varied and comprehensive. The courses are held in Leavesden Country Park and are highly praised, attended and to date have an average of 41 attendees per session. There are also a wide variety of partners that are invited to support residents at the sessions, including Herts Help, Alzheimer's UK, Rennie Grove Peace Hospice, HILS (Hertfordshire Independent Living Services) and Healthy Hubs to name a few. The project is due to have its final course in September; therefore, full attendance figures and feedback will be available in due course.

Testimonials:

“The course has allowed us to finally accept my Dad’s diagnosis and helped us learn coping techniques. Thank you everyone.”

“The course was excellent – exactly what I have been searching for.”

8.3 – Challenges and resolutions of project – The availability of hall hire and how this impacts attendance was a concern facing the project early on, this was addressed by trialing the proposed time and location for one course and monitoring attendance, and if it proved to negatively impact then the following course times could be amended. Ultimately attendance was positive and no change needed to be implemented.

Some practical concerns include the suitability of projector screens, as the one included in the venue was too small and inappropriate for people with vision impairment. The usability of microphones was also raised as these can often work unpredictably and

some speakers need guidance when first using them. These issues were tested similarly to the above location concern and were ultimately found to not need further addressing.

9. Three Rivers District Council

9.1 - *Introduction to project* - Project Haven delivers a range of health events across the district to raise awareness of health conditions, improve access to support, engage underrepresented communities, strengthen partnerships with local organisations, and expand our reach into areas of the district where we have had limited previous engagement.

9.2 - *Successes of project* - Project Haven has successfully delivered 5 health events across South Oxhey, Chorleywood, Abbots Langley and Rickmansworth, covering topics such as hypertension, diabetes support for people fasting during Ramadan, carers' support, SEND support, flu and vaccinations, and LGBTQ+ support. Building on this success, upcoming events aim to focus on dementia, sepsis, and support for African and Caribbean, Hindu, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, alongside an online podcast due to be released soon.

Project Haven has engaged 69 residents through its health events, with more than 22 partner organisations involved in delivering and promoting support. Between January and July 2026, the dedicated project webpage has received 573 views from 314 unique visitors. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with all respondents rating the events as moderately to extremely beneficial.

9.3 - *Challenges and resolutions of project* - Community engagement has been the main challenge in this project, with lower than expected attendance despite extensive promotion, resulting in one event being cancelled. However, partner engagement has remained strong and future events will focus on linking with existing community activities to increase participation and reach more residents.

10. Watford and Three Rivers Trust

10.1 – *Introduction to project* – MindSpace was held in collaboration with local partners including Batchworth Community Council, MIND and the Ollie Foundation. Mindspace was a full day, in person community event focused on mental health awareness, stigma reduction, and practical wellbeing support for secondary school aged children, who were nominated by their schools to benefit from learning more about mental health and wellbeing. Sessions were held at an accessible venue and included Life is Loud by Herts Mind Network, Zentangle by the Ollie Foundation and Power of Music by Herts Inclusive Theatre.

10.2 – Successes of project - MindSpace brought together 59 young people from four local schools (St Joan of Arc, Croxley Danes, Rickmansworth and The Reach Free School) for a dedicated wellbeing day focused on mental health awareness, reducing stigma and developing practical strategies to support emotional wellbeing.

The event provided a safe, welcoming and supportive environment where young people could openly explore topics relating to mental health and wellbeing. Through the sessions, participants were encouraged to recognise the importance of looking after their mental health, identify some of the factors that can affect their wellbeing, and consider positive ways of managing stress and difficult emotions.

A key focus of the day was reducing the stigma associated with talking about mental health. Young people were encouraged to see conversations about mental health as a normal and important part of looking after themselves and others. The sessions also provided practical coping strategies and simple tools that participants could use in their everyday lives, helping them to feel more confident in managing stress and seeking support when needed.

Feedback from participants was very positive. Young people described the event as welcoming, useful and calming, with many reporting that they felt more comfortable talking about mental health following the sessions. Participants also identified practical techniques that they could use to manage stress and support their own wellbeing.

10.3 – Challenges and resolutions of project - Although feedback from the MindSpace wellbeing day was overwhelmingly positive, participants identified a small number of practical and content-related improvements that could strengthen future delivery.

One of the main areas identified was organisation and navigation during the event. A small number of participants felt that clearer information about the day's schedule and where to go for each activity would have been helpful. Some participants suggested that certain workshops would benefit from additional time, while others expressed an interest in more music, greater variety in activities, and more opportunities to explore wider issues affecting young people's wellbeing, such as school-related stress and everyday pressures.

In response to this feedback, future events will include clearer timetables, more visible signage and improved workshop navigation, helping participants understand the programme and move between activities more easily. The balance and structure of workshop content will be reviewed to ensure there is sufficient time to address both anxiety-specific support and broader issues relating to everyday stress and emotional wellbeing.

Participants' feedback will directly inform future programme development and topic planning. Areas being considered for future sessions include exam and school pressure, sleep and wellbeing, friendships and relationships, confidence building, social media and self-esteem, and mindfulness-based activities.

These improvements demonstrate the project's commitment to listening to young people and using their feedback to shape future delivery. Learning from this event will be incorporated into future planning to ensure that MindSpace continues to provide relevant, engaging and accessible wellbeing support that reflects the needs and interests of young people.

11. Conclusion

The projects featured in this report demonstrate the success, importance and positive impact that the Connecting Three Rivers Fund has on a range of themes across the district. While most projects are still underway, their success is still apparent and wide reaching. For the ongoing projects, further information on their progress, outcomes and impact will be available at the end of the financial year in a concluding report.

Fundraising for 2026/27 application is ongoing, with events being coordinated by Watford and Three Rivers Trust.