

Robertsbridge Parish Council Community Grant Application

Sussex Outreach Support CIC (SOS)

Community Outreach, Youth Engagement & Rural Hub Development
(Including Robertsbridge)

Applicant Organisation: Sussex Outreach Support CIC (SOS)

Founder & CEO: Dr Sarah Jacques

Supported by: Rother Voluntary Action

Grant Type: Community Grant

Amount Requested: Up to £800 (with gratitude for any level of support the Council considers appropriate)

Executive Summary

Sussex Outreach Support (SOS) respectfully applies for a Community Grant of up to £800 from Robertsbridge Parish Council to support the delivery of mobile community outreach, youth engagement activities, and the ongoing development of a rural hub-and-outreach model that directly benefits residents of Robertsbridge and the wider Rural Rother area.

About Sussex Outreach Support (SOS)

Sussex Outreach Support (SOS) is a Community Interest Company established to improve access to health, wellbeing, advice, digital inclusion and youth support services across Rural Rother, where transport barriers, service centralisation and social isolation significantly impact community access.

In 2024, with support administered via Rother Voluntary Action and Rother District Council, SOS successfully secured Government Levelling Up Funding to purchase a bespoke electric mobile outreach vehicle designed to deliver integrated services directly into rural communities.

The vehicle is fully equipped with:

- Two private consultation suites
- Full satellite WiFi for digital inclusion
- Flexible space for partner service delivery

The original aim of SOS was to provide a platform for services already established in urban areas to expand their outreach into rural communities where provision is limited and access is difficult.

Commitment to Robertsbridge & Rural Rother

Rural need extends across interconnected villages including Etchingham, Burwash, Battle, Ticehurst, Sedlescombe and surrounding areas.

Experience from early delivery has already shown cross-village engagement, with young people from Robertsbridge attending youth sessions hosted in Etchingham. This reflects the lived reality of rural communities, where residents naturally travel between neighbouring villages to access support and social opportunities.

SOS therefore operates a rotating outreach model, ensuring fair and equitable service access across Rural Rother rather than limiting delivery to a single fixed village. This approach mirrors the broader community ethos seen in Robertsbridge's support of regional initiatives, recognising that residents benefit from services delivered across the wider rural network.

Youth & Community Outreach Delivery (2026 Programme)

Following a constructive multi-agency planning meeting with:

- East Sussex Children's Services
- Fellowship of St Nicholas (FSN)
- Rother Voluntary Action (RVA)

A formalised structure has been agreed starting to deliver monthly youth and community events rotating between 4 rural venues, one of which will be Robertsbridge. The proposal is to deliver 4 such evenings in Robertsbridge. One already conducted, two further agreed to delivered before the end of September and further one in the winter.

Robertsbridge Event Capacity & Structure

- Maximum capacity: 30 young people
- Supervised, structured environment
- Creative activities (e.g. T-shirt decorating)
- Sports and movement-based activities
- Quiet board game and wellbeing area
- Talking and support space
- Access to the Mobile Youth Hub games console

We are pleased to confirm local sponsorship from Rustico Pizza, who have committed to supplying free pizzas for monthly events for the foreseeable future (subject to branch availability). SOS will supplement this with healthy food options such as fruit and refreshments to support wellbeing.

The Robertsbridge Clerk has also kindly supported activity provision through donated T-shirts for creative sessions, demonstrating valuable local partnership.

Staffing, Partnerships & Governance

Delivery is being undertaken through a robust professional multi-agency partnership model, including:

- East Sussex Children's Services staff (present within the mobile unit)
- A trained youth worker (formerly FSN) continuing in a supportive capacity
- Qualified volunteer youth support
- SOS volunteer team (including experienced youth-facing volunteers)
- Governance oversight from Rother Voluntary Action

All partner organisations are jointly developing and implementing:

- Membership and consent forms (including dietary and additional needs)
- Safeguarding procedures
- Risk assessments
- Public liability alignment
- A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This ensures compliant, safe and well-governed delivery from the outset.

SOS will be looking to cover some of the paid part time operational staff.

Planned Wider Services Benefiting Robertsbridge Residents

In addition to youth provision, in future, SOS intends to facilitate access to a range of services via the mobile unit and developing hub network, including:

- Health and wellbeing outreach sessions
- Advice and support services (via VCSE partners)
- Digital inclusion support using onboard WiFi
- Community drop-ins and signposting
- Family and social support outreach
- Partner-led statutory and voluntary service sessions

Constructive discussions have already taken place with youth services, voluntary sector organisations and wider support agencies regarding use of the vehicle as a shared rural delivery platform.

Budget & Use of Grant Funding

A Community Grant from Robertsbridge Parish Council would directly support delivery benefiting local residents through delivery of the four sessions;

- Art and creative activity supplies (paint, materials, additional T-shirts) materials
- Healthy refreshments to complement donated food
- Youth engagement equipment and activity resources
- Venue hire costs
- Mobile unit operational costs (insurance, charging, maintenance)
- Essential outreach delivery costs

£200 per session.

The total annual running costs of the mobile outreach vehicle, including insurance, charging, tax and core operational overheads, are approximately £5,200, enabling continued volunteer-led delivery across Rural Rother while sustainability funding streams are developed.

Community Impact for Robertsbridge

Feedback from the first session already conducted was overwhelmingly positive. Support from Robertsbridge Parish Council would:

- Provide structured youth provision in a rural setting
- Reduce social isolation among young people and families
- Improve access to services otherwise concentrated in urban areas
- Strengthen safeguarding and early intervention opportunities
- Support community cohesion and wellbeing

Even when sessions are delivered in neighbouring villages, Robertsbridge residents directly benefit through inclusive access within a shared rural delivery model.

Closing Statement

Robertsbridge Parish Council has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting community wellbeing and innovative local initiatives. A Community Grant contribution — at any level the Council considers appropriate — would play a significant role in enabling equitable, sustainable outreach delivery that directly benefits Robertsbridge residents while supporting the wider rural community infrastructure.

We would be delighted to:

- Provide impact updates to the Parish Council
- Bring the SOS mobile unit to Robertsbridge for viewing
- Continue collaborative engagement with the Parish Council as delivery develops

Dr Sarah Jacques

Founder & CEO

Sussex Outreach Support CIC

Rural Rother, East Sussex