



Margate Early Years Community Fund overview

About the Margate Early Learning Community

The [Margate Early Learning Community \(MELC\)](#) was established in 2018 by Save the Children UK, Kent County Council, the Margate Task Force¹ and Cliftonville Primary School. MELC aims to improve early learning outcomes for children aged 0-5 growing up in poverty.

This is because [evidence](#) shows that early childhood is a critical time for the development of later life outcomes: positive experiences early in life are closely associated with better performance at school, better social and emotional development, improved work outcomes, higher income and better lifelong health, including longer life expectancy.

MELC is a place-based, systems change initiative, meaning the project seeks to stimulate impactful and sustainable improvements across the local early years community over a period of several years. It does this by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, including families, services and organisations, to share knowledge, collaborate and innovate to improve outcomes for children. MELC is currently in the final phase of full-scale project delivery, with our current funding due to end in December 2026, after which the project will be significantly scaled back over the course of a 2-year transition period (2027-28). MELC's remit spans the entirety of Margate (the town's current official boundaries are defined by the 7 political wards: Cliftonville East, Cliftonville West, Dane Valley, Garlinge, Margate Central, Salmestone, Westbrook). Save the Children has made [this short video](#) summarising the work of MELC and the impact it has had on the lives of families in Margate to date.

MELC's work is primarily focused across two broad workstreams, which have been identified over the first phase of the project as clearly linked to poor early learning outcomes for local children growing up in poverty:

1. Confident parenting – *parents and carers are aware of and engaging with existing support, including support focused on children's early learning and any additional needs*
2. Family mental health and wellbeing – *both children and their parents/carers have access to support relating to their mental health and wellbeing*

While we know there are a range of other barriers to learning affecting young children in the community, by narrowing MELC's focus we hope to better support the local early years community to collaborate on and learn more deeply about how best to address these two priority areas.

About this fund

The Margate Early Years Community Fund (MEYCF) was launched in 2023, following high levels of engagement with similar funding made available to the local early years community in 2022 which had a huge impact for the recipient organisations and hundreds of local

¹ Margate Task Force changed its name to the Thanet Multi-Agency Task Force in 2020. It is a group of professionals working with families with complex problems who struggle to access services through mainstream routes.

families. You can find out more about innovation projects previously funded and supported by MELC [here](#).

The fund aims to invest in small-scale innovation that supports the local early years community to test and learn from a new approach to addressing a gap in existing local services, as well as to trial a new approach to service design and delivery that is community-led and supports long-term shifts in the local early years system, for the benefit of children and families. 'Innovation' in this context refers to a product or service (or an adaptation of an existing product or service) that can be measured in some way to understand its impact.

Requirements/eligibility criteria

- Projects should have a total budget of no more than £5,000 (there is no minimum funding threshold)
- Projects must be aimed primarily at supporting children aged 0-5 and/or the parents/carers of children aged 0-5 (including antenatal support)
- Services must be delivered in Margate (the town's current official boundaries are defined by the 7 political wards: Cliftonville East, Cliftonville West, Dane Valley, Garlinge, Margate Central, Salmestone, Westbrook) and must be free at the point of service
- Projects must have a minimum delivery timeline of 1 year (this can include preparation, delivery and evaluation phases), starting from when funding is received
- Applications must be linked to an established organisation or service (e.g. a charity, school, nursery, public service organisation, public limited company, limited company, community interest company, partnership or sole trader)
- All application outcomes are subject to applicants successfully passing Save the Children UK's due diligence processes, including suitable safeguarding procedures (this is because Save the Children UK acts as the funding distributor for this fund). Applicants must have an up to date safeguarding policy they are willing to share for review. You may be asked to also share other policies and documents with us for review depending on the nature of your organisation
- There is no limit on how many times a particular project/applicant can receive funding through this fund, but the merits of this should be set out clearly and considered carefully during the application process

Project design

Projects must be designed to incorporate the following elements:

- A clear link to one of MELC's workstreams ('confident parenting' or 'family mental health and wellbeing', see details above)
- Drawing on/encouraging collaborations between local organisations and services, to provide more holistic support for children and families
- Co-design/coproduction principles that ensure the project is initially designed in collaboration with families and continuously shaped by their input
- Plans for monitoring and evaluation, including gathering and acting on family feedback (inputs from children and/or adults) and measuring the project's impact
- A focus on developing and sharing learning and good practice on supporting either 'confident parenting' or 'family mental health and wellbeing', with the intention to influence the practice of local early years professionals and, where possible, influence local decision-making for the benefit of children and families

- Plans for sustainable impact and legacy beyond the funding being provided by MELC, including a clear vision for how the project will inform and contribute to the applicant's future plans and the wider early years community for the benefit of children and families
- Being accessible to, and inclusive of, children and families from all backgrounds, and advancing equalities for marginalised and minority groups
- A detailed and realistic budget and staffing plan

Roles and responsibilities

Successful applicants will be considered key MELC partners and we will work closely with you throughout your project, offering a range of bespoke support.

Funding recipients will be responsible for the following:

- Completing the required due diligence processes in order to receive project funding
- Overall project delivery (including staffing, implementing activities, engaging families etc.), in line with the original, successful application
- Collaborating with the MELC team to develop and share learning and good practice, both for the benefit of your project and the wider early years community
- Liaising regularly with the MELC team, to share key project updates, including completing interim and final project reports
- Conducting monitoring and evaluation activities
- Management of funding provided within the agreed timeframe
- Delivering the project in a way that reflects MELC and Save the Children UK's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- (Occasionally) presenting to MELC bodies (for example our Working Groups and Project Board) and other relevant local stakeholders to share key project updates and learning from the project

The MELC team will provide support with the following:

- Access to project funding, via Save the Children UK, including guidance through the relevant due diligence processes
- Set up of a grant agreement contract (on Save the Children UK's terms) and any legal advice on this as required
- Access to relevant data and insights from research with local families and professionals
- Support (where needed) with the initial design of monitoring and evaluation activities
- Support (where needed) with the initial design of co-design activities with families

Application process

Prospective applicants should read through this overview document in full before filling in our online application form [here](#). Prospective applicants are also encouraged to contact Mary Norton, Early Learning Community Lead at m.norton@savethechildren.org.uk before submitting an application, to discuss their project idea and assess its suitability for the fund.

Following submission, applications will be reviewed by the MELC team and members of our Working Groups (made up of a range of professionals from across local early years services). Applicants should expect to hear back on the status of their funding application within approx.

3 months and should not expect to start delivery of their project until at least 1-2 months after this, to allow time for completion of paperwork and the receipt of funds.

There is no deadline for the receipt of applications, as the fund is open to applicants on a rolling basis. If we are unable to support further projects at any point due to a lack of funds, we will close our application form and update the MELC webpage to reflect this.