

Applying for Awards for All Funding

Gay City Bowlers

The Gay City Bowlers was founded in 2017. Its purpose is simple: providing an inclusive, safe space for LGBTQ+ community to come together, socialise and make friends through bowling. The model uses volunteers to organise bowling sessions, with an affordable ticket price which generates funds for the group. The bowling sessions have been an instant hit, and the organisation has grown quickly, spreading to more cities outside of Manchester.



With the organisation growing, Gay City Bowlers initially came to Manchester Community Central for support to incorporate their group as a Community Interest Company (CIC). We supported the group with basic strategic planning, information on directors' responsibilities and governance resources before moving on to the CIC registration. The group's registration was successful in February 2025.

During the registration process we identified that the group would also benefit from support around funding, namely: getting ready for funding, identifying funding, developing their ask and applying for funding.

We worked with the group to become 'funding ready' meeting with the directors to ensure the group had the relevant human resource, insurance, policies and procedures in place to be funding-ready and to manage grant funding.

The group generates its own income through tickets sales, so it had a higher level of income than most new CICs and a solid track record of managing a regular income. This meant that The National Lottery Awards for All funding



of up to £20,000 was an appropriate opportunity. A development worker supported the group to apply by:

- Developing the ask and helping to frame the project: looking at the funder limitations and the group's financial needs curating an ask which suited both. In this case the ask was focused on building the capacity of the group to ensure steady, sustainable growth. This included a part-time salary, training budget for staff and volunteers and other development costs.
- Researching costs: Sharing training providers to help cost training needs, and other information to help build realistic budget.
- Budgeting: We encouraged the group to create a 'wish list' budget including everything they would like to fund within this project. This was revised and prioritised by identifying the most important costs and costs that are hard to cover. The stripped back and revised budget was double checked against quotes and costs to ensure value for money.
- Reviewing the application: Once the group had developed their ask and budget, they drafted an application which was reviewed by a development worker.

The group submitted their application to the Awards for All fund in July and successfully secured the funding in October 2025. They are now able to employ their first staff member, and this will help the group to grow and thrive.

“We want to express our profound gratitude to [Manchester Community Central] for their continuous and utterly brilliant support, which has fundamentally transformed our organisation's trajectory.

From the very beginning, [Manchester Community Central] was instrumental in helping us navigate the complex landscape of becoming a Community Interest Company (CIC). Their expert guidance, clear advice, [...] turned what could have been a confusing, daunting process into a manageable and successful milestone. This foundational support ensured we were properly structured and ready for the next level of growth.



The true game-changer came with the support [Manchester Community Central] provided for our grant application to the National Lottery Community Fund. The advice, resources, and crucial insights we received were invaluable, ultimately leading to us securing a substantial grant of almost £20,000. This funding is a massive step forward, enabling us to deliver our mission with confidence and scale.

Thank you, [Manchester Community Central], and especially Helen, for being such a vital partner in our journey. We look forward to continuing our growth with the foundation you helped us build.'

Gay City Bowlers CIC

December 2025

