

Cassel Project Grant Scheme Now Open

We are now inviting Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for applicants to the Cassel Project Grant Scheme, kindly funded by The Cassel Hospital Charitable Trust. The Charitable Trust promotes the care and treatment of adults and young people affected by challenges associated with complex relational trauma (sometimes referred to as complex emotional needs or personality disorder). The grant must be used to fund research, service evaluation or quality improvement projects.

Timings: The EOI window will open **1st December 2025** and close at **midnight on 5th January 2026 (deadline)**.

Applicants should submit a short outline of a maximum **500 words** by the deadline, addressing the key headings in the application guidance below. All EOIs will receive feedback, an invitation to a project development workshop (including creative methods), and encouragement to apply in full to Stage 2 (competitive final stage).

This scheme has been co-designed by a Lived Experience Advisory Panel, researchers and clinicians. The **core values, eligibility & scope**, and **expected outcomes** are shown in the three boxes below and will be used by the group to review and score applications.

Projects must be co-produced and include meaningful involvement of people with lived and living experience, not as token contributors but as equal partners. Lead applicants must be **employees of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**. The scheme welcomes **peer researchers, early career researchers, and collaborators external to Sussex Partnership**.

Applicants who are awarded funding will receive tailored support for their projects. This may include mentorship from lived and living experience advisors and experienced researchers, research governance guidance, and drop-in sessions.

Project Duration: Funded projects may run for up to **18 months**.

Fund: A total of **£33,000** is dedicated to the scheme. Applicants can apply for up to **£11,000**.

All applications should be submitted to Dr Anna-Marie Bibby-Jones by midnight 5th January 2026. Please also contact her to confirm your intention to apply and for any queries at Anna-Marie.Bibby-Jones@nhs.net

Cassel Trust Grant Scheme Details

Core Values of the Scheme

- Supports **meaningful and impactful research** that improves the lives of adults and young people affected by challenges associated with complex relational trauma (sometimes referred to as complex emotional needs or personality disorder).
- Projects should enhance understanding of lived experiences and lead to **tangible improvements** in wellbeing and not just service efficiency or cost savings.
- Welcomes applicants who are **less confident with research**, offering a **supportive and inclusive application process**.
- Provides a **light-touch application and review process**, with constructive feedback loops.
- Encourages **creative and inclusive methodologies**, such as narrative approaches, photovoice, art, food, and drawing.
- Promotes research that **de-centres diagnosis**, focusing instead on environmental factors and individual needs.
- Emphasises a **trauma-informed approach**: asking “*What happened to you?*” rather than “*What’s wrong with you?*”. Projects should not increase stigma.

Eligibility & Scope

- Projects must encourage **bold, innovative and creative ideas** to deliver significant shifts in understanding related to the lives, health and wellbeing of people with lived or living experience of challenges associated with complex relational trauma (sometimes referred to as complex emotional needs or personality disorder).
- Projects must be created through the **lens of lived and living experience** and incorporate codesign or co-production.
- Focus on **intersectionality** (we have a particular interest in experiences of neurodivergent people) and research involving multiply marginalised groups.
- Lead applicants must be **employees of Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**.
- Open to peer researchers, early career researchers (ECRs), and experienced researchers.
- Collaborators outside of the trust are welcome.
- All applications must include meaningful lived experience **involvement** that is **not tokenistic**, but integral to their team.
- Project teams should include people from multiply marginalised groups.
- People with **lived and living experience** should be considered as **equal partners** in the research process.
- Lived experience among applicants and contributors will be prioritised.
- Project Duration: up to **18 months**

Expected Outcomes:

- Project findings should offer **practical ways to improve lives**, reduce stigma, support wellbeing and improve quality of life.
- **Realistic recommendations** for policy and practice should be identified.
- Findings must be **communicated accessibly** to participants, people with lived and living experience, the wider public, health and care services and research community.
- **Creative dissemination methods** (e.g. Easy Read versions, webinars, community presentations) are strongly encouraged as a priority.
- Peer-reviewed open access publications are also encouraged
- Projects must have the potential to serve as a **foundation for future research**.

Application Guidance

Use the following headings to outline your project (max 500 words).

- **Type of project:** State if your project is Research, Service Evaluation or Quality Improvement - see <https://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/> to help you decide.
- **Ethics:** State whether NHS Research Ethics Committee review is required (see decision tool <https://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/>). If NHS Research Ethics Committee review is not required, you will still need Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust approval from the QIST team.
- **Team Details:** Provide the name of the lead applicant, organisation, and team members. Include a clear statement on how lived and living experience is represented and valued within your team.
- **Background and Rationale:** Describe the context and purpose of your project. Explain how it will benefit adults and young people affected by challenges associated with complex relational trauma (sometimes referred to as complex emotional needs or personality disorder), as well as staff. Ensure the rationale reflects compassion and an understanding of the stigma often associated with diagnosis.
- **Project Question:** Present a focused and answerable question that is informed by existing literature and shaped by lived and living experience.
- **PPI and EDI Strategy:** Outline how lived and living experience will be meaningfully embedded throughout the project. Explain how equity, diversity and inclusion will be upheld, ensuring all voices are respected and valued.
- **Project Plan:** Provide a practical and achievable plan using SMART objectives. Demonstrate how the project has been co-designed with contributors who have lived and living experience.
- **Evaluation and Impact:** Describe how you will evaluate the project and reflect on its impact. Include plans to involve existing lived experience panel members and show how the project will contribute to improving lives.
- **Knowledge Mobilisation:** Explain how findings will be shared in free and accessible formats. Include plans for creative dissemination methods that reach diverse audiences.

- **Next Steps:** Outline your intended actions following the completion of the project. Include how the project findings will inform current or future research programmes or practice.
- **Support Needs:** Specify any support required to successfully deliver the project, including research, involvement, or mentoring support.
- **Access Needs:** Detail any access requirements for you or your team to participate fully in the scheme (please use additional word count to cover this if needed).
- **Estimated total cost:** For the EOI indicate an overall total cost for conducting the project. A full breakdown will not be required until the full application stage. Costs can include salary support. Adequate costs for including people with lived and living experience are expected.
- Expression of Interest word limit – 500 words.
- Submit by your EOI by midnight 5th January 2026

Key Dates for Applicants

- 1st December 2025 – EOI call opens
- 5th January 2026 – EOI deadline
- 20th January 2026 – Review of final EOIs. Initial feedback and invitations to workshop/full application.
- Mid February 2026 – Online creative methods workshop
- End March 2026 – Final application deadline
- End April 2026 – Final funding decisions
- May 2026 – Project start date
- Autumn 2027 – Celebration & dissemination event

All applications should be submitted to Dr Anna-Marie Bibby-Jones by midnight 5th January 2026. Please also contact her to confirm your intention to apply and for any queries at Anna-Marie.Bibby-Jones@nhs.net

FAQs will be posted [here](#) so please check first. Note this will only open for NHS staff.