

# Autistic Adult Support Fund

## Fund information and guidance notes

Application deadline:  
12pm (midday) Wednesday 21 May 2025

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# About this fund

The Autistic Adult Support Fund builds on the work of projects funded between 2023 and 2025 to provide support to autistic adults across Scotland. Over this period several organisations received funding to deliver various types of support to autistic adults. The fund aims to help adults with an autism diagnosis, self-identified autistic adults, and their families and carers understand what neurodivergence means for them and improve their wellbeing.

Projects have been providing post-diagnostic groups (online and in person), one-to-one support, group support, employment support, counselling, and one-off sessions such as webinars. Findings of an independent evaluation of the support provided found that the key benefits to individuals were around developing a sense of community and peer support, understanding themselves better, understanding more about autism, self-acceptance, improved confidence and learning coping strategies. It was common for the support received to be described as life changing. The benefits of support provided by autistic staff were widely reported. The evaluation also found that there was a much higher demand for one-to-one support and advocacy than anticipated.

The new Autistic Adult Support Fund will provide **£2,500,000** for the period from **October 2025 to end of March 2028**: £500,000 for the first six months October 2025 to March 2026, and £1,000,000 per year for the following two years.

## Successful proposals will:

- **Meaningfully involve autistic people** in the development, design and delivery of the activity.
- Be **strengths based**, making the most of, and building on, the skills and experiences of autistic people and assets within communities.
- **Complement existing provision**, demonstrating a good understanding of what others are doing locally and how to direct people towards other resources, increasing and adding value to other relevant activity in the area. Projects that take an intersectional approach are encouraged.
- **Be evidence-based**. Projects must deliver support that is autism-informed and have a credible evidence base.

**The deadline for applications is 12pm (midday) on Wednesday 21 May 2025.**

If there are any barriers to you accessing the information about applying to this fund, please get in touch by email [autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk). Information about more accessible forms of this document can be found on page 13.

## Who can apply

To apply for this funding, you must be a not-for-profit organisation working closely with autistic people.

### You must be a Scottish not-for-profit organisation

You should be a Scotland-based, not-for-profit, incorporated organisation with a '**legal personality**'. Please note if you are a registered charity this does not automatically mean you are an incorporated organisation, so please check the legal form of your organisation before submitting an application. Eligible legal forms include:

- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Community Interest Company

Statutory services (e.g., NHS, Local Authorities) are not eligible to apply. However, strong, clearly evidenced applications from eligible third sector organisations working in collaboration with statutory services may be considered.

You must have a bank account registered in the name of your organisation. This bank account must require two signatories for withdrawals.

We will ask how your organisation is governed. This will include questions about your Board or Directors, how decisions are made and the ways you manage risk. Community Interest Companies must have a minimum of three Directors who are not related.

### You must have strong experience working with autistic people

All applicants should already be working closely with autistic people and specialise in support for autistic people, and this should align with the organisation's core mission.

The expectation is that organisations applying for larger grants should have national coverage and be supporting higher numbers of autistic adults.

### You can be part of a partnership project

Collaborative applications made in partnership with other organisations are eligible to apply. Projects might link up services on a geographical basis, provide complementary services or

other new ways to combine strengths to support autistic people's diagnostic journey. The lead organisation should apply on behalf of the partnership. Where the partnership includes a statutory service (e.g. NHS, Local Authority) the lead applicant and primary funding beneficiary must be the third sector organisation. A partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out the approach to delivery, payment of funding and reporting must be included for each partner. Budgets must identify what each partner receives and contributes to the project.

## The type of projects we fund

All projects must meet all of the following requirements:

### 1. Your project supports autistic adults

This fund aims to support adults who have received an autism diagnosis, who are awaiting assessment, or who self-identify as autistic. Adults in this instance refers to people 18 years old and over but applicants who have experience in supporting young people aged 16 and over, and whose projects propose supporting people of this age, will be considered. In addition to supporting autistic adults projects may also support the families and carers of autistic adults.

### 2. Your project supports the programme outcomes

You will be asked how your project contributes to the four programme outcomes. These are:

- Adults who have an autism diagnosis or who self-identify as autistic have access to support to help with their understanding of autism.
- Autistic adults who access this support say it helps their wellbeing.
- Teams in local Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) know about and refer autistic adults to the projects.
- Scottish Government knows more about what support works for autistic people and how to address gaps in support.

### 3. Your project meets a need or fills a gap in provision

A specific goal of the programme is to enable autistic people to access appropriate and high-quality support within 4-6 weeks of first contact with the project. You will need to provide evidence of the need for your project, such as how it fills a gap in current service provision. Services should be provided free of charge to autistic adults and their families and carers.

## **4. Autistic people are meaningfully involved**

You will be asked about the role autistic people play in your organisation and how you have involved autistic lived experience in the development of your project. All funded projects will be strengths-based; you should focus on making the most of and building upon the skills and experiences of autistic people, as well as what other support there is within communities.

## **5. Support provided is evidence based**

You must be able to evidence how your approach builds on up-to-date knowledge and autistic perspectives. Support provided must be evidence-based and promote a positive view of autistic people. You will be expected to be working towards autism expertise and at least the Appreciation, Empowerment or Advocacy levels of the [Level UP!](#) levels.

## **6. Your organisation works with others**

You are not required to be part of a formal partnership, but you will need to demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of what others are doing locally or nationally. You will be asked how your project complements and adds value to other relevant activity in your area. You will need to demonstrate how your project will work with local provision of support to autistic adults.

## **7. Your project will measure progress to understand the difference you are making**

You will need to clearly explain how you evaluate your work, i.e. how you measure the difference support makes for autistic people. You should explain the successful methods you have used in other relevant work, what information you gather and how often you gather it.

## **8. Your project is inclusive of all autistic people**

Your project should be inclusive and projects that take an intersectional approach are encouraged. You should consider how you reach people and the physical, social or economic challenges people might have in accessing support. You will be asked the ways you overcome these challenges to make sure the widest range of people can participate.

## **9. You have a robust safeguarding framework and practice**

You will need to demonstrate best practice on safeguarding of adults, and clear commitment to relevant professional standards, accreditation, governance and training requirements for safe, appropriate delivery of the services proposed. Proposed work should be [trauma-aware](#).

# What you can spend the money on

## How much you can apply for

This funding is to cover project delivery costs and associated overheads for the period from October 2025 to March 2028 (30 months/2.5 years).

- Minimum grant size is £40,000 per financial year (£100,000 for 2.5 years)
- Maximum grant size is £200,000 per financial year (£500,000 for 2.5 years).

The amount requested per year must not be more than 30% of your organisation's annual income.

## Revenue expenditure

As this is project funding, the expectation is that applications will be for revenue expenditure: the day-to-day operational costs that come from delivering the project. Requests for small amounts of capital funding to purchase or upgrade physical items essential to delivery of the project will be considered.

## Core costs

We recognise that delivering this project might require more core resource (e.g. you may have to bring on more staff and/or increase your internal operations). Therefore, we support full cost recovery in project budgeting. This means that your proposed budget should include overhead costs as well as direct project costs. We will fund a 10% contribution to core overhead costs in addition to project costs. You may find this [introduction to full cost recovery](#) helpful.

## Evaluation costs

The evaluation framework for this work will be co-designed with successful applicants at the start of the funded period. Successful applicants will be required to participate in this exercise.

You can include costs in your proposal that will help to review progress and monitor or map the journey of the project. This could be a contribution towards salary costs for a member of staff to monitor and evaluate the project, or it could be reasonable costs towards external evaluation expertise to support you to gather evidence of the project's impact.

## Participation costs

We encourage you to consider what costs you need to budget for to ensure that there are no barriers to people participating in your project. These might include accessible venue spaces or communications materials, childcare, transport, or refreshments.

# How to apply

## Guidance notes and fund information

Please use these guidance notes to inform your application. In particular, you should ensure that your organisation is eligible to apply and that your project meets the fund criteria.

## Expression of Interest and application

We want the application process to be simple and as accessible as possible. The standard application process is written and submitted online.

Please submit an Expression of Interest through this [link](#).

Completing the Expression of Interest will give you access to:

- A link to the online application form where you submit your written application
- A Microsoft Word copy of the application questions, to help you prepare your application
- A copy of the budget template
- A copy of the fund information and guidance notes

When you have submitted your application, you will receive a confirmation email. Check your spam folder, and please get in touch with us if you have not received this email after submitting an application.

Please contact us directly at [autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk) to discuss any adjustments you may need us to make to support you to access this fund.

**Full applications must be submitted by 12pm on Wednesday 21 May 2025.**

Applications after this time will not be accepted.

## Documents you will need

All applications will need to upload the following documents:

- a detailed budget indicating what your grant will be spent on (use this template)



- a copy of your latest set of your organisation's annual accounts
- a copy of your organisations' Memorandum and Articles or Constitution
- a copy of any agreements or Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with project partners

Applications that do not include the documents above will be considered incomplete and will not be considered.

# Additional application notes and guidance

## Preparing your application

**Multiple applications:** Given the expected demand on funding, only one application per applicant will be accepted. Please contact us directly to discuss and obtain guidance on situations where you are considering submitting more than one application.

**Match funding:** This grant does not require match funding. However, if your total project cost exceeds the size of the grant you are applying for, you will be asked to explain how you have raised the additional funds.

## Planning your application

You can use the Microsoft Word copy of the application form, including additional information on the questions, to help you plan your answers.

Please note that **we can only accept applications submitted through our online application process unless alternative arrangements have been agreed with us in advance**. If you wish to use the Microsoft Word template to draft your written application, you should copy and paste your answers into the online form to submit your application.

## Submitting your online application

**Read over the entire application form before answering questions:** To save you repeating information, we recommend you read all the questions before starting the form. Please gather the additional information and documents you may need to upload prior to starting the online form.

**Maximum word limits:** Please note there are word limits to some questions. These limits are a guide only - the maximum limit does not need to be met. You will be unable to enter more than the maximum word limit. **Keep your answers short and to the point.** A clear and concise response that answers the question is much better than a long one.

**Formatting:** Please note that formatting (including bold text and bullet points) is not captured by our online form.

**What information to include:** We expect a high level of interest in this funding. Please consider this when completing your funding request and provide as much detail and clarity as possible. Be specific, ensure your application is clear and answers the question we are asking. We strongly recommend you draft and prepare your answers prior to completing the form online, and you may find it helpful to ask someone in your team to read over your application before you submit it.

# What happens after you apply

## How we will make decisions

We will take the following questions into account when assessing applications:

- Does the project support the Autistic Adult Support Fund outcomes?
- Has the applicant clearly demonstrated the evidence base for the project they are proposing?
- How have autistic people been involved in developing the project?
- Does the applicant have the capacity itself or partnerships in place to be able to deliver the project?
- Does the project fit into existing provision?
- Does the project fit a gap in support and has the applicant provided the evidence for this?
- Is the budget clear, well thought out and does it represent value for money?
- Is there a sustainability plan for beyond the grant period?

## Successful applicants

1. If your application is successful, you will be notified by email. We will let you know when you can publicise the good news.
2. Your organisation will be asked to sign a grant agreement and provide us with bank account details and a recent bank statement. We will also ask for details of a finance contact for your organisation who can receive payment remittances and be able to account for how the funding has been spent.
3. Once this information has been received, we will pay your grant. Payments will be made in advance and will be spread over the duration of the project.
4. You will be asked to report at regular intervals on how you've spent the money and what difference the funding has made.

## Timelines

Close for applications	12pm on May 21st 2025
Decisions to applicants	July 2025
Funded work starts	1 October 2025

## How to get more help and advice

If you have any questions when completing your application, you can email: [autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk).

### Video overview

To support organisations preparing applications and to help answer questions you may have, we have prepared a short video overview of the fund aims and application process. You can find this on the [webpage](#).

### Frequently Asked Questions

Please check the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website for more information you may find helpful. We will continue to add relevant questions and answers to the FAQs as they arise.

### Accessibility

We want this information and application to be as accessible to as many people as possible. If there are barriers to you accessing the Autistic Adult Support Fund information or application form, please get in touch.

You can contact us by email: [autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk](mailto:autismenquiries@inspiringscotland.org.uk)  
Or by telephone: **0131 442 8740**



Contact us via an online  
**Sign Language Interpreter**  
**Contact Scotland BSL**

You can also contact us through an online British Sign Language interpreter using [Contact Scotland BSL](#).

You may find the information on the Ability Net website: [mycomputermyway](#) useful in providing help on how to adapt your phone, computer or tablet to meet your needs.

# About Inspiring Scotland

Since 2008 Inspiring Scotland has worked towards a Scotland where everyone, no matter where they live, or the circumstances they are born into, is given the chance to enjoy a happy, healthy life free from poverty or disadvantage.

We believe Scotland's voluntary sector has a transformative effect on the lives of those living in Scotland who otherwise may struggle to make the best of their lives due to life circumstances, poverty, or other disadvantages. Our aim is to amplify and strengthen the impact of organisations across civic society by helping them build their strength, resilience, and reach.

We partner with entrepreneurs, businesspeople, philanthropists, charitable trusts, Scottish Government, local authorities and other public bodies to design and implement bold, long-term solutions – drawing on expertise and experience from across disciplines and sectors.

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