

## **Sheila Coates Foundation rapid response fund**

### **Your questions answered**

Before applying for funding from the SCF rapid response fund, please read this information which tells you about:

The Fund

Applying for the rapid response fund

Who can apply

Making a decision about who gets a grant

### **The Fund**

#### **Why is rapid response funding needed to support young people with autism in secondary schools and colleges?**

The Government's long-awaited improvement plan ([published in March 2023](#)) arising from its SEND review outlines proposals to address the review's findings: huge inequalities in the system for supporting children and young people with special educational needs, and in the quality of support received. Many of the milestones in the plan are set for 2025, but schools need changes now to get the right support in place for students with SEND. This is particularly so for autistic young people, for whom secondary school can be hugely challenging.

The headlines in the National Autistic Society (NAS) 2021 [school report](#) were stark, emphasising the long wait and often inadequate support to meet needs in school. The challenges are immediate, needing help now. Earlier this year the NAS [Education Report](#) highlighted these continuing challenges. It found that only 26% of autistic pupils feel happy at school, with 74% of parents or carers saying their child's school place did not fully meet their needs.

Our previous rapid response funding rounds have shown how practical solutions, put in place quickly can [really make a difference](#) to autistic young people, their families and the schools which support them.

#### **Why have you chosen to focus on mental health and wellbeing, increasing awareness and understanding of autism, and specific cohorts of autistic young people?**

[Research](#) released last year shows that autistic young people's mental health problems have continued well after the pandemic (more than other SENDs). Throughout SCF rapid response

funding rounds, schools and colleges have reported this to be an identified area of concern sometimes resulting in students struggling to attend school. In one study, [over 80%](#) of autistic children and young people have experienced mental health issues such as anxiety.

We want to ensure SCF funding reflects what matters most to autistic young people in secondary or college education. One of the recurring themes in surveys during the pandemic has been the need for school and college staff to understand more about autism - aligning with one of the six themes in the Government's [autism strategy](#). In one survey 70% of autistic young people said school would be better if teachers knew more about autism. As well as this, recent DfE statistics show a steady increase in the number of SEND pupils in schools. There is a need for more staff with specialist skills but these are often [difficult to recruit](#).

This is SCF's 7th rapid response fund. The pattern of applications so far has shown there to be particular groups of autistic students who find secondary school challenging in either the short or long-term. We want to give schools the chance to identify those groups and provide focused support. Examples of these groups are:

- Autistic girls: around 3 times [less likely to be diagnosed](#) than boys, and often identified later
- Autistic students in Year 7, making the [transition to secondary school](#) - a major shift academically, socially and organisationally
- Autistic students [taking exams](#) where there are specific 'rules' and changes to learn about
- Autistic students who find secondary school so challenging they are [unable to attend](#)

### **Why are you prioritising applications where there is co-production or collaboration?**

In their [Anxiety Plan](#), Autistica emphasise that support should be co-developed with autistic people. Alongside this two key recent reports provide insight into the educational experience of young people with SEND, and highlight the fact that they often do not feel listened to ([Educational experiences of young people with special educational needs and disabilities in England, young person friendly report: 2022](#) and the [Children's Commissioner's report](#).) Previous SCF funding has shown that activities which have actively been planned and delivered with autistic students has made a big impact. Recognising autistic young people as [experts in how they think, feel and act](#) ensures that what is developed will genuinely support them.

### **What kind of co-produced or collaborative activity will you fund?**

Consulting autistic young people in planning developments is always a good thing to do, but

co-production goes beyond this. Applications must propose activity in one of our three key areas: mental health and wellbeing, increasing awareness and understanding of autism, a specific cohort of autistic young people. However, we are interested in funding initiatives where autistic young people have been actively involved in planning or delivery (or both). This may be in aspects of school development, whole school or department initiatives, activities which raise awareness of autism. The activity could involve just one or two autistic young people, such as supporting students to plan and deliver a presentation for staff as part of a training initiative. Alternatively, it could involve autistic young people across the school such as a school-wide consultation or a planning group to plan and lead a whole school awareness-raising initiative - for example about sensory strategies to support mental health. These are just a couple of ideas, we look forward to receiving creative applications which are innovative.

### **Why are you offering funding in a specific region?**

SCF was founded in 2020. Our strategic approach is to gradually build the number of schools, colleges and young people that we support. In our first year, we offered larger grants and our focus was in the South East of England. In 2021, we ran our first rapid response round in the East Midlands region, our second round in the South West, the third North West region, the fourth in Greater London, the fifth in the North East, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and North Yorkshire - and the sixth, most recent round in the East of England. This seventh rapid response round is focused on the South East region of England.

### **Why are you interested in funding initiatives that have an impact across the school/college beyond our specialist autism team?**

Most autistic young people attending mainstream secondary school have lessons across the school rather than in one base or department. In previous rapid response rounds, we have been particularly pleased to see applications for initiatives which respond to this by looking at the whole school environment. We do understand that with short-term, limited funding this is not always possible, but we will be looking for creative ideas.

### **What do you mean by 'implementation support'?**

In our research, schools told us that although there are many resources, information sources and programmes available, they don't have the time or staffing to make best use of them. When we say 'implementation support' we mean what is needed to make things happen as quickly as possible. This could be (*examples only*):

- additional staff time to help with well-being or engagement with school and learning
- additional time for staff to attend or deliver staff development activities such as mentoring, action learning

- the costs of planning an event or initiative
- a video production or digital company that you commission to develop online resources or Apps
- more practical costs such as transport.

The important thing is that the funding allows things to happen quickly. Because of this we are unlikely to fund schools to recruit new staff or specialists. Rather, we envisage existing staff having their hours extended, or specialists from an agency or local service being commissioned.

### **What's included when you say 'resources'?**

When we say 'resources' we mean things that you can purchase, and this can be wide ranging. It includes (*examples only*):

- hardware such as laptops, iPads, tablets, a video camera
- software packages
- interventions or workbooks
- the cost of specialist training packages
- soft furnishing to create a 'safe space' for students who are struggling with aspects of school
- items in a sensory well-being package to be sent home to encourage interaction

The important thing is that we fund activity which can be put in place immediately, to have immediate impact. Because of this, you need to be clear in your application how initiatives can be set up and delivered quickly.

### **What's the reason for the short deadline and short timeline?**

The issues we have identified from our background research are happening now, and the challenges we want to tackle are very real. Many autistic young people need immediate support to help them manage successful engagement with learning. Because of this, we want to make funding available as soon as possible, and to fund short-term practical solutions.

### **Applying for the rapid response fund**

#### **If I need help completing the application form what do I do?**

We have made the application form short and simple, so don't anticipate any huge problems. Google Forms is widely used so please ask colleagues for immediate support.

If you still have questions, you can get in touch by emailing us at [enquire@sheilacoates.foundation](mailto:enquire@sheilacoates.foundation)

### **Any top tips about completing the form?**

The most important thing to remember is that we base our decisions on what you write in your application form. Questions 3 and 4 are crucial in letting us know what you are planning to do so use the word count wisely. Please check out [the criteria](#) (page 8/9 of this document) against which we will judge your application. If you don't write it, we won't know it!

### **How long will it be before I hear whether we've been successful?**

We want to get funding to schools as soon as possible. We aim to make decisions and notify you by 6th November 2023.

### **What happens after we've been awarded funding?**

Once you have been awarded funding, the school's Headteacher or Principal will have to sign our Terms and Conditions and send in bank details so we can transfer money. We will ask a sample of successful schools and colleges to trial the new SCF impact measures, and these will have to be completed in advance of funds being released as baseline data (we'll also ask you to complete this 6 months after your funded activity). We want you to get funding as soon as possible, and the sooner you send us information the sooner the funds will be released. This can happen quickly, we aim for this to be within ten working days of you providing the required information.

### **What are SCF impact measures?**

The SCF impact measures are simple rating scales measuring student engagement (a 12-point rating scale) and well-being (a five-point rating scale).

This funding round, a sample of successful schools and colleges will be asked to complete SCF impact measures on a sample of autistic students before starting funded activity, and then again afterwards.

You can find more information about the measures [here](#).

### **Will we get all of the money up front, or will it be given in instalments?**

For this rapid response fund, we will transfer the full amount of your award at the beginning

so that you can put in place the activity you have planned.

### **What do you mean by ‘over and above what is statutory provision’?**

We don't want to replicate support or interventions that are, or should be provided by the school or Local Authority as part of their agreed provision - things they HAVE to do. So, for example, we won't fund the delivery of something which is part of the curriculum, or something which is identified in a young person's education, health and care plan. We also won't fund applications where a statutory agency (such as a local authority or health service) has assessed a need and has a responsibility to fund but has failed to do so.

### **How will we have to report to you on how the money has been spent?**

We have made the application and award process as simple and quick as possible. We are interested in hearing about the impact of our funding but don't require a detailed report. At the end of the funding period, we'd like you to send in a statement about the difference SCF funding has made. This can be as long or short as you'd like and we will give you some guidance. We need this to enable us to understand how our charitable funds are being spent.

A sample of schools and colleges will also repeat the SCF impact measures that they carried out with a sample of autistic students at the beginning of funded activity. You can find more information about this [here](#).

SCF trustees will be interested in talking with some schools to see the impact of awards, and yours may be selected. We'll give you plenty of notice and an idea of what to expect. The conversation will be low-key and will have a focus on SCF engaging with your work.

### **I have just found out about this funding but I have missed the deadline - can I still apply?**

This fund is for a very limited time, to meet a very specific need and so we will be sticking to the deadline. We will keep our website updated with any extensions to the rapid response fund, or any further funding rounds.

### **How is this fund different from the other Sheila Coates Foundation grants?**

This rapid response fund is responding to the current urgent need for support highlighted in various reports. Schools tell us that they currently have limited capacity and time for implementing the longer-term projects that our grants programme usually funds. By giving smaller amounts of money now to more schools and colleges in this rapid response fund, we hope that much needed support and resources will be put in place quickly. Currently we

have run six rounds of awards from this fund, with this one being the seventh. We will make decisions about further rounds based on what is most needed.

### **Who can apply?**

We will not accept an application from an organisation that is not a school, college or other mainstream-based educational establishment.

### **What do you mean by 'other educational provision'?**

The majority of our funding goes to mainstream secondary schools and colleges. However, some mainstream educational provision for autistic students is separate to the main establishment - this may be resource provision or a separate unit. This is why we use the term 'other mainstream-based provision' in this rapid response fund. As a broad guideline, we require beneficiaries (students who benefit from funding) to be on the roll of a mainstream school or college with a unique reference number (URN).

### **We are an alternative provider of education, can we apply for a grant?**

No, this fund is for mainstream secondary schools, colleges or other mainstream-based educational provision. If you are an alternative provider working closely with a mainstream school, or work with students on the roll of a mainstream school then contact the mainstream school concerned to see if they would be interested in submitting an application.

### **We are a special school/college, can we apply for a grant?**

No, this fund is for mainstream secondary schools, colleges or other mainstream-based educational provision. If you are a special school or college and have an idea of ways to support transition to mainstream provision, then contact the mainstream school concerned to see if they would be interested in submitting an application.

### **I am a parent of an autistic young person, can I apply for a grant?**

No, this fund is for schools, colleges or other educational provision where autistic young people are supported to access mainstream education. This support may include working closely with parents. Get in touch with your child's educational provision, let them know about the SCF rapid response fund and they may be interested in submitting an application. Having you, as a parent, on board will add value to an application.

### **We're an organisation that supports families of autistic children, can we apply for grants?**

No, this fund is for schools, colleges or other educational provision where autistic young people are supported to access mainstream education. This support may include working closely with local organisations who support families of autistic young people. We advise getting in touch with local educational provision and exploring how you can work together - but remember the application has to come from them. Working closely with local organisations will strengthen an application.

### **I am a young person with autism, can I apply for a grant?**

No, this fund is for schools, colleges or other educational provision where autistic young people are supported to access mainstream education. Start a conversation with the people who teach you, let them know about the SCF rapid response fund. Share any ideas you have for things you know will really help you to learn or to feel happy and calm. Applications where the ideas have come from young people will be strong, so you can really help to add value.

### **We are a primary school, can we apply for a grant?**

No, this fund is for secondary schools, colleges or other mainstream-based educational provision. If you have an idea for activity that could support transition to secondary school then contact the secondary school concerned to see if they would be interested in submitting an application.

### **Our school is not in the South East region of England, can we apply?**

No, the rapid response fund is for mainstream educational provision in the 19 local authorities making up the South East region of England only. These are: Bracknell Forest, Brighton and Hove, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Medway, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Slough, Southampton, Surrey, West Berkshire, West Sussex, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham.

If this changes, we will update the news section on the SCF website.

### **Making a decision about who gets a grant**

#### **How will a decision be made about who will receive an award?**

After you submit your application you will receive an email confirming that we have received it. We will do a basic check to see if you have submitted all the information we need, and if



you have applied for activity we are able to fund. We will then review your application against a set of criteria, taking into consideration all the information you have provided. We use a four point scale to rate how well the activity described in the application:

- supports one of the three identified focuses: autistic young people's mental health, increasing autism knowledge and understanding, a specific cohort of autistic young people
- is quick to put in place
- will have an impact within 6 months
- involves autistic young people

It is important to remember that questions 3 and 4 in your application form are crucial in letting us know what you are planning to do so use the character count wisely. We base our decisions on what you write in your application form, and you will need to score well against all of the criteria. Remember: If you don't write it, we won't know it!

Please be aware that this is a limited fund and we anticipate we will be oversubscribed. As a result some applications will be unsuccessful. You will be informed of the decision by email.

### **Can we appeal if we are unsuccessful?**

The SCF Board of Trustees make the final decision about which grants are allocated, and their decision is final. It is not possible to appeal against this decision.