



York Neurodiversity and Mental Health Group

Expression of Interest Brief: Formal Peer Support for the Neurodivergent Community

This project is a pilot, designed to build a clearer understanding of the level and type of need within the neurodivergent community in York.

Context

The York Neurodiversity and Mental Health Group, which is part of the Mental Health Partnership, is committed to creating a city where:

- We all feel valued by our community, connected to it, and can help shape it.
- We are enabled to help ourselves and others, build on our strengths, and can access support with confidence.
- We have mental health and neurodivergent support services that are inclusive, responsive, and built around our lives.

The Mental Health Partnership has a vision and set of principles that support should be:

- **Accessible:** Easy to engage with for all.
- **Welcoming:** Warm and understanding environments.
- **Flexible:** Tailored to individual needs and preferences.
- **Sustainable:** Consistent and able to grow with the community.
- **Inclusive:** Built collaboratively with those it aims to serve.

This funding opportunity aligns with our commitment to empowering neurodivergent individuals and enhancing mental health support services in York. The initiative seeks to co-create a formal peer support offering to address current gaps and provide targeted, high-quality support.

A proportion of this grant has been funded by the central UK government Trailblazer initiative, led locally by the York and North Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. The Trailblazer initiative aims to reduce social isolation and improve self-confidence and social experiences, particularly for people who are out of work or seeking employment. It supports individuals by building confidence, developing skills, and strengthening local support, bringing together work, health, and skills programmes into a holistic, evidence-based offer.

Description of the Work

We are seeking voluntary, community, social enterprise organisations, or limited companies that align with the project's core principles and will not profit from the funding. The successful partner will develop and deliver a formal peer support project designed to offer flexible and person-led support for individuals aged 18+ with Autism and/or ADHD (not dependent on diagnosis).

It is important to note that organisations that do not meet this description will not be eligible for this funding opportunity.

Peer support refers to structured one-to-one support, ideally informed by the insights and experiences of neurodivergent individuals with appropriate training. Mentoring may be a lighter-touch, informal form of support, but applicants should clearly outline this in their proposal.

The project aims to:

- Create a structured and well-governed peer support model that prioritises inclusivity and accessibility for individuals aged 18+.
- Establish a dedicated, safe, sensory-friendly space where individuals can feel supported and understood.
- Deliver support through trained peer supporters who have lived experience of neurodivergence, or of supporting neurodiverse individuals.
- Offer a blend of in-person and virtual peer support sessions, including one-to-one, group sessions, and workshops to accommodate diverse preferences and needs.
- Be free at the point of delivery to those accessing support.
- Establish appropriate and robust support and training for peer supporters.

The core principles of peer support include:

- **Mutual Support:** Bringing individuals with shared experiences together to support each other.
- **Acceptance and Understanding:** Creating spaces where everyone feels valued and their experiences are recognised.
- **Empowerment:** Promoting shared learning and resilience through support.
- **Practical Assistance:** Offering help with navigating systems, social connections, and everyday challenges.

We are committed to making the application process as accessible as possible. In addition to written proposals, we welcome alternative formats such as:

- Video or audio submissions
- Visual presentations or storyboards
- Other creative formats that clearly communicate your ideas and delivery plans

If you wish to submit your proposal in an alternative format, please contact us in advance to discuss any accessibility needs or technical considerations.

Outcomes

This initiative aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Ensure support is shaped by a strong neurodivergent presence, fostering a non-judgemental environment rooted in validation and acceptance.
- Recognise and celebrate the diversity of neurodivergent experiences, tailoring support to individual needs.
- Empower individuals through self-advocacy and neurodivergent affirming, trauma-informed practices.
- Offer flexible and person-led peer support for individuals aged 18+ with Autism and/or ADHD (not dependent on diagnosis).
- Provide access to a flexible, community-rooted space that can be located in various venues in the city to accommodate the neurodivergent (ND) community. This space does not need to be owned by the organisation and could utilise community venues (successful application is responsible for funding and sourcing the venue), to deliver the programme effectively.
- Facilitate peer-led support groups and mentoring to build social links and shared understanding within the community.
- Reduce social isolation and improve self-confidence and social experiences, focusing in part on those who are currently not working or looking for work.

The successful organisation will be required to monitor and measure outcomes relating to these objectives and contribute to an evaluation of the project's impact.

Role/Responsibilities/Skills/Background

We are looking for an organisation that:

- Has experience and a strong track record in providing mental health and/or neurodivergent support services in York.
- Organisations should detail how they will monitor who accesses support, how they heard about it, and what impact the support had.
- Demonstrates expertise in delivering similar peer support projects.

- Is willing to engage in co-design processes with neurodivergent individuals and other stakeholders.
- Will implement the monitoring and reporting requirements of the Trailblazer programme.
- Applications must describe how they will ensure the offer reaches the broader ND community, not just existing contacts.
- Can provide training and ongoing support for peer supporters, ensuring quality and sustainability.
- Has strong links to the York Neurodiversity and Mental Health Group or similar local initiatives.
- Willing to collaborate and share learning with the wider Mental Health Partnership, Mental Health Hubs and Connecting our City project.

Key Information for Applicants:

- Clearly outline how many people you aim to support and how this support will be delivered.
- Proposals should detail your delivery model, including structure, approach, and any training involved.
- Please note this is a grant fund, not a commissioned contract. Your organisation will be responsible for designing and implementing your own model of support.
- A portion of participant data will need to be reported using the trailblazer monthly participation data tools, quarterly reporting and ongoing evaluation processes for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Full details and training will be provided once these are confirmed.

Funding Available

The funding pot for this project is up to £80,000, which must cover all associated costs, including training, delivery, and monitoring. Groups may apply for the full amount or for smaller grants within the £80,000 pot.

This funding is initially available up to 2 years, with the potential for future funding opportunities based on the project's success and sustainability. Bids for this funding can be submitted in partnership with other aligned organisations.

How to Apply

To express your interest, please complete the attached application form and send it to **connectingourcity@york.gov.uk** no later than **Monday 15th September**. Submissions should include:

1. Your proposed delivery method, including detailed costings.

2. Any previous experience of delivering similar or related projects.
3. The training and ongoing support that will be provided to peer supporters.
4. Related or complementary work your organisation has undertaken.
5. Ability to effectively measure and report on the impact of the project.
6. Foster partnerships and prioritise collaboration, free from hierarchical complexities that can sometimes arise within services.

We welcome flexible submissions, including video, audio, or written formats; please ensure all the points above are answered in your submission.

Who is Involved

The York Neurodiversity and Mental Health Group works closely with the following organisations, who may also be involved in this project's planning and evaluation:

- Neurodivergent and Mental Health Working Group
- City of York Council
- York CVS
- NHS Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV)
- Other voluntary and community groups focused on mental health and neurodivergence
- Other local stakeholders with a shared interest in improving support services.

Next Steps

A small panel of representatives, including neurodivergent individuals, carers, and community partners, will review submissions and invite selected organisations to discuss their proposals further. Proposals will be assessed using a standard scoring sheet that aligns with City of York Council's scoring metrics.

Shortlisted applicants will be notified on the **18th of September** and will be required to prepare and deliver a presentation as part of the interview process on the **24th of September**. Further details regarding the presentation and interview will be provided to those who are shortlisted.

Join Us in Making a Difference

This is a unique opportunity to play a pivotal role in shaping a peer support service that responds directly to the needs of York's neurodivergent community. Together, we can build a sustainable, inclusive, and impactful support system that transforms lives.

Discuss Further

If you have any questions about the expression of interest or to discuss your submission further, please contact connectingourcity@york.gov.uk