

Answers to questions presented at the 17th August online Q&A. For anything that may not have been covered, please email bridgesfordementia@sheffield.ac.uk.

1. Question: As the network is led by the University of Sheffield, is there an expectation that the project should happen in the region?

Answer: No, the project can take place anywhere in the UK.

2. Question: Does the lead have to be an academic?

Answer: Yes, funding can only be distributed to an organisation that can accept EPSRC funding. This includes any UK-based university.

3. Question: Can SMEs be involved?

Answer: SMEs, community groups, or independent researchers may team up with an organisation that can accept funding to create a proposal that suits all parties.

4. Question: How might an SME be involved?

Answer: That is something you would need to discuss directly with the lead partner.

5. Question: Is it okay if lived experience input and co-design elements are incorporated entirely within the project, or is there an expectation of a contribution to developing the proposal itself before the project starts?

Answer: We welcome lived experience involvement in various ways, and our call guidelines reflect this. The ideal approach is having someone shape your proposal before submission, but at minimum, we expect to see involvement within the project lifetime. Detailed guidance on involving lived experience is provided in the call document.

6. Question: Regarding co-design, how much should the application define a specific technological solution in advance, versus leaving space for the research direction to be shaped through collaboration and co-production?

Answer: Primarily, the technology should improve the confidence and independence of people with dementia. Some ideas were generated during our 28th May workshop. If developing technology, it must be used or tested by people with lived experience; this is the most important criterion. Explain in your application how they will be engaged to shape the proposal. Involving people with lived experience from the beginning makes it a collaborative process rather than a pure product-testing exercise.

7. Question: For outdoor environments, would multi-sensory stimulation be considered too?

Answer: Yes, if it serves to enable people's independence.

8. Question: Can a research partner receive part of the funding as well?

Answer: It depends on what you mean by "research partner". Non-academic organisations (e.g., charities, companies) are welcome to participate, but only UK-based academic co-investigators are eligible to receive funds. Non-academic or non-UK-based academic partners cannot receive direct funding. However, if you are referring to a subcontractor providing a product or service, they can be paid through the project. Subcontractor costs must be justified as with any EPSRC project.

9. Question: Can I be a PI as an ECR on a fixed-term contract?

Answer: An Early Career Researcher (ECR)—such as a postdoctoral researcher or Fellow—may serve as a PI. PhD students are not considered ECRs for this call. ECRs must check their own institution's rules regarding application eligibility. This call is not exclusively for ECRs; academics at any career stage may apply.

10. Question: Will the funding cover salaries for researchers on permanent research contracts?

Answer: Yes, funding covers both directly incurred and directly allocated costs. Directly allocated costs typically apply to permanent staff, whereas directly incurred costs apply to postdoctoral researchers on fixed-term contracts.

11. Question: Is there an expectation to financially cost 'in-kind' contributions (e.g., support offered by a third party not formally costed into the bid)?

Answer: In-kind contributions, such as access to expertise, facilities, or knowledge, may carry a monetary value. A non-academic partner may contribute cash or in-kind support to increase the project's scope, duration, or impact. We look for partners to meaningfully support and complement your expertise.

12. Question: What are your expectations around the use of citations and references?

Answer: We do not have strict criteria. Following feedback, we updated the application form to specify that references fall outside the 1,000-word limit for the science case for support.

13. Question: Would costs for including people with lived experience be covered, or costs for a memory café or local non-academic specialists in dementia?

Answer: Yes, these project costs can be covered. Given the limited available budget, please plan accordingly. University costing teams are familiar with budgeting these costs and should be approached first.

14. Question: How many projects do you expect to award?

Answer: We expect to award between two and three projects, depending on the scope and requested funding. Further funding rounds will be available through separate thematic calls.

15. Question: Is there flexibility on a January/February start date (e.g., if a PDRA needs recruiting)?

Answer: We are flexible within reason. If severe delays arise, start dates can be discussed individually.

16. Question: Do you have a preference for whether the project is technically led or clinically led?

Answer: We have no preference. Focus on building a team that ensures project feasibility and brings in the right leadership. Ensure the proposal aligns with priority themes shaped by people with lived experience, such as those outlined in our scoping document.