

Beyond the traditional routes for CPD?

Catherine Evans, trustee and CPD lead for the Elizabeth Casson Trust looks at how the charity can support occupational therapists in their continuing professional development



The Elizabeth Casson Trust is a charitable organisation with a purpose to advance the profession of occupational therapy and support the development of occupational therapists.

In order to deliver on its purpose, the trust has a five-year strategic plan (2015 to 2020) (<http://bit.ly/2BJi45>), consisting of three strategic intentions:

- help develop and promote the evidence base of occupational therapy in order to increase the understanding of the efficacy and unique contribution of occupational therapists to those people with occupational needs within the UK;
- help develop leaders in occupational therapy with the capability of taking the profession forwards within the context in which it needs to operate; and
- help develop the practice of occupational therapy.

In order to progress these strategic intentions the trust has a number of project groups, and in a previous issue of (OTnews, May 2018, page 28) the Elizabeth Casson Trust leadership project was presented under strategic intention two.

Another of the project groups addresses continuing professional development (CPD). The CPD panel accepts applications from post-registration occupational therapists through either individual, team or service applications for CPD activities related to the strategic intentions of the Elizabeth Casson Trust. In its last financial year, the trust made awards to over 100 occupational therapists, totalling more than £100,000.

Why CPD?

As occupational therapists we have a responsibility to ensure that we engage in lifelong learning and maintain our fitness to practise (COT 2015; HCPC 2013). In the current climate, funding for CPD activities through the traditional work-based routes is reducing.

Occupational therapists and services are needing to be more creative with how they engage in and fund CPD. This is seeing an increase in individuals contributing towards their own CPD costs and looking beyond the traditional routes for additional funding.

This will often require applicants to apply to more than one source in order to gain adequate financial support.

At the Elizabeth Casson Trust, we are aware of the current challenges faced by occupational therapists and services and are pleased to be able to continue to contribute towards the development of occupational therapy and occupational therapists by offering financial grants towards CPD activities.

What is funded?

The trust supports a wide range of CPD opportunities including courses and conferences, higher education and research, team development and bespoke opportunities.

Courses and conferences: we receive a wide range of applications relating to attending courses and conferences, some occupational therapy specific and others looking to other areas.

It is important to broaden our knowledge and experience from a range of sources, therefore the trust accepts applications for a wide range of activities, the key point being that the applicant should make explicit links to their role as an occupational therapist and the benefit to the occupational needs of service users.

Higher education and research: the trust supports a number of occupational therapists to engage in further study and research. We accept applications per year of MSc study, where support with more than one module is requested.

We are currently reviewing the application process for MSc, PhD and Professional Doctorates, please watch the trust website for further information (bit.ly/2sPzLTv).

Team development: we have started to receive applications from teams and services 'buying in' tailored training opportunities for the occupational therapists employed within. This is an excellent way to develop a service, invest in a number of occupational therapists and benefit local service users.

Bespoke opportunities: these are opportunities which are designed by the applicant/service to meet their individual CPD needs. Some examples of these are study tours and bespoke training.

This is an exciting area of CPD as this enables the applicants to be creative, innovative and address their specific CPD needs.

Across the four areas described above, in the last financial year (2017 to 2018) 60 per cent of the applications received were for courses and conferences, this was followed by 32 per cent for higher education and research.

These are typically the 'traditional' routes to engage in CPD, however we are keen to see a rise in applications for team development and bespoke development opportunities. These offer a fantastic opportunity for individuals and services and can potentially have a greater impact.

Within the CPD grant budget we offer funding towards the CPD activity, unfortunately we do not normally provide funding for associated costs such as travel and accommodation.

What is the CPD grant application process?

Applications for CPD grants are received throughout the year via the Elizabeth Casson Trust website and are reviewed by the CPD panel on a monthly basis; please watch the website for guidance on submitting MSc and PhD funding requests or contact: secretary@elizabethcasson.org.uk.

The panel consists of occupational therapists and all grants are awarded based on the appropriateness and quality of the application. All applications are graded for alignment with the Elizabeth Casson Trust strategy, benefit to self, service and service users, and overall application standard.

If successful in gaining a CPD grant, it is unlikely that the trust will offer a grant covering 100 per cent of the cost, the amount awarded is an outcome of the grading of the application.

With all CPD funding requests it is essential to consider how the CPD activity is aligned to the Elizabeth Casson Trust strategic intentions, develops the applicant, service, and impacts the occupational needs of service users.

If you are seeking funding elsewhere and making a personal contribution, include this in your application. There is an FAQ section on the website that provides all you need to know to make an application; make sure you read this before applying.

How have others benefited?

Supporting CPD activities has been a core activity for the Elizabeth Casson Trust since the trust began. In recent years we have supported individuals to engage in a wide range of courses for specific assessments, interventions, models of delivery, etc.

We have funded attendance at conferences worldwide, both occupational therapy specific and specialist. We have contributed toward service wide training and development and supported individuals to complete post registration study.

Monica Silva who received support from the trust says: 'By benefiting from the Elizabeth Casson Trust grant I have been able to continue my specialist clinical expertise and provide best evidence-based care to the infants in my caseload. I find that it not only contributed to my profile as an occupational therapist, but to the service where I work and centrally to the service users benefiting from early assessment.'

What next?

We encourage teams and individuals to carefully consider how CPD activities will benefit them, the service and service users.

As with other organisations, we have a finite budget and must use this budget effectively to meet our charitable purpose to advance the profession of occupational therapy and support the development of occupational therapists.

If you would like to apply for a CPD grant consider the following before applying: Is this the most effective activity for my development? Could this be applied for as a team/service? How will this benefit service users occupational needs? What contribution will I be able to make? Can my employer make any contribution? Read the FAQs section on the trust's website.

Take a look at the website to find out more about Elizabeth Casson, the trustees, and funding opportunities: www.elizabethcasson.org.uk.

References

- COT (2015) *Code of ethics and professional conduct*. Available online at: www.rcot.co.uk/sites/default/files/CODE-OF-ETHICS-2015_D.pdf [accessed on 19 October 2018]
- HCPC (2013) *Standards of proficiency – occupational therapists*. Available online at: www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10000512_Standards_of_Proficiency_Occupational_Therapists.pdf [accessed 19 October 2018]

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