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NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY EXTENDS ST OSWALD'S HOSPICE SUPPORT TO HELP MEET GROWING COST OF SERVICES

A much-loved North East hospice is continuing to battle back from the impacts of the pandemic with the help of further funding from Newcastle Building Society.

St Oswald's Hospice provides specialist care for adults and children from across the region with life-limiting conditions and aims to make the most of time and improve quality of life for them and their families.

Gosforth-based St Oswald's continued to run both its inpatient ward and its children's service right through the pandemic, investing more than £100,000 in the additional clinical and support services required to meet patients' needs and keep them as safe from infection as possible.

A new infection prevention control nurse and additional bereavement counsellors have been brought in, while the Hospice's Silver Rings project is enabling engraved keepsakes to be created by a silversmith for families as reminders of their loved ones.

Newcastle Building Society has now awarded a £3,000 grant to the Hospice to help it covers its running costs and meet the financial challenges that it is still facing.

The funding is being provided through the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation, which offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society's branch network.

It's the second time in the last two years that the Hospice has received support from the Society, with a £5,000 grant given in 2020 to help it maintain its essential services.

During the pandemic, St Oswald's adapted how it worked to provide a range of additional services, either remotely or digitally, as well as implementing a range of new creative ideas.

Arts and crafts packs were delivered to service users' homes, videocalls via Facebook and Zoom were set up to help everyone keep in touch, new well-being resources were made available online and baby chicks were even brought into the hospice for young patients to look at and hold.

Jane Hogan, head of fundraising at St Oswald's Hospice, says: "The Hospice is still operating under a range of restrictions in order to keep our patients safe and there are still a lot of challenges facing us, but we're optimistic for the future.

"The extra resources and service that we've put in place have helped to meet service users' different needs in a situation where the challenges they're already facing have often been greatly intensified.

"The coming year looks set to be as challenging and as unpredictable as the last, and we're anticipating and preparing for an increase in referrals for patients who have missed screenings or had treatments for serious conditions such as cancer postponed, delayed or cancelled.

"The way that local people and businesses have stepped up to support us over the last two years has been wonderful, and receiving blocks of flexible funding like this latest Newcastle Building Society grant takes a lot of the pressure off meeting costs that we know we'll need to cover."

Lynn Richardson, manager at Newcastle Building Society's Gosforth High Street branch, adds: "St Oswald's is an absolute pillar of the North East community and makes a huge difference to the lives of hundreds of families facing the most difficult situations imaginable.

"The team's commitment to maintaining their services during the pandemic is inspirational and we're proud to be extending our support for their invaluable work."

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society's Community Fund has also contributed over £2.1m in grants and partnerships to a wide variety of charities and projects across the region, including the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and the Prince's Trust.

The grants are so far estimated to have had a positive impact on more than 151,000 people.

The Newcastle Building Society Community Fund is run in association with the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland.

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