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Project tackling barriers to employability amongst young people in Sunderland community receives funding boost

A Sunderland-based skills and employability project has received a four-figure grant to help remove the barriers to employment and secure long-term employment prospects for the City's young people.

The Parker Trust's Pathways project works with around 40 young people between the ages of 16-25 from the Sunderland area. The employability project, now going in to its second year, is helping to address issues around low attainment in school, low confidence and undiagnosed autism and get more young people in the local community into work experience and employment.

Pathways' support with training, higher education and job searching has been successful in moving its first 40 young people forward with their career ambitions, and the Parker Trust believes its project can create wider benefit for the local community by reducing the likelihood of more people relying on housing benefit, universal credit and food banks.

The charity has now received a £4,914 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland to help fund the salary of a Pathways Worker who will be responsible for helping the charity's young people find meaningful work experience and longer-term employment in the North East.

Karen Noble, centre manager at the Parker Trust, said: "Our aim is to upskill local young people in and around Sunderland who may lack self-esteem, not have any formal qualifications or have experienced barriers to employment, so that they have a better chance of catching a potential employer's eye and getting on their interview list.

“We’re already seeing positive outcomes for our first batch of students, with several of them going on to secure work experience or interviews, get volunteering positions and find employment, and with the support of Newcastle Building Society we’re looking forward to welcoming even more local teens and young people to learn with us in the coming months.”

The Newcastle Building Society Community Fund seeks to provide support aligned to the Society’s strategic community focus. Priorities for funding are informed by [Vital Signs North East 2024](#), the latest series of reports developed by the Community Foundation.

Supported by Newcastle Building Society, Vital Signs is a guide to the key issues affecting the North East and suggests how individuals and businesses can work with charities and community organisations to create a bigger impact in the region.

Jamie Anderson, customer advisor, at Newcastle Building Society said: “Developing skills and employability to help people across our heartland area is one of the core focusses of our charitable giving. The Parker Trust team has developed a practical project for dozens of local young people to develop the skills they need to move towards careers that they will love, and it’s a pleasure to be able to support their inspiring work.”

The Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society's branch network.

Since 2016, Newcastle Building Society’s Community Fund at the Community Foundation has contributed over £1.7m 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.

To find out more about the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation and for member nominations, visit: <https://www.newcastle.co.uk/powering-communities/community-grants/apply-for-a-grant>

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About Newcastle Building Society

Newcastle Building Society is the biggest building society in the North East, with a network of 31 branches and assets of more than £6.2bn. We've been here for our members for over 160 years.

As a leading local employer, we're committed to growing our region's talent and being a great place to work where people can realise their potential. We hold Platinum IIP and won the Excellence and Positive Impact Award at the 2022 CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards. We have been named Regional Building Society of the Year for seven consecutive years from 2017 – 2023 by What Mortgage? and also won Best Overall Personal Finance Brand at the Personal Finance Awards 2023/24. In 2024 Newcastle Building Society became the first UK business to receive international accreditation for mutual value measurement, recognising our ongoing commitment to creating value for its members and communities.

We help people to own their home, to save and to plan their finances through our range of products and services. We believe in the role of the high street at the heart of our communities and, as our branch network grows, we are increasingly proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our regions.

Financial Advice is provided through our Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited subsidiary. Face-to-face financial advice is available at each of the Society's 31 branches, with another full-service branch arriving in Pickering, North Yorkshire, later in 2024. For the third year running, Newcastle Financial Advisers has been awarded Top Rated Firm status by VouchedFor - the UK's leading review site for Financial Advisers.

We're dedicated to helping our communities make positive changes; since 1995 the financial support through grants and donations from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to benefit local causes has surpassed £1.7m. Our total community contributions in 2023, made up of grants, match funding, and our ongoing partnership donations, was more than £350,000.

Newcastle Building Society is committed to creating a culture of belonging, where people can bring their whole self to work and be respected and valued for who they are. Our colleague-run networks include the Race Network, LGBTQ+ Network the Disability and Awareness Network, Women in Leadership Network, Menopause Network and Parent and Carers Network, all of which help steer Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy within the organisation. www.newcastle.co.uk

Newcastle Building Society Principal Office: 1 Cobalt Park Way, Cobalt Business Park, NE28 9EJ.

Newcastle Building Society is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Newcastle Building Society is entered in the Financial Services Register under number 156058. You can check this on the Financial Services Register or by contacting the Financial Conduct Authority on 0800 111 6768