

## **NORTH EAST AUTISM SOCIETY SUPPORTING MORE NORTH TYNESIDE FAMILIES THANKS TO FUNDING BOOST**

Families in North Tyneside that are navigating a new autism diagnosis are getting extra support thanks to a longstanding regional charity and a four-figure grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.

The North East Autism Society has been working to empower and support autistic children, young people, adults and their families for more than 40 years, and supports around 4,500 individuals around the region every year.

The charity is now using a £3,000 grant to set up a new weekly parent and toddler support group at the Riverside Children's Centre on the Meadow Well Estate in North Shields for families that are either going through or have received an autism diagnosis.

The play-based group, which forms part of the charity's wide-ranging Family Support service, provides an opportunity for up to ten families at a time to get support and advice on their individual situations, as well as information on what autism is and could mean in practice to their family situation.

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

Headquartered in Chester-le-Street, the North East Autism Society was founded in 1980 by a group of parents who wanted to provide a better standard of education for autistic children in the region.

Having first established Thornhill Park School in Sunderland, it now runs five specialist educational facilities around the North East, and also provides residential care, short breaks and supported living services for people of all ages.

Its Family Support service aims to help alleviate some of the pressure that families face by providing community-based care for their loved ones, with support packages tailored to the needs of each individual and their family.

Kevin Meikle, fundraising manager at the North East Autism Society, says: “When families first receive an autism diagnosis for their child, or are going through the assessment process, there will naturally be an awful lot of questions they want to ask about conditions that they probably haven’t about much previously.

“Our Family Support service aims to give them the information they need, as well as to help educate them on the realities of autism, provide opportunities for respite where they need it and chances to speak and listen to other families in the same situation.

“We already run a number of these parent and toddler groups around the region and look to set them up where we see a specific need.

“They provide an extremely useful touchpoint for our experts and families, and also form an important part of the pathway towards a formal diagnosis.

“We don’t receive any statutory funding to run these groups and have to fundraise to cover their running costs, so receiving a lump sum like this from the Society will make a massive difference to how we can help local families who otherwise might not know where to turn.”

Anisa Rahim, content communications lead at Newcastle Building Society, adds: “The North East Autism Society has a clear practical focus on enabling people with autism and their families to live the fullest and most rewarding lives.

“It has been having a tangible positive impact across our region for more than four decades and we’re very pleased to be able to support this latest project.”

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society’s Community Fund at the Community Foundation 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.

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**For further information on Newcastle Building Society, please contact:**

Julian Christopher  
Footprint Public Relations  
07891 005034

### **About Newcastle Building Society**

Newcastle Building Society\* is the biggest building society in the North East, with a network of 30 branches and assets of more than £4.9bn. We've been here for our members for over 150 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 were named Company of the Year in the Northumberland and Tyneside category of the North East Business Awards 2022.

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 are proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our region.

Our Financial Advice is provided through our Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited division\*\*.

We're dedicated to helping our North East communities make positive changes; since 2016 the financial support through grants and donations from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to benefit local causes has surpassed £2.1m

[www.newcastle.co.uk](http://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. Call 0845 734 4345 or visit us online at [www.newcastle.co.uk](http://www.newcastle.co.uk)

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**About St Oswald's Hospice**

St Oswald's Hospice is a charitable hospice rooted in the North East. The hospice provides outstanding, specialist and expert care to adults and children with life-limiting conditions, and for their families too.

St Oswald's is a place where people matter. A place that focuses both on living and dying well. It is a home-from-home, filled with honesty, camaraderie and hope that offers quality time for everyone.

Visit [www.stoswaldsuk.org](http://www.stoswaldsuk.org) for more information or [bit.ly/2QX5JYF](https://bit.ly/2QX5JYF) to watch St Oswald's 'Our Story' video.