

FOUR-FIGURE GRANT HELPING CLEVELAND HOUSING ADVICE CENTRE BUILD COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

A longstanding Teesside charity is extending the help it provides for local communities with the help of a four-figure grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.

Cleveland Housing Advice Centre (CHAC) provides free advice and guidance to local people around welfare benefits, housing, and debt issues, and is estimated to have helped almost a quarter of a million people since it was set up in 1992.

Based on Middlesbrough's Borough Road and an office in South Bank, the charity also looks to mitigate problems arising from these issues, such as repossessions, evictions, domestic violence and poverty, and also provides on the job training for local people who are both socially and economically excluded from the labour market.

It is now using the £3,000 grant to help cover the cost of meeting growing local demand for its support, which has increased significantly in light of the cost of living crisis and the covid pandemic, through which CHAC remained open.

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.

CHAC has an eight-strong team of trained advisors delivering its services, which is backed by 14 volunteers, and works with a number of other local community organisations to ensure the right support is available to each individual service user, including Citizens Advice, Age UK Teesside and Middlesbrough Borough Council's Welfare Rights Unit.

Its advisors are also dementia-trained, enabling them to provide effective support to people and their families living with the condition.

Mahmoud Shehata, joint centre manager at the Cleveland Housing Advice Service, says: “We take a holistic view to helping the people that come to us, and we try to come up with action plans which will improve each individual’s quality of life.

“We take on around 3,000 cases per year, each of which needs the involvement of different advisers and service providers to help ensure that small problems don’t spiral into bigger ones.

“The situation across our communities is getting ever more challenging and it often feels like we’re running to stand still with the improvements we’re making, but having this new funding will help us keep up with local demand.”

Emma McGill, Head of Strategic Planning at Newcastle Building Society who visited Cleveland Housing Advice Centre to find out how the grant was being used, adds: “Cleveland Housing Advice Centre has been working in some of the region’s most deprived communities for decades and its positive impact on the lives of hundreds of local people is very clear.”

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

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