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## **CHILLI STUDIOS GETS MORE CREATIVE WITH MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT THANKS TO NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY BACKING**

A Newcastle charity tackling mental health issues through the creative arts is increasing the support available to its members with the help of a four-figure grant from Newcastle Building Society.

Chilli Studios delivers a range of creative services to those who are, or who are at risk of experiencing mental health problems, and social isolation.

Based in Ouseburn, the charity works with around 250 people from across Newcastle and Gateshead every year, with 50 members visiting its headquarters at the Blackfriars Centre on Newbridge Street each day.

Chilli Studios, which celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, has used a £3,000 Newcastle Building Society Community Fund grant to add a therapeutic enabler to its team to support members as they move towards employment, education and training, and to help them resolve day-to-day situations that arise.

The post-holder is a former Chilli Studios service user themselves, which gives the people they're working with an example of how their situations can improve and the opportunities that they themselves could access.

The grant has been 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.

Chilli Studios' services cover almost every aspect of the creative arts, from audio/visual, music, writing and ceramics through to digital activities, photography and performing arts.

Sessions are led by creative professionals in each field, with their work supported by the charity's team of volunteers.

Chilli Studios is predominantly grant-funded, with members paying a nominal fee to access the service.

Bob Malpiedi, development and strategy lead at Chilli Studios, says: "Our service is designed to engage people in creative activities which develop skills and ability while also building resilience and improving wellbeing.

"We try to create a positive, safe environment in which our members can enjoy spending time experiencing different activities while getting the support and advice they need to address their individual situations, in both the short- and longer-term.

"The post-holder for this new role being a former member of our organisation shows our current members that there's an opportunity, with the right help and support, for them to make progress themselves and to achieve their personal goals.

"There is always high demand for the money we have available to deliver our different projects, and without the generous support we've had from Newcastle Building Society, we simply wouldn't have been able to fund this important role."

Kathryn McLaughlin, head of group communications at Newcastle Building Society, who recently visited the charity, adds: "Chilli Studios provides an incredibly warm and welcoming environment for all its members.

"Its innovative approach helps hundreds of local people find a positive way to manage and resolve a range of challenging situations, and adding this extra resource will enable the team to make an even greater positive impact."

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society's Community Fund at the Community Foundation has also contributed over £2.3m 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 31 branches and assets of more than £5.3bn. 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 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 £2.3m

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