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GATESHEAD CHARITY EXTENDING FAMILY SUPPORT WORK WITH NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY BACKING

A Gateshead community charity which has supported hundreds of local people during the pandemic is expanding its work thanks to new funding from Newcastle Building Society.

Regal Respite provides respite care for members of Gateshead's orthodox Jewish community who are looking after a seriously ill family member to enable them to have a much-needed short break from their caring responsibilities.

Over the last two years, it has expanded its work to provide food and toy hampers for local families that have been stuck in their homes due to Covid-19, to ensure parents were able to keep their children occupied and didn't have to worry about cooking meals while they've been ill.

Regal Respite is now using the £3,000 Newcastle Building Society grant to expand the range of situations in which it can provide its respite support to include issues such as bereavement and miscarriage.

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.

Regal Respite was founded in 2016 by Saul Sonner in response to the community his family receive while his son was being successfully treated for leukaemia.

Two local caterers signed up in support of the charity's work during the pandemic to ensure that the food supplies required to prepare the meals being made by Regal Respite volunteers were available for a much lower cost than usual.

Saul Sommer says: “Our overall aim is to take away some of the worry that families face during difficult times, whether this is when a child is going through a severe illness as we experienced or they’re having to manage challenging situations that have been brought about by the pandemic.

“When you’re unable to look after yourself properly due to illness, the worry that this causes about how your family is going to manage can make the situation much worse, especially for larger families with several young children.

“Being able to offer respite care and other support in these situations has a hugely positive impact on families’ well-being. Some people just need our assistance briefly, while others need longer-term support, but the breathing space it provides for all of them gives them the chance to recharge when they need it most.

“We’ve recognised the wider need for support across the local community for families facing other challenging situations and the funding that Newcastle Building Society is providing will have an immense impact on what we’re able to do in the future.”

Dale Barclay, manager at Newcastle Building Society’s Trinity Square branch in Gateshead, adds: “Regal Respite’s community commitment is hugely impressive and the difference that the team is making to Gateshead families facing some tough situations is clear.

“Our grants are designed to have a tangible positive impact on our communities, and this is a great example of how this idea comes to life in practice.”

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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