

Vinnies Community Lunch Club Setting More Places At The Table With Newcastle Building Society Grant Support

A Newcastle charity is making more room at the table at its weekly community lunch club after receiving a four-figure grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.

St Vincent's Newcastle runs the weekly Vinnies drop-in lunch club at its community centre on Newbridge Street in Ouseburn, where up to 140 people receive a free, hot three-course lunch that is prepared by a team of 40 volunteers.

The lunch club, which has been running for the last six years, has seen an increase in the number of people attending in recent months, as well as a sharp rise in the costs of the ingredients used to make the meals on its menu, which is designed by catering supervisor Jan Cruikshanks.

St Vincent's is now using the £3,000 Newcastle Building Society grant to help meet the growing cost of buying and cooking these ingredients, which it adds to the donations it receives from city supermarkets through the FairShare food redistribution scheme.

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.

St Vincent's supports around 250 people in Newcastle every week and runs a wide range of different activities and programmes, including debt advice, health checks, ESOL classes, a weekly pop-up market where essential goods are available cheaply and crisis and transitional accommodation for people who have become homeless.

Its weekly Breaking Bread project provides a dedicated space for individuals and families seeking sanctuary in the city in which they can socialise, play, prepare food and practice their English language skills together, while emergency packs of food, clothing and toiletries are provided to individuals and families in need.

Rebecca Stevenson-Read, centre manager at St Vincent's Newcastle, says: "We welcome everyone in the spirit of compassion and kindness and look to provide opportunities for people from all the city's different communities to meet in a place where they feel comfortable and welcome.

"Vinnies is about much more than just the weekly meal we provide. It fosters a real sense of community and belonging that is hugely beneficial to the people that join us every week, and provides a really positive environment in which they can spend some time.

"The number of people that we're welcoming every week is continuing to rise, which has an obvious impact on the project's running costs alongside the increase in food prices that everyone's only too well aware of.

"Receiving funding such as the Society's generous grant makes such a difference to what we can do and helps to reduce the worry about how we're going to cover the costs of helping the people that come to us."

Suzanne Main, Head of Client Services at Newcastle Strategic Solutions - part of the Newcastle Building Society Group, adds: "Vinnies lunch club provides a warm and welcoming place for people in our home city to spend some time each week and we're very pleased to be able help its amazing team of volunteers keep delivering this invaluable project."

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 £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 £2.3m

*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 <https://www.newcastle.co.uk/>

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