

## **NORTH TYNESIDE DISABILITY FORUM MEETING GROWING LOCAL SUPPORT NEEDS WITH NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY BACKING**

Dozens of people with disabilities across North Tyneside have been accessing extra support with their day-to-day needs, thanks to the work of a local charity and funding from Newcastle Building Society.

The North Tyneside Disability Forum has used a £3,000 Society grant to extend the amount of time it can dedicate to helping individuals and families across the area manage the negative social, financial and cultural impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Forum advice worker Eileen Franklin has been working with around a dozen different families every week through the winter to gather the information needed to resolve a wide range of evolving issues, to find their way through the complexities of the benefits system and to prove they're entitled to the help they need.

Assistance with completing forms, managing food and fuel poverty issues and identifying other relevant sources of support and advice has also been provided.

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.

It's the second time that the Society has awarded funding to the Forum, with a £3,000 grant given in 2021 supporting a project which helped around 30 disabled and vulnerable people of all ages develop their workplace skills.

Founded more than 30 years ago and headquartered in Shiremoor, the North Tyneside Disability Forum provides a wide range of free activities, from photography, Tai Chi and music classes to creative arts, drama and a cinema club.

Around 4,200 people access the charity's services every year, with their delivery supported by a 120-strong team of volunteers.

It also runs a community café which provides somewhere for all local people to meet and spend time, offers affordable meals to help visitors facing issues with food insecurity and provides opportunities for vocational training and work experience for some of the charity's service users with learning disabilities.

Sue Adams, chief officer at North Tyneside Disability Forum, says: "The impossible decision between heating and eating that we've all heard so much about is a daily reality for many of the families that turn to us for help.

"There's been a huge amount of demand from local people of all ages, and the addition of disability and ill health makes their situations even more challenging.

"The type of bespoke support we can provide for local people with disabilities isn't really available elsewhere and is helping to meet a need for advice, information and guidance that has increased hugely since the pandemic.

"This covers everything from crisis intervention with food packs, clothes for kids and free school meals, through to obtaining the day-to-day aids and adaptations that our service users need and navigating the complexities of the welfare system on their behalf.

"Having these extra resources in place has given us the time needed to resolve a great many complex situations and we know that the quality of life enjoyed by dozens of local families has improved over the last few months as a result.

"Newcastle Building Society's support has made a massive difference to the number of people that we've been able to help obtain the different resources that they need and are entitled to, and we're very grateful to have them on our side."

Jonathan Fincken, manager at Newcastle Building Society's branch in North Shields, adds: "The Forum team has continued to step up when families across North Tyneside have needed them most and we're very pleased to be supporting their excellent work once again."

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

\*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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