

SUNDERLAND CHARITY HELPING CITY'S NEW ARRIVALS FIND THEIR WAY INTO WORK

A Sunderland charity supporting black and minority ethnic families living in and coming to the city is helping more new arrivals into work with the support of a four-figure grant from Newcastle Building Society.

The International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS) is using the £3,000 Society grant to help individuals overcome the barriers that can prevent them from getting into the workplace, including language issues and understanding how to navigate unfamiliar systems.

The charity is building on its links with a number of local employers, including the North East Ambulance Service, Sunderland College and Northumbrian Water, as part of the project, and helping participants build the skills and knowledge they need to get the jobs they want.

Eighteen people have already signed up to the project, with six now in employment and others undertaking different training courses - and ICOS is now looking to add to the number of people involved with its work.

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 charity, with a £2,941 grant provided in 2021 helping it provide one-to-one work, education and training support to around 25 local people over a 12-month period.

Founded in 2009, ICOS works to improve the quality of life of black and minority ethnic people in the North East and to enhance community cohesion and intercultural understanding.

Much of its work focuses on those who lack access to information and services to ensure equal access, with the aim of focusing on both the assets of its communities and the issues that they are facing.

It also helps individuals who have been impacted by a range of specific problems, including hate crime, domestic abuse and modern slavery, while its East Rangers project has seen 175 volunteers removing over 5,000 kilograms of rubbish during 40 activity days in the Backhouse Park area.

ICOS has particularly strong links to the Eastern European community, but also works with refugees, asylum seekers and black and minority ethnic people born in the UK, as well as a range of partners across the region.

ICOS manager Michal Chantkowski says: “The people that we’re supporting want to get on with finding work and building their new lives in our city, but often simply don’t know how or where to start.

“Those who’ve been granted refugee status also only have 28 days before they have to find new accommodation and move into the mainstream support system, which can be hard enough to navigate for those that know their way around it and almost impossible for people who’ve already had to deal with a huge amount of upheaval to their lives.

“The help we’ve had from local employers has been invaluable and we’re very pleased with the progress we’ve made so far.

“It’s brilliant to see people succeeding in the workplace, and we’re very keen to give even more people the support they need to find their way in their new home town.

“This project simply wouldn’t have been possible without the funding provided by Newcastle Building Society and we’re extremely grateful for their continuing support.”

Robert Boak manager at Newcastle Building Society's Sunderland branch, adds:
"ICOS makes a terrific difference to the lives of people who are making a new home in our region in lots of different ways.

"The impact of its different activities is very plain to see, and we're very pleased to be continuing our support for this extremely impressive charity."

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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For further information on Newcastle Building Society, please contact:

Julian Christopher
Footprint Public Relations
07891 005034

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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