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ST MARTIN'S CENTRE PROVIDES A WARM WELCOME TO LOCAL COMMUNITY THANKS TO NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY FUNDING

More than 150 local people found a place to stay warm in the cold weather thanks to the work of a Tyneside charity and a four-figure grant from Newcastle Building Society.

St Martin's Centre Partnership turned its community centre on Roman Avenue in Byker into a 'warm hub' right through the winter months to give vulnerable and older people in Byker and Walker somewhere to spend their time free of charge during the colder months.

More than 100 people visited the Centre during an average week, with a large proportion regularly spending the whole day on site.

The charity used the £3,000 Society grant to cover the cost of providing a hot meal, drinks and snacks to anyone who needed them.

The grant was 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.

Built on the site of the old St Martin's church, the purpose-built St Martin's Centre opened in 2006 as a venue for a wide range of activities, with an older people's project taking place five days a week and a befriending service that began during the pandemic continuing to extend its reach across the local community.

Other events and activities hosted at St Martin's range from baby and young children groups, an on-site nursery and a volunteer project through to family support advice, employment and training support, and an affordable café.

The Centre is entirely grant-funded and needs to raise around £250,000 every year to cover its running costs.

Helen Twelves, director of finance at St Martin's Centre Partnership, says: "We foresaw problems that were going to arise in our community as the winter rolled in and knew we needed to do what we could to help out.

"Providing a warm, welcoming space that people could visit any time they wanted without worrying about the cost, and where they could stay in as long as they wanted, took away a lot of the worry that our visitors might otherwise have been facing.

"The social side of this project has been just as important as any other part of it, with the chance to share time together and make new friends in a relaxed, friendly environment really helping to keep spirits up and improve visitors' well-being.

"With a lot of money to raise every year and a lot of different costs to cover, we simply wouldn't have been able to offer this additional help without Newcastle Building Society's support and we're grateful to have had them in our corner."

Kelly Beattie, area manager at Newcastle Building Society, who recently visited the charity, adds: "St Martin's recognition of and response to an urgent community need has made a huge difference to the well-being of more than 150 local people when they've needed it most.

"We're very pleased to have been able to support the invaluable work of another amazing charity in our home city."

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:

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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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