

28 July, 2025



## Smart Works Newcastle counts on Building Society support to help unemployed women prosper

**Newcastle Building Society has announced a new partnership with Smart Works Newcastle, a life-changing charity helping women across the region into secure employment.**

The partnership, which is supported by a contribution of £10,000, will also see Society colleagues volunteer their time and skills to support Smart Works with events and fundraising as well as with the charity's upcoming office move.

Part of this funding has been provided by the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation North East.

Andrew Haigh, chief executive of Newcastle Building Society, said: "We're so proud to partner with Smart Works Newcastle, a charity whose mission to empower women through employment aligns perfectly with our own purpose of connecting our communities with a better financial future.

"Work and opportunity is a strategic community priority for us, and supporting Smart Works means our members are helping to open doors for women across the North East – whether they're stepping into the world of work for the first time or returning after time away.

"Along with our new Monument branch in the city centre, the partnership underlines our commitment to the people and communities in the region."

Smart Works is a UK-wide charity offering free interview-appropriate clothing and interview preparation support to unemployed women, and women on zero-hour contracts. The Newcastle team have helped over 3000 clients across the North East and 98% of clients felt Smart Works had increased their chances of getting a job. Smart Works Newcastle hopes to secure new premises in the city centre to enable them to support 1000 women annually.

Helen Boyd, Head of Smart Works Newcastle, said: "Women still face so many barriers to work, so our aim is to break down the barriers of self-confidence and interview clothing to help our clients see their potential and secure employment and financial independence, which we know has a positive impact on children, families and the wider economy. Though based in Newcastle, our service is for women across the North East and our partnership with Newcastle Building Society will help us reach women across the region"

The North East continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates for women in the country, with a female unemployment rate of 3.6% and a female economic inactivity rate of 28.1%, significantly higher than the national average of 24.6%. Despite these challenges, Smart Works Newcastle's mission of supporting 1000 women a year into employment is helping to combat this, with 68% of their client's securing employment within a month of their visit.

The Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation North East offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society's branch network.

Since 2016, Newcastle Building Society's Community Fund at the Community Foundation has also contributed over £1.7m in grants and partnerships to a wide variety of charities and projects across the region, including the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and the King's Trust.

## **ENDS**

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## **About Newcastle Building Society**

Newcastle Building Society is the UK's 7th largest building society with 32 branches across the North East, Cumbria and North Yorkshire. A branch in Manchester city centre will open later this year under the Manchester Building Society brand. The Society has assets of more than £6.5bn. It has been there for its members for over 160 years. Financial Advice is provided through its Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited subsidiary. Newcastle Financial Advisers has consistently been awarded Top Rated Firm status by VouchedFor - the UK's leading review site for Financial Advisers.

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 we're proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our regions.

We're dedicated to helping our communities make positive changes; since 1995 the financial support through grants and donations from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation North East to benefit local causes has surpassed £1.8m. An additional estimated £1million income gain has benefitted service users of the Society's Helping Hand service, delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice Gateshead.

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. We are a Real Living Wage employer and were the first building society in the UK to become an accredited Living Pension employer in 2024. We have been named Regional Building Society of the Year for eight consecutive years (2017–2024) by What Mortgage? and Best Overall Personal Finance Brand at the Personal Finance Awards 2023/24 and 2024/25.

In 2024 Newcastle Building Society became the first UK business to receive international accreditation for mutual value measurement, recognising our ongoing commitment to creating value for our members and communities.

In 2025 we signed up to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking, committing to take action for a more sustainable future in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement.

## **ABOUT SMART WORKS**

Smart Works Newcastle, established in 2018, is part of Smart Works — a dynamic, high-profile UK charity that exists to empower all women who need help getting into work. Through the transformative power of high-quality clothing and one-to-one coaching, we help women succeed at interview, get the job — and gain the confidence and independence that comes with it.

Last year, Smart Works supported over 10,000 women across the UK, including 700 at Smart Works Newcastle. 68% of our clients secured a job within one month of their appointment — moving from unemployment to income and towards a brighter, more secure future.

To date, Smart Works has supported over 40,000 women nationwide, with 3000 supported by Smart Works Newcastle. Our mission is simple: that any woman who needs our support should be able to access it.

Smart Works delivers its service through 11 centres across the UK — including London, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Newcastle, Reading and Leeds — as well as virtually for women in other regions.

As part of our ambitious growth, Smart Works recently doubled the number of women we support each year. Looking ahead, Smart Works Newcastle is proud to play a vital role in helping even more women unlock their potential — in our local community and beyond.

Smart Works Newcastle Charity No: **1176547**