

Free Tech Skills Courses On Offer At Sunderland Women's Centre Thanks To Newcastle Building Society Funding

Dozens of Wearside women will be getting the chance to improve both their tech skills and their confidence thanks to a new project set up by a Sunderland charity.

Sunderland Women's Centre is using a £6,880 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to launch a series of free ten-week computer skills courses at its Green Terrace offices in the city centre.

The courses will cover the basics of computing, including how to use word processing packages and the internet, while it will also look at practical issues including recognising online scams, using social media and keeping in touch online with family and friends.

Computers are also made available at the Centre to enable students to practice their skills between classes, as well as to ensure they have access to the technologies they need to complete online tasks like job searches and application forms.

Students will also be able to access the Centre's on-site creche to ensure their children are being looked after while they're learning.

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.

Originally founded in 1984, Sunderland Women's Centre aims to ensure equality of opportunity by identifying and removing barriers to learning and by supporting women from under-represented or disadvantaged groups.

It offers a number of different courses in association with Sunderland College, including maths, English and ESOL language courses, while it also hosts mother and

toddler groups, wellness and meditation sessions, and history, textiles and flower workshops.

Andrea Bulmer, project manager at Sunderland Women's Centre, says: "Many of us relied on different types of technology to keep in touch with family and friends during the pandemic, but not everyone has had the chance to develop the skills and knowledge they need to use it, or indeed can get access to it at all.

"This course, and the others that we offer, are about much more than just the skills that the women learn.

"They also help to build confidence and self-esteem, to give participants the chance to build new connections with people who share their experience and situations, and to find support with addressing some of the other needs that they might have.

"Developing these sorts of essential skills could be the first step back into education or employment for course participants, and we're keen to hear from women across the city who'd like to get involved.

"With all the core costs we need to cover, it wouldn't have been possible for us to put on these courses without Newcastle Building Society's support, so we're really grateful for the generous funding they've provided."

Jennie Pitt, head of equality, diversity and inclusion at Newcastle Building Society, who recently visited the Sunderland Women's Centre, adds: "The services and support that Sunderland Women's Centre provides makes a huge difference to the lives of women and families across the city in lots of different ways, and we're very pleased to be able to support this excellent 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.

For more information on Sunderland Women's Centre's new computer skills course, please call 0191 567 7495.

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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 £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

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