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NEW UNIFORMS CREATING TOGETHERNESS AT PERCY HEDLEY FOUNDATION EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT

Adult learners at a much-loved North East disability charity are dressing for success with the help of a four-figure grant from Newcastle Building Society.

As part of its work to improve the lives of people across the region with disabilities, the Percy Hedley Foundation set up Hedley's Horizons, an employability programme which helps dozens of its service users develop new teamworking and life skills by undertaking different purposeful activities.

Projects range from gardening, arts & crafts, making Christmas wreaths and cookery through to volunteering with Northumbria Police cadets and at the Springfield Community Café in Forest Hall.

To help create a greater sense of belonging across the group and give them more visibility while they're working at their various tasks, the charity has used a £3,000 Newcastle Building Society grant to buy branded uniforms for all the people taking part in the projects, including polo shirts, aprons and uniforms.

The charity is now also looking at options for working with a local retailer to sell some of the items that the Hedley's Horizons team makes and creates, in order to raise further funds.

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.

Originally set up in 1953 as a special school for children with cerebral palsy, the Percy Hedley Foundation specialises in care, education and support for people and children with disabilities across the North East.

It is one of Newcastle's leading providers of schools for children with Special Educational Needs, with two schools in Forest Hall and Jesmond offering specialist provision education for children and teenagers aged 3 to 19 years old with a range of complex physical disabilities and learning difficulties.

It also runs Hedleys College, a specialist further education and training provider for young people aged 16-25 with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities, and has four specialist residential care homes located across Newcastle.

Patricia Boynton, trusts and foundations fundraiser at the Percy Hedley Foundation, says: "Hedley's Horizons is all about giving people with disabilities the chance to learn new lifeskills, work as a team and develop confidence in themselves and what they can do.

"The structured programme of purposeful activities we've developed has a real impact on our students' well-being and we see the pride they take in the jobs they're doing every day.

"The uniforms have created a real sense of belonging among our students, as well as helping them to separate their work life from their home life.

"With lots of other budget priorities to cover, this would have remained just a nice idea without Newcastle Building Society's contribution and we're really pleased with the impact that their generous support has had."

Jill Wilson, head of IT service management at Newcastle Building Society and who recently visited the charity, adds: "The Percy Hedley Foundation has been part of the fabric of the North East for 70 years and has had an immeasurable impact on our home region.

"This is a simple project that's having a real impact on the charity's adult learners and we're very happy to see how well the uniforms have been received."

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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