

EAST DURHAM TRUST GETS FOUR-FIGURE FUNDING BOOST

A County Durham charity that works to improve the lives of families living in the county's former pit villages has received a four-figure funding boost from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.

East Durham Trust provides a range of support services to the 22 distinct communities which make up the former district of Easington, most of which continue to be affected by significant levels of deprivation and disadvantage.

Headquartered in Peterlee, the Trust has seen demand for its support grow by around 30 per cent over the last two years as the impacts of the pandemic have taken their toll on the local area.

The charity has now been awarded a grant of £3,000 from the Newcastle Building Society's Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland to help cover the growing cost of meeting the increased demand from local families for different types of advice and support.

Founded in 2007, East Durham Trust works with a wide range of partners and a dedicated team of volunteers to deliver services which address complex and diverse needs across its communities.

In the last year alone, it has distributed more 7,000 food parcels to people in crisis, provided over 4,000 hot meals provided and helped to feed more than 3,000 local children.

It runs County Durham's only community-based and led debt advice centre, while its East Durham Connected project brings together more than 20 organisations to offer a comprehensive range of support and advice services.

The Trust's volunteer-run Chit Chat telephone befriending service tackles social isolation and well-being issues by providing regular opportunities for social contact, including for local residents living with cancer, while its East Durham Creates

project, which seeks to engage local people in creative activities and grow arts provision in sustainable ways, is soon to be extended to cover the whole county.

East Durham Trust receives no core funding and is entirely reliant on grants and donations to cover its day-to-day costs.

It is also currently looking to recruit more volunteers for a number of roles, including drivers, food bank support, advice pathfinders and debt advisors.

Chief executive Graham Easterlow says: “Nearly three quarters of the communities we serve are designated as ‘left behind neighbourhoods’ reflecting the enduring issues they face, and our mission is to tackle as many of these issues as we can through the comprehensive range of community-based services we provide.

“The pandemic has had a disproportionately severe impact on communities that were already experiencing severe levels of deprivation, although the grassroots response that we’ve seen has proved the power of community involvement and cooperation time and time again.

“Many of the people that we’ve been supporting over the last couple of years have never fallen into crisis before and don’t really know where to turn for help, so we’ve been focused on identifying their individual needs and helping them find a positive way forward.

“A crucial part of our work is giving people hope and showing them that there are people and organisations out there who care.

“The support we’ve had from Newcastle Building Society does exactly that, and with demand continuing to rise, it will go a long way in enabling us to keep providing the support that our communities need.”

Sally Peverley, Head of Procurement and Supplier Management at Newcastle Building Society, adds: “East Durham Trust’s commitment to its communities makes an incalculable difference to the lives of the people living in them and it has stepped up to do even more when its help has been needed the most.”

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society's Community Fund at the Community Foundation has contributed over £2.1m 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 30 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 £2.1m

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