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## Life-Changing Project Provides Asylum Seekers With Hope for the Future

**Teenage asylum seekers fleeing conflict in Africa and the Middle East are being given the chance to rebuild their lives in North Shields, as part of a life-changing project led by a well-known local charity and supported by the region's largest building society.**

The young people from countries such as Ethiopia, South Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq have said how grateful they are for the support of the YMCA North Tyneside as they adapt to life in the UK.

The charity, based in North Shields, has witnessed its young people take great strides in their English language, gain a better understanding and awareness for British culture and begin to develop lasting friendships with other young people thanks to its programme for asylum seekers.

To ensure the future of the programme, a £4,834 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland is helping to fund the salary of a YMCA North Tyneside support worker. The role will be dedicated to helping the young asylum seekers navigate the complex challenges of adjusting to life in another country, and support them in becoming contributing members of society.

The project, which has supported over 20 asylum seekers since it began in 2022, aims to integrate the teenagers into the local community in North Shields through a variety of activities, including cooking classes, martial arts and English language courses. Over the past 18-months word has spread of the impact the programme is having on young asylum seekers, with teenagers in the wider North Tyneside and Northumberland areas interested in getting involved.

Peshawa Aso Hussain, 18, from Iran is part of the YMCA North Tyneside's resettlement programme. He said: "Since joining the YMCA North Tyneside's project for asylum seekers I have developed new friendships, my English has improved and I feel like a valued member of the local community. I am so grateful for the support of the staff who have given me the opportunity to create a new life for myself in North Shields."

Dean Titterton, chief executive at YMCA North Tyneside, said: “The programme for young asylum seekers is helping to break down barriers and better integrate our displaced young people into the community.

“We’re experiencing high levels of engagement in many of the activities led by our support workers, and feedback from our teenagers has been overwhelmingly positive, with asylum seekers from other parts of the North East also keen to participate in the programme.

“Several of our young people have now been granted ‘leave to remain’ in the UK, and we’ll continue to support them through to adulthood when they may decide to relocate to other parts of the country to be closer to family, or to pursue careers.

“Without funding from Newcastle Building Society we would struggle to continue to deliver this vital project which is transforming the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.”

In April Newcastle Building Society announced it would be making a significant investment in North Shields with plans to work with the YMCA North Tyneside to open a branch inside their vibrant community building on Church Way, adding to the range of facilities already on offer.

It’s latest support for the YMCA North Tyneside follows a long-standing relationship with the charity that has seen its colleagues volunteer their time and skills to many YMCA North Tyneside projects over the years. These include volunteering at the YMCA café, community meals and allotment, and fundraising for several events that support the vulnerable young people in YMCA-supported accommodation, youth groups and nursery.

Conor King, manager of Newcastle Building Society’s North Shield branch who recently visited the charity, said: “It was inspiring to meet with the YMCA North Tyneside’s asylum seekers and hear first-hand about the impact the YMCA North Tyneside is having on their lives as they continue to integrate into our local community.

“We’re particularly proud of the long-term partnership we’ve had with the YMCA North Tyneside, and we’re proud to contribute towards the salary of its support worker who is responsible for playing such a key role in these young people’s lives. As we move into the YMCA North Tyneside’s premises later this year we look forward to watching the project evolve.”

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

Since its launch in 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 Prince's Trust.

The grants are so far estimated to have had a positive impact on more than 151,000 people.

**-ENDS-**

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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 £6.2bn. 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 have been named Regional Building Society of the Year for seven consecutive years from 2017 – 2023 by What Mortgage? and also won Best Overall Personal Finance Brand at the Personal Finance Awards 2023/24. 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 its members and communities.

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, as our branch network grows, we are increasingly proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our regions.

Financial Advice is provided through our Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited subsidiary. Face-to-face financial advice is available at each of the Society's 31 branches plus a financial advice-only location in Pickering, North Yorkshire. For the third year running, Newcastle Financial Advisers has been awarded Top Rated Firm status by VouchedFor - the UK's leading review site for Financial Advisers.

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 to benefit local causes has surpassed £1.7m. Our total community contributions in 2022, made up of grants, match funding, and our ongoing partnership donations, was more than £544,000.

Newcastle Building Society is committed to creating a culture of belonging, where people can bring their whole self to work and be respected and valued for who they are. Our colleague-run networks include the Race Network, LGBTQ+ Network the Disability and Awareness Network, Women in Leadership Network, Menopause Network and Parent and Carers Network, all of which help steer Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy within the organisation.

[www.newcastle.co.uk](http://www.newcastle.co.uk)

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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