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CHARITY HELPING ASYLUM SEEKERS FIND THEIR FEET IN NORTH TYNESIDE WITH NEWCASTLE BUILDING SOCIETY BACKING

A North Tyneside charity is supporting the physical well-being and mental health of asylum seekers coming to the region with the help of a four-figure grant from Newcastle Building Society.

Walking With in North Tyneside provides a range of services and activities to enable people who come to the area after arriving in the UK seeking sanctuary to feel welcomed, safe and part of the community.

It is using a £5,000 Newcastle Building Society grant to add small amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables to the 40 bags of non-perishable food that it provides every week across North Tyneside to asylum seekers that don't qualify for benefit payments.

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.

Founded in 1999 and headquartered on Hugh Street in Wallsend, Walking With in North Tyneside works to welcome, befriend, support and empower asylum seekers, by providing education, befriending, resources and a safe, welcoming environment in which they can spend time and socialise.

It currently has 512 people on its books, with a 50-strong team of local volunteers helping the charity to deliver its different projects and services, which include English language classes, clothing and food banks, healthcare and well-being activities and housing support.

It is also part of a Schools Of Sanctuary project which is enabling pupils in eight local schools learn more about the issues facing asylum seekers, and so helping the children of families seeking asylum who are attending these schools to feel more settled there.

Joan Hault, chief executive officer at Walking With in North Tyneside, says: “We began providing our food bags during the pandemic and they made a big difference to the health and well-being of our clients, so we’ve been keen to continue and enhance them.

“The people that we’re helping have extremely limited resources available to them, meaning buying fresh produce is often simply not possible.

“Adding fresh ingredients to our food bags means the recipients can add to ingredients like lentils and chickpeas and cook familiar meals from scratch, which is important from both a nutritional and a social point of view.

“The feedback that we’ve had has been very positive and the impact that this work is having on recipients’ mental health is especially pleasing to see.

“Our organisation doesn’t receive any statutory funding, and with demand growing for the many other ongoing activities that we provide, we simply wouldn’t have been able to make this project happen without Newcastle Building Society’s generous support.”

Jonathan Fincken, manager at Newcastle Building Society’s North Shields branch who recently visited the charity, adds: “Walking With in North Tyneside has a long history of helping people who’ve arrived in our region with almost nothing and their support has never been needed more than it is today.

“This latest project shows just how much of a positive impact a little bit of extra thought can have and we’re very pleased to be able to help Walking With extend its excellent local work.”

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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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 £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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