



Carers from Sunderland Home Care Associates, Val Hetherington (centre) and Debbie Reynoldson, with client Mary Murray who lives on the Ford Estate

## Enterprising Spirit

**Anyone working in or with the voluntary sector is likely to have been tripping over a new term lately - social enterprise.** The Government's definition of a social enterprise is 'a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community (rather than being driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders or owners).' In the North East the idea is catching on fast, with social enterprises creating jobs in areas of long-term unemployment and filling gaps in local services.

A sense of local ownership is a vitally important part of successful social enterprises. Sunderland Home Care Associates (SHCA) started life as Little Women, one of the first co-operatives in the city. Established in 1976 by Margaret Elliott and six friends, the co-op's first business was managing a shop in Hendon. 'It was a bit of a community shop,' Elliott explains. 'The customers would sit and have a coffee and a chat and most of them

came to our AGMs for a knees-up. We had a seat for young mothers and older people and we sold small portions to pensioners - one egg, one rasher of bacon.' There was a nursery too and every member of the co-operative took it in turns to look after the children, serve in the shop and work behind the scenes, cleaning one day and bookkeeping the next. Everyone involved was learning new skills.

In 1980, Little Women sold the shop and took a break, although its members continued to meet and two years later they set up Little Women Homecare Services Ltd. The 'social objective' here was to provide domestic support for people who needed a home help but could not get one through the local authority. Anyone on benefit automatically qualified for an additional payment to cover the cost of the service. The business ran for three years until the additional payments came to an end, but now the company had some experience under its belt and was ready for the next opportunity. It came in 1993, in the wake of the Griffiths Report on care in the community. Sunderland Social Services advertised for local providers of home care services to meet the increasing demand and Little Women Ltd made a successful bid.

Renamed Sunderland Home Care Associates, this social enterprise has gone from strength to strength. From a starting point of 18 workers, all of whom were unemployed or parents returning to work, SHCA is now owned by its 150 employees and is providing personal care and domestic services to increasing numbers of older, frail and disabled people in Sunderland. Contracts from Social Services amount to 3,000

hours of work per week which are supplemented by work for the University of Sunderland, supporting disabled students.

'SHCA is an excellent example of a social enterprise,' says Kevin Marquis, director of Social Enterprise Sunderland (SES), formerly Sunderland Common Enterprise Resource Centre. SES helped Margaret Elliott and her colleagues to secure European funding to set up training courses in home care. Professional standards are vital to the reputation of social enterprises, argues Marquis, whose organisation offers a local support structure for social enterprises and opportunities for people living in Sunderland's 'hard pressed' communities. The Northern Rock Foundation, which is especially keen on initiatives that lead to employment, is one of SES's funders.

'Too many people see social enterprises as part of the subsidised sector and not as the businesses that they are,' says Marquis. 'Once you start thinking of them as a poor relation to the private sector, you are in trouble.' He agrees, though, that grants can be useful in areas with little infrastructure, where it can take a while for a business to get off the ground, or where an organisation is making the transition from being a subsidised voluntary sector group to a social enterprise.

This was the experience of Community Ventures Ltd in East Middlesbrough. Set up as a project, in 1989, to create jobs for people made redundant by Teesside's steel and chemical industries,

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# Enterprising Spirit

Community Ventures received funding for six years from City Challenge and the European Social Fund. Inevitably the grants came to an end and alternative ways to finance the project had to be found. 'We knew we had to adopt a more commercial approach,' recognises Chief Executive Chris Beety, 'and that meant a change in culture.' Fortunately, Community Ventures had good links with the local authority and secured contracts as a result. For Beety, as for Marquis, one of the challenges for social enterprises is being taken seriously by the people who procure the kinds of services they offer.

Community Ventures' objectives are to create employment and to increase community safety. Its business is security and it directly employs 50 people, generating more than a million pounds per year. The company monitors Middlesbrough Council's CCTV cameras, domestic alarm systems and lone security workers as far afield as Derby. It also manages a local street wardens scheme and offers training for neighbourhood wardens nationally.

Beety attributes at least part of the success of Community Ventures to the way his Board is organised. There are two parts to it – a supervisory board of community representatives

and a smaller management board of people with hands-on experience of running a business. The profits are used to improve the business and to provide local charitable services, such as training for people who are still unemployed locally, an on-line centre that is accessible to every member of the community and family projects.

There are a lot of people in the voluntary sector who are very entrepreneurial and the social enterprise model gives them the chance to use that skill

A more modest example of social enterprise is Flabagast Arts Ltd, a cooperative set up by four graduates to provide an arts services for primary schools. Flabagast has an annual turnover of about £50,000, a core team of five and a pool of 20 freelance artists who work on special projects. Spokesperson Bev Quinn admits that they can only keep going because the members are prepared to work for low wages, but Flabagast has never applied for a grant and does not intend to. Based at Washington Arts Centre, it covers an area with 800 primary schools

where few other companies appear to be offering a similar service. 'Schools are often surprised that we will travel to the middle of nowhere, but if there is a road, we'll get there,' says Quinn. 'We are providing a service that schools want and slowly but surely, the business is growing.'

There are currently eight organisations offering support to social enterprises in different parts of the North East. In March this year they got together to set up the North East Social Enterprise Partnership (NESEP), which has recently published its first action plan. 'The exciting thing about social enterprises,' says NESEP's coordinator, Keith Richardson, 'is the change of culture that is taking place. There are a lot of people in the voluntary sector who are very entrepreneurial and the social enterprise model gives them the chance to use that skill.' The focus on social objectives rather than making the largest possible profit in the shortest possible time also means that social enterprises are going where the private sector fears to tread. 'They are often trailblazers,' ventures Richardson, 'developing new markets where perhaps a private business wouldn't take the risk.'

## Further information

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Margaret Elliott  
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**Community Ventures Ltd**  
Chris Beety  
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**Flabagast Arts Ltd**  
Bev Quinn  
0191 419 3336

**NESEP**  
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Keith Richardson  
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**New social enterprises may benefit from the creation of a new type of company being proposed by the Government – the Community Interest Company.**

**The next issue of Rock Reports will include an update on the proposal.**



'Greeks' performed with the help of Flabagast Arts Ltd.

## Do you need a meeting room?

Readers will know that we have moved to a new building in which, at last, we have meeting rooms. There are two small rooms that can take about six people and a Board room that can seat 20 around a table. All three rooms are accessible to wheelchair users. Our Trustees hate the idea of useful spaces lying empty when we are not using them ourselves. So, if you are a current or previous grant holder, a CVS or a fellow grant maker and you need a room for a meeting in Gosforth, we might be able to help. There will be no charge, but we do ask people to be considerate about noise and coffee breaks, since the rooms are next to the office space.

**If you would like to use a room please call us to check availability. 0191 284 8412**



Photograph © Allan Glenwright



Steve Palmer, Manager of Saltwell Park, Gateshead with one of the old park benches which have been refurbished by young offenders at HMPs Castington and Acklington

# Researching Criminal Justice

**Grant-making trusts may not be the largest funders of research in the public and voluntary sectors (academic research councils and government departments are way ahead) but they do have a well earned reputation for investing in ground-breaking research projects that change the way we work.**

Two years ago, the Trustees of the Northern Rock Foundation began to talk about what they could do to improve the quality of life of people experiencing domestic violence. While recognising the vitally important work undertaken by women's refuges, they were keen to find a way to do something that would be of long-term benefit and that nobody else was doing.

'We didn't have any expertise in this area,' explains the Foundation's Director Fiona Ellis, 'so we decided to ask other people what they thought we should be doing.' An exploratory meeting involving Government Office North East, the Crown Prosecution Service, the police, and professionals involved in running refuges came up with a recommendation the Trustees liked. 'They told us that what was really needed was some serious research into rates of attrition in domestic violence cases. Only one in five incidents is reported and very few offenders receive a custodial sentence. The question was, why is this? When we asked who might help us find some answers, we were told that one of the best research units in the country was just around the corner at the University of Sunderland.'

In December 2000, the research contract was awarded to Professors Marianne Hester and Jalna Hanmer at the University's International Centre for the Study of Violence and Abuse. While men do suffer domestic violence, the majority of victims are women and they were therefore the focus of the research. The findings were published in May and have been warmly welcomed by the Home Office.

The research team looked at domestic violence incidents taking place, in three separate months, in three locations in the Northumbria Police Force area. Of almost 900 incidents reported, almost 300 were

arrestable offences, 37 resulted in a conviction and four of the offenders were given a custodial sentence. Arrests are more common now than they were, but there is still no such offence as 'domestic violence'.

'One of the surprises is the way in which offenders go on and on,' says Ellis 'and where someone is fined rather than imprisoned, the level of fine can be almost meaningless.' The government has recently promised a domestic violence register for offenders who receive a prison sentence of six months or more and this will enable the police, social services and the health service to identify potential offenders and their victims.

The researchers' recommendations include the introduction of a specific offence of domestic violence; increased efforts to collect photographic evidence of an incident; a more systematic approach to repeat offenders; and a closer partnership between the criminal justice system, health, social services and other agencies dealing with chronic offenders and vulnerable witnesses. As **Rock Reports** went to press, a conference was being planned for the end of June to share the findings of the research more widely.

## Inside Out in Gateshead

The restorative justice research project being run by the International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS) at King's College London and the Inside Out Trust was the subject of an article in **Rock Reports** Issue 2. Funded by the Foundation, the ICPS and the Inside Out Trust are looking at the impact on prisoners of working on projects with a public benefit in the North East.

Following a successful partnership with Middlesbrough Council, involving the restoration of Albert Park, the two organisations have announced a new project for Gateshead's Saltwell Park. With the support of Gateshead Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the park is to receive a £10 million makeover and over the next five years, prisoners at five institutions, including HM Young Offenders Institute Acklington, HMP Low Newton and HMPYOI Castington will be

contributing their skills to the project. Activities will include making bird boxes, benches and picnic tables, translating leaflets and education packs into Braille, making tactile signage and growing plants and trees for the wildlife garden. Young offenders at HMYOI Acklington will also be creating a database on which to store and analyse the results of a tree survey and there are plans to digitise the park's archives

In a presentation to a conference in February this year - **Sentencing: a postcode lottery?** - ICPS project manager Ann Mace spelled out her ambitions for restorative justice: 'The public generally have low levels of knowledge about sentencing,' she said. 'The language of the criminal justice system is often obscure and the fact is non-custodial penalties tend to receive more publicity for their failures than for their successes. This all influences the public's and victims' views and expectations of sentences... To use the jargon: there is a need to create a strong, well understood and attractive brand that builds interest in non-custodial sentences and engages public support, for example, by focusing on work which aims to install a sense of responsibility and discipline, involves putting something back, or making some reparation to victims...

Prisoners are an integral part of society; they come out into society again. Prisoners are society's responsibility and we reap a bitter harvest from the demonisation of prisons and prisoners if we allow it to persist.'

## Further information

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Fiona Ellis

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**Restorative Justice Project**  
Viv Francis  
The International Centre for Prison Studies

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# Give us our money back...

When is a grant not a grant? When it's a loan. Charity law allows grant-making trusts and foundations to lend money to an organisation, as well as making grants. For some organisations a loan can make more sense than a grant and the advantage for the Northern Rock Foundation is that when the money it lends is repaid, it can be used again.

The Foundation has made just two loans in the past five years, the largest of which was to the Centre for Life, a stone's throw from Newcastle railway station.

The Centre for Life is a new building, partly financed by the Millennium Commission. Knowing it would need to earn income to pay its bills, the Centre built some shop units, which it fully expected to let. But while visitors were flocking into the Centre, the slow-down in the retail sector meant that the shops lay empty. The Centre had taken out commercial loans of £1 million and was paying a heavy rate of interest. So, when, in 2001, it applied to the Foundation for a three-year grant to develop an education programme, it was suggested that perhaps an interest-free loan to pay off the £1 million might be more useful. The organisation has ten years to pay the money back and the option of a three-year repayment holiday. The savings on interest payments can now be ploughed back into meeting the Centre's running costs.

While the Foundation's Director, Fiona Ellis, does not expect to be making many loans, she is keen for the sector to be aware of this option. 'An organisation might need a bridging loan while waiting for a large grant from another source to come through,' she explains. 'There might be a need for some working capital to bridge the gap between spending money and earning money and there are certainly organisations - social enterprises for example - that want to get off the grants treadmill altogether, but may find it difficult to borrow from a high street bank.'

Loans, like grants, will need to reflect the Foundation's current priorities (see page 8) but requests will be considered separately and the grants budget will not be affected. The ability of an organisation to repay a loan will be independently assessed. If you think you might find a loan more useful than a grant, please contact the Foundation first to discuss it.



Photograph © Carol Bell

## New face at the Foundation

**Rob Williamson has left Newcastle City Council's social policy unit to become the Northern Rock Foundation's Assistant Director, Policy and Communications. This is a new post and for Rob, an exciting new challenge.**

His first job, on leaving university, was as a housing benefits assessor for York City Council. He quickly realised he wanted to do something more hands-on and became a project worker at a day centre for single, homeless people - the Peaseholme Centre, in York. 'A lot of what I understand about what voluntary sector organisations can do for people came from my three years there,' says Rob. 'We ended up specialising in work with 16 and 17 year olds, because there was no specialist provision for that particular age group.'

From there he moved to Newcastle to help to set up the Outpost Housing Project, which provides supported accommodation for 16 - 25 year olds who are or think they might be lesbian or gay (Rock Reports Issue No. 2).

The next move was to Newcastle CVS, where he stayed for two years before joining the City Council's social policy unit. Here, one of his main tasks was to draft the partnership agreement - the compact - between the Council and the city's voluntary sector organisations. 'My role,' says Rob, 'was to bring the relevant people together, to agree what should be in the compact and how it would be implemented.'

One of the attractions of his job at the Foundation is the opportunity to work again in partnership with the voluntary sector. 'The voluntary sector has always been a vehicle of change,' he argues, 'particularly in the area of social disadvantage and I am very keen to see how the Foundation can contribute to this. We are not driven by statutory obligations or by public sector targets and that is a great opportunity. The Foundation can fill gaps at a very local level, but it can also think about the bigger picture and fund the voluntary sector to take risks. That's an exciting prospect.'

Mobex North East takes to the water at Tyne Green, Hexham



## Sports Report

**If there were a league table showing what type of activity receives most support from grant-making trusts, sport would come pretty near the bottom. While the National Lottery has invested millions of pounds in local sports clubs and in the training of Olympic athletes, few sports clubs have had the opportunity to become registered charities and apply for charitable funding. Until now.**

The Charity Commission has recently recognised, two new charitable activities: 'the promotion of community participation in healthy recreation by the provision of facilities for playing particular sports' and 'the advancement of physical education of young people not undergoing formal education'. What this means in practice is that community-based, amateur sports clubs that meet the Charity Commission's guidelines (which include promoting health and fitness and being open to all) are able to apply for charitable status. Many clubs will prefer to stay as they are, relying on membership fees and takings at the bar for their income but, for others, this change in the rules presents a significant opportunity to raise funds.

The Foundation is interested in organisations that are using sport and other kinds of physical activity to promote physical and mental health and well being. More of us watch sport than do it, which is one of the reasons why the number of obese adults in Britain has trebled in the past 20 years. Schools continue to sell off playing fields to raise money; young children are spending more time sitting down than running about, and teenagers with no opportunity or interest in sport are finding other, sometimes destructive, ways to burn off their energy.

The Foundation's investment in sport to date has been modest, focusing mainly on healthy living activities for older people. An exception was a small grant to Tonbridge United Football Club to develop its work with children and teenagers on the Meadow Well estate in North Shields. A

more substantial grant was awarded to Newcastle-based Mobex North East, which uses outdoor pursuits to help young people to develop their potential.

The Mobex approach was developed by Brian Ware, the Director of an outdoor pursuits centre in the Lake District in the 1980s. By that time, most of Britain's more remote areas could boast at least one such centre. Local education authorities, youth and probation services would bring groups for a week or two to cave, climb and canoe. 'The weakness,' explains John Hebborn, Project Director of Mobex North East, 'was that there was no follow up. It was a single hit and the young people would lose what they had learned very fast. Then, Brian went to Australia and discovered a different approach. There they had units - a vehicle with workers, who would get to know the young people in their city environment and then take them on a wilderness experience. When they came back to the city, the work would continue.'

'From the beginning, we have used outdoor activities as a tool,' says Hebborn. 'We take a holistic approach, offering experiences that will influence a young person's physical, intellectual and emotional development. We work with young people who, for whatever reason, have switched off from learning and it has become easy for them to see themselves as failures.' So what does taking them canoeing achieve? First, it gets them out of the school environment. Second, it's a way of getting back into learning. 'For example,' says Hebborn, 'canoeing skills are graded using a system of star awards. After a day or two we might ask someone if they would like to work towards a star award. If they say yes they are immediately back into a pattern of learning and we can say "look, you can learn".'

The physical side is also important. Young people on probation are regular Mobex clients. They have few educational qualifications and

low aspirations for the future. 'The offending cycle is very exciting for someone in that situation,' Hebborn points out. 'We have found that the physical activity of climbing several peaks in a day can give them the same kind of buzz.' That is something they learn.

Applications involving charitable sports activities can now be made under two Northern Rock Foundation Programmes: Prevention and Aspiration. 'We are keen to see proposals that involve people who don't normally get a chance to participate in sport, or outdoor activities,' confirms Grants Officer Sue Vaughan, 'and we are also interested in opportunities for volunteering. The bottom line is health, fitness and well being and people will have different ideas about how that might be achieved.'



Photography © Allan Glenwright

Preparing to tackle Peel Crag, Hadrian's Wall

### Further information

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Participants in the  
Durham Training Institute



# Creating Ripples

**Twelve months ago, the Northern Rock Foundation threw a stone into a pond. The stone was a training programme called the Northern Rock Foundation Training Institute and the pond was the North East's voluntary sector. In partnership with the London-based Directory of Social Change (DSC) the Foundation set out to help some 50 voluntary organisations (with an annual income of £500,000 or less) to become more sustainable.**

The Training Institute was a ten-day course organised in five blocks of two days each. Subjects included strategic planning, creating a fundraising strategy (focusing on local trusts and foundations), managing yourself and other people, financial management and marketing. It took place in four locations (Newcastle, Heddou on the Wall, Hartlepool and Durham) and involved four different groups of people. Advertised through the Foundation and the Councils for Voluntary Service, and publicised more widely by the Community Foundation and other local organisations, priority was given to applications from organisations that could guarantee that a senior member of staff and a management committee (or Board) member would attend every session. A refundable deposit of £150 helped to make this more likely.

Ruth Hutton, Project Coordinator of East End Community Health Project was impressed by the detailed description of the training that came with the initial publicity and signed up for the Newcastle Institute with management committee member Joan Harris. 'We had been funded by the Northern Rock Foundation and this looked to be very worthwhile,' Hutton explains. 'The most beneficial session was the one on increasing our profile. We do a lot of different types of work – a carers' project, the loan of equipment to disabled people, complementary therapy, drama workshops and a volunteering initiative – but we have never really promoted the fact that we deliver the activities as well as providing a base. Now we are trying to make more use of the media to get that message across. This will also help us with our fundraising – we have in the region of £250k to raise each year.'

For Hutton the Training Institute was about personal professional development as well as strengthening her organisation, and much of what she and her colleagues from the

management committee learned was converted into a training pack for use by other members of staff.

Sue Oliver, Project Manager of South Shields Shopmobility and Pearl Chrisp, Secretary to the management committee, took part in the Northumberland Institute and found it particularly helpful in developing their thinking about where the organisation needs to go next. 'We are now in our fourth year. We are doing well, but needing to look ahead,' explains Oliver. 'We have a staff of three and have just secured a substantial Community Fund grant for the next three years. When we signed up, we knew we needed to know more about how to meet targets and how to analyse what we were doing. The Training Institute delivered the goods. We have looked hard for courses like this but almost all of them seem to concentrate on funding. This was much more positive and hit a lot of targets for us.'

One participant went away with the confidence to challenge long established practices and to look for more effective ways to fulfil the charity's objectives.

The networking aspect of the Institutes has proved unexpectedly beneficial. 'There were groups that have been running much longer than us and had useful experience to share,' says Oliver. 'Nothing was out of turn: we were encouraged to share successes and failures.' Several months after the end of each Institute,

the participants got together again to reflect on what had changed in their organisations. These meetings have proved helpful in reinforcing the lessons learned. 'The networking has been a real bonus,' agrees Hutton.

The evaluation of three of the four Institutes is now complete and that showed how useful the participants found it to attend in pairs. It helped the employee and management committee member to see each other in a different light and to learn about the distinctive role that each has to play in their organisation. It also ensured that there were two people through whom the information could be fed back to colleagues. One participant commented on the fact that he and his colleague had picked up on different points that they were then able to discuss.

For everyone, the greatest challenge was in taking ten days out of the office but for most, the experience was well worth it. One of the benefits cited was the ability to 'stand back', as was the breathing space created by leaving the office for two days at a time. One participant went away with the confidence to challenge long established practices and to look for more effective ways to fulfil the charity's objectives. Others felt they had gained a much better understanding of the voluntary sector of which they are a part.

**The Directory of Social Change and the Foundation are considering re-running the Training Institute. Organisations that might like to take part should contact Anne Burleigh on 0191 284 8412.**



Sue Oliver, Project Manager at South Shields Shopmobility (standing) with customers Ethel Fenwick (left), Win Shiel and volunteer Simon Handy

Photograph © Allan Glenwright

## Able Parents

**Twenty years ago, the suggestion that learning disabled adults might choose to have a family and bring up their children independently would still have been considered radical. Today, in England, there are an estimated 250,000 people doing just that.**

Learning disabilities have different causes and effects, ranging from 'mild' or 'moderate' at one end of the spectrum to 'profound' at the other. Whatever the extent of their disability, most learning disabled people are less able to understand new or complex information or to learn new skills and they may need some support to live independently.

Becoming a parent for the first time is a challenge for most people, but for learning disabled parents, other people's assumptions about their parental skills can make their job even harder. It is

a fact that families in which one or both parents have a learning disability are much more likely to be drawn to the attention of social services. 'There may be nothing wrong at all, but someone thinks the parents are not managing and calls

social services,' explains David Walton, Family Adviser with the North East Family Adviser Service (NEFAS), run by the community support team of Mencap, which has its North East office in Gateshead. Mencap is a national charity which has branches all over the country and Walton is one of a handful of staff with responsibility for supporting learning disabled parents.

NEFAS has been funded by the Northern Rock Foundation since its inception in 1999. Set up to offer families with learning disabled members advice on education, housing, benefits and other matters, it has found itself increasingly involved in working with learning disabled parents. 'We reached the stage where we couldn't advertise NEFAS because we thought we would be overwhelmed,' Walton explains. That is why, earlier this year, Mencap applied to the Foundation for funds to set up the North East Parents Support Service (NEPSS), a dedicated service for parents who have a learning disability. The application was well timed, coming as it did at the beginning of the European Year of the Disabled. The year is designed to raise awareness of the unequal opportunities experienced by disabled people, and disability organisations throughout the UK will be enjoying a higher profile as a result of the activities funded by government and the European Commission.

Walton is already in touch with 46 families in Northumberland and Tyne and Wear and expects to be working with a similar number in

Sunderland. It is an ambitious brief, but he will not be working alone. A steering group of professionals and parents will be established to support the new service, and recruitment of volunteers has already begun.

'We are looking for between eight and ten volunteers,' says Walton. 'They will complete a 20-hour training course, accredited by the Open College Network. They will then be able to take on some of the generic work – acting as befrienders, reading through mail, helping to fill in forms, checking that families are getting the benefits they are entitled to, making sure their housing is suitable for their needs and so on.' This enhanced voluntary support will leave him free to concentrate on his role as a crisis advocate.

'Part of my role is to support parents through the child protection process,' he explains.



'Sometimes, families can be in a crisis situation. We may be contacted by a social worker or community nurse because they are concerned about a family's ability to cope and are considering whether to place the child on the "at risk" register. I will work

with the family to identify the issues and if required, support them through the process, acting as a crisis advocate in some cases and in an advisory role in others, to enable them to express their views.'

The aim of the service is to complement and supplement the role of social services' children and family teams as well as specialist learning disability teams. Walton and his team of volunteers are ideally placed to put families and professionals in touch with other organisations and services that may be able to help. Walton can offer many examples of how such a service can work for families. In one case, a child was taken to the doctor by his parents, because he had stomach pains. The doctor called the social worker, who started child protection proceedings. NEFAS established that the pains were the result of the parents not knowing enough about food hygiene. Working with a local health visitor, the problem was resolved and the boy is off the child protection register, living at home and thriving.

Walton readily admits that there are cases of abuse and neglect, just as there are in families where no one has a learning disability but, of the fourteen children whose parents have been supported by NEFAS so far, only two have been removed from the family. This is a rate well below the national average and suggests that with the kind of support that NEPSS staff and volunteers will provide, people with a learning disability can be more than able parents.

## Continuing to make an impression

**Last year's Presentation Skills course** (RR Issue No. 5) was very oversubscribed. Fortunate and quick organisations who got their application for a place in promptly told us that the course was excellent.

So we have agreed to offer it again.

The course lasts for three days. It covers planning, preparing and delivering a presentation. It will give confidence and skills to nervous presenters.

Northern Rock Foundation is offering places for only £50 but it's first come, first served.

We are delighted that The Management Centre will run the course again for us in Newcastle. So if you are free between 15 and 17 September 2003 and need to brush up on your presentation skills, please contact Anne Burleigh on **0191 284 8412**.

## NOW LOOK HERE

North East Voluntary Organisations - If you read something in this newsletter about a project or organisation similar to yours and you would like to visit it, call and talk to one of our Grants Officers. If they agree that a visit would be useful, we'll contribute towards your travel costs.

**Visit and Learn Scheme  
Tel: 0191 284 8412**

### Further information

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# Grant Programmes

The primary objective of the Northern Rock Foundation is to help improve the conditions of those disadvantaged in society. It supports causes in Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Teesside.

The Northern Rock Foundation is an independent grant-making organisation. We were formed in 1997, when the Northern Rock Building Society converted to a plc, to recognise the commitment of Northern Rock to the community from which it draws its strength.

## Who will we support?

To apply you should be a properly constituted organisation. You do not have to be a registered charity but the purpose for which you are applying must be charitable. We want to support projects which directly and clearly fulfil one of the following six programmes.

## Prevention

Prevention of local and regional social decline - actions which stop social problems from developing or worsening.

## Regeneration

Regeneration - local initiatives which improve the economic prospects of an area or a community of interest.

## Basics

Basic day-to-day services.

Not every project has to be about changing circumstances: sometimes people just need more of what services or help they are already receiving. We want to help organisations that offer high quality services and assistance to people over and above what statutory authorities provide.

## Exploration

Exploration and experiment - researching, trying out, thinking, finding new ideas or ways to address social problems.

## Better Sector

A better, strong voluntary sector - making the sector more capable of helping itself and others, articulating its needs and fighting its corner.

## Aspiration

Aspiration - assistance to cultural, environmental, heritage and sporting charities which raise the profile of our area and make it a better place in which to live and enjoy life.

## How to apply

If you would like to speak to someone, you can contact the Foundation on 0191 284 8412, or to get an application pack, simply complete and return this form free to: The Northern Rock Foundation, FREEPOST NEA 8299, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1BR.

If you would like an application pack emailed to you please contact us at: [generaloffice@nr-foundation.org.uk](mailto:generaloffice@nr-foundation.org.uk).

You can also view our grant information and download an application form from our website: <http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk>.



Photograph © Carol Bell

# Writer's Award

The second Northern Rock Foundation Writer's Award has been won by novelist, poet and playwright Julia Darling. The prize, worth £20,000 per year for three years, is now the largest in the UK for writers. Until now it has been awarded to writers living and working exclusively in the North East. In 2004 writers in Cumbria will also be eligible to apply.

Darling, a resident of Newcastle for the past twenty years, is currently writer in residence at Live Theatre and an associate fellow at the University of Newcastle. She also spends time travelling round the country giving readings and working on projects, often with other artists.

Recognising that many writers have to supplement their income with other jobs, the Foundation established the Writer's Award to give writers with demonstrable talent the time to use it. 'It's like being given a wage to be yourself... it's a kind of fantasy that never usually happens,' wrote Darling, on receiving the award.

Claire Malcolm, Director of New Writing North, the literary development agency that administers the competition for the Foundation agrees. 'There is nothing else like the Writer's Award,' she says. 'When a writer starts to become well known, there is an assumption that they must be earning a reasonable living. But that's rarely true. They have to do lots of other work to keep going - work that eats into their writing time. This Award allows a published writer to keep going at a critical point in their career. It gives them the financial freedom to concentrate on their writing.'

Application forms for the next Northern Rock Foundation Writer's Award will be available from [www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

### Further information

New Writing North

Tel: 0191 232 9991

[www.newwritingnorth.com](http://www.newwritingnorth.com)

To receive a new application pack, complete and return this form to: **The Northern Rock Foundation, FREEPOST NEA 8299, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1BR**

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Other ..... Name .....

Organisation .....

Address .....

.....

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Postcode ..... Tel. ....

I am planning to apply for:

A grant under £15,000 ..... ☐

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## Rock Reports

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