



A wide range of clothing is available at Washington Asylum Seekers Project

home from home

Refugees and asylum seekers don't get the best press, but in the North East an energetic group of voluntary sector organisations is earning the region a national reputation for the warmth of its welcome.

Stop ten people in the street and ask them how many of the world's asylum seekers apply to enter Britain each year and most will say 'about 25%'. The real figure is ten times less than this, yet the national press still runs stories about the 'hordes' of 'illegal immigrants' who are 'swamping' the country and criticises any funder that offers a grant to refugee or asylum seeker group.

The first thing to do is to sort out the vocabulary. A refugee is someone who has been granted the right to live in Britain. An asylum seeker is someone who has applied to the Home Office for that right and is awaiting a decision. An illegal immigrant is someone who comes into the country and stays here without permission.

The North East has always welcomed individuals and families fleeing war or persecution in their home countries, but it was not until the early 1980s that any single group arrived in large numbers. At the end of the Vietnam War, two million people left Vietnam (mostly by boat) seeking refuge in any country that would take them. Britain was one of their destinations and a small number of 'boat people' came to the North East. In the years that followed, there was a steady trickle of new arrivals until, in 1999, the Government announced the introduction of a system of 'dispersal'.

During the 1980s and 90s, conflicts across the world (in Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq and Rwanda, among other places) had meant a sharp increase in the number of people seeking asylum. In Britain the main points of arrival are the ports and airports in the South East, which was already overcrowded. The aim of the dispersal policy was to distribute asylum seekers around the

country, and by May 2003 the North East was finding homes for up to 6,000 people a year. So how did the region respond?

One of the myths about refugees and asylum seekers is that the Government gives them everything they need. While there are basic benefits that can be claimed, in the North East most of the day to day practical support is provided by local voluntary sector organisations. 'What new arrivals need, above all,' says Daoud Zaaroura, Chief Executive of the North of England Refugee Service, 'is information. They need information about what their rights are but they also need to know about the place they have come to. What are the codes of behaviour? How do people earn a living here? How do you register with a GP? The best people to answer these kinds of questions are local people, which is why the voluntary groups are so important.'

The North of England Refugee Service was one of the first groups in the region to offer such services, starting life in 1989 with one desk in Gateshead's Citizens' Advice Bureau. It now has offices in Newcastle, Sunderland, Wallsend and Middlesbrough and a small team of paid staff and volunteers, supporting asylum seekers and refugees who want to settle in the area.

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home from home

At the last count NERS was working with people from 97 different countries speaking more than 30 languages.

The way the dispersal system works is that people who speak the same language should be able to live near each other. In Washington, Tyne and Wear, there are 53 houses or flats reserved for asylum seekers and refugees. A few years ago most were from Sri Lanka, Iraq and Iran. Today the largest groups are from Angola and Zimbabwe. As soon as a family is housed, they are asked if they would like to meet someone from the Washington Asylum Seekers Project (WASP), an initiative of the local churches run by more than 30 volunteers. If the answer is yes, WASP volunteers will call round to say hello and to deliver a welcome pack of basic foodstuffs. They will offer to accompany family members to register with the local GP and to show them the area and how to get around. Last July WASP made a successful application to the Northern Rock Foundation for a grant to pay the salary of a full-time administrator and volunteer coordinator. 'It will make a big difference to have someone here full time,' says Andrew Hoseason, a volunteer advice worker. 'There is such a lot of work to do. It has been taking up to four years for asylum seekers to get an answer from the Home Office and although newer cases are being dealt with faster, people need a lot of support through the process.'

Down in Houghton-le-Spring, on the border between Sunderland and Durham, the Houghton Racecourse Community Association has used a grant from the Foundation to set up a state of the art IT facility known as the Access

Point. It is free to everyone in this former coalfield area and is being enthusiastically used by asylum seekers and refugees. 'We have people here from all over the world,' says IT project worker Vince Woodhead, 'Russia, Estonia, Iran, Chad, the Congo. We teach IT courses and some people use the equipment as part of their English language training.' Access to email and the internet is giving people unprecedented opportunities to keep in touch with what is going on in their home country. They can listen to news programmes and read newspapers in their own language and they can email friends and family.'

The Community Association was founded in 1997 and moved into the centre (two council houses knocked together) in June 2000. 'Local people have been involved since the very beginning,' explains volunteer coordinator Anne Ramshaw. 'We have about 20 refugee or asylum seeker families on the estate and they have fitted in well. We have been really very lucky. Everyone knew that families would be coming here, and so we did a lot of work on some of the myths about asylum seekers and refugees. The community was well prepared and that meant that when the first people arrived, they were welcomed.'

This sense of feeling welcome is not unique to Houghton-le-Spring. In Washington, Andrew Hoseason has noticed that when people are granted the right to stay, they often choose to remain in the area. 'It might be partly because of the facilities and services we have to offer,' he says, 'but I think it has more to do with the people. We do have a reputation for being friendly.'

Daoud Zaaroura agrees. 'We have asked people why they want to stay in the North East and they always talk about the friendly faces and friendly communities.' It is as a direct result of the number of refugees deciding to stay, that the North East has given birth to the country's first forum of community organisations led by refugees. The Regional Refugee Forum North East was formed in 2001. Its members all represent particular groups: people who speak the same language or come from the same country, young people, women and so on. The aim of the forum is to hear and articulate the collective voice of the refugee community in the North East. The Home Office has been so impressed by the Forum's effectiveness that it has asked Forum representatives to sit on a Home Office working group.

But is everything really this rosy? No, says Zaaroura. 'There are incidents from time to time and there are extreme views we have to counter. There are times of crisis too.' In January, the Home Secretary announced that if people did not claim asylum the moment they arrived, or very shortly afterwards, they would forfeit the right for their case to be considered and all financial support would be withdrawn. 'These are the hardest situations,' says Zaaroura. 'We have had stories of people sleeping on the streets, in cemeteries, even in telephone boxes, because they have nowhere else to go.' But those moments are short-lived and the quality of life for refugees and asylum seekers in the North East is better than in many other places. 'There are still caring communities in this part of the country,' says Zaaroura. 'People ask how you are. That's what makes the difference.'

Photograph © Allan Glenwright



GCSE maths tuition is one of the opportunities on offer at the Westgate Road Iranian Centre

Further information

**North of England Refugee Service
Head Office
2 Jesmond Road West
Newcastle Upon Tyne NE2 4PQ
Tel: 0191 245 7311
Fax: 0191 245 7320
Email: info@refugee.org.uk**

The NERS will provide contact details for all other refugee and asylum seeker projects in the North East.



more grants for cumbria

The Northern Rock Foundation attracts most attention for its work in the North East, but in neighbouring Cumbria a growing number of organisations are making successful applications for funding. Rock Reports went to find out more.

Cumbria may be one of the most sparsely populated counties in England, but the voluntary sector is alive and well here. While the Lake District National Park attracts millions of visitors a year, volunteers are working year round and throughout the county to improve the quality of life of local people.

Earlier this year, the West Cumbria branch of the Alzheimer's Society made a successful application to the Northern Rock Foundation for a grant to cover the salaries of two of its workers for two years. The Alzheimer's Society is a national organisation, set up in 1979 by two women whose husbands were suffering from dementia. There are more than 100 different types of dementia of which Alzheimer's is the most common.

Based in an office in the Workington Infirmary, the West Cumbria branch is one of 250 in the UK. There are three others in Cumbria, in Carlisle, Furness and Penrith. The West Cumbria team is six strong and provides a mixture of advice, information and practical support for people with dementia and their carers and for the professionals in health and social services. 'We cover a huge area,' explains branch manager Helen Casson. 'We are working with about 1500 people with dementia and their carers over an area of 1700 square miles. We go as far as Wigton in the North and Millom in the South.'

The office is open five days a week. It runs a helpline, does home visits, organises courses, holds a monthly drop-in session at the Infirmary and works with carers' support groups in Cockermouth, Whitehaven, Seascale, Millom and Wigton/Maryport. Social events are a vital part of the picture too and if anyone has difficulty attending meetings or events because of lack of transport, the branch will try to help out.

'Carers' issues are at the heart of what we do,' Casson explains. 'We set up our Carers' Support Service in 2000 and since then, referrals have snowballed.' Working with the carers, Casson and her colleagues have identified a need for

more services for younger people with dementia. 'Dementia is associated very much with elderly people,' she explains, 'but one in 20 people who have it is under 65. We are used to younger carers looking after older relatives but we mustn't forget the older people who are looking after somebody younger. They need support too.'

Carers are among the hundreds of volunteers who raise funds for the West Cumbria branch each year. 'Our volunteers are constantly fundraising,' explains Casson. 'Sponsored walks, raffles, stalls at the country shows, street collections, you name it.' Until the Northern Rock Foundation awarded its grant this year, the branch manager's salary was being paid from a legacy. 'We are always having to plan ahead,' says Casson. 'We have a grant from the Community Fund which runs out in December 2004, which we have to replace. We are now receiving some money from social services and from the Eden Valley Primary Care Trust, which takes the lead in commissioning mental health services in Cumbria, so that's a positive development. We are not as popular as some other charities and we do need to keep raising awareness of the work that we do and of what it costs to run a fairly labour intensive service.'

The next challenge is to find new premises. The Workington Infirmary is closing down and the West Cumbria branch is looking for physically accessible offices for six people, preferably with a meeting room, in the centre of Workington. Anyone with any ideas should contact Helen Casson at the telephone number below.

Further information

West Cumbria Alzheimer's Society
Workington Infirmary
Infirmary Road
Workington CA14 2UN
Tel: 01900 607280

Lake District Summer Music
92 Stricklandgate
Kendal LA9 4PU
Tel: 08456 442144



GAMBLESBY COMMUNITY CENTRE

In the Eden Valley, ten miles from Penrith, the village of Gamblesby is refurbishing its community centre with the help of an £11,000 grant from the Foundation's Prevention programme. This is the only community facility in the village. The pub, shop and post office have all closed. The former Victorian school building was used by the playgroup, the Women's Institute, a bingo club, lunches for older residents and fairs until it had to close during the Foot and Mouth outbreak and fell further into disrepair. The newly refurbished building will use environmentally sustainable materials, be properly insulated and have underfloor heating.



LAKE DISTRICT SUMMER MUSIC

Lake District Summer Music is one of Cumbria's longest established arts festivals. Based in Kendal, it runs a summer school in Ambleside and promotes concerts (mainly classical music) in churches, community centres, school halls and theatres all over the county. This year musicians played in 16 different venues during the space of two weeks. Run until now by one full-time employee, LDSM applied to the Foundation's Aspiration programme and received a grant of £68,000 over two years, enabling it to take on more staff and expand its programme.

HMS Trincomalee with its proposed museum and visitor centre on the horizon

building for the future

What do a colliery, an indoor cricket pitch, two theatres, a museum, a garden and an eighteenth-century battleship have in common? Buildings to inspire and delight – or they soon will have, as a result of their successful bids to the Northern Rock Foundation's funding programme of the same name.

The idea behind the programme is to give organisations with architecturally ambitious plans the extra boost they need to realise their plans. The result will be better arts, heritage, sporting and environmental facilities across the North East, with the added bonus that striking and unusual buildings are likely to attract more visitors, who will spend money in local shops, pubs, cafés and other businesses while they are here.

Some of the winners are planning new buildings; others are going to be improving what they already have. At Woodhorn Colliery in Ashington, they are doing a bit of both. 'Some of the buildings are in desperate need of restoration,' explains Nicolas Baumfield, Cultural Services Manager for Wansbeck District Council. 'Some are scheduled ancient monuments and there is nothing else like them in the country. We want to build a museum that will attract visitors for generations to come. At the same time, Northumberland County Council is looking to relocate the County Records Office and so we are designing one building to serve both needs.' The new facility is being funded by a combination of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the District and County Councils and the

Northumberland Strategic Partnership, as well as the Northern Rock Foundation.

The proposal from Edinburgh-based architects RMJM (pictured above right) has been well received. 'They have taken the idea of a coal scuttle and used it as a design for the front,' Baumfield explains. 'There aren't any contemporary buildings in this part of Northumberland at all. We haven't even got any castles, so this is going to be our landmark. We wanted an inspiring building and we've got it.'

"We haven't even got any castles, so this is going to be our landmark"

Chester-le-Street's Riverside Cricket Academy which opens for business in 2005



In Chester-le Street, the Youth Development Trust is using its award to build the Riverside Cricket Academy, a world-class indoor cricket facility (left). 'It's for the whole of the old County of Durham – the cricket county,' explains Ian Simon, Leisure Services Manager for Chester-le-Street District Council and a director of the Youth Development Trust. 'The idea has been around for three or four years, but we have never had the means to realise it.' The building will be an extension of the existing changing rooms for the neighbouring outdoor sports facilities owned by the District Council. Construction starts in November and the facility will open to schools, colleges and clubs at the start of the 2005 season. The other funders are Sport England and the District and County Councils.

A new public space and County Records Office at Woodhorn Colliery



Newcastle Theatre Royal is working on an extension too. This grand Victorian Theatre in the centre of Newcastle is surprisingly cramped behind the scenes and its access for disabled visitors and staff is not up to modern standards. The plan is to expand into the old Barclays Bank building next door, to create an accessible public space with a new box office, and to increase the available wing space at the side of the stage. At the moment, touring companies quite often have to adapt their sets just to get them on stage. With the new extension, they will be able to put on exactly the same show in Newcastle as they do elsewhere.

In Hartlepool, the Trincomalee Trust's winning project is a museum and visitor centre designed to do justice to the oldest warship afloat in Britain today. Built of teak in Bombay in 1817, HMS Trincomalee spent part of her working life on anti-slave trade patrols in the West Indies. In 1862, she came to Hartlepool as a training ship where she stayed for 15 years before being sent down to Southampton. More than 100 years later, by then in the care of the World Ship Trust, the Trincomalee was brought

back to Hartlepool on a submersible barge to begin the next phase in her life. It took just over 11 years, 750,000 hours of skilled labour and £10.5m to restore the boat to her former glory.

As well as welcoming thousands of visitors a year, the Trincomalee is regularly hired for weddings and other functions (in the Captain's cabin) and is proving very popular with film makers. The HMS Trincomalee Trust applied for a grant from the Buildings to Inspire and Delight programme to build a shoreside museum and visitor centre on Hartlepool Historic Quay. This will include a fixed jetty from the centre to the ship to replace the current wobbly gangway.

Gangways, of a sort, are one of the features of another of the winning proposals – the world's biggest treehouse in the gardens at Alnwick Castle. The tree house will be reached by fixed walkways and rope bridges and will be used for educational projects as well as adventure. The Foundation has so far spent £2.3m on this programme which, in the great scheme of

The Bowes Museum, at Barnard Castle, has received £500,000 for the restoration of its Grade 1 listed building



building projects may not seem a lot. Nicholas Baumfield sees it another way. 'When you are raising funds for capital projects,' he says, 'everyone looks to everyone else to be the first person to put in their money. The early commitment from the Foundation has made a huge difference to our ability to lever money from other sources. It came up with the grant just when we needed it.'

'We're very excited by what we've been able to fund from Buildings to Inspire and Delight,' says the Northern Rock Foundation's Director, Fiona Ellis. 'There is no shortage of imaginative projects out there. Our Trustees have now agreed a £2 million cultural capital programme for 2004 with a further commitment in 2005. We're looking for similarly ambitious projects but this time we will be taking a closer look at what goes on inside the buildings.'

There will be no deadline for applications in 2004, but potential applicants **must** speak to a grants officer first.

For sports and environment projects call Sue Vaughan on 0191 284 8412 or email svaughan@nr-foundation.org.uk

For arts and heritage projects call Carol Bell on 0191 284 8412 or email cbell@nr-foundation.org.uk

The 2003 winners

- **The Alnwick Garden**
Rachel Johnston
01665 511352
- **The Bowes Museum**
Rachel Scott
01833 694 600
- **Chester-le-Street**
Riverside Cricket Academy
Ian Simon
0191 389 0986
- **Woodhorn Colliery Museum**
Colin Mitchell
01670 843443
- **HMS Trincomalee Trust**
Bryn Hughes
01429 223193
- **Newcastle Playhouse**
Chris Collett
0191 245 0501
- **Theatre Royal, Newcastle**
Greg Miller
0191 232 0997



Teentalk participant Emma Dowson arrives home from hospital with baby Shannon

women's voices

'We talk about empowerment a lot, don't we?' admits Dawn Phillips, 'but I can honestly say that, in this case, these young women have been empowered.'

The 'case' Phillips is talking about is Teentalk, a peer education project about teenage parenthood run by Easington Public Health and Health Development, where she is project coordinator. Since January 2001, Teentalk has provided hundreds of secondary school pupils and youth club members (mostly aged 14 or older) with the opportunity to find out what it is like to be a teenage parent. The power of this project is that the people passing on the information are teenage parents themselves. Another of Teentalk's aims is to promote positive attitudes to sexual health and to ensure that young people know where to go for advice and support if they need it.

Teentalk members usually work in pairs and their audience has the opportunity to meet them twice. The first session, which lasts about two hours, involves the whole class. The teenage mothers talk about what it felt like to find out they were pregnant, telling their parents, coping with the pregnancy, giving birth and then getting used to the routine of living with a baby. They talk about the prejudices of some health care professionals towards single, teenage mothers, about the extent of the father's involvement and the realisation that they are no longer able to go out with their friends in the evenings.

There are positive aspects too, but no one hearing these talks is left in any doubt about how difficult being a teenage parent can be. The follow-up sessions are with much smaller groups in which the participants are more likely to ask and answer questions. It is an opportunity to deal with some of the fears and myths surrounding pregnancy ('Is it true that you won't get pregnant so long as you have a bath after sex?') and to tell some home truths about sexually transmitted diseases.

Teentalk was well underway when Dawn Phillips took a call from Amber Films, a Newcastle-based arts company that runs community-based film and photography projects. 'Amber asked if we might have a use for a video project,' Phillips recalled. 'I snapped their hand off!' The members of Teentalk felt that none of the videos they had been shown about becoming a parent were much good. 'One was a drama and was a bit dated. Another was very depressing. These young women now had the chance to make a video that would tell their stories their way.'

"No-one is left in any doubt about how difficult being a teenage parent can be"

The result of this collaboration between Amber Films, Easington Public Health and Health Development and a group of about eight young women, their babies and in some cases their partners is **We Did It Together, So Why Do I Feel So Alone?** Four young mothers are filmed talking about their experience of parenthood. They talk about how their friends stopped

calling, about the area in which they live (where a flat is easier to find because it is 'hard to let') and about the ambitions they have given up. 'There is nothing in that film that the young women didn't approve first,' says Phillips. 'If they didn't like it, it didn't go in. There were plenty of rows but in the end they were in control. It is their work.'

Amber Films' Graeme Rigby agrees. 'It was interesting the way the project developed,' he reflects. 'Some of the original Teentalk members chose to be producers rather than presenters. They knew exactly what message they wanted to get across.' The video is of a very high quality and an education pack is now being produced so that the whole package can be sold to professionals working with teenage parents and young people who might find themselves in the same position.

From its base in Newcastle, Open Clasp Theatre Company is using a different medium to tell women's stories. Set up in 1998 by a group of five students in their final year at Northumbria University, the company writes and performs plays based on the experiences, ideas and opinions of women and girls who take part in their theatre workshops. It works like this. Open Clasp's resident writer, Catrina McHugh, suggests a storyline to be explored by different groups of women and girls. Each group meets several times and may decide to pursue the original storyline or to suggest one of their own. The participants develop their ideas to a point at which McHugh can take them away and start work on a script. A few weeks later, a rough version of the script comes back to the group, which is asked if the story is being told in a way that seems true to them. It then goes through a further phase of refinement, before the company of professional actors begins rehearsals.

While the subject matter often reflects the difficult lives that many women lead, Open Clasp has a well earned reputation for its sense of humour. 'This is the funniest, most heart-breaking reality check I've witnessed in eons,'



Jade and Shannon, photographed by their mother as part of the Teentalk project



wrote one critic of the company's production **Falling Knives and Runaround Wives**. 'Their strength is that they make realism entertaining and accessible, allowing us to peek into a world we know little about or one we know only too well - and give some the strength to make changes,' wrote another.

'The reason the productions work,' says Kathryn Mace, the company's artistic community development manager, is that it is the women who come up with the characters and the stories. The characters reflect what life is like for the women we meet and although there are colloquialisms that might not mean much outside the North East, the stories and the humour are universal.' The company proved this point last year when it toured **Falling Knives and Runaround Wives** to new audiences in Scotland, Leeds, Manchester and Cumbria.

Open Clasp has earned its following by specialising in an area of work for which there is growing demand. Many of the company's early contacts came through the Regional

Women and Girls' Network but it now receives a steady stream of requests for playwriting workshops and one-off sessions from a wide range of organisations including family health projects, refugee and asylum seekers' services, and groups concerned with particular issues, such as drug and alcohol abuse, homophobia, teenage parenthood, the care system and domestic violence.

"The characters in the plays reflect what life is like for the women we meet"

The Northern Rock Foundation was an early supporter and last year awarded Open Clasp a three-year grant towards its core costs. 'We didn't know anything about fundraising when we started,' Mace admits, 'but someone from the Foundation came to our showcase at Live Theatre in Newcastle and liked the work.'

Left and below, scenes from Open Clasp's **Falling Knives and Runaround Wives**

We applied for our first grant in 1999 and got it. Then other funders, including Northern Arts, as it was then, Newcastle City Council and the Community Fund followed suit.' The company has also secured work through government funding schemes (Quality Projects and Sure Start) to work with children and young people, including girls and young women living in care. As a result, Mace and McHugh are now salaried members of staff and during production periods, the company can grow to as many as fifteen.

'As long as there is a need there, so are we,' says Mace, confident that the demand for work that gives women and girls a voice is unlikely to diminish. The next step is to appoint an administrator and to move to fully accessible offices at West End Women and Girls Centre.

Further information

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Teentalk Project Coordinator
Easington Public Health and
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Graeme Rigby
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5 The Side
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 3JE
Tel: 0191 232 2000

Open Clasp Theatre Company
5 Charlotte Square
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4XE
Tel: 0191 230 1698
Email: openclasp@tinyworld.co.uk

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



Photograph © Leanne Bell

IPPR comes north

The Institute for Public Policy Research, an independent think tank, has opened an office in Newcastle, with support from the Northern Rock Foundation. The IPPR undertakes research with a view to influencing public policy and ultimately to creating a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable society. So why has the think-tank come to the North East?

'This is the poorest region in the UK,' says IPPR North's Research Director John Adams. 'The economy is the worst performing and the levels of sickness and disability are the highest. As an organisation with a focus on social justice and equity, we are concerned by that and interested in what the solutions might be.'

According to Adams, too many public and voluntary sector initiatives (country wide, not just in the North East) are based on fashion and political decisions rather than sound research. Following a six-month consultation process, funded by the Millfield House Foundation, he is certain that there is a role

for the IPPR in producing more reliable evidence for the region's decision makers. The Northern Rock Foundation's Assistant Director, Policy and Communications, Rob Williamson, sees the establishment of IPPR North as a great opportunity. 'They will provide that vital link between academic research and practitioners,' he explains. 'There is a lot of valuable work going on in the universities, but the IPPR will add to that by linking more directly to what's happening on the ground. The region may have a lot of problems,' Williamson acknowledges, 'but it is also coming up with some of the most interesting solutions. This project is about learning but it is also about sharing what we know.'

The research programme will be supported by seminars and other events for policy makers, voluntary sector organisations and anyone else who is interested. For more information about IPPR North, contact John Adams on 020 7470 0033 or Rob Williamson on 0191 284 8412 or go to www.ippr.org.uk/north

tax rebates

The Inland Revenue Charities Division has announced a new scheme that will come into effect from April 2004.

The scheme will allow tax payers who complete self assessment forms to give any tax rebate they may receive to a charity of their choice. Many people are now paying 40% tax and some of them may be your regular donors or people who take an interest in your work. If they are eligible for a tax rebate, they may well want to sign it over to you.

The tax payer simply has to tick a box on the self assessment tax form and naming the charity to which the rebate should be donated. The only condition is that the charity must have registered with the Inland Revenue to take part in this scheme and the deadline was 30th September. But do not despair. We believe that the scheme will grow in future years and that charities will have another opportunity to register. The Inland Revenue repaid around £3 billion to self assessment tax payers last year. Wouldn't you like some of that?

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.

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

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

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