



# **Northern Rock Foundation** 2007–2013 Review

**Our contribution and  
achievements in the  
North East and Cumbria**

Northern Rock Foundation is an independent charity which aims to tackle disadvantage and improve quality of life in the North East and Cumbria. The Foundation gives grants to organisations which help people who are vulnerable, disadvantaged, homeless, living in poverty or are victims of crime or discrimination. We also carry out research, commission training programmes and gather and share learning from the activities we fund. Where appropriate we seek to inform and influence wider regional and national policies and practice.



## Chairman's Introduction

**The establishment of Northern Rock Foundation in 1997 was a unique act of corporate philanthropy which, by December 2013, had resulted in over 4,200 grants totalling £215 million.**

After 17 years of grant making Northern Rock Foundation will close its current grant programmes at the end of 2014. Despite Trustees' extensive efforts and discussions with Virgin Money, other businesses, charitable funders and the government, to find a viable solution to future funding for the Foundation, this has not been possible. Whilst the Trustees remain open to any viable option, it is with deep regret that we must begin to prepare for the Foundation's now likely eventual closure. The remaining funds will be used to achieve positive long-term impact on the lives of children and young people in the region and also to support the development and sustainability of voluntary organisations.

This Review summarises the Foundation's work over the last seven years, highlighting the organisations and social issues we have promoted and supported. We know that social needs remain acute and indeed are rising, but we believe that our work has helped to strengthen the voluntary and community sector and build their skills and capacity to continue to tackle disadvantage and improve quality of life in the North East and Cumbria.

Northern Rock Foundation has always been focused principally on the North East and Cumbria and responsive to its needs. Over the past year we have worked closely with several national funders to develop their links with the region to help to sustain charitable support for the voluntary sector in future. We are pleased that our ambition to provide a long-term legacy with part of the Foundation's

remaining funds through the creation of a social investment fund for the North East will be fulfilled, in partnership with Big Society Capital and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and the newly established North East Social Investment Community Interest Company.

Northern Rock Foundation has been an exceptional initiative in corporate and charitable giving. It was established as an independent charity when Northern Rock Building Society demutualised in 1997 and until 2007 was funded through a covenant whereby it received five per cent of the new bank's pre-tax profits annually – a much higher level of support than almost any other corporate organisation has given to its charitable foundation.

In the first 10 years the Foundation received £190 million from Northern Rock and by 2007 was amongst the larger grant-making trusts in England. It became known for the quality of its grant making, its willingness to experiment and innovate and also its support for less popular causes, for example help for sexually exploited adults and children. The scale of funding, but also the commitment to one geographic region, allowed the Foundation to develop long-term programmes and in-depth relationships with voluntary organisations. This way of working has been demonstrably successful in enabling voluntary organisations to grow and improve their services and has led to nationally significant advances in support for vulnerable people.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported the Foundation in its work, but particularly my fellow Trustees who have guided the Foundation wisely through turbulent times. I would also like to record my sincere thanks to the staff of the Foundation who have shown tremendous passion, commitment and professionalism in difficult circumstances.

As Chairman since 2006 I also want to pay tribute to the previous Chairmen, Founding Chairman Reay Atkinson, Richard Harbottle, and my predecessor Leo Finn, and also to the Founding Director, Fiona Ellis. Their vision and commitment created an exemplary institution, which has been a force for good and of which people across the region have been justly proud. Northern Rock Foundation was created and funded through the generosity of Northern Rock bank, but its success and achievements relied on the help of many others. We are grateful for all the support we have received from many voluntary, public and private organisations. The Foundation's aim to help the most vulnerable people in our communities will be sustained through their work in future.

**Alastair Balls**

**September 2014**

## Chief Executive's Overview

In 2006 Northern Rock Foundation was approaching the end of its first decade. In common with most generalist grant makers, the majority of the Foundation's awards had been made through open grants programmes; the Foundation identified certain priorities and organisations applied for funds. Alongside its grant making it had begun to drive policy, setting money aside to learn about the more chronic challenges facing the North East and Cumbria; it had already invested considerable resources in important work to better understand the impact of domestic violence, to reduce reoffending rates and to build capacity in the voluntary sector in the North East and Cumbria.

During 2006 the Foundation undertook a wide-ranging review of what it had achieved, what new problems had arisen and what challenges the region would face. As a result new programmes were introduced in 2007 and staff and Trustees agreed a greater focus on research and dissemination. The Foundation also made a commitment to act as an advocate on behalf of the third sector and to continue to provide leadership and management training. However, the collapse of Northern Rock in the autumn of 2007 fundamentally affected the Foundation and enforced a significant contraction of its work.

The recession that followed had a dramatic impact on the North East and Cumbria. The region saw rising levels of unemployment, particularly amongst young people, dramatic cuts to public funding and increased levels of indebtedness.

In response, the Foundation decided to refocus its grant making, remodel its grants programmes and concentrate on a smaller set of key priorities reflecting the challenges facing the North East and Cumbria and those core social needs which the Foundation had had a long-term commitment to tackling.

In 2007 the Foundation awarded £21 million to grants and commissions, and then over the six years from 2008 to 2013 it awarded £58 million. The Foundation has sought to ensure that the impact of its reduced resources has been mitigated as much as possible. Working alongside individual organisations, staff have endeavoured to support them to reduce any reliance on the Foundation's funds and engage other funders with organisations in the region to establish links for the future. In 2011 the Foundation also introduced the Fresh Ideas Fund to enable voluntary and community organisations to explore alternative models for generating income.

This Review summarises the main grant programmes that have been delivered over the last seven years and the way funding support has been directed to achieve the Foundation's aims. In 2014 Trustees are marking the end of the Foundation's current grant programmes by commissioning studies to record and review the contribution and achievements of the Foundation since its creation.

**Penny Wilkinson**

## The Grant Programmes

**Safety and Justice for Victims of Abuse** This programme grew from a need to address a “justice gap”. High levels of domestic violence and the seriousness of the crime, contrasted starkly with the low levels of support for the victim and the tiny numbers of prosecutions. Building on its growing knowledge, the Foundation recognised the patchy nature of provision for victims and the gaps that existed in the evidence base. Over the intervening five years the Foundation worked with the sector to fill these gaps, building stronger networks and introducing new ways of working. As importantly, it commissioned research and shared the learning from that research as widely as possible to ensure its findings were heard and acted upon. In more recent years this has been an increasing struggle as ever-deeper public sector cuts threaten to roll back the considerable progress that has been made.

**Enabling Independence and Choice** The Foundation brought together its work focused on those vulnerable people who receive the least support from other sources in the Enabling Independence and Choice programme. This programme supported work with older people, people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities and carers, based on the principles that everyone has a right to lead a rich and fulfilling life and to have choices about how they live. More recently, the Foundation’s work with older people has focused on supporting people with dementia and their carers in response to the large increases in the number of people with dementia that are predicted for our region. The Foundation recognised that more and better solutions will be needed to support the increasing numbers of people who will be living with dementia in future. The Foundation has funded research in the North East and a range of innovative projects, which are helping to establish our region as a leader in the provision of high-quality care and support for people with dementia and their carers.

Photo: The Women’s Service team, Sunderland Counselling Service, with Toby Sweet, Service Manager.





**Changing Lives** The Foundation recognised that there are some people who live on the margins of our society and who struggle to feel that they have a place in the community, or are able to take part in education, training or employment. Through the Changing Lives programme the Foundation funded work with young offenders and young people within the criminal justice system, and people who misuse drugs and alcohol with a focus on local community support. Work to support refugees and asylum seekers to access appropriate legal services and general support so that they could begin to settle into new lives in this country was also a priority. The Foundation has worked closely with the refugee and asylum support sector, bringing organisations together in a regional forum as well as working with national funders to recognise the needs of the sector in our region.

**Having a Home** The Foundation decided to prioritise its work on homelessness on the most disadvantaged young people to build a network of support across the North East and Cumbria.

The Foundation invested in both national and local charities that provided one-to-one support to vulnerable young people to help them maintain a home or to help them find somewhere safe and secure to live. In all cases, the organisations funded had systems in place to measure the progress people make as a result of their intervention. The Foundation also promoted improvements in quality of provision supporting training and development of staff and core-funded Youth Homelessness North East, a network body which now leads the region's strategic response to youth homelessness.

**Managing Money** A focus on financial inclusion developed from the Foundation's long history of working with Credit Unions and Community Development Finance Institutions to ensure the provision of low-cost credit in the poorest communities in the North East and Cumbria. In 2012 the Foundation commissioned the Research Unit for Financial Inclusion at Liverpool John Moores University to carry out a baseline study into the make-up of the credit union sector in the North East and Cumbria. The final report outlined the strategic options and practical actions that credit unions could take to facilitate sustainable growth and made recommendations on how to improve credit unions' performance and encourage them to work collectively. This research guided a final series of strategic awards by the Foundation to support the growth of larger sustainable credit unions across the North East and Cumbria.

Working with Citizens Advice, the Foundation also introduced an innovative programme of targeted debt advice providing a mix of face-to-face and telephone advice across the North East and Cumbria. At the end of a major investment of £3.1 million over four years the Integrated Debt Advice Project had dealt with £171 million of debt. This programme also had a broader impact, contributing to the modernisation of the Citizens Advice Bureaux service nationally.

**Supporting the Voluntary Sector** Alongside the main grant programmes, the Foundation supported the training and development needs of the voluntary sector, funding leadership and management training and governance and operational improvements. With the emphasis in recent years, from public funders in particular, on demonstrating impact and outcomes, the Foundation also supported voluntary organisations to develop evaluation and impact assessment methods and practice. These projects were a key part of the Foundation's "Funder-Plus" approach, mixing grants with training and capacity building, networking and also research. Since 2009 the Foundation has been carrying out an in-depth analysis of the state and composition of the Third Sector in the North East and Cumbria. The Third Sector Trends Study will provide an unrivalled analysis over six years of the scale, dynamics and needs of the voluntary and community and social enterprise sector in the North East and Cumbria. The final reports from this study will be published in 2015.

## Case Studies

The Foundation has given grants to provide community and voluntary organisations with funding ranging from support for core costs to the implementation of new ideas and to fill gaps in provision. It has been willing to make repeat grants and provide support over long periods of time and has also used funds to work in partnership with others and commission research studies.

## **Support for basic needs**

**The Foundation has always been prepared to fund core costs for organisations meeting basic needs, if this is what is needed to ensure support for vulnerable people is provided.**

**Free the Way** supports people who misuse drugs and alcohol in Seaham, County Durham. The organisation does have some statutory funding but it needs charitable funds to continue to provide the vital friendly drop-in that has been so helpful for people beginning to build a new life.

**ACANE** (African Community Advice North East), based in Byker, Newcastle, provides a welcoming environment for refugees and the host population, offering social activities as a way of fostering integration and cohesion. The Foundation's recurring funding has enabled ACANE to continue to provide a support service that can respond quickly and knowledgeably to the local situation.

**SixtyEightyThirty** provides support to women affected by domestic abuse in Tynedale, Northumberland. Although Tynedale is a relatively affluent area, domestic abuse is still a significant issue; year-on-year the numbers of women seeking support increases. SixtyEightyThirty is funded almost entirely by charitable trusts and foundations; the Foundation has funded the chief officer post for nine years, giving it a solid base upon which to build.

Photo: Gaby Kitoko, Development Manager, ACANE, with service users.



## Funding new ideas

**The voluntary and community sector has never been short of new ideas, but has often lacked the capacity to develop them. The Foundation has been able to support new ideas and ways to generate income or bid for contracts, by providing money, advice or expertise to explore different approaches to social change.**

**Growing Well** is an award-winning farm-based mental health organisation, based at Low Sizergh Farm near Kendal. Growing Well was just a good idea when the Foundation gave the organisation its first-ever grant in 2003. Since then it has awarded Growing Well five more grants, most recently supporting the organisation to develop its work with people with personality disorders and with people who misuse drugs and alcohol.

**Circles 2** grew out of the Foundation’s funding of a Circles of Accountability and Support programme, which provides a “circle” of four trained volunteers who support and challenge a “core member” who is a convicted child sex offender returning to the community. Barnardo’s saw an opportunity to use this model with mothers who have left abusive relationships and are struggling to reconnect with family and the wider community. The Foundation awarded Barnardo’s funding to pilot this approach; the evaluation so far is extremely positive and the model is now being tried with other groups including parents with learning disabilities and young care-leavers.

Photo: Growing Well. © Growing Well.





## Support over time

**Many of the organisations that the Foundation has supported have needed long-term funding to help them put good ideas into practice, have time to understand the results of the interventions and grow their services.**

**The Key** (previously Keyfund) awards incremental amounts of money (£250–£2,000) to groups of young people, giving them the opportunity to run projects and gain experiences previously beyond their reach. The Key's model supports a huge range of young people's organisations, providing a coordinated focus for some of their activities and a method of engaging some of the hardest-to-reach young people. The Foundation recognised the value of The Key's approach and has supported the organisation for over 10 years – including a development award of £1,000,000 which enabled The Key to expand the model across the whole of the North East and Cumbria. Since then it has gone on to develop a franchise model, which it is currently promoting across the North of England.

**Centrepoint** works with young homeless people. It opened its first accommodation service outside London in 2005. The Foundation supported Centrepoint to establish in the North East, bringing a national charity and its additional resources into the region. Repeat awards ensured that Centrepoint remained in the region and support for fundraising and contracted activity has ensured the charity is now firmly embedded here. The benefit of this continuing investment was confirmed when Centrepoint used its own resources to fund a purpose-built centre in Sunderland in 2012.

Photo: Stuart Dexter, Chief Executive at Tyneside Mind (centre), with service users and members of the staff team.

Through support for the work of local **Mind** groups, the Foundation has aimed to provide more and higher-quality support for people with mental health problems and to ensure that support is available for people with mental health problems in areas where no community mental health provision has previously been available. This has included core and project funding, grants to develop trading enterprises, training opportunities and paid consultancy support. The Foundation has also funded regional development officers, employed by national Mind. Over seven years the Foundation has made 38 grants totalling £2.5 million to national Mind and to 15 local Mind organisations.



## Gap filling

**Working in a defined geographic area, the Foundation developed an overview of service provision and identified pockets of good practice as well as areas where there was little or no provision. This detailed local knowledge has meant that the Foundation can help voluntary sector agencies to spot opportunities and fill gaps to improve the quality and reach of services.**

**Sunderland Counselling Service** identified women seeking support following rape and abuse as a group in need of specific service. With Foundation funding, specially trained staff and volunteers now provide therapeutic support to over 100 victims of sexual violence and childhood abuse each year. Further north, **Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre** was funded to expand into Northumberland, leveraging in further funding from government. These investments mean that there is now specialist provision for victims of sexual violence across the whole of the North East and Cumbria.

**Foyers** combine housing either with training, or education, or help into employment, for young people. The Foundation funded Impact Housing in Cumbria to employ a Foyer development officer to establish a network of Foyers across Cumbria, complementing the two already established in Penrith and Kendal. A Foyer has now been opened in Carlisle by combining existing projects, a Foyer in Whitehaven will open in the summer of 2015 and a partnership has been established to drive the development of a Foyer in Barrow.

Photo: Lorraine Usher, Director of Support and Communities, Impact Housing Association, at the Whitehaven Foyer site.





### **Partnership working with other funders**

**The Foundation has worked in partnership with other grant-making organisations to both combine financial resources to achieve greater impact and draw on others' expertise. The Foundation has also encouraged and helped national funders to increase their spending in the North East and Cumbria.**

Northern Rock Foundation is a founder member of the **Child Sexual Exploitation Funders' Alliance**. This was created to bring about a step change in how Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is dealt with across the UK by positioning CSE as an integral part of mainstream safeguarding activity. A key element of the strategy is the development of a model of specialist service provision, which grew out of Foundation-funded work across Teesside by Barnardo's SECOS project (Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets). This model has already been rolled out across the North East, bringing additional funding from Big Lottery, Comic Relief and The Bromley Trust.

Ten charitable grant makers in the Alliance are working together to extend this provision across other parts of the country. Working jointly in this way has enabled funders to respond quickly to an emerging need around child sexual exploitation.

Photo: Wendy Shepherd, Children's Service Manager, Barnardo's SECOS.

## Using research to support programme aims

**The Foundation has funded research regularly as part of a strategic approach to a particular issue. It has worked with academic institutions and independent researchers, commissioning a range of different studies, always with a clear intention to influence future policy and practice.**

Over the last seven years the Foundation has commissioned a series of studies looking at the prevalence and nature of **sexual exploitation of both adults and children**. Separate studies looked at the region's four police authority areas, with each commissioned in partnership with a local statutory agency. In every police area the research uncovered previously unknown or unacknowledged groups of vulnerable people; the findings have been invaluable in informing local commissioning priorities, as well as the Foundation's own grant making. The process of undertaking these studies, i.e. researchers talking in detail with large numbers of front-line workers about this issue, has been as useful in drawing attention to the problem as the final report. The Foundation's independence and neutrality has been an important factor in ensuring that work on such a sensitive, and at times contentious, issue was undertaken and disseminated appropriately.

The Foundation has worked closely with the North East Dementia Alliance (NEDA), a partnership of health, social care, voluntary and private sector organisations. In 2011 the Foundation funded an independent report to look at the **state of dementia care in the North East**. This provided a comprehensive overview of the numbers of people with dementia, the current state of dementia provision, and gave clear guidance about the future work needed. The document formed the basis of NEDA's work plan and is used by individual members to plan future service provision. It also provided evidence of need, for organisations applying for funding. In 2013 the Foundation committed funding for an updated version of the report, which has been published in 2014.



Hazel Cuthbertson, Regional Operations Manager, North East Area, Alzheimer's Society.  
The Alzheimer's Society is a member of the North East Dementia Alliance.





Photo: Northern Rock Foundation Staff and Trustees July 2013.

### **Trustees** July 2013

Alastair Balls, David Faulkner, Jackie Fisher, Christopher Jobe, Frank Nicholson, Barbara (Mo) O’Toole, Julie Shipley. Not pictured: David Chapman, Tony Henfrey, Lorna Moran.

### **Staff** July 2013

David Allan, Gemma Appleby, Pete Barrett, Carol Candler, Rachel Kyle-Barclay, Caroline Percy, Ian Rutter, Jayne Straughan, Louise Telford, Penny Vowles, Richard Walton, Cullagh Warnock, Penny Wilkinson, Susan Young.

Talk 2 Us is a self-advocacy organisation for people with learning disabilities in South Tyneside. Since 2009 the Foundation has provided two grants to fund the organisation's part-time support worker and the core costs of the project.



Northern Rock Foundation  
The Old Chapel, Woodbine Road  
Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1DD

Tel: 0191 284 8412  
Fax: 0191 284 8413  
Email: [generaloffice@nr-foundation.org.uk](mailto:generaloffice@nr-foundation.org.uk)  
Website: [www.nr-foundation.org.uk](http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk)

Registered office:  
The Old Chapel, Woodbine Road  
Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 1DD

Registered charity: Number 1063906

Company limited by guarantee: Number 3416658

Design: © GDA ([www.gda-design.co.uk](http://www.gda-design.co.uk))  
Photography: © Simon Veit-Wilson ([www.veit-wilson.co.uk](http://www.veit-wilson.co.uk)),  
except where otherwise stated.