

Fashion at Belsay:
Stella McCartney's Lucky Spot

it's the fashion

Belsay Hall attracted record numbers of visitors this year, and it wasn't because of the weather. Thirteen of Britain's best known designers took over the Hall, its 14th-century castle and Grade I-listed gardens and created a spectacular exhibition of original design called Fashion at Belsay.

The well known names included Alexander McQueen, Stella McCartney, Zandra Rhodes, Paul Smith and Agent Provocateur. Each designer had his or her own room or space to play with. Some changed the decor, others installed new furniture; there was a giant crystal horse, a fountain in the form of a dress, and a spiral of shoe leather two storeys high. The exhibition opened at the end of May and by the time it closed at the end of September, 78,000 people had seen it. That's one and a half times the number of visitors for the same period in 2003.

This was Belsay's fourth major exhibition. The first was the inspiration of the designer Jean Muir who lived nearby at Rothbury. 'She saw the potential for Belsay as a venue for contemporary art and design,' says Belsay's arts director, Judith King, 'so she went to the



Photograph © English Heritage

then Chairman of English Heritage and persuaded him that it was a great idea.' That was ten years ago and since then Belsay has become well known for its exhibitions. **Fashion at Belsay** beat all the records, not just for its visitor numbers, but for the range and quality of the media interest it attracted. 'We got coverage in the art and lifestyle magazines, which you might expect,' says King, 'but we were in the **Sun** and **Hello** as well. It really seemed to catch people's imaginations.'

So why did Northern Rock Foundation decide to make a substantial grant to an exhibition of work by fashion designers in one of the best known English Heritage properties in the North? 'I can tell you that it wouldn't have happened without the Foundation,' admits King, who also managed to raise funds from Arts Council England, Northumberland Strategic Partnership and the Grainger Trust. 'We applied to the Foundation's Aspiration programme because we were convinced that an exhibition this unusual and of this quality would raise the profile not just of Belsay Hall but of Northumberland. It would attract visitors who would spend money here and it would probably encourage people to come back another time. The evaluation of the project won't be ready until February but all the signs are that we achieved everything we hoped we would.'

Fashion at Belsay wasn't just about attracting visitors from far away. Thirty five local community groups were given personal tours and if they had any difficulty in paying for transport to get to Belsay, which is 14 miles from Newcastle and hard to reach by public transport, the Foundation's grant paid for it. It also funded an activities booklet for families with children and a competition for the best drawing inspired by an exhibit.

The exhibition appealed to people of different ages and backgrounds. 'I think I expected some criticism from regular visitors to historic houses, who might have been unhappy about seeing contemporary designers take over Belsay,' admits King, 'but that didn't happen. One day I was showing a group from Age Concern around the castle and some of the visitors had real difficulty getting up the steps into the Great Hall to see Stella McCartney's **Lucky Spot**, but when we finally got up there, there was real joy.' McCartney's crystal horse, which hangs from the ceiling like an eccentric chandelier and moves as people come near it, will be coming back to Belsay next year, but this time to a more accessible location in the Pillar Hall.

There was a strong educational dimension to **Fashion at Belsay** too. In the stable block, students from Northumbria University's Design School exhibited work inspired by 'the little black dress' and the schools programme is continuing with designer Shelley Fox working on a project with pupils at Washington High school. The results can be seen at the Queen's Hall in Hexham from 15 January.

English Heritage's Chief Executive, Simon Thurley, has no doubts about the importance of **Fashion at Belsay**. 'Belsay Hall is one of English Heritage's most spectacular and extraordinary properties,' he says. 'The vast, stark splendour of its Greek revival façade and empty atmospheric interiors provide an exceptional space in which to do something quite different with the presentation of an historic monument.' It would seem that thousands of people agreed.

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www.english-heritage.org.uk



looking out for each other

Ask anyone trying to raise funds for their voluntary sector organisation which words send shivers down their spine and 'innovation' would probably come close to the top of the list. Funders, they say, are always challenging us to come up with 'innovative' ideas and new ways of doing things. Well, not always.

Northern Rock Foundation's Basics programme was set up to support organisations that have found an effective way of working and need funds to deliver more of the same. Newcastle Advocacy Centre (NAC), based at Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service, is one example.

Founded in Newcastle City Centre nine years ago, NAC has recently secured its third grant from the Foundation.

We prioritise vulnerable adults, but we work with other people too

'We are funding them because they do an important job and they do it consistently well,' says the Foundation's Assistant Director, Rob Williamson. The Centre, which is the only one of its kind in Newcastle, introduces vulnerable and isolated adults to another adult who will help them to gain access to services and other opportunities. It finds volunteers who become long-term friends and supporters of their advocate partners, and others with specialist knowledge and skills in legal, housing, educational, health or social services and who can support individuals on a case by case basis.

'We have more than 60 people with citizen advocates at the moment and about 20 on the waiting list,' explains NAC's manager, Jacqui Jobson. 'People are referred to us by health and social services, but anyone can ask for an advocate. We prioritise vulnerable adults, but we work with other people too.'

The volunteers who become citizen advocates come from all walks of life and age groups.

'We get a lot of support from Student Community Action, and especially from students doing courses in law, health and social care,' explains Jobson. 'We are on the Newcastle CVS website and we get approaches from individual older people too. And if we are not being bombarded with offers then we go out and give talks to community organisations. Also, if someone who is looking for an advocate has a particular interest – basketball or something – we go and talk to a group of people with the same interest. Last week we matched an Estonian woman with a student of East European politics who had volunteered.'

NAC keeps a file on everyone who is waiting for an advocate. The volunteers are asked to read through it and identify anyone they might like to meet. NAC staff then talk to the advocate partner about the volunteer and offer to arrange an initial meeting.

The process of training and matching volunteers with their advocate partners is a thorough one. Every new volunteer must complete an application form, provide references, undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check and be interviewed. The training a new citizen advocate needs depends on what they already know. People with a health and social care background may need less training in some areas than someone who has worked in industry or retail, or who has arrived in the UK quite recently (some of the volunteers are foreign students).

People come to citizen advocacy by different routes. Alan Vaughan, who currently chairs NAC's steering group is a health care assistant at the Northern Neurological Rehabilitation Centre, but he used to work in a small residential home for six young adults with severe and profound learning disabilities.

'One young man came to us, at the age of 21, with a sheaf of papers and a photograph of a car, and that was it. He had nothing else. He lived with us for 15 or 16 years and then the home closed down and the residents were sent to different places. My concern was that he was going off into the unknown. He was going to have to start all over again with people who didn't know him. If he needed something, who was going to speak on his behalf?'

We are speaking up for people, but with their voice

Vaughan picked up a leaflet about NAC and got in touch. He had not come across citizen advocacy before and it seemed to offer an answer: he would become a citizen advocate and his friend would be his advocate partner. 'This was a bit unusual because I came already knowing the person I wanted to partner,' he acknowledges 'but it gave me a role that the agencies who were working with my advocate partner could understand.'

'The important thing about advocates is that we are ordinary people,' says Vaughan. 'We are not employees of the local authority or of health or social services. We are volunteers who are being asked by our advocate partners to help them get access to services. We are speaking up for people but with their voice.'

He is impressed by the variety of people who volunteer and particularly by the number of younger people involved. 'I come from a working class community where people used to talk across the street or across the fence, but that doesn't happen much any more. We live in a much more atomised world. What thrills me is that we do attract people of all ages, people who simply want to look out for each other because that is the natural and decent thing to do. I think the North East does have that tradition of volunteering and I hope that in ten years time Newcastle Advocacy Centre will be just as vibrant as it is now.'

More information

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Building the work of the voluntary and community sector in the North East

invest 2006

'That was the news. Now here is the funding forecast for the North East for the next three years.' If our regional television stations did offer such a service, the story would go something like this. Over the next three years, changes in the priorities of the European Commission, a reorganisation of the way central government distributes funding to the regions, and the merger of the Community Fund with the New Opportunities Fund will present voluntary organisations in the North East (and elsewhere) with a significant challenge.

The Big Lottery Fund is already up and running and there is concern at the loss of a substantial, dedicated fund for the types of voluntary sector activity the Community Fund (and before that the National Lottery Charities Board) used to support. The government's Single Regeneration Budget comes to an end in 2006 and from 2007 there will be a new set of European funding programmes. This does not mean the end of European money for the North East but it does mean there will be much stiffer competition for it, especially from the new member states, most of which are much poorer than the UK.

Earlier this year, a report commissioned by the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland estimated that every year for the past three years, the voluntary and community sector in the North East had secured more than £64 million from a combination of the Single Regeneration Budget, European Objective 2 and 3 programmes and the Community Fund. The report, by Bruce Reed of European Economic Research Services (EERS), predicted that by 2007 the combined income from these funds and their replacement sources could drop to less than £10m a year, leaving a gap of more than £50m. This is almost exactly the amount that charitable trusts are already spending in the region.

Without wanting to be alarmist, the Community Foundation knew that it had to act fast. It brought together a partnership of funders and voluntary organisations to look at the problem. The result is **Invest 2006**, a campaign to raise awareness within and outside the region of the financial challenge the voluntary sector is now facing. Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) is hosting the campaign and funding is coming from the Community Foundation, Millfield House Foundation and Northern Rock Foundation.

The campaign coordinator is Jane Streater, who wants to make it clear that this is not a simple "Stop the Cuts" campaign. 'The voluntary sector in the North East is making a vital contribution to regeneration, alongside the public and private sectors,' she says. 'If the funding we need to do this work reduces significantly, we will not be able to deliver. We need to get that message across. **Invest 2006** is about highlighting the role of the voluntary sector and ensuring that government at national and regional level recognises what we do. We are contributing to the economic health of the region and to the well being of individuals and communities.'

The quality of the voluntary sector's relationship with ONE North East, the regional development agency for the North East, is critical, both in financial and policy terms. ONE North East determines the economic strategy for the region and administers the Single Programme budget from which, according to Streater, the voluntary sector should be benefiting more than it currently does. One of the challenges is that the Single Programme has much more stringent economic targets than some of the funding programmes it has replaced, but

Streater is adamant that the voluntary sector has a significant role to play in helping ONE North East to achieve its targets.

For example, one of the government's priorities is economic inclusion and support for new businesses. In the North East, the rate of business start-ups is low and unemployment still relatively high. The day to day realities of finding work and setting up businesses are sometimes hard for government departments to understand and respond to, which is why they need input from a voluntary sector made up of organisations that are run by the community for the community. 'The voluntary sector can reach the parts that other agencies can't reach,' says Streater. 'The only way forward is to have a joined up response.'

Invest 2006 was launched in November and will run to March 2006. Its initial priorities are to communicate the EERS research findings to the voluntary sector, develop a public relations strategy, engage with the key regional agencies and begin to lobby government at a national and European level. Jane Streater is based at VONNE and Mike Worthington, Deputy Chair of the Community Foundation is chairing the steering group.

More information

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emails go missing

At the beginning of October Northern Rock Foundation had problems with its server, meaning that incoming and outgoing emails were lost. By the second week of October things were back to normal, but if you emailed us before then, we apologise if you have not had a response. Please resend any messages that you think we might have missed, or get in touch with us on 0191 284 8412 to check that we've received your email.



Jane Streater
Invest 2006
campaign
co-ordinator



Illustration © Chris Deighan

have I got news for you?

If you are a small-scale voluntary or community organisation you might like to contact the Foundation for a copy of its new guide to managing the media, Have I Got News for You?

There have never been more opportunities to tell the media your story. Newspapers, magazines, local radio and television stations and websites are always looking for good material. And every time an individual organisation gets some positive coverage, it helps the voluntary and community sector as a whole. Maybe you just need help communicating what you do to your members or your immediate community; maybe you have a story for the national press. The guide covers the basics of communicating with the media, from writing a news release, to doing an interview, to filing photographs of your work, to managing a crisis. There is also a list of local media contacts which will be updated from time to time. You can find **Have I Got News for You?** on the Northern Rock Foundation website www.nr-foundation.org.uk or we can send you a paper copy.

Lessons from Haltwhistle

The Haltwhistle Partnership has a dream and is having a hard time realising it. The dream is of a building, in the centre of town, that would house the Partnership's office, accessible facilities for services of different kinds and a social space. It would offer a home to advice services, training rooms, meeting rooms and perhaps a small auditorium for live performances and films.

The Haltwhistle Partnership's objective is the regeneration of Haltwhistle town and its 11 local parishes. Northern Rock Foundation is one of its funders. The trustees include representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors and the organisation's whole approach is based on working together to achieve common goals. A shared building makes sense, but the process of finding and negotiating for new premises is proving to be a continuing challenge.

Some time ago, the Haltwhistle Partnership found a building it liked the look of: a high-ceilinged, two-storey, stone-built church hall on the main street, built in 1908. It was barely used and falling into disrepair. The Partnership commissioned a survey and drew up plans. The proposal was to demolish the hall and start again, using the original materials. This would be a much cheaper and more practical option than conversion and by using the same stone as the original building, the new centre would fit in well.

The Partnership undertook widespread public consultation. It explained what it planned to do and why. Tynedale Council advised that the proposal was likely to get planning permission provided it had the support of the community, including the Town Council. It was therefore a surprise when, out of nowhere, a small group of local residents began a vigorous campaign to 'save the Church Hall'. At an emergency meeting of the Town Council, the vote was tied and the Partnership realised it did not have enough support to go ahead and apply for planning permission.

The strength of the opposition took Kirsten Francis, Haltwhistle Market Town Project Officer, by surprise. 'The proposal was brought down by a very vocal, very negative campaign,' she says. 'I think if we had done more consultation with some of the key groups who would have benefited from the new centre – young people and families, especially – we might have been better placed to respond to the opposition. The "no" lobby wasn't very big but it had good media connections and therefore far more weight. We didn't do enough to enable people who would really have benefited from the centre to have a voice.'

The other weakness in the process was that owing to staff shortages in the Planning Department at Tynedale Council, the Partnership was unable to have a pre-planning application meeting that might have alerted it to the likely opposition.

The next idea was to buy and redevelop an old Spar shop in town but the building had a number of problems and this too fell through. 'That was a huge

disappointment for everyone,' admits Francis. 'The fact is that an integrated approach to locating and negotiating the use of a building is complicated and when it doesn't work out you have more fallout. It's much worse when there are several parties involved, but an integrated approach makes sense and we are still looking for a site.'

'If you look ahead you can see that for everyone to have their own buildings would not be sustainable,' she says. 'Instead of one building there would be three or four that would need resourcing and that could be difficult.' The other challenge is in securing funding that is not time limited.

Meanwhile the needs of some of the original partners have changed. Sure Start, which might have been housed in a building shared with the Partnership, is finding premises of its own and the school has raised the money to buy theatre seating, so there may be less demand for a performance space elsewhere in town.

Francis remains upbeat. 'It is important that we constantly reassess what the needs are and respond accordingly,' she says. 'Young people are a high priority for us now. We have just secured funding from the Northumberland Children's Fund to employ a youth worker and we will be looking at provision for young people throughout the year.' And as for a building? Watch this space.



Photograph © Allan Glenwright

More information

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the new rural economy

The Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University belongs to the 'down to earth' school of higher education. It was set up in 1992 in memory of the Duke of Northumberland.

'The Duke was a traditional landowner and improver who was very keen on rural development,' explains the CRE's founding director Professor Philip Lowe. 'He was also a man of science. He chaired the Medical Research Council and the Agricultural Research Council at various times and his family thought a university research department looking at new structures for the rural economy would be the right kind of memorial.'

The timing was right too. The early 1990s were a critical time for Britain's farming community. Milk quotas had recently been introduced and relying too heavily on subsidies looked increasingly risky. 'We were faced with the question of how to diversify,' Lowe explains. 'Farming was going to have to change and so were the universities. We needed to think beyond farming to the wider rural economy.'

The CRE is an applied research department and Lowe and his colleagues were certain that the way forward was for the academics, farmers and others working in the rural economy to pool their experience and ideas. 'We call it the co-production of knowledge,' says Lowe. 'Academics can become very locked into old ways of thinking. In the early nineties we knew more about the animals and plants than we did about the people. We all needed to learn from each other.'

This approach took on a more concrete form four years ago when the Centre embarked on the New Rural Economy Project funded, in part, by Northern Rock Foundation. The Project, which is run by Dr Katy Bennett, organises the Northern Rural Network through which members exchange their experience and ideas, undertake research and host placements for postgraduate students following courses in either Agricultural and Food Marketing or Rural Development and Resource Management.

The Network now has more than 500 members, all of whom are working for sustainable rural development. They may be

employed by a local authority or a government agency; they may run a business or voluntary sector organisation. Several times a year the CRE organises seminars that attract between 50 and 100 people. This is a highly motivated and committed group.

A key feature of rural businesses in the North East is their small scale. 'We knew very little about micro businesses at first,' admits Lowe, 'so we decided to conduct a survey. [The university has been responsible for the government's Farm Business Survey since the 1930s.] We set up a steering group of micro businesses and paid them to meet us on a monthly basis.' The Network received 2,000 responses which, in turn, helped it to make an accurate assessment of the needs of small businesses. IT and marketing were the most common and this is where the student placements have proved particularly helpful. 'These businesses are small and understaffed and the managers have very little time to do research or to sit back and reflect,' says Katy Bennett. 'The sort of students the CRE attracts are often mature students and have plenty of experience from elsewhere. They really can make a useful contribution.' One student was offered a placement at an abattoir that wanted to promote local meats. She helped the abattoir to set up a club so that butchers could learn about the provenance of different meats and give the abattoir useful feedback.

Network member John Anderson farms at Kirkharle in Northumberland, the birthplace of garden designer Capability Brown. 'Several years ago, I was concerned at the direction that farming was heading and felt we needed to look outside agriculture in terms of land use,' he explains. 'We had this set of traditional, early 19th-century buildings behind the cattlesheds and decided to do something with them.' The 'something' was a complex of crafts businesses. When a group of students from the CRE came to visit they discussed ways in which Kirkharle might raise its public profile. 'One of the students did a project with us researching the possibility of joint marketing with the National Trust,' Anderson explains. 'That turned out not to be feasible but the process we went through was very helpful in determining what

our customers thought was unique about Kirkharle.'

The New Rural Economy Project has also helped to kick-start new initiatives. Following the example of Voluntary Action Cumbria's Feast Cookers (see Rock Reports 5) it has set up an organisation called Northumbria Larder to grow, rear and promote local produce and now has more than 80 local food producers on its books. The CRE learned about Feast Cookers from the then Director of Voluntary Action Cumbria, Kate Braithwaite, who is studying for a PhD at the Centre. Professor Lowe, who handed over directorship of the CRE to Professor Neil Ward earlier this year, is keen to see more members of the Northern Rural Network taking advantage of the Centre's academic services, either through short, extra-mural courses or part-time, postgraduate degrees.

'We now have this highly interactive constituency of small businesses, voluntary sector organisations and public sector departments,' he says. 'They need research skills so that they can do their own evaluations, research their markets and improve their performance in various ways. The result is that we end up with a much better informed and more sustainable sector.'

More information

Professor Philip Lowe is Director of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme of the UK Research Council. The Director of the CRE is Professor Neil Ward.

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rapid response to domestic abuse in Gateshead

Gateshead Domestic Violence Forum has been awarded a five-year grant worth £1.9 million to set up a Domestic Abuse Rapid Response Service (DARRS). This is part of a £4m initiative by Northern Rock Foundation to find more effective ways of working with the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

The Forum, which includes Gateshead Council, Northumbria Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, Gateshead Health Trusts, voluntary organisations and local solicitors, is one of the first beneficiaries of the initiative, which was launched earlier this year. The DARRS management group is being led by Aquila Way (formerly Aquila Housing Association) which has experience of working with women escaping domestic violence.

DARRS will be open from 10am to 2am seven days a week and anyone dialing 999 as a result of domestic violence will be offered immediate support by staff seconded from Gateshead Council's Safer Families Project. The priorities will be to ensure the victims' safety and to collect evidence that might contribute to a successful prosecution. Currently, a very small percentage of people who commit domestic violence are imprisoned. Melinda Blackburn of the Crown Prosecution Service Northumbria says: 'We know from research findings that early support and information for victims of domestic violence does make a difference, and can help them have the confidence to go to court and give evidence, so that more perpetrators can be brought to justice. Domestic violence is a complex issue and no one agency working alone can deal effectively with it.'

In addition to the grant from the Foundation, the Forum members are contributing their resources and expertise: the statutory agencies will be appointing dedicated staff to work on domestic violence cases; the witness service will be offered to domestic abuse victims; and two solicitors' firms will provide victims with free legal advice.

Closer collaboration and more effective communication between the different agencies involved with the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence was a key recommendation of research commissioned by the Foundation to inform its grantmaking in this area, and the Forum's members have made it clear that they are committed to developing new ways of working together and sharing information. An important aspect of the work is to offer perpetrators of domestic violence the opportunity to address their behaviour positively. There will also be support for any children involved.

The Foundation is keen to explore different approaches and by Christmas will have awarded a major grant for the development of a service in a rural area. Meanwhile, Sunderland University has been contracted to evaluate the domestic violence initiative and the extent to which it influences government policy and the work of other agencies.

For more information on the initiative, contact Cullagh Warnock at Northern Rock Foundation on 0191 284 8412.

For more information on DARRS, contact Jo Grant at Aquila Way, Tel: 0191 477 1870. Email: jgrant@aquilahousing.co.uk

Grants in 2004

With one more meeting of Northern Rock Foundation's Trustees to go this year, we thought you would like to see how our grants have been distributed so far in 2004.

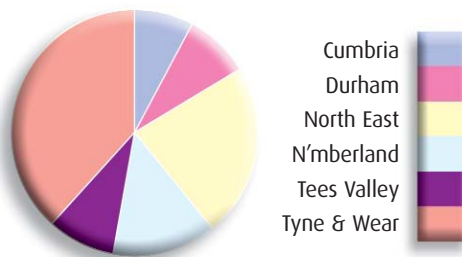
Grants by programme Jan - Oct 2004

Grant Programme	Amount Approved (£)	No. of Awards	% of Total Amount Approved
Aspiration	1,817,950	34	9%
Basics	2,733,436	67	13%
Better Sector	1,396,878	54	7%
Capital	1,900,000	7	9%
Exceptional	520,000	2	2%
Exploration	299,219	6	1%
Prevention	3,518,541	107	17%
Regeneration	2,117,520	33	10%
Special Projects	6,539,750	7	32%
Grand Total	20,843,294	317	100%



Grants by region Jan - Oct 2004

Region	Amount Approved (£)	No. of Awards	% of Total Amount Approved
Cumbria	1,607,609	44	8%
Durham	1,804,177	36	9%
North East	4,739,443	28	23%
Northumberland	2,838,699	42	14%
Tees Valley	1,868,589	41	9%
Tyne & Wear	7,984,777	126	37%
Grand Total	20,843,294	317	100%



important finance course for voluntary organisations

What's the hardest thing to raise funding for? Your overheads. Northern Rock Foundation has been working with a charity called New Philanthropy Capital to help voluntary sector organisations calculate and recover the full cost of delivering their services.

'Full cost recovery' is now the subject of a CD-ROM and a one-day training course. The course will take place in three venues in Cumbria and four in the North East and will be run by Sayer Vincent, a firm of accountants that specialises in working with the voluntary sector.

There are 15 places on each course and these will be awarded on a first come, first served basis.

The full cost is £95 + VAT for organisations spending £50,000 or less per year and £125 + VAT for those spending more.

Organisations with an annual expenditure of £50,000 or less may apply for a free place.

For more information on the course, to book a place, or apply for a bursary, call Paul Stirrat on 020 7841 6360, or email: fullcostrecovery@sayervincent.co.uk or visit: www.sayervincent.co.uk

Dates	Cumbria	
Wednesday	19th January	Whitehaven
Wednesday	26th January	Carlisle
Thursday	27th January	Barrow
North East		
Tuesday	18th January	Darlington
Wednesday	19th January	Hartlepool
Monday	24th January	Morpeth
Tuesday	25th January	Newcastle



staying out of prison

A national charity, originally set up to work with homeless young people, is using a grant from Northern Rock Foundation to work with young offenders in the months before and immediately after their release to reduce the likelihood of them reoffending.

Depaul Trust is one of five organisations taking part in a £4.2m, three-year initiative on reducing reoffending by young people and adults in the North East. The others are the International Centre for Prison Studies, Nacro, the No Way Trust and New College Durham.

According to research by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit, 58% of people who have spent time in prison or a young offenders institute (YOI) are reconvicted within two years of their release. The figures for young men, in particular, are stark: 72% of 18 – 20 year olds find themselves back in prison.

Depaul Trust was founded in 1989 with the encouragement of the then Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hulme. It was a time when changes in the benefits system were resulting in an increasing number of young people becoming homeless and sleeping rough. Westminster Cathedral was already running a day services centre and night shelter for homeless people in London, and Hulme could see with his own eyes that more and more young people were needing help. Three existing charities concerned with homelessness got together to set up Depaul Trust specifically to work with young people. Fifteen years later the Trust has projects in London, Kent, Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands, the North West and the North East.

The Trust's Head of Services (North) is Val Keen. 'We started off working with young people who were street homeless,' Keen explains. 'It was initially mostly about crisis intervention. Then we turned our attention to stopping people ending up there in the first place. Many of the people we saw were getting caught up in a cycle of homelessness and offending, so we decided to try to do something to break that cycle.'

The grant from Northern Rock Foundation will help Depaul Trust to increase its support for young men from Tyne and Wear and the Tees Valley who are currently serving sentences at HMYOI Castington and HMYOI Deerbolt. The Trust works with the YOI staff and statutory services to provide practical support, advice and guidance – a combination designed to help the young men to readjust to life outside prison and make it less likely that they will reoffend.

It was initially mostly about crisis intervention. Then we turned our attention to stopping people ending up there in the first place

Resettlement workers employed by the Trust at Deerbolt meet every young offender from the North East at the beginning of his sentence. The aim is partly to introduce themselves and partly to see if there are things that need sorting out at home. 'When a young person has a tenancy of their own and has received a short sentence, we can help make sure the tenancy is maintained and the rent paid while they are in the YOI,' Keen explains. 'If it is a longer sentence, we help the young person end their tenancy officially, keeping on good terms with the landlord and making it easier to get another tenancy when they are released.'

Finding a place to live can be a significant challenge for anyone with a criminal record and a low income or no income at all. While many local young offenders have families in the area, relationships have often broken down and there is no possibility of going home. Providing safe and affordable accommodation is therefore a priority for Depaul Trust and part of Northern Rock Foundation's grant will be used to help pay for two assessment centres. These will provide a safe and secure environment for young offenders for up to three months after

their release from prison. During this stay, appropriate, settled accommodation will be identified and a package of support set up.

Finding work is another major challenge and lack of money often propels young people back into crime. Another part of the Foundation's grant is therefore being used to research the possibility of setting up a social business where former young offenders would be offered real employment in a supported environment.

In the months leading up to their release, every young person is offered a mentor. 'Mentors offer support, advice and guidance, and act as role models, helping young people build their aspirations and plans,' explains Keen. 'The role is a flexible one and there is no shortage of people wanting to take it on.' The Trust advertises in the local press and through the region's volunteer networks. 'One of the things the young people say they appreciate about this service is that the mentors are volunteers,' she says. 'They are not doing this because they are being paid to do it.'

John Caldwell, Resettlement Manager at HMYOI Deerbolt confirms the value of the Trust's approach. 'We have worked closely with Depaul Trust over a number of years, and have seen at first hand how effective practical resettlement initiatives can be,' he says. Their work in providing sustainable, supported, housing and mentoring services has made a real difference to prisoners returning to their communities.'

More information

For more information about this initiative, contact Anne Burleigh
Northern Rock Foundation
Tel: 0191 284 8412

For more information on Depaul Trust contact Paul Kelly, Project Manager
Tel: 0191 261 8080
email: paul.kelly@depaultrust.org
www.depaultrust.org

new faces

Northern Rock Foundation has two new Grants Officers, Pauline Johnson and Louise Telford. Louise runs the Basics programme. Most recently she worked for Cumbria County Council as a voluntary sector support officer and she still lives in Cumbria. She has also been a policy officer with a remit to enhance the independence of older people. One of her most enjoyable projects involved developing a 'smart' home, using infrared technology to help people continue to live independently at home. She enjoys what she describes as 'the friendly, more creative environment' at the Foundation.

Pauline has come to the Foundation by a roundabout route. For her degree she studied arts in the community, trained and worked as a secondary school art teacher and then became a community tutor in Amble, Northumberland, where she was responsible

for the management of youth clubs and adult education classes. One of her new colleagues at the Foundation is a former pupil. She has worked for Durham City Arts, North East Museums, the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art in Sunderland and, most recently, for South Tyneside Council. 'The Foundation's thematic programmes interested me,' says Pauline. 'I applied for the Prevention programme job as I felt my experience could contribute to its themes, particularly regarding young people.' She lives in County Durham.



Photograph © Carol Bell

Grants Officers Pauline Johnson and Louise Telford

Penny goes to Futurebuilders

Grants Officer Penny Vowles is currently on secondment as the Investment Team Manager with Futurebuilders England. The scheme aims to explore ways of developing sustainable funding for the voluntary sector, as well as investing in voluntary and community organisations that are working to improve public service provision.

'I am enjoying finding out about different ways to support and invest in the sector through loan funding and public service contracts,' says Penny. 'Futurebuilders has a strong emphasis on knowledge management and I look forward to sharing the lessons we learn.'

grant programmes and initiatives

Northern Rock Foundation is an independent grant-making organisation. Our primary objective is to help improve the conditions of those disadvantaged in society. We support causes in Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and the Tees Valley. We were formed in 1997, when Northern Rock Building Society converted to a plc, and receive, by covenant, 5% of Northern Rock plc's pre-tax profits each year. The Foundation is fully independent of Northern Rock plc and our own Board of Trustees determines our policies.

who will we support?

To apply you must 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. Proposals must fit within one of our programmes.

prevention

Prevention of local and regional social decline - actions which stop social problems from developing or worsening, focusing on one or more of our priority issues.

regeneration

Local initiatives that improve the economic prospects of an area or a community of interest and ensure money stays within it.

basics

Basic day-to-day services, over and above what statutory authorities offer that provide people in our priority groups more of the help that they need.

exploration

Exploration and experiment - practical research, 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 corners.

aspiration

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

cultural capital scheme

Supporting significant, ambitious and high quality proposals for new or refurbished buildings for arts, environmental, heritage or sporting organisations.

loans

We can offer loans for capital expenditure, bridging funds, working capital, developing new activities or to pay for regular commitments. Loans do not form part of our normal grant programmes, and have separate application criteria. Contact us for more details.

how to apply

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

No stamp is needed.

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

You can also view information about all our programmes, and download an application form from our website:

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**

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