

THE
BERN^{ICIA}
FOUNDATION

Annual Report

2025-2026

01. A Message from our Chair

Lesley Moody OBE – Trustee and Chair of the Bernicia Foundation



This year our focus has remained firmly on tackling poverty and supporting people across the North East to build better futures. As trustees, we are continually inspired by the commitment and impact of the organisations we fund, and by the difference their work makes to individuals and communities.

Our work has concentrated on breaking down the barriers that prevent people from accessing good work. We know that employment alone is not always enough; people also need the right advice, aspirations, skills and ongoing support to overcome challenges and move forward with confidence. By supporting projects that address these needs, we have helped people take meaningful steps towards work and greater financial security.

Alongside this, we have continued to recognise the importance of access to advice and the ability to participate in activities that support wellbeing and strengthen communities. These opportunities play a vital role in helping people feel connected, valued and able to contribute, creating more cohesive and resilient neighbourhoods.

Bernicia Foundation set out with a commitment to provide £1 million of grant funding over five years. I am delighted that we have been able to extend this ambition, and by 2026 will have awarded more than **£1.4 million** over six years to support people and communities across the region.

Now that we have achieved and exceeded our original commitment, Bernicia Foundation will come to a close. I'd like to thank all our trustees, our partners Community Foundation North East and all our Bernicia colleagues who made the Foundation such a success. A special thanks goes to all those community organisations who gave their time and effort to help us deliver on our commitment and to help thousands of people across the North East. We are proud of the role the Foundation has played, and we hope the funding we provided has acted as a catalyst, helping organisations to grow, adapt and ultimately improve people's lives.

Whilst this is the end of the Bernicia Foundation, it is by no means the end of Bernicia's commitment to our communities and the people who live there. We continue to invest to help our local areas thrive. We continue to work alongside local agencies, charities and community groups to help deliver the best outcomes, providing opportunities for those who need them most. More information can be found on our social media pages and at berniciacommunity.com.

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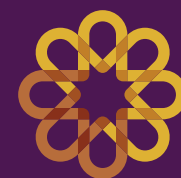
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**THE
BERNICIA
FOUNDATION**



02. Summary of Progress

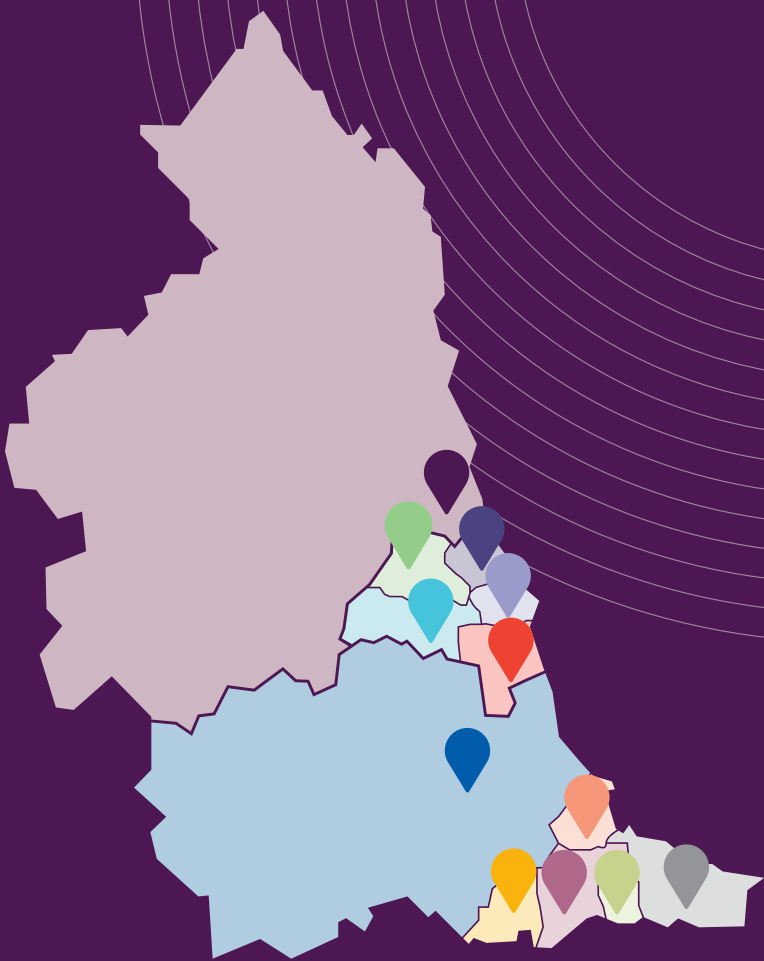
During 2025-26 we have funded 19 Inclusion projects and 6 inspirational young people, awarding grants totalling £183,500. Since we launched in 2020, we have now supported our communities with over £1.4million of funding.

Inclusion Grant

Through our Inclusion grants, we aim to advance economic inclusion by backing initiatives that open up employment opportunities, build skills, and help individuals and families overcome barriers to financial independence. Complementing this is our commitment to social inclusion, which supports projects that strengthen community connections, promote wellbeing, and enable people from all backgrounds to take an active part in society.

In delivering these objectives, we seek to ensure that our tenants are able to access or benefit from the projects we support. In recent years we have tried to award grants in proportion to where our tenants mostly live. In addition, to help us meet demand and fund as wide a range of projects as possible, those who have received a grant in the past three years were considered a lower priority for funding. However, for our final funding round, we wanted to encourage and support as wide a range of projects as possible. So those funding criteria were not applied.

Delivery Location	Number of Grants	Bernicia Grant Paid Out	Percentage of Grants Awarded
Northumberland	37	£342,337	28.2%
Sunderland	20	£174,517	15.3%
Newcastle	19	£162,995	14.5%
Gateshead	12	£104,856	9.2%
North Tyneside	10	£93,168	7.6%
South Tyneside	9	£86,669	6.9%
County Durham	8	£78,000	6.1%
North East Region	4	£30,000	3.1%
Tyne & Wear	3	£25,000	2.3%
Middlesbrough	3	£23,000	2.3%
Darlington	3	£20,000	2.3%
Stockton-on-Tees	1	£9,489	0.8%
Hartlepool	1	£9,440	0.8%
Redcar	1	£5,000	0.8%
Grand Total	131	£1,164,471	100.0%



Percentage of Homes in Local Authorities

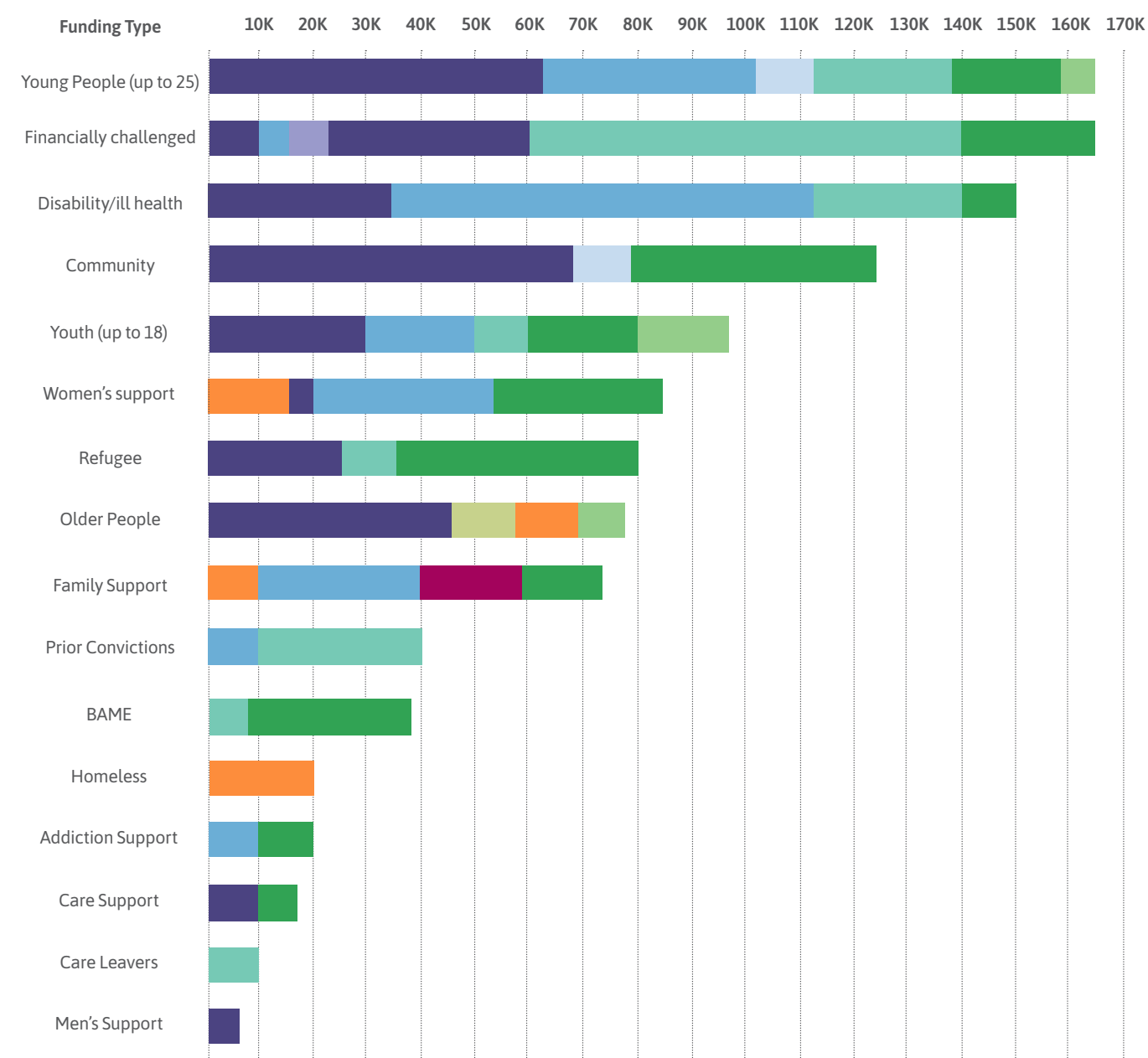
Northumberland 59.72%	County Durham 12.14%
Newcastle 3.51%	Darlington 0.79%
North Tyneside 6.16%	Hartlepool 2.68%
Gateshead 3.73%	Stockton-on-Tees 0.09%
South Tyneside 1.66%	Middlesbrough 0.15%
Sunderland 9.13%	Redcar & Cleveland 0.24%

This year, we have continued our commitment to tackling poverty by supporting people to move towards, and into, good work. We recognise that sustainable employment plays a crucial role in improving financial security, wellbeing and long-term life chances. Our funding has focused on breaking down the barriers that prevent people from accessing work, helping individuals gain the advice, skills and practical support they need to take positive steps forward.

We also recognise that progress towards employment is rarely linear. Access to advice services remains vital in helping people navigate immediate challenges, whether related to finances, housing or family circumstances, and in enabling them to plan for the future. Alongside this, opportunities to participate in social, cultural and community activities play an important role in supporting wellbeing, building confidence and reducing isolation.

Many of the activities and groups we have funded this year have helped strengthen cohesive communities, providing safe and welcoming spaces where people can connect, build networks and access further support. These entry points often lead to engagement with advice, training or employability services, helping individuals move towards greater stability and opportunity over time.

Types of funding bar - all



Inspiration grant

Our Inspiration Grant has enabled the Foundation to recognise and support young people whose commitment and performance set them apart.

In practice, this has most often meant backing emerging sporting talent, where our support has helped individuals take part in high-level training and competition. The young people supported through this grant have demonstrated remarkable focus and determination, frequently performing on national and international stages. By providing targeted support at key moments, the grant has contributed to confidence, progression, and achievement during an important stage of their development.



Billie Netherton

Billie has been a gymnast since she was just two years old. Having advanced through Newcastle Gymnastics Academy's elite pathway, she proudly competed at English and British Championships, earning medals and securing a place on the England Aspire and Junior squads. She also placed highly at the Youth Olympic Hopefuls' Competition in Brno, Czech Republic, and continues to aim her career towards the Olympics. However, in October 2023, Billie's journey was dramatically interrupted by a serious ankle injury, requiring surgery and intensive rehabilitation.

Her mother, also one of her coaches, Kerry Scott, shares the challenges they faced: "It was heartbreaking seeing Billie go through her injury and return to the gym. Gymnastics has been at the heart of our lives for 14 years, and the injury threatened to derail her dream of becoming a Senior gymnast. The financial and emotional costs, specialist surgeons, travel, daily rehab, have been immense."

Billie reflects on this period: "The time between injury and surgery was the toughest. Choosing surgery was the turning point. My passion and goals, to make the GB squad, win British medals, and excel as a vaulter and bar worker, keep me motivated to follow my rehab plan diligently." "I have milestones to meet to progress through my rehab phases, and by Spring 2026, I aim to be back to 'crazy gymnastics,' as my surgeon calls it. From there, I plan to be competition-ready and aim for squad selections."

Looking ahead, Billie's next competition is anticipated in October 2026 at the British Teams Championships, followed by the English Championships and British Championships.

Review of Grants Awarded

Grants are typically awarded for a 12-month period, after which we ask recipients to let us know what difference the grant has made to their project. We report here on the projects and individuals that we supported in 2024/25 (Rounds ten and eleven) who have now completed their projects.

Brief details of the grants awarded this year (2025/26 - Rounds twelve and thirteen) are also listed below.

Inclusion Grants Awarded in Round Ten

- **£10,000**

Community@NE66 Charity Trust – Community Advice Services

Additional 10 weekly staff hours and opening for an extra day per week. Supported 57 families and 227 individuals, including 27 safeguarding cases which included physical abuse, organised crime, child sexual exploitation and online safety concerns.
- **£10,000**

Peace of Mind CIO – Refugee Advice Services

Employment and integration support for refugees and asylum seekers. Supported 83 households, delivered 10 employability workshops, matched 25 families with volunteer buddies, and achieved 69 employment, training, volunteering and vocational outcomes.
- **£6,000**

Blyth Resource and Initiative Centre (BRIC) – Employment services for financially challenged

28 Functional Maths & English passes, 4 positive job outcomes, and improved confidence for 27 participants (22 adults and 5 young people), with further passes expected beyond the grant period.
- **£10,000**

Bringing Words to Life Limited – disability/ill health skills

Literacy workshops for 27 neurodivergent learners delivered 96 sessions, resulting in 1 job outcome, 8 volunteers, increased confidence for all, and new ESOL provision in development.
- **£10,000**

Recyke y'bike – Refugee skills

Funding supported a bike maintenance and travel cost reduction programme for asylum seekers and refugees. Seven participants built their own bikes and gained a nationally recognised Velotech award focused on practical skills.
- **£10,000**

Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library – family support for food & clothing poverty

Core funding for a North Tyneside children's charity. The Toy Library has nearly 200 members, helping families save money by borrowing baby items and promoting reuse.
- **£5,000**

Readeasy Newcastle and North Tyneside – skills for financially challenged

Core costs enabled purchase of learning materials, recruitment of volunteers, training coaches and developing courses to improve literacy in Newcastle and North Tyneside.
- **£10,000**

Northumberland Community Bank – Social activities and clubs for the financially challenged

Grant to support financial awareness activities in schools. During the grant period NCB joined a wider organisation and ceased trading in its own right. The new organisation is now delivering the project.

Inclusion Grants Awarded in Round Eleven

- **£10,000**

People and Drugs (SILX Teen Bar) – youth advice services

Delivered 208 sessions for 578 young people (11–18), increasing confidence for 250 and providing one-to-one support on mental health, relationships, education and personal safety.
- **£10,000**

Newsham and New Delaval Youth Forum – young people skills

A safe youth club supported 252 young people across 2,652 attendances, improving confidence for 50 participants, helping some into part-time work, and developing cooking and life skills through a weekly food project.
- **£8,000**

Cleveland Housing Advice Centre – Fuel poverty for financially challenged

Over 600 people received energy advice and support, improving quality of life (51%), reducing social exclusion (27%) and improving health and wellbeing (22%).
- **£5,000**

Friends Action North East – community social activities & clubs

Supported 98 people with learning disabilities and autism through groups, one-to-one support and training, improving confidence, independence and community connections.
- **£10,000**

Acorns North Tyneside – family support advice services

A Family Support Worker provides tailored support to families, while parents and carers access wellbeing activities, peer support and recovery programmes that reduce isolation and build confidence.
- **£10,000**

Shiney Advice and Resource Project – community advice services

Advice service supported 10,146 people from 18–93-year-old. 455 experiences relief from debt burden, 744 were able to pay for their housing, and 118 were able to heat their household in the winter due to the interventions.
- **£10,000**

The Young Women's Film Academy – young people skills

Thirty-five young women took part in Future Lasses film and skills programmes, gaining work experience, volunteering opportunities and industry exposure, with nine achieving NCFE accreditation.
- **£10,000**

Building Self-Belief CIO – food & clothing poverty family support

Weekly Leadgate community food and fuel poverty family activity clubs held in area of high socio-economic deprivation. Employment support included CV assistant, job search and interview prep. 260 individual children and adults, supported with 44 moving into work.
- **£10,000**

Meadow Well Connected – community advice services

Delivered a wide range of community wellbeing, recovery and crisis support, including food and fuel assistance, after-school and holiday activities, employment support, and inclusive volunteering, creative and nature-based programmes for children, families and adults, with six people progressing into volunteering or employment.

Bringing Words to Life

In England, 18% of adults aged 16 to 65, around 6.6 million people, have very poor literacy skills, impacting their daily lives and opportunities, with the North East among the worst-affected regions.

Reducing isolation and building independence

Since 2013, Bringing Words to Life has worked across Newcastle, Gateshead, and Northumberland to improve literacy and communication skills. Each year, over 700 people gain confidence and skills in reading, writing, and self-expression through their programmes.

The charity uses journalistic skills to help learners rebuild confidence and express themselves. It has worked with carers, youth offending teams, teen parents, and over one hundred schools across the region, consistently demonstrating improvements in basic literacy, confidence, teamwork, and motivation.



Melanie J Cornish-Fleet, Founder and CEO Bringing Words to Life and Sam Goodlet, CEO of Northern Butterflies with learners at the Bringing Words to Life workshop.

A Creative and Supportive Learning Environment

Bernicia Foundation support provided literacy workshops for vulnerable adult learners aged 22 to 70 in Cramlington.

Bringing Words to Life delivered 96 one-hour workshops, supporting 30 local learners with a range of difficulties including dyslexia, ADHD, neurodivergence, physical disabilities, and mental health challenges. The sessions focused on practical literacy skills such as letter writing, form filling, and general communication, tailored to each learner's pace to encourage engagement.

Workshops were partly held at Northern Butterflies studio in Cramlington, a creative charity led by artist and former teacher Sam Goodlet, offering a supportive space for adults with learning disabilities and mental health needs to flourish.

The Founder and CEO of Bringing Words to Life charity, Melanie J Cornish-Fleet said:

“We believe writing with purpose is for everyone. This grant from the Bernicia Foundation allows us to reach people who often feel overlooked by traditional learning environments, giving them practical support and the confidence to make their voices heard. It's about independence, empowerment, and inclusion.”

Consultations with learners and their families have highlighted how lack of confidence and early negative experiences with education have affected many adults. Bringing Words to Life and Northern Butterflies provide a safe, supportive environment where learners can progress at their own speed and develop both skills and self-belief.

Young Women's Film Academy

YWFA provides film making activities and support services for girls and young women across the North East. In 2025 YWFA was awarded £10k from The Bernicia Foundation to deliver a Talent and Skills Programme. 35 young women attended activities including regular Future Lasses in film sessions in community settings around the North East. YWFA also provided industry work experience where some young women worked on a real film with tv crew. They undertook volunteering and attended cultural trips. Holiday club bootcamps provided hands on technical film making skills. 24 young women completed or are working towards their NCFE accreditation.



YWFA told us

“We are especially proud of the direct positive impact to our young women who regularly attend sessions as we have seen their confidence grow, their mental health improve and the group has given them a safe space and a sense of community and support.

“We have helped train the next generation of young women who may enter the film and tv industry. We have supported them to gain practical and social skills which will help them in their professional careers. Some of the main achievements we would like to highlight are - We have given paid employment opportunities to 22 young women working with us on commissions. One of the highlights from these commissions was taking 6 young women to interview film director Danny Boyle at the ‘28 Years Later’ premier. We were the first ever all female film crew he had ever met.

“We have also offered part time employment to one young woman. She is now leading on our main film project for 2026, helping to teach some of the younger women who have been attending Future Lasses.”

“Future Lasses told us “myself and others have noticed how much my confidence has grown over the last year in working on sets and with others as well as voicing my own opinions and ideas freely. I also feel a lot less afraid to ask questions when I’m unsure.” - T

“Support from the YWFA team is unmatched, I’m very grateful for the opportunities opened up to me as a result of participating in this group. Thank you.” - E

“Future lasses is an amazing experience. I feel like I have grown as a person from my time here” - A

“The Future Lasses in film helped build my confidence for entering the film industry. Having that community and knowledge eased being on film sets as I felt that I belonged too.” – J

Inspiration Grants Awarded in Round Ten



£1,000

A, Newcastle - Ballet

Towards living and dancewear costs for Ballet. Due to sport intensity, goes through 2-3 pairs of pointe shoes a month which proves very costly. The grant paid for shoes and two terms of specialised medical insurance which is a stipulated requirement by the dance school.



£1,000

B, County Durham - Kickboxing

Funding enabled participation in international kickboxing competitions, resulting in a World Championship silver medal, five national titles, and representation of Great Britain at the WAKO European Championships.



£1,000

C, Tyneside- Climbing

Grant for climbing coaching including tailored training plans. Attended training camp in Paris, a GB Climbing training camp in Austria and climbed in Munich. Competed across the UK. Won Scottish Youth Climbing Championships for the second year in a row, and Youth Plywood Masters (bouldering).



£1,000

D, Northumberland - Rowing

Cost of competing in rowing competitions. With teammates won Silver at 2025 National Schools Regatta in the coxless four. Represented Great Britain in the women's quadruple sculls at the GB vs France J16 match, helping towards Team GB's overall victory.



£1,000

E, Northumberland - Rowing

Cost of competing in rowing including British Coastal Rowing Champs in Bournemouth. With teammates won Silver at 2025 National Schools Regatta in coxless four. Represented Great Britain in the women's quadruple sculls at the GB vs France J16 match. Training with British Beach Sprints GB Aspiration team.



£1,000

F, Newcastle - Judo

Costs of approved judo suits and travel for the British Schools programme. Attended a range of national and international competitions this year, being medalled at each event.



£1,000

G, Newcastle - Judo

Grant for approved judo suits to fight in European Competitions, to travel to those competitions and those across the UK. Achieved places on England Development and GB Olympic Training squads



£1,000

H, Northumberland - Athletics

Cost of competing in athletics. Achieved a national standard in sprint hurdles, despite challenge of living far away from athletics facilities, so has significant cost and time constraints.



£1,000

I, Middlesbrough – Judo

Funding for travel, competition fees, training and equipment enabled participation in competitions that built confidence and supported the participant's development.



Inclusion Grants Awarded in Round Eleven



£1,000

J, Northumberland – Rowing

J was able to travel and commit to GB and England trials without the burden of costs. J was selected for both England Four Nations in Ireland and the GB team selection competing in Turkey.



£1,000

L Northumberland – Judo

Grant to attend British Schools National Championships and the British Judo Council Open National Championships where hoping for fourth consecutive national title.



£1,000

K, Northumberland – Gymnastics

Funding for travel and coaching camps enabled attendance at three elite gymnastics training camps, supporting preparation for the British Team, English and British Championships.



£1,000

M, Middlesbrough – Judo

Grant for competition costs and specialised training, accessing opportunities and competitions that would otherwise have been out of reach. confidence has grown noticeably, both on and off the mat. Has encouraged M to set personal goals, build self-belief, and approach challenges with a more positive and determined mindset.

Freya Burdon-Watson

Eighteen-year-old Newcastle ballet dancer Freya Burdon-Watson is pirouetting her way to national acclaim in the Central School of Ballet, thanks to support from The Bernicia Foundation's Inspiration Grant. Freya began her dance journey at just five years old, starting with tap and jazz before dedicating herself to ballet. Now in London, she's one of only 43 students selected from 500 national and international candidates, and the only female student from the North East in this year's intake.

The financial demands of living and studying in London are significant. Freya's course requires bespoke medical insurance, uniforms, pointe shoes, and tutu skirts, in addition to high transport and living costs.



The Inspiration Grant of £1,000 from The Bernicia Foundation has alleviated some of these pressures, allowing her to focus on her training. This has been especially important in the past year as the family has faced personal challenges.

Freya's mum, Nikola says: "We couldn't be prouder of her, especially during this challenging year for our family. The funding allowed Freya to travel from London, making visits less stressful financially for us, which has been a huge help."

Freya's considerable achievements include being crowned British Ballet Champion in 2016, reaching three English Championship finals, and earning special commendation at the 2022 International Dance Teachers Association Ballet Performers Theatre Awards. She was runner-up in the Scholarship Finals and awarded the prestigious Leverhulme Arts Scholarship for her talent and commitment, while also excelling academically in her at GCSEs.

Freya has faced her share of challenges along the way; managing her asthma diagnosis since childhood has only bolstered her determination and resilience. She continues to face an intense training schedule: she wears out two to three pairs of dance shoes each month, each one meticulously cared for and individually approved by her ballet teacher to meet the highest standards of practice and performance. Yet, despite these demands, Freya continues to thrive in London.

"I've just completed a hugely intensive third term and went through many pairs of pointe shoes. I'm so grateful to The Bernicia Foundation for helping to cover the rising costs of my shoes." Says Freya.

For her summer break, Freya returned to Newcastle for a week-long intensive course at Dance City, where she immersed herself in the techniques of Sir Robert Cohan, a pioneering figure often credited as the founding father of British contemporary dance. The experience culminated last Saturday in her first hometown performance since beginning her studies in London, marking a significant milestone in her artistic journey.

Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library

North Tyneside's Baby Equipment Loan Service and Toy Library (BELS) has secured £10,000 grant funding from The Bernicia Foundation to continue its vital work providing an affordable, high-quality toy and baby equipment loan service for families across the region.

Founded over 40 years ago by the Young Women's Group in Rosehill, near Wallsend, BELS has grown into a valuable service, now supporting more than 120 families.

It loans items to families at minimal cost from cots to highchairs, soft toys to puzzles, all of which are professionally cleaned, inspected and ready for use. It saves families the cost of having to buy expensive items upfront which they can return when their children outgrow them.



Originally established to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people in North Tyneside, the female-founded initiative gives members access to over 4,000 toys and educational resources for just £7 per year. This provides children with a wide variety of fun and enriching play opportunities and champions sustainability through toy reuse.

Carol Dennison, Treasurer, trustee and a founding member of BELS, said: "Our goal has always been to support families and respond to their needs.

"Initially we started this service as a way for single mothers to get hold of essential second-hand baby equipment. Today, we offer a range of new resources, such as sensory toys for children with special needs, party packs, and we have also started to run community groups for families. We've listened to what our community tells us."

The Bernicia Foundation grant has directly supported staffing costs, helping the organisation maintain its team of volunteers and paid staff, many of whom have benefited directly from the service.

With demand on the rise due to the ongoing cost of living crisis, BELS remains an essential service for many local parents. Whether it's a board game to encourage screen-free evenings or a fancy-dress costume for World Book Day or Halloween, the Toy Library offers affordable and sustainable fun and relief for many.



3. Grants We Have Funded This Year

Inclusion Grants Awarded in Round Twelve



£10,000

Sunderland Women's Centre – Women's Skills

ESOL language support and basic skills classes for 60 women.



£10,000

FareShare North East – Food & Clothing Support for Financially Challenged

Core costs to support 460 families in Ashington and Newbiggin providing over 26,000 meals



£5,000

Newbiggin Arts Centre – Community Social Activities & Clubs

Tutor costs and overheads, increasing regular participants by 12.5%



£10,000

Northumberland Community Enterprise Ltd – Advice for Financially Challenged

Core costs support to help 300 residents with housing-related advice or crisis assistance, help with tenancy loss and financial planning



£10,000

Wm. Morrison Darlington Enterprise Limited – Employability Support

Employability classes for adults, aiming to secure 6 individuals into secure paid employment



£10,000

Communities Together Durham – Refugee Advice Services

Refugee and Asylum Seeker advice project



£10,000

Pathways4All – Youth Additional Needs Support

Alternative education provision for children aged between 7-14 including family/carer support and advice sessions



£10,000

Real Lives: Real Choices – Disability/ill health Skills

Core costs to provide weekly support and activities to remove barriers to employment for 25 people with learning disabilities

Inclusion Grants Awarded in Round Thirteen



£7,550

West End Refugee Service – Refugee Skills

Skills Match staff costs to support 200 refugees over 12 months.



£10,000

Peace of Mind CIO – Refugee Advice Services

Women's Pathway to Independence Project to improve financial stability by supporting at least 60 refugee and asylum-seeking women over 12 months.



£10,000

ESCAPE Family Support Ltd – Addiction Support Skills

Trauma-informed Educator & Volunteer Coordinator for families in need of specialist support.



£10,000

Minerva Arts & Wellbeing – Prior Convictions Employment Support

Future Makers employability project: Skills, Support and Progression for Category 'A' Former Offenders Leaving the Criminal Justice System.



£10,000

Community@NE66 Charitable Trust – Community Advice Services

Towards core costs to expand youth engagement, enhance family support and improve facilities and sustainability.



£10,000

The Twisting Ducks Theatre Company CIO – Disability/ill health skills

For Learning Disability spotlight. 18 workshops to increase employability skills and acting industry work readiness.



£10,000

Three13 Training and Enterprise Ltd – Employability Support

Salary costs of a Tutor/Assessor to aid 50 people facing barriers to work to feel better connected to their community and more work ready.



£10,000

Choysez – Youth Additional Needs Support

Core costs towards additional needs youth provision support for girls.



£10,000

Mortal Fools – Young People Social Activities and Clubs

Core costs for delivery of programmes for children, young people, and families in Ashington.



£10,000

Northumberland Community and Voluntary Action – Employment Support

Towards core costs to provide increased confidence and reduced isolation by providing a personalized Key Worker, enabling 60 participants to set goals to progress into community groups & activities, volunteering, training or employment.



£5,000

St Paul's Community Partnership – Youth Social Activities and Clubs

Towards Bonnie Bairs and Taalkin' Teens Youth Clubs.



Inspiration Grants Awarded in Round Twelve



£1,000

N, County Durham - Rowing

Towards purchase or hire of a single scull boat for competitions and domestic rowing fees



£1,000

P, Northumberland – Rugby

Equipment, travel and accommodation costs to compete in Rugby



£1,000

O, Northumberland - Climbing

Competition fees and associated costs for competing in climbing



£1,000

Q, Northumberland - Squash

Coaching sessions and competition costs for Squash

Inspiration Grants Awarded in Round Thirteen



£1,000

R, Newcastle – Judo

Towards competition and travel costs to practice and compete in Judo.



£1,000

S, Sunderland - Rowing

Towards travel and accommodation costs for competitions, trials and training camps

Emma Nicholson and Esme Pugh

Emma and Esme began rowing together in 2022 and quickly formed an outstanding partnership, marked by teamwork, mentorship, and a passion for excellence. Both are huge role models within Hexham Rowing Club, sharing their knowledge with younger members as they teach “learn to row” sessions in their spare time.

Together, they have competed internationally at the GB vs France match in 2024 and won Silver at this year’s National Schools Regatta in the coxless four. In July, representing Great Britain in the women’s quadruple sculls at the GB vs France J16 match, they helped secure Team GB’s overall victory.



Future hopes and international ambitions

Emma and Esme share similar goals, aiming to continue progressing through the GB pathway and secure international medals.

Emma is currently competing in Turkey for the Beach Sprints Rowing World Championships and is making progress through the British Rowing Diploma in Sporting Excellence and ongoing GB trials. Esme, meanwhile, is about to start the GB trial process and looks ahead to further international competition and university rowing.

Their resolve and achievements embody Hexham Rowing Club’s commitment to excellence. Hexham RC coach Julia commented:

“We’re incredibly proud of Emma and Esme. Their commitment, work ethic, and sportsmanship embody what our club strives for. Both girls have achieved so much in a short time and are outstanding role models, supporting and inspiring the next generation of Hexham rowers.

The Bernicia Foundation’s support makes a huge difference, helping remove barriers that can hold back even the most talented young athletes.”

“Receiving the grant has meant I’m able to attend more events around the country and represent GB internationally. Some of the funding also goes towards training, which is essential. I’m very thankful, as without this support, I wouldn’t be able to compete for GB or spend as much time rowing,” said Emma.

Esme echoed this, adding: “The grant has helped cover race entries, travel, and accommodation costs for many events, which I’m very grateful for.”



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