

Newcastle Cultural Investment Fund Report

2025-2026



Community
Foundation
North East



Local giving. Lasting impact.

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the impact report for the Newcastle Culture Investment Fund. This is my sixth year of managing the fund and the cultural sector continues to deliver **ambitious, high quality and impactful work** for communities across Newcastle.

The Newcastle Culture Investment Fund has always been about supporting the sector to **enable residents to access culture**; as participants, as audiences, as makers and in happenstance and unexpected corners as they live their lives in this brilliant city!

In April 2025 we entered a new round of three years of core funding and the portfolio expanded to encompass 28 organisations working across a wide breadth of art forms. These venues, cultural hubs, festivals and grassroots organisations have all made a case for support that aligns to the cultural strategy of the city which can be read in full [here](#).

Their work evidences a contribution across the six themes: Health & Wellbeing, Environment, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Prosperity, Opportunity and Place. The case studies in this report give a flavour of the impact in relation to each area.

But, of course, the funding is about more than delivering against some headline targets. It is about investing in and valuing the creative sector. It is about giving people access to culture, in ways that make them feel empowered and celebrated. It also gives them space to **explore difference and find unity**, making Newcastle a healthier, happier and more prosperous place for everyone.

The fund has now been supporting the cultural ecology for almost **15 years**. Over that decade and a half, the investment has not increased, but the impact has. The stats on page 9 show cumulative figures and underline how sustained investment in infrastructure, alongside the one-off and high-profile projects delivered year on year, has enabled the city to continue placing culture at the heart of what it offers to both residents and visitors.



Jo Cundall
Senior Programmes Advisor

Grants Awarded

Core Funded Organisations	Awarded Amount
Alphabetti Theatre - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
AmberSide Trust - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£25,000
Arcadea CIO - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£15,000
balletLORENT - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£15,000
Beacon Films CIC - Viewfinder workshops to take place in Newcastle	£12,000
Boho Arts Limited - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
Cap-a-Pie Engagements - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£12,000

Core Funded Organisations	Awarded Amount
Chilli Studios (Newcastle and Gateshead Arts Studio Ltd) - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
Company of Others - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
D6: Culture Ltd - staff salaries and overheads to deliver arts activity benefitting Newcastle	£25,000
Dance North - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£15,000
Equal Arts - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£12,000
Fertile Ground Dance Ltd - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£12,000
Glow- Newcastle Cultural Education Partnership - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£15,000

Core Funded Organisations	Awarded Amount
Liberdade Community Development Trust - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£25,000
Moving Parts Arts CIO - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£25,000
New Writing North - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£15,000
North East Theatre Trust (Live Theatre) - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£15,000
Northern Print - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
Northern Roots - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£12,000
Northern Stage (Theatrical Productions) Limited - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£12,000

Core Funded Organisations	Awarded Amount
Open Clasp Theatre Company - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
Pink Lane Jazz Co-op Limited - supporting the organisation’s work with emerging artists in Newcastle	£8,000
Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children’s Books - supporting the organisation’s work in Newcastle	£20,000
The NewBridge Project - supporting the organisation’s work in Newcastle	£20,000
The Twisting Ducks Theatre Company CIO - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£20,000
The Young Women’s Film Academy CIO - supporting the organisation’s work in Newcastle	£25,000
Unfolding Theatre - supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle	£25,000
TOTALS	£500,000

Project Funded Organisations	Awarded Amount
West End Women and Girls Centre - an eight week creative writing project for 60 women from diverse backgrounds in the west end of Newcastle	£10,359
Brundibár Arts Festival - project costs for the 10th annual festival taking place in Newcastle in January 2026	£9,962
Curious Arts - expanding/diversifying the membership of ‘Curious Youth Newcastle’ by delivering a programme of inclusive outreach work in schools and colleges	£7,000
Elders Council of Newcastle - the creation of a 25th anniversary book celebrating the diverse voices of older adults in Newcastle	£12,000
Hand Of Ltd - a creative mentorship programme for 15 Looked After Children (LAC) and care leavers aged 14-25 from Newcastle	£4,300
Her Circle - weekly creative art sessions for women experiencing complex motherhood in Newcastle from June 25 to June 26	£12,000

Project Funded Organisations	Awarded Amount
High Bridge CIC - delivering a programme of artist-led events and educational materials to support 'How Rivers Think' Exhibition at Newcastle Contemporary Arts	£12,000
Skimstone Arts - delivery of legacy events to celebrate and document 18 years of Skimstone's work in Newcastle	£9,750
The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne - ClassicsFest 2026 to take place in Newcastle	£6,500
The Wembley to Soweto Foundation - support costs for 30 young people from Byker and Elswick aged 14-25 to take part in a photography and visual storytelling project	£3,550
Ouseburn Trust - towards the programming and participation opportunities at Ouseburn Festival 2025	£12,000
Scotswood Natural Community Gardens - project costs to develop creativity, stories and visual art responses to the natural environment of Scotswood Garden	£10,500
TOTALS	£109,921

Statistics

2025-2026



Number of beneficiaries

135,376



Amount awarded this year to **40** organisations, 10 new

£610k



Further funding leveraged

£1,710,607

That is **£2.80** for every **£1** spent

Celebrating 15 years

As we now enter the **15th year** of the Newcastle Cultural Investment Fund it also feels timely to celebrate all the fund has achieved. The quality and consistency of reporting has developed over the lifetime of the funding and as such the figures that follow will not be exact. It is only since 2018 that specific, and therefore comparable, data regarding beneficiary numbers and additional leveraged funding has been requested. The following is a conservative estimate gleaned from several sources:

Lifetime Figures

Since its inception in 2012, and through strategic investment of council funding of up to £600k per year:



Number of grants made

528



Size of grants made

£750-£50k



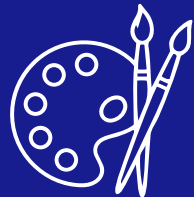
Number of people supported

789,500



Other money brought in

£18 mil



Organisations supported

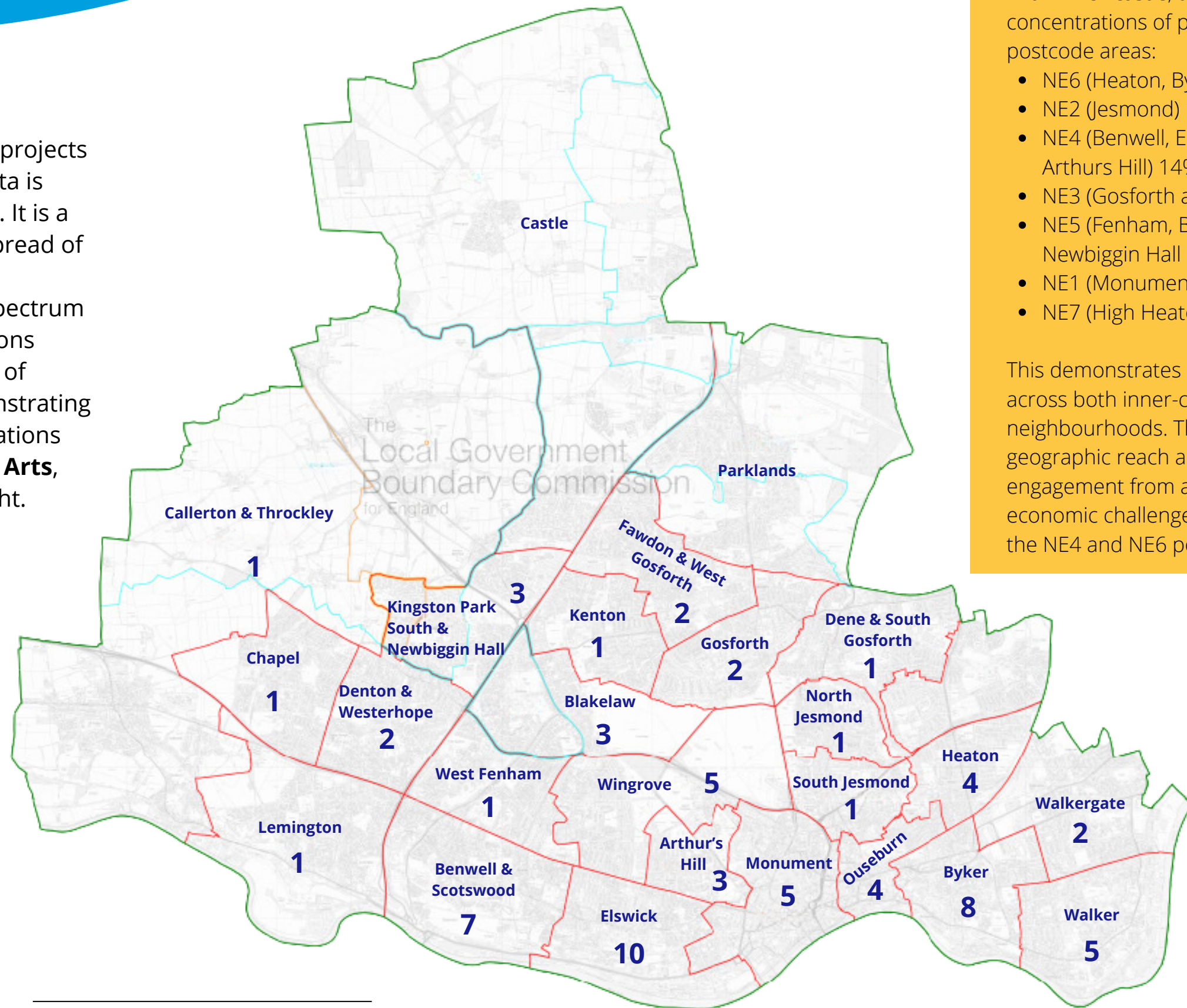
115



Above: Twisting Ducks production.

Map of Projects

This map details specific instances of projects taking place in a defined area. The data is drawn from grant monitoring reports. It is a useful visual reference to show the spread of the impact for residents, but is not exhaustive! There is a wide ranging spectrum of data collection from the organisations themselves. Some provide postcodes of participants which is helpful in demonstrating the reach that many of these organisations have. A great example of this is **Boho Arts**, demonstrated in the quote on the right.



Left: Beacon Films CIC training session.



Within Newcastle, the highest concentrations of participants are from postcode areas:

- NE6 (Heaton, Byker and Walker) 32%
- NE2 (Jesmond) 19%
- NE4 (Benwell, Elswick, Wingrove and Arthurs Hill) 14%
- NE3 (Gosforth and Fawdon) 14%
- NE5 (Fenham, Blakelaw, Chapel, Newbiggin Hall and Westerhope) 9%
- NE1 (Monument and Ouseburn) 9%
- NE7 (High Heaton) 3%

This demonstrates strong engagement across both inner-city and residential neighbourhoods. This evidences broad geographic reach and includes strong engagement from areas with known socio-economic challenges, particularly within the NE4 and NE6 postcode areas.

Beneficiary Quotes

The case studies in the pages that follow are great examples of how NCIF funding has underpinned and enabled organisations to thrive. But the fund is always about people. An, albeit informal, question the panel often ask themselves when making decisions on funding is 'who will get something that they otherwise wouldn't have access to?' So it is important to include those voices here:

This is the **only** provision that has ever worked. I'm so proud he has used this as an opportunity to **get away from the criminality** he was engaging with - **Carer of participant in the Hand of Ltd project**

The more I was singing the more I was able to **advocate for myself**, if I can have the confidence to sing in front of people, I can let them know what I need - **Chilli Studios Member**

Dance activities have personally been vital in my recovery from the trauma of a bereavement. The supportive and non-judgemental ethos means I am free to express myself. It has given me the confidence to do things I didn't think I was capable of doing such as performing. It has given me **essential social contact** and the opportunity to develop new friendships - **Over 50 participant, Fertile Ground**

This was my first time in a theatre watching a show, I really hope it's not my last.....I **thought the theatre was for posh people - I now know it's not.....** It's fantastic that the theatre give us free tickets as I'd struggle to afford this myself - **Participants from Tyne Housing project delivered at Northern Stage**

I've had issues with connecting my thoughts with my speech, but through these workshops I've developed this ability. This has boosted my **confidence in communicating** with others and allowed me to become a more engaging person. I've been able to open up emotionally to my new friends and to others in my life - **An asylum seeker participating in Boho Arts Improv sessions**

I moved to Cowgate three years ago. For one year I did nothing. I was that person who was really shy. I felt embarrassed and scared to talk to other people. Because I couldn't be myself, sometimes people would think I have no emotions. People would just tell me what to do. Because I didn't talk to people, **I felt like I wasn't included in the community. After one week of coming here, I felt different.** I have so much fun doing drama and the activities.

...I knew some children in the group already, but I have made new friends too and I enjoy their company. I've learned you can't always get your own way. You have to respect other people's opinions. **I feel safe here** and confident - **Cowgate Young Theatre Makers (Unfolding Theatre) participant**

The amazing effect working with the Northern Print team and Alex has had on my mental health and general wellbeing cannot be overstated....Their **complete acceptance of my needs** has been truly remarkable and they have always been able to guide me to finding the right home-based solutions that work well in tandem with the services they provide in the studio, making my practice sustainable in the future. Since working with them, I have been able to actually see how I can make this work as a career, which has **given me hope** for the first time in many years - **Northern Print studio member**

Case Studies

The following case studies show the breadth and depth of the creative engagements that the funded organisations provide for the residents of Newcastle. They are drawn from a mixture of core and project grants so are (edited versions of) the organisations own words.

As stated above, this is the first full year that organisations were asked to make their case for support in relation to the strategic objectives of the city’s Cultural Strategy. I have therefore used examples that can speak to each of the six themes.

It is important to note that in line with the underpinning aims of the funding, all the grantees make a case for Health and Wellbeing. In practice, almost all of the work could make a case against all of the themes.

There is an inherent cross cutting of work that, for example, creates opportunities by promoting equality, diversity and inclusion to increasing prosperity. But the following shows the proportion that have demonstrated their case for support against each of the themes.

EDI	13
Prosperity	3
Opportunity	11
Place	5
Climate	2
Not defined/ combined	6
Health & Wellbeing	40



Right: High Bridge CIC workshop in local primary school.

Environment

High Bridge CIC

£12,000 project grant towards delivering a programme of artist-led events and educational materials to support 'How Rivers Think' Exhibition at Newcastle Contemporary Arts

Listening to the Voices of the Rivers was presented at Newcastle Contemporary Art, featuring Amazonian artists alongside UK artists Zoe Walker and Neil Bromwich. Developed through a partnership between NCA, Newcastle University, the University of London’s School of Advanced Study and the Amazonart Project, the exhibition was curated by Giuliana Borea, Jamille Pinheiro Dias and Harriet Sutcliffe.

An extensive public programme included artist talks, film screenings, a symposium, weekly Spotlight Friday tours, school visits, university seminars, a publication launch and a live-streamed event from COP30 in Belém, Brazil. These activities enabled audiences to **engage directly with Indigenous artists while exploring climate change, environmental stewardship and cultural resilience.**

We exceeded our educational targets by delivering 10 workshops and engaging 242 school pupils and 202 university students across four schools and three universities. A key element was Conjuring a River, where Zoe Walker and Neil Bromwich worked with Hotspur Primary School, Ceidith Mac and Newcastle University Fine Art students to creatively explore Newcastle’s hidden Lort Burn through costume-making, performance and storytelling.

Overall, the project engaged 1,056 participants. Evaluation through teacher surveys, workshop observations and a multilingual visitor comments book demonstrated strong impact. All teachers reported that the programme supported curriculum objectives extremely well, **75% reported increased environmental awareness** among pupils, and 100% said they would return with another school group. These findings demonstrate meaningful public engagement, increased climate literacy and lasting educational impact.

The impact of the project was visible throughout the exhibition. Children’s artwork was displayed alongside Harry Pinedo’s large-scale anaconda wall drawing, creating a powerful sense of ownership, pride and achievement. Teachers reported high levels of engagement, while students benefited from opportunities to learn about biodiversity, conservation and local environmental stewardship through creative practice. Listening to the Voices of the Rivers created opportunities for students and researchers to work alongside professional artists, curators, educators, schools and community organisations. The project contributed not only to public engagement and environmental learning, but also to the development of future artists, educators, researchers and cultural practitioners.

Opportunity

balletLORENT

£15,000 per year (Year 1) towards supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle for 2025-28

Our partnerships with local primary schools have strengthened significantly over the past four years of funding through NCIF, and we are pleased to have founded a new partnership with a Specialist School, Thomas Bewick. We are working with children across all age ranges, from nursery through to yr 9/10, with many children having participated in multiple activities over the years.

Children are benefitting from our offer to schools of high-quality dance activity, including **free performances and in-school creative workshops**. Teachers and pupils have commented how inspirational the engagements have been, with increases in aspiration and participation with the arts. Benefits to our company are also significant: Children offered feedback on scenes and characterisations from our Snow White Open Rehearsals, which we were able to incorporate into the work, improving elements of the final production for all our audiences across the national Spring tour in 2026.

We are seeing an increase in engagement with our local communities out of school, offering opportunities to families to engage through our performances and film screenings (Best Worst Dances & Velveteen Rabbit Film).

We are encouraged there is better recognition and support for our work locally and an understanding that we are a hyper-local based dance theatre company, with a mission to serve our local communities as much our national audiences. More young people from our local community are attending classes and our Youth Academy on a regular basis. Families are more regularly engaging with our activity, from film screenings to classes. We are proud to be a neurodiverse friendly organisation, and that our staff are confident to support CYP with SEND. We offer our staff training in SEND and neurodiverse support and continue to make improvements to our venue and front of house engagement to support the needs of participants and audiences, including our recently refurbished Sensory Space and Garden.

We delivered two summer holiday camps for primary aged children, focussing on dance, creativity and theatre arts, with showcase events for friends and family. **It is a delight to meet such talented children and young people living locally, and we are thrilled to be able to offer them the opportunity to develop their interests and skills in dance and theatre**, in an area of the city where very little similar provision exists.

Right: local primary school children engaging in balletLORENT workshop.

Prosperity

Beacon Films CIC

£12,000 per year (Year 1) towards Viewfinder workshops to take place in Newcastle 2025-28

By equipping disabled and neurodivergent participants with in-demand digital filmmaking skills, we create opportunities for these individuals to secure **future employment in the creative industries**. These workshops provide participants with the technical skills needed to contribute meaningfully to Newcastle's cultural sector, opening pathways to employment and self-sustaining creative careers. The goals mentoring aspect of the project is key to this, with its one-to-one support, and the tailored pathways into other opportunities.

Additionally, the project's partnerships with cultural organisations across the city enhance the digital capacity of those who work there, making them better equipped to reach new audiences and expand their impact. Such cross-sector collaboration will help position Newcastle's cultural institutions as leaders in innovation and inclusivity, while also **contributing to the city's economic growth through enhanced digital literacy and creative output**.

A Case Study: Phil Hughes

Phil's background is in photography, and he first got involved with Beacon Films through a filmmaking project we delivered for North East Autism Society (NEAS). Phil says: "Since before doing anything with you, I've been an amateur photographer. So, I really love anything with cameras. One of the main things I like focusing on is camera work in that regard. But I've also really enjoyed editing things." He continues: "I'd been getting some help with finding employment from North East Autism Society... they were working with you on that workshop and recommended it to me... So that's how I found you." Following the NEAS project, Phil successfully applied for a place on Making Creativity Works, a screen industry training programme run jointly by ITV Signpost and Beacon Films.

From there, he started taking part in our Focus First workshops, which are an inclusive space for people to work collaboratively, experiment creatively and develop skills. Phil says: "It gives me an opportunity to get out and meet people, which helps build my confidence up." Phil's particular interests are in camera work, editing and grading (colour correcting the edited footage). Since taking part in Focus First, Phil has progressed into our So What Heritage project, which we run in partnership with Great North Museum, Hancock.



AmberSide Trust

£25,000 per year (Year 1) towards supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle for 2025-28

The grant’s most direct impact has been on organisational survival and strategic clarity. Business planning funded [partly] through NCIF confirmed that Side Gallery's existing building was financially unviable, saving the organisation from continuing to invest in premises that would have absorbed resources at the expense of people and programme. Rather than a crisis, this became a turning point: the **evidence gathered this year has positioned AmberSide for a more sustainable future** than it has had for some time.

We anticipated seeking a new home for the AmberSide Collection alone. Instead, through dialogue with cultural partners, consultation with our audiences, and our options appraisal it became clear that Side itself could, and should, move to a new home.

We conducted a formal options appraisal across three routes. Each route had distinct implications for Side’s organisational autonomy, financial health, visibility, programming capacity, and long term strategic growth.

Following this appraisal, the panel decided to establish Side’s curatorial office at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. This move is specific to the curatorial function of Side Gallery and is driven by the need for reduced overheads, greater visibility (Baltic receives over 350,000 visitors annually), and long-term financial sustainability



Above: AmberSide Trust documenting place at the Farrell Centre.

It is important to be clear about what this means for our Newcastle presence:

- The AmberSide Trust’s registered office remains in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- The AmberSide Collection is being housed in partnership with Newcastle University Special Collections, **keeping this nationally significant archive in the city.**
- Significant free public exhibitions, community engagement projects, and heritage activities continue to take place across Newcastle.
- Our **commitment to free public access to exhibitions** within Newcastle has not diminished. It has grown.

The year delivered substantial programming, audience engagement, and a decisive plan for long-term sustainability remain rooted in Newcastle.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Twisting Ducks

£20,000 towards supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle - Year 1 25/26

The grant has supported us to build a stronger sense of **inclusion and belonging for local people with learning disabilities and autism**, strengthening their support networks and creating opportunities for them to contribute to their community through their creativity.

Continued partnership working with Northern Stage through our NCIF-funded Spectrum group had helped us to reach new audiences and raise the visibility of artists with learning disabilities and autism in the City: 51% of the audience at our 'Hi I'm Charlie' Northern Stage performance in June had not previously seen a Twisting Ducks performance before. 100% said they would attend another performance.

Through our NCIF funded outreach work, along with involving more people from our community of interest, funding has enabled us to collaborate with new communities, not previously engaged in our work. **This has enabled our groups to explore the stories of other marginalised groups in Newcastle**, including older people and refugees, gaining new perspectives that will enrich the diversity and relevance of their performance work.

“It feels like a big step for us doing workshops with new groups, not just people with learning disabilities and autism. It's been great - **Victoria, Spectrum member**

Our artists with learning disabilities and autism facilitated creative workshops with younger people, their local learning disability community and other marginalised groups in Newcastle, exploring the social dynamics of bus travel. Content generated via the workshops will inform an immersive performance and digital story bank incorporating the stories and creative contributions of workshop participants. Performances will be staged on a static bus at community sites where the workshops took place, and at local cultural venues and festivals next year and in 2027.

Group members devised and led structured workshops to explore the theme of bus travel and to encourage participants to share their experiences and express their identities, using movement and story-telling.



The group delivered 9 workshops to 63 participants across Westgate College, Newcastle College, Thomas Bewick School, West End Refugee Service and the Elders Council. All workshops had excellent levels of engagement, and participant evaluation was highly positive.

By employing people with lived experience in creative roles, these individuals have gained increased confidence and wellbeing and helped to raise aspirations amongst their peers. For example, as a result of a commissioned film project led by our autistic film maker, one of the young project participants has been inspired to pursue a career in film making.

“I loved the idea of getting to know each other, the bonding bit, encouraged to tell stories. It was so lovely working with different people with different abilities - **Elders Council**

Left: Twisting Ducks performance.

Health & Wellbeing

Chilli Studios

£20,000 towards supporting the organisation's work in Newcastle - Year 1 25/26

Chilli Studios has continued to make a significant positive impact on the health and well-being of our beneficiaries. The consistency of our programme has helped **members develop skills and establish meaningful connections. Their support, through volunteering and participation, has become central to our delivery model.**

We provided **917 sessions** with total attendance in activities reaching **10,496** across **325 active studio members**. We use a mixed-method evaluation approach combining attendance data, observational feedback, paper and digital surveys, and our QR-based wellbeing tool to assess impact.

Out of 89 individuals surveyed about satisfaction, the services offered were rated as good or excellent across a range of indicators such as feeling optimistic about the future, being useful and able to think clearly, for being more relaxed, for being better able to deal with problems and for participation that supported their well-being.



The grant has allowed us to stabilise after a difficult funding period, helping us secure additional funding and strengthen our ability to deliver our service for years to come. We have also experienced a change in the leadership team. Secure funding and strong leadership have enabled us to move forward confidently, with improved systems in place for the future.

New partnerships have continued to grow, particularly across the Ouseburn Valley, strengthening Chilli Studios' place within the local cultural and community ecosystem.

These partnerships include:

- Ouseburn Farm
- Ouseburn Trust
- The Cycle Hub
- Tyne Housing
- The Toffee Factory
- The Biscuit Factory
- Roots and Wings
- Seven Stories
- BottleWorks
- Stepney Bank Stables
- Ouseburn Radio
- 36 Lime Street
- Cobalt Studios

These relationships help ensure that members remain connected to the wider community and that their creative work is visible beyond the studio walls.

Volunteers remain central to the life of Chilli Studios. We currently work with 18 regular weekly volunteers, supported by a further eight occasional volunteers who contribute to specific projects and events.

Many volunteers bring valuable creative skills, and six of our regular weekly programme sessions are now delivered by volunteers themselves. This reflects the strength of the community within the studio and the willingness of members to share their experience and talents with others.



We are particularly proud that six individuals have progressed through our engagement programme into paid roles, either as employees or freelance contractors through our Therapeutic Enabler pathway. This progression route demonstrates the potential for creative engagement to build confidence, skills, and employment opportunities for people who may previously have been excluded from the workforce.

The grant has allowed Chilli Studios to develop new initiatives that respond to the needs and interests of the community. One example is the Music for Mental Health project, which launched in February 2026. **This initiative brings together partner organisations to create a range of musical opportunities for people with lived experience of severe mental illness.** Activities include a choir, live karaoke, music production, and group drumming.

Left and Above: Attendees at Chilli Studios workshops.

Sector Support

Led by Colette Harrison, the Sector Support offer delivered at Community Foundation North East is an increasingly **integral part of the work that we do**. Through a programme of events, responsive interventions and mutually beneficial introductions, this work is vital to strengthening the infrastructure that supports the grassroots community organisations our funding is aimed at. Nearly all the sessions delivered are taken up by at least one Newcastle based arts organisation. But, most pertinently, the chance to cross fertilise and network with organisations from other sectors is frequently cited as an added bonus to attendance.

In 2025-26, the following sessions were offered:



8 x Time to Talk: introduction to Community Foundation North East



4 x Charing Network sessions



6x First Trusteeship Gatherings

- Diversity and Boardroom Behaviour session
- Succession Planning for Chairs and CEOs
- Taking your Charity to the Next Level – Prioritising Your Ambitions
- Taking your Charity to the Next Level – Project Planning
- Smart-phone Filmmaking Training
- Exploring Governance Options for Arts Sector Organisations

We elevated the reach of trustee recruitment for arts organisations including Pink Lane Jazz Co-op, Fertile Ground Dance Ltd and Northern Stage.

Via pro bono consultancy, Newcastle Circus Arts accessed governance guidance from ION Consulting and Igloo Regeneration supported Waygood Collective and Archives with property and lease expertise.

The Charing Network alternates between corporate and arts venues, actively bringing new audiences to Newcastle city centre performance spaces. The first event of 2026 took place at Dance City and the Trustees’ Week Charing Network will be hosted by Live Theatre.



I found [this] session really engaging and insightful, and I really enjoyed getting away from my desk for a few hours and meeting other CEOs and charity managers from across the region.



Above: Prioritising Your Ambitions workshop.

Sector Support Case Study - 'North East Culture Social' Model

The funding from Newcastle City Council also enables us to deliver bespoke, arts targeted sessions when an identified need arises. In September 2025 one such event was delivered, in partnership with Unfolding Theatre using their established 'North East Culture Social' model. The event, held at Alphabetti Theatre in June 2025 invited community organisations and creative practitioners to come together to **share learning, network and cook up ideas for future projects**. This was facilitated in response to a direct request from the sector, who wanted to be able to better understand how they could engage communities. We asked some specific questions:

What are the ingredients of a good creative project in the community?

What matters to your communities right now?

How might this inspire or shape cultural projects we might want to develop together?

Right: Arts-focused session at Alphabetti theatre.



Key to the success of the day was the fact that community organisations, arts organisations and community arts organisations were invited as equal partners. Provocations were delivered by Kelly Coates of Projects 4 Change, Natasha Haws of Mustard Stories Arts and Pao Fresnillo, community champion for Unfolding Theatre.

The event was attended by 56 people and was fully evaluated. In summing up, a rich list of ingredients was identified as the key to successful creative community collaborations:

- Going into something with the **belief and attitude that it will work** but also having the confidence to say when things aren't working
- Being flexible and adaptive
- Clear **communication** where expectations are set on both sides and roles are delegated
- Creating the optimum environment for success - a room that's **fun, encouraging and comfortable** (the importance of several cups of tea in community arts)

- Recognising that "what success looks like" is different for everyone
- Recognising the distance travelled is just as important as the proposed outcome
- Openness and **transparency**
- Allowing time for relationships to build
- Following the community's lead and providing a platform for them to have a say in the work
- Trust in the artists. Trust in the process.

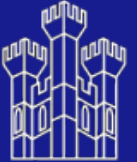
This 'wish list' has been widely disseminated and the cross fertilisation and contacts made on the day will undoubtedly be ongoing. This work is an important way that the funding can underpin and stimulate a more vibrant cultural ecology for the city. **We remain grateful to Newcastle City Council for continuing to invest in this fund.**





**Community
Foundation
North East**

Supported by

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Front cover: Image taken from North East
Culture Social session at Alphabetti Theatre.