



# 2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT

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## About us

Adapt (NE) is a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee, and a social enterprise which is managed by a trustee board of volunteers. Our trustees have a wide range of experience and backgrounds and use their expertise to steer the direction of the organisation. As a community-based organisation, Adapt (NE) provides services to people across North East England, with the aim of promoting an inclusive society.

Our aim is to improve the quality of life of disabled people who have sensory, physical and learning disabilities or mental health problems; also people who are disadvantaged in being able to access services because they live in a rural location. We work closely with the voluntary and statutory sectors to achieve this aim.

To become more self-reliant, we have developed a range of services, including provision of an enterprise hub and community cafe, whilst still holding on to our primary aims. By using our services, other organisations are assured of quality attention whilst at the same time helping us in our work.

## Review of the year - Liz Prudhoe, Director

As we look back on April 2023 to March 2024, it is reassuring to recognise we are continuing to deliver on our aims, sustainably building on our work and adding new services. This year we welcomed North Shields Primary Care Network Social Prescribing Service to our social prescribing offer.

We continued to develop Northumberland Learning Disability Network working with partner organisations and groups who provide services for people with learning disabilities. We continued to work with our partners across the North East on the 'Good Life Collaborative', a partnership for organisations working for people who are learning disabled to develop new services.

It feels a good while since the COVID-19 pandemic, although we recognise that COVID is still very much active. It is pleasing to witness our offices being a hub of activity again with lots of people returning to face to face meetings, although it is fair to say that work patterns have changed and there is greater flexibility for staff.

Café @ Burn Lane has welcomed customers old and new; it has however, felt the impact of the cost of living crisis due to the rising cost of food. Nevertheless, we have worked hard to keep prices in the cafe as low as possible.

We feel we have lots to look forward to in 2024/2025 and plan to continue what we are doing and keep developing services as we go. I wish to record my thanks to all of our board members for their continued support and guidance, and to our staff who are committed to their roles and work hard throughout the year.

## A word from Lorraine Hershon, Chair

It is reassuring that after a bumpy start, we have had a solid year here at Adapt (NE). We have expanded our social prescribing offer and developed more partnerships through the Learning Disability Network. We are proud of the range of services we are able to deliver to communities in Northumberland and further across the North East, as part of our mission to create more inclusion for people in the region.

On behalf of the board, I pass on our thanks to Liz and the staff team for all of their efforts over the past 12 months.

# Healthwatch Northumberland

Healthwatch Northumberland is the independent champion for NHS and social care across the county. Healthwatch was introduced under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is part of a network of over 150 local Healthwatch, supported at national level by Healthwatch England.

As an independent statutory body, Healthwatch Northumberland has the power to make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to public feedback and improve standards of care.

We use a range of approaches to ensure that as many people as possible can share their experience of health and social care services and can get reliable information about what help is available.

Full details of our work and impact is available in our Annual Report. This is available online or by calling us on 03332 408468. This year 12,000 people helped to improve health and social care services by sharing their experiences with us, or came to us for clear advice and information about topics such as mental health and the rising cost of living.

We published 20 reports this year. This included a detailed look at Health Visiting Services. We worked with people who receive support from Adult Social Care and Northumberland County Council to ensure that service improvements reflect what people want.

By using a wide range of approaches we can ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to provide us with insight about their experience of health and care services.

During 2023/24 we have been available by phone, text and email, via our website and social media channels, attended virtual and face-to-face meetings of community groups and forums, plus we hold five drop-in sessions per month in community locations across Northumberland.

We also hold a monthly online session where we invite a guest speaker from a health charity or support organisation to talk about a particular issue or health condition. These free sessions continue to be popular with members of the public and professionals.

We have a dedicated and growing team of volunteers who are out and about listening to what is working well and what needs improving in our communities. If you want to do the same then please get in touch.



# Advocacy for Parents

Advocacy for Parents is a pilot advocacy provision, delivered in partnership with Northumberland County Council Children's Services.

It is designed to provide support for parents who Children's Services believes would benefit from the service and who are subject to the Child Protection process. This can include parents with a learning disability or who may be neurodivergent.

Parents who meet the criteria and agree to advocacy support are referred to the service by their social worker. The advocate will then meet with the client, attend meetings with them where necessary, support them to understand the process and to help ensure that their views and wishes are heard, during what can be a very difficult time for the parent.

Although Adapt (NE) had trialled Parent Advocacy previously, this service began in its current form in mid-2023 and has supported around 40 parents through various stages of the Child Protection process, in some cases from pre-birth to the end of the court process. Other cases may be supporting a client through a parent assessment.

We have received positive feedback from the service, and on the whole, clients tell us that having an advocate has been helpful to them.

*"...my advocate was extremely kind and helpful, I would have found it very difficult to cope without his support."*

# Northumbria PCN Social Prescribing Service

The Northumbria Primary Care Network Social Prescribing Service has been delivering support to registered patients for two and a half years since it was set up in April 2022.

The team continues to consist of two Social Prescribers, one Social Prescribing Link Worker and one Team Leader. This team supports demand for the service and the NHS England emphasis on social prescribing as part of its personalised care agenda within Northumberland.

The service offers support for emotional wellbeing, finance and benefits, employment and skills, social networks, family, parenting and relationships, housing, and healthy lifestyles, and continues to support clients with issues around cost-of-living.

Whilst the Social Prescribing Service receives referrals from GP practices, it also accepts self-referrals and partner agency referrals and we are continuing to broaden the range of agencies from which we receive referrals. During the year the service received 278 individual referrals with the main issue for referrals being emotional wellbeing, followed by finance and benefits issues.

To access the Social Prescribing Service individuals need to be aged 18 years or above, be a registered patient at one of the five Northumbria Primary Care Network GP practices, require support with non-clinical issues that are impacting their health or wellbeing, and would like to engage with a social prescribing approach to improve their wellbeing.

# West Northumberland Living Well Service

The West Northumberland Living Well Coordination Service was set up in January 2020 and began taking referrals from an initial group of three West Northumberland GP practices in February 2020. The service now accepts referrals from 12 GP practices across West Northumberland.

The demand for the service, and the NHS England emphasis on social prescribing as part of its personalised care agenda, allowed for expansion of the team to six Living Well Coordinators. There has been some change in the team over recent months. In January 2024 there were four Living Well Coordinators in post, reducing to two in April, increasing to four in July and there are now three.

The service works with anyone aged 16 years and above and accepts self-referrals and partner agency referrals. The service offers support for:



During 2023/2024 the Living Well Coordination Service received 721 individual referrals, with the main issue for referrals being emotional wellbeing.

The service has focused on recruitment, raising awareness in the community and with local and regional services. In addition, we have attended The PCN FarmFit Project to raise awareness with, and offer support to farmers, and also to raise smoking cessation awareness.

# North Shields Social Prescribing Service

Due to the success in delivering our social prescribing services for patients of West Northumberland and Northumbria Primary Care Networks GP practices, Adapt (NE) was commissioned by North Shields Primary Care Network to provide its social prescribing service. We inherited a fantastic team of Social Prescribers to complement our existing teams.

# Core services

## Transport

The last 12 months have been very busy for our transport service. Numbers of passengers travelling on the Dial-a-Ride routes have stayed consistently high. The two new routes from Whittonstall into Hexham and Byrness into Hexham are busy, with numbers regularly close to full capacity. Passengers have said that the services are very important to them, helping them to do their shopping but also socially, as a way to meet other people.

Our other Dial-a-Rides continue to help people across the county. Our Blanchland into Hexham and Allenheads into Hexham routes continue to be popular and often run at nearly full capacity. Passengers say how helpful the drivers are and how the Dial-a-Rides help them to get out and about in safety. We also run Prudhoe and Corbridge Dial-a-Rides which continue to be very popular with passengers using the services on a regular basis.

In the last year we have provided transport for The Charlotte Straker Project, with regular outings to the theatre and day trips to the coast.

## Getabout

This year we received over 30 requests for help through the Getabout Scheme. The requests have been varied and from across the county.

In the spring we were asked to help someone with learning disabilities in South East Northumberland. They had a placement with a small business and had been using public transport to get to work. Unfortunately the local bus service is very unreliable, so Getabout was asked to help with transport options. We connected them to a volunteer driver to get them to work and they are now delighted with the help and support they've had from the service.

In July we helped a Tynedale resident who had an appointment at Wansbeck General Hospital. They were advised that they would be able to get patient transport but this was not the case. A Getabout volunteer driver was able to take them to their appointment,

Some of the requests we get are from people who feel socially isolated. We were able to connect someone who had recently moved to a remote area to our Dial-a-Ride Service, which they now use to travel to Bellingham or Hexham each week.



## Wheelchair Loan Scheme

The wheelchair loan scheme continues to be very popular, with requests from all over the region, plus quite a few holidaymakers and visitors from overseas. A couple from North America travelled to the North East to visit an elderly relative. To make the visit easier we were able to loan them a wheelchair to help the family get out and about together.

We have received donations totalling £500 for the last financial year. This helps with maintenance of the equipment plus new additions, which enables us to continue providing this greatly appreciated service.

## Hexham Enterprise Hub

Since October 2014, when our first tenant West Northumberland Food Bank moved in, all nine business units have been fully occupied. Although we have seen interest rates rise since 2022, the steady rental income from the units has helped offset this increase and enabled us to fund other activities that are beneficial to the community.

We receive enquiries at least every month as to whether there are any units available to rent, although we look forward to having a long lasting and happy business relationship with each of our present tenants.

## Cafe @ Burn Lane



Like many food and hospitality businesses in the UK, our community café has faced not only the challenges of rising food and electricity costs, but also of customers being more careful with how they spend their money.

Going forward we are exploring different avenues of attracting people to the café. This includes our aim to help combat social isolation and loneliness in people living in rural areas of our county.

# Accounts 2023-24

This year, April 2023 - March 2024, saw an income of £976,355 and an expenditure of £982,465 which has resulted in a small deficit of £6,110. However, after the bumpy start to the year we feel on the whole that this has been another strong financial year.



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