



# Annual Report

| 2024-25



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[adapt-ne.org.uk](https://adapt-ne.org.uk)



## 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, whilst still holding on to our primary aims.

## A message from outgoing Director, Liz Prudhoe

As my final words as Director of Adapt (NE), it feels exactly the right time for Adapt (NE), and myself, to be stepping aside and be welcoming our first Chief Executive Officer, Hannah Harniess.

I joined Adapt (NE) in 1997 and took over what was then the Coordinator role in 2002, so a total of 28 years with the organisation, which I never imagined in the beginning. However, backed by very supportive chairs and boards and working with very committed staff it has been interesting, challenging and in the most part fun. I never thought in April 1997 I would be here in 2025. However, I believe because I enjoyed the role and it developed through time I had very few days when I didn't wish to come to work. I wish Adapt (NE) and everyone involved all the best for the future.

## A word from Lorraine Hershon, Chair

The context in which charities are operating continues to be challenging in terms of finances and demand for services. Despite this, Adapt (NE) continues to deliver for local communities, acting responsively and innovatively to changes and challenges we have faced.

During 2024/25 it has been encouraging to see our Social Prescribing offer develop, supporting more people to thrive, in a holistic and person-centred way. We have been delighted to secure the Advocacy contract for Northumberland and our skilled team of Advocates are working to support people to express their views, make informed choices, and secure their rights within health and care services. Healthwatch Northumberland has continued to play a significant role in championing local voice and influencing NHS care services.

Our partnerships continue to thrive, including our collaboration with EveryTurn on mental health outreach and a joint initiative with the Good Life Collaborative on independent travel training.

Whilst we are not complacent, we remain deeply proud of the range of services we are able to deliver to communities in Northumberland and 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 particular thanks to Liz as she moves on from her role as Director, and we welcome Hannah as new CEO. Finally, thanks to the teams who deliver the work and who make our organisation what it is.

# 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. Each local authority must commission a Healthwatch function and Adapt (NE) is grateful to Northumberland County Council for the continued support it has provided since Healthwatch Northumberland was established.

As an independent statutory body, Healthwatch Northumberland can make sure NHS leaders and other decision makers listen to public feedback and improve standards of care. Thanks to continued support from Northumberland County Council, we've been able to listen, act, and make a difference.

## Spotlight on Audiology Services

We asked people what their experience was of using audiology services provided by Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals. Over 60% of patients responding were unhappy with recent changes to the service. We heard repeated concerns about waiting times, the distances patients they had travel to collect hearing aid batteries as well as appointments with audiologists. This was a particular hardship for people in the rural North and West of the county. Waiting times to be seen after referral by a GP were also problematic and people were confused about how and where to access support with hearing loss.

### Driving change through feedback

We told Newcastle Hospitals about these issues. Despite service pressures, they responded with a clear improvement plan: better communication, new clinic locations, and streamlined patient pathways. The biggest improvement was a new partnership with national hearing loss charity, RNID. The charity is providing local clinics where people can collect batteries and talk about their hearing loss. For some people this replaces a 100 mile round drive or bus journey.

Newcastle Hospitals said "We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Healthwatch Northumberland and key service user groups over the past few months. This has been invaluable in exploring the key themes and concerns outlined in the report. The feedback we've had has been insightful and we are eager to build on this progress. Our goal is to establish a user group that will play an integral role in shaping the future direction of our service, ensuring that it meets the evolving needs of the population we serve."

## SMI Outreach Service

Our outreach workers support people living with mental illness who are eligible for physical health checks but who have not accessed these. This includes adults living with schizophrenia, psychosis and bipolar disorder.

We recognise the individual circumstances and experiences of our service users and the Outreach Service is designed to work with service users who did not respond to the health check invitation, to inform them about the benefits of the physical health check and to support them in accessing the services they are entitled to.

Furthermore, the SMI Outreach Service aims at connecting individuals to their community via link work. Within the last year the service has supported 125 service users in completing their appointments with 90% showing positive/no changes.

# Advocacy

We are pleased that Adapt (NE) successfully regained the Statutory Advocacy contract in February 2024. We welcome back the dedicated Advocates who previously worked on this contract. Adapt (NE) now provides Statutory Advocacy across Northumberland, offering the following services.

## **Independent Mental Health Advocacy**

Supports individuals who are detained under the Mental Health Act or subject to certain treatments. Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHAs) help people understand their rights and ensure their views are heard regarding their care and treatment.

## **Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy**

Assists people who lack the capacity to make specific decisions about serious medical treatment or changes in accommodation or safeguarding. Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCAs) represent the person's best interests when there are no family or friends available to consult.

## **Paid Relevant Person Representative**

Provides advocacy for individuals under a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) authorisation. The Paid Relevant Person Representative (RPR) ensures the person's rights are upheld and that they are supported to challenge their detention if appropriate.

## **Rule 1.2 Representative**

Appointed under the Court of Protection rules to represent individuals who lack capacity during legal proceedings. This role ensures the person's voice is heard and their rights are protected in court.

## **Care Act Advocacy**

Supports individuals who have substantial difficulty in being involved in assessments, care planning, or safeguarding processes under the Care Act. Advocates help ensure the person's wishes and feelings are considered.

## **General Advocacy**

Provides support for individuals who need help expressing their views, making decisions, or accessing services. This can include help with housing, benefits, or navigating health and social care systems where there is no other service to support them. It is short term and issue based.

We currently have approximately 430 cases across a team of nine.

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### **Feedback from professionals**

"You would fight the person's corner."

"You are an excellent advocate."

### **Feedback from service users**

"Thank you for all your support."

"Thank you for caring and for everything you do for me. I really appreciate it."

# Northumbria PCN Social Prescribing Service

The Northumbria Primary Care Network (PCN) Social Prescribing Service was established in April 2022. The team currently consists of two full-time Social Prescribers who work holistically to help patients with non-clinical issues that impact their health and wellbeing.

The Social Prescribing Service receives referrals from GP practices but also accepts self-referrals and partner agency referrals. To be eligible, individuals must be 18 years or older and be a registered patient at one of the five Northumbria PCN GP practices.

## Areas of support

- **Emotional wellbeing:** Referrals for mental health support within GP practices and external services; provision of mental health support contacts
- **Finance and benefits:** Securing hardship grants (i.e. money, fuel vouchers, household equipment), arranging food parcels, referring to debt teams, signposting for benefit form completion, assisting with blue badge applications
- **Employment and skills:** Referrals and signposting to employability projects, volunteering opportunities and training providers
- **Social networks:** Signposting to local groups and activities, such as Northumberland Recovery College, with a member of the team accompanying patients if needed
- **Family, relationships, and parenting:** Referrals and signposting to family hubs, North East Law Centre, Carers Northumberland and domestic abuse services
- **Housing:** Support with housing applications, supporting letters and Discretionary Housing Payment applications
- **Healthy lifestyles:** Referrals to the Exercise on Referral Scheme, Health Trainers and Northumberland Recovery Partnership

The service has received some excellent feedback from patients and continues to make a real difference to improving health and wellbeing.

# North Shields Social Prescribing Service

The North Shields Social Prescribing team supported patients across the region with their social and emotional wellbeing, to find new employment, increase confidence and motivation, and support them with housing and finances, along with other non-medical issues. Over 800 referrals were received this year, with more than 730 discharged from the service.

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## Patient feedback

“Thank you very much for all your kindness, support, understanding and empathy during a difficult time in my life.”

“Your smile every time you greeted me for my appointments made me feel calm and relaxed.”

“I have nothing bad to say about the service at all, you have been so helpful, and I really appreciate it.”

“You have supported me a lot throughout my situation with the housing and I am very grateful.”

“After working with the Social Prescribing Service, I now have faith in services again and feel more confident in engaging with services for further care.”

# West Northumberland Living Well Service

At the Living Well Service, we've been hard at work behind the scenes to enhance our operations, making it easier for clients to receive timely appointments as soon as they're referred to us. We understand how challenging it can be, especially for those who are vulnerable or isolated. That's why we're preparing winter contingency packs filled with essential resources to help people access food, fuel, and support during the colder months. We're also committed to keeping care coordinators in the loop about our service users' unique situations, ensuring everyone involved knows how to best support each individual.

## Case study

An individual presented to the service, with significant distress after sudden homelessness.

The Living Well Service liaised with the Housing Officer, helped with homelessness applications, supported them to raise a mandatory reconsideration of PIP, and sought advice on housing options. The outcome was that the client successfully challenged the PIP decision, found settled accommodation and accessed subsidised travel to connect with their social network which is hundreds of miles away.

This is just one example of the complexity presented to our social prescribing team, who work in an inclusive, holistic and skilled way to support and signpost people to the services and support they need.

## Travelling with Confidence

Travelling with Confidence is a project which started in March 2025, delivering targeted travel training to adults with learning disabilities. The project is funded for two years by Motability Foundation. Travelling with Confidence is delivered in partnership with five other organisations across the North East. All partners are delivering the same activity to beneficiaries in their geographic areas, with Adapt (NE) covering Northumberland. This project came about due to transport emerging as a recurring barrier for people with learning disabilities, resulting in limited opportunities and an impact on quality of life. Evidence showed that this situation was compounded by Covid, with many individuals not going back to using public transport since pre-Covid.

We worked with Open Awards to get the course accredited, writing a Level 2 and Level 3 travel training course. 21 individuals with learning disabilities have so far completed Level 2. This aims to give learners the ability to travel with support, through practical and theory sessions. To develop their skills further, one-to-one travel support has been offered, with nine one-to-one journeys having taken place so far. We have received positive feedback about the course, with one individual stating "I really enjoyed the course, it was interesting and wish I could have done this when I was a lot younger."

Another aspect of the project is supporting people with learning disabilities to form a regional Travel Champions Network. The aim of this is to tackle travel barriers at a grassroots and strategic level. We have recently been creating a Quality Check Framework, which we will utilise to feed back to the transport sector. From there, we can work with the transport sector to co-design solutions to transport and improve inclusive practice.

# Core services

## Transport

This year has been a rather challenging one for our transport service; with the aging of our buses we are facing increased maintenance costs.

However, we recognise how important our Dial-a-Ride services are for many of our passengers. This service helps people not only to do their weekly shopping and access other services, but they are also a great way to get out and socialise.

With this in mind, we are currently exploring alternative ways to fund our community transport scheme and hope we can continue to provide this much wanted and needed service.



## Wheelchair Loan Scheme

Our wheelchair loan scheme has grown rapidly. We received several donations of wheelchairs, mobility aids and motorised chairs allowing us to offer our loan service to more people than ever before.

A new digital management and tagging system have revolutionised the efficiency of the scheme to ensure that our fleet remains trackable and well maintained.

£765 was donated by people borrowing wheelchairs through the year, which has supported maintenance of the fleet, improvements in our storage facility, plus awareness campaigns to better promote the service to those who may benefit from the scheme.

## Hexham Enterprise Hub

The Hub here at Adapt (NE) continues to have full occupancy across all nine units, with our newest tenant in place since 2023.

We have continued to keep the rent accessible for a mix of for profit and non-profit tenants.

# Cafe @ Burn Lane

Our community cafe, Cafe @ Burn Lane, has been operating since 2018, following investment from Northumberland County Council. Since the opening of the café, we have provided a welcoming and inclusive space for the local community as well as some additional bespoke funded projects over the operating period. The space has become well loved by many members of the community, with regular customers to the space. However, in common with peers across the hospitality industry, the café has faced increasing challenges with its financial viability due to the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, rising costs, and changing demand on the café services.

In 2024/25 this resulted in operating losses of around £10,000, a gap which was met by core charity funding but which we cannot sustain going forwards. We will be exploring best use of this space during 2025/26, in partnership with our funders and partners.

## Accounts 2024-25

Adapt (NE) had a successful year supporting communities across Northumberland, delivering over £1 million of services and strengthening our role as a trusted local charity. Despite a £63,000 deficit, we remain financially healthy with total funds of £593,891 and strong unrestricted reserves of £440,471 to support our future plans.

With a committed team and thriving partnerships, we look forward to the year ahead with confidence.



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