



Linskill and North Tyneside
Community Development Trust

Connecting People, Enhancing Lives

Annual Report 2024 – 2025



Chief Executive's Introduction



At the time of writing, I am reflecting on yet another very busy and productive year for the Trust and for our three community hubs. In this year's report you will find lots of information about our many achievements as well as some of the challenges we have faced. However, here are some thoughts from myself as I look back on all that has happened this year.

During the year we have made further changes and improvements to Linskill Centre, the largest and busiest of our three hubs which receives around 22,000 visits each month. We have improved accessibility with the provision of new entrances and ramps making life easier for centre users. We have also improved security measures with the installation of new fob-controlled fire doors and CCTV. Additionally, we have continued to cut our energy usage and costs and reduce carbon emissions by securing funds to install a further 190

solar panels, two air source heat pumps and 150 more LED lights. In this regard we are extremely grateful to all our funders including National Lottery Community Fund/Awards for All, BEST, and Big Issue Invest (via NECA).

We are also grateful to Kellett Fund and Sir James Knott Trust for the grants they have given to support our Community Programme staffing costs, ensuring that we can continue to deliver all the activities provided at the Centre for older people and adults. To ensure the community programme continues to meet centre users' and community needs, staff carried out a Focus Group about the current community programme provision. This gave us useful information about the types of activities people want, what times they would like to do them and what they would like us to do more of. While we may not be able to immediately respond to all of this, the information will certainly help us to identify

what additional funding we may need to secure to make all of this happen.

During the year, our Shed Project, which is a valued part of our community programme, has continued to thrive and there is a growing demand and long waiting list for its services. We have not been able to respond to this level of demand due to the space available in the current shed premises. However, one of our long-term tenants, North Tyneside Arts studio, advised us that they would be leaving for pastures new in spring 2025 and would no longer need the arts studio. As a result, we have worked to secure funds and loan finance to allow us to revamp this space into three units during next year, which will give the shed a newer and much larger operating base from September 2025.

As an organisation we constantly strive to improve what we do by reviewing not just our activities and facilities but also our own systems and structures. This year we have introduced a new Operations Subgroup. This will improve how we report compliance across all three of our community hubs to the Board who have overall responsibility for our charity. We have also added a new Environment Subgroup to report on our environmental achievements. Finally, we have re-established the Marketing Subgroup to create a marketing plan, track marketing initiatives and kick start public fundraising activities.

One of our commitments as an organisation, is to look beyond ourselves and work in partnership with others wherever possible. This year we have been working closely with both North Tyneside Council

and North Tyneside Voda as well as many other local voluntary sector organisations to pull together plans and funding applications for North Shields 800th anniversary year in 2025. We are proud to be a North Shields based organisation supporting local people and we are happy to support wider events and initiatives which celebrate the town.

Government policy decisions have had some impact upon our organisation. The increases to employers National Insurance contributions announced this year will impact next year's budget. As a result, we have had to give careful thought to our staffing structure moving forward. While we have avoided significant redundancies, nonetheless we have had to do some restructuring of posts and hours to get next year's budget to work. The changes in the provision of free government funded hours for nursery/early years provision has also had an impact on our nursery, which has a waiting list and received a very positive Ofsted report in May.

Finally, I want to recognise all of those important people who have made it possible for us to do and achieve so much this year: Our dedicated, enthusiastic Senior Managers and staff who work day-to-day to ensure our buildings, activities and services run smoothly and meet the needs of our communities; Our Board members who ensure we achieve our charitable aims and set the direction for everything we do; Our volunteers who quite simply help make everything possible.

Simeon Ripley *Chief Executive*

Community Programme

The Trust's Community Programme has two key elements:



A family programme that provides local families with quality early years education via Linskill Nursery, and a weekly timetable of family activities to support family life.



An adult programme with a specific focus on over 55's with a range of activities to support physical health and emotional wellbeing.



Family Programme

Linskill Nursery is an 88 place Ofsted registered childcare provider, providing care and education for children aged six weeks to five years. An experienced and dedicated nursery team work across five bespoke rooms, each specifically resourced and set up to meet the developmental needs of the different age groups.

An Ofsted inspection took place in May 2024 which gave the nursery a 'Good' rating, with an excellent inspection report. The report highlighted the nursery's key strengths including partnerships with parents, the safeguarding culture, and an ambitious and exciting curriculum for children.

Key features of the nursery curriculum included learning through movement and in particular learning in the outdoors, developing environmentally sustainable practices, nature inspired learning and connecting with the local community. During the year two early years practitioners embarked on their Level Three Forest School leader training which has enabled forest school sessions to take place both locally at Northumberland Park and onsite at Linskill Centre in the Wild Garden. Forest school sessions and nature-based learning allows the children to explore wildlife and biodiversity, have real hands-on experience of using tools, and experience play in all weathers. This helps create resilient, independent, curious and confident learners.



This year the green fingered nursery children's produce included potatoes, onions, beetroots, carrots, strawberries, and raspberries. The children planted, cultivated, harvested, ate, and cooked with their home-grown produce. This aspect of the curriculum raised children's environmental awareness including the importance of reducing

food miles and packaging. It also supported the delivery of the Personal, Social and Emotional strand of the curriculum as the children learned how to care for something to make it grow.



The Nursery developed a new nurture garden to the front of the building, utilising an unused section of land, making an additional safe space specifically for babies to play and explore. Fencing has created a small enclosure in which the children can explore lawn, plants and windchimes.

The intergenerational project continued, and children of all ages visited the adjacent assisted living complex, enabling the children and residents to interact with each other. The children visited weekly and shared arts, crafts, stories and songs. The benefits for both the older people and the children were evident to see.

Bill's Book Barn also opened this year, an outdoor summerhouse filled with all things to promote

young children's literacy! Thanks to a kind memorial donation from one of the nursery families, Bill's Book Barn was utilised by all nursery children who had access to a range of both fiction and non-fiction books. It has also proven to be a favourite place for small group story time.

During this year the Government introduced more funded hours for families with children from nine months. This is welcome news for families, providing opportunities to return to work and making childcare and education more affordable. From September 2025, nearly 100% of the children attending Linskill Nursery will be eligible for up to 30 hours of funded childcare.



Children and Young People

As part of our family provision, the Trust provided a weekly programme of fun activities for families with children under four years. This is designed to meet the developmental needs of children from the youngest infants through to pre-school age. These activities also create opportunities for peer support and friendships, contributing to positive parental mental health. Activities included a rolling programme of infant massage to support healthy attachments, a weekly baby & toddler group and sensory play sessions, in a bespoke, unique on-site sensory room.



The Trust also continued to offer weekly youth provision, The Hot Chocolate Club, at Battle Hill Multi Use Centre for young people aged 11-16 years olds. This once-a-week evening session provides diversionary activities to reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the area. Approximately 18 young people per week attended the sessions, with gaming, sports and cookery popular choices of activity. Sessions on knife crime and county lines have taken place with the support of the local police to educate young people and support community cohesion.



The Adult Programme

It was a busy year for the Adult Programme, which engaged with approximately 6000 adults.

This programme aims to improve mental health and wellbeing by following the 'five ways to wellbeing' model, providing opportunities for people to:

- KEEP ACTIVE
- KEEP LEARNING new skills and gain knowledge
- CONNECT with others to form friendships and establish social networks
- TAKE NOTICE and be present in the moment
- GIVE to others and practice acts of kindness

A core programme of weekly and monthly activities included: Socials, creative/craft sessions, reading/creative writing groups, film club/book club, Tai Chi, Cycling, and Pilates.

Participants also enjoyed many one-off activities such as visits out, walks, and talks including:

- A day trip to Keswick
- A visit to Stephenson Railway Museum
- A visit to Belsay Hall gardens and castle
- A trip to Blyth Battery
- A Christmas Craft fayre





Shedders – Linskill Shed



for the ICB and is held in high regard by referring agencies and organisations, such that Shed places are always in high demand. The Shed continues to be a safe place where friendships are made, skills and experience are shared and learnt, a routine is provided for participants, and health and wellbeing is openly talked about to improve attendees' quality of life wherever possible.

The Shed has eight registered volunteers who support its activities, while there are around 20 Shedders in total who attend the Shed across the week. The Shed runs all year round and with additional funding we are expecting to expand this by September 25 to meet ongoing demand.

The Shed also offers volunteer led community workshops for local people to come and try their hand at their own woodwork project.

The Shed project is funded through the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and provides members of the local community (predominantly men, but not exclusively), with access to a converted space which offers woodwork, with the aim of upskilling, reducing social isolation, and improving health and wellbeing. A Woodwork Supervisor is employed by the Trust to oversee the operation of the Shed, while there are also several volunteers who share their skills and knowledge to support the delivery of the shed's objectives. The Shed is considered a flagship



Cycling Programme

The cycling programme continued to be funded by Big Bike Revival. This programme supports people by:

- getting people active as part of a healthy lifestyle
- connecting people with others with a cycling interest helping to reduce social isolation
- teaching new skills
- raising confidence
- encouraging sustainable ways to travel to support lowering carbon emissions locally.

Cycling activities have included:

- cycling for beginners – Couch to 20k
- improvers and returners to cycling
- five challenge bike rides
- five Dr Bike sessions providing free service and safety checks for cyclists
- skills sessions such as learning about gears, puncture repair and route planning.

A total of 75 UK Cycling activities were offered with a total of 506 sessions delivered, and 94 individual participants taking part in rides, volunteering and planning and review sessions.



There are seven cycle volunteers, three who completed their ride leader training, and five trained as emergency first aiders.

The Linskill Cycling Programme is a great demonstration of how Linskill Trust supports the local community to lead physically active, healthy lifestyles.

A key development this year has been the creation of a legacy cycling group. This is a newly formed group who have been supported by Linskill Trust to set up a new and independent group for more advanced and confident riders. This is a great accolade, which demonstrates the success of the Cycling programme.

A key partnership this year was developed with Suez, which has led to North Tyneside Council donating

bikes to Linskill Trust that have been salvaged from the tip. These bikes are made safe and fit for purpose by the volunteers from Dr Bike. The Trust then hosts bike events where the upcycled bikes are offered to the public in return for donations to Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust to support our charity.

Another key achievement has been the collaboration with Deaf Awareness, a small charity who support those who are Deaf and hard of hearing. A group of people who are Deaf were enabled to take part in rides with grant money funding a British Sign Language interpreter.

And finally, there was a great accolade for the Cycling Programme Project Worker, Lucy Fenwick, who was nominated and recognised by "We Are Cycling UK" as one of the top 100 women in cycling!



Volunteers

The Trust has continued to be supported across the various departments by approximately 45 volunteers who gave their time, knowledge and skills to supporting our organisation's work. This included the Upcycle Garden, cycling, Linskill Nursery, craft groups, The Shed, and more. In a typical month the volunteers collectively give around 500-600 hours of their time. Volunteers have varied motivations for volunteering which include: wanting to give back to the local community; keeping busy after retirement; sharing knowledge and skills with others; raising confidence.

Celebrating Our Volunteers

This year, we were delighted to host a special celebration to thank our amazing volunteers, made possible with the support of Newcastle Building Society. Their generosity helped us enjoy delicious food and fantastic entertainment, including live music and table magic from. Feedback from our volunteers was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing how valued and appreciated they felt.



Buildings and Bookings

The Trust is delighted that Casual Room Hire service has performed exceptionally well over the year, with over 5,700 bookings recorded. A wide variety of customers continue to use the spaces at Linskill Centre for training sessions, workshops, craft classes, fitness groups, and much more, demonstrating the Centre's appeal as a go-to community venue. This consistent level of demand highlights the flexibility and accessibility of the Trust's facilities for both personal and professional use.

The Events Department has also enjoyed another highly successful year, proudly supporting twelve couples in planning and celebrating their weddings. Feedback from all events remains overwhelmingly positive, with customers consistently praising the Trust's dedicated staff, the charm of this heritage building, the beautiful outdoor garden, and the superb catering services. The department's unwavering commitment to exceptional customer service and a warm, welcoming environment continues to establish the Centre as a popular choice for weddings, parties, and other celebrations.

Café 32 has continued to serve as a vibrant and welcoming hub within the Centre. It attracts a diverse customer base including those attending classes, meetings, or training, and members of the community dropping in for a coffee and a chat. In addition to its regular offerings, Café 32 also provides meals for the on-site Nursery, buffets for

room hirers, and full catering for weddings and other events. Whether dining in or taking food to go, customers continue to consistently enjoy the friendly atmosphere and high-quality service that Café 32 delivers.



Operations and Marketing

It's great to report that during this year the Trust has continued to strengthen our role as a trusted and inclusive community organisation. Staff teams across Facilities and Building Operations, Marketing and Communications, and Environmental Sustainability have worked collaboratively to maintain high standards, respond to change, and deliver meaningful progress in line with our organisation's charitable aims. The Team's focus has remained on improving infrastructure, optimising engagement, and embedding sustainable practice across the Trust's buildings and work areas.

In 2024–2025, the work carried out by Facilities and Operations focused on making the Trust's buildings safer, more accessible and increasingly efficient. In this regard a series of capital improvements were delivered across all sites, with particular highlights including the installation of solar panels at both the Linskill and Royal Quays Centres. These investments have already made a significant impact on the Trust's environmental footprint and its financial sustainability.

At the Linskill Centre a new ramp was installed to improve access to the Owlettes Sensory Room, alongside the creation of a secure rear entrance to improve safety for nursery families and other service users. Internally, new doors were fitted throughout the building with fob access controls, enhancing the security and flow of the space. Decorative

improvements and necessary refurbishments also took place at Royal Quays and Battle Hill, ensuring all three sites remain attractive and fit for purpose.

Marketing activity this year was shaped by the Trust's desire to connect more meaningfully with its audiences and to clearly communicate its charitable purposes. Building on the successful launch of a new and improved website the previous year, improvements were made to the way information is presented making it easier for people to engage with the Trust's services.

"There is so much going on at Linskill, so many groups, giving people an opportunity to make new friends based on shared interests."

"It's a place where you can meet people with similar interests and the activities and meeting people definitely enhances my life."

"I feel heart and spirit is within the building, as a volunteer I feel it and feel staff have this sense of heart and spirit towards community."

Due to the success of the 'Have Your Say' survey in early 2024 Trust staff continued to undertake consultations through focus groups, surveys and staff engagement activities to understand how best to represent our mission. This work informed the development of a new organisational strapline "Connecting People, Enhancing Lives" which was formally introduced in May 2025. The strapline is now embedded across all channels and provides a clear and consistent message that reflects who the Trust is and the impact of its work.

Community-focused campaigns helped raise awareness of fundraising, volunteering and venue hire opportunities.

In addition, the Trust's communications also became more inclusive, with a focus on design, clarity and consistency. Newsletters were streamlined and social media remained a key tool for sharing impact, highlighting success stories and supporting campaign delivery.

The Trust has continued to be committed to contributing to the achievement of the North Tyneside Council's target to make North Tyneside carbon net-zero by 2030 and environmental improvement remained a strong priority throughout the year. In addition to the installation of solar panels, there was continued investment in energy-efficient lighting, air source heat pumps and improved insulation. These upgrades are helping to reduce the Trust's carbon footprint and contribute to long-term energy savings.

The Environmental Subgroup brought together staff and stakeholders to shape and deliver awareness

activities, including supporting the very popular "No Time for Waste Day" and support for borough-wide sustainability initiatives with the placement of a small electrical recycling bin for the community to easily access. Additionally, the five electric vehicle charge points installed last year in the Linskill Centre continue to get high usage by the community.

The Trust continues to embed sustainability in its operations and culture. Energy-saving measures and greener practices were adopted across our buildings and grounds, supported by a reviewed Environmental Policy and clearer internal planning.

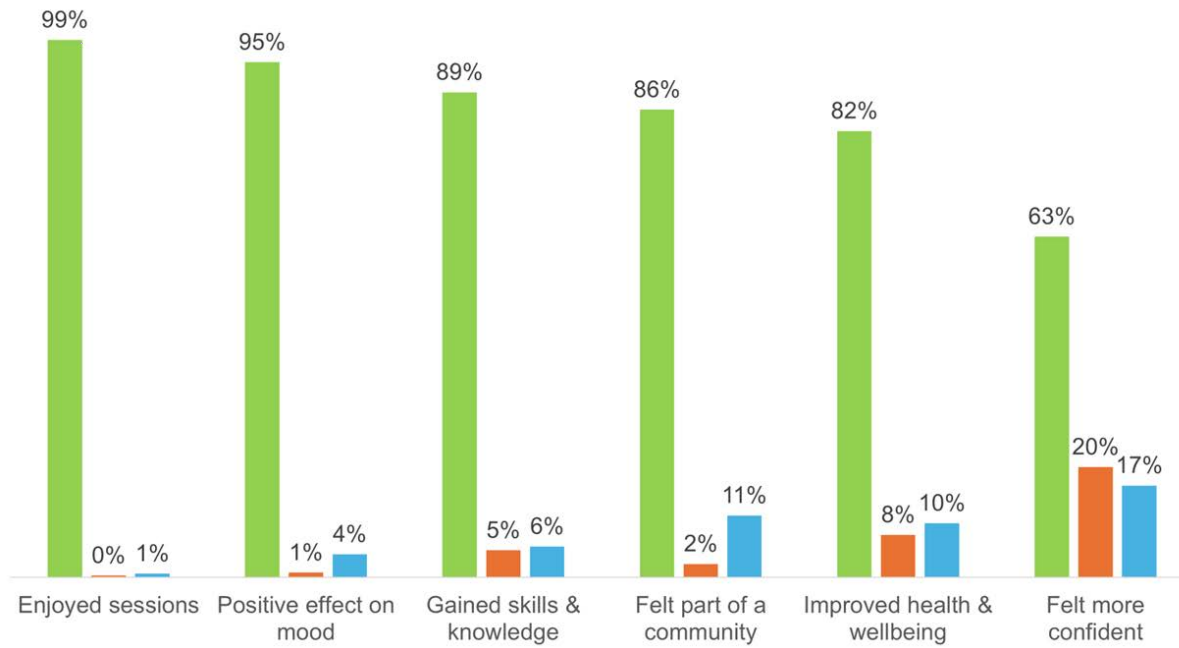


Outcomes from the Year

Linskill's Community Programme offered engaging, enjoyable and inclusive opportunities for learning, wellbeing and social connection, supporting adults to feel more confident, more connected and more positive about their lives.

Self reported impact from attending activities

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure



Participants consistently described their experiences as fun, relaxing, welcoming, and supportive, with strong appreciation for staff, tutors and the friendly, inclusive atmosphere.

"Fantastic from start to finish – friendly, well organised and so much fun!"

"I always feel part of the community at Linskill, it's such a wonderful welcoming place."

Activities provided relaxation, happiness and memorable experiences. Many described sessions as uplifting, with laughter and a friendly buzz in the room.

Trips, workshops and social events were consistently praised for being well organised, accessible and welcoming.

Participants valued expert guidance, clear instruction and the chance to learn in a supportive environment. Many left feeling confident to apply skills independently at home or share them with family.

The programme created inclusive spaces where people connected, built friendships and reduced isolation.

"I would be so lonely without the activities at Linskill."

"Lovely to meet new people and experience the shed inner workings."

Sessions supported both mental and physical wellbeing through social connection, creativity, relaxation and time outdoors.

"It's always good to mix socially and have a good gossip – lifts the spirits."

"I am confident now to visit the site again soon on my own."

THE IMPACT OF LINSKILL ACTIVITIES ON PARTICIPANTS



99% of participants enjoyed the session they attended



63% reported feeling more confident



89% said their skills and knowledge have increased



86% said that by attending they felt part of their local community



82% said that their sense of health and wellbeing had improved

"The trips are brilliant – great company, smooth transport and so much fun."

"I learned simple skills I would be able to use again independently."

Plans For The Future

As we look back on all our achievements and progress this year, we can confidently look forward to another exciting year ahead.

Capital Plans

Refurbishment of the annex/art studio – which will convert this valuable space into three large units, one of which will be used to house our successful men's shed. The larger space will enable the number of those attending the shed to increase from 20 to 40 per week over three years and help meet some of the ongoing demand for this service.

Relocating the maintenance room to the current Shed premises will enable it to be used as a new pre-school classroom for both the Owls and Owlets groups together. This will also free up the room currently used by the Owls to the Foxes and create a new room for 12 children aged 18 months to 2.5



years. The effects will be to give children more suitable learning spaces to enhance their learning experiences and better support their development. In addition, the changes will enable the Nursery to increase the numbers of children attending from 88 to 92.

Celebrating NS 800

Some of the Trust's Senior Staff have worked closely this year with North Tyneside Council and North Tyneside Voda to plan and seek funding for programmes of activities to celebrate North Shields 800th anniversary year in 2025. As a result, various events and activities will take place across North Shields for local people of all ages to enjoy and here at Linskill Centre several events will be hosted from summer to winter 2025 including a Community Heritage Day to be held in June 2025.

Fundraising

As with all charities, the Trust must ensure it has sufficient funds to continue to provide its three community hubs and the many charitable activities which take place in them. In this regard, and with the benefit of the improved website and communications channels, in the year ahead a fundraising plan will be further developed to enable more funds to be raised from donations.



Community Finance

Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust
Consolidated Income and Expenditure 2024/2025

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025	Total 2024
Incoming Resources				
Donations and Legacies	5,262	141,433	146,695	97,181
Charitable Activities	1,326,227	-	1,326,227	1,224,257
Other Trading	541,591	-	541,591	485,657
Investments	7,592	-	7,592	701
Total Income	1,880,672	141,433	2,022,105	1,807,796
Expenditure				
Raising Funds	433,092	-	433,092	365,186
Charitable Activities	1,426,357	149,447	1,575,804	1,533,646
Total Expenditure	1,859,449	149,447	2,008,896	1,898,832
Gains / (losses) on investment assets	- 2,533	-	- 2,533	24,131
Net (expenditure) / income	18,690	- 8,014	10,676	- 66,905
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	638,729	530,554	1,169,283	1,236,188
Total funds carried forward	657,419	522,540	1,179,959	1,169,283

Thank You To Our Funders

The charity is grateful to National Lottery Community Fund, Community Foundation Tyne and Wear, North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, Ballinger Charitable Trust and Cycling UK for supporting our Community Programme. We are also grateful for the grant support received from RW Mann Trust, The William Leech Charity, and Sir James Knott Foundation.



We play an important role in improving the quality of life for people of all ages across North Tyneside providing a range of activities and opportunities which promotes positive wellbeing.

Help us to continue our work by donating here.
Thank you.



linskillcentre
connecting people, enhancing lives

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