

FINAL HEXTOL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Our beneficiaries are the reason we exist and we value each and every one of them. Part of our mission is to address social isolation which we do through team working, social events and lunchclub. We know from our annual survey these are much appreciated by everyone here.

Christmas is for many a time to get together and enjoy family and friends but for others it is a lonely time so please keep an eye out for those in need.

Thank you for your support this year, however that was given, and we hope you have a very happy Christmas.

Good news!

This October, the Hextol Foundation received two wonderful pieces of news. We were shortlisted for two separate awards as recognition for the work we do.

Our Cycling Minds team was shortlisted for the Outstanding Organisation Award at the Head Outside Awards – a national award celebrating organisations using the outdoors to improve mental health and wellbeing. Cycling Minds uses guided e-bike rides to get people outdoors and spending time with others. These rides have been going out three times a week since April and have recently come to an end for the winter.

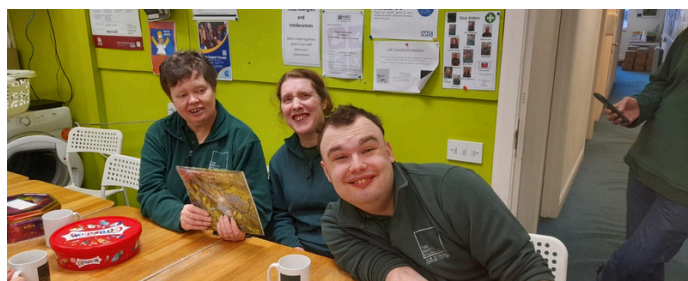
The Hextol Foundation itself was shortlisted for the Best of Northumberland awards in the Community Champion/Group of the Year category. Once again, being shortlisted for awards like this incredible recognition for all the work our volunteers and staff do and the amazing year we've had.



Warm Space Soups

As of December 2nd, the Adapt (NE) site on Burn Lane in Hexham began their 'warm space' sessions. The Hextol Foundation is delighted to be providing the soups for these sessions made in our catering kitchens here at Gilesgate.

These 'warm space' sessions aim to promote social connection and support, something that perfectly aligns with our aim of reducing social isolation. This is another example of our contribution to the local community and is another demonstration of the work of our beneficiaries.



Our year in workshops

By the end of December, we will have completed seven different workshops for volunteers at the Hextol Foundation, delivering them to 17 of our volunteers who come from all five of our business areas. These workshops were both new and repeats of popular sessions, allowing others to take part. Ranging from Manual Handling, Cleaning the Kitchen and Social Media, Privacy and Safety, our final workshop of the year will be a Learning to Sign workshop on December 18th.

We are working on next year's workshop programme already, with the aim of continuing to offer a variety of workshops and training to our volunteers which will help them both in their placements here and in their day to day lives.

Time to spare? Why not talk to us about volunteering with Hextol to improve the lives of the people we support!

<https://www.hextol.org.uk/support-us/donate-time/>

Eatwell on a Budget

In September, we ran our first Eatwell on a Budget course. Four volunteers took part in a six week programme designed to enable them to confidently make nutritious and healthy food – funded by the Green Rigg Fund at the Community Foundation.

Over the six weeks, our volunteers learned how to budget and cook six different meals from scratch, as well as discussing food labelling, nutrition and other relevant topics. Recipes aimed to be accessible and easy to replicate at home. At the end of each three hour session, the volunteers were able to sit and eat the meals they had made, and take home any leftovers!

We will be holding another course in January of next year.



The annual Hextol Christmas party!

The Hextol Christmas party is one of the most anticipated events of the year. Out of all the social events we hold throughout the calendar, the Christmas party is where our volunteers can let their hair down the most. The festivities are filled with singing and dancing, sharing drinks and conversation with people we see every day and not so often.

We had volunteers from all of our business attend and share the dance floor with friends, carers, staff and family to bring the Hextol year towards a close. Our catering staff worked tirelessly to make sure the buffet was ready for the night. One staff member who attended for the first time described it as 'just so cool' watching the 'phenomenon' of a particular volunteer on the dance floor and it reminded her that 'we work with "amazing people"'.

Through our surveys, we've found beneficiaries hugely value being able to meet and spend time with those they wouldn't see ordinarily – these social events are where this is possible and are therefore a vital part of our mission to reduce social isolation.



Christmas tree collection with Tyndale Hospice at Home

The Hextol Foundation will once again be working with Tyndale Hospice at Home to provide Christmas tree collection and recycling services across the Tyndale area. Hextol is providing our vans and volunteers to help with this endeavour after enjoying it so much last year. 15% of the profits will go back into the Hextol Foundation.

Registration closes on 4th of January, so there is still plenty of time to sign up, and collection will take place between the 8th-10th of January. The link is [here](https://www.hextol.org.uk/support-us/donate-money/) for anyone interested.



We rely on donations and fundraising to cover our costs – can you help with a one off or regular donation, or perhaps organise a sponsored event for us?

<https://www.hextol.org.uk/support-us/donate-money/>



Celebrating with Cycling Minds

Cycling minds have had their final bike ride of the season and are putting their bikes away until spring. To celebrate the end of the season, the team got together to share fond memories, reflect and celebrate progress made.

Over the year, Cycling Minds ride leaders have taken out 25 cyclists on 88 rides – with almost as many coffee shop stops on the way. These rides get people in the fresh air, exercising and spending time with others.

During the winter, the ride leaders have arranged a few 'walking weeks' to bridge the gap between rides and stay in contact, which we are sure will be greatly appreciated by the participants.

Christmas cakes and more!

For the third year running, Hextol has offered it's Christmas catering to customers. As usual, Christmas cakes, mince pies and biscuits were on offer, as well as any options from our *fromHextol* range. New to the menu this year, we have offered butternut wellington and nutroasts - both in individual portions and whole dishes and seen good demand.

Additionally, the Hextol Foundation worked with Hexham Farmers market and GO Local Food to launch Tynedale Local Food - a way of ordering local produce online. This was initially just for the festive season with food and gifts available to be collected from our Hextol Foundation offices in Giles gate or GO Local's Ovington site.

Some of our *from Hextol* range – made by our catering team - was available through this platform. Hextol provided the storage, packing and the collection elements for this venture, presenting new opportunities to our volunteers who we aim to keep at the centre of all we do.

As a reminder, our full *from Hextol* range is available from the Tans all year round (and available for purchase on our website!).



Seasons greetings from the Tans!

The Christmas season at the Tans is always busy – with our annual Christmas fundraiser as well as customers popping in to refuel after Christmas shopping. The decorations are up, and the kitchen volunteers have been cooking up some festive bakes for the season. One volunteer presented an idea for a chocolate mint fudge cake with a layer of mint fondant in-between inspired by his favourite Christmas chocolate and was able to create his masterpiece, demonstrating his creativity and baking ability. The cake didn't last very long at all! We've also had a new brown sugar apple cake and some vanilla cherry brownies on offer to cold Christmas shoppers.

Hextol has also been running a raffle for the second year, with all proceeds going back into the Foundation. This year, alongside our *fromHextol* hamper and range of chutneys several local businesses have been kind enough to donate prizes in support of us – such as Lolla Mac's ring making work shop as second prize. It's incredible to see local businesses coming together to support us and the work we do, and hope this continues into the next year. Thank you to Lolla Mac, Transcend, Cogito Books, Beautiful Betty, The Beauty Spot, Emma Bacon Yoga and Philip Sturgess for their donated prizes!





The Hextol Foundation survey

For the last three years, the Hextol Foundation has sent out a survey to both volunteers and those who support our volunteers. This is an important opportunity for us to assess whether we are delivering on our key aims. The results are used to guide our progress through the year.

These surveys provide direct insight into how our volunteers experience Hextol - what we do well and should continue and what we could be doing better. This is invaluable, as we exist principally for our volunteers and aim to continue providing the best service we can. It's their experience and voices we should be using to make this progress.

Engaging with the people who support our beneficiaries provides an insight into how we are viewed by that group and the effect being a Hextol volunteer has on our beneficiaries' lives outside Hextol. This perspective can bring new ideas to light and has helped us improve communication between us and volunteers' supporters - including the creation of this newsletter.

Our next surveys are set to be sent out in January of next year.

How you can support us!

As the year draws to a close and we head into the next, thoughts turn to resolutions and seasonal giving and we would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the many ways you can support the Hextol Foundation. Volunteering your time in one of our business areas is a great way of personally involved in what we do. Donations can be made through our website and are giftaidable - these donations are vital for covering costs and enabling us to continue the work we do. The hiring of our businesses supports us and all our volunteers and engages in a local business. Our catering, gardening, warehouse, cafe and pack and post services are available all year round! If you think we can help you, please contact us at contact@hextol.org.uk. Thank you!



Looking onwards to next year

We already have an exciting line up of events set for next year at the Tans. These fundraising meals and quizzes are always incredibly popular and enjoyed by all - and they sell out quickly! Bookings can be made in person at the Tans, or via our contact@hextol.org.uk inbox!

JANUARY 23RD: QUIZ NIGHT, includes a Burns themed supper and a glass of wine.

(This event is already sold out!)

MARCH 14TH: Mother's Day Afternoon Tea.

MARCH 27TH: Turkish Vegetarian Meal.

APRIL 24TH: QUIZ NIGHT, includes supper and glass of wine!

Welcoming new faces

At the beginning of December, the Hextol Foundation introduced a new member of staff to Gilesgate! Our new fundraising manager Grace Dunne has joined us and is settling in quickly, already making a difference. We are incredibly excited to see what the new year brings us!

