

# The Hextol Foundation

## Our Year: 2020

THE  
HEXTOL  
FOUNDATION

FOR WORKING OPPORTUNITIES

## About Us

Based in Hexham in Northumberland, The Hextol Foundation works across Tynedale and Newcastle to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities or who are living with or recovering from mental health conditions. To do this we offer supervised work experience and training across a range of social enterprises which include:

- the Hextol Tans Café in Hexham
- Greenbox post and packing service
- gardening
- warehousing and distribution



## 2020: the Highs and the Lows



While we were unable to support our beneficiaries in their work placements during the 2 main lockdowns, we were thrilled to be able to welcome many of them back for part of the summer and autumn.

Our priority was to offer as many opportunities to as many beneficiaries during the times it was safe to do so. The Hextol Tans Café was open from July until November, and it was great to be able to see many of our beneficiaries and customers at the Tans during that time. Our gardening and warehouse teams have remained working throughout the pandemic, with beneficiaries returning to these business areas - as well as to Greenbox - from July until December.

But we haven't been idle during the lockdowns. There has been much behind the scenes planning going on to ensure we open in a Covid-safe way after the

lockdowns. We have also been applying for grant funding to ensure our financial stability as we emerge from the pandemic. We have received grants to help us with our core running costs, such as salaries, rent and utilities. We have also received grants from COVID-19 emergency funds to help us set up new IT and phone systems so that some of our staff can work from home, and to purchase things like Perspex screens for the Café, hand sanitiser dispensers, face shields and all manner of other equipment to allow us to open our services in a Covid-safe way.

During lockdowns, we keep in touch through our 'Hextol Happenings' newsletters as well as through social media, phone calls, Zoom and socially distanced walks. We just hope it won't be too long before we can welcome everyone back to their Hextol placements.



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The Hextol Foundation



@HextolCharity

# Our Impact: FY 2019-20

**83 people** with learning disabilities and/or mental health supported the 2019-20 financial year



**10,816 hours** of supported work placements

**159 business skills**

certificates awarded for packing, gardening, cooking, front of house, warehousing, cleaning, office and handyperson skills



**808 lunches** served

to our beneficiaries as part of our Lunch Club to encourage people to meet in a relaxed and friendly setting



**Welcomed 133 beneficiaries** to a range of **social events**, including a barbecue, bowling and cinema trips, pottery painting, and our Christmas Party at Hexham Abbey



**142 core skills** certificates for

Teamwork, Customer Care, Ready for Work, Health and Safety, and Timekeeping



And, because we never forget that we are here for our customers...



**42,199 envelopes** packed and posted



**6,460 coffees** and **3,836 scones** served



**29,232 accounts** and **books** packed and dispatched



... and **acres** and **acres** of grass cut by our gardeners

# Meet our Beneficiaries

Our beneficiaries have learnt a variety of skills across all of our businesses during their Hextol placements. From following a recipe to make a quiche from scratch and topping up the coffee machine with beans in our Café to operating the pallet truck in the warehouse or learning how to use a lawnmower correctly and safely are all examples of skills our beneficiaries once weren't able to do and now can. The knock on effect to an individual's self-confidence and self-esteem is enormous, allowing everyone the chance to reach their own potential.



**Tom has been working at Hextol for 18 months now and works in our gardening business. He also works at our café, The Hextol Tans, in Hexham.**

Tom is cheerful, chatty and is always keen to learn new skills and put them to good use, both at Hextol and at home. He has achieved lots of skills such as how to serve food to the customers in the Café and which tools to use in gardening. Since working as a gardener with Hextol, he has taken on more responsibility for looking after his mum's garden and her collection of plants. He also says that having learnt how to clean the Tans Café kitchen correctly, his mum now expects him to do that at home as well! Tom says he enjoys the independence that Hextol offers him and loves meeting his Hextol friends and staff. He says his best memory is 'the day I went to rake some leaves up and I couldn't see the ground, until we raked up all the leaves then I could see the ground and this made me happy'.



**Aaron has been with us since 2010 and has worked in our handy person, warehouse and catering businesses as well as in the Tans Café.**

Aaron likes coming to Hextol because he gets to meet new people and learn new skills, such as how to measure accurately and to use a paintbrush correctly. He says he enjoys the independence that Hextol gives him, and likes that it gets him out of the house to do something worthwhile. Aaron has enjoyed learning about Health and Safety and how to do the best for the customers. He uses his cooking skills at home and Aaron's mum loves the scones and cakes that he has cooked for her. He has also decorated his own bedroom and he has helped his mum to paint their garden fence using skills he has learnt at Hextol. Aaron says that the Hextol supervisors have helped him to build his confidence, and to appreciate the importance of having a laugh.



**Rebecca has been working at Hextol for 13 years in our post and packing and catering teams, as well as in the Tans Café.**

Rebecca has worked at Hextol since July 2008. She started in our post and packing business, and then helped to set up our catering business, which originally used to deliver sandwiches to local schools and businesses. This remains one of her highlights about working at Hextol. Rebecca now works at our café as a chef in the kitchen.

Rebecca has really enjoyed learning to cook and bake. Quiche is her signature dish: she can now make one all by herself and this makes her feel very independent. She enjoys using the cooking skills she learns at Hextol in her own home and helps her support staff to cook her meals.

Rebecca feels she has achieved a lot during her 13 years at Hextol, including passing her Food Hygiene certificate, following recipes from start to finish, and using equipment she never thought she would use such as the gas cooker in the Café. She enjoys learning all about our core employment skills such as 'Timekeeping' as this has helped her learn to tell the time. Rebecca's best part of being in Hextol is helping others, being part of a team and coming to our social events. Her favourite events are bowling and pottery painting. Rebecca feels very proud that she can now ask for help when she's stuck and she feels her confidence has grown in her time with us. Above all, she loves being able to see her Hextol friends when she comes to work.

# Survey of Our Beneficiaries

Before lockdown, we carried out a survey of our beneficiaries. Among the aspects people liked best about their time at Hextol, recurrent themes emerged:

- feeling part of a team
- learning new skills
- being busy
- support from staff
- meeting friends and colleagues

(We weren't surprised to learn that one of the least favourite aspects was 'doing the dishes'.)

We were very encouraged with the results which have demonstrated that we are achieving our aims of providing supported and enjoyable work, making our beneficiaries feel valued, improving their skills level and reducing social isolation.

Our beneficiaries missed coming to their Hextol placements during the lockdowns.

They told us that they couldn't 'wait to see my Hextol friends again' and 'continue my journey with Hextol'. We know that the sense of structure and purpose that Hextol offers our beneficiaries is very important to post-pandemic recovery.

97% would recommend Hextol to family and friends

90% thought the job and core skills programme was important

97% love working at Hextol or enjoy it most of the time

## Looking to the Future

Re-establishing supported work placements for our beneficiaries remains our top priority as everyone recovers from the upheaval of the pandemic.

The generosity and flexibility of many funding organisations during COVID-19 mean that we are in a good financial position as we emerge from the pandemic. We will also be able to expand some of our business areas. A generous grant from Freemasons Northumberland has allowed us to buy a crew van which means we can take on work from more customers and offer even more opportunities to the people we support.

We remain very grateful to



several individuals who contribute regular financial support, either towards our skills training programme or for our general running costs. If anyone is interested in setting up a regular donation via standing order or even through a gift in a Will to The Hextol Foundation, please contact us.

Our beneficiaries remain at the heart of what we do and the experience of lockdown has served to remind us of the importance of our work. Having the opportunity to learn new skills, receive appreciation for a job well done, make friends, and carry out real work for real customers gives our beneficiaries a sense of routine, purpose and well-being.

