

£92,400 grant over 3 years
(2021 – 2024)

The Junction Foundation – Whole Family Support Project

The Charity of Richard Whittington
Church & Communities Programme

Supporting children, young people and families with additional challenges in Tees Valley

The **Junction Foundation** is a charity based in **Tees Valley** working to empower children and transform lives. This grant has provided a funded worker to provide whole family support to young carers and their families. They provide advice, support and activities for families to help them navigate through systems and facilitate peer support opportunities.

“One child said ‘my mum’s just totally different, it’s been so nice to have my mum go out and have time for herself’ so just being able to see that the kids are seeing what difference it’s making to their parents is a really big thing”
Project Lead

Why the work is needed

Families with caring responsibilities can be socially isolated and often lack trust in support services. Previously, The Junction Foundation was struggling to engage vulnerable families. Many parents were not actively involved in the service but were facing difficulties of their own making them reluctant to engage.

Approach

Many of the families supported by The Junction have children with a range of complex and / or additional needs. Having a funded support worker enables dedicated time to build trusting relationships with families and enables them to engage in meaningful ways. They provide non-judgemental support for vulnerable families and access to services which help address wider needs.

A family centred approach:

- 1:1 case load support in home or in the community.
- Range of activities and workshops for parents.
- Signposting to other specialist organisations and agencies.
- Regular family outings during school holidays.
- Parents are consulted regularly about the activities / courses they would like to have access to, which they greatly value.

“We ask them what they want... we ask them, what would they like, what would be useful for them.” **Project Lead**



Impact



Many of the families are living in very challenging circumstances. One parent explained how she had recently become a lone parent, her husband had been imprisoned placing emotional and financial pressure on the family. They had become ostracised from the local community, making her feel very lonely. However, attending the Junction sessions had helped her immensely – providing peer support and helping to form new friendships.

“Building friendships that we never had” Beneficiary



Other parents expressed their gratitude at being offered training and skills in new areas, which not only helped increase their confidence, but equipped them with key skills which were hugely beneficial to them and their family, through courses such as; parenting skills, budgeting, life saver skills and Makaton.

“You’re all able to communicate together and teach each other those skills, which is really nice.” Beneficiary



Challenges

Initially trying to encourage families into sessions took longer than anticipated, as some parents were reluctant to be in group settings.

Transport was also a barrier to access for some. However, through perseverance a small group of parents started attending the family sessions regularly which has since snowballed, to the extent that some sessions are oversubscribed.

The project has also seen an increase in numbers of parents presenting with multiple complex needs.

“I’ve been working here for around 12 years and I think about the kind of the complexity of the families we are working with now.” Project Lead

Learnings

- The importance of the provision of transport – enabling families to attend sessions and activities, as some are quite isolated. This is something they have factored into their new grant, along with money for expenses.
- Efforts to build partnerships with key professionals / agencies are proving positive.

The Future

The Junction Foundation has been awarded a further grant by The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington to continue to fund the family worker role. The Junction Foundation will be using the learning from the first grant to inform delivery going forward.

“We were absolutely devastated thinking that it was going to come to an end. But the fact that it’s been refunded is obviously amazing.” Project Lead