



The Hextol Foundation Annual Review 2025-26

Welcome to our review of 2025-26, a year in which our beneficiaries delivered a record 13,500 hours across all our services. Demand for our services remained strong, both from customers and from beneficiaries.

The benefits of our unique approach to building confidence and self esteem, providing structure and purpose and reducing social isolation were recognised in our being shortlisted for Outstanding Organisation in the Head Outdoors Awards and for Community Group of the Year in the Best of Northumberland Awards.

While this recognition is important, what makes me most proud is the feedback we receive from the people who use our services. In our annual survey, 97% of beneficiaries said they feel supported at Hextol always or most of the time, while 92% said they enjoy what they do and feel more confident since joining us.

Our year in numbers

- 109 beneficiaries
- 13,491 supported work hours
- 2,495 free LunchClub meals
- 29 training courses
- 4 social events

This year, we are celebrating 20 years of Hextol - a milestone that reflects the lasting impact our charity has had on the people we support. At our heart is a strong sense of community, bringing people together, creating opportunities, and helping individuals grow in confidence and independence.

Throughout our anniversary year, we will be sharing stories from Hextol's history and celebrating the people, partnerships and achievements that have shaped the organisation. To mark this milestone and invest in our future, we are launching *Friends of Hextol*, a new scheme offering supporters a simple way to give regularly and help sustain our work for years to come.

People come to Hextol for many reasons, often when they feel isolated, anxious or lacking opportunities. Here they find friendship, support and a place where they are valued. Whether they move on to employment or volunteering or remain part of Hextol's story for many years, we see time and again how the purpose, structure and sense of belonging found here helps people live fuller, more connected lives. This impact is reflected in the words of one support worker, who told us:

"Hextol is one of the only places our young person gets to spend time with his peers socially outside of the home. Being a volunteer and being 'employed' helps him feel valued in the community, increasing his sense of self-worth."

Thank you to everyone who has been part of Hextol's journey this year. Your support, dedication and belief in what we do make our work possible.

Bruce Howorth, Chief Executive

Focus on: The Hextol Tans

The Tans remains at the heart of Hextol's mission, combining commercial success with life-changing opportunities. In 2025-26, the café provided 6,644 work hours, up from 6,182 the previous year, offering meaningful placements in front-of-house, food preparation and kitchen support.

As our most visible community business, *The Tans* gives people with learning differences and mental health needs the opportunity to develop skills, build confidence and take on increased responsibility in a real customer environment. Every day, customers see first-hand the contribution our beneficiaries make, helping to challenge stereotypes, normalise disability and build a more inclusive community.

A successful town-centre café with consistently strong customer reviews, *The Tans* generates trading income while delivering significant social impact. It also hosts popular fundraising events, including quizzes and themed supper clubs inspired this year by South America, Turkey and India. These events provide additional opportunities for volunteers and beneficiaries to develop new skills, gain experience and engage with the wider community.

The Tans demonstrates Hextol at its best: real work, real customers and real impact.



Providing real work for real customers is central to our mission at Hextol. We are grateful to all of the customers, businesses, organisations and community groups who choose to use our services.

Their support allows us to offer a wide range of meaningful work opportunities for our beneficiaries, helping individuals build skills, confidence and experience in real working environments. You can find out more about hiring Hextol at www.hextol.org.uk/hire-us/



Emily has been with Hextol since July 2024 and volunteers on our Monday Catering team, who produce our From Hextol range. Emily's favourite task is baking biscuits and she enjoys baking at home as well.

Over the summer Emily will be taking on another Catering shift. Emily particularly enjoyed the Eatwell on a Budget course, learning new recipes and skills and she really likes to get things right.

Emily is a great team player with a wonderful sense of humour. At Hextol social events she is an enthusiastic Karaoke singer. Outside of Hextol Emily enjoys reading, writing, drawing and playing her guitar.

Building skills, confidence and connections

We know that people thrive when they feel connected, valued and included. Alongside supported work placements, Hextol offers a range of social opportunities through LunchClub, social events and our Cycling Minds programme. These activities help beneficiaries build friendships, develop confidence and feel part of the wider Hextol community.

Over the last year, beneficiaries enjoyed a summer BBQ, bowling trip, pottery painting session and our annual Christmas party.

Open to everyone we support, these events bring together people at different stages of their Hextol journey, whether they are attending on a college placement or have been volunteering with us for many years. During the year, 52 beneficiaries attended at least one social event, with most taking part in more than one.

Each weekday, we provide a free, freshly prepared hot meal through LunchClub. As many of our beneficiaries are on low incomes, this helps ease financial pressures while also creating an opportunity to connect with others. LunchClub also provides valuable catering experience in a quieter environment than The Hextol Tans, helping beneficiaries develop skills, confidence and a sense of pride through preparing and serving meals for their Hextol colleagues. During the year, 2,495 meals were served.



CYCLING MINDS

Now fully integrated into Hextol, **Cycling Minds** delivered 88 supported e-bike rides in 2025 – almost double the number provided in 2023. Participants report improved confidence, wellbeing and social connection. One of our cyclists shared:

"The rides have restored my confidence. The team feels like a little family. When I've had difficulties, the rides have really helped my mental health."

Daniel started volunteering at the Hextol Foundation with our gardening team and has since become an incredibly valued member of the Hextol Tans, working in both the kitchen and more recently building his confidence front of house.

To help with this, he's also completed accredited training meaning Daniel is an incredibly useful pair of hands to the supervisors on shift. Daniel also goes out cycling with our Cycling Minds group.

Outside of Hextol, Daniel has an interest in etymology and linguistics – in fact, he always has an interesting fact to offer on the topic of conversation, no matter what it is.





Tommy has been with Hextol since March 2019, when he joined our Gardening team in Newcastle. When that service closed, he decided to stay with Hextol and has been travelling across to Hexham since 2023.

Tommy gardens twice a week and also provides holiday cover in our Warehouse. He particularly enjoys gardening because he likes working outdoors. When he finishes a garden project and looks at the final product it makes him happy.

He has taken part in several courses and training opportunities including a Digital Voice Course. Tommy enjoys the television shows Countdown, Pointless, The Simpsons and Doctor Who.

Learning and Development

Our placements provide meaningful opportunities for purposeful work, helping people build confidence, skills and independence at their own pace. Alongside work-based learning, beneficiaries can access our Training and Workshops programme, including sessions on Manual Handling, First Aid and Dementia Friends. These workshops develop practical knowledge, boost confidence and support progression into volunteering, training or employment.



Across placements and workshops, we use ASDAN LifeSkills Challenges to recognise the skills, knowledge and positive behaviours beneficiaries demonstrate. This flexible approach helps individuals celebrate achievements and track their progress. Beneficiaries can also complete accredited work-readiness training, including Food Hygiene and Allergen Awareness qualifications. Over the year, 17 people achieved ASDAN LifeSkills awards and 13 completed accredited training courses. By combining workplace experience with structured learning, we help people develop skills that can make a lasting difference to their lives.

Thank you to the following schools, colleges and organisations who work with us:

Azure College, Cambian Dilston College, Collingwood Media & Arts College, Gap Supported Housing, Hexham Priory School, Lowgate Care Home, Kirby Moor School, Percy Hedley School, Queen Elizabeth High School

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