

# Annual Report 2022-23





## **Mission**

To promote the wellbeing of all older people and to help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

## **Vision**

To be the 'go to' organisation for all things that enrich the lives of people aged 50+ within County Durham.



# Message from the Chair - Paul Phyll



The UK continues to go from one crisis to another and this year we have seen the cost-of-living triggering massive increases in food and energy prices, causing inflationary pressures that have significantly impacted our communities.

The Board of Trustees have continued to maintain the strong governance and sustainability of the Charity whilst in pursuit of our strategy, to ensure the growing need for our services were extended to reach more people within the County.

We have consistently provided information and advice, tackling loneliness, dementia support, welfare, health, and wellbeing, help at home and digital inclusion services to those in need. During the year there has been further pressure placed on charities seeking less available grants and funds to deliver our services and therefore we are forever grateful to our funders and partners who continue to support us. We have focussed on becoming more self-sufficient through our boutique and superstore therefore the donations received have enabled us to continue to make progress in this area.

Our volunteers are an integral part of the delivery of our services to those in need across the County for which we are truly grateful. Without the volunteer community we could not achieve the outcomes delivered thus far. With more volunteers we could deliver more to those in need of our help and support and therefore we are always seeking more volunteers to join us.

Our staff work tirelessly and deliver above and beyond in support of the needs of our charitable aims, whether that is within our stores to generate more desperately needed income or the management and delivery of our services to those who are 50 and above.

Finally, I would like to thank the management team under the direction of our CEO, Robyn Holmes, who have continued to direct and deliver upon our strategy with great success. On behalf of the Trustees, I thank you all.



# About the Organisation



- Age Concern Durham County (trading as Age UK County Durham) is a small independent local charity formed in 1974. Age Concern Durham County incorporated & commenced trading as a charitable company limited by guarantee (Age Concern Durham County trading as Age UK County Durham charity number 1122008) on 1st April 2008, signing a brand partnership agreement with Age UK in 2011.
- An autonomous charitable organisation, Age UK County Durham raises funds to improve the lives of people aged 50 plus living and working in the area.





# Activities

Age UK County Durham offers a host of services to promote mental and physical wellbeing including lunch and breakfast clubs, exercise classes, craft and recreational sessions

**640 Sessions**

**4954 Attendances**

**364 New Clients**

During January to March 2023 we introduced 18 new activities under the Keep Warm Keep Moving project.

These activities were hosted in 16 “warm space” community venues during the colder months and were offered free of charge. 156 participants joined us. We launched a new ‘Indoor safe Archery’ session in 2 community venues which proved extremely popular





***Thank you for  
your work  
in the community***

We have worked in 6 assisted care settings, building on the **Falls Prevention** pilot project and offered crafting and mindfulness sessions as part of the **Keep Calm & Craft Project**. We supported 99 residents to keep physically and mentally active.

**Intergenerational** work is now embedded into all our services, connecting older adults with the younger demographic and fostering a sense of mutual respect and awareness. During the period we engaged with four care homes; two primary schools, one secondary school, three 6th form colleges and Durham University. Nine volunteers have supported this work. One of our volunteers represented our organisation by 'being' Santa for Belmont Primary School which was fantastically well received by both pupils and school staff.

During **Children's Mental Health** week in February, we hosted an event at Sycamore Lodge care setting where 29 primary school children joined residents to participate in a carousel of activities from crafting to traditional toys, reminiscent of school days past.

Just to say 'thank you' for the work of your volunteer, Gerry at our school yesterday. It was great to have a 'real' Santa in that none of the children knew who he was!





**Digital Inclusion** – this project started in July 2022 and aims to reduce digital exclusion by raising awareness and developing the digital skills of older adults. We have supported **226** clients in total; **170** of those through the delivery of **244** one to one sessions and **56** clients through 5 group sessions. We worked in partnership with Amazon and Beamish to offer two fun digital awareness sessions focusing on safe online shopping and digital history. **15** volunteer digital champions have supported the project to date.

**Help at Home** – during the year our **37** dedicated volunteers have supported **239** clients and completed **1,954** individual service requests covering shopping, light DIY and gardening.

Our lovely supporter Chrissie volunteered to help us spread Christmas Cheer to older adults who were on their own at Christmas. She made bespoke personalised gift boxes filled with essentials and treats which our team delivered to help bring a little joy at a time which, for lots of reasons can be quite difficult for some.

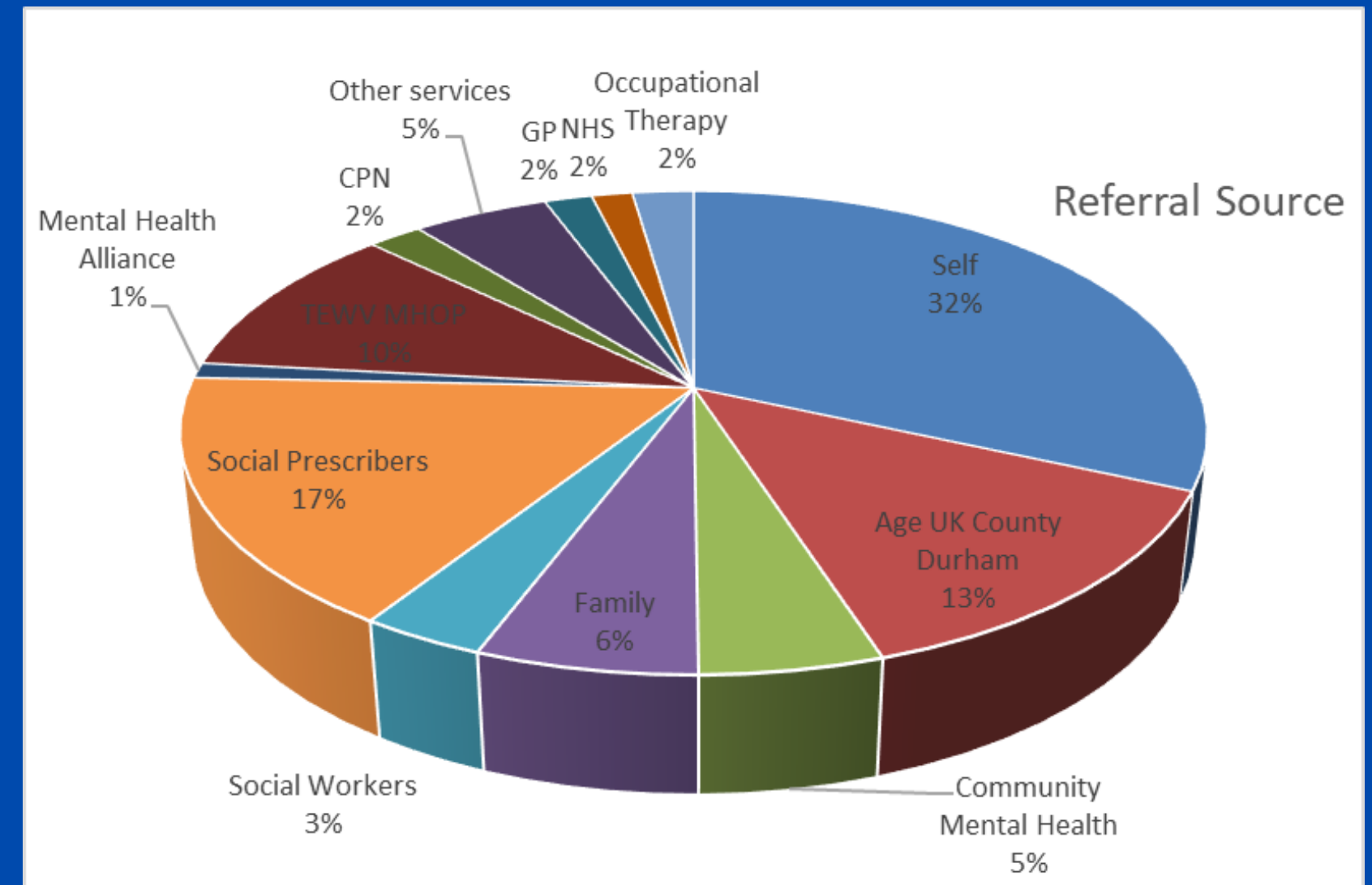
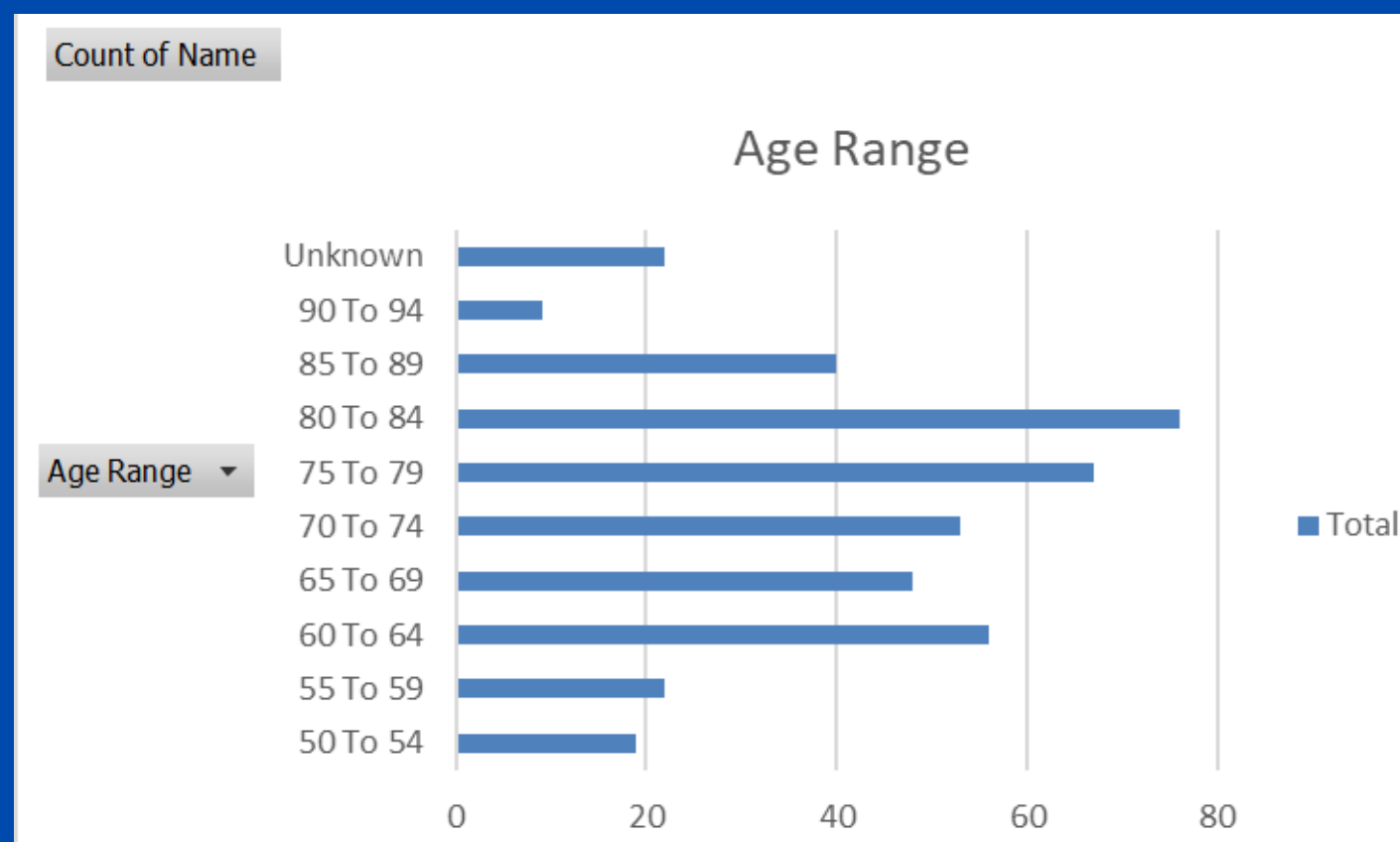
The **Woodshed** based in Belmont continues to support men's mental health and offers weekly woodworking sessions. The group enjoy making seasonal items which are offered for sale in our charity superstore.





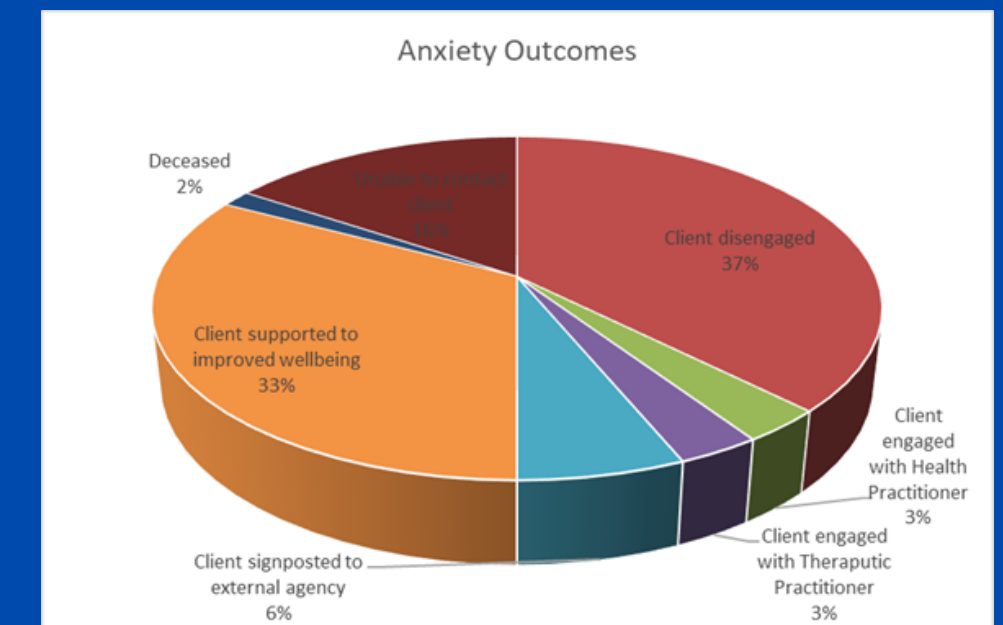
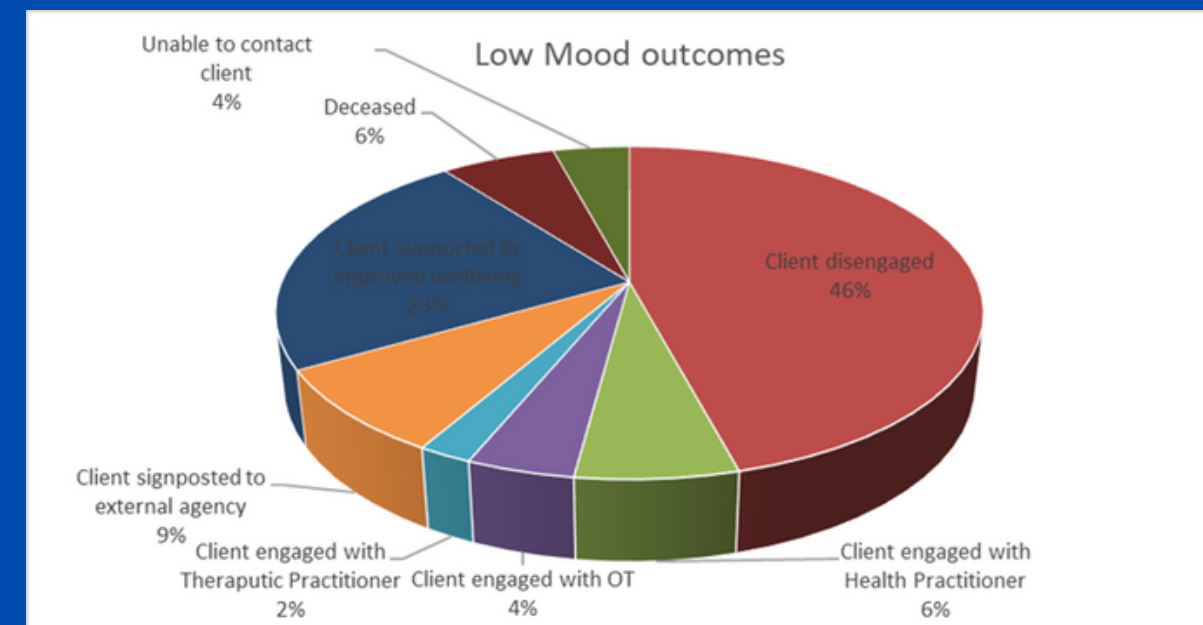
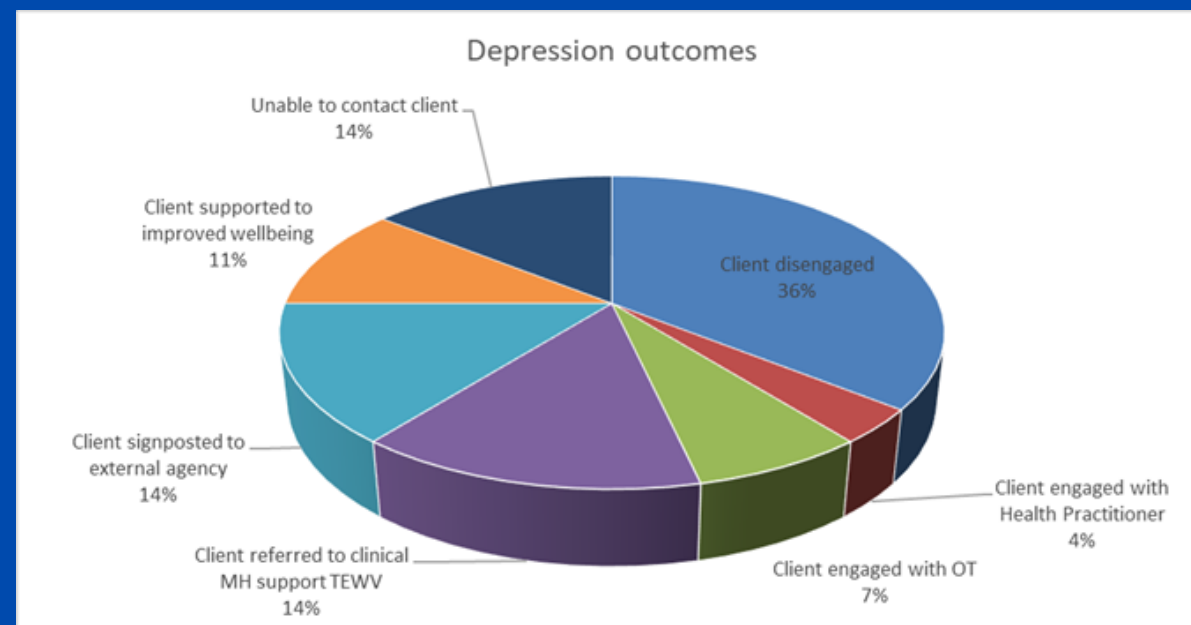
# Mental Health Support

We designed this service to respond to evidence gathered from clients during the pandemic. We established a community based, accessible service to meet the needs of older people and their mental wellbeing. The purpose is to offer a service to people that prevents them entering secondary services. We work with clients to address the issues underpinning poor mental and physical wellbeing by offering a seamless and responsive pathway to secondary mental health services when appropriate.



In partnership with TEWV, we employ trained Psychotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists. The team is supported by two wellbeing workers. They address the anxieties' and low mood initially caused by the pandemic, the sense of despair and suicidal ideations. Although the anxieties due to the pandemic have reduced, people are still referring with high levels of anxiety and low mood due to the ever changing external factors of cost of living, energy, Ukraine, health issues and access to services.





A significant number of older people have also received support from us for past traumas, domestic violence and bereavement . Our service is available to anyone aged over 50 - most of those who we have supported are aged between 75-84 and are predominately living alone. The welfare workers offer regular support to those who wish to have contact and conversation to lift their mood and prevent further worries and anxieties, they also offer a contact service to those who may be waiting for 1:1 support. Our service has:

- Identified and engaged with new clients previously unknown to other service providers
- Provided early intervention, helping to reduce referrals to primary or secondary care (14% of clients presenting with depression required greater clinical intervention including crisis)
- Clearly communicated referral pathways for those experiencing low level mental health issues and increased levels of anxiety.
- The Mental Health Transformation agenda and supported ease of referral, step up and step down through the Mental Health Alliance
- Reduced the stigma of mental and emotional health issues - leading to earlier interventions from professional services
- Reduced the need for more costly interventions through our intervention and supported clients in accessing existing Age UK County Durham services
- Provided clear pathways to interventions from voluntary and community sectors and other agencies



# Dementia Therapy

With funding from the Age UK national charity we successfully launched a new Dementia Therapy Project (MCST) working in partnership with Bishop Auckland College.

Dementia therapy sessions were followed with lunch served by the catering students at the college.

In the afternoon opportunities to engage with students from various vocational courses were developed for our participating clients to learn new skills, be creative, imaginative and entertained.

# Cost of Living

Age UK County Durham continued to support older people as the cost of food and energy started to rise.

Funded through the Household Support Fund, food vouchers, warm clothes, slippers and food parcels were delivered and activities organised in Warm Hubs across the County.



## Information and Advice

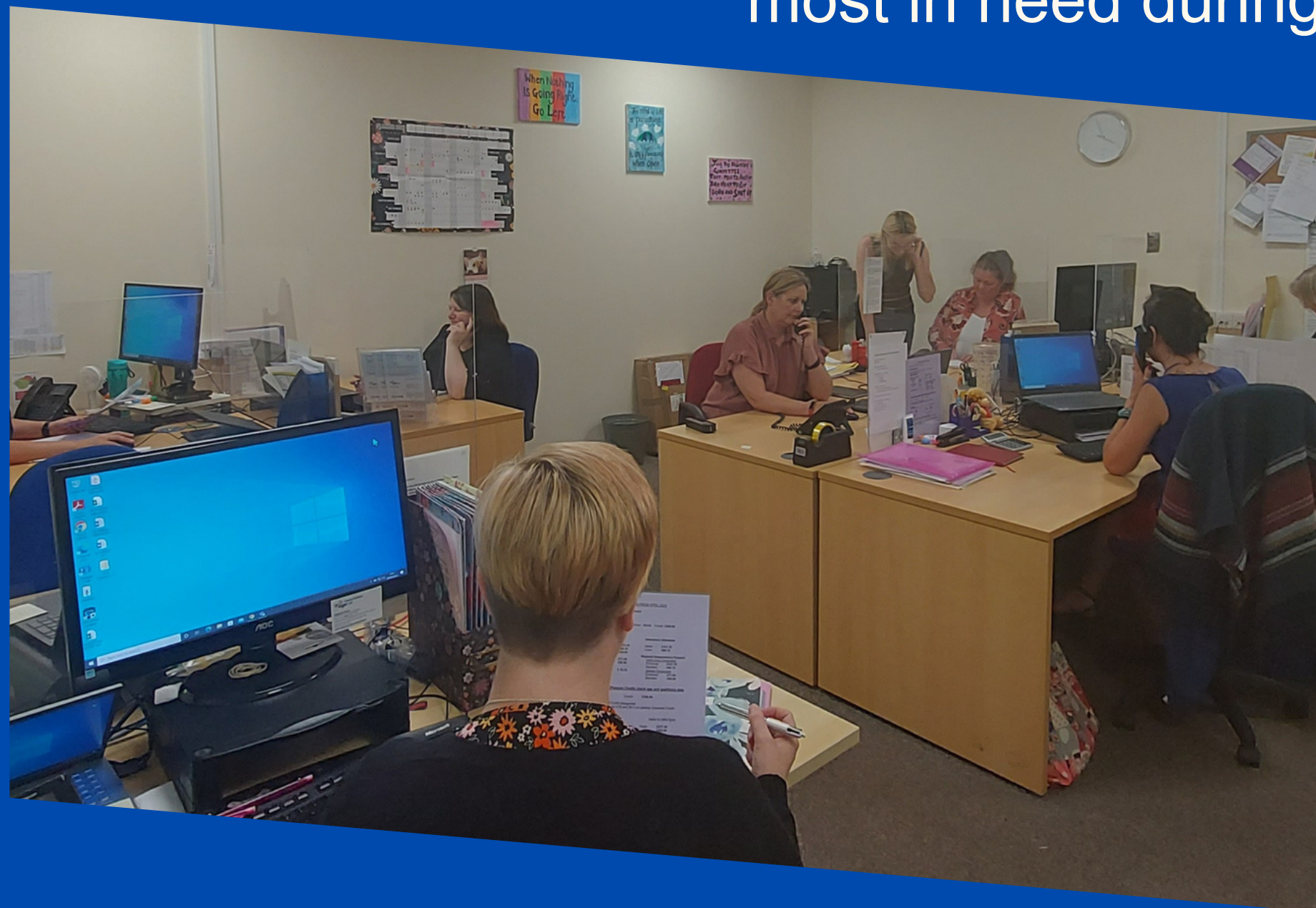
Our Information and Advice service is **free, confidential and impartial** and can offer support to those aged over 50 (including their family members and carer's) in accessing information about benefits and other services they may be entitled to. Our aim is to help older people maintain their independence and improve their physical and mental wellbeing for as long as possible. Our service is holistic, providing factual information and advice on issues such as finances, health, housing and access to local services. We provide factsheets, leaflets, signpost and make referrals to partners working together to maximise support.

### **This year our Information and Advice service has successfully:-**

- Accessed **£5,132,504** in unclaimed benefits
  - Made **545** home visits
  - Completed **819** disability benefit forms
  - Received **4894** client enquiries
- Helped **42** clients via our Advocacy service
- Completed **389** Benefit Eligibility Checks
- Carried out **51** Home Energy Checks as part of our Warm Homes Project



- Completed **75** benefit checks, **20** Court of Protection applications and **7** Lasting Power of Attorney applications with our Financial Capability service (funded by Durham County Council)
- Delivered winter parcels, emergency food parcels and shopping vouchers to those most in need during the cold weather



I've been able to apply for a move to a bungalow which would make my life much better. I was at rock bottom with lack of self-confidence, the adviser was so nice, she'll never know how much she helped me.

The assistance I received has stopped me worrying if I can cope with rising costs. Just keep doing what you are doing, helping people to live better.

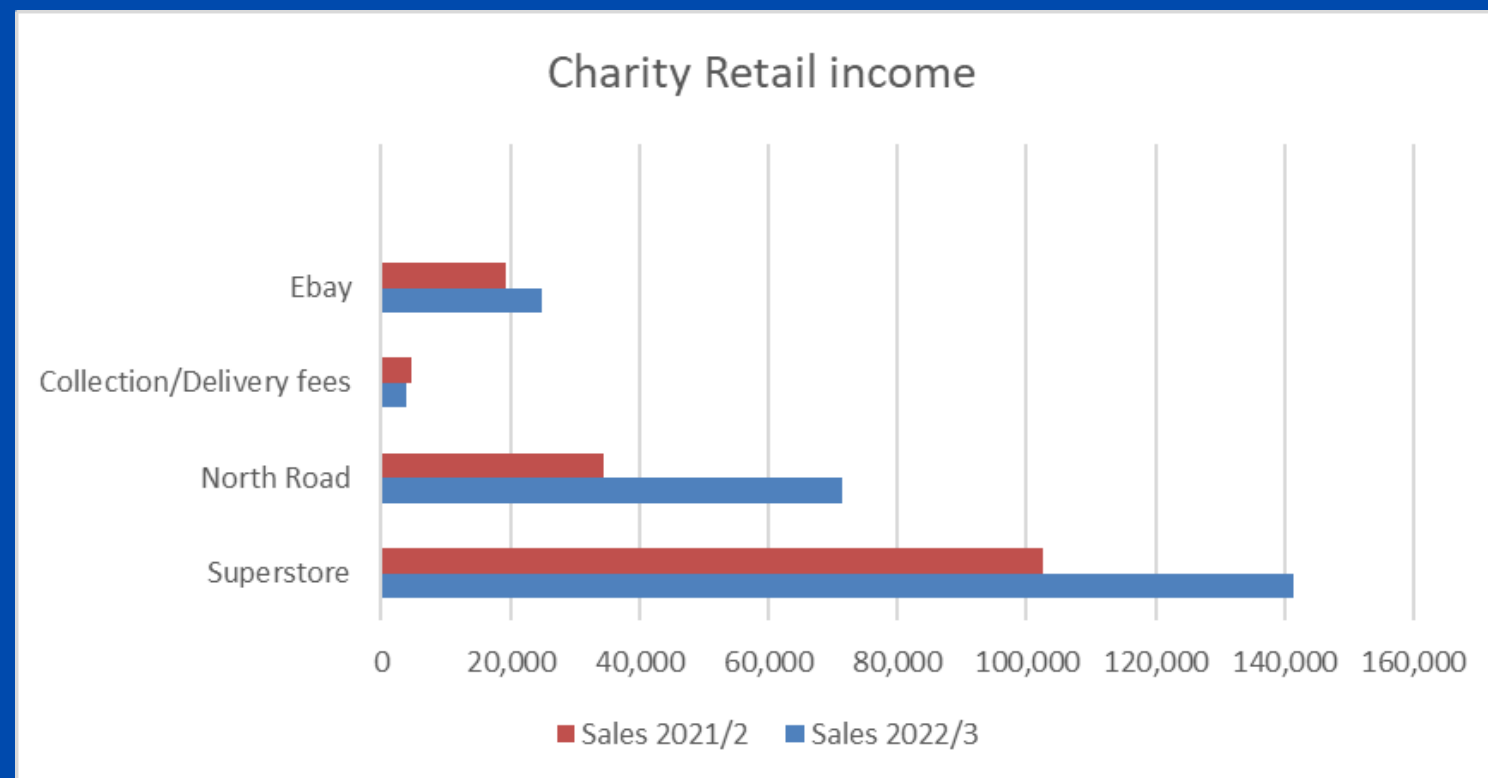


# Retail

Our charity shop outlets are based at the **Superstore in Mandale Park, DH1 1TW** and the **Hidden Boutique in Durham City Centre, DH1 4SQ**.

In addition to these we also have online shopping outlets on eBay and Vinted.

Our staff and volunteers continue to work incredibly hard at our shops to raise funds for Age UK County Durham. All funds raised in these stores are used by us for the benefit of older people living in County Durham.



# Big Knit

Every year we take part in the **Big Knit** campaign organised by the national Age UK charity with the Innocent Smoothie company.



The 2020-21 campaign was extended due to the pandemic and ended during 2022-23. Our volunteer knitters created an amazing range of colourful little pompom hats during this time.

**The final total of hats sent to Innocent Smoothie was 30,000—which is an incredible achievement!**



## Our funders

Durham County Council  
The Shakespeare Trust  
Age UK  
County Durham Community  
Foundation  
NHS  
ESF  
Scotto Trust

## Working in partnership with

Durham County Council  
NHS  
Northern Cancer Alliance  
Bishop Auckland College  
Citizens Advice  
East Durham Trust  
UTASS  
Durham Community Action  
Community Venues  
plus many more

**Age UK Charity  
Quality Standard**

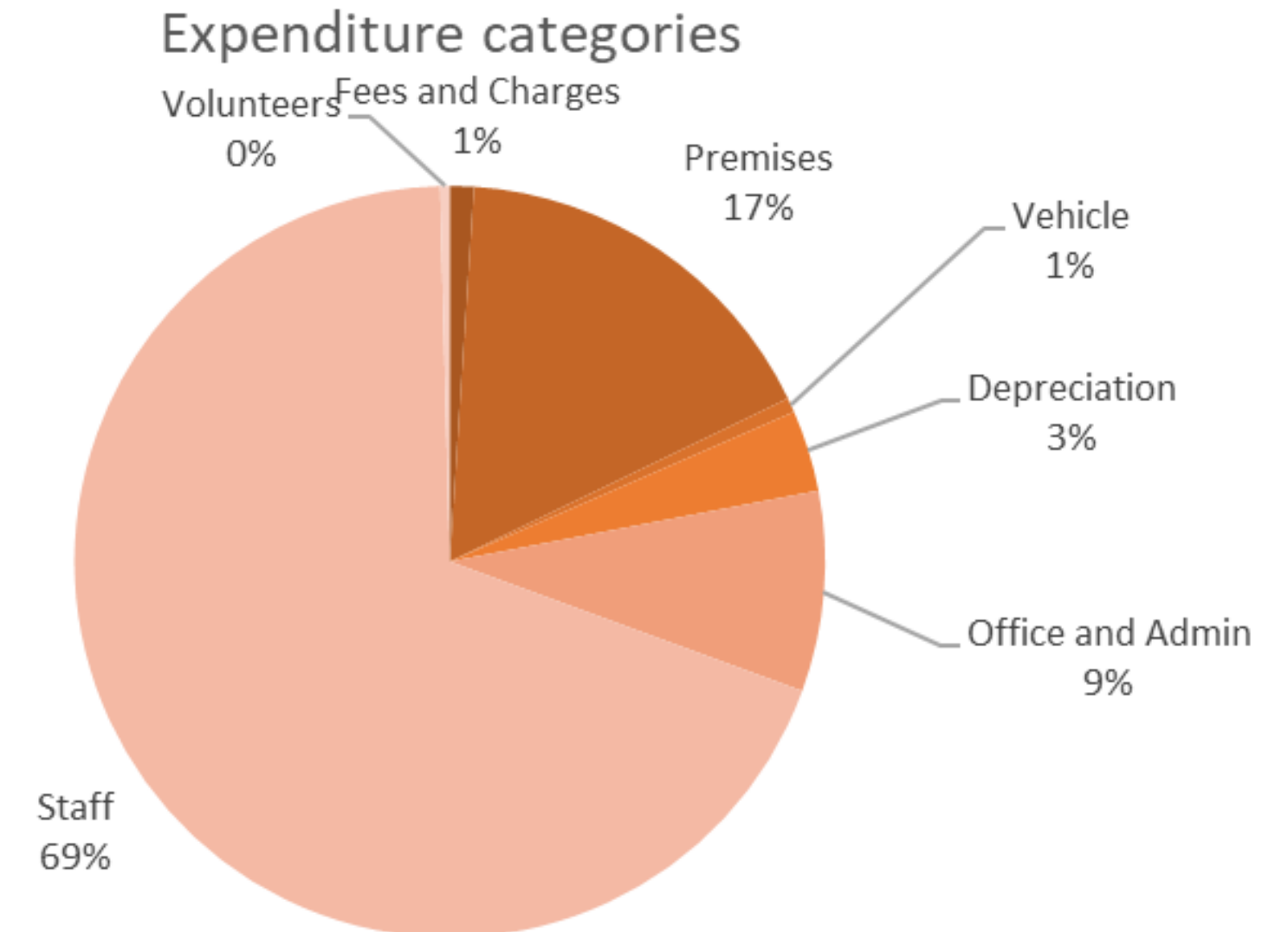
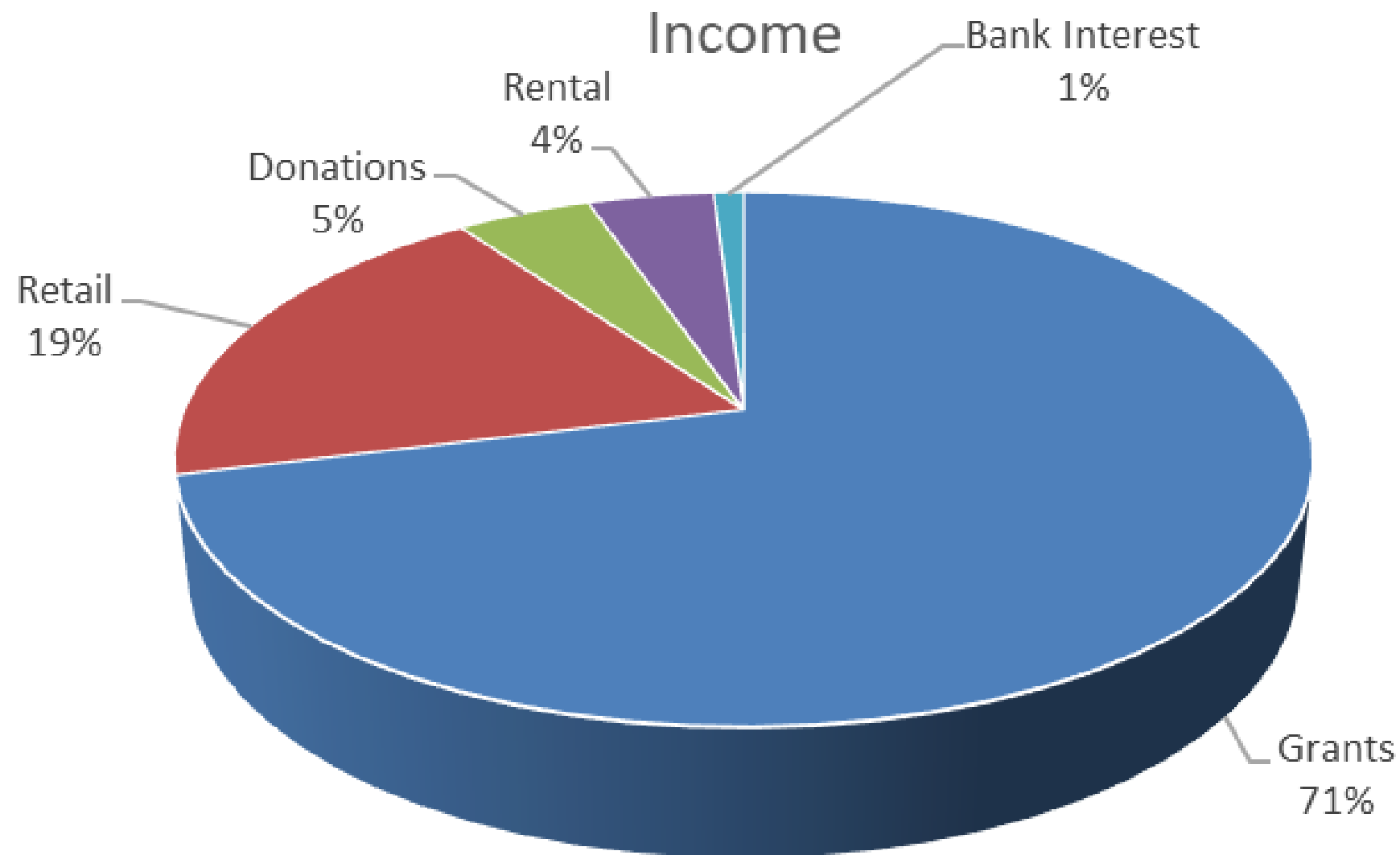
certified by  
 **SGS**

  
advice  
quality  
standard



**Age UK  
Information & Advice  
Quality Assured**

# Finance



**All donations and legacies given directly to Age UK County Durham are used for the sole purpose of improving and supporting the lives of older people living in County Durham**



# Contact us

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**Information & Advice Team**

0191 386 3856 / 0191 374 6367

[your.rights@ageukcountydurham.org.uk](mailto:your.rights@ageukcountydurham.org.uk)

**Charity Superstore**

0191 384 5098

**Hidden Boutique**

0191 814 3973

**We are the 'go to'  
organisation for  
everyone aged 50+  
living in  
County Durham**

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