

CONNECT



JUBILEE PARTIES
PAGES 18 & 19

INSIDE



DARLINGTON
Borough Council



TENANCY ENFORCEMENT



BREAD AND BUTTER THING



DINSDALE COURT CHARITY SUCCESS



A MONTH IN LIFELINE



Kevin Nicholson

As the Cabinet member with responsibility for Health and Housing I continue to be proud of the work we are doing to improve our service for tenants across Darlington.

This year we have been transforming our processes to ensure that we deliver brilliant services for tenants and our communities. The introduction of our new housing terms and conditions reinforces our responsibilities as a landlord and makes clear the responsibilities of our tenants who live within our council properties. If you are having any issues with your home or with anyone living in a council home, please do speak with your housing officer who will provide you with support.

I was pleased to accelerate our single glazed window replacement scheme this year which will deliver upgrades to around 1,600 single glazed properties, this will help our tenants with their energy bills and will improve the overall feel and look of their homes.

It was great to attend our tenants panel meeting recently where we talked about a wide range of issues that impact our council homes and communities. We're always looking for new members to join our tenants panel and there is more information within this newsletter about how to get involved.

As a council we are continuing to see increased demand for our services and in particular for council homes. That's why we're building 1,000 new council properties over the next 10 years, we have already delivered around 300 new homes in the last couple of years. The next development will be at Neasham Road, which will see additional 150 new council properties built by spring 2023.

In the meantime, if there is anything you may need from me, or the team please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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You Said, We Did

We are committed to listening and working with our tenants to improve what we do and to keep improving the services we provide. We don't always get it right and we want our tenants to hold us to account when we don't, that's why your comments, suggestions and complaints are important to us.

To help us improve how we feedback to you we have created a new "You Said We Did" webpage where we will document what we have received, what we have done and how you can give us feedback. We hope this will make it easier for our tenants to see how important you are to us and how dedicated we are to improving our service to you.

Park Place

Park Place residents love where they live but had raised with us that they felt there was a lack of engagement from Police, Civic Enforcement and Housing staff in their area. We therefore set up a multi-agency community meeting in September 2021 to meet with residents and look at how we could improve this and other issues. This has now become a regular meeting and has been so successful that we have rolled this out to other areas across Darlington.

Community Grant funded laptops

To help improve digital skills and for children to access virtual school lessons who live in our homes the Housing Team used some of the Housing Community Fund to provide 75 laptops across 7 locations to help families with schooling needs.



Residents Parking Park Place

Residents of Park Place reported an increase in traffic in the Resident's zone. They felt this was due to faded lines in the private parking spaces. In November 2021 the Housing Officer Dean Morris worked with the residents for a resolution. The parking area was restored with the help of the civil engineering department. Bringing the parking area back to its former glory with new lines in place.



Extractor Unit Branksome Hall Drive

In February 2022 residents at Branksome Hall Drive raised with us that they did not have an extractor fan in their kitchen which was causing difficulty when they were cooking. Our Housing Officer Linda Johnston, worked with the asset management team to fit an extractor unit. On completion of the job the tenants were grateful because it made such a difference to them, sending a compliment to all those involved.

Flower Beds Edmund Street

Residents at North Riverside raised with us that they felt there had been an increase in fly tipping in March 2022. This mainly seemed to affect the empty flower beds in Edmund Street. To combat this our Housing Officer worked with residents and arranged for Street Scene to plant more flowers in the beds, this has discouraged fly tippers and made the area more appealing for local residents.

Tenants Panel

With the focus moving to online in the last year we asked our Tenants Panel to join us for online engagement. One of our panel was keen to be involved in these sessions but did not have the equipment to be able to do it. To help assist, the Customer Engagement team bought the tenants panel member a new tablet to loan from us. This meant that she could be involved in engagement events as well as assisting her in day to day tasks. We also listened to our tenants panel when they asked for some IT training which we were happy to help with as this would complement their panel duties.

If you are interested in becoming part of our Tenants Panel please contact Matt Hufford, Customer Engagement Co-Ordinator on 01325406682. The Panel are involved in the North East Tenants Voice where tenants throughout the Northeast meet to discuss regional topics and mystery shopping workshops to help the Panel to start their mystery shopping etc.

Tenancy Enforcement

In this edition of Housing Connect we are focusing on our Tenancy Enforcement Team which have recently expanded and explaining how they work with our tenants to improve your communities.

As your landlord we are committed to ensuring that our tenants enjoy their right to a safe home and community, and we do not tolerate anti-social behaviour (ASB) or hate crime and act whenever necessary. We are committed to preventing and tackling ASB. We want our communities to be safe and peaceful places to live and we work hard to ensure this.

Jo and Christine make up our Tenancy Enforcement Team and work closely with all Housing Teams and Partners.

Christine recently started in the Tenancy Enforcement team joining us in April 2022.

She has a huge amount of experience dealing with ASB with over 17 years as a Police Community Support Officer with Durham Constabulary.

'In my first 11 years with Durham Constabulary I was based here in Darlington so it's nice to be back. I am looking forward to supporting the council tenants of Darlington going forward and meeting some old and new faces along the way.'

Jo has been with the Tenancy Enforcement team for just under two years joining the team in August 2020.

Jo has 5 years experience working in housing after previously working with the Thirteen Group based in Middlesbrough.

'I am responsible amongst other things for dealing with serious cases of anti-social behaviour but my main goal is helping tenants who are the victims as we have some fantastic tenants in Darlington.'

I have achieved and resolved ongoing issues by working in partnership with other services, residents and communities and I am looking forward to developing this engagement moving forward.

There is a range of ways to contact the **ASB team**. You can either:

Call us on **01325 405333**

Online via our referral form

Email us at housing@darlington.gov.uk



A day in the life: Tenancy Enforcement

- 07.00** I get up, have a quick cup of coffee before setting off for the commute into work
- 08.30** In the office, I catch up with colleagues and partner agencies. Check emails and respond. Make call backs to tenants. Check the police daily briefing for any incidents which occurred the previous day / night before that involved our properties or tenants.
- 09.00** Review of current cases which are usually between 15 and 25, ensuring cases are up to date, complainants are kept up to date. Review new cases which have been allocated. I will keep an eye on these in any spare time throughout the day.
- 10.00** I head out to speak with tenants where complaints have been made against them. The first visit is to an introductory tenant where allegations have been made that their visitors have been causing a disturbance outside of the home. The tenant has already taken steps to stop the issues from occurring by requesting that their visitors do not return.
- 10.30** Continue with unannounced visits and prearranged appointments.
- Visits and appointment can often be made jointly with the police and other agencies for example social services, mental health services. DBC have an excellent working relationship with the Police & Civic Enforcement in Darlington.
- 14.30** Head back to the office to complete follow-up administration work, calls and emails.
- 15.00** Prepare a Notice of Seeking Possession for a tenant involved in high level anti-social behaviour. This is legal paperwork served on a tenant when high level evidence has been gathered. This is our notice to the tenant that we intend to take legal action against their tenancy.
- 16.00** Attend a multi agency meeting regarding the welfare of a tenant. All agencies are looking at what they can do with the tenant and how to support and help them to sustain their tenancy well.
- 17.00** Head home after a busy day.



GREEN DOCTORS CAN HELP YOU TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR FUEL BILLS

Practical Solutions To Reduce Your Energy Costs

> Advice on switching to find the best energy deal

> Installing energy saving devices

We help with:

- Energy bills and fuel debt support
- Grants for boilers & insulation
- Heating systems & controls
- Reducing energy costs in the home
- Water bills & debt
- Damp/condensation/mould advice

We can install:

- Draught proofing
- Reflective radiator panels
- LED light bulbs
- Damp humidifiers
- Pipe lagging
- Water saving devices

www.thegreendoctors.org



@TheGreenDoctors



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ARRANGE A FREE HOME VISIT, CONTACT:

FREEPHONE 0808 168 3547

OR 0113 238 0601

Email: greendoctorleeds@groundwork.org.uk

Subject to eligibility

Green Doctor is provided by Groundwork, the community charity 519846



The bread and butter thing.



What is the Bread and Butter Thing?

The Bread and Butter Thing is an award-winning and innovative affordable service. For just £7.50, members' shopping bags are filled with a minimum of £35 worth of items made up of quality nutritious food.

Each week members access three bags of produce including fresh fruit and veg, chilled goods for the fridge, as well as cupboard staples such as pasta and cereal.

Families can use their NHS Healthy Start vouchers and low cost period products are also available.

People interested in using The Bread and Butter Thing's affordable food service need to register as members and should contact TBBT by email at hello@breadandbutterthing.org or text 07860 063304.

There is also a sign up form and more information at www.breadandbutterthing.org/contact.

The Well, North Road

Wednesdays 1.30pm

Corporation Road Primary School

Wednesdays 2.15pm

Eastbourne Park Community Centre

Thursdays 2pm

Elim Road Pentecostal Church

Mondays 2.15pm

Firthmoor Community Centre

Fridays 1.30pm

Skerne Park Community Centre

Mondays 11.30am

Red Hall Primary School

Thursdays 1.30pm

Windsor Court

Tuesdays 1.30pm

A day in the life: Lorraine Glenning

Scheme Manager

With the schemes going from strength to strength within the last couple of years we speak to Lorraine Glenning who is a scheme manager at our Branksome Hall Drive sites.

What does your job entail?

I help and encourage independent living within sheltered accommodation with morning calls along with visits and pop ins to catch up with our tenants. This has been especially important in the last 2 years through an isolated time. We also like to encourage engagement with our tenants with daily activities like coffee mornings, bingo and game days. Our last big event was the jubilee where everyone was brought together including the local community. We are a big support and on call until we go home then response take over giving our tenants a 24hour response which is of great comfort to them.

What do you enjoy the most about your role?

Every day is different, I love speaking to tenants daily and popping to visit where I can and help out, if one small thing has helped benefit their independence then that's a smile on my face, also motivating others to mix and socialise more helps them to improve their well being, which is rewarding to their families, me and most importantly themselves.

How long have you worked at Darlington Borough Council and what roles did you do before?

I worked for the council previously with 7 years experience in the Enforcement team. After a change in career I returned and have now been a scheme manager for 17 months.

A
DAY
IN
THE
LIFE



A month in Lifeline

Here for you

Our Lifeline Team are one of the busiest within Darlington Borough Council in a typical month they are responsible for up to 8000 calls with the team working tirelessly around the clock. In April alone the team dealt with the following.



Calls received
7962



Incidents Attended 696



Equipment Installs 56



Annual updates completed 74



Welfare calls made 10503



Activities Delivered 354



In April only **4** of our clients needed hospital treatment which indicates the fantastic work that the team achieve on a daily basis.



Games for the Brain

Oban Court are delivering Games for the Brain sessions to enable people living with dementia to remain physically active and enjoy activities they previously accessed in a way that is suitable for them.

Activities will include such games as indoor bowls and dominoes as well as others.

The sessions take place every Tuesday between the times of 1.30 and 3.30pm.

Alzheimer's Society can make direct referrals for the person living with dementia and their carer to Oban Court Games for the Brian. To be referred, please speak with your Dementia Support Worker.

For further information, visit our website at www.darlington.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-services/living-independently/lifeline-and-telecare/



Community Fund Projects

Residents of Carlton Court and North Riverside both recently applied for funding from the Housing Services Community Engagement fund which aims to donate money to a voluntary or community group with a good idea that will make a difference to the lives of Darlington Council tenants.

One of the applicants, who is an avid gardener, applied for the funding to create a project for the gardens at Wesley Court. The aim is to develop a healthier and greener environment and to encourage healthier eating with funding spent on growing fruit and veg and feels the project will help create a community spirit.

'We can build a closer bond in the community by working together for success'

A member of the North Riverside Association applied for the funding to continue an eco brick project which started in 2017 and which had unfortunately stalled because of Covid.

'We are a small group of residents who want to complete a raised bed as part of the Eco Brick Project. The project will demonstrate how we are endeavouring to bring our community together and love where we live.'

You too could be the beneficiary of our community funding scheme which gives Council tenants up to £1000 with support for activities and projects that make a difference in the community. We are especially interested in projects and events that will coincide with the Queens Jubilee objectives and hope to be able to help fund projects which will have a lasting effect in the community.

Tenant Testimonials

Our Schemes and Good Neighbour sites have rebounded from the devastating effect of Covid over the last few months.



A resident of Dalkeith House has spoke about how social gatherings have enhanced his quality of life.

'Gilly (scheme manager) always tries to book a singer and we hold a raffle and have ice creams too. I like to win a raffle prize and enjoy mixing with friends, and meeting new tenants, I make friends at these events and look forward to seeing everyone again.'

Having an afternoon of fun for occasions like Easter and Christmas really do brighten my day. We held a Easter raffle with chocolate prizes and the lounge was decorated for Easter, the themed tree is always decorated and I enjoy helping to do this. I am now looking forward to the Jubilee celebrations.'



Dot who spends a lot of her time visiting and helping out at the Havelock Centre has also felt huge relief with the centre reopening.

'It has felt like a very long time since the Havelock Centre closed its doors due to the pandemic. I didn't realise just how important it was to have a place where I can go to meet my friends until it was taken away from us. I am so pleased to finally be able to go and sit at the community hub with all my friends. I feel so much happier within myself now that we can sit together. I used to take the community centre for granted but losing it like we did has made me realise how lonely it would be if we lost it altogether.'

'We have a lovely little garden at the rear of Wesley Court community centre, which has various beds laid out, as well as a small greenhouse. Thanks to a meeting with our Engagement Co-Ordinator, Housing Officer and Scheme Manager the council offered a grant of £1000 to improve the facilities in the garden. With this money we have been able to buy a new larger greenhouse as well as obtaining various vegetables and flower seeds.'

We are looking forward to a nice harvest of flowers and vegetables later on this year. All volunteers are welcome.'

At the start of 2022 residents of Wesley Court were granted funding for a community garden with one of the main residents and tenants panel member Julian delighted with the outcome.

Take a look inside our tenants panel with a Q and A with some key members

Communications and Engagement Co-ordinator

Matt Hufford



What is your role within the Council?

I am the Communications and Engagement Co-ordinator. A role which is extremely varied but involves working closely with all tenants. I also chair the Tenants Panel meetings which occur every couple of months.

What do you like best about your role?

My role is varied and challenging but extremely enjoyable and has changed a lot in the last 6 months after I have been able to get out and about more.

Why is the tenants panel so important?

The tenants panel is vital as they are an important part of the decision making within the housing team. I come to the group with a range of issues and policies and the panel offer their views and challenge us where necessary.

Can anyone join the panel?

If you are a council tenant and are enthusiastic about the area that you live, then the Tenants Panel could be for you. More information can be provided via email at customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk or give me a call on 01325 406682. All meetings are advertised on our Facebook page so come down to a session.

Tenant's panel member

Denise



How long have you been a council tenant?

34 Years and counting

Which area of town do you live in and what is the best part about living there?

I live in the Haughton area of town. It is a lovely tight knit community where everyone looks after each other.

How long have you been a member of the tenants panel?

Approximately 15 Years

What is the best thing about being a member of the tenant's panel?

The meetings are always extremely informative with lots to discuss. They are always made interesting and it's good to see what is going on

Is there anything you would change about your area or the town as a whole?

More residents joining the DBC panels local residents' associations. Everyone should show an interest in their local community

The Big Spring Clean

Tenant's panel member

Karen



How long have you been a council tenant?

I have been a council tenant for two years since my flat was built.

Which area of town do you live in and what is the best part about living there?

I live in the Lingfield area of the town. Darlington is a lovely market town. The regeneration is happening so fast and looking good.

How long have you been a member of the tenants panel?

I have been a member of the tenants panel for approximately 1 year.

What is the best thing about being a member of the tenant's panel?

The tenants panel gets you involved with the workings of the council, information that goes out to all council tenants. I feel that the panel provides me with a voice for my community.

Is there anything you would change about your area or the town as a whole?

The main issue that bothers people locally is the constant littering and fly tipping as well as dog fouling. The town is a fantastic place to live, and I want to encourage people to have a bit of pride in their neighbourhood.



Throughout March and April residents of Darlington got out their litter pickers to help with a campaign aimed at tidying the streets of Darlington.

On the 10th March Housing Officer Naomi and Customer Engagement Co-ordinator Matthew joined volunteers in the Branksome and Cockerton areas of town to help tidy the paths and road which were becoming a hot bed for litter and fly tipping.

There were also volunteers at Skerne Park where volunteers gathered at Blackwell Meadows Rugby Club for a litter pick along the river to Snipe Pond and Lakeside, Red Hall and Heighington as well as other locations in the town.

Future events will be organised throughout the year so keep your eyes peeled on our website and Facebook Page.

You can report a fly tip in your area by visiting www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/street-scene/fly-tipping-and-needles

Dinsdale Court Charity Success

Tenants and staff at Dinsdale Court held a Cancer Research UK Fund Raiser event this March. The event which included a coffee morning, raffle as well as a pie and peas dinner raised an amazing £2400 for the charity.

This was followed by an afternoon of games and bingo and is another great example of the fantastic community spirit at Dinsdale Court along with the rest of our Sheltered Housing, Extra Care and Good Neighbour Schemes.

Well done to everyone involved in such a fantastic event and raising so much money.

For more information about Dinsdale Court visit www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/finding-a-home/50plus-housing/sheltered-housing/dinsdale-court/

If you have a charity event or occasion and want us to promote this why not send us some pics and details to engagement@darlington.gov.uk



Gas Servicing

You may have noticed that we have contacted you earlier than usual to confirm an appointment for your gas service to be carried out.

We are changing the process in the way we deliver our gas servicing as we move to complete more services during the summer months, leaving more appointments available in the winter months for emergency repairs.

Despite this change gas safety checks remain a priority for us as this is a legal requirement, so if you have received a letter to remind you that your service is due don't hesitate in getting in touch.



Electrical Testing

As your landlord we have the responsibility to check that our properties electrical installation meets the regulatory requirements.

As with the Gas Servicing we will ensure that the testing will be arranged for at time that is convenient to you. The appointment will take around 2 hours to complete.

If you receive a letter reminding you that your Periodic Electrical test is due please contact our Housing Planners team on 01325 406676 to book your appointment.

If you receive your electrical safety check between now and the 31st August you will automatically be entered into a free prize draw with the opportunity to win a £50 love to shop voucher.



FIRE SAFETY IN THE HOME



Follow these helpful tips to protect yourself and your family from deadly **CHIP PAN FIRES**

ALWAYS

- Keep the oven, hob and grill clean – a build up fat and grease can easily catch fire.
- Use a thermostat-controlled deep-fat fryer, which will make sure the fat doesn't get too hot.
- Dry the chips before putting them in the pan
- Test the temperature of the oil by putting in a small piece of bread. If the bread crisps up quickly the oil is ready.

NEVER

- Leave cooking unattended
- Fill the pan more than a third full with fat or oil
- Put food in the pan if the oil begins to give off smoke. Turn off the heat and leave the oil to cool, otherwise it could catch fire



IF A PAN DOES CATCH FIRE

- Don't move it or throw water on it
- Do turn off the heat if you can do it safely



Service Improvement

You may have noticed there has been big changes in the way that we deliver our services, with more of a focus on providing documents and information digitally through our website and Facebook page . In the last 12 months we have worked hard to produce documents that are easy for tenants to understand and complete.

This has included our tenancy agreement, sign up pack and the introduction of DocuSign.



Tenancy Agreement

Our new tenancy agreement came into force in February 2022 in a bid to make it clearer to understand as well as clamping down on nuisance issues. The new terms and conditions introduce a zero-tolerance approach for tenants and their visitors who commit crimes and anti-social behaviour.

The Council's Housing Team wrote to it's 5,239 tenants to outline all the key changes and invited comments as part of the consultation towards the end of 2021.

The comments as a whole were positive, welcoming the proposed changes which included anti social behaviour, pets and animals, gas and electricity safety, access to your home, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and tenant Involvement.

You can view the new tenancy agreement on our webpage www.darlington.gov.uk/media/15576/tenancy-agreement-2022.pdf

Sign Up Pack

In early 2022 we designed a new and improved Sign Up Pack for all of our new and transferring tenants. The sign up pack includes welcome information, our tenancy agreement, repairs handbook, fire safety brochure, electrical safety checklist, payment details, water safety brochure and tenant involvement information. We believe that with such a detailed pack a tenant will have all that they need when renting a home from Darlington Borough Council. This pack will be soon be available for all tenants to view on our webpages



DocuSign

In May 2022 we also successfully introduced our new DocuSign system which allows residents to sign up for their new property electronically available to all tenants. The aim for the DocuSign is to streamline the process of signing up and making it quicker, easier and more convenient for all tenants. For any tenants that do not have online access a hard copy of the sign up pack and Tenancy Agreement will be available. We plan to extend this to more documents in the next few months so watch out for this.

DocuSign®

Darlington Home Online

Darlington Home Online is Darlington Borough Councils online service for named tenants. It's quick and easy and once signed up to Darlington Home Online you will be able to

- Check your account balance and make payments
- Report Repairs and view your repair history
- Update your personal information
- Order a new rent card
- View rent account statements

To get started all you need is an email address, internet access and a device to register for Darlington Home Online as well as your tenancy number.

HOUSING

You can pay your rent, report repairs, contact the housing team and more.

DO IT ONLINE

DO IT ONLINE


DARLINGTON HOME ONLINE

Pay, Update, Message, Book



SAVE TIME, DO IT ONLINE

Jubilee Parties

In Early June the nation celebrated the Queens Platinum Jubilee with celebrations up and down the country, with Darlington being no exception.

Tenants from all over the borough donned their red, white and blue and held garden and street parties over the long weekend.

Our schemes were particularly busy with events ranging from tea parties, childrens activities and singalongs.

The Housing Team used the Jubilee to celebrate community spirit and gave a little back to the people that mean the most to us.

Throughout May we advertised our Jubilee Community Fund which offered a contribution for tenants and residents associations looking to hold events.

Groups from Firthmoor, Windsor Court, The Havelock Centre, Oban Court, Park Place, Branksome Hall Drive and King William Street were all successful with over £4000 of the fund being used for the fantastic cause.







Darlington Wordsearch

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | W | S | M | G | G | A | K | H | I | B | B | W | S |
| F | R | B | H | I | P | P | O | D | R | O | M | E | T |
| X | B | B | R | O | K | E | N | S | C | A | R | X | C |
| S | O | U | T | H | P | S | R | K | C | S | F | O | U |
| T | V | P | H | U | E | J | L | Q | D | Y | W | F | T |
| W | H | M | J | C | O | R | N | M | I | L | L | Q | H |
| M | A | R | K | E | T | H | A | L | L | P | Y | Y | B |
| G | D | O | L | P | H | I | N | C | E | N | T | R | E |
| B | R | I | C | K | T | R | A | I | N | F | I | E | R |
| N | S | K | E | R | N | E | B | R | I | D | G | E | T |
| H | E | A | D | O | F | S | T | E | A | M | W | O | S |
| X | I | B | J | O | S | E | P | H | P | E | A | S | E |
| I | D | B | S | V | F | T | O | W | N | H | A | L | L |
| K | Y | E | D | H | B | A | W | O | K | V | N | N | B |

- SOUTH PARK
- ST CUTHBERTS
- BRICK TRAIN
- JOSEPH PEASE
- CORNMILL
- SKERNE BRIDGE
- TOWN HALL
- MARKET HALL
- HEAD OF STEAM
- HIPPODROME
- DOLPHIN CENTRE
- BROKEN SCAR

To be in with a chance of a £75 Love2Shop voucher simply fill in the wordsearch and return to Housing Tenancy Management, Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington DL15QT

Entry Form

Name

Address

..... Postcode

Telephone number