

Housing

CONNECT

May 2019 | Edition 10



A survey is coming with a fantastic prize

and much more...



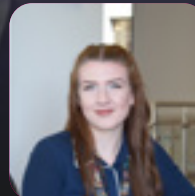
Community Fund in action



Council shortlisted for an Achievement award



Two wordsearches in this edition
Around the schemes



www.darlington.gov.uk/housing

The Housing Community Fund in Action

The Housing Service established a Community Fund designed to help make a difference for tenants. The Fund supports a wide variety of projects. If you are interested in bidding for money from the Fund details can be found at: www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/customer-engagement/community-fund/

Rosemary Court, Lascelles - The kids are alright

A link has been established between Rosemary Court Extra Care scheme and the local nursery. Children visit the scheme on most Mondays. A successful bid was made to the Community Fund to buy games and toys to play with when the children from Maidendale Nursery visit.



Ted Fletcher Court - HenPower!

Ted Fletcher held a 'Love your Hen Party' on Saturday 16th March with tenants and their families and the wider community. There were creative activities, hens and nibbles followed by a chat about HenPower from Equal Arts. HenPower creatively engages older people in arts activities and hen keeping promoting health and wellbeing and helps to reduce loneliness. Money was awarded from the Housing Community Fund to kick start this project which will eventually see Ted Fletcher Court with its own hens.

Dinsdale Court has an Echo

Wi-Fi has been fitted into the communal areas in all sheltered and most Good Neighbour schemes to provide tenants with access to the internet. The Wi-Fi is currently being tested and will go live in the next few weeks. The residents of Dinsdale Court wanted to trial an Echo Dot smart speaker. With the help of their Management Officer Dean Morris they made a bid to the Community Fund to get the speaker. They want to familiarise themselves with what the internet has to offer. The residents of Roxby Court made a similar bid. Should the trial of the speakers prove successful then the Council will look at ways to provide speakers in other schemes.





Roxby Court- Sign of the times

The residents of Roxby Court asked for funding so that they could learn Sign Language to help them communicate with one of the residents who is hearing impaired. Both staff and residents took the half day course.

Friends of Fryers Field

Friends of Fryers Field are a group of residents who have come together to improve and maintain Fryers Field which is situated at the back of Fryer Crescent in Springfield. They applied to the Community Fund for money to buy equipment such as lawnmower, garden tools, wheelbarrow, plants and bulbs etc. They needed the equipment to help them maintain the green space. They have planted shrubs and flowers on the entrance to the park and around the children's play area to make it a brighter and welcoming place for everyone. The group have also sourced funding to install lighting and Cleveland Bridge made some lovely red seating that is situated around the park. If anyone wants to volunteer, lend a hand or help with events you can contact John Thompson via Facebook at Friends of Fryers Field Recreation Ground.



Roxby Court, Knit and Natter

Members of Roxby Court's Knit & Natter group were presented with a cheque for £230 funded through the councils Community Fund. The money is to enable the group to buy more supplies to knit baby items for the neo-natal unit at Darlington Memorial Hospital and to be involved in the Big Knit 2019 which raises money for Age UK. If you are a council tenant and want to get involved email customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk

Branksome Hall Drive

The residents of Branksome Hall Drive have decided that they wanted to make some additions to their garden. Garden improvements is one of the more common reasons for making bids to the Community Fund. If you have an idea or project that might need a bit of funding why not apply to the Community Fund? If you are not sure then speak to your Management Officer or if you live in a sheltered /Good Neighbour Scheme, speak to the Scheme Manager.



New faces

Two new faces in Housing Services – Scott Richardson and Sara Williams

Scott joins us as the new Tenancy Enforcement Officer ensuring that tenancy conditions are adhered to, deal with Anti Social Behavior, neighbourhood disputes. Scott previously worked for Gentoo Housing before training to be a gas fitter then after an accident on a mountain went to EE before coming back into Tenancy Enforcement.

Sara joins us as a Senior Housing Income Advisor dealing with accounts, direct debits, rent statements, payment methods etc. Sara previously worked for Livin and has 14 years' experience in Housing and previously worked in housing benefits, been a homeless officer and housing tenancy officer but prefers the income side of the job.



Our Wordsearch winner

Our latest winner was Mrs D Douthwaite from Skerne Park who won a £25 Love 2 Shop voucher.

TENANTS CONTENTS INSURANCE

Seven ways to help prevent house fires



1

Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on every floor and that it is inspected regularly.



2

Keep inside doors closed, particularly at night. It can help slow down a fire.

3

Don't overload plug sockets. Try to stick to one appliance per socket.

4



Make sure candles are secured in their holders and kept away from curtains, blinds or materials that might catch fire.

5



Make sure wiring is safe. Only ever use a qualified electrician to carry out electrical work.

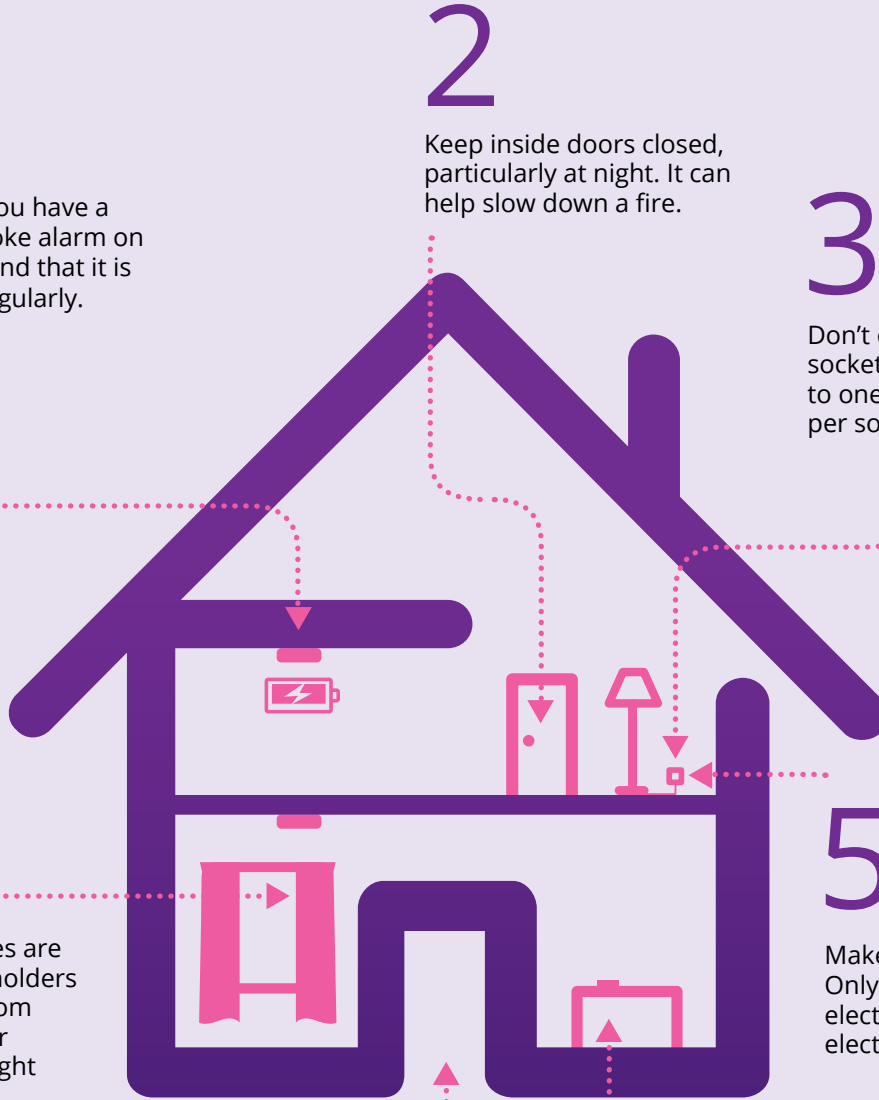
7

Plan an escape route. Keep all exits clear of clutter.

6



Always stub out and carefully dispose of cigarettes. Don't smoke in bed or when tired.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE
CONTACT YOUR LANDLORD ON:
01325 405333**





With a wide range of council services now available online it is now even easier to



- Register for council housing
- Register to vote
- Register for a birth, death or marriage certificate
- Appeal a parking fine
- Report a repair
- Register and pay for the garden waste scheme
- Pay a bill
- Register a change for Council tax
- Apply for Housing Benefit



Lascelles Community Hub

The newly refurbished Lascelles Community Hub in Eastbourne Park has now opened. The centre was the former bowling pavilion in Eastbourne Park and has had a full re-fit with a new kitchen, electrical goods, toilet facilities, flooring and re-decoration. The centre is in a lovely setting and there is seating and tables outside on a sunny day to enjoy your cuppa. Funding from the Community Fund helped to get the project under way.

The Hub is open on Tuesday for the Links Express Group to serve soup and sandwiches between 12:00pm-2:00pm and on a Wednesday morning for "Breakfast in the Park" 9:30am- 12:00pm.

The Hub is run entirely by volunteers and they have regular family and fundraising events throughout the year, more details can be found on their Facebook page 'Lascelles Park Residents Association Darlington'



Red Hall Clean up



A new community group has been formed at Red Hall, the Red Hall Partnership formed in January. Their first action was to organise a litter pick and a very impressive 65 people turned out. Over 60 bags of rubbish were collected from around the area. After the litter pick the children were so unhappy about the level of litter they found they decided they wanted to make some posters to encourage those littering the estate to stop & think before they drop their rubbish!!!

As they went out to put their posters up they were shocked to find more rubbish in one of the areas they spent ages cleaning but this has made them all the more determined to keep Red Hall litter free.

Food for Thought

Food for Thought are a voluntary organisation who are challenging food waste and showing how good quality meals can be made with food that otherwise would go to waste.

They have started sessions at Red Hall Community Centre with chicken and chorizo vegetable bake and BBQ pork at the first session. Participants had a sit down meal with pulled pork and took home their chicken and chorizo vegetable bake for a family meal.



MJ Awards

The Council's new build programme has been short listed for the prestigious MJ Achievement Awards. The Council started to build new council housing in 2015 and has developed over 200 new homes. The tenants of the new properties have been delighted with the quality and space standards and that has encouraged the Council to commit to a new programme of 1000 new Council homes. Our next development at Lancaster Way, off McMullen Road in Lingfield is now well underway and we hope to have news about other new development for the next issue of Housing Connect.

If you are interested in our new Council housing or in any other Council homes go to <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/finding-a-home/> for more information.



Have your say and win a fabulous prize!

The Council are really keen to find out what you think about the housing service and have appointed an organisation called the TLF to conduct a telephone survey in June/July.

We want to know how well you think we are doing on

- Repairs
- Managing our neighbourhoods
- Letting properties
- How we keep you informed



To encourage participation and by way of a thank you to all of those who participate, they will be placed in a draw to win the latest **iPAD AIR worth £500.**

About a fifth of all tenants will be contacted for participation in the survey and questions will cover a variety of aspects of the service and your experience of it. The survey will take a few minutes to complete. The results of the survey will be reported in Housing Connect and will directly influence our future service planning.

What a Year

2018/19 has been quite a year for the housing service:

- Our new build programme was completed, demand for the new properties has exceeded expectations and the feedback from tenants about their new homes has been excellent



- We have improved relet times again this year. It now takes on average 19.6 days to let a property, the best performance in comparison to other providers in the North East



- Gas servicing for occupied properties is now at 99.8%

- We have managed to keep rent arrears low, at 3.26% despite the increased roll out of Universal Credit. The average in the region is 3.52%



- We have listened to our tenants and accelerated the double glazing window replacement program



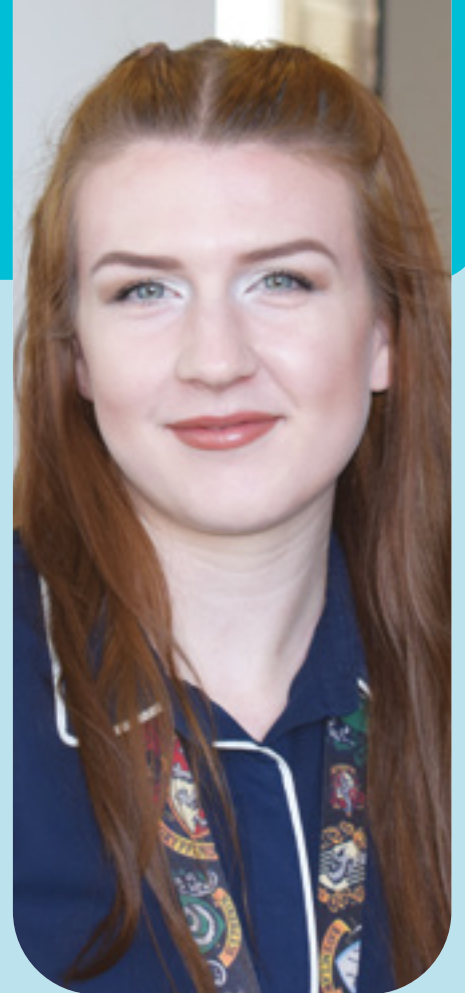
- Merged part of the customer contact service into housing to deal with housing related calls. This means that we are providing a better quality responses to your calls

- The cost of running the service is now the second lowest in the region



A Day in the life of Amy Harden

Housing
Performance Officer



What does your job entail?

My role is varied and changes day-to-day, depending on the time of year and what different projects I'm involved in. One of my main responsibilities is to benchmark our performance against other organisations throughout the country to help us judge how well we are performing. The projects I'm involved in are always changing, but I'm currently helping with the roll-out of our new Digital Tenancy, which will allow tenants to view their rent account and order repairs online. As part of this I engaged with our tenants so they could test the system and suggest improvements. I have previously carried out work listening to our housing calls and analysing them to see why people ring and if there are any other ways we could resolve their queries. The new ScanStation in Customer Services is another recent project; this allows you to easily scan your own documents to different departments in the council without having to take a ticket and wait in a queue.

Describe a typical day?

I don't really have a typical day due to all of the different projects, but four times a year I collect data from many different departments and teams within the council and housing, to then submit to a national bench-marking organisation. I can then see how we're doing compared to other councils and Housing Associations, and compared to our previous performance, and feed this back to different teams. I also have annual information to collect which is a bigger piece of work, lasting a couple of months over summer.

What did you do before joining the council?

I was at Northumbria University, where I gained a degree in Business Management. I joined the council the same year I left university, as a Graduate Apprentice in Revenues, Benefits & Housing.

Hobbies/Interests

I don't have any exciting hobbies! I like to go to the gym regularly, I do a few different classes there otherwise I would lose interest. The rest of my time I spend watching films and TV, plus I go to a quiz quite regularly. I'm currently trying to revamp my garden, so gardening may become a hobby!

Quick Questions

Fave TV Programme?

Game of Thrones
(can't wait for season 8)

What was the first record you bought?

Steps

What is the item you couldn't live without?

Phone

Favourite holiday destination?

Florida

“We claimed and are now so much better off!”

“We were really struggling to make ends meet after my husband John had to give up work following a stroke.

Because I was still working full time, in addition to looking after him, I didn't think we would be able to get any help but after seeing an advert for #DarloMillions I got in touch.

Turns out that we're entitled to nearly £140 a week in support!

Now we manage a lot better and I would wholeheartedly advise anyone else who's struggling to take five minutes to check – it's ok to claim.”



To find out if you or someone you know is entitled to claim visit www.onedarlington.org.uk/darlo-millions and use the calculator. For advice or help to make a claim email darlomillions@darlingtoncab.co.uk or call 734999.

Supported by



**DARLINGTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Around the Schemes



Oban Court - that's entertainment

Allen the Entertainer visited Oban Court Extra Care Scheme for an afternoon of enjoyable songs and plenty of laughs. It looks like it also involved dressing up too.



Oban Court - rocks out!

Ukulele Age Uk Band recently performed at Oban Court Extra Care in Whinfield Scheme. Residents could not make up their minds which was more memorable, the music or the shirts!

Branksome Hall Drive Nails it!

Level 2 Beauty students from Darlington College came to Branksome Hall Drive to give some of our residents a free nail manicure and polish as part of their ongoing beauty course.



Park Place - offer an alternative to morning TV

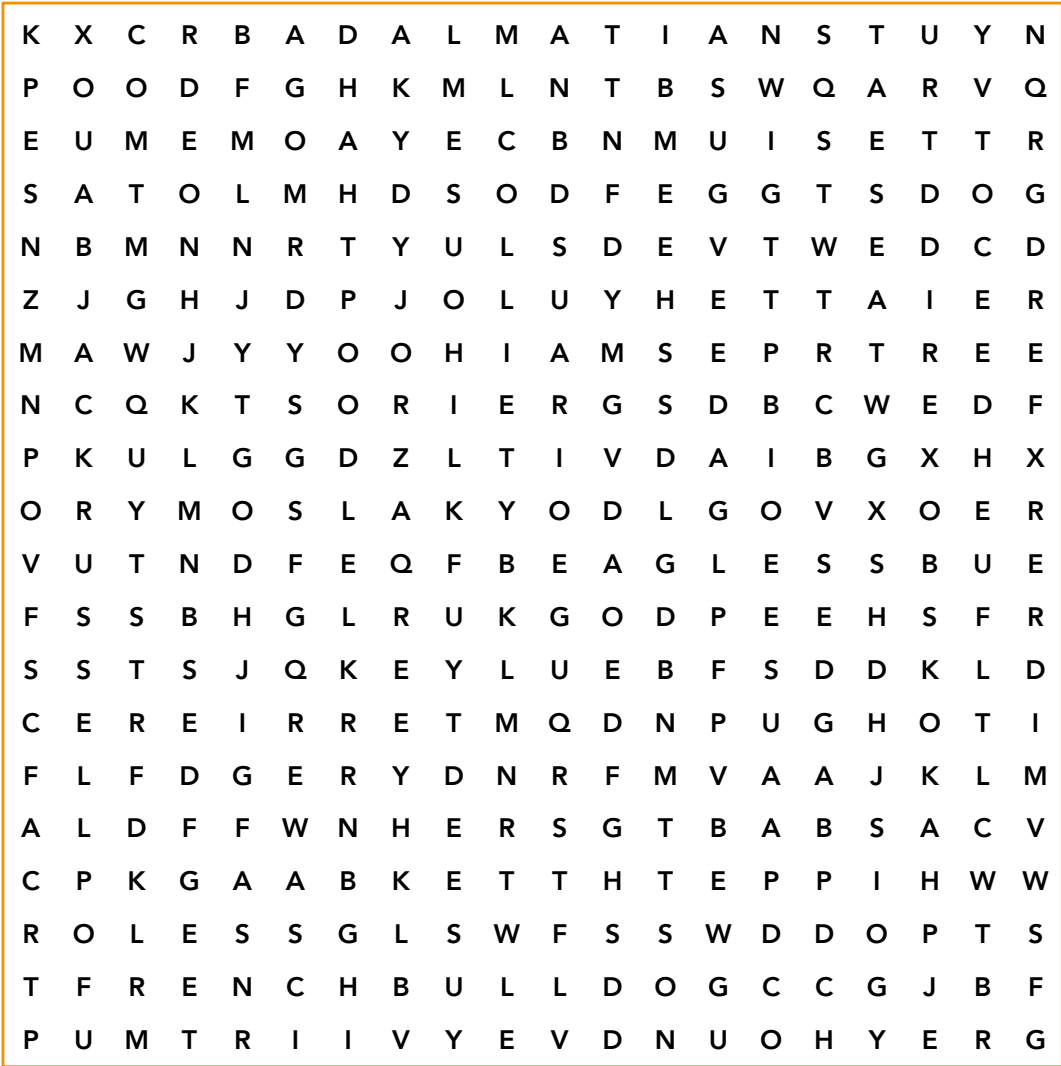
The Community Centre at Park Place hold a weekly Chair Aerobic class on a Friday morning at 9:30am. Liz Jolly who is a fully trained Nordic and Keep Fit instructor said "I deliver fun filled Chair Aerobic Exercise classes for all abilities and ages for both male and females. Great upbeat music is used throughout the class along with apparatus".

If you fancy giving this a try, then just pop along to the community centre on a Friday at 9:30am. A coffee morning follows straight after the class so why not stay for a cuppa and a bacon sandwich? Everyone is welcome.



DOGGIE WORDSEARCH -

win a £20 canine treat



- BEAGLE
- SHEEPDOG
- BOXER
- COLLIE
- DALMATIAN
- FRENCH BULLDOG
- GREYHOUND
- JACK RUSSELL
- KOMONDOR
- LABRADOR
- POODLE
- PUG
- SETTER
- TERRIER
- WHIPPET

You can win a £20 voucher to treat your canine companion courtesy of The Designer Dog Company on Northumberland Street, Darlington and online at www.thedesignerdogcompany.co.uk

Just find all of the dog breeds in the doggy wordsearch and then send your entry to Customer Engagement, Town Hall Feethams, Darlington. DL1 5QT or customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk by Friday 31st May 2019

Name

Address

Telephone number

Email address



Learning & Skills



Learning & Skills Family Learning and Parenting courses

Learning & Skills has some fantastic new Family Learning and Parenting courses available to parents, carers, grandparents and to anyone who would like to learn something new.

Course Title	Venue	Day	Start	Finish	Date	Course Length	Fee
Positive Parenting 0 - 5 years	Coleridge Centre	Thu	12.45pm	2.45pm	6th June	5 weeks	Free
Family Health and Happiness	St Teresa's R C Primary School	Thu	1.15pm	3.15pm	6th June	5 weeks	Free
Positive Parenting 5 - 11 years	McNay Street Children's Centre	Fri	12.45pm	2.45pm	7th June	5 weeks	Free
Family Health and Happiness	Mount Pleasant Primary School	Wed	1.15pm	3.15pm	12th June	5 weeks	Free
Family Health and Happiness	Coleridge Centre	Thu	9.15am	11.15am	13th June	5 weeks	Free
Cooking on a Budget	Harrowgate Hill Primary School	Tue	9am	11am	18th June	6 weeks	Free

FREE Functional Skills courses:

Are your English, maths and computer skills a little rusty? Take the opportunity to improve your skills and achieve a recognised qualification in English, maths or ICT by learning in a supportive, friendly environment. Classes will take place in venues around Darlington. You will need to complete an assessment before you start the course.

If you would further information or to book a place, please phone the Learning & Skills team on: (01325) 405601, email: l&s@darlington.gov.uk or text us at: 07932 869325. For course information please visit our website: www.darlington.gov.uk/learningandskills



Learning & Skills



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Robyn Allinson

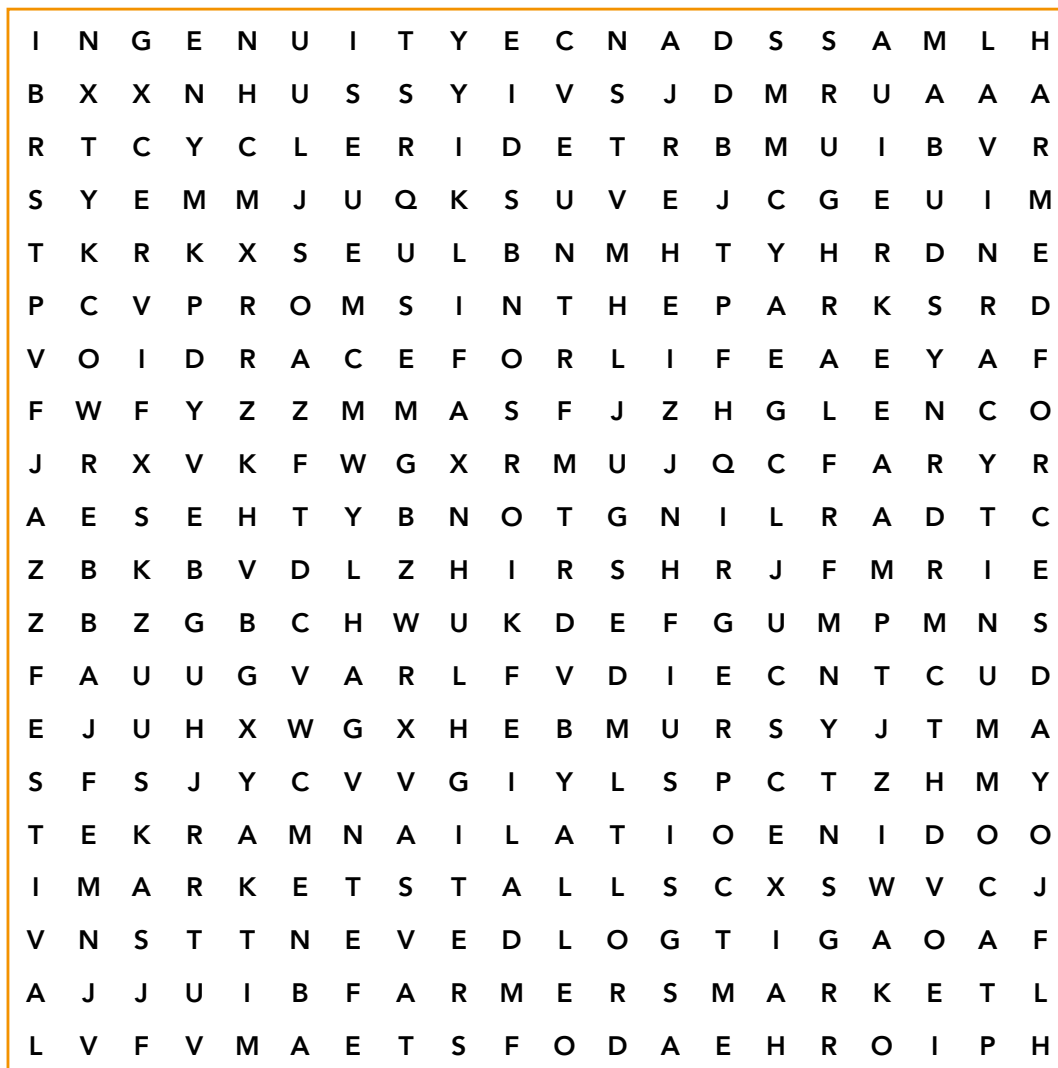
In the November 2018 edition of Housing Connect we featured Robyn who had started as an apprentice in Housing Services and is working to complete a Level 3 Business Administration. Robyn has worked hard and fitted in well with the team and has now secured a full-time position in Housing as an allocations support assistant. Congratulations Robyn.



Walkies?

Did you know that once your dog poo is bagged up you can pop it into any public litter bin? You can!

Darlington Events wordsearch



- ARMED FORCES DAY
- ARTS FESTIVAL
- COMMUNITY CARNIVAL
- CYCLE RIDE
- DARLINGTON BY THE SEA
- FARMERS MARKET
- FUNRUN
- GOLD EVENT
- HEAD OF STEAM
- INGENUITY
- ITALIAN MARKET
- JABBERWOCKY
- JAZZ FESTIVAL
- MARKET STALLS
- MASS DANCE
- PEASE PUDDING MARKET
- PROMS IN THE PARK
- RACE FOR LIFE
- RHYTHM N BLUES
- TOWN CRIER
- VINTAGE VEHICLES

Win £25 Love 2 Shop voucher by completing the word search and returning it to: customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk (please include your contact number) or by post to Housing & Building Services, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT by Friday 31st May 2019.

Name

Address

Telephone number

Email address

