

# Housing CONNECT

November 2018 | Edition 8



**Red Hall Fair**



**We're all going on a summer holiday**



**Day in the life**



**Meet the Mayor**

**Two word search prizes**

**Win a Family Panto Ticket**

**and much more...**



**Win £50 with our Survey**

[www.darlington.gov.uk/housing](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/housing)

# Win a Family Ticket to see Aladdin!






We have joined up with the Hippodrome to offer the chance to win tickets to this year's spectacular pantomime on Sunday 9th December 2018. It's the ultimate family treat.

To be in with a chance of winning a Family Ticket (4 tickets, minimum 1 adult) simply find the five stars of the show hidden in the pages of Housing Connect.

You must submit your results to us by Wednesday 28 November 2018. A draw will be made the following day. We will contact the winner by phone. Make sure you give us your name address and phone numbers when you submit your entry.

You can use the form below for your entry or you can submit your entry via email



Actors	Page Number	
 Eric Potts		Name:
 Robin Askwith		Address:
 Zoe Birkett		Phone Number:
 Louie Spence		<b>Send Entries to:</b> Housing and Building Services, Town Hall Feethams, Darlington. DL1 5QT  <b>Email:</b> customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk
 Liam Mellor		

# We're all going on a summer holiday

The school holidays, particularly the summer holiday are often seen as a carefree, fun time but it is not like that for everyone. There is now a lot of evidence that this is also a very stressful time. The costs of feeding the children and keeping them occupied during the long holiday all add up to what can be a very difficult time. This year a summer programme of activities ran in three areas Cockerton, Skerne Park and Firthmoor funded by the Council with support from the Healthy New Towns project and Housing's Community Fund. As you can see they had a great time.



A separate but similar project also was run in Red Hall with funding through the Government

## A Day in the Life

**Cheryl Simmons**  
Programmes and Performance Manager



### What does your job entail?

I manage a range of programmes and projects relating to business improvement and overall management and monitoring of Housing Services performance. This includes the maintenance of properties and management of the Housing technology programme. A current project is going Digital and offering tenants an opportunity to access lots of digital and online services, one of the biggest projects being to access their tenancy online.

### Describe a typical day?

It's like a Firework, lots of things all going off at the same time but the end results make it worthwhile.

### What do you enjoy most?

My work is so varied and covers a wide remit, which keeps it interesting. Every day is different and gives new challenges every day.

### What did you do before joining the Council?

I started out on an apprenticeship in the days of YTS (Youth Training Scheme). After only a year I got a job in Local Government (since I was 17 in 1996). Stockton Council for 10 years then Darlington since 2006, joining housing in January 2016.

I started off in Finance and owe my career to Frank Butcher from EastEnders, when I was 11 (maths was my favourite subject) he was in financial difficulty with his car lot. I knew then that I wanted to do the kind of job that helps sort out those kinds of problems.

### Hobbies/Interests?

We don't always get time to make room for hobbies but when I do I like to do Crafts (such as Card/Jewellery making), DIY, Socialising, visiting the local sites, such as Whitby and getting out on some of the local walks like Roseberry Topping

### Quick questions:

**Fave TV programme?** I enjoy comedies and Disney films

**What was the first record you bought?** I can't remember my first record but my favourite group is Queen and I attended Freddie Mercury's 50th Birthday party in Somerset – he was dead but the fan club still ran it.

**What is the one item you couldn't live without?** I'm not very sentimental about possessions – I could live without most things – it's just nice have the choice not to.

**Tell us something nobody else knows about yourself.** I am nearly 40 and still have 2 baby/milk teeth (and no fillings)



## At the Hub

The Mayor Councillor Copeland and Councillor Newall attended Lascelles Hub in Eastbourne Park which is run by the Lascelles Residents Association is going from strength to strength with an ever broadening range of activities. They recently held a fundraising coffee morning for the MacMillan Trust and raised £390.



## Red Hall Fun Run

Darlington Harriers with the support of Heritage on Track organised a fun run around Red Hall. Participants were encouraged with music from Locomotive Rhythm. Red Hall was chosen because of its location next to the original Stockton to Darlington railbed. It was a very healthy way to start a Sunday!



# The Digital Tenancy – Coming Soon

## What is digital tenancy?

We are introducing a new electronic way for tenants to manage many aspects of their tenancy from the comfort of their own home. Using your smartphone, tablet or PC you will be able to access your tenancy information safely and securely. You will be able to get things done faster and as you can connect to your account outside of office hours it means you can manage your account at your own convenience.

## What will I be able to do?

- Check your current rent balance and transactions
- Print rent statements
- Make online payments
- Set up direct debits
- Report repairs

## When will I be able to do it?

We are currently testing the system and have engaged with our Customer Panel to help support the testing and suggest ideas. We are aiming to go live before Christmas and will be signing up new tenants as soon as it goes live. Existing tenants will also be able to sign up and details will be published via the website and social media to announce when and how to sign up.

## Get Involved!

Do you want to be part of a team of testers? Do you want to help provide new ideas? Do you want to be first to see what you can do online?

If you answered yes to any of those then join our team of testers. You don't need to have computer skills to be involved. We are looking for testers to come from all levels of skills and experiences. This helps us to understand how easy (or hard) the technology is and helps us to make things easier to use.

## How much time will I need to give?

As much or as little as you want – we can tailor the testing to suit different needs.

If you want to be involved and find out more, please register your interest by emailing [customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk)

# New Homes

Our latest exciting development off McMullen Road, Lingfield is now under way. The development consists of:

8 x 3 bed houses

4 x 4 bed houses

18 x 2 bed apartments

These properties offer the latest in modern living-all at an affordable rent. For more information on how to apply either visit the Council Website or phone 405333.



# Gas Service

Gas service is very important and should not be ignored. The Council and tenants must take the risks of not carrying out services seriously. Consequently we will take action against tenants who refuse to co-operate when it is time for a service.

Please help us to keep you safe and save you money. A

serviced boiler is a more efficient boiler and that will help keep down the bills. However, there is a bigger bill you could face. If we have to go to Court to gain access you will be faced with Court charges and you may be putting your tenancy at risk.



# Meet the Mayor

Play equipment has been installed in the play area at Warwick Square in Cockerton and the Mayor visited as part of an event to celebrate this stage in the development of the play area. On a gloriously sunny day there was a great turn out to enjoy the music, barbeque and the ice cream! The event was sponsored by the Council and North Star Housing Association and the Groundwork Trust provided the organisation and music.

There was a serious side to the event as residents and children were surveyed about the development of phase 2 of the play area.



# Red Hall Summer Fair

The Friends of Red Hall residents association organised a summer fair. This is the first time the residents have planned and delivered a large scale event entirely on their own. They have formed a partnership with Stockton International Festival and they are hopeful this will help attract other events. About 250 turned up for a full day of fun and activities.



# A New Walking Route

As part of the work to revitalise the Red Hall area a new walking route is being developed that shows off some of the history and wildlife of the area. In the first stage of work artist designed benches have been installed that have information on them about the history of the immediate area and what plants, flowers and wildlife can be seen from that point. The Primary School children were involved in the design of the benches.

Four benches have been provided and work is due to take place to improve the linking footpaths and signage is also going to be provided.



## You Said, We Did

The residents of Alston Moor Close asked if we could take out some shrubbery and bushes and StreetScene came along and cleared the area. You can see the difference it has made.



## Universal Credit - Hints and Tips

1. Don't Forget when you make your claim Universal Credit to include your housing costs
2. Your water rates are not included in your housing costs payment, you will need to pay the water charges out of your own personal allowance
3. Think Carefully before you apply for an advance, the payments will be automatically deducted from your monthly payments for between 6 and 12 months
4. Why not set up a standing order or direct debit for the date your receive your Universal Credit payment, that will help you with your monthly budgeting
5. Check your UC journal regularly because this is how the DWP will try to contact you, they will send you messages and things you need to do via your journal
6. The DWP will not generally pay the housing costs to the Council so it is your responsibility to pay the rent monthly.
7. Don't apply for your housing costs before your tenancy starts, we cannot verify your housing costs before your tenancy start date
8. Don't bury your head in the sand, contact us if you need help or are struggling to make your rent payments

9. Don't forget to update housing costs with your UC payment date so we know when you will be paying your rent, this might stop any recovery action including visits and letters
10. Remember to make your claim for council tax support online

If you're having problems understanding Universal Credit or need help with Budgeting why not call our Tenancy Sustainment team on 406939, 405797 or 406962, or email them at [tenancysustainment@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:tenancysustainment@darlington.gov.uk)?

They offer free, confidential advice on money matters and Universal Credit and can help with benefit claims, debts and budgeting.



# What do you think about getting involved?



**Win  
£50**

Involving tenants in housing services is both necessary and important in delivering the service. We want to know what you think about getting involved. The survey will only take about 5 minutes and you could win £50 in shopping vouchers, very handy this close to Xmas! You can either fill in the survey below or fill in the survey electronically at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FHRKHBL](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FHRKHBL)

<b>1) Do you know that you can get involved and have your say in improving the housing service?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Yes	
No	
<b>2) What subjects are you most interested in.</b>	<b>Tick</b>
<b>Please select two from the list below:</b>	
Repairs	
Improving my local area	
Rehousing	
Tenant communication	
Tackling Anti-social behaviour	
My landlord's performance	
Rents and service charges	
The way housing services are delivered	
Developing policies	
Services to older people	
Do not want to get involved	
<b>3) How would you prefer to engage with us?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
<b>You can choose more than one</b>	
Internet / online surveys / Email surveys	
Meeting a housing officer in my local area to sort out local issues	
Workshop or focus group	
Tenants meetings	
Reading Housing Connect	
Helping the council to write in plain English	
Helping to set up community groups, gardening groups	
Online think tank or a facility to bring up ideas and make comments	

<b>4) How much time could you spare to get involved?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
<b>Choose one</b>	
Once a month	
Just like to be kept informed	
3-4 times a year	
Not at all	
<b>5) What support or incentives would be helpful in return for your time?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
<b>Please select a maximum of three</b>	
Out of pocket expenses(including travel costs)	
Child care costs	
Training	
Work references	
Opportunities to see work of the Department	
Find out how decisions are made	
Meet new people	
<b>6) Is there was anything that would prevent you from getting involved?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Yes	
No	
<b>If you tick "yes" please tell us why:</b>	<b>Tick</b>
<b>Choose one</b>	
Work	
Looking for work	
Health	
Transport	
Confidence	
Carer's responsibilities	
College	
Childcare	
Language barriers	
Not interested	
Council doesn't listen	
Cannot use the internet	
Other	



<b>7) Do you get involved in your local community?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Yes	
No	
<b>If yes, tell us what do you get involved with?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Coffee mornings	
Trustees of local groups	
Community group	
Mums group	
Bingo	
Church groups	
Helping out neighbours	
Delivering local newsletters	
Community bus	
Gardening groups	
Volunteering	
Sports club	
School	
Other	
<b>9) How would you prefer to find out about opportunities to get involved?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Choose one	
In Housing Connect	
By email / e-bulletin	
Council Web page	
Facebook/Twitter	
Notice board in Community Centre/Scheme	
One Darlington Magazine	
<b>10) Are there any other ideas and suggestions about how you would like to get involved?</b>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>	

<b>10) Do you have access to the internet?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Yes	
No	
<b>11) Do you have an email address?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Yes	
No	
<b>12) Would you be interested in getting more involved?</b>	<b>Tick</b>
Yes	
No	
<b>13) In order to enter the Draw for a £50 shopping voucher please provide your name, Email Address or phone number and your address.</b>	
Name	
Email Address/ Phone number	
Address	

Please return the survey to:

**Survey, Housing & Building Services, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT**

or email your entry to: [customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk)

please include your contact details.

The survey will close on **28th November 2018**

Only people who live in Council tenancies are eligible to take part in the draw.

**The important bit:**

The collection of data from this survey adheres to the GDPR 2018 requirements. Your response will remain anonymous and will only be used to inform our plans for future tenant engagement.

# Around the Schemes

## Folk.....Dancing

Residents of Oban Court, Whinfield, enjoyed an afternoon of entertainment from the Harlequin Women's Morris group. If you fancy a go at Morris dancing they are based at the Friends Meeting House in Skinnergate and meet on a Tuesday from 8pm.

For more information, call 01325 465129 or email: harlequin.morris@gmail.com



## Hen Power

The residents of Ted Fletcher Court have embraced the power of hens! They have joined a project that will introduce Hen keeping to the scheme. Looking after the "Hensioners" will help to tackle social isolation, reduce the risk of depression and improve wellbeing. The project is run through Equal Arts and the residents of Ted Fletcher Court made a successful bid to the Community Fund to cover the costs.



## Little Gems

Two grandchildren of the residents of Tennyson Gardens, Skerne Park had a really different summer holiday. They helped out the residents over the summer holidays with the GEM (get everyone moving) exercises. The girls really got involved over the summer and were a great help.

But they are not the only children helping out this summer! Tennyson Garden Community Centre have had new outdoor furniture donated by a tenant's family but the area it was going to be placed on was covered in moss and debris. Two young boys, Ellis Smith and Harvey Todd, who are related to tenants came and cleared the area in readiness for the new furniture. Didn't take them long but what an improvement!

Ellis (pictured left in the photo) also helps to escort residents, including his own Nana, to the bingo evening on a Thursday and makes sure they get back safely to their homes afterwards. Tennyson now hold a coffee morning every Tuesday at 10:30am and everyone is welcome to attend.





## Lunch Time

In a busy time for Tennyson Gardens a new monthly lunch club has been introduced and for those who cannot get out there is a home delivery. The first home delivery was made by the PCSO's before they joined everyone for a delicious home cooked meal.

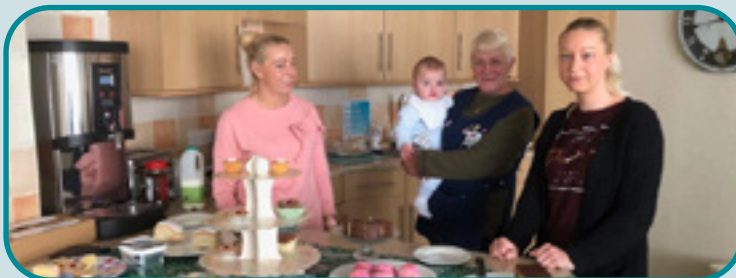
## Fit for the Future

Chair based exercises take place at Park Place Community Centre in the town centre on Fridays 9:30 to 10:30 am followed by a cuppa and bacon butties. Anyone is welcome to come and join in the fun.



## McMillan Coffee Mornings

A number of schemes have run Coffee morning and other fund raising events:



Roxby Court, Firthmoor raised £180



Tennyson Gardens raised £156

Wesley Court, Bank Top held a coffee morning in aid of Breast Cancer Care. There was a cake stall, tombola, bring and buy, bottle stall followed by bingo on the afternoon.

Dawn King, who is a resident of Wesley Court and a breast cancer survivor, has arranged parties in the past raising money for Macmillan and St Teresa's and decided to hold another for Breast Cancer Care. There was a fabulous display of cakes and pastries and due to the kindness and generosity of the local community they raised a massive £400.

Any goods left unsold were taken to the Armed Forces charity shop.

Following on from this the residents held a MacMillan Coffee morning in September and raised a further £243.00 Paul Smith who is the Wesley Court Scheme Manager said "People are so generous that use this Community Centre".

Pilmoor Green, Firthmoor have held their first Coffee Morning. Although it was only a small turn out, it was perfectly formed! This will now be a regular event and everyone is welcome to come along for tea and chat on a Friday morning at 10:30am



# Wi-Fi in Communal areas of Sheltered and Good Neighbour Schemes – Coming Soon

## What is Wi-Fi?

Technology which enables devices such laptops, smartphones and tablets to connect to the internet without the need for cables. Devices connect via a Wireless Access Point (or hotspot).

## What will I be able to do?

The Council are installing this technology for the benefit of the residents. It will give you the opportunity to use your mobile devices more flexibly within the schemes and will help those visitors who need to access the internet.

In the communal areas you will be able to connect your own devices to the internet. This will be a simple registration service and once connected will enable you to;

- Log in to your Digital Tenancy – This enables you to pay your rent, check your balance and report repairs.
- Access My Darlington+ - This enables you to create your own customised version of Darlington Council's website. You can view your council tax balance and find out your refuse and recycling collection days.
- Browse Internet Pages – People browse internet for information. You can browse various search engines like Google, Yahoo to know about any necessary information. Also people browse websites like Wikipedia which is a complete encyclopaedia on internet.
- Social Networking – There are lots of social networking websites like Facebook and Bebo and Twitter
- Connect with Others - Via Instant Messaging services such as Skype, Whatsapp and Yahoo Messenger

## Where can I access it?

- Rockwell House
- Ted Fletcher Court
- Windsor Court
- Branksome Hall
- Oban Court
- Linden Court
- Roxby Court
- Dalkeith House
- Dinsdale Court
- Rosemary Court

## Community Centres at;

- Park Place
- Havelock Street
- King William Street
- Wesley Court
- Richard Court
- Tennyson Gardens

## When will I be able to do it?

We are currently working with the suppliers to install the equipment. We will be updating progress for each site via the DBC website and on social media as well as letting tenants in the schemes know.



**WARNING:**  
**ZERO**  
**TOLERANCE**  
**TO LITTER**  
INCLUDING  
**CIGARETTE BUTTS.**

PUT YOUR RUBBISH IN A BIN OR  
TAKE IT HOME OR GET A £75 FINE

# Welcome to Robyn

Welcome to Robyn who joins Housing as an apprentice to complete a level 3 in Business Administration. Robyn left St Aidans School and went to work in a nursery doing both admin and looking after children but decided that she liked the administration side of the job better. After a short stint as a Dentist Receptionist, Robyn saw an advert on the DBC website for an apprentice in Housing, applied and got the job which she says keeps her very busy and also likes the variety the apprenticeship brings.



I-r Nicola Mattison, Adeem Khan, Stephen Smith, Dawn Storey

## Lifeline for you

The Council have invested in new transport for the Lifeline service. The new vans are being used to attend emergency call outs as well as routine calls. They are easily identified with the new logo. The vans are also used to install new lifeline and assistive technology. Three vans are equipped with lifting equipment and other essential tools which are needed to provide our professional service across the Borough of Darlington.

## Equipped for Fun

The Lascelles Residents Association obtained funding from the Big Lottery to fund some additional bits of equipment for the Lascelles play area together with the painting of the existing equipment. Children from St John's School helped choose the equipment. Both the Mayor and Jenny Chapman MP attended a ceremony to mark completion of the work on what proved to be a very rainy day.



## Aged 55 or over?



Sheltered housing could suit you if you want to live independently but need a bit more support, or if you want to live in an easier-to-manage home.



- 24-hour emergency help from Darlington Borough Council Lifeline Services
- Communal areas, such as gardens or lounges
- Social activities for residents.

Interested? Call us today on

**01325 405333**

Or visit [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)



# Family Learning and Parenting



Family Learning and Parenting is part of the Learning & Skills Service within Darlington Borough Council. We offer courses to parents, grandparents and carers to improve their ability to support their child's learning in a fun and safe way.

We have some new festive courses available to parents, carers, grandparents and to anyone who would like to learn something new for the festive season.

Course Title	Venue	Day	Start	Finish	Date	Course Length	Fee
Festive Fun on a Budget	St Georges C of E Academy	Mon	1pm	3pm	12 Nov	5 weeks	Free
Christmas on a Budget	St John's C of E Academy	Tue	9am	11am	13 Nov	5 weeks	Free
Christmas Arts and Crafts	West Park Academy	Wed	9am	11am	14 Nov	5 weeks	Free
Christmas Arts and Crafts	Red Hall School	Thu	9.15am	11.15am	15 Nov	5 weeks	Free
Festive Fun on a Budget	McNay Street Children's Centre	Thu	12.45pm	2.45pm	15 Nov	5 weeks	Free
Festive Arts and Crafts	Corporation Road Community Primary School	Thu	1.15pm	3.15pm	15 Nov	5 weeks	Free
Christmas Arts and Crafts	Northwood Primary School	Thu	1.15pm	3.15pm	15 Nov	5 weeks	Free

## Learning & Skills

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](mailto:l@s@darlington.gov.uk) or text us at: 07932 869325. For course information please visit our website: [www.darlington.gov.uk/learningandskills](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/learningandskills)



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# It's your money, claim it!

The average unclaimed amount per household is estimated at **£3,000**. This is money people are entitled to - money that could be helping families support themselves and our economy.

#DarloMillions is helping residents claim money they are owed. Since April, over £600,000 has been claimed by people who didn't realise they were missing out until they checked and there's still millions waiting to be claimed, so don't delay claim today!

## Are you entitled?

Take time to check whether you, or someone you know, is missing out on money they are entitled to. Even if you and your loved ones are in work, retired, or already receiving some benefits, you could qualify for financial support. If you have a disability and are in work ensure you seek advice to make sure you aren't missing out.



To find out what you and your family may be entitled to visit [www.onedarlington.org.uk/darlo-millions](http://www.onedarlington.org.uk/darlo-millions)

There's a calculator for you to work out if you may be eligible for any financial support.

If you need advice, support and help to make a claim email [darlomillions@darlingtoncab.co.uk](mailto:darlomillions@darlingtoncab.co.uk) or call **266888** ext **118**.





# Panto Wordsearch



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

**ALADDIN**

**BABES IN THE WOOD**

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

**CINDERELLA**

**DICK WHITTINGTON**

**ERIC POTTS**

**HIPPODROME**

**JACK AND THE**

**BEANSTALK**

**LIAM MELLOR**

**LOUIE SPENCE**

**MOTHER GOOSE**

**PUSS IN BOOTS**

**ROBIN ASKWITH**

**SLEEPING BEAUTY**

**SNOW WHITE**

**ZOE BIRKETT**

**2**  
**£25**  
**vouchers**  
**to be**  
**WON**

**Can you find all the different Panto's and the stars from this year's Aladdin at Darlington Hippodrome.**

Due to a printing error on the word search in the last edition of Housing Connect, we are offering two prizes of £25 Love 2 Shop vouchers for two lucky winners in this edition. Send your entry to Housing & Building Services, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT or email your entry to: [customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk) please include your contact number. Entries to be received by 28th November 2018

**Name**.....

**Address**.....

**Tel No**.....