

Housing
C O N N E C T

August 2018 | Edition 7



Annual Report to Tenants

Red Hall Goes Gardening



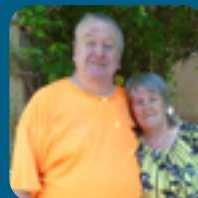
Well Done Lyndsey

New Council Housing



and much more...

**Around the schemes
Universal Credit
Summer Wordsearch**



www.darlington.gov.uk/housing

Congratulations Lyndsey

Lyndsey Robinson, Tenancy Enforcement Officer won the Public Service Hero award at the Best of Darlington awards. She won her award for the work she did on tackling anti-social behaviour in a particularly difficult case. It involved someone linked to serious crime and a range of unacceptable behaviours. Lyndsey worked with a number of Police forces and it eventually led to the property being repossessed and banning orders being issued.



Meet the Team

**Meet the Housing Contact Team L - R
Holly, Kimberley, Lesley, Natalie, Tina.**

If you have ever had to phone up about a Housing query then your call will have been answered by one of our Housing Contact Advisors. Lesley who is the Team Leader said "We are the first point of contact for all Housing queries aiming to deal with their query in full within 1 phone call. Our busiest times tend to be Monday & Thursday mornings and just after bank holidays. We are working hard to improve and promote self-service processes and there are lots of things that can be done online such as checking rent balances, making payments and raising non urgent repairs".

All of them said they like working in a small friendly team and support each other taking an average 900 calls per week. The team get some unusual requests such as a lady asking if we could fix her pull along shopping trolley and another asked if we could stop the birds pooping in the back garden. Although these are funny calls the serious point is that they are time wasting and they stop the team from dealing with more important calls.

If you have any Housing queries the number is **01325 405333** followed by these options:

- (1) Repair
- (2) Rent
- (3) General Advice including Homeless and allocations
- (4) Private Sector Housing
- (5) Other Services not related to your Home (ie back to operator)

Around the Schemes



Crafty at Dalkeith House

A fun afternoon of table decoration making is just one of many activities that take place at this busy Extra Care Scheme in Hummersknott. This afternoon was organised by volunteers who visit the scheme monthly.

The Singer and the Song Branksome Hall Drive

The residents of Branksome Hall Drive enjoyed an afternoon of song courtesy of singer Jenn Highfield. This was a perfect way to spend a summer's afternoon.



Supporting the Forces at Ted Fletcher Court

The residents of Ted Fletcher Court, Haughton have raised £450 for the Forces Support charity. They have been raising money through a variety of activities including Coffee Mornings, raffles and name the Teddy. Ted (the dog) along with the residents really enjoyed dressing up and are clearly having a lot of fun.

If you want more information about this charity please visit www.forcessupport.org.uk

Roxby Knits

Ladies from Roxby Court, Firthmoor meet each Thursday for Knit & Natter and their chosen charity is the Special Care Baby Unit at Darlington Memorial Hospital. The ladies knit hats, booties, blankets and coats for new born and premature babies and personally deliver them to the maternity unit. They received a lovely thank you card from the staff at Darlington Memorial for their wonderful work and donations. If you would like to join the knit & natter group then come along to Roxby Court on Roxby Moor Avenue at 1:30pm each Thursday.

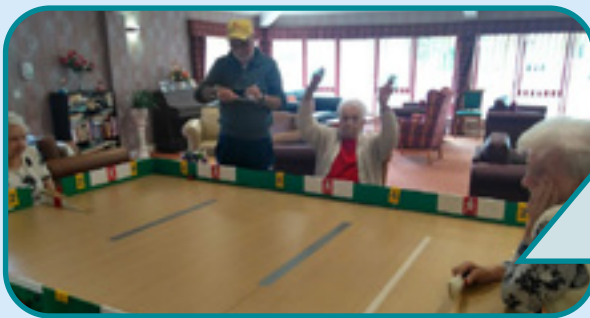




Pony Therapy

Residents at Oban Court, Whinfield were treated to a visit in their communal room from a miniature horse. Mr 'P' who is an 8 year old American Miniature Horse entertained the residents and took his turn letting every one stroke him and some of the ladies even plaited his mane. Katie Smith who owns KL Pony Therapy at Northallerton Equestrian Centre used to work in the care industry and knows the benefits it can bring when any animal, especially ponies were seen by residents. They can stroke them or talk to them and always get a positive reaction especially from those with poor mobility, partially sighted and suffers of anxiety and depression. Mr 'P' behaved perfectly and enjoyed all the attention and is not a stranger to big events as he has appeared on The Alan Titchmarsh Show and the Horse of the Year Show as well.

The scheme manager Gemma McGregor was sponsored to run a half marathon to help fund this visit and so a big thank you to her as well.



The Cricket Season

It's summer, so it must be time for cricket and the residents of Dalkeith House have embraced the indoor version of the game. The session was run by the Disability Cricket Consultants and everyone agreed it was a different and fun experience. If anyone is interested in helping fundraise for this cause or find out more contact Ron Young 07801090661 ron.young@durhamccc.co.uk



Havelock Street – Move, Meet & Greet

A new Move, Meet & Greet session at the Havelock Centre, Katherine Street started recently. The fun started at 10am for an hour gentle chair based exercises and a game or two with Ruth. At 11am the kettle went on and the tasting of Elaine's cup cakes began, they then enjoyed a game of bingo followed by a quiz to get "those little grey cells" working.

Move More sessions are on each Wednesday at 10:00am and everyone is welcome.



Romance at Rockwell

Romance blossomed when Brian and Pat Wood moved into Rockwell House, Springfield in 2013 having never met each other before. While in town one day in torrential rain, they quickly dived into the nearest shop for shelter which just happened to be a jewellers, and came out engaged with Pat having a ring on her finger! The couple decided not to hesitate and were married within three months of meeting each other. Brian and Pat then moved on to other sheltered accommodation before deciding that they belonged back in Darlington where they both hail from and moved back into Rockwell House in June this year.

Brian worked as a bus driver for many years then a Taxi Driver while Pat started her working life in the Lily Laundry before going into care work. Between them they have 5 children, 15 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren with another one on the way. The couple also have a Cockapoo named 'Magic' who they rescued after finding she was kept in a shed for most of the day and badly mistreated but now lives happily in Rockwell House with Brian and Pat.



Reminiscence Day

Oban Court stepped back in time to remember the 1940's and 50's. There were lots of items to look at that were used around the house at that time along with books and photographs of old Darlington. Residents brought photographs from their youth and wartime years and reminisced on their youth.

A walk in the park

Residents from some of our schemes met in South Park in May for a group walk. Scheme Managers organised buses and taxis and with the help of family and volunteers helped the residents walk around the lovely park for a couple of hours finishing at the South Park Café for a cuppa.



The Royal Wedding

No surprise, there were plenty of celebrations of the royal wedding around the schemes. Here are Dalkeith House and Ted Fletcher Court:



Community Fund

The residents of Richard Court in North Riverside made a successful bid to the Community Fund for money to spruce up the patio area at their scheme and as you can see they have done a grand job. This is now a lovely suntrap uplifted with lots of plants and flowers.



Official Opening of Earl Carlson Grove

The Council's largest development at Earl Carlson Grove Lingfield is now fully let and in recognition of the investment of £8.8 million in new housing Bill Dixon, performed the official opening as one of his last acts before standing down as Leader of the Council.

The Council's Building Services have designed and built a total of 62 properties consisting of 20 three bed houses and 42 two bed flats. All the properties are designed to lifetime homes standards and the ground floor flats are designed to mobility standards that includes a flat floor shower and space for anyone who needs to use a wheel chair.

Weekly rents for these new properties offer exceptional value being £87.69 for a two bed flat and £108.59 for a three bed house.

A special lettings policy was adopted for this development to ensure that a balanced community is formed and demand far exceeded supply. As a consequence a new development is going to start across the road from Earl Carlson Grove consisting of eight three bed and four 4 bed Houses and 18 two bed flats. It is anticipated that development will be complete next winter.

Anyone interested in the new developments or any other council properties available to rent can log onto the website at www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/finding-a-home/applying-for-a-council-home/ or contact the Customer Contact Team on 01325 405333.





Universal Credit

Are you ready?

Universal Credit is now being fully rolled out across Darlington by the Department of Work and Pensions.

Universal Credit is a single monthly payment for working age people in or out of work. It will replace:

- Housing Benefit
- Child Tax Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit

If you are of working age and make a new claim for any of these benefits this will affect you! If your Universal Credit payment includes help with rent this will be paid direct to you. This means you will be responsible for paying your landlord whether you are council or housing association tenant or renting privately. If you don't you risk losing your home.

What should I do?

Contact your landlord direct to see what help they can offer you or if you receive support contact your support provider and / or worker.

If you live in a DBC property the Tenancy Sustainment Team can offer you advice and support around Universal Credit and budgeting. You can contact the Tenancy Sustainment team in the following ways:

- **Call:** 01325 406962/406939
- **Text:** Your name and address to 07984282289 / 07957675804
- **E-mail:** tenancy.sustainment@darlington.gov.uk

What a load of rubbish

Did you know that if you pay someone else (other than the council) to take your rubbish away, it's up to you as the householder to check they are a licensed carrier and will dispose of the waste properly? If it's then fly-tipped it could be traced back to the householder and YOU may be prosecuted. If you have any large items that need disposing of, we offer a bulky waste collection costing £17.17 for up to 6 items eg 1 fridge, 1 washing machine, 1 chair, 1 bed frame, 1 mattress and 2 refuse sacks (classed as 1 item). Why not share the cost with a neighbour who may want to get rid of items as well. We also offer a garden waste service removing up to 10 bags for £8.53. You can ring 01325 405111 for advice and to book this service or visit <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/street-scene/bulky-waste-collection> for more information.

And, of course, householders can also dispose of items themselves 'free' at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (tip) – details can again be found on the website at: <http://www.darlington.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/street-scene/household-waste-recycling-centre>.



This household waste, pictured below, that had been flytipped resulted in a £3000 fine.

Annual Report to Tenants 2017-18

How 2017-18 went

This has been a successful year. We have continued to deliver good value for money while charging the most competitive rents in Darlington. We have also been able to continue to build new Council housing this year and the number of new homes completed will increase further in this year. The level of demand for these properties is a clear indicator of the need for new housing.

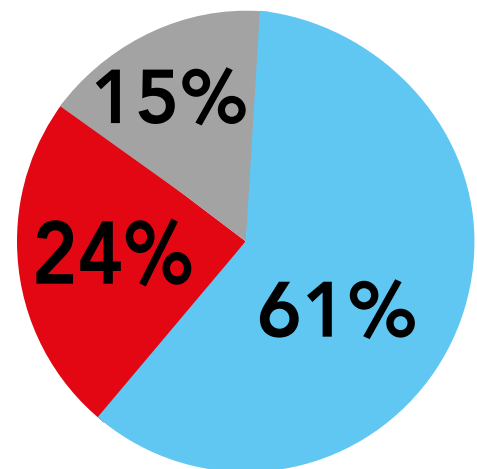
The work on the regeneration of Red Hall has seen demand for the area increase and we are seeing a more confident community emerging. We will continue to work this and other communities. An example of which is the development of a new play area in Cockerton that has been developed in consultation with the local community with further discussion taking place about a second phase of development.

The year ahead promises to be a busy year and we would like you to get involved in helping to shape our plans. You will find information on how to do this at the end of this report.

Councillor Andy Scott, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Partnerships

**There was a £25.7 million budget for Housing.
This is how we spent the money**

- - 61% Major improvements, new build, regeneration
- - 24% Management
- - 15% Repairs and Maintenance



The average cost per property for repairs and maintenance was £718.

Other unitary authorities in England spent on average £1074. We spend less because we focus on planned maintenance reducing the number of more expensive reactive repairs.

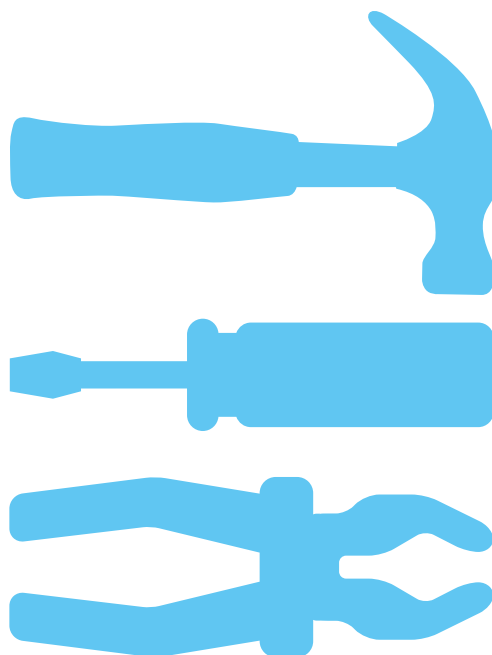
Did you know?

174 properties had adaptations such as flat floor showers and ramps carried out during 2017/18. These are carried out to help people with disabilities or illnesses to remain in their home.



Housing Investment Programme 2017/18

- ✓ Heating - £1,290,000
 - ✓ Structural - £198,000
 - ✓ Lifeline - £50,000
 - ✓ Repairs before painting - £100,000
 - ✓ Roofing - £450,000
 - ✓ Garages - £130,000
 - ✓ External Works - £1,498,000
 - ✓ Pavement Crossing - £25,000
 - ✓ Replacement Doors - £378,000
 - ✓ IPM Works (Kitchens and Bathrooms) - £1,800,000
 - ✓ Communal and Door Entry - £234,000
 - ✓ Smoke Detection - £150,000
- TOTAL - £6,303,000



Rent collected as a proportion of rents owed on Council dwellings *including arrears b/fwd 98.28%

	Social	Affordable
1 Bed	63.35	71.44
2 Bed	71.42	81.95
3 Bed	79.59	90.49
4 Bed	85.27	93.55

Average Social Rent £71.09

Average Affordable Rent £78.88

Average Affordable Rent for other Social Housing Providers in the North East £96.74

In 2017/18 we built 38 new properties to life time standards:

Anfield and Aintree Court, Redhall

8 x 2 bed flats and 11 family homes

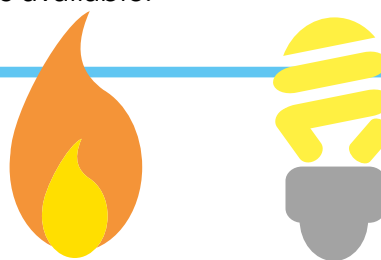
Sherborne Close, Branksome

12 x 2 bed flats & 6 x 3 bed family houses



Energy Efficiency

All our new boilers are "A" rated and they are the most energy efficient boilers available.



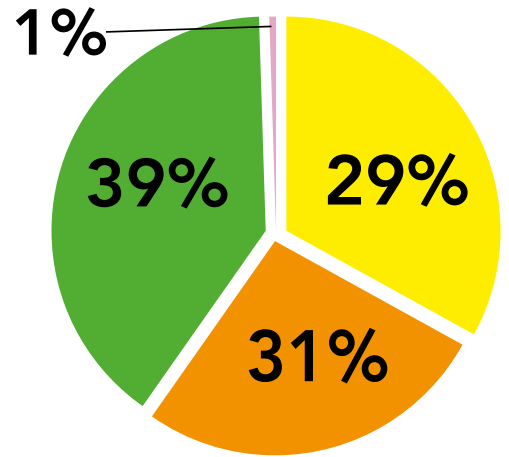
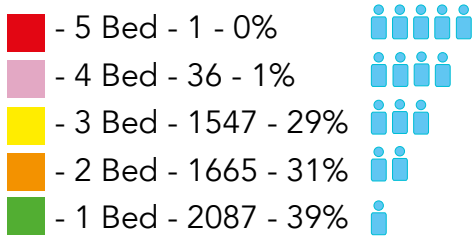
The average time to let a property was 19.6 days this compares with an average letting time for other Local Authorities of 31 days. This is an exceptional performance.



There were 36 evictions during 2017/18. All were for rent arrears. This is an increase on 2016-17 when 29 evictions took place.

Housing Management

The Council have 5336 properties to rent.
The total stock rose by 46 homes.



Did you know?

We let **687** properties in 2016/17

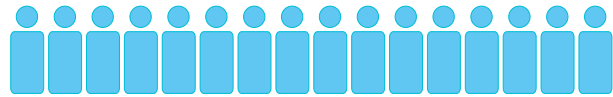
248 were let to existing tenants

439 were let to new tenants

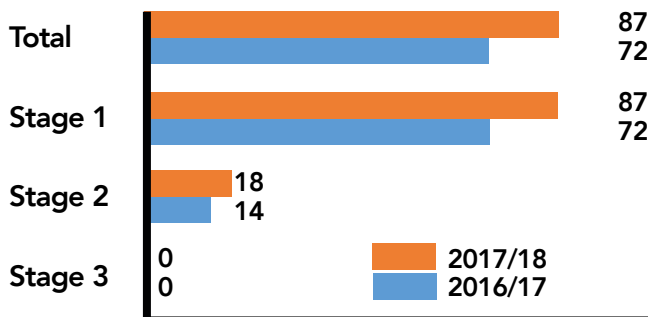


Number of people registered on the waiting list: **1577** Last year: 1540

The waiting list has fluctuated around 1600 for over 10 years



Complaints



Complaints were down in 2017/18 and for the second year none needed to go to a Complaints Panel. Baring in mind the scale of the services being provided the number of complaints being received is remarkably low.

Customer Engagement

The Tenant's Scrutiny Panel completed a review of the sign up process for starting a new tenancy. They made seven recommendations for change and all were adopted by the Council.

In October 2017 members of the Tenants Panel's attended a meeting with the Housing Minister to share their views on the role of tenants in managing housing

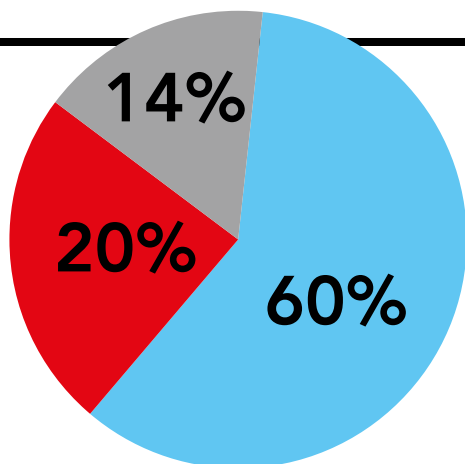


Looking forward to 2018/19

What we will do

Expenditure for 2018/19. Budget £23.4million

- 60% - Major improvements, new build, regeneration
- 20% Management
- 14% Repairs and Maintenance



In 2018/19 we will complete 78 new properties.

- (a) Jedburgh Drive, Branksome – 8 two bed roomed apartments, finished in May 2018.
- (b) Whitby Way, Branksome – 8 two bed roomed houses, due for completion in August 2018.
- (c) Earl Carlson Grove 20 three bed houses and 42 two bed flats- finished in June 2018

Rent 2018/19

	Social	Affordable
1 Bed	64.13	75.31
2 Bed	72.20	83.69
3 Bed	80.31	90.65
4 Bed	87.14	100.72

Average Social Rent £70.88

Average Affordable Rent £81.72

The Housing Investment Programme for 2018/19 is as below:

- Heating £1,280,000
- Structural £500,000
- Lifeline £50,000
- Repairs before painting £100,000
- Roofing £700,000
- Garages £75,000
- External Works £500,000
- Pavement Crossing £32,000
- Replacement Doors £350,000
- IPM Works (Kitchens and Bathrooms) £1,800,000
- Communal and Door Entry £100,000
- Smoke Detection £50,000
- Window Replacement £500,000
- Adaptations & Lifts £200,000
- TOTAL** £6,237,000

If you have any comments or are interested in getting involved in how we run housing contacts us: Tele: 405333 or Email: customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk



Red Hall does Gardening

The Friends of Red Hall, who are a group of residents, are interested in establishing a community garden in one of the many green spaces in Red Hall. They were funded by the Healthy New Towns project to visit Todmorden in West Yorkshire to learn about the Incredible Edible project that has been running for a number of years. The whole group were inspired by what they saw and learned about the local community growing vegetables and herbs in public places. They have now submitted plans to the Council and are going to consult with the residents of Red Hall. However, this is not the first community garden in Red Hall.

Bisley Court

The residents of Bisley Court Red Hall asked the Council if they could take control of an open space next to their homes.

They made a bid to the Council's Community Fund for the cost of replanting the site and set to work.

They have planted a range of herbs, vegetables and flowers and encourage other residents to pick their products free of charge. As well as these committed gardeners there is also another group:



Gardener's of the future

The Primary School at Red Hall is again involved in promoting the growing of plants and flowers as part of the annual Red Hall Garden Competition. Supported by Groundwork this is the second year that children have been involved in planting flowers that they can take home. The project is funded by the Council's Community Fund.



Welcome to Julie

Welcome to Julie Donkin our new Team Leader in the Housing Income Team. Julie joins us with nearly 30 years' experience which began working for a local Housing Association and has remained in social housing management ever since. Specialising in income collection for the last ten years, Julie has seen some vast changes around income collection most noticeably the introduction of welfare reform, in particular bedroom tax and benefit cap and how this effects customer's ability to pay rent and manage their money. The team have recently been restructured to prepare for a fresh set of challenges with the roll out in Darlington of Universal Credit from 20 June 2018. Julie hopes to help the Income Team collect all monies due to the Council in rent and other charges on time and help customers be able to sustain their tenancies.

One of Julie's first tasks is to review the method of delivery of rent statements. With increasing use of digital communications tenants increasingly prefer this method.



New Council Housing

Jedburgh Drive, Branksome

The Council are pleased to announce the completion of eight 2 bed flats at Jedburgh Drive. All the properties are fully let but eight new two bed houses are now under construction at Whitby Way Branksome

Anyone interested in the new developments or any other council properties available to rent can log onto the website at www.darlington.gov.uk/housing/finding-a-home/applying-for-a-council-home/ or contact the Customer

Contact Team on 01325 405333



Holiday Fun

Groundwork got together with the Healthy New Towns project to provide a holiday enrichment programme during the school holidays in Red Hall. As well as providing a range of activities children were also offered healthy meals and as you can see they helped to make some of the meals!

Cleaning Up

Members of the Links Group and residents from Havelock Street and Richard Court Community Centres came together to do a litter pick around North Riverside. A large amount of bags of rubbish were collected by the group who hope to make it a monthly event to keep their area looking clean and tidy. If you are interested in helping please contact Elizabeth on: 01325 468586



Do you know?

Would you know where to find your stop tap if you had a plumbing emergency in your home?

It's always best to know just in case you need to turn off your water supply in the event of an emergency or when doing planned DIY jobs.

Top tip: An easy way to remember is...

Righty-tighty and lefty-loosey!

Check out this how to video >

www.nwl.co.uk/your-home/your-services/how-to-guides.aspx



Red Hall Medieval Summer Fair Come and join the fun

Sunday 12 August from 11am to 4pm on the green at Red Hall

The Friends of Red Hall Residents Association is holding a summer fair on the Green at Red Hall and everyone is invited.

As part of the group's plan to encourage community involvement they have been working with the people who run Stockton International Riverside Festival and the Healthy New Towns project to bring a wide range of activities for the whole family.



Among the attractions are: O'Brian's Fair, A circus which will also offer workshops to learn various circus skills, A Medieval Band, The Tim Peake Experience-courtesy of Samsung, Lots of games and activities- mom and dad's race, Stalls, Prizes!, Fitness demonstrations, Treasure Hunt around the benches, Food, And much, much more

It's your money, don't lose it!

More than £26m of tax credits, benefits and other allowances is going unclaimed in Darlington every year.

The average unclaimed amount is estimated at £3,000 per household. This is money people are entitled to. It could be helping families support themselves, businesses and the wider area.



Is this money yours... ?

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

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

Summer Wordsearch - Seaside Resorts

E A S T B O U R N E A X X B U I M L K W
 U M I N E H E A D B I M S K E G N E S S
 K O M M N S C C E X N P R E S T A T Y N
 J J B T L I C R O B O G N O R R E G I S
 C E C G G H Y A L L A N D U D N O S N Y
 M Y Z V S S R Z R E F H K M Y M R H R J
 C G E C T I J E N B O Z B W E X T I U T
 S R C W G L N R D Q O A O O G U S J B R
 Y J Y E C W R O G C M R V X O S R E T O
 B T W E Y A C D T J A L O M Y Y I B L P
 H Y Y E B D O Y L H B R U L G V A M A H
 N Q L I G M H O A W G A Q Y G V T A S T
 O I Z U E Y O A J U Y I H L I H S C U U
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 Q M I C I A D E Q R F Z O E G W O O M W
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|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| ABERYSTWYTH | BUDE | ILFRACOMBE | REDCAR | SOUTHPORT |
| BLACKPOOL | DAWLISH | LLANDUDNO | RHYL | TENBY |
| BOGNOR REGIS | EASTBOURNE | MINEHEAD | SALTBURN | TORQUAY |
| BRIDLINGTON | FILEY | MORECAMBE | SCARBOROUGH | WHITBY |
| BRIGHTON | GREAT | NEWQUAY | SEAHOUSES | |
| BROADSTAIRS | YARMOUTH | PRESTATYN | SKEGNESS | |

For the chance to win a £25 High Street voucher please return you completed word search to:

Housing and Building Services, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT by Friday 31st August 2018 or email your entry to customerengagement@darlington.gov.uk (please include your contact number)

Name:

Address:

Telephone No:

Email address:

Congratulations to Mrs Moss-Carbert from Finchale Crescent who won a £25 voucher in the May edition of Housing Connect.