

Welcome to the New Look Newton News

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Newton ⚡ News

April 2026

Incorporating 'The Newtonian'

Newton Aycliffe's free community magazine published at the beginning of each month

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Outgoing Lord Lieutenant Thanked for Her Service



The Lord Lieutenant of County Durham has been described as an “unwavering servant to our area,” as she prepares to stand down. Sue Snowdon has served in the role of The Monarch’s official representative in County Durham for more than a decade, chaperoning members of The Royal Family on their visits to the area since 2013. Mrs Snowdon, from Spennymoor, became a Deputy Lieutenant in 2006 before becoming the first female Lord Lieutenant of County Durham. She served both Queen Elizabeth II and King Charles III and was knighted as a Dame Commander in The King’s Birthday Honours last year. On 1st April, Mrs Snowdon will celebrate her 75th birthday – the point at which all Lord Lieutenants must retire. A special service was held at Durham Cathedral to mark her time in the role, attended by Durham County Council’s Chairman Cllr Robbie Rodiss. Cllr Rodiss said: “On behalf of everyone at Durham County Council, I’d like to thank Sue Snowdon for her service as Lord Lieutenant of County Durham over the past 13 years. Mrs Snowdon was at the heart of a number of Royal Visits to our area, notably King Charles and Queen Camilla attending the first Royal Maundy Service to be held at Durham Cathedral since 1967, last year. “As the organiser of such visits, I can only imagine the stress involved but, from what I hear, she always has a smile on her face and has acted with great professionalism. Mrs Snowdon has always displayed a real dedication and determination to promote County Durham, in particular our young people, and is truly an unwavering servant to our area. “I’d like to wish her all the very best in her retirement; and, also, to her husband and consort Keith, who has been a huge support to Sue. Similarly, I’d like to wish the best of luck to her replacement.” The new Lord Lieutenant of County Durham from 1st April 2026 will be Michael Butterwick.



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Durham Brass Festival Announces 2026 Line-Up

A popular festival celebrating all things brass has announced its line-up as it makes a milestone return in 2026 for its 20th anniversary.

Durham Brass Festival, organised by Durham County Council and with funding from Arts Council England, will be returning to the region from Sunday 12th to Sunday 19th July and promises a week of spectacular performances. Supported by Durham-based the Banks Group, the festival will launch with a bang on Sunday, with ELVANA performing with Oompah Brass XXL at Durham Gala Theatre.

Blending rockabilly with grunge, ELVANA will tear through Nirvana's catalogue combining it with the finest moments of Elvis Presley's legacy while being supported by original rock 'n' roll Oompah band Oompah Brass XXL to bring a whole new sound to Durham Brass Festival.

On Friday 17th July, visitors will be wowed with a performance from Brass & Pipes with Howard Beaumont, which is returning for an exciting evening celebrating the thrilling sounds of a brass band and theatre organ.

The performance will feature music from movies, musicals and much more as legendary organist Howard Beaumont takes to the Wurlitzer at New Victoria Centre in Howden-le-Wear alongside the acclaimed Stanhope Silver Band.

On the same day, Hector Gannet promises to impress audiences with a special performance of Talking In The Mother Tongue at Redhills, aka The Pitman's Parliament, with Durham Miners' Association Brass Band.

On Saturday 18th July, Brassed On will take over Gala Durham with local artists Dilettante, multi-instrumentalist Francesca Pidgeon, and Isabel Maria, who pairs contagious melodies and piano-driven production with personal



lyricism.

Plus, Vice Killer, a four-piece indie band from Peterlee will also perform at the theatre on Saturday, creating exciting and fresh new music, unique to the festival.

Bringing their incredible skills to Durham Cathedral on Saturday, EverReady Band will be performing their new work Myth, Magic & More, featuring iconic music from Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Game of Thrones, The Mandalorian and Star Wars. The band are highly decorated, having won the North of England Brass Band Championships a record 36 times.

Finally, Grimethorpe Colliery Band will be performing on Sunday 19th July at Gala Durham to close off the festival. Finding worldwide fame following the hit film Brassed Off, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary, they are regarded as one of Britain's finest brass bands, so audiences will not be disappointed.

There will also be free concerts, community activities and a full week of lively street bands when the festival returns, culminating in the ever-popular Streets of Brass weekend and Party in the Park, with further details to be announced soon.



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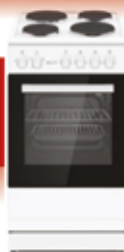


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Welcome to the New Look Newton News

We are proud to introduce a new, refreshed and revitalised, Newton News - a publication that has long stood at the heart of our community. While this new chapter brings positive change and renewed energy, we also want to acknowledge an important shift.

Due to rising distribution costs and changing delivery logistics, we regret that we are no longer able to deliver a copy of Newton News to every home in Newton Aycliffe and the surrounding areas. We understand how much the door-to-door service meant to many of our readers and this was not a decision made lightly.

However, we are committed to ensuring that Newton News remains as accessible as possible, so, printed copies will be available at a wide range of convenient collection points across the town, including: Steam Machine, Trenches Cafe, Walkers Butchers, Thames Butchers, Aycliffe Village Hall, School Aycliffe Community Centre, Husqvarna (staff), Oakleaf Sports Complex, Costa Coffee, Tesco, Beveridge Way Bistro, PCP, Save Garage, McColls (Simpasture), Pease Way Surgery, Bewick Crescent Surgery, Newton Aycliffe Leisure Centre, Young's Post Office (town centre), St. Clare's Care Home, Ruff & Tumble, The Work Place, ROF59, Planet Leisure, Total Cards, Only Fools & Sauces, K9 Pursuits, Business Park Post Office, Gestamp (staff), Johns Shop (Neville Parade), Washington Crescent Shop, McDonalds, Oakfield Shop, Spar (Heighington), The County, The Gretna, Lifeline Community Action Hub, McColls (near Turbinia), Woodham Newsagent, Woodham Golf Club, Jubilee Medical Surgery, Cobblers Hall Pub, Greenlee Garth Shop, Middridge Village Hall, The ARK and Newton Press reception.

We encourage residents to pick up a copy while going about their daily routines and to continue supporting the local businesses that help make this magazine possible.

For those who prefer a more convenient or environmentally friendly option, Newton News is also available in digital format. Subscribing is simple - just email paul@newtonnews.co.uk to join our free distribution list and you will receive your copy directly to your inbox on the day of publication. This ensures you never miss out on the latest community news, features and announcements.

Despite these changes, our mission remains exactly the same, Newton News is, and always will be, dedicated to serving the people of Newton Aycliffe and its surrounding villages. We remain passionate about highlighting the achievements, stories and milestones of local residents, businesses, schools, clubs and organisations. This new format allows us to continue doing so sustainably, ensuring the magazine can thrive for many years to come.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank

our loyal readers and valued advertisers. Your continued support is the foundation of everything we do and we are excited to move forward together into this next phase.

As always, Newton News is your platform, if you are planning a local event, celebrating a personal milestone, promoting a business achievement, or simply have a story to share, we would love to hear from you. Please send your submissions to: paul@newtonnews.co.uk

Publication Details

Each edition of Newton News will be published on the first of each month. To ensure your content is included, please note that the deadline for advertisements, notices, letters, stories and editorials is five working days prior to publication. Planning ahead will help us ensure that important information reaches the community in good time and we thank you for being part of the Newton News community and we look forward to continuing to inform, celebrate and connect Newton Aycliffe.

Leaflet Distribution

Behind every successful promotion is a team you rarely see - our delivery team. At Newton Press, we don't just print and deliver leaflets; we help businesses reach the right people at the right time. From takeaway menus to special offers and new business launches, every leaflet carries opportunity.

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Member of Parliament Update

Email: alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk - Tel: 01325 344185

It has been another busy and productive week both in Parliament and across our local communities.

A key part of my role as your Member of Parliament is listening to the concerns of residents and taking action. Lots of people have contacted me recently about delays to Royal Mail deliveries. While our local posties do a fantastic job and work incredibly hard, it is clear that the overall system is not working as it should. I'm gathering residents' experiences so that I can continue to press for improvements. I raised concerns on behalf of Aycliffe residents in the chamber of the House of Commons recently and am pushing for everyone to receive the reliable service we deserve. Please share your views through my survey:

<https://tinyurl.com/Royal-Mail-survey>

Supporting residents with the rising cost of living also remains a top priority. Following recent global events, including the conflict in Iran which has driven up oil prices, the Chancellor has announced over £50 million of support for lower-income households who rely on heating oil. This is an important step in helping to protect families in our area and across the country who depend on this form of fuel, particularly in the villages in our constituency.



My campaigning to creating jobs and opportunities locally is making real progress. I was proud to speak in Parliament about the new apprenticeships at the Oetric semi-conductor factory in Aycliffe. It was a pleasure to meet Sam and Evan, two young apprentices who've recently started at the factory, supported by South West Durham Training. After working with the Defence Secretary to save the plant, I'm really pleased that government investment has ensured 33 more jobs being created and new apprenticeships. It is a strong example of how government investment can support local industry, strengthen our economy and provide real opportunities for people in our community.

It was wonderful to visit Vane Road Primary School in Newton Aycliffe. Spending time in our schools is always one of the most rewarding parts of being an MP. Engaging with young people about how Parliament works, discussing democracy and encouraging them to share their ideas helps to bring politics to life in a meaningful way. These visits are not just about explaining my role, but about promoting



important British values such as respect, participation and active citizenship. The pupils asked thoughtful and insightful questions and it was inspiring to hear their ideas about the future of our town.

My office continues to support local residents with a wide range of issues. We have helped thousands of individuals, often with very complex cases. I've also held 57 MP advice surgeries across towns and villages throughout the constituency to ensure I remain accessible to those who need support. I'm proud to have also secured nearly £80,000 for residents through unclaimed benefits such as Pension Credit, Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment.

If you have an issue you would like to raise with me, please email: alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk or call 01325 344185. Finally, I would encourage anyone who would like to stay up to date with my work in Parliament and across the constituency to sign up to my newsletter for regular updates.

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Get the latest updates straight to your inbox. Click the link in the post or scan the QR code below.

Alan Strickland MP
Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor Constituency

Hoppingly Brilliant Easter Plans at Raby Castle



County Durham's Raby Castle, Park and Gardens is celebrating Easter 2026 with a packed programme of seasonal events. Across the bank holiday weekend (Friday 3rd to Monday 6th April), visitors can enjoy an Easter Food and Craft Market in the Riding School and Dutch Barn, featuring local produce, artisan crafts and regional specialities. The Coach House will also be open, offering a curated selection of gifts, homeware and Raby produce. Food and drink are a highlight, with treats available at the Garage Café and The Vinery Café, which offers light lunches, Sunday roasts and pre-bookable Easter afternoon teas throughout April. Families can explore the Walled Gardens, Deer Park and woodland playground, The Plotters' Forest, home to a themed Easter Trail. Additional activities include craft sessions, guided tours, tractor rides and a Little Eggsplorers trail inside the castle. Special events include a hot cross bun masterclass on Thursday 9th April and at nearby High Force Waterfall, a carrot patch trail will run throughout the holidays. Tickets start from £24 for adults and £13 for children, with family options available. Discounts are offered for a limited time using code EASTER10. For more information and bookings, visit: www.raby.co.uk/easter-at-raby-estates

AFWC in Northumberland

A record 49 walkers joined the coach in March to travel to Northumberland and specifically to walk routes between Rothbury and Warkworth and the River Coquet Valley. The weather was sunny and despite a longish journey to Rothbury, many walkers were bold enough to take on the longest routes from Rothbury with some of those even adding to this by diverting to Druridge Bay and walking up the English Coast Path via Amble to Warkworth. However, the most popular route was the 10 miler from Acklington to Druridge Bay and up the coast to Amble and Warkworth.



AFWC always has suggested routes for each walk day but it is perfectly acceptable to do your own thing and so it was on this occasion. A group of eight walkers chose to walk a circular route from Warkworth going north up the coast to Alnmouth via St Oswald's Way and turning inland towards Low Buston (the site of a medieval village) before arriving back in Warkworth to meet up with fellow walkers. Everybody was in good spirit on the way home having enjoyed the hospitality of the Warkworth pubs and cafes.

The next walk on Saturday 11th April goes south to enjoy the countryside between Masham and Pateley Bridge with walk options to visit Studley Royal, Fountain's Abbey and Brimham Rocks. Many walks will include sections of the Ripon Rowel Walk and the Six Dales Trail. Aycliffe Fell Walking Club is a very friendly walking club. Please look at the website aycliffefellwalkingclub.com for further details or if you are interested in joining us. Annual membership of £10.00 runs from January to December with each walk outing costing £15.00 to cover the cost of the coach. Feel free to join us on the next walk. We look forward to your interest.

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More Great Names Join the Line-up for Bishop Auckland Food Festival 2026

Brothers who convinced a Dragons' Den judge to invest in them, the latest winner of The Great British Bake Off, a presenter of the popular BBC daytime series Escape To The Country and pies inspired by Bishop Auckland.

All are newly announced for this year's Bishop Auckland Food Festival, which is now just days away on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th April.

Lumberjaxe, Jasmine Mitchell and Briony May Williams will all be appearing at the event on Sunday 19th April, organised, as ever, by Durham County Council and free to attend.

Lumberjaxe shot to prominence after their appearance and successful investment on Dragons' Den, while Jasmine will be a very familiar face to 'Bake Off' viewers, having won last year's series. Briony is perhaps best known for presenting Escape to the Country, but she too appeared in 'Bake Off' nearly a decade ago.

They join Phil Vickery, Shivi Ramoutar, Aaron Mountford-Myles who've already been announced for Saturday 18th April, and host Chris Bavin, who will appear across the full weekend of the festival.

They'll join over 150 traders offering food from both near and far, for festivalgoers to choose from.

Cllr Karen Allison, the council's Cabinet member for leisure, tourism, regeneration and high street, said: "We're really looking forward to Bishop Auckland Food Festival and thrilled to be announcing that Lumberjaxe, Jasmine and Briony will be part of the event.

"We know how important food and drink are to visitors to County Durham and how many jobs they sustain here, supporting our economy in the process. It's therefore fitting that we can organise events such as Bishop Auckland Food Festival that recognise and celebrate all that food and drink contribute to our area.

"We can't wait for everyone to come along and enjoy an amazing selection of food with us."

Lumberjaxe is made up of brothers Brendon and Jaydon Manders, who together came up with a seasoning and sauce brand, with the purpose of making preservative free products that are lower in salt and sugar. The brothers, who share a love of outdoor cooking, appeared on BBC Dragons' Den in February 2025, successfully securing investment from global business leader Emma Grede. Their pitch was described as "one of the most powerful moments in Dragons' Den history."

Jasmine Mitchell brought a calm, methodical approach to the baking tent during her successful run in last year's 'Bake Off', earning five 'Star Baker' titles and multiple handshakes from Paul Hollywood. Not only did she showcase an unbeatable set of skills, flavours and designs, she also brought personal authenticity to the competition, openly sharing her journey with alopecia and choosing to bake without a wig, a powerful statement of confidence that drew a huge response from viewers.

Briony May Williams appeared on series nine of 'Bake Off' in 2018, finishing fourth. She now presents BBC One's property series, Escape To The Country, as well as being one of the presenters of BBC One's Morning Live. Her other TV credits include Pointless Celebrities, House Of Games and



The Weakest Link. Briony's first cookbook, The Retro Recipe Society, was published earlier this year.

Ahead of the festival, meanwhile, people are being given the chance to take part in a competition to come up with a recipe for a pie that represents Bishop Auckland. The food festival has teamed up with Bishop Auckland College's The McIntyre Centre to invite budding bakers, foodies, and creative cooks, to submit their ideas for a truly local pie that captures the flavours, spirit, and personality of the Bishop Auckland area. Favourite suggestions will be cooked at The McIntyre Centre and judged, with one lucky creation crowned the winner and sold across the food festival weekend for everyone to enjoy.

To find out more visit www.bacoll.ac.uk/piecompetition

The festival is also offering a treat for chocolate lovers, with workshops from chocolatier Paul A. Young both days. Paul will be running an hour-long Perfect Truffles Masterclass and Adventures with Chocolate sessions, on both the Saturday and Sunday.

Booking for these is required via the festival website, where further information on everything happening across the two days can be found, at:

www.bishopaucklandfoodfestival.co.uk



Octric Semiconductors Partners with South West Durham Training

A high-tech partnership between Octric Semiconductors UK and South West Durham Training (SWDT) is set to bolster the region’s engineering future, providing local young people with a pathway into the UK’s critical defence supply chain.

The initiative has seen the first two multi-skilled maintenance apprentices, Sam Norman and Evan Porter, join the team at the Aycliffe Business Park facility.

The site - formerly the Coherent Inc factory - was famously opened as Fujitsu by Queen Elizabeth II in 1991 and was saved from closure through a strategic acquisition by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in 2024.

Now operating as Octric, the plant is the only secure facility in the country capable of manufacturing compound semiconductors. These specialist chips are essential for high-performance, mission critical applications such as defence (such as military jets), telecoms and space. Sam and Evan have embarked on a four-year Level 3 multi-skilled maintenance technical apprenticeship, with the potential to progress to a degree-level qualification. After starting their training in September at SWDT, part of the Bishop Auckland College Group, they secured their placements following a rigorous recruitment process.

Sam, 16, from Crook and a former pupil of Parkside Academy, said: “I wasn’t sure at first about an apprenticeship, but I am so pleased I took that step now. We’ve been shadowing in the workshop, helping with everything from planned maintenance to breakdowns. I’ve always enjoyed problem-solving, and that is a key aspect of the job. I want to be a fully qualified maintenance technician and get a job at the end of it; it’s a great opportunity.”

Evan, 17, from Darlington and a former Longfield Academy pupil, said: “The recruitment was exciting, but tough. We had an icebreaker session, interviews and even had to do a presentation. I worked hard to get this, and I am so proud. Octric is a company with strong backing and a promising future, and I’d love to keep progressing until I have a permanent job here.”

The visit to the site by Alan Strickland, the Labour MP for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor, highlighted the government’s commitment to Octric.

He worked closely with Defence Secretary John Healey in 2024 to safeguard 100 jobs at the factory, arguing that the UK “couldn’t afford to see this company go under.”

Mr Strickland said: “When I worked with Defence Secretary John

Healey to secure the future of the factory, we were clear the Ministry of Defence’s investment should boost opportunities for local people. That’s why I was proud to meet the new apprentices who have started at Octric, learning advanced manufacturing and engineering skills. I’m really grateful to the leadership at Octric and South West Durham Training for working together to organise such a high-quality apprenticeship programme.” The move to bring in apprentices marks a significant shift for the factory, which has not taken on trainees for many years until very recently.

The leadership at Octric sees this as a vital step in ‘backfilling’ skills and investing in the future generation of the equipment team.

The global semiconductor market is forecast to reach \$1 trillion by 2030. Through this partnership, Octric and SWDT aims to ensure that the North-East remains at the heart of this critical global industry.





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New Home for Historic Durham Cathedral Painting



The Building of Durham Cathedral has been carefully removed by Durham County Council's collections team and transferred to Ushaw Historic House, Chapel & Gardens, where it is now on display.

The seven-metre-wide painting depicts Durham Cathedral as it was being constructed in the 11th Century. The artwork was created by renowned North East-based artist Thomas William Pattison, whose works also appear at the Laing Art Gallery.

One of Pattison's other works, a portrait of Hannah Rushford, the first female Mayor of Durham, is on display at Durham Town Hall. Members of the public may recognise The Building of Durham Cathedral from visits to County Hall, due to its prominent position above the doors leading into the foyer of the council chamber.

While not much is known about the origins of the painting, it is believed to have been acquired by the council in 1968. Following a delicate removal process, the painting received a specialised conservation clean before being transported to Ushaw, where it is now on display in the Main House.

Cllr Karen Allison, Durham County Council's cabinet member for leisure, tourism, regeneration and high street, said: "As part of the decommissioning of County Hall, we are in the

process of carefully reviewing the collections that remain in the building and finding new homes where they can be preserved.

"The Building of Durham Cathedral depicts one of the most significant moments in Durham's history. For almost 60 years, the painting has watched over as councillors, officers, and members of the public have entered the council chamber to make decisions which have shaped County Durham.

"We're delighted to work with Ushaw in finding a new home for this painting, where it will continue to be enjoyed by the public."

Andrew Heard, visitor programmes manager at Ushaw, said: "We're thrilled to be able to display this magnificent and monumental painting at Ushaw. We are sure that visitors will appreciate the opportunity to see this striking realisation of one of the most important events in Durham's history."

The painting has been given a new home as the council works towards closing County Hall by this July. The building is to be demolished to pave the way for development at Aykley Heads, potentially creating thousands of quality jobs, as part of the emerging Durham Innovation District.

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New College Celebrates Success

New College Durham celebrates the success of the first cohort of learners to complete Fire Futures – Preparation Pathway, helping them to prepare for a career in the fire service.

The first group of 14 learners recently attended their very own 'Passing Out' ceremony to celebrate the successful completion of a pioneering new fire-service preparation programme delivered in partnership between New College Durham (NCD) and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

The 13-week programme, designed for anyone aged 19 and over, was created to support individuals taking their first exciting steps towards a career in the fire service. Successful participants completed sessions combining practical training, accredited learning, and employability development, culminating in a Level 2 qualification in Safeguarding and Prevention.

Delivered across multiple venues - including New College Durham's newly developed Training & Skills Development facility, and fire stations at Durham and Bishop Auckland,

the course provided learners with a realistic insight into fire service careers. Participants undertook fitness training, mock recruitment assessments, safeguarding and prevention training, and received tailored support with the fire service's dedicated online recruitment process. The programme also focused on wellbeing, resilience, teamwork, communication, and interview skills. Subject to meeting recruitment requirements, including assessments and fitness testing, successful completion of the programme places participants in a strong position for future recruitment. They gain the opportunity to qualify for a guaranteed interview during any forthcoming fire service recruitment process.

Following the success of the first intake, NCD and CDDFRS are planning to continue delivering their shared commitment to developing skilled, confident, and work-ready individuals for careers in the fire service. For those interested in a future in the fire service, or any of the fantastic, uniformed services, contact New College Durham to find out more.

National Award for 'The Story'

County Durham's newest culture, heritage and registration venue has been recognised for its contribution to the community with a national award.

The Story was among the winners crowned at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence.

The Durham County Council venue received the award for Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture, which celebrates outstanding projects that have improved or enhanced places with a particular historical or cultural significance, for the benefit of the community and future generations.

Judges described The Story as a big, bold, ambitious project delivering on heritage, culture, architecture and environmental objectives.

The national RTPI Award was won in conjunction with Kier, which was appointed as the main contractor to deliver the design and build of The Story.

The Story has received waves of recognition in its first year of opening, having been Highly Commended at the regional

RTPI awards for Building Project of the Year and Best Project.

It was also commended in the Constructing Excellence North East (CENE) awards for both Regeneration & Conservation and Building Project of the Year and was a finalist in the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) awards in the Refurbishment/Revitalisation category.

In its first year, The Story welcomed over 125,000 visitors and engaged 1,672 children in discovering the county's past at its popular school sessions, workshops and weekly Small Stories group. This is in addition to the thousands of children who visited with their families.

The Story is also the home of the County Registration Service and, during its first year, 708 couples tied the knot in its ceremony rooms, more than 2,100 notices of marriage or civil partnership were granted and 2,277 births registered.

The registration service is now taking bookings for 2027/28.

The Story is open every day and entry is free. To stay up to date with the latest news and events, visit:

www.thestorydurham.org



PCC Funds Trailblazing Drug Education Pilot in Secondary Schools

A major new pilot to educate children and young people on the harm and consequences of taking illicit drugs has been delivered, co-funded by County Durham and Darlington Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen.

The project was delivered by the drug and alcohol education charity Daniel Spargo Mabbs Foundation, initially at Greenfield Academy in Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Barrington Academy in Bishop Auckland. There are plans for two further schools in Darlington to join.

It included the provision of parent workshops to help parents and carers confidently manage conversations around drug harm with their children, and awareness sessions targeted at pupils themselves, alongside staff training to help teaching staff better identify and support pupils at risk. Pupils also received a powerful live theatre performance recounting the tragic story of 16-year-old Daniel Spargo-Mabbs, who died from an accidental overdose of ecstasy and the lifelong impact his death has had on his family and friends.

The pilot followed the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' (ACMD) publication of the findings of its Drug Misuse Prevention Review last year, which highlighted the importance of education in reducing drug-related harm among children and young people. This was supported by a public survey undertaken by Joy Allen which showed that over 50% of respondents placed tackling drug-related criminality as one of their top three priorities.

The Commissioner part-funded the £3,270 project for both Durham and Darlington. In County Durham, pilot schools contributed the remaining costs, while in Darlington the schools' contribution was part funded by Darlington Public Health.

The PCC has prioritised a prevention-first approach to crime and outlined a series of commitments in her Police, Crime and Justice Plan aimed at making communities safer, stronger, and more resilient to drug and alcohol related crime.

This includes ensuring there are preventative services available for young people to prevent and deter drug and alcohol abuse under her Safer People Safer Places priority.

Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen said: "Drug education is urgently needed in our schools. In my role as Commissioner, I have talked to parents who have suffered the devastation of losing a child to drugs. Their heart-breaking stories inspired me to take action to stop any other child's life from being stolen by drugs.

"Every conversation, every warning we share, every young person we reach, could save a life. We are doing everything in our power to ensure young people fully heed the risks involved and have the courage from an early age to say 'no'.

"This pilot was an important step in expanding support and resources in educational settings, helping parents and teachers to competently handle conversations around drug use, protecting young people and our wider communities from future harm.

"Drugs drive nearly half of all acquisitive crime and a huge proportion of violent crime. We have to act to break the cycle and stop these problems recurring generation after generation and creating more victims. By intervening early, we not only prevent escalation into addiction and offending, we also reduce the future burden on our public services."

The pilot aimed to fill a vital gap in education on the harms and risks of illicit drug use among children and young people across the force area and was an extension of work already taking place across the UK.

Fiona Spargo Mabbs OBE, director and founder of the Daniel Spargo Mabbs Foundation, said: "We were so pleased to be able to bring our play to schools in Durham and Darlington, and we are very grateful to the Police and Crime Commissioner and to Darlington Public Health



for contributing to the costs of this important work, along with drug education workshops for students, parents and carers, and training for teachers.

"When I lost my sixteen year old son Dan to ecstasy, I committed myself to doing all I could to prevent any harm happening to anyone else's child. The play that told Dan's story was at the heart of that work, touching young hearts and minds and changing how they saw the risks and consequences of drug use and the impact it could have on themselves and those that loved them.

"We very much hope that this will be just the start of working in partnership with schools, families and communities in the area, to support young people to keep themselves and their friends safe from drug related harm."

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www.newtonnews.co.uk

Local Parking Fines and Enforcements

Dear Sir,

I am writing to raise concerns about the way parking fines are being issued and enforced, and to ask whether others in our community have experienced something similar.

I received a parking fine of £100 from Parking Group relating to Greenwell Road. The letter was dated 21st January 2026, but did not arrive until 20th February 2026, leaving me very little time to respond. As soon as I became aware of it, I went online and submitted an appeal.

However, before receiving any reply to that appeal, I was shocked to receive another letter - this time from Direct Collection Bailiffs - dated 3rd March 2026, but received on 12th March, demanding £170.

I was told the charge had increased because I had allegedly exceeded the permitted parking time, something I was not even aware of despite having lived in Newton Aycliffe for over 36 years.

I feel it is important to explain my circumstances. I have undergone complex multi-level spinal surgery and live with constant severe pain. I rely on a mobility scooter and two crutches, and I cannot stand for long periods without significant difficulty. At the time, I was unable to use a disabled parking space because my Blue Badge had expired in October and, although I had applied for a renewal, I am still waiting for it to be processed.

On the day in question, I was attending local amenities including the hairdresser, library and shops.

I contacted Direct Collection Bailiffs on 13th March to explain my situation and to point out that I had not yet received a response to my appeal. Despite this, I was told that if I did not pay the £170 immediately, the matter could be taken to court, potentially adding further costs.

This situation has caused me considerable distress. I am left wondering whether this is fair or reasonable, particularly given my health condition and the apparent lack of communication regarding my appeal.

I would be grateful to hear from others who may have had similar experiences. Have other disabled residents faced such circumstances? Were you required to pay under these conditions?

Any sensible advice would also be greatly appreciated, as I simply cannot afford to pay such sums without question.

Name and address supplied.

New Custodians for Binchester Roman Fort



An attraction which shows what life was like at one of the largest Roman military sites in Northern Britain is to come under new management. Durham County Council will be transferring the custodianship of Binchester Roman Fort to The Auckland Project as part of plans to enhance visitor experience and conservation of the site.

The heritage site is a Scheduled Monument and home to substantial remains of a significant Roman military base dating back to 80 AD. Visitors can explore the well-preserved remnants of several Roman buildings that make up the base, including two almost intact bath houses.

The council currently owns a small portion of the Binchester estate, with the surrounding land owned by The Auckland Project.

As part of plans to establish stronger links between its attractions, including Auckland Palace, The Auckland Project will take over the management of Binchester Roman Fort as an attraction and visitor centre.

The transfer will support the council as it addresses the current significant financial challenges facing local authorities, creating a saving of £15,000 per year.

It will also allow The Auckland Project, which can access funding sources as a registered charity, to make a significant investment in the site to enhance its facilities.

Jane Ruffer, CEO of The Auckland Project, said: "We purchased the land at Binchester Roman Fort in 2014 to safeguard this hugely significant archaeological site for the public. Since then, we have supported Durham County Council's guardianship of the Scheduled Monument.

"We are now entering an exciting new phase, when Binchester will join our group of attractions alongside Auckland Palace. In this new phase of activity, The Auckland Project intends to improve both the visitor facilities, enhance the interpretation of the site, and fund essential conservation on the exposed archaeological remains.

"We aim to welcome more visitors, including families, to experience the wonder of archaeology, and share even more of the site's rich history."

Arrangements to transfer the site to The Auckland Project are ongoing, with the fort expected to open under new management by the summer.

Photo: Front left to right - Jane Ruffer, CEO of The Auckland Project, Cllr Karen Allison, Durham County Council's Cabinet Member for leisure, tourism, regeneration and high street.

Back left to right - Dr John Castling at The Auckland Project, Mark Rowland, visitor assistant at Binchester Roman Fort, and Benjamin Westwood, archaeology manager and Durham County Council.

Former Film-Maker who Empowers Women and Girls



A former Script Supervisor, who has worked on films and in television around the world, is now spending her time helping to change the lives of women and girls. Ruth Sabrosa, nee Atkinson, originally from Weardale, has, in the past, worked on such films as Star Wars and James Bond and more recently on the last episode of Vera. Since returning to the north-east in 2020, she has improved on the work she was doing in London, where she had previously lived. She all but gave up her film career after the birth of the first of her three daughters in 2010 and, after realising the poor state of maternity services in the NHS, retrained as a Natal Hypnotherapist to help other women to have the best birth experience they could. While living in London, she formed and hosted groups of women and children to meet. When Ruth relocated to the north east, she began working in our communities with women and children. She also began to study herbs and homeopathy and, despite living in the countryside for all her formative years, began to really understand how nature can help people. She became a leader of the Wild Sea Women on Durham's coastline and set up workshops - Mindful Mothering - because Ruth realised that women need empowering and set out to bring back the magic and power of being female.

She holds workshops for women and their daughters, explaining the concept, 'Supporting the rise of the feminine from Menstruation to Menopause'.

"It is interesting - and sometimes frightening - how little women and girls know and understand about their own bodies," said Ruth. "There is nothing scary in starting periods, having babies or even the menopause. We women need to be reawakened and realise that we have the power. The concept of the wiser, older woman has been drowned in the care home system nowadays, but we need to bring her back!"

Ruth is also in demand as a hypnotherapist, treating everything from phobias to mental health problems, with huge success.

"My previous career in films and television could be exciting and even unique in some ways, certainly unusual, especially when I found myself directing Storm Troopers in Star Wars, but this work fulfils me like no other job can" mused Ruth.

To discover more about Ruth, visit her website at: www.ruthsabrosa.com - or for any queries, email: ruthy57@hotmail.com - or for more information about her empowerment circles: <https://ruthsabrosa.com/empowerment-circles>

Eaglescliffe to Ibiza

A man is swapping a flight for an epic cycling adventure by riding from Eaglescliffe to Ibiza to support his local air ambulance service. Colin Irving, 61, who lives in Eaglescliffe, will set off ahead of his family's holiday to the Spanish island in August, and cover more than 1,000 miles to reach his destination.

Colin, who is originally from North Wales, is no stranger

to a challenge, and spent most of his adult life 'playing' in Snowdonia. He has completed the London Marathon seven times and clocked up 47 city-centre marathons around the world.

He later stepped up to ultra-endurance events, becoming the fifth British civilian to complete the gruelling Marathon des Sables in 1996, a six-marathon race across the Sahara Desert in five days, and did it again in 1997.

His sporting journey continued into triathlons, completing the world-renowned Ironman Lanzarote in 2006, 2007 and 2019, even taking a sabbatical from his London-based corporate career to compete at age-group level.

Colin is now retired, but does some freelance consultancy and he has continued his fitness by riding his bike, running and taking part in CrossFit.

Since moving to the North East in 2020, the family have had yearly holidays to Ibiza and, while booking their upcoming trip, Colin's wife came up with an idea for a new challenge for him.

Colin said: "My wife announced she had booked a holiday to Ibiza in August and then announced she had only booked flights for herself and my son as she knew how much I needed a fresh adventure; so why don't I ride there on my bike and she will join me for a cold beer at Café Mambo when I arrive.

"I loved the idea and have begun planning the adventure. Sharing this with my fellow cross fitters, they suggested I raise money for charity and that's when I immediately thought of GNAAS.

"Playing in Snowdonia, the yellow RAF Sea King helicopter was always a sight, always coming to the aid of walkers, climbers and runners in the hills as well as sea vessels in the Irish sea, for a time Prince William was the pilot and often I shared a nod of respect to him in the mountains.

"Like the yellow Sea King of Snowdonia, GNAAS is now part of my life. I hope I never need the service, but I know how fantastic a job they do." Colin won't be alone in his adventure, and will be joined by his close friend Phil Aldread, who required the services of an air ambulance after his bike slipped on leaves and he suffered a severe head injury.

Colin said: "Without the local air ambulance getting him to Stoke, where he was placed in an induced coma for two weeks, we know now he would have died."

Phil hadn't ridden a bike since the incident, but, after hearing about Colin's plans, he asked to join him, and is now back in the saddle and travelling up north to train alongside his friend.

Colin recently visited GNAAS' base in Eaglescliffe, where he toured the facilities and had the opportunity to meet the charity's chief executive officer, Joe Garcia MBE.

He has set himself a target of raising £2500 for GNAAS and you can donate to his challenge via his JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/colin-irving-4>



Catering Operator Wanted

Appeal for café and catering operator at the Pioneering Care Centre
Is your café or catering business looking to expand in Newton Aycliffe?



Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP) is inviting early-stage expressions of interest from experienced, community focused café operators to deliver café and catering services within the Pioneering Care Centre (PCC) in Newton Aycliffe. The Pioneering Care Centre has over 350,000 visits per year across its services, making it a thriving community space. The PCC Community Café provides healthy, nutritious and affordable food, supported by a high quality catering offer. Exceptional customer service is at the heart of the Community Café, ensuring every visitor receives a warm and friendly welcome. For more information, and to request an expression of interest form, please visit: www.pcp.uk.net/pioneering-care-centre-expression-of-interest or email Project Development Manager Gayle Goldsmith at: gayle.goldsmith@pcp.uk.net Completed submissions must be emailed no later than midday on Friday 10th April.



Introduction to Woodcarving

Aged 50-69 and living or working in Newton Aycliffe?

Learn woodcraft skills using scroll saw, wood turning and hand carving

The Veterans Community and Enterprise Centre
Newton Aycliffe, DL5 6DS

Thursday 9 April
6.00pm - 8.00pm

Book your free space now on
0191 386 3856
info@chapter50.org.uk



GNAAS' Operation SOS Appeal Reaches £500k Milestone



The Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS) has reached a significant milestone in its Operation SOS: Secure Our Service appeal, raising £500,000 in just three months. This is 20 per cent of their £2.5 million target, which is needed to secure the deposit for a third helicopter to safeguard the future of their operations.

As a charity, GNAAS does not receive government funding, and their current aircraft, which are Dauphin N3 and Dauphin N3+ helicopters, are coming to the end of their economically viable life due to parts shortages, ever-rising maintenance costs, and extended downtime.

As demand for their service continues to grow, the charity has designed the blueprints for a stronger future, investing in three, state-of-the-art, Airbus H145 D2 helicopters.

They have already secured the financing for the first two new aircraft through sound financial planning, but they urgently need the public's help in securing the deposit for a vital third aircraft to ensure they are never grounded.

Phil Lambert, chief pilot at GNAAS, said: "With only two helicopters we live on a knife-edge. If one is in maintenance and the other develops a fault, we're grounded, and that means we can't answer a 999 call by helicopter.

"A third aircraft changes everything. It gives us resilience and guarantees that when one is being serviced, two

remain ready to fly."

Since launching the appeal in November last year, the charity's critical care teams have responded to more than 420 incidents, delivering advanced care to patients across the North of England and the Isle of Man.

Due to scheduled maintenance on the current fleet, approximately 70% of these call-outs were attended via rapid response vehicles.

Securing the third H145 D2 will provide the resilience needed to keep crews in the air rather than on the road.

GNAAS hopes to reach their fundraising target later this year and are appealing for the public to help them raise the remaining £2 million needed to secure the aircraft.

Joe Garcia MBE, Chief Executive Officer at GNAAS, said: "Reaching £500,000 in the first three months of Operation SOS is an incredible achievement and a powerful demonstration of the trust and generosity shown by our supporters."

Mr Lambert added: "When you donate, you're not just funding equipment. You're buying time, safety and certainty, and giving my crew and me the best tools to save lives."

To find out more about Operation SOS: Secure Our Service and support the appeal, visit: gna.as/secure_our_service



Youth Football News

Whickham Fellside 3 v U15 Girls 2

The girls were unlucky not to come away with a point, but despite the result, this was a very enjoyable game to watch and manage. Aycliffe started strong with Layla scoring from Payton's corner on six minutes. They continued to play well, but they did not deal with a bouncing ball and gave away an easy goal. And then not closing down a shot following a corner 5 minutes later. Despite this 5 minute lull the girls kept their heads up and kept taking the game to Whickham. HT 2-1. The exceptional work rate from all twelve players continued throughout the entire second half as the girls battled for every inch of the pitch. Whickham scored again on 65 minutes. But Aycliffe responded quickly to bring us back into the game. Our second goal came from Annabelle tapping in from a GK fumble. We had enough opportunities to get something from this game, but after a few missed chances and goal mouth scrambles, it unfortunately wasn't to be. FT 3-2. Managers Player: Mylee; Players: Jessica & Miyah.

U16 Angels 3 v Stockton Town Girls 1

A great performance from our eleven available players. A huge shift from them all made this an enjoyable match to watch and to be proud of. A direct free kick from Evie, a stunning goal from Faith and a finish from Evie for our third. Star players were Erin and Georgia, but there were performances to be proud of up and down the pitch.

U7 Eagles v Billingham Synthonia

Three quick fire goals from Hunter and Chester (2) put the Eagles in front. Billingham improved in the second half with Harrison (MOTM) and Arthur standing strong in defence and Lincoln keeping his clean sheet. Another positive performance in the development game with Vinny and Charlie (MOTM) excellent at the back. Archie and Chris caused the opposition many problems upfront. Well done again boys.

New Marske v U11 Eagles

A commanding display from the Eagles from minute one, controlling all areas of the game. The passing and composure were there, there were crosses into the box, there was hard work, solid defending and positioning and most impressive of all - lots of talking and communication. A 6-1 win does not flatter the boys at all, completely deserved.

Other Results

Under 16's 2 v Leven FC 1

Under 13 Eagles 5 v Springwell Village 1

Foundation of Light 5 v U11 Wildcats 3

NAYFC Seniors 1 v Washington Athletic 0

The seniors started off strongly, but, despite great approach play, just couldn't find the net. However, the defence were never put under any real pressure, restricting Washington to long range efforts which never troubled our GK. Then mid-way through the first half, a through ball into the box found Josh Batey who got to the ball before the keeper and, as the ball broke free, he was first to react and slotted from a tight angle. HT 1-0. The second half continued as the first half left off then, as Keiran surged into the box, he was brought down. However, the resultant penalty was well saved by the keeper. Washington increased the pressure in the closing stages, but Aycliffe held on for the 3 points. The Seniors continue to give game time to players who have come through our Male Pathway, with two players from our under 16's playing their part in the win, as these lads will be part of the future for our seniors.

NAYFC Women

No match to report on this week for the women, however, they continue to recruit in preparation for next season.

EXPERIENCED PLAYERS WANTED

Newton Aycliffe Women F.C. are currently rebuilding and strengthening the squad and we're looking to bring in experienced players to help take the team forward.

Over the past few weeks we've welcomed several new players who are beginning their football journey, which is fantastic to see. Development is something we're passionate about as a club. However, competing in this league requires experience, leadership and strong characters on the pitch, and we're looking for players who want to play an important role in shaping this team.

If you're an unattached experienced player, looking for:

A positive team environment;

A club focused on development and improvement;

An opportunity to help guide and support a developing squad; Then we'd love to hear from you.

Female Pathway

At Newton Aycliffe Youth F.C. we have a strong female pathway, starting at our two very successful and highly rated Wildcats development sections for 4-6 years old and 7-10 years old, through all the age groups with a total of ten female only teams, up to our open age adult women's team in the Durham FA premier division. Our current U16's are moving up to the U18 league next season and recruiting year 11-13 (2026/2027).

Male Pathway

At Newton Aycliffe Youth we also have a thriving male pathway starting at our Little Eagles Development section for year 1 boys up to year 3 boys. We have eleven male teams up to our open age adult team playing in the Wearside League.

Kenya Partnership

The football club continue to support a club in Mombasa, Kenya, who are now named 'Newtonians Football Academy'. With almost one hundred boys and girls attending training sessions each week. The Head Coach, Ahmed, has many strong teams competing in local leagues and tournaments. Many of the children don't even have the basics of any sort of footwear to play their football, meaning they play in bare feet or in socks. The football club regularly sends parcels full of donated boots and recycled strips and used equipment. However, getting the parcel to Kenya is expensive, so we continue to raise funds throughout the club and send money for Ahmed to purchase equipment, locally, in Mombasa. One of the ways of raising money is through our boot exchange, old boots traded in for quality used boots and the money raised sent over to Kenya.

Visit our website: www.nayfc.com and check out our current stock of boots that are available. If you have football boots to donate contact Berni 07939 045242.



RECRUITING U18's
Year 11-13 2026/27

OUR SUCCESSFUL GIRLS TEAM IS LOOKING TO RECRUIT FOR THE NEW SEASON 26/27 AS WE BECOME AN U18 TEAM

For info contact: 07958 712786 or aycliffeangels@gmail.com




Joseph's Dreamcoat

Darlington Operatic Society is set to stage the family favourite musical 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' in a vibrant new production at Darlington Hippodrome from 22nd April to 2nd May. This follows the company's successful run of Come From Away last October.

The production features a talented local cast, with Samantha Morrison and Katie Spencer sharing the role of the Narrator and Ben Connor starring as Joseph. They are joined by a large supporting cast and ensemble, alongside two teams of young performers who will appear on alternate performances. Chair Eddie Taylor-Jones said the show celebrates creativity, community, and the magic of live theatre, highlighting Joseph's story of hope, resilience, and joy. The production is directed and choreographed by Joanne Hand, known for previous large-scale shows with the company, and features a live 15-piece band led by Paul Walker.

Originally released as a concept album in 1969, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat has become one of the world's most beloved musicals, performed internationally.

Told entirely through song, the musical follows Joseph, his jealous brothers, and his journey from betrayal to becoming Pharaoh's trusted advisor in Egypt, before ultimately reuniting with his family.

The show runs from 22nd April to 2nd May, with tickets available through Darlington Operatic Society.

Careers in Archives

A popular culture, heritage and registration venue has hosted more than 150 students as part of sessions aimed at encouraging them to consider a career in managing historical records.

Across three days, Durham County Council venue, The Story, hosted 154 Year 7 students from Tanfield School who heard from archivists and conservators about their roles in looking after the historic collections at the building.

Students were able to peek behind the scenes at the venue, which is home to five collections of historic records, documents and objects, including the DLI Collection.

They were able to see how old documents are cared for and repaired before hearing about how they are curated and interpreted.

They were then able to handle some of the items and archive materials before learning about how they can be displayed and exhibited for people to see and enjoy.

Dr Catherine Quigley, assistant head teacher at Tanfield School, said: "We'd like to thank staff at The Story for their work in supporting Tanfield School's careers provision, bringing workplaces and employability skills into sharp focus for Year 7 pupils as they plan their dream futures."

The sessions were made possible through grants from The National Archives, after they were awarded Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport funding from the Discover! Creative Careers programme. This funding has allowed The National Archives to award eight grants of £1,600 to archives across England to enable them to engage with schools, potentially for the first time.



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Final Instalment of the Hell's Rift Trilogy

Child of Hell's Rift to conclude acclaimed fantasy series by J.M. Cornish.

Author J.M. Cornish has announced the upcoming release of *Child of Hell's Rift*, the highly anticipated third and final instalment in the Hell's Rift fantasy trilogy. Scheduled for release in December, the novel will bring the sweeping saga to a powerful and dramatic conclusion.

While the official cover has yet to be revealed, *Child of Hell's Rift* promises to deliver an emotionally charged finale to a story defined by war, sacrifice, and the complexity of power. The trilogy began with *Princess at Hell's Rift*, currently available on Amazon and Kindle for £4.99, followed by *Queen at Hell's Rift*, available for £5.99 on the same platforms.

About the Book

The war for Hell's Rift has already taken everything from Queen Madelyn of Lemuria - her peace, her people, and her certainty in the cause she fights for. As the conflict enters its third chapter, Madelyn discovers she is pregnant, introducing both hope and danger into a kingdom on the brink of collapse.

After giving birth to her daughter, Cahira, Madelyn makes the heart-wrenching decision to send her child away into secrecy, to protect her from the growing threats surrounding the throne. As Cahira grows up hidden from the chaos, Madelyn remains at the centre of a war that continues to intensify.

Over the next decade, alliances fracture, loyalties blur, and trust becomes increasingly fragile - even among those closest to the queen. In a world where there are no clear heroes or villains, every decision carries consequences, and every victory demands sacrifice.

Child of Hell's Rift explores themes of legacy, power, and the moral cost of survival, offering a gripping conclusion to a story where even the noblest intentions can lead to unintended darkness.

About the Author

J.M. Cornish, 23, has been passionate about writing from a young age. Diagnosed with autism during primary school, Cornish found solace and expression through storytelling. Now working as a Teaching Assistant in a local primary school, Cornish continues to pursue a lifelong ambition of completing a full book series.

The Hell's Rift trilogy marks a significant milestone in that journey. Cornish's first novel, *Princess at Hell's Rift*, was published at age 14, followed by *Queen at Hell's Rift* at age 16. In addition to the trilogy, Cornish has also published two poetry collections: *For the Love of Poetry: One Small Book for a Guy's Largest Ideas* and *The Healing Process*.

"I've always wanted to complete a series," Cornish says. "Even if just one person reads it, I see that as a success."

Readers can follow updates and promotional content via the author's public Facebook page, 'J.M. Cornish'.



What is a Wellbeing Event?

The Women's Mental Health and Well-being event is a one-day festival taking place on Thursday 18th June at Glow in Newton Aycliffe, the event aims to foster awareness, inclusivity, and support for women's mental health. The well-being event includes interactive workshops, insightful panel discussions, networking opportunities and empowerment through sharing.

Interactive workshops

Hands-on sessions, designed to build resilience, promote mindfulness, and increase women's mental health awareness.

Expert speakers

Hear from leading women's mental health and well-being experts as they explore topics such as workplace wellbeing, inclusive mental health policies, and overcoming stigma.

Networking

Throughout the day, and over a light lunch provided, attendees will have the opportunity to connect with like-minded professionals in women's mental health and wellbeing. This well-being event will be a safe and welcoming space where everyone's voice matters. Attendees will have the opportunity to share their stories, learn from others, and feel truly heard in a mental health and wellbeing community that values empathy and understanding.

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Mayor Kim moves North East Closer to Bringing Buses Back Under Public Control

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness has heralded a major step towards bringing buses back under public control, as council leaders signed off moving her plan to its next stage – including letting the public have its say.

The North East Combined Authority Cabinet on Tuesday 17th March 2026 unanimously agreed for a detailed Bus Franchising Scheme Assessment to be submitted for independent audit and public consultation, after which a final decision will be taken early next year. The plans explain how taking public control of buses could mean passengers benefit from a new performance regime to make buses more reliable, simple and affordable fares which work across all public transport and a single website for information, payment and customer service.

Speaking after the decision, North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said: “Buses should work for people across our region – whether you’re travelling in the city centre, from rural towns and villages, or along our coast. We have already stepped in with the Mayor’s Fares to make travel more affordable by paying bus companies to make tickets cheaper. Now we can go further.

“I’ve always been clear that I want to see buses back under public control as a way to deliver the improvements we all want to see. I said I would do this in my manifesto, and today we have taken a huge step forward.

“This opens the way for everyone in the North East to have their say on our plans. That’s going to happen this summer before we make a final decision.

“This has been a long and detailed process, but it matters because buses matter. We’ve already seen more growth in people using buses here than in many places in the country, and that shows just how important they are to people’s everyday lives.

“My ambition is to build a world-class public transport network for the North East – one that connects our communities, supports our economy, and gives people a real reliable alternative to the car.”

Council leaders were told the Franchising Scheme Assessment showed public control would mean more passenger journeys, more services, lower fares and greater value for public money when compared with an alternative partnership agreement with bus operators – but that there were also risks associated with moving to and operating a



franchise in which private companies deliver services under contract to a public body.

The move would mean public transport in the North East would be brought together under a single identity across towns and cities stretching from Barnard Castle and Newton Aycliffe on the border with Yorkshire all the way to Berwick on the Scottish Border, making it the largest scheme of its kind in England by geography, as well as serving the cities of Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland.

Subject to a successful audit, the 600-page assessment will move to public consultation this summer, giving local people the opportunity to shape the future of their bus services.

The consultation will be the next crucial step before the Mayor makes a final decision on whether to introduce a better, franchised bus network in the North East.

Improving buses has consistently been one of the strongest priorities raised by residents. During the Mayor’s Local Transport Plan consultation, more than 16,000 people shared their views, with better, more reliable bus services emerging as one of the biggest themes.

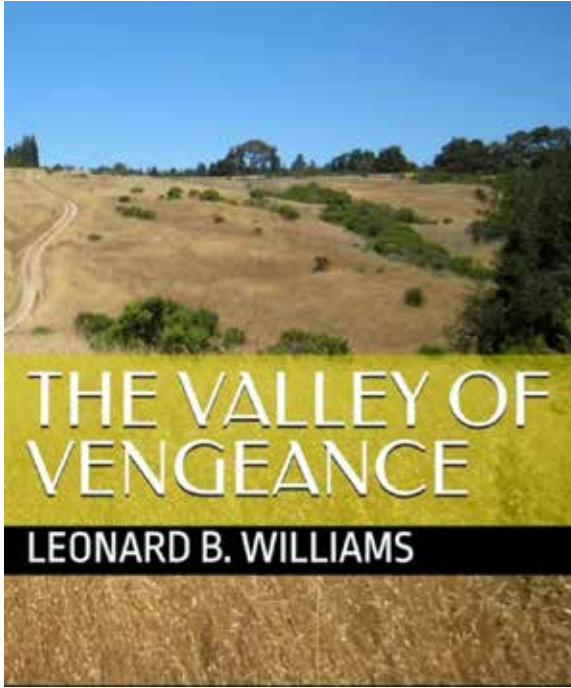
Stimulated by the hugely popular Mayor’s Fares, bus use in the North East has grown faster than the national average in recent years – demonstrating the vital role buses play in connecting people to jobs, education, healthcare and their communities across the region.

As part of her wider transport vision, the Mayor has committed to creating the Angel Network, world class transport for the North East, combining bus, Metro, ferry and local rail into one joined up network. Bus franchising would give the North East Combined Authority control over how buses operate – including routes, timetables, fares, and standards – allowing for the network to be designed around people of the North East rather than private bus operators.

Following the independent audit, the Combined Authority expects to launch a public consultation, giving people across the region the chance to help shape the final decision.

People can sign up to be part of our journey to the Angel Network - Mayor Kim’s vision for a world class transport system for the North East, including progress toward bringing buses back into public control: www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/bepartofthejourney - Those who join will be the first to hear when the public consultation opens and will have the opportunity to shape the future of buses in our region.

Local Author Releases Debut Novella



Written by local author, Leonard B. Williams, and 2022 'Page Turner Awards' finalist, the Valley of Vengeance is a powerful and heartfelt story set during the great depression era of 1930's America, when financial poverty was at an all-time low.

Charlie and Eddie are two migrant drifters from the dust bowl of Oklahoma, travelling from ranch to ranch in the Californian valleys. Feeling somewhat familiar with each other, they become real good friends and start looking out for each other, despite Eddie having a weakness that keeps bringing them trouble. Whilst running from a ranch, they meet another fellow 'Okie' whom is finding life hard, so he agrees to join them. Charlie takes to Seymour like a father figure, always helping him despite Eddie's discontentment, more so when Seymour foolishly falls in love with the boss' daughter on the next ranch. Following an accident, Eddie decides to take matters into his own hands and sets Seymour up to have him removed, but his plan backfires, as he too becomes victim of the same brutal fate. Charlie attempts to intervene, but makes a shocking discovery that questions their friendship and past, who is Eddie? In a moment of gripping tension, the want for revenge reaches boiling point as the truth is revealed in the darkness of the valley. Can vengeance be served? "I will repay said the Lord."

'The Valley of Vengeance' is now available to read on Amazon. Search title and author: <https://amzn.eu/d/O17PBZan>

JOY ALLEN

Durham Police & Crime Commissioner



Ruthless organised crime gangs are targeting our children. This can happen to any child, from any background, in any neighbourhood, that is why we all have a role to play in keeping them safe.

County lines are not just about drugs. It is about children being groomed, coerced, threatened, and controlled by crime gangs who use them to carry and sell drugs, move cash, store weapons and take unimaginable risks that could endanger their lives.

These gangs entice young people with promises of money and belonging. They often isolate them from their families and trap them in debt.

That is why tackling exploitation and drug-related crime sits firmly at the heart of my Police, Crime and Justice Plan, which makes my commitment clear: to make our communities safer, stronger and more resilient to drug and alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour.

And the force, with the support of the North East Regional Organised Crime Unit, is committed to taking action on every front.

They are relentlessly pursuing and prosecuting organised crime gangs. They are disrupting county lines networks and understanding how they adapt. They are strengthening intelligence led policing and working with partners to tackle the underlying drivers of crime.

But enforcement alone is not enough. So, I am working closely with them, local authority safeguarding boards, youth justice services and community organisations, to identify risks earlier, so we can intervene sooner. But we could do much better.

Exploitation thrives in silence, so we need the public to share valuable intelligence and information they have via the Police (online, 101 or 999 in an emergency) or 100% anonymously via Crimestoppers.

Potential signs to look out for:

- Going missing from home or school.
- Sudden unexplained money, clothes, or multiple mobile phones.
- Secrecy about where they are going or who they are with.
- Travelling to other towns.
- A drop in attendance or change in behaviour.
- Large numbers of calls or messages from unknown contacts.
- Properties with frequent visitors at unusual hours, a possible sign of 'cuckooing'.

If something does not feel right, please report it! You will never be criticised for reporting a concern. But a child may suffer if you do not. Reporting is not about getting a young person into trouble - it is about safeguarding them. It gives police and partners the intelligence they need to intervene early, disrupt gangs, and protect victims.

Together, by spotting the signs, sharing information and taking a stand against exploitation, we will protect our children, families and communities from crime and harm.

Together, we can break these criminal networks.

Together, we will make County Durham and Darlington safer and stronger and more resilient to drug-related crime and anti-social behaviour.

JOY ALLEN
DURHAM POLICE AND
CRIME COMMISSIONER

County Lines Intensification Week
Crime gangs are targeting our children

If you suspect a child is being exploited, report it.
Contact Durham Constabulary on 101, or in an emergency call 999.
You can also report anonymously via Crimestoppers 0800 555 111.

Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Durham Police Headquarters, Abbey Moat, Durham DH1 1TJ
Telephone: 0191 375 200 | Email: General.Inquiries@pcj.durham-pcc.gov.uk | Online: durham-pcc.gov.uk

Local Business Wins Prestigious Award Just One Year After Launch

Having worked in the leisure industry since the age of 16, now, at 29, I've dedicated over a decade to a career that has always felt more like a passion than a job. My journey began through sport, competing in water polo at international level for GB and Wales including the Europeans and Tri-Nations. Those experiences shaped not only my discipline and resilience, but also made it clear that I wanted to build a future within the leisure and fitness sector.

I started out as a lifeguard and swimming teacher, developing hands-on experience in supporting people to feel safe and confident in the water. Over time, I expanded my qualifications to become a gym instructor, duty manager, pool plant operator and later a trainer assessor. One of my proudest achievements has been delivering four of my own lifeguard courses, all with a 100% pass rate, something that reflects both my commitment to high standards and my passion for helping others succeed.

I have always believed in the powerful benefits that leisure facilities can offer, not just physically, but mentally. Fitness and wellbeing spaces can be transformative, providing people with a sense of purpose and confidence. So, when the opportunity arose in April 2025, I knew I had to take it.

That's when I bought The Recovery Room in Newton Aycliffe. Alongside my full-time role at the leisure centre, I've worked tirelessly to push The Recovery Room with the incredible support of my boyfriend, Tyler Claughton, who also works in the leisure industry, he has been by my side helping everyday with the recovery room as well as my dad, Denis Foulds. Together, we've balanced busy schedules to keep the facility running smoothly and I am incredibly grateful for everything they've done. I have a brilliant support network, family is everything. The Recovery Room has been designed as a space for everyone, not just athletes or fitness enthusiasts, but anyone in need of physical or mental recovery. Whether someone is dealing with the pressures of daily life, preparing for a competition, recovering from a competition or simply looking for a moment of calm, the facility offers a safe, private, and welcoming environment.

Our bespoke setup includes a Swedish ice bath, a seven-seater hot tub, a traditional sauna, changing and shower facilities, Pulsio leg compression machines, hand held massage devices, and sports massage services. While we're proud to support a number of professional athletes, inclusivity remains at the heart of everything we do, everyone is welcome.

Just six months after opening, The Recovery Room was nominated for the England Business Awards, a huge milestone in itself.

Now, as we approach our one-year anniversary in May, we attended the awards ceremony in Newcastle recently (22nd March), we were honoured to win Best Health & Wellbeing Business in County Durham. To receive such recognition for something I care so deeply about is truly incredible.

Looking ahead, the goal is to continue growing, expanding the facility, upgrading our services, and reaching as many people as possible. This journey has always been about helping others feel better, both physically and mentally, and that will remain at the core of everything we do moving forward.



New Early Years Funding

A council has welcomed new government funding that will bring improvements to early years education and support the development of children from more deprived backgrounds. From April 2025, the Government increased the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) to £655 per child, a 45 per cent uplift intended to improve outcomes for children in low-income families. Now, Durham County Council is one of 10 local authorities to benefit from an additional EYPP boost of up to £363 per child as part of a national test and learn programme, bringing the total funding up to £1,018 per child per year.

Through the programme, the local authority will identify barriers faced by families and providers, simplify EYPP claims and payment processes, and work with the Department for Education (DOE) to help design improvements to the system.

Plus, the council will receive £50,000 to support administration and analytical work and will share its data, so that an independent evaluation can be carried out.

It is hoped the programme will assess the different ways providers are making the most of the increased funding which could be through staff training, resources, or activities, to improve take-up and effective use of the support.

Cllr Cathy Hunt, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for children and young people's services, said: "We are delighted to be part of the new test and learn programme which will greatly support our targeted work ensuring that children within our county have the best start in life.

"This boost in funding will mean that we can provide low-income families and disadvantaged children even more of a helping hand so they can flourish and build a future."

The local authority will be able to access the additional EYPP funding from September.

Editorial Contributions

Editorial contributions, stories and tidbits can be sent to the Newton News editor via email:- paul@newtonnews.co.uk

Alternatively, you can 'contact us' via our website:- www.newtonnews.co.uk

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PLEASE NOTE:

Any letter for publication should be accompanied with the author's email address, name, address and contact number. These details can be withheld from publication on request.

Health Squad Crowned Winners in National NHS Partnership Awards



The Health Squad team in County Durham have been crowned winners in the prestigious Health Service Journal (HSJ) Partnership Awards 2026, celebrating excellence, innovation, and collaborative working across healthcare. For nearly half a century, the HSJ has recognised NHS teams and partners who are driving improvements in patient safety, service transformation, and health outcomes. This year, Health Squad were awarded the Most Impactful Project Addressing Health Inequalities. Alan Hodgson, Programme Lead, said: "Health Squad is still a young service, we first began supporting clients from hard to reach communities in 2023. To be officially recognised for our work - just three years on - is an outstanding achievement and testament to the team's dedication."

The team works with individuals and communities across County Durham to tackle health inequalities. Their clients include people at risk of homelessness or living in supported accommodation, vulnerable migrants, veterans, and those from GRT communities - groups who have historically struggled to access primary healthcare. By providing outreach-based full health assessments in community venues and drop-in centres, the team has delivered impressive outcomes. Between April 2024 and March 2025, Health Squad supported 815 clients, 678 of whom received full health assessments.

- 64% of those assessed identified health improvement goals

- 84% went on to achieve those goals
- This HSJ recognition is not their only recent success. The team was also shortlisted alongside Health Diagnostics in the 2025/26 Health Tech News (HTN) Now Awards in the Healthcare Improvement and Operations Transformation category. This nomination highlighted their work with the Health Options® platform, a tailored digital consultation tool. Although they didn't take first place, they were named highly commended runners up - a remarkable accomplishment for such a new service. Funded by Durham County Council, Health Squad is delivered in partnership with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust and the Pioneering Care Partnership.

Newton Aycliffe Women's Institute

Important Information - Venue Change

The venue for the foreseeable future for our W.I. meetings, starting Tuesday 14th April at 7.00pm, will be at Neville Parade Methodist Church, Newton Aycliffe.

We look forward to seeing you all there.

If you have any questions or queries please contact our President, Christine Robinson, on 07981 992686.

Congratulations



Tony and Elaine Harrop are celebrating a remarkable 60th wedding anniversary, marking decades of love, commitment and family life that began in Hull when they wed on 26th March 1966.

The couple first met on a night out with friends in their home town, a chance encounter that would go on to shape the rest of their lives. At the time, Tony was working as a taxi driver, while Elaine

was employed at Needlers Chocolates. From those early days, their bond grew steadily, built on shared values and a deep understanding of one another.

In 1982, Tony and Elaine made the move to Newton Aycliffe, where they would lay down roots and build both a successful business and a thriving family life. Over the years, they became well known locally as the dedicated directors of Workshop Supplies, a role they both have retired from.

Family has always been at the heart of their story. Together, they have raised four children and are now proud grandparents to thirteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Much of their time today is happily spent supporting the younger generations, particularly by following their many sporting activities.

To mark their special anniversary, a celebration is being held at the Oakleaf Sports Centre, bringing together family and friends to honour the couple's enduring partnership.

When asked the secret to a long and happy marriage, Tony and Elaine offer simple but heartfelt advice: always be there for each other - whether you agree or not.

Their story is one of lasting love, shared success, and a family legacy that continues to grow with each passing year.



Town's Cricket Club Celebrate 40 Years

2026 sees the 40th anniversary of Newton Aycliffe Cricket Club. Reformed in 1986, after the previous club had been dissolved a couple of year earlier, the Club initially entered the Darlington and District League where they found a fair amount of success, achieving the league and cup double in 1999, before moving to the North East Durham League in 2000.

In 2013, after a few years of planning, the Club made the massive move to the North Yorkshire and South Durham League, a premier league and one of the best grassroots leagues in the country, where they continue to play. From humble beginnings, the Club now field two senior men's teams, two senior women's teams and five junior teams. The new season starts on Saturday 18th April when the first team entertain Yarm while the second team travel to Guisborough.

In preparation for the new season, the Club have strengthened their senior ranks with Adam Gittins returning after a spell at Norton and Patrick Howe indicating that he will be available to play on a more regular basis, after missing games since his move to Leeds. One outgoing player is Matthew Greaves, who has decided to move.

As part on the 40th anniversary, the Club will be holding a night of celebration on Saturday 13th June and would like to see as many players and ex players plus sponsors and supporters, at the event. Further details can be found on the Newton Aycliffe Cricket Club Facebook page or by contacting one of the Club officials.



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The Clock

As another day begins to dawn
 A piercing sound I hear
 It is the clock beside my bed
 That screams at me so near
 And as I place my hand upon it
 To block its constant cry
 The noise is stopped at once - hooray!
 So I lay down and sigh
 But as I snuggle deep within
 The comfort of my bed
 The motion of the clock I hear
 'Get up, you're not yet dead'
 Tick tock, tick tock
 The rhythm of the clock
 As the time of day is racing by
 I shout out loud 'please stop'
 But the clock it does not listen
 It covers up its ears
 So once again I raise my voice
 'Be quiet, I'm sleeping here'
 Then the clock becomes defiant
 As time is on its side
 And as its hands turn round and round
 I slide down the bed to hide
 But even in the darkness
 Trapped and all alone
 The calling of the clock surrounds me
 In the bedroom of my home
 And so we start to argue
 As it tries to get its way
 'Get out of bed you lazy thing
 Get dressed and start your day'
 This clock it does annoy me
 But what is it I can do?
 Then suddenly a thought pops up
 I'll drop it down the loo!
 Then its petty voice can't wake me
 In the early morning light
 And work will be a distant dream
 As I roll over and say 'goodnight'!

JOY ALLEN

Durham Police & Crime Commissioner



Protecting Horses and Riders on Our Roads

Every time a driver passes a horse too quickly or too closely, they are gambling with a life. Last year alone 58 horses were killed and 97 injured on UK roads, while 80 people were also hurt in collisions involving horses. In total, 3,118 road incidents involving horses were reported to the British Horse Society in 2024. Even these shocking figures only tell part of the story. The British Horse Society estimates that only around one in ten incidents are reported, meaning the real scale of danger on our roads is likely far greater. Behind every statistic is a devastating human story - a rider thrown to the ground, a traumatised family and a much-loved horse suffering catastrophic injuries at the roadside. Recently I was contacted by a family in our county who experienced every rider's worst nightmare when their horse was struck by a vehicle and suffered fatal injuries. The trauma for the rider and those present is something no one should ever have to witness. Sadly, this was the second horse death brought to my attention in recent months. Incidents like these are deeply distressing and, in many cases, entirely preventable. Horse riders are among the most vulnerable road users. Horses are powerful animals, but they are also easily startled. A vehicle passing too fast, too close or revving loudly can cause a horse to panic in seconds, putting both rider and driver in serious danger. The British Horse Society reports that over 80% of incidents occur because vehicles pass horses too quickly or too closely, while one in three riders report experiencing road rage or abuse from drivers. That is why the Highway Code is clear. Under Rule 215, drivers must slow down when approaching horses and pass them at no more than 10mph, leaving at least two metres of space. Drivers should avoid revving engines, sounding horns or accelerating suddenly. Ignoring these rules is not just inconsiderate - it can be criminal. Dangerous or careless driving under the Road Traffic Act 1988 can result in penalty points, heavy fines, driving bans or even imprisonment where serious injury occurs.

Education is vital, but enforcement also matters. Durham Constabulary runs Operation Close Pass, raising awareness and tackling dangerous behaviour on rural roads. Riders are also increasingly using helmet-mounted cameras to capture dangerous driving. Footage can be submitted through Operation Snap, enabling police to investigate and take action against drivers who put lives at risk. Following the recent tragedy locally, further steps are being taken. The powerful National Police Chiefs' Council training video, "It's Not Just A Horse," has now been circulated to officers in Durham to help them respond compassionately and effectively when incidents involving horses occur. As Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham and Darlington, and nationally as Joint Lead for Roads Policing with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, I will continue working with partners such as the British Horse Society to raise awareness and improve safety. But, ultimately, every driver has a responsibility. Slow down. Be patient. Give space. Because when you see a horse on the road, a few seconds of care could prevent a life-time of heartbreak. Drive dead slow. A life depends on it.

JOY ALLEN
 DURHAM POLICE AND
 CRIME COMMISSIONER

Dead Slow Saves Lives.

Protecting Horses and Riders on Our Roads.

Slow down - Be patient - Give space.
 Riders are also increasingly using helmet mounted cameras to capture dangerous driving.
 *Footage can be submitted through Operation Snap

[durham.police.uk/police-services/durham-constabulary/areas/campaigns/campaigns/operation-snap/](https://www.durham.police.uk/police-services/durham-constabulary/areas/campaigns/campaigns/operation-snap/)

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THANK YOU

Alice Charlton

Thank you to everyone who attended the funeral of my Wife, Alice at Wear Valley crematorium on 19th March and those of you who kindly donated to CRUK. I have donated the proceedings accordingly to them totalling £230.
Tony Charlton

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IN MEMORIAM

Tommy Harbottle

Died 7th April 2005.
Happy memories of our lovely Dad.
Vera, Lavinia and Andy xxx

Margaret Shaw



On the 13th April it will be twenty years since I lost my Wife, Margaret, after 35 years. She was a good Wife and Mother, her life was affected by the loss of Sons Paul and Giles.
Fondly missed,
Michael Shaw.

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St Joseph's Pupils Enjoy Inspiring Trip to London



Year Six pupils from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Newton Aycliffe have returned from an unforgettable adventure to London. The visit was fully funded by the school, ensuring that every child was able to take part. For some pupils it was their first ever visit to the capital, making the experience even more meaningful.

From the moment they arrived the children were excited by the famous landmarks around them. They enjoyed seeing Trafalgar Square, spotting Big Ben and catching a glimpse of 10 Downing Street. A standout moment was their visit to Buckingham Palace, where they were able to watch the Changing of the Guard. The ceremony, the uniforms and the sense of tradition captured their imagination.

The highlight for many pupils was their tour of the Houses of Parliament. During the visit they learned about the important roles, traditions, and responsibilities that shape how the country is run. One of the most memorable moments was standing in front of the dispatch box, which looked much smaller in real life than they expected. Pupils also located the area where messages are delivered to their local MP, Alan Strickland, who represents Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor.

To deepen their understanding of democracy, the children then took part in an engaging workshop which helped them explore how debates take place and how laws are made. Headteacher, Kirsty Evans, praised both the pupils and staff, saying "At St. Joseph's we are committed to providing wider opportunities that help our children grow, discover and dream beyond the familiar. We believe every child deserves the very best start in life and experiences like this lay strong foundations for their future. Trips of this kind allow our pupils to see the world beyond their local town and inspire them to aim high, broaden their horizons and believe in what they can achieve." Teachers described the visit as inspiring, educational and full of moments the children will remember for many years to come. It was a trip that not only expanded their understanding of the world, but also sparked curiosity and ambition for the future.

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Senior Citizens' Excursions



Application forms and information brochures for Great Aycliffe Town Council's free Senior Citizens' Excursions will be available from 9.00am on Saturday 25th April. You can collect them from the Library and Recreation Centre in Beveridge Way, the Oakleaf Sports Complex and Golf Complex, they will be available from Great Aycliffe Town Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane on Monday 27th April at 9.00am. The forms and full details of the excursions will also be available from the Council's website www.great-aycliffe.gov.uk - Please note, however, that the library does not open on Wednesdays.



The application process opens at 10.00am on Monday 27th April 2026 at the Council Offices on School Aycliffe Lane. The closing date for applications is Friday 8th May 2026.

To be eligible, you do not have to be drawing a pension or have a bus pass, but you do have to be a resident of the electoral parish of Great Aycliffe and 60 years old, with a date of birth on or before 31st March 1966 (applies to both men and women). You must provide proof of your age and address. We do not keep records from previous years, so please do not assume we will be able to check from last year. If you are in any doubt, please telephone 01325 300700 and we will check your eligibility. You can bring (with proof of residency and age) to our offices at School Aycliffe Lane during the times shown on the brochure, which is available with the forms. You can send your forms and copies only of your proofs via the post or e-mail the form and proofs to info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk. This year we will be visiting York, Whitby, Keswick, Alnwick, Northallerton and Thirsk (dual destination), Tynemouth, Seaham and Dalton Park (dual destination) and Redcar (shorter day). Please note that places are limited and given out on a 'first come, first served' basis. The coaches provided are 49-53 seater executive coaches with toilet facilities. There is also one executive coach with a wheelchair hoist to Whitby, Alnwick and Redcar. This ensures that people with mobility problems can enjoy a day out too. The hoist can be used for loading wheelchairs for residents who need to travel in their wheelchair.

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New College Durham Celebrate 50 Years of Podiatry Training

New College Durham (NCD) is celebrating 50 years of podiatry education, marking five decades of training skilled healthcare professionals who support patients across the North East and beyond.

Since the programme began in the mid-1970s, the college has played a vital role in developing confident, capable podiatrists who go on to work across a range of healthcare settings. Graduates from the programme provide essential care ranging from routine foot care to managing complex clinical conditions, helping people maintain mobility, independence and quality of life.

Podiatry is a specialist healthcare profession grounded in science, clinical precision and patient care. Practitioners assess and diagnose conditions affecting the foot and lower limb, develop evidence-based treatment plans, manage wounds and infections, carry out minor surgical procedures and contribute to the management of wider health conditions such as diabetes and vascular disease.

At New College Durham, the programme combines academic study with extensive hands-on clinical experience, ensuring students develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to succeed in professional practice.

Teaching is delivered by experienced podiatrists who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and the Royal College of Podiatry who bring extensive clinical and teaching expertise to the programme. Students also benefit from structured placements arranged by the college across both NHS and private practice settings, helping them gain valuable real-world experience while building professional confidence and employability. To ensure they get the best possible start in their careers students train in facilities replicating real clinical environments both on its Framwellgate Moor campus and at its Bishop Auckland clinic, where the college has recently invested more than £200,000 in refurbishing patient and student facilities.

The college also remains committed to widening access to the profession. Eligible students can access bursaries, and the full-time programme is structured across three days per week, helping learners balance study with family commitments or other responsibilities.

Reflecting on the milestone, Tracy Walker, Curriculum Manager for Podiatry at New College Durham noted just how much the world has changed since the course first began in the 1970s – a time when the average weekly wage was around £72, a pint of beer cost just 32p and home computers were unheard of.



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