



Listening, Learning, Improving - Page 24

Newton News

July 2026

Incorporating 'The Newtonian'

Newton Aycliffe's free community magazine published at the beginning of each month
Editorial and advertising contact: Telephone: 01325 300212 - Email: paul@newtonnews.co.uk - Website: www.newtonnews.co.uk



500 Miles - Page 3



Discharge Lounge - Page 5



Prams - Page 25



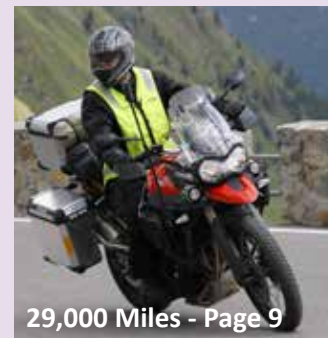
Lift Off - Page 6



Written in the Sky - Page 8



Extra Mile - Page 7



29,000 Miles - Page 9



Company of the Year - Page 10



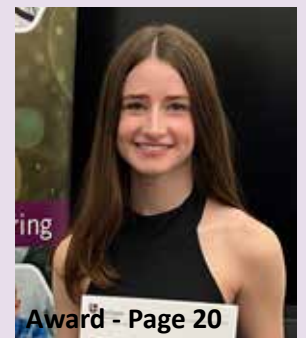
Ruth Retires - Page 11



Santa Tours - Page 12



Guide Dogs - Page 15



Award - Page 20

Aycliffe Radio Welcomes Four New Shows to its Growing Schedule



Dr. AJ



Aidan Coomber



Ian Killip



Thomas and Kevin

Aycliffe Radio is delighted to announce the addition of four exciting new programmes and presenters to its broadcast schedule, further strengthening the station's commitment to providing diverse, entertaining and engaging content for listeners across the community and beyond.

The new line-up introduces a mix of music, discussion, nostalgia, interviews and specialist programming, offering something for listeners of all ages and interests.

Monday Nights Go Back to the 80s with Dr AJ

On Monday evenings, listeners can take a trip down memory lane as Dr AJ takes over the station's popular 'Through the Decades' 80s slot with The 80s Show. Broadcasting from 8pm, the programme will celebrate one of music's most iconic decades, featuring classic hits, forgotten favourites, artist spotlights and fascinating stories from the era that defined a generation.

The Theme Team Arrives on Wednesdays

Wednesday evenings will see the launch of The Theme Team, hosted by Thomas and Kevin. The dynamic duo will explore a wide range of topics each week, pairing their chosen theme with a carefully curated soundtrack to match. From popular culture and history to hobbies, events and unique talking points, listeners can expect engaging discussion, humour and music that perfectly complements the subject matter.

Brand New Saturday Show from Aidan Coomber

Saturday afternoons are set to become even more exciting with the arrival of Aidan Coomber and his brand new programme 'Made You A Mixtape'. Broadcasting from 4pm to 6pm, the show will feature a carefully selected blend of tracks inspired by the classic art of creating the perfect mixtape. Whether introducing listeners to new discoveries or revisiting timeless favourites, Aidan's show promises a fresh and personal musical journey every week.

Saturday Night Disco Classics with Ian Killip

Completing the new additions is Ian Killip, who will bring the glamour and energy of the dance floor to Saturday evenings with Disco Classics. Airing from 7pm to 8pm, the show will celebrate the greatest disco anthems and dance floor favourites from across the decades, providing the perfect soundtrack to kick-start your Saturday night.

A Growing Station for the Community

These exciting additions reflect Aycliffe Radio's continued growth and its dedication to supporting local broadcasting talent while delivering high quality programming for its audience.

A spokesperson for Aycliffe Radio said: "We are thrilled to welcome these talented presenters and their fantastic new shows to the station. Each programme brings something unique to our schedule, helping us offer an even wider variety of entertainment, music and conversation for our listeners. We look forward to hearing the audience's reaction and supporting our presenters as they become part of the Aycliffe Radio family."

Listeners can tune in to all of the new programmes via Aycliffe Radio's online stream and mobile platforms or via local DAB. For more information, programme updates and the latest station news, follow Aycliffe Radio on social media or visit the station's website - www.ayclifferradio.co.uk

Garden Party



Join us for the Annual Garden Party at Avon Court on Saturday 15th August from 1.00pm onwards (stall holders from 11.00am). If you would like to book a stall (£5.00), please contact the Scheme Manager: Hazel Davis
Email: hazel.davis@housing21.org.uk
Telephone: 0370 192 4553.

This is an outdoor event, so please bring your own gazebos or parasols if possible. We do have a limited number of tables available, but bringing your own table would be greatly appreciated.

There will be refreshments, a variety of handmade crafts from local people, and plenty to enjoy throughout the afternoon.

All proceeds from the event will go towards the residents' Christmas outing and party.

Please come along, support us, and enjoy an afternoon in our lovely gardens. Feel free to bring a picnic too!

Gary Completes 500-mile Charity Cycle

On 8th June, I successfully completed my Camino de Santiago, arriving in Santiago de Compostela two days ahead of schedule. Reaching the finish was an emotional and rewarding moment, made possible by the encouragement, kindness, and support of so many people throughout my journey. Every message, word of encouragement, and act of support helped carry me forward along the miles of road and trail.



I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who donated to the two charities I have been supporting. Knowing that the journey was helping worthwhile causes provided additional motivation during the more challenging days and made crossing the finish line even more meaningful.

The above photograph was taken shortly after I arrived in Santiago, capturing what should have been one of the happiest moments of the adventure. It reflects the sense of achievement, relief, and gratitude I felt after completing a journey that had tested both body and mind. However, life can change in an instant. Not long after the photograph was taken, I received a phone call from my brother with the heartbreaking news that my father had passed away just a few hours earlier.

What had begun as a day of celebration suddenly became one of profound sadness. The emotions of completing a long-held ambition were immediately overshadowed by the loss of someone who had been such an important part of my life.

Looking back, the Camino will always hold a special place in my heart - not only as a remarkable personal achievement, but also because it marked the final chapter of my father's life. The journey taught me many lessons about perseverance, friendship, kindness, and gratitude, but perhaps the greatest lesson was a reminder of how precious and fragile life truly is.

To everyone who supported me, encouraged me, and donated along the way, thank you. Your generosity and kindness helped me reach Santiago and will remain with me long after the journey has ended.


Wheelchairs

In the UK it is estimated 4.3 million people experience a short-term mobility need that could benefit from a wheelchair. 44% of these people believed they would have benefitted from one, to attend appointments or to continue in their normal social environment.

The NHS provides wheelchairs for long-term users, but those in temporary need often have to apply privately, some have a waiting list and most have a charge. If the need for a wheelchair is unplanned, such as after an accident, a wait or a charge might have a dramatic effect on their lives.

Community Spirit Newton Aycliffe can supply transit and self propelled wheelchairs, children's and bariatric chairs on a temporary loan basis, free of charge - and, they can delivered to the door if you live within Newton Aycliffe. Please contact: communityspiritaycliffe@gmail.com or call Anne 07506 123561.

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Listening, Learning and Acting: Democracy in Action.

One of the most important parts of my role as Police and Crime Commissioner is listening directly to the people I serve.

While crime statistics, performance reports and survey data all play an important role in helping us understand local issues, nothing replaces hearing first-hand from residents about their experiences, concerns and expectations of policing and the wider criminal justice system.

That is why I have been attending a series of joint public engagement surgeries with your local Members of Parliament across County Durham and Darlington. These sessions provide an opportunity for residents to raise concerns, seek advice and share their experiences directly with those elected to represent them. They also allow us to identify recurring themes, spot emerging issues and ensure that local voices help shape local priorities.

Importantly, they demonstrate the value of partnership working. Crime and community safety challenges rarely sit neatly within the responsibilities of a single organisation. By bringing together MPs, Police and Crime Commissioner, Durham Constabulary and wider partners, where appropriate, we can often resolve issues more quickly and ensure residents receive the support they need.

One theme that has emerged consistently from these discussions is a lack of awareness among victims about their rights under the Victims' Code.

Many people have told us they were unaware of the support available to them following a crime, while others were not aware they could access specialist victim services, regardless of whether a crime resulted in a charge or conviction.

This is concerning because every victim has rights, including the right to be kept informed, the right to access support services and the right to be treated with dignity, respect and compassion throughout the criminal justice process.

My Police, Crime and Justice Plan 2025-2029 places victims at its heart, with a clear commitment to delivering a first-class service to victims and ensuring that those affected by crime receive the support they deserve.

The concerns raised through these surgeries reinforce why evidence-led, intelligence-informed and data-driven problem solving is so important. Individual cases often reveal wider trends. By listening carefully to residents, analysing data and working closely with partners, we can identify where systems are not working as intended and take action to improve them.

For anyone who feels they have not received the service they should expect, there are routes available to seek answers and accountability.

Concerns about the conduct of a police officer or member of police staff can be raised through Durham Constabulary's Professional Standards Department. Information on how to make a complaint is available via Durham Constabulary's website (see details below) If a victim believes their rights under the Victims' Code have not been met, they can also request a review or raise concerns through the Victims' Right to Review Scheme, where applicable, or seek advice from my specialist victim services.

My Victim Care and Mentor Service offers free, independent and confidential support for victims of any crime, witnesses and their families.

Public engagement should never be a tick-box exercise. It should be about listening, learning and acting.

The issues raised during these surgeries are helping inform decisions, shape priorities and improve services. Most importantly, they ensure that the voices of local people remain at the heart of everything we do as we work together to build safer, stronger and more resilient communities.

<https://www.victimcareandadvice.service.uk>



Know Your Rights as a Victim of Crime

You have the right to:

1. Be given information in a way that is easy to understand and to be provided with help to be understood.
2. Have details of the crime recorded by the police as soon as possible.
3. Receive written confirmation when reporting a crime and information about the criminal justice process.
4. Be referred to services that support victims.
5. Be told about how to claim compensation for any loss, damage or injury caused as a result of crime.
6. Be provided with updates on your case and to be told when important decisions are taken.
7. Make a Victim Personal Statement, which tells the court how the crime has affected you and is considered when sentencing the offender.
8. Be told the time, date and location of any court hearing and the outcome of those hearings in a timely way.
9. Be told the outcome of the case and be given an explanation of the sentence.
10. Claim certain expenses if you attend court and if any of your property was taken as evidence have it returned.
11. Be given information about the offender following a conviction.
12. Make a complaint about your Rights not being met.

My Victim Care and Mentor Service offers free, independent and confidential support for victims of any crime, witnesses and their families (details below)

VICTIM CARE AND MENTOR SERVICE
 Tel 0800 138 2020 |
 Email victimcare@durham-pcc.gov.uk

durham-pcc.gov.uk/victim-care-and-mentor-service

durham.police.uk/feedback/complaints/complaints-about-the-police

durham-pcc.gov.uk/vic-care-review

New ANPR at Memorial Hospital

A new Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) parking system went live at Darlington Memorial Hospital on Thursday 21st May 2026.

The new system replaces paper tickets and uses cameras to record vehicle registration numbers when entering and leaving the visitor car park and staff car park by Memorial Hall. The system is designed to make parking more convenient and reduce delays for drivers using the hospital site. It will also help modernise parking management and improve the overall experience for patients, visitors and staff attending the hospital each day.

The improvements form part of wider parking changes at the hospital designed to improve how parking operates on site, including simplifying the process for patients and visitors and helping improve traffic flow.

Under the new system, drivers will enter the car park as normal before paying for parking by entering their vehicle registration number at a payment machine prior to leaving.

There will also be a 20-minute grace period for drivers who enter and leave the site without parking.

Payment machines are located inside the hospital at:

- Women's Centre Entrance
- Main Entrance
- Outpatients A (next to the post room)

Blue Badge holders will continue to be supported under the new system and should scan their Blue Badge at the payment machine before leaving.

The Trust and Synchronicity Care Limited recognise that parking can be challenging at busy hospital sites and have continued working to improve access and parking management at Darlington Memorial Hospital.

Further updates will continue to be shared as the remaining phases of the parking improvement project progress.



New Discharge Lounge now Open at Darlington Memorial Hospital



A new Discharge Lounge opened to patients at Darlington Memorial Hospital on Tuesday 19th May, providing a calm and welcoming space for patients who are ready to leave hospital.

The new lounge, based in the main hospital block on C Floor (Floor 1), will support patients who no longer need to be cared for on a ward, but are waiting for final discharge arrangements, such as medication, transport, discharge information, or transfer to their next place of care. The space has been designed to help patients feel one step closer to home, offering a more relaxed environment as they prepare to leave hospital. Patients will continue to be cared for by staff while they wait, with access to refreshments, comfortable seating and support from the Discharge Lounge team.

For many patients, the final part of their hospital journey will be spending time in the Discharge Lounge. The Trust is encouraging patients, families and carers to think ahead about discharge arrangements, including how they will get home, who may be able to collect them, and whether they need any support when they arrive home.

Using the Discharge Lounge also helps make ward beds available for patients who need acute hospital care, supporting flow through the hospital and helping patients receive the right care in the right place. Julie Form, (General Manager for Outpatients and Clinical Site Management, said: "Leaving hospital is an important step in a patient's recovery, and we want that experience to feel safe, supported and as smooth as possible. Our new Discharge Lounge at Darlington Memorial Hospital will provide a more comfortable and welcoming space for patients who are ready to leave the ward while final arrangements are completed. It is about helping patients feel one step closer to home, whilst making sure beds are available for patients who need urgent hospital care."

The Trust is also looking at opportunities for volunteers to support the Discharge Lounge, helping to create a friendly and welcoming environment for patients as they prepare to leave hospital.

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A Ticket to Co. Durham's Key Attractions



Three new bus services have been launched across County Durham to help visitors and residents explore its key attractions. Durham County Council has commissioned the Durham Explorer to run on weekends and bank holidays between 23rd May and 31st August this year.

Each service will connect Durham City to a range of visitor destinations including Locomotion; Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens; Beamish, The Living Museum of the North; The Auckland Project; Raby Castle, Park and Gardens; The Bowes Museum; and High Force Waterfall; with many venues also offering discounts to those who arrive by bus. The services have been funded by the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, to help make bus travel more affordable and attractive for both local people and visitors. The Mayor's Fares will apply with a single adult journey costing just £2.50 and people aged 21 and under travelling for £1.

The new Durham Explorer buses, which will be operated by Northstar, are:

- The Durham Dales Explorer (873) which runs from Durham City to The Auckland Project; Raby Castle, Park and Gardens; Barnard Castle; The Bowes Museum and High Force Waterfall.
- The Time Traveller line (874) from Durham City to Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens; and Beamish, the Living Museum of the North.
- The Tracks Through Time line (875) from Durham City to Shildon and Locomotion.

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness said: "County Durham has so much to offer, from brilliant attractions to stunning countryside, and these new bus routes make it easier for people to enjoy great days out without needing to rely on a car.

"I'm delighted we, at the strategic mayoral authority, have been able to fund them, helping more families, residents and visitors explore what our region has to offer, support local tourism and enjoy simpler travel by bus."

All buses have accessible access, with dogs also allowed on board. An adult day ticket is also available in County Durham for £6, allowing unlimited bus travel, while passengers can also purchase a regionwide adult day ticket for bus and Metro travel for £7.50. A regionwide day ticket for young people costs £3.

Children under 11 can also travel without charge during the school holidays as part of the Kids Go Free initiative, offering travel at no cost for up to three children, when accompanied by an adult with a valid ticket or a concessionary pass holder.

For more information, visit: www.durham.gov.uk/CountyDurhamByBus
For more information on discounts to regional attractions through the North East Combined Authority's Days Out by Bus scheme, visit: www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/daysoutbybus

Mobile Rocket Lifts Off

A Newton Aycliffe tech company is expanding internationally as part of an ambitious growth strategy that could see turnover more than double. Newton Aycliffe-based Mobile Rocket creates digital recruitment platforms used by major names including Amazon, Waitrose and the NHS.

It has grown into one of the UK's largest temp software supplier, with over a million Candidates using its platforms. Launched in 2013, the multi million pound company has enjoyed consistent growth and is on course to grow in recurring revenue this year.

Now the business has revealed it is investing five figures into establishing a presence in both the USA and the Netherlands, with the latter identified as a 'major' potential market.

"Mobile Rocket's core business model is that we create recruitment platforms 'all in one solution for recruitment agencies' - that help companies onboard and manage temporary workers in one place," said founder Adam Lee. "We believe that with the right strategy, and by targeting the right markets, Mobile Rocket can become a major international force. Additionally, recruitment is a global market, and app-based hiring is quickly becoming the norm."

The core arm, Rocket Recruitment, supports recruitment agencies in sectors where temporary staff are in high demand, including education, logistics, manufacturing and healthcare. Its platform keeps everything under one roof - from candidate onboarding and compliance checks to shift management and timesheets. Amid Mobile Rocket's growth, the company is also creating several new roles in the North East.

These include sales and inbound marketing positions, created on the back of what is expected to be a strong 12 months for the company.

"Our financial year ends in April, and we are expecting to see a growth of around 25 per cent," said Adam. "Given the current job market - particularly the pressure caused by rising employment costs - that speaks volumes about the trust clients have in us to create platforms that deliver the right staff quickly and efficiently."

After the business took off in around 2017, it was the Covid pandemic - when demand for temporary workers soared - that really unlocked the company's potential. While AI is increasingly embedded in the firm's technology, the company says its focus remains firmly on people.

Visit: <https://mobilerocket.co.uk>

Diane Goes the Extra Mile for Dementia

A popular hospital worker is walking the walk to raise much-needed funds and awareness around dementia and patient care.

For the past seven years radiology clinical assistant at University Hospital of North Durham Diane Waddell has walked a mile a day in May for Dementia UK, which is more than 400,000 steps.

Her efforts have not only raised more than £2,000 over the years for charity, often by also singing and splashing in puddles, but have raised awareness about how best to treat people with vulnerabilities.

Diane, of Stanley, began working for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust 10 years ago after working in care homes.

"I got the opportunity to work here when I was 51 and it was such a privilege," she said. "It was a big step for me and I feel really proud. I've been passionate about dementia for 35 years and when I first started I was part of the enhanced care observation team helping vulnerable patients on the ward, including those with dementia. I would see to their personal needs and make life easier for the patients, their families and staff.

"When I moved to radiology I took my skills with me and used them when I noticed that, quite often, patients' anxiety was stopping treatment and they were having to go back to their beds on the ward.

"I can pick up if patients are vulnerable and have extra needs, or are just anxious, and work with them to help them through their scans.

"If they are children, I can play with them and help them and their families know what to expect. If, for instance, an elderly lady comes in for a mammogram I can ensure the staff member with her is female.

"Other times it might be someone with a learning disability, an addiction or even a prisoner. So it is all about me and my amazing colleagues reading the person and reading the room as everyone is entitled to a period of reasonable adjustment and to be put at ease. They deserve a good appointment."

Diane is part of Carers UK and the Trust's learning disabilities and dementia champions team. She feeds back to the management team on a host of issues that could improve patient care.

This includes anything from making the department more environmentally friendly, colour-coding for the visually impaired, making rooms more child-friendly and less intimidating, recognising people's anxieties and being kind.

"Staff have been very supportive, but it is important to keep working to change everyone's mindset and working methods," she said. "I wear a lanyard that says 'you are safe with me', but sometimes it is as simple as introducing yourself by offering your hand and smile."

CDDFT Chief Executive, Steve Russell, added: "Diane represents the best of our NHS values through the kindness, compassion and support she shows to patients, families and colleagues every day.

"We are very proud of the difference Diane makes, not only through her fundraising efforts, but through the care and understanding she brings to supporting vulnerable patients across our services."



Fell Walkers

Aycliffe Fell Walking Club travelled to the western area of the North Yorkshire Moors National Park on Saturday 13th June for some challenging distance walking from Sutton Bank, Helmsley and Hawaby areas to Osmotherley. However, the journey there was hampered by some significant delays caused by resurfacing roads and a mysterious absence of one walker. That said, this is a very flexible and knowledgeable group and adjustments were made where necessary. Some had decided to do a short circular (8.5 miles) from Osmotherley which involved some very steep steps out of the village, but everyone made the right decisions for them and enjoyed the day. I have heard several reports of groups of walkers wading through very long grass unable to see the path they were on. This is where those with GPX technology stepped up confirming that they were on the path – it is just that recent changeable weather had turned it into a jungle! Apparently, by the time they had all reached the hospitality in Osmotherley, the mysterious absence of the one walker had been explained. The next walk on Saturday 11th July is in the Lake District National Park, with a selection of walks based around the Grisedale Horseshoe between Glenridding and Patterdale. 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 runs from January to December with each walk outing costing £15 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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Praise Indeed

Dear Sir,
Phone Call from Matthew Kelly

The debut novella, *The Valley of Vengeance*, written by local author Leonard B. Williams, is a true work of passion. That passion began in 2004 when Matthew Kelly graced the stage at Darlington Civic Theatre with his award-winning performance as Lenny in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

Matthew, best known as the host of the classic television show *Stars in Their Eyes* and the famous catchphrase, "Tonight, Matthew, I'm going to be...", is just as comfortable on stage as he is in front of the camera. In 2004, alongside George Costigan, he delivered a remarkable performance that further established his reputation as a talented actor, earning widespread acclaim and contributing to his Olivier Award-winning career.

The performance in Darlington was unforgettable. There was a lump in everyone's throat as the audience rose to their feet in rapturous applause. For Leonard, it was more than just a performance—it was the inspiration for a journey that would eventually lead to the creation of *The Valley of Vengeance*.

Inspired by the story, Leonard began researching 1930s America and the migration of thousands of people from Oklahoma to the so-called "Land of Plenty" in California's fertile valleys. As his research deepened, he started developing his own story set during that era of hardship, loss, and struggle.

However, it was not until 2020 that the manuscript was finally completed. Leonard entered the draft into the Page Turner Awards, where it was nominated as a finalist. Earlier this year, the book was published on Amazon as a Kindle edition before being released in paperback format.

As a gesture of thanks, Leonard sent a copy of the book to Matthew Kelly. Then, one afternoon, completely out of the blue, Matthew personally telephoned Leonard to congratulate him, telling him how much he had enjoyed reading it.

"What a fantastic story. A true labour of love." Matthew was warmly thanked for the inspiration he unknowingly provided all those years ago on a stage in Darlington, setting in motion a journey that would culminate in the publication of *The Valley of Vengeance*.

The Valley of Vengeance is now available on Amazon. Search for the title and author, Leonard B. Williams.

Name and address supplied.



Written in the Sky

The Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS) has launched an exciting new fundraising campaign inviting supporters to be visibly part of its future life-saving missions. Through the *Written in the Sky* campaign, people can have their name, or the name of someone special to them, displayed on the underside of one of the charity's new helicopters.

By donating £100 or more, supporters can submit a name to be featured, and they will receive a thank you letter and a certificate.

As part of the launch, those who choose to include a name on a helicopter will also have the exclusive opportunity to purchase a limited-edition commemorative coin for £10.

This keepsake has been produced in recognition of the incredible community of people who help keep the charity's helicopters flying and the crew ready to respond.

The campaign forms a key part of Operation SOS, the charity's most ambitious appeal to date, which aims to raise £2.5 million to secure the deposit for a vital third helicopter.

Their current aircraft, which are Dauphin N3 and Dauphin N3+ helicopters, have responded to thousands of life-saving missions, but due to parts shortages, ever-rising maintenance costs, and extended downtime, it has become increasingly challenging to operate them.

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 helicopters called Airbus H145 D2.

Through careful financial planning, the charity already has the deposits for the first two aircraft, however, they urgently need public support to fund the deposit for a crucial third helicopter.

Returning to a three-helicopter fleet will ensure GNAAS' critical care team are always ready to respond by air, even when one aircraft is temporarily out of action for maintenance.

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."

At the time of writing, the charity had raised 26% of their fundraising goal, thanks to the generosity of the public, community groups, and businesses who have donated in support of Operation SOS.

Joe Garcia MBE, chief executive officer at GNAAS, said: "Surpassing £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."

Nearly £2m still needs to be raised before the end of 2026 to meet the campaign target and GNAAS are calling on communities, businesses, and individuals to support *Written in the Sky* and help secure the future of its life-saving service. Visit: <https://gna.as/written2026> for full details, naming guidelines and terms and conditions.



Shildon Motorcyclist on 29,000-Mile Round-the-World Adventure



A Shildon motorcyclist is preparing to embark on the journey of a lifetime, riding more than 29,000 miles across Eurasia and North America in a solo, self-funded, round-the-world expedition while raising money for the mental health charity Mind.

On 1st July, Oliver Dickinson will leave County Durham on a motorcycle journey that will take him across some of the world's most famous, remote and spectacular roads. The route spans multiple continents, crossing Europe and Asia before continuing through North America, covering approximately 29,000 miles in total.

The trip is being undertaken largely alone, with the exception of China, where foreign motorcyclists are required to travel with an approved guide. Upon entering Laos, Oliver will once again continue the adventure solo.

The expedition is dedicated to raising funds for Mind in memory of a close friend who passed away several years ago. Through sharing the journey online, Oliver hopes to raise awareness of mental health issues while generating donations for the charity.

"I wanted to do something that would challenge me completely while also supporting a cause that means a great deal to me. This journey is in memory of a close friend, and if it can help raise awareness and support for mental health services, then every mile will be worthwhile."

Oliver currently lives in Shildon, where he has been based for the past three years. Prior to that he lived in Bishop Auckland for four years and has worked in Newton Aycliffe for most of his adult life. He was originally born in Meadowfield, County Durham.

The ambitious project has been entirely self-funded, requiring months of preparation and planning, including the decision to leave his job in order to undertake the expedition.

The journey has attracted support from two sponsors. National Bike Tyres, based in Newton Aycliffe, became the first company to back the project, and motorcycle mounting specialist Quad Lock has recently joined as a sponsor.

Throughout the trip, Oliver will document the adventure through regular updates, videos and photographs on social media, giving followers a firsthand look at the challenges and experiences of riding around the world.

Those wishing to support the fundraiser can donate via: www.justgiving.com/page/oliverdickinson

Follow the journey on Instagram: @mrodickinson or YouTube: @mrodickinson

Hobbies Group

Dear Sir,
Woodham Community Centre invites you to join their 'Hobbies Group' on a Thursday afternoon from 2pm - 4pm, for £2 with tea, coffee & biscuits.

A friendly group of ladies - bring your craft along for an afternoon of fun including Cross Stitch, Tapestry, Knitting, Sewing or Crochet, or any other craft you enjoy.

Pop along on a Thursday afternoon, we look forward to greeting you.

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Company of the Year

Murtek has been named Company of the Year at the prestigious Make Your Mark Awards, a significant achievement for the North East-based IT and cybersecurity specialist as it celebrates 19 years in business.

The award follows Murtek's Small Business of the Year success in 2024 and recognises the company's continued growth, innovation and commitment to supporting businesses across the region and beyond.

Founded in 2007 by Managing Director Stuart Murray, Murtek began as a provider of IT support for small businesses. Over the years, the company has evolved into a trusted partner for IT, cybersecurity, connectivity and digital resilience services, helping organisations navigate an increasingly complex technology landscape.

Speaking after receiving the award, Stuart said: "Winning Small Business of the Year last year was amazing, but this is a real step up for us. We honestly didn't expect to win, especially considering the quality of the businesses we were up against."

Despite the company's growth to a team of 12, Stuart believes Murtek's success has been built on staying true to its core values.

"We've never wanted to take over the world," he said. "We've always wanted to do a good job for people, provide a great service at a fair price, and build long-term relationships based on trust."

Many of Murtek's customers have been with the business for years, a testament to the company's customer-first approach and reputation for delivering reliable support.

As cyber threats and digital risks continue to evolve, Murtek remains focused on helping businesses stay secure while continuing its own growth journey. The Company of the Year award marks not only recognition of the company's achievements over the past 19 years, but also confidence in its future direction.



King's Award for Voluntary Service

Heritage charity, The Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway, received the prestigious King's Award for Voluntary Service at Hopetown Darlington on the afternoon of Saturday 6th June. The award, presented by Mike Butterwick CBE, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for County Durham, recognises thousands of volunteer hours contributed by the charity's members over more than a decade.

The charity has supported volunteers and helped communities care for their railway heritage, including rescuing and restoring the pioneering Heighington Station, helping to preserve the historic inclines west of Shildon, and transforming the former Fighting Cocks coal yard from overgrown land into a welcoming community picnic area.

The charity has also worked closely with local authorities to protect internationally important heritage sites from unsuitable development and to support positive regeneration in the surrounding areas.

At the event, the charity will receive a crystal trophy and a certificate bearing His Majesty's signature in recognition of the group's excellence in volunteering.

The group's chair of trustees, Niall Hammond said: "Recognition through awards like this is of huge significance to our supporters, partners and of course our volunteers, who have quietly give so much time and effort over the last decade or more. Rail heritage brings together a wide range of people with a strong community bond to care for our internationally important heritage, improve their local environment and help stimulate social and economic improvements. I hope the King's award will stimulate us to new heights and encourage others to join in our work."

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Dr Ruth Lund, GP, Retires After Nearly 25 Years of Service

A much-loved GP, who has spent almost a quarter of a century caring for families in Newton Aycliffe, has announced her retirement from Bewick Crescent Surgery.

After more than 24 years serving the town, the doctor says she leaves the profession with “wonderful memories” and immense gratitude to the patients and colleagues who shaped her career.

Her journey into medicine was not entirely straightforward.

“When I was at school, I always wanted to be a vet,” she said. “But my biology teacher told me I wasn’t clever enough and suggested that if I wanted to work with animals, I should marry a farmer!”

A change in direction came when she was around 14 years old and visiting her grandmother in hospital.

“There were lots of very good-looking doctors taking care of my nan and I remember thinking maybe becoming a doctor was a better idea. I’m not sure where all the good-looking doctors went, but it definitely was a great idea and one I don’t regret for a second.”

She went on to study medicine at the University of Liverpool before completing her house jobs at Bishop Auckland General Hospital.

After graduating, she undertook four years of GP training — though Newton Aycliffe was never originally part of the plan.

“I was supposed to complete both of my GP attachments at a practice in Bishop Auckland,” she explained. “But one of the GP trainers stepped down from their training role and luckily Bewick Crescent GP Dr Gordon Ferguson agreed to take me on at Bewick Crescent Surgery.”

Dr Lund (or Hewitt as she was then) later secured a permanent role after Dr Martin Jones offered her a job following the retirement of Dr Saunders.

Reflecting on more than two decades in general practice, she acknowledged how dramatically the profession has changed.

“The demand and pressures on general practice are higher than ever and the system is grossly underfunded,” she said. “We now live in a world of instant gratification, where people can order food or shopping on their phones and have it delivered within the hour, so naturally people also want to be seen quickly no matter how minor their problem.”

Despite the challenges, she says she has truly loved her job.

“It has been an honour and my privilege to do what I do,” she said. “I have met so many fantastic patients and families over the years and have worked with some very special individuals, who have become friends as well as being colleagues. I take with me wonderful memories from my time at Bewick Crescent Surgery.”

She added: “People still continue to amaze me to this day. It is sad that many people dislike their job, but I can honestly say I have absolutely loved mine.”

She also paid tribute to her colleagues and the wider community.

“I have worked as part of an incredible team, and the town and people



of Newton Aycliffe have been a huge part of my life. I will always hold that fondly in my heart.”

Dr Lund plans to spend more time with her family, especially parents, spend more time outdoors, (rather than sitting at her desk in Room 8,) hiking, swimming and canoeing. She is also considering becoming a community first responder volunteer for the rural village where she lives and surrounding local area, to assist with the longer ambulance response times to reach rural patients. She also plans to travel back to Kenya to support the tiny clinic on the edge of the Maasai Mara where she worked as part of her sabbatical in January 2025.

As she steps away from medicine, patients and colleagues alike are expected to remember her, not only for her years of dedication, but also for the warmth, humour and compassion she brought to generations of families across the town and her expertise in women’s health.

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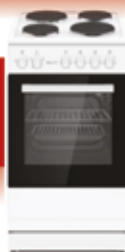


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Let's Talk About the Santa Tours

Introduction

The Town Council is reviewing the Santa Tours to improve and enhance the event ahead of Christmas Eve 2026. A Santa Tours Sub Committee, made up of councillors, volunteers and members of the public, has been formed to ensure a wide range of views were considered as part of this review.

Why Change the Event?

Changes were required last year due to increasing safety and logistical challenges, including traffic risks, volunteer shortages, a growing town, parked cars on narrow streets, anti social behaviour, and safety concerns for Santa and his volunteers. Advice from the Council's Health and Safety Advisor and insurers confirmed that the traditional format presented unacceptable risks. The Council's challenge is to manage these risks, while preserving the magic of Santa visiting the town on Christmas Eve, and keeping the event accessible to as many residents as possible.

Last Year's Event

In 2025, the event moved to a 'hybrid' format, with fixed 'meet and greet' locations at community centres, churches etc; a limited non stop tour of accessible streets, with Santa waving from the vehicle; and visits to care homes. While the fixed locations and care home visits were popular with residents, the touring element was poorly received, mainly due to restricted access to streets and limited interaction with Santa.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The Santa Tours Sub Committee has met twice to review what worked and what didn't, and to explore options for improving the event. Options investigated included:

- 1) Running the event in the same format as last year.
- 2) Focusing on and enhancing the fixed location, meet and greet format on Christmas Eve, with more and improved locations, and additional care home visits, but with no touring element.
- 3) Maintaining and improving the fixed location, meet and greet format on Christmas Eve, with care home visits, and supplementing this with a non-stop tour of safely accessible streets, with Santa safely harnessed to the back of the sleigh, using the one Council works vehicle currently adaptable to hold a framework and harness.
- 4) Running the event as closely to the traditional tour as is safely possible, using Council vehicles only, but running this over several nights in the run up to Christmas, to ensure as many streets as possible can be visited, but with no fixed location meet and greet points or care home visits on Christmas Eve itself.

The Santa Tours Sub Committee has agreed that Option 3 should be taken forward as the preferred option for the 2026 event and consulted upon with the community.

Further Information

The agenda, minutes and reports relating to the Santa Tours Sub Committee Meetings can be accessed and read via the Meeting Section of the Council Website: <https://www.greataycliffe.gov.uk/meetings-diary/past-meetings>

Have Your Say

The Town Council fully acknowledges and appreciates the strength of public feeling regarding the changes to this much-loved event.



We are therefore keen to hear for you, the community, to have the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the event.

Please complete the Santa Tours Survey via the link:

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/t/CGIRZA/

Or scan the QR code:

The survey will close at 12 noon on Friday 31st July 2026.

All comments received will be reported to the Council's Recreation Committee in September for consideration.



South Durham U3A



South Durham U3A is a branch of the national U3A movement (University of the 3rd Age) and is based in Cockerton and this year marks its 25th anniversary. Since its inception, the branch has gone from strength to strength and currently has 230 members and offer a wide range of groups and activities as well as arranging a number of trips each year.

To celebrate this milestone, we are organising a number of events - the first was a cream tea held at the Glass House Restaurant last month and served by students of Darlington College, a fish and chip lunch in July in Cockerton Club, an outdoor picnic and the planting of two silver birch with plaque at Elm Ridge Methodist Church in August and a cake decorating session in October.

To find out more visit www.southdurhamu3asite.uk

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PCC Jointly Funds New Police Welfare Van



A new police welfare van has been launched to provide officers across County Durham and Darlington with a space to rest and get refreshments during long deployments.

The van, which has been converted thanks to a £10k grant by Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen and matched funding from Durham Police Federation and Unison, features a range of amenities including a toilet, sink, awning, solar power, diesel heater, microwave and space for seating.

It has been designed to enhance the welfare of hard-working officers on jobs where rest facilities are limited, including missing person searches, ongoing scene preservation and largescale public events.

Durham Constabulary has purchased the van, which has become part of the force's fleet, and the force will continue to maintain and service the vehicle in the future.

PCC Joy Allen said: "I am delighted to contribute towards this fantastic new facility. Our officers are instrumental to keeping our county safe and they deserve the very best support and equipment to do their jobs effectively. I know the welfare van is a welcomed addition to the force's fleet and will make long shifts and deployments out in the elements much easier to cope with.

"The care of our workforce is a top priority for both the Chief Constable and myself as Commissioner and collectively we are committed to investing in the technology, training and facilities that enhance their personal wellbeing and professional capabilities, so they feel appreciated and supported. You simply cannot put a price on feeling valued. The welfare van is just one example of several improvements we are investing in to meet the needs of the workforce and create the best and safest working environment for officers and staff to further boost satisfaction and morale within the force. It comes hot on the heels of our investment in the state-of-the-art Durham Investigative Hub which has transformed the working environment for custody officers and is one of the most advanced police investigative facilities in the UK."

The force has at least 590 frontline female officers alongside female CSI staff who work long hours on scene. The van ensures that these female officers and staff have access to a safe and comfortable space to manage their personal needs while working at a scene.

Many forces and Police Federations across the UK have successfully introduced a Welfare Van and the response has been extremely positive with the facilities well-used and appreciated.

Round Up of Newton Aycliffe Juniors Action



Under 10's Reds were in the Kader FC tournament, coming away as winners. After games against Leven, Kader, and Darlington Spraire in the groups, they faced Leven in the final, coming away victorious.

Under 11's Whites entered the South Park Rovers tournament with a fresh look squad. The team showed some great moments throughout, eventually losing the plate final on penalties. The team also had their first pre-season friendly against Hardwick, putting in an impressive performance with Teddy scoring all four goals.

Under 11's Blacks were the winners of the World Cup tournament. In the sun, the team showed great energy to capture the trophy, winning the final on penalties. The scorers in the tournament were Kaiden, Olly, Benjamin and Elliot.

Under 12's Blues played their last league game away to second placed Kader, playing some fantastic football to come away with a superb 6-3 win.

Under 13's Whites hosted Washington United Yellows, playing some nice attacking football without getting the result they wanted. The team then travelled to face Coxhoe Tigers, coming away with a 6-2 win.

Under 14's Whites entertained Shildon in the last home game of the season, coming away with a superb 6-2 win. After a slow start Aycliffe took over the midfield battle and never looked back. Goals from Michael (2), Oliver, Marley, Jack and Albie. MOTM was awarded to Saav. The team then entered the Redcar tournament, coming away as winners. Remaining unbeaten all day, Aycliffe won the final 4-2.

Under 14's Blacks hosted Velocity Pythons for the last home game of the season. Despite going 3-0 down, Aycliffe put up a great fight, eventually falling to a 6-2 defeat. Kai and Kaylm scored the goals. PPOTM was Charlie John and MMOTM was shared between the team.

Fun for a Fiver

The railway museum is playing host to Flying Scotsman, widely regarded as the most famous steam locomotive in the world, from Sunday 2nd to Tuesday 25th August, with both passenger rides and individual footplate experiences (the chance to ride alongside the driver in the cab) available to pre-book. First entering service in 1923, Flying Scotsman became a world record breaker in 1934 as the first steam locomotive to officially reach an authenticated 100 miles per hour. While on tour in 1989, it set another world record for the longest non-stop run of a steam locomotive, travelling 422 miles across South-East Australia. Flying Scotsman stands as the flagship of Locomotion's free Summer Festival, a 6-week celebration at the museum featuring workshops, exhibitions and the popular pop-up beach. As well as Flying Scotsman, the museum is also offering rides behind their replica of Stephenson's Rocket, a world-changing locomotive which kick-started a golden era of innovation.

There will be a series of workshops and displays inspiring visitors to 'Think like an Engineer'. The popular LEGO bricks entertainer Bricks McGee, the North East Meccano Society and artist Dawn Belshaw - as well as a host of others - will be hosting regular workshops throughout the festival programme, all free of charge and all suitable for the whole family.

Last year, Locomotion joined celebrations of S&DR200, the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway which launched the modern railway era when the world's first passenger railway journey took place on the line in 1835.

This year marks the 150th birthday of Sir Nigel Gresley, one of Britain's most famous steam locomotive engineers, who designed Flying Scotsman. As part of celebrations, the museum will also be inviting visitors to 'Meet the Engineers' through a display of past and present engineers including Sir Nigel Gresley and eleven other inspiring engineers. Locomotion anticipates demand to see and ride the famous Flying Scotsman locomotive to be greater than ever in this anniversary year, so is urging those interested to book their tickets soon, before they sell out.

All pre-booked tickets, including passenger rides and footplate experience, are available to book from Tuesday 2nd June. All tickets can be booked and the whole festival programme, including all free events, can be viewed at www.locomotion.org.uk/whats-on/summer-festival. The Flying Scotsman centenary programme has been generously supported by Hornby Hobbies (Lead Sponsor) and has also been made possible thanks to the National Heritage Memorial Fund and players of People's Postcode Lottery.

£250 for Guide Dogs



A huge well done to Dorothy Whitehouse and the ladies from 'Sharing Together Crafts', who have raised an amazing £250 for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Dorothy runs a craft room at our Whitehouse Funeral Service premises in Newton Aycliffe, where the ladies create and sell beautiful handmade items to raise money for good causes within the local community.

We are incredibly proud to support such a thoughtful and dedicated group whose kindness and creativity continue to make a difference to others.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Sharing Together Crafts and helped make this donation possible.

Project Seeks Hospital Volunteers

Do you volunteer in a hospital, visit patients on the wards, or host a hospital radio show? Or did you volunteer in the past?

A Newcastle University research project is looking for healthcare volunteers, active any time from the 1970s onwards, to give oral history interviews! The project explores what it was like to volunteer in healthcare, what motivated volunteers, and the role of smaller hospitals in three counties in the north of England – Cumbria, Northumberland, and County Durham.

Interviewees can expect to talk about what they did on a typical day volunteering, their favourite aspects of the role, why it was important to them, and topics like changes in the NHS over the decades. Interviewees are encouraged to talk about things important to them, and each interview is unique.

If you - or someone you know - may be interested in taking part, get in touch with Lily at: l.tidman2@newcastle.ac.uk or on 07977 326960. Please also get in touch with any questions!

The research is being carried out by Lily Tidman for her PhD in History at Newcastle University. The project is funded by UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), through the Northern Bridge Consortium Doctoral Training Programme. It is supervised by Professor Graham Smith, Professor of Oral History at Newcastle University, and Dr Vicky Long.

New £60,000 Paediatric Echo Machine Donated by Red Sky Foundation



Children and families across County Durham and Darlington are set to benefit from faster access to specialist heart diagnostics, thanks to the donation of a new paediatric echocardiography machine funded by the Red Sky Foundation.

The state-of-the-art equipment, worth £60,000, has been donated to Darlington Memorial Hospital to support children's services, and will help reduce waiting times for young patients requiring important cardiac assessments. The new machine will allow clinical teams to carry out detailed heart scans for babies and children more efficiently, improving patient experience and supporting earlier diagnosis and treatment.

The non-invasive scan plays a crucial role in identifying potentially serious heart issues early and ensuring patients receive the care they need as quickly as possible.

Funding for the project was supported through a remarkable fundraising effort, including a small group of dedicated Red Sky Foundation supporters who travelled to Everest Base Camp to help raise money towards the appeal. The adventurers self-funded their entire expedition, ensuring every penny donated goes directly toward supporting babies, children and adults living with heart conditions. Their challenge and fundraising efforts, has helped bring the vital equipment to local healthcare services.

Dr. Sergio Petrucci (Hon.) MBE, CEO and Founder of Red Sky Foundation, said: "We are incredibly proud to fund this much-needed echo heart machine for the paediatric department at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. Early diagnosis is absolutely vital when it comes to heart conditions, and this equipment will make a real difference to children and families across the region. "This simply would not have been possible without our amazing Everest trekkers, whose commitment, determination and passion to help others has been nothing short of inspirational. Their challenge will leave a lasting legacy for so many families."

Rich Jones, CDDFT Charity Manager, said: "We are incredibly grateful to Red Sky Foundation, and everyone involved in supporting this appeal. This new paediatric echo machine will make a real difference for children and families across our communities by helping reduce waiting times and improving access to specialist cardiac diagnostics."

The partnership marks another important step in improving healthcare services for children, patients and staff which will strengthening collaboration between the Trust and Red Sky Foundation.

Lauren Faye, General Manager Paediatrics and Neonates, added: "We look forward to continuing to work together and supporting one another in the future to make a lasting difference for children and families."



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PCP Cooking Course Gifts and Essentials



Participants in a community cooking programme, delivered by health and wellbeing charity Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP), are continuing their cooking journeys at home after being gifted their own cooking equipment on completion of the course.

Thanks to funding from the Point North Community Grant Fund, 14 local people took part in a series of accredited four-week cooking courses delivered in partnership with Bishop Auckland College. The programme helped participants develop practical cooking skills, learn how to prepare healthy, affordable meals, and build confidence in the kitchen.

To help them put their new skills into practice, each participant received a free electric cooking pan and a kitchen starter kit, complete with utensils and an apron.

The courses were designed to support people facing a range of challenges, including social isolation, loneliness, food poverty and rising household costs. Alongside learning new recipes and cooking techniques, participants had the opportunity to meet new people, share experiences and build lasting connections in a welcoming environment. Lucie Fieldson, Community Development Officer at PCP, said: "We've had 14 learners take part and received some fantastic feedback. It has been wonderful to see people grow in confidence, develop new skills and enjoy cooking alongside others.

"We were delighted to be able to provide each participant with an electric cooking pan and kitchen starter kit at the end of the course. This means they can continue cooking at home, use what they've learned and feel more confident preparing affordable, healthy meals for themselves and their families."

Following the success of the programme, PCP is already working with local referral partners to plan future courses, with additional sessions scheduled for September and November 2026.

The initiative reflects PCP's ongoing commitment to helping people improve their health, wellbeing and resilience through practical, inclusive community programmes.

For more information about PCP and its projects and services, visit www.pcp.uk.net

Free Workplace Health & Wellbeing Roadshow



The Workplace Health Durham team is set to host a free workplace health and wellbeing roadshow on Wednesday 15th July, bringing together more than 30 local organisations dedicated to supporting healthier, happier workplaces. The event will take place at East Durham College, Peterlee campus, from 11am to 1pm.

Visitors can look forward to a mix of interactive workshops, expert talks and engaging activities designed to inspire better health and wellbeing at work. From stress management and nutrition to fitness and workplace culture, the roadshow offers practical insights for business owners, HR professionals, and anyone interested in improving wellbeing at work.

There will be a variety of free workshops taking place throughout the event, including sessions from the likes of Miss Menopause, Team Solan Cancer Trust and more.

Attendees will also have the chance to network with local organisations and discover new tools and resources to support a healthier working environment. Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to prioritise your health and wellbeing at work!

This event is free and open to all.

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29th November

Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship Meet
750 Motor Club Car Race Meeting
Christmas Stages Rally

Lifeline to Expand Youth Provision in Newton Aycliffe

Youngsters living in Newton Aycliffe will have more opportunity to take part in organised sports and leisure activities at a popular youth club thanks to a funding boost from Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen.

The County Durham and Darlington PCC has provided £3,710 to community-based charity The Cornforth Partnership to support the work of the Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre Youth Club to keep young people safe and prevent their involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The move forms part of the PCC's ongoing investment into Problem-Solving Orientated Policing (POP) plans across the force area which are designed to bring partners together with the force to proactively address issues that concern residents, undermine their confidence and increase their fear of crime.

Newton Aycliffe has long-standing issues with ASB, with incidents mainly occurring between 5pm and 8pm and peaking on Wednesdays. The town is already one of 15 'hotspot' areas benefiting from extra high-visibility patrols to tackle ASB and serious violence funded by government cash secured by the PCC.

As part of her mission to build safer, stronger and more resilient communities, the Commissioner is working closely with the force, The Cornforth Partnership, housing provider Livin Housing Association and other partners in Newton Aycliffe to transform young people's lives while improving the way police and partner agencies work together to solve problems.

The Youth Club already offers weekly activities on Wednesdays for young people aged ten to seventeen, in partnership with Thrive Durham, to divert young people from gathering in the Town Centre. The programme aims to support their social development, physical wellbeing and community involvement through structured sessions combining sport and social activities.

The PCC's funding will cover the costs of hiring Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre for eight consecutive weeks and to partially fund the use of a youth worker to maintain age-appropriate sports and social sessions at the facility. Livin has also provided funding worth £2k towards the programme while a further £5,592 has been secured from The Ballinger Charitable Trust and additional funders.

It has become apparent that there is a small group of young people in Newton Aycliffe who are currently on the periphery of criminal behaviour and recognised as key influencers among their peers. While the youth club is committed to supporting all young people, it is felt that integrating this group into existing sessions could negatively affect the progress and safety of those already attending. To ensure these young people are not excluded from positive opportunities, a portion of the funding is to be allocated to providing a dedicated youth worker to carry out targeted outreach work. This approach allows the group to engage with youth provision in a way that is safe, supportive, and tailored to their needs, while reducing the risk of further isolation or escalation into harmful behaviours.

Without the funding lifeline, it would be more difficult to secure the venue's availability consistently, leaving young people with nowhere structured to go when the youth club is not available and increasing the risk of them congregating in public spaces and engaging in ASB.

The PCC has been at the forefront of national efforts to improve the response to ASB, jointly funding an array of diversionary projects to educate young people on the consequences of ASB through interactive performances in schools.

Tackling ASB is also a key commitment in her Police, Crime and Justice Plan, with the PCC setting out a series of promises to bring redress to communities and prevent young people from being drawn into crime and ASB. This includes a promise to fund positive, affordable and accessible diversionary activities and working with social care and other partners to target and support those at risk of falling out of education.

Police and Crime Commissioner Joy Allen said: "The links between crime and an absence of safe spaces for young people to socialise and develop are well-documented. It's vital we come together as partners to overcome any challenges to build the infrastructure we need to sustain our young people, guide their development and encourage them to thrive.

"I am proud of the huge strides we've made in tackling ASB countywide, achievements which have earned us national awards and recognition. ASB offending is complex and

masks a whole array of other problems that must be addressed at source, but by sharing our expertise and our resources, and funding practical solutions like this youth club, we can and will make a difference."

The Youth Club has already registered 150 young people and between 40 and 50 children and young people attend every week, demonstrating there is high demand for the provision.

The PCC remains committed to identifying young people most at risk of becoming involved in crime and ensuring effective, joined up support. In 2024-25, she awarded £37,000 to The Cornforth Partnership to expand youth services in Cornforth, Bishop Middleham, Ferryhill, Chilton and Newton Aycliffe.

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Woodham Student Wins Physics Award



A Year 10 student from Woodham Academy has been named Durham University Schools' Physicist of the Year 2026, recognising her performance and commitment to Physics.

Scarlet Dunn received the award at a recent Durham University Science Outreach event. She stood out across the region for her achievement and consistency throughout the year.

Scarlet is the first student in the cohort to achieve almost full marks across all Year 10 Physics assessments – a significant milestone.

Head of Science, Mr Jenkins, said: "Scarlet has worked exceptionally hard this year and shown a clear commitment to improving her understanding, particularly across Paper 1 topics. Achieving almost full marks across all assessments reflects both her ability and her consistency."

She has been particularly strong in energy, particles and electricity, and approaches more challenging problems with care and confidence.

Mr Jenkins added: "She applies her knowledge well to unfamiliar questions and responds positively to feedback. Scarlet is a reliable, hard-working student who fully deserves this recognition."

The award was presented by Durham University's Science Engagement team and signed by Dr Lorraine Coghill. Scarlet received it alongside senior members of the Physics department, including Professor Paula Chadwick.

Woodham Academy continues to see students progress into Physics at a high level. Scarlet follows former students now studying Physics and Astrophysics at Durham University, including Charlie Pemberton, and Jake Mendelsohn, who is currently undertaking doctoral study in Astrophysics at the University of Oxford and has already published a lead-author paper.

This recognition reflects both Scarlet's individual effort and the strength of Physics within the school.

Menopause

Join our friendly face to face support group where we get together to chat, share experiences, feel understood and support each other in a safe and welcoming space.

Whether you are struggling with symptoms, feeling overwhelmed or simply want to connect with other ladies who 'get it', you are most welcome!

No booking required, just pop along on Thursday 2nd July 2026 at 6pm to the PCP, Carers Way, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 4SF.

Contact Jules Howe, WBFL Team, for further info on 07809 342192.

Newton Aycliffe Women's Institute

Our June meeting was a craft social evening, painting small pebbles, which everyone enjoyed. There has been an excursion to Helmsley which included plenty of opportunity for shopping, visiting local cafés and Beadlam Grange Farm shop. On Monday 15th, some of our members took advantage of the dry, warmer weather and walked to the Locomotion in Shildon for a well-earned coffee.

Our next WI meeting is on 14th July and we will be learning about historical costume making in 'Cutting it Fine'. The July excursion will be to Hawes Creamery.

August will see us attending Shildon Fair with a bake and sandwich table and the 21st of August is the ever popular Sweet Delights evening, which will be held at Neville Parade Community Centre.

In September, one of our members will be running the Great North Run, raising funds for Great Aycliffe Cancer Support Group, our charity of 2026.

As a WI member, you can have access to the events catalogue from WI House, including early evening walks, coffee mornings, cookery demonstrations, lunches, ladies days and coach trips, all at reasonable prices to suit your budgets.

We meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 7pm in the Methodist Church at Nevilles Parade. We have speakers on varied topics, craft evenings, auctions and parties. There is no need to be lonely as a WI member. Come and join our friendly and welcoming Newton Aycliffe WI. All women are welcome. If you have any questions or queries, please contact our President Christine Robinson on 07981 992686.



Aycliffe Youth Football News



Apart from a couple of games in the RFYL, the season has been concluded for most of our teams, and it was onto the annual awards presentations. Over the weekend 12th/13th June the football club packed out the Big Club, as 350 players received recognition for their efforts over the season and over 1000 people attending to support their children. The presentations were held over five sessions, starting Friday night and then all day Saturday. Thank you to all our presenters of the awards for giving up their time Brianna Westrup, Sunderland AFC Women's club captain; The new NAFC management team of Mark Wood and Neil Dodd, one of the founders of the club, Joe Blackett's and our Women's Captain Courtney Wilson. The Under 17 Boys, Under 13 Boys, Under 12 Girls all won the leagues and the Under 14 Boys finished runner up. Success in the Spring Cups for Under 7 and Under 10 Girls, will see them both play in the RF premier league next season. Under 16 Girls, once again, reached the final of the Durham County Cup.

Each player was given an award for representing the club throughout the season and each team awarded special trophies for Player of the Year, Outstanding Achievement, Players Player, Managers Player and Most Improved Player.

The club special awards went to

Samantha Harding, parent of an Under 17 Boy's Player - Darren Scott Community Award:

Under 11 Wildcats - Kev Loscombe - Secretaries Award

Michel Anderson - Under 12 Wildcats - Joe Blackett 0 Manager of the Year Award.

Under 13 Eagles - The Brian Rose Founder Trophy - Team of the Year.

Mini Goal Keeper of the Year - Lincoln Clethro and Goal Keeper of the Year - Courtney Wilson.

Across all five sessions, football cards were sold to raise much needed funds for our sister club in Mombasa, Kenya.

Thanks to the generosity of all those who attended we raised over £800, which will give welcome support to the children wanting to play football.

Thanks to Paul Howarth at Newton Press for arranging the Photographer, Colin, PA System and the DJ Mike, playing a selection of rousing football anthems throughout the sessions.

Meanwhile, the enhanced, end of season maintenance was commencing on our home pitches at the Oakleaf Sports Complex. This will complete year seven of our ten year grant from the Football Foundation. The improvement has been significant over the last seven seasons, as all our pitches now have a Pitch Quality score of Good or Advanced. The quality of the playing surfaces goes a long way to improving the performances on the pitch and the successes, this year, certainly backs that up.

So, as one season finishes, all our teams will have short breaks over the summer and be ready for the start of the 2026/2027 season in September. Good luck to all our teams from everyone involved with our FA 3* Accredited Football Club, one of only a small group of elite clubs in County Durham.

Should you want to get involved with the club, as a player or as a coach, or need information on our thriving development sections for 5-7 year old boys and girls, visit our website: www.nayfc.com





Member of Parliament Update

Email: alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk | Telephone: 01325 344185

I want to start by thanking Sir Keir Starmer for his service to our nation and for the strong support he gave our constituency in the campaign to save the 700 jobs at the Hitachi Rail factory in Newton Aycliffe. Keir visited Newton Aycliffe twice to back the campaign led by local Labour MPs, trade unions and The Northern Echo to secure a future for the plant. His support helped shine a national spotlight on the importance of protecting advanced manufacturing jobs in our area. I'm very grateful for the backing he gave our community and for his commitment to protecting the livelihoods of local families. I wish Keir and his family all the very best for the future.

I'm also really pleased to see action being taken on social media access for under 16's. Many parents across our area have contacted me with concerns about the impact social media can have on children and young people. The national consultation showed overwhelming support for action, with nine in ten parents who responded backing the ban. This measure will help protect children from cyber bullying, harmful content and online exploitation while giving families greater confidence that young people can grow up in a safer online environment. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to get in touch with me about this important issue.

Creating good jobs and opportunities for local people will always be one of my top priorities and I'll continue to bang the drum for investment in our area. That's why it was a pleasure to welcome the Deputy Ambassadors from Germany (bottom left), Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands to NETPark in Sedgefield. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the world-class industries and innovation that make our constituency such a great place to invest. NETPark is home to some of the most exciting science and technology companies in the country and visits like these help strengthen international relationships and open the door to future investment. I'll continue working to build stronger partnerships with our international allies, helping to bring new opportunities to our area and secure the high-skilled jobs of the future. I'm also delighted that local organisations are set to benefit from the North East Mayor's opportunity fund. The Solan Connor Fawcett Family Cancer Trust (bottom right) has been awarded a grant of £10,000 to help Team Solan provide targeted support for older people affected by cancer, many of whom live in Newton Aycliffe, including 400 hours of one-to-one staff support through wellbeing calls, advocacy and signposting services. I recently visited their hub in Spennymoor and saw first-hand the incredible difference they make to people facing some of the most difficult challenges in their lives. This funding will go a long way in helping them continue that vital work.

I am also pleased that Fishburn Youth and Community Centre have secured £8,887 from the same fund. The investment will help the centre expand the range of activities and events it offers to local residents. I am also looking forward to my next MP advice surgery, which is in Aycliffe Village. If you'd like to meet me at a surgery, to discuss issues that are important to you, please get in touch: alan.strickland.mp@parliament.uk



Opening Date Confirmed for The Light

An opening date has been announced for Durham City's latest cultural attraction, heralding the start of an exciting new chapter for art, history and innovation in the North East.

Durham County Council has confirmed The Light will open its doors on Saturday 22nd August, with visitors invited to experience a spectacular exhibition of international light art. Victory Over the Sun: Encounters with Light will launch the venue's ambitious cultural programme, featuring groundbreaking works by artists who use light in extraordinary ways – Tracey Emin, Dan Flavin, Olafur Eliasson, and Chila Burman, to name just a few.

Tickets are now on sale for the exhibition, which will span three galleries in the newly transformed building, once home to the Durham Light Infantry (DLI) Museum and Durham Art Gallery in Aykley Heads.

Inspired by one of the 19th century scientists who first created artificial light, Victory Over the Sun will immerse audiences in a range of sensory effects, increasing their understanding of how we see and experience light, and showcasing the links between light, science and nature. The North East's own part in this story will also be celebrated, with a replica of the first British lightbulb, invented by the Sunderland-born physicist Joseph Swan, included within the show.

Visitors to The Light will also have the chance to discover more about the DLI at a fascinating new permanent exhibition. Featuring images, sounds, hands-on activities and rich sensory experiences, We Are The Durhams builds upon the venue's military heritage to tell a deeply human story of identity, belonging and community.

In addition to the cultural offer, The Light will include dedicated areas for educational and community activities, a café with an outdoor terrace overlooking beautiful grounds and flexible spaces for meetings and events.

To celebrate the opening of the new venue, The Light will come alive this summer with an action-packed opening weekend launching a season of activity designed to inspire visitors of all ages to come together and get creative.

The programme will continue for the remainder of the school holidays, with the venue opening seven days a week and offering a mix of indoor and outdoor activities for children and families. Inspired by the theme of "light" – a reference to both the DLI and the extraordinary works featured in Victory Over the Sun – visitors can expect spectacle, hands-on creativity and inspiring ideas. Further details of the opening programme will be announced in July.

Situated at the heart of Aykley Heads, The Light will be an anchor institution of the emerging



Durham Innovation District. Acting as a meeting place and creative hub it will support the game-changing ambitions of the new district and play a key part in the sustainable growth of the site.

Other featured artists include Maarten Baas, Yto Barrada, Tina Bech, James Clar, Shezad Dawood, Spencer Finch, Ceal Floyer, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Katrin Hanusch, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Jenny Holzer, Hilary Jack, Glenn Ligon, Erin McDougle, Steve McQueen, Tatsuo Miyajima, Ivan Navarro, Katie Paterson, David Shrigley, Liz West and Cerith Wyn Evans. Victory Over the Sun has been curated by Natasha Howes, senior curator at Haigh Hall, former principal curator at Light Night Leeds and former senior curator at Manchester Art Gallery.

Entry to The Light and We Are The Durhams is free.

In August, The Light will be open every day, from 10am to 5pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; from 10am to 8pm on Thursday; and from 10am to 4pm on Sunday. The café will be open from 10am to 4pm.

From September, the venue will be closed on Monday and Tuesdays, with other opening hours remaining the same.

To find out more, visit www.thelightdurham.org.uk and follow @[thelightdurham](https://www.facebook.com/thelightdurham) on Facebook and Instagram.



Listening, Learning, Improving

PCP continues journey to invest in people



North East charity, Pioneering Care Partnership (PCP), has reaffirmed its commitment to its people by achieving Gold status from Investors in People (IIP).

Carol Gaskarth, PCP Chief Executive, said: "We are honoured and thrilled to be among the small percentage of organisations that achieve IIP Gold. This reaccreditation is especially meaningful because it reflects the voices, experiences and opinions of our workforce."

The IIP assessment involved a comprehensive review of staff experience across the organisation. The IIP team conducted group discussions, one to one interviews, and gathered anonymous feedback through an all staff survey to understand how employees feel about working at PCP. Key highlights from the report include:

- 94% of staff believe PCP has a positive impact on society
- Over 90% feel encouraged to use their initiative
- All 9 Investors in People indicators scored above both Investors in People and industry averages
- Our overall engagement score is rated as "Exceptional"

Carol added: "Our achievement of Gold directly reflects how PCP works towards our mission of Health, Wellbeing and Learning for All; every interaction, every service delivered, every challenge overcome and every act of kindness contributes to the positive impact we have on people's lives. The report repeatedly highlights the passion, commitment and social purpose that exists throughout PCP.

"We are incredibly proud of the culture we have built together, and this award reinforces our commitment to continually investing in our team.

"By prioritising our people, we're ensuring that those who care for our local communities feel valued, supported, and equipped to make the greatest impact."

The assessor also described PCP as having a culture where people feel empowered, supported and encouraged to perform at their best, and that PCP has built "strong foundations and a culture people believe in."

If you'd like to find out more about PCP, our projects or services, please visit www.pcp.uk.net



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Privacy Prams to Support Bereaved Parents

Two families have made heartfelt donations to County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT), providing privacy prams to support bereaved parents during some of their most difficult moments.

Privacy prams provide a safe and discreet way to transport babies within the hospital, offering dignity, sensitivity and choice to families, including when making journeys to the mortuary.

At Darlington Memorial Hospital, Kylie and Daniel Rushton-Orton donated a privacy pram in memory of their baby daughter, Olivia.

Olivia was born at 25 weeks and six days, but sadly passed away just one hour later. During this incredibly difficult time, Kylie and Daniel were cared for in a dedicated bereavement room, supported by specialist staff.

In recognition of the care they received, Kylie's workplace, Verve, chose 4Louis as their charity of the year for 2025.

Through fundraising activities including cake sales, birthday donations and Christmas jumper days, alongside a contribution from the company, they raised £2,000. Part of these funds were used to donate a privacy pram in Olivia's memory.

Jenna Goat, Specialist Bereavement Midwife at CDDFT, said: "We are incredibly grateful to Kylie and Daniel, and to Abigail, for their generosity and for choosing to support other families, following the loss of their daughters, Olivia and Ember Marie. These privacy prams will make a meaningful difference, helping us to provide compassionate, respectful care and giving families the time and space they need during such a difficult time."

At the University Hospital of North Durham, Abigail Spensley has also made a deeply personal donation of a privacy pram to the maternity department.

Abigail experienced the loss of her baby daughter, Ember Marie, on 28th March 2024, at 25 weeks of pregnancy. She was cared for in the hospital's maternity bereavement suite during this time.

Reflecting on her experience, Abigail shared that having access to a privacy pram would have brought her comfort, allowing her to leave the suite while still keeping her baby close.

In memory of Ember Marie, Abigail made the donation to help other families, offering them greater comfort, dignity and support during their bereavement.

Rich Jones, Charity Manager for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust Charity, added: "We are incredibly grateful to Kylie, Daniel and Abigail for their generosity and courage in supporting other families during such a difficult time. These generous donations will help ensure that families across our hospitals are given greater privacy, choice and compassionate care when they need it most."

You can help support Your NHS Charity with a text donation, simply text YOURNHS to 70480 to donate £5. Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message, or by organising a fundraiser, please contact the team on 01325 743781 or email: cddft.charity@nhs.net

Photo: Kylie and Daniel Rushton-Orton with Specialist Bereavement midwife, Jenna Goat, at Darlington.



Fibromyalgia

Please join us at our new group venue: Glow Church, Long Tens Way, Aycliffe, DL5 6AP. We meet every Monday afternoon from 12.30-1.30pm, with the coffee shop alongside for refreshments.

This is a safe, supportive space where you can connect, share and find real understanding from others attending.

No need to book – just pop along, anyone can attend with you (partner, friend, carer) -

Contact number for the group is: 07543 477773

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Hot Pursuit for Scarlet!

Scarlet Whitaker Dunn, the Newton Aycliffe based Junior Pro-kart racer, competed in Round 4 of the Teesside Sprint Series held at Teesside Autodrome on Sunday 20th June. Scarlet was competing in the ultra competitive Junior Pro-kart class, which saw an impressive grid of 26 entrants. The racing was incredibly close (and the weather was just as hot) as we all enjoyed what was the hottest day of the year, so far.

Scarlet got off to a great start in Heat 1 where she managed to convert her (drawn start position) P22 start position into an impressive P12 finish.

Heat 2 was a similar affair with Scarlet again finishing P12. The third heat was rather chaotic, after a huge pile up at the first corner, where half of the field went spinning off in every direction.

Despite Scarlet getting turned around in the melee, she didn't lose out as badly as some of her fellow competitors did. A few corners after, Scarlet and a few other competitors had a coming together, but Scarlet managed to rejoin without damage. She soon got going again and battled her way through the now mixed up order. Sadly, she only managed to salvage a P18 finish after being hit a further time by a fellow competitor on the South Bank turn. The final race of the day went well and Scarlet soon found her rhythm. Her lap times (although just shy of her PB) were very quick and consistent, resulting in her finishing in a creditable P12 in a quality field.

All of Scarlet's races (Junior Pro-Kart No.7) at Teesside this season will be live streamed on the circuits YouTube channel, which can be found by searching tsk-media on



YouTube. Or can be viewed afterwards.

R1 21-22 March

R2 25-26 April

R3 16-17 May

R4 20-21 June

R5/6 25-26 July

R7 26-27 Sept

R8/9 24-25 October

We would like to thank Amaron Racing, PHM (Peninsula Historic Motorsport), Carbon Arc Training and Consultancy, Grandad Ron and Rob Storey for their generous assistance and financial support making this possible.

To support Scarlet in her journey please email mail@amandawhitaker.com - every little helps!

Move Your Way 2026 is Coming

This is going to be an amazing family day for the whole community.

On Sunday 16th August 2026, we're inviting families, friends, schools, community groups, superheroes and supporters of all ages to take part in a sponsored superhero MOVE from Newton Aycliffe to Shildon.

Not only will you enjoy a fantastic day out, you'll also be helping to raise vital funds for two local charities, Little SENDsations and Lifeline Community Action, supporting local families and creating more inclusive opportunities across our communities.

Whether you walk, wheel, push, stroll or roll, this event is all about moving your way. What can you expect?

- A fully inclusive sponsored superhero walk
- A special Move Your Way 2026 medal and goody bag for everyone who fundraises
- A small selection of superhero outfits available, for anyone who needs one
- Music and entertainment
- Emergency services, community partners and special guests joining us throughout the day
- A Design Your Own Superhero competition with prizes to be won

We're also looking for donations of superhero costumes for children and adults. If you have any clean, good-quality costumes that are no longer needed, we'd love to hear from you. Your donation could help someone take part and feel like a superhero on the day.

We've worked hard to make this an event that welcomes everyone. The route has been carefully planned with accessibility in mind, and a shuttle service will be available to help participants return to the start point after the event.

Our goal is to raise £5,000 to support local families and community projects, and we'd love you to be part of it.

Sign up today and we'll send you everything you need, including event information, fundraising details and your Move Your Way participant pack - <https://bookwhen.com/littlesendsations/e/ev-s6ew0-20260816104500>

So, who's ready to dust off their cape, gather their superhero team and join us for a day of community, inclusion, fun and fundraising?



S.A.C.A.

School Aycliffe Community Association
Community Hall, Eastfields Road DL5 6QH
(Follow the white/brown information signs).

Upcoming Events

Ladies Night

1st Wednesday of each month
7.00pm-9.00pm | £3 including refreshments
Next session: 1st July - Spectre Detectors
Contact Christine: 07981 992686

Community Choir

2nd & 4th Monday each month
7.00pm-8.30pm | £3 including refreshments
Next session: 13th July (Summer Party) before
the summer break. Choir resumes 14th
September. Contact Julie McGrath: 07742
015609

Reading Group - Coming Soon!

Monthly meetings £3 including refreshments.
Read and discuss books together, share
recommendations, and enjoy discounted book
purchases. Contact Georgette: 07951 758118
or georgetterose236@hotmail.com

Free Defibrillator Training

Sunday 5th July | 2.00pm-3.30pm
Free hands-on training, with refreshments
provided. Open to all (children 10+, must be
accompanied by an adult). Limited places
available. Contact Zanna: 07929 916725 or
zanna@elphaba.co.uk

Collections at the Hall

Used stamps – please donate to support a
worthy cause.
Used bras – helping raise funds for the hall.

Mobile Food Van – Weird Dough

8th July & 30th September
4.30pm-7.30pm. Please avoid parking on the
road when ordering or collecting.
Visit our Facebook page: School Aycliffe
Community Centre. We are a warm, welcoming
community space for all ages. Thank you
for supporting our events and for parking
considerately when visiting the hall.

Breakfast Drop-In

The next Breakfast Drop-In at Aycliffe Village Hall is on Saturday 11th July, from 10am to noon.

This month's drop-in is being hosted by ACLE (Adventure Community Learning Experience) to help raise funds for their activities. Why not come along to find out more about what the group gets up to? And, enjoy a catch-up with friends whilst enjoying refreshments and a bite to eat (breakfast buns, fresh scones, plus other bakes will be available).

New Children's Menu Launched in Support of Sophie's Legacy

A new children's hospital menu, in support of Sophie's Legacy, has been launched at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT).

CDDFT is proud to launch a new children's hospital menu, in support of Sophie's Legacy, helping to ensure young patients have access to comforting, nutritious food during their time in hospital.

Sophie's Legacy was established in memory of Sophie Fairall, who was diagnosed with a rare childhood cancer, rhabdomyosarcoma, shortly after her ninth birthday. Despite intensive treatment, Sophie sadly passed away aged 10, just one year after her diagnosis. In her memory, her family are committed to continuing the change she hoped to see - particularly improving the quality of hospital food for children, something Sophie felt strongly about during her time in care.

The new Munch's Menu has been carefully reviewed and agreed with the Trust's dietitians and the Children's Ward Manager to ensure it meets the dietary and nutritional needs of children while offering choice and familiarity. The menu was introduced on Thursday 2nd April 2026. The menu has been created in honour of Sophie, whose legacy continues to inspire improvements in the experiences of children and families in hospital. Her story has prompted change across the NHS, encouraging hospitals to think more carefully about how food and nutrition support recovery and wellbeing.

The menu includes a wide range of child-friendly options that can be offered alongside the Trust's main hospital menus, with many items available throughout the day to provide flexibility for young patients. Options include comforting meals such as macaroni cheese, cottage pie, mild chicken curry and lasagne, alongside lighter choices, snacks, desserts, and breakfast items. Vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free and other dietary requirements are also catered for.

By offering familiar foods and flexible choices, the menu aims to support both nutrition and emotional comfort for children during what can be a difficult time.

This initiative reflects the values that were so important to Sophie and her family - ensuring that children in hospital receive thoughtful care and access to food that feels reassuring and nourishing.

The Trust hopes the launch will both celebrate Sophie's legacy and reinforce its commitment to delivering compassionate, high-quality care for young patients.



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IN MEMORIAM

Enid Ann Burn

It is 3 long years on 1st July 2023 since you went with the angels to your heavenly home, but leaving lots of little things that bring back memories you are so sadly missed. Every day you are in our hearts and you will never be forgotten by your Husband Donald, family and friends. Miss you lots.

IN MEMORIAM

Paul McNamee



21/1/58-26/6/23

In Loving Memory of my beloved Partner, Paul. How quickly three years have passed. I still miss you so very dearly as if it were only yesterday. You were such a special person who left your mark on so many people. My life is not the same without you. We had so many adventures and happy times together which will never be forgotten. I only wish we had had more time to spend enjoying our retirement. You will always be in my heart and thoughts - miss you lots. Rest In Peace. All my love, Christine (and Woody) x x x x

Irresponsible

Dear Sir,
 Could I politely ask those 'irresponsible dog owners' to kindly pick up after their dogs. Not only are they allowing them to foul our footpaths and outside shops, they are now letting them foul our lawns and flower borders. Whilst gardening amongst the flowers, I had to pick up a large amount of dog poo. How ignorant are you dog owners? Why is it such a problem for you to pick up after them? You are well aware this is happening as you have hold of their leads and are stood next to them. There are plenty of poo bins all over your dog walking routes, so no excuses. What do other dog walkers feel when you have them fouling on your lawns or paths, yet you pick yours up? You really should be ashamed of yourselves. Very angry resident!
 Name and address supplied.



SCAN TO SPONSOR



HELP FOR HEROES

Lorraine Pickering
 150 Mile Weighted Challenge in aid of **Help for Heroes** in the heat of Rhodes, Greece.

Aycliffe Village WI

Coffee 'n' Chat

Our next Coffee 'n' Chat will be on Wednesday 8th July between 2.00pm and 3.00pm at Aycliffe Village Hall. Everyone is welcome to come along for a drink and a chat in a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere. You don't have to be a member of the WI and we look forward to seeing new faces.

Trip to Saltburn

Aycliffe Village's annual trip to Saltburn will be on the 15th July. Members will be leaving from Newton Aycliffe, Heighington and Darlington North Road stations. This fun visit to Saltburn will involve lots of cake, fish and chips and ice creams.

Our next WI Meeting

Our next members meeting will be held on Wednesday 29th July at 7pm in the Village Hall. The speaker is Alex Willis from Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society. Visitors are most welcome to join us at the meeting and refreshments are provided. For more information about our WI or our meetings, email aycliffevillage@durhamwi.co.uk

PUZZLE CORNER
Sudoku

						9	2
			6		5	4	
9	6		1				
7				1	4		6
1			7		4		9
8		3	6				7
				5		8	4
	7	9		8			
4	5						

Pauline Pybus
 (Allison)

23/8/53-17/6/23
 Three years without you Pauline. We think of you every day. Always remembered, never forgotten. Love from Mam, Dad, Shirley, Maureen, John, Angela, Catherine and Andrew xxx

Newton News
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paul@newtonnews.co.uk

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Cross Party Team Work

Dear friends, neighbours and residents. I hope that you are enjoying your summer. I just wanted to share with you a brief update. First of all, thank you to all those who signed both the online and paper petitions, to get our local store re-opened and for giving Mandeep, Mohan and their staff a warm welcome.



Secondly, thank you to Councillor Tony Beddard for supporting me in meeting with our MP to lobby for him to push Durham County Council on progress to either repair or demolish the town centre multi-storey car park. I also asked the MP to lobby cabinet Minister MP Stephen Kinnoch about extortionate private care home fees.

The minister's response was sadly weak and ignored my recommendations to re-use closed down pub hotels (as public sector councils run care homes) to undercut the private sector, prevent OAPs from having to sell their homes to pay for fees and create thousands of green jobs as well as, plus save billions in care home fees for Rachel Reeves. I have also had the pleasure of visiting Forest Park special secondary school and was massively impressed. I linked them up with Durham Youth Council.

We also have two new co-opted councillors at Great Aycliffe Town Council, as you will have seen in last month's paper. The only sad thing is that we could have had two free, no expenses co-opted (voted in by current councillors, not the public) last year, but the Lib Dems and Labour voted against it (because it was not their candidates), but did a U-Turn this year in exchange for the new members (to vote for them) and get committee chair/vice chair places, as a reward, if they voted for nearly all Lib Dem chairs.

It's quite bizarre when Councillors vote to elect opposition party members, but sadly, that's how politics works. One even voted against a former Labour Mayor last year, who was ten years in his own party!

I invited my two Lib Dem Councillors to share with me what achievements (successes and challenges) they had encountered on our shared ward, but was told I had to ask their spokesperson, which I did last month, but am sadly still awaiting a reply. It is a great shame when we can't work together for the benefit of our residents and share information on ASB, potholes, dog bins, litter and residents' concerns. It's not a competition to see who is best.

Being a Councillor is a unique job with no job description, person specification or performance appraisal. Therefore, you can do as little as possible and attend one meeting every 6 months, or you can engage with residents, be seen on your ward and notify taxpayers if you are giving value for money.

Please be aware that County Councillors get £300 per week expenses, a free laptop and phone and a £20k budget. Town Councillors get £30 per week expenses, zero budget, no free equipment and no access to big committees at County Hall for health, education, highways, etc. It was good to see a Reform County Councillor come and speak to the town council and update us on his work for the town. Believe it or not, it very rarely ever happens!

I believe that one of our Councillors has joined another political party and I myself am joining the Green Party after thirty years as a Lib Dem, five years as Independent, but can no longer sit back and watch the genocide taking place in Gaza and Lebanon or the racism growing in the UK.

Many thanks for your continued support.
Cllr Tony Armstrong BA (Hons) HND PGCE.

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