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# Award Nomination for Greenfield



We are delighted to announce that both Greenfield Arts and Greenfield Community College have been nominated for a national award.

Greenfield Arts have been recognised for their contributions to family focused arts activities, bringing creativity to local communities. In this 20th birthday year they are reflecting upon the many activities, projects and events they have developed and led. This nomination is fantastic recognition for the work that has taken place and continues to be developed to support the wider community to be creative, explore ideas and express themselves.

'The Fantastic for Families Awards' are organised by Family Arts Campaign, an organisation that encourages engagement with the community and the arts. Greenfield Arts are perfectly aligned with their ethos supporting young people and families to participate in arts with many free events and activities that support engagement without barriers. Activities such as their free art club, free holiday activities, projects such as Storymakers and Creative Communities and the offer of regular high-



quality live performances for all to enjoy. Greenfield Community College have been recognised for their consistent and proactive approach to valuing the importance of student voice and the structure in place that has encouraged this to thrive and impact upon student learning and school improvement.

This award is organised by Votes for Schools an award-winning platform that gives students a voice on the issues that affect them the most. Greenfield Community College are nominated for the Student Voice Awards that recognise and celebrate high quality and inspiring practice in schools. The strength of student voice is an integral part of decision making and

school life at Greenfield. Student Leaders have a strong presence leading assemblies, facilitating whole school staff training and have even attended council meetings and have designed and led their own school student conference.

The student communications team, The Newshounds, have worked hard to keep issues and initiatives on top of agendas and have been an excellent conduit to involve the whole school in positive initiatives. We wish nominees at both Greenfield Arts and Greenfield Community College every success with their award nominations. You can find out more by visiting our websites at [Greenfieldschool.net](http://Greenfieldschool.net) and [Greenfield-Arts.co.uk](http://Greenfield-Arts.co.uk)

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# Open Letter to MP Paul Howell

Dear Mr Howell, I am writing to you at a time when it has never been more apparent that our society is misaligned. Many of the people in low paid work have been revealed as being what many of us already knew them to be; Key Workers. While CEOs of corporations and hedge fund managers stay safely distanced from this terrible virus, we see people from our communities putting their own health at risk by doing jobs that our communities actually need. People who work in our NHS, in our care homes, in our shops, delivery drivers, bin collectors, postal workers, I would also like to mention cleaners, who are often overlooked, even during this crisis.

As a teacher I have seen changes in our education system over the past ten years that have narrowed the choices of our young people and placed too little emphasis on the importance of becoming, what we now refer to as, key workers. In fact, children, who may have gone on to be key workers, have been made to feel like failures in life if they have been unsuccessful in their now very narrow academic based curriculum. I hope that the efforts of the people who have showed themselves to be so necessary in our lives will no longer be derided and disrespected. Our education system needs to not only reward academia but to also respect those who go on to be a vital part of our lives.

I was, therefore, very disappointed to hear that you voted for a bill that judges people who earn less than £25,600 per year as being “unskilled”. While I am sure you will try to pass off voting for this bill as being in favour of a points based immigration system, may I remind you that the UK already has a points based immigration system and has done so since 2008. What this bill does is show contempt for all of the workers that our society needs, who are underpaid. The threshold is only marginally below the median wage for County Durham and a great deal higher than what somebody might hope to earn who is on the ironically named National Living Wage. Here is a selection of Key Worker jobs and the median salary for their profession.

Ambulance Staff (excluding paramedics) -£24,445  
Bakers - £19,373  
Bank and Post Office Clerks - £22,892  
Butchers £22,009  
Care workers - £19,104  
Caretakers - £21,733  
Chefs - £22,905  
Cleaners £17,380  
Cooks - £16,853  
Education support assistants £16,217  
Farm workers -£22,590  
Hospital Porters -£20,752  
Nursery Nurses and Assistants - £16,987  
Shelf fillers - £18,335  
Teaching Assistants - £17,091  
Van Drivers £22, 959  
This is just a small selection of the jobs that you voted

to class as low skilled. As well as the British born workers in these roles a large number of these workers will not have been born in this country, but work hard for our communities. To reclassify all of these workers as unskilled is a slap in the face for each and every person who will now feel unwelcome or undervalued as a consequence of this thinly veiled jingoism and classism. In each of these jobs there are a variety of skills that each worker possesses that are, in fact, vital.

Meanwhile we have seen billionaires make use of the furlough scheme using public money to protect their fortunes. One argument given for the justification of the huge discrepancies between what our key workers earn and the huge wealth of billionaires is that these employers are robust enough to face a crisis and still pay their employees. This has been shown in many cases to be false with many,

including JCB owner Lord Bamford, furloughing the ‘vast majority’ of his 6,500 staff, despite his family wealth standing at £4billion and donating £10 million to Tories. I am sad to see some of these beneficiaries of government hand outs now making staff redundant in spite of the support they have received.

I invite you to answer the following questions:

What plans are in place to address the massive inequalities in our society that see key workers underpaid to such an extent that they are now classed , by your Government’s immigration bill, as “unskilled”?

Do you feel that all people on wages less than £25,600 are unskilled? If not, why did you vote to make them so?

Which of the jobs listed do you consider to be low skilled?

What plans do the government have to help the people move into high skilled and, therefore, high

paid work? Who will fill the “low skilled” roles vacated by those hard workers who happen not to have been born in the UK?

What training plan is there to ensure that there are enough key workers, already in the UK, capable of performing these “low skilled” jobs?

When you clap for NHS workers, do you clap for all of the workers, regardless of where they were born? If so, why do you think it is appropriate to define them as unskilled and make them feel unwelcome in this country?

The salary cap means that low paid jobs will be reserved for British born workers. Will this disadvantage British born people and ensure they remain in low paid work if there is a worker shortage?

I write to you in the hope that you have simply overlooked the fact that so many of your constituents and key workers are now considered, by your own definition, to be unskilled, and voted for the bill without having thought

through the ramifications. I look forward to a detailed response and reassurance for those workers, both UK born and those who have decided to make their life here, that you regret following the Party whip and insulting so many key workers from our community.

Having worked as a cleaner, delivery driver, warehouse worker, facilities staff member and labourer I understand how hard people in these jobs work and the value they bring to our communities. Do you?

**Paul Daly**  
Sedgefield CLP Chair  
and Key Worker

## FUNDING BOOST FOR COUNTY ROADS

Almost £8.5 million has been allocated to repair roads and prevent potholes forming in County Durham. Durham County Council has been awarded the money from the Department for Transport’s Pothole and Challenge Bid funds.

The funding is in addition to the £30 million already committed by the council for 2020-21 to help repair local highways in the county and will be spent on highway maintenance to improve the overall condition of the network.

It will help to strengthen the council’s rolling programme of resurfacing and sealing road surfaces.

Some of the funding will also be used to maintain other assets such as bridges and drainage systems. Resurfacing works resumed across the county on 24 April following a break in services caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

Council officers are now working on a programme that will address the backlog of works that are needed, at the best value.

Cllr Brian Stephens, Cabinet member for neighbourhoods and local partnerships, said: “We are committed to making sure roads across the county are safe and free of potholes. The best course of action is to ensure that work is carried out before potholes occur which is why a lot of the extra funding will go towards preventative maintenance treatments such as resurfacing.

“Our programme of improvements has suffered some setbacks because of the restrictions that were in place because of the coronavirus. We are endeavouring to address this whilst ensuring that we follow public health guidelines around social distancing and safe operating practices so we would ask the public for their patience while this carried out.”

## CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT CARE HOME FRONTLINE STAFF



A northern care group has launched a campaign to show recognition for the job being done by care sector staff during the current Covid-19 crisis.

Wellburn Care Homes, which runs homes across the North East, York, Richmond and Berwick, has created the We Care badge, as a “symbol of appreciation for the hundreds and thousands of people working in the care sector nationwide who continue to support the most vulnerable.”

And now the company is appealing to the general public to buy the £2.50p badges, with profits going to the Care Workers’ Charity. The campaign has already won the backing of football legend Alan Shearer and now the hope is more people will get on board and support the many unsung heroes and heroines working in the care industry.

Rachel Beckett, chair of Wellburn Care Homes, said the idea initially was to create a badge to give their own care home staff but then realised it could be rolled out much further.

“These last few months have been as tough as they can get for all of my

amazing staff,” said Rachel, who employs 600 people.

“We wanted to do something positive for them and for every single person working in the care home sector across the country who’ve been tirelessly and bravely putting themselves in harm’s way, day in and day out.”

The colourful badges feature a mix of polka dots – representing the many care workers – stripes to signify the path out of the pandemic and a two coloured rainbow to honour the men and women working in the care home sector.

Chief Executive of the Care Workers’ Charity, Karolina Gerlish, said she was delighted with the “wonderful and positive campaign.”

“This will be a breath of fresh air during such tremendously difficult times,” she said.

“Offering something symbolic, even something as simple as a badge, will send a clear message and show each and every one of those working in care that we support them.”

The We Care badges are now on sale and available at [www.showwecare.co.uk](http://www.showwecare.co.uk)

## National Recognition for Business Durham

A new report from a national organisation shaping Government policy on research and development (R&D) has highlighted NETPark and Business Durham as an excellent example of local leadership.

The Power of Place report was published by the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) this week and is designed to feed into the Government’s ‘levelling up’ and R&D agenda.

The report examines how we can maximise the local economic impact of greater R&D across regions and nations and ensure the UK economy rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on an extensive consultation carried out over the last 18 months, the report makes conclusions and recommendations in three areas – building on excellence and developing brand, the importance of local leadership and supporting small businesses.

The Power of Place states that improving regional growth through R&D is critical to the UK economy and is likely to be more important than ever as the UK seeks to rebuild the economy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using Office for National Statistics data, the report looked at research intensities of all UK regions. It states that the North East invests £707million in R&D or 115% of Growth Domestic Product (GDP), compared to the UK as whole (169%). NETPark and Business

Durham has been highlighted in The Power of Place as a strong example of local leadership bringing great benefits to the local economy.

Business Durham, the economic development arm of Durham County Council, manages NETPark, a leading science, engineering and technology park for the commercialisation of cutting-edge R&D from major international organisations, universities and entrepreneurs. Opened in 2004, NETPark hosts 32 innovative companies providing 450 skilled jobs in Sedgefield, County Durham.

The Power of Place hailed Business Durham as innovative in its approach to support and foster R&D at NETPark. CaSE said Business Durham was effective in increasing connectivity between a variety of agencies and in adopting initiatives to provide businesses with the tools they needed to succeed. This included support for the retention of skilled workers, matching businesses with talented individuals and creating a Venture Capital Fund for innovative businesses.

Local leadership is important in driving forward each region’s strategy and enabling the effects of R&D investment to directly benefit the local economy, according to the report.

Sarah Slaven, interim Managing Director at Business Durham, said: “It is fantastic to be recognised by CaSE in The Power of

Place report. As a national organisation which is influencing Government policy and feeding into its levelling up R&D agenda, it’s great for NETPark to be showcased on the UK stage.

“We are proud to lead a strong partnership that is focused on supporting innovation across County Durham as R&D is critical to the future of the regional and UK economy, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.” Cllr Carl Marshall, Cabinet member for economic regeneration for Durham County Council, said: “It is great to see Business Durham and NETPark highlighted as strong examples of local leadership. We are already aware of the great benefits they are bringing to our local economy but this national recognition is very well deserved.

“We’re determined that County Durham’s economy will continue to grow and Business Durham and NETPark play an important part in that, particularly in terms of keeping skilled workers in our local areas and continuing to innovate. We look forward to building on this even further once we start to recover from the effects of COVID-19.”

NETPark Manager Janet Todd said: “We have some outstanding innovative companies here at NETPark, with fantastic research capacity and capability, and we’re delighted that our work has been highlighted as an example of best practice in the field of R&D.”

### 75th ANNIVERSARY

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- 1.15pm - Aycliffe Radio
- 1.30pm - 1407 Cadets Drill
- 2pm - Jenna Highfield
- 2.30pm - Aycliffe Radio
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- 3.15pm - Jenna Highfield
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**102 Battalion REME**  
Vehicles, Recruiting and Display



## Visitors to Parks, Beaches and Open Spaces Reminded to Follow Guidance



Members of the public are being reminded to social distance and follow the latest government guidance when visiting County Durham's parks, beaches and open spaces.

In a TV broadcast on Sunday night followed by the publication of The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson set out how people can exercise as many times a day as they want, from Wednesday 13th May.

Under the new guidance, people can drive to parks, beaches and open spaces irrespective of distance as long as they respect social distancing guidelines to remain two metres (six feet) away from people outside their household.

The new guidelines also allow people to meet up with one person from outside their household, as long as they observe social distancing.

Cafes and visitor centres at the council's Hardwick, Riverside and Wharton Parks, and The Lodge visitor

centre at its Blackhill and Consett Park remain closed until further notice.

Oliver Sherratt, the council's head of environment, said: "We continue to welcome people to County Durham's parks, beaches and open spaces but it is so important that when visiting them they ensure they are two metres or six feet from anyone who is not from their household."

"While people can now visit with one person from outside their household, again they must observe social distancing."

"We are pleased that we have been able to keep facilities open for use throughout the pandemic and hope people understand that cafes and toilets must be closed in line with government guidance, to slow the spread of coronavirus, "We will continue to act in accordance with government guidance and will ensure residents are kept fully informed of any changes in arrangements."

For more information, visit [www.durham.gov.uk/parks](http://www.durham.gov.uk/parks)

## Council Works with Schools Towards a Phased Reopening

Schools in County Durham are being advised that they should only start a phased reopening when they feel it is safe to do so, following the Government's announcement on the phased return.

Durham County Council has been working with schools and has provided comprehensive guidance on risk assessment, acknowledging that the circumstances for each school are different.

Commenting on the phased return, Cllr Olwyn Gunn, Cabinet member for children and young people's services, said: "The Government's announcement on a phased return to school is both controversial and complex, but the safety of children and staff is paramount."

"Since the Government 'lockdown', schools have remained open for some pupils. During that time we have been supporting them and will continue to support them through this next

challenge.

"There is no simple answer to the phased reopening and I'm acutely aware that there is a nervousness about returning too early. This is completely understandable and whilst it will be great for all children to return to school, parents, carers and staff need reassurance regarding safety."

"Durham County Council has provided extensive guidance to schools around a phased reopening and decisions on the timing of it and the number of pupils returning will be based on an individual, rigorous risk assessment for each school. "In line with national guidance, parents and carers can be assured that they will not be penalised if they make the decision not to send their children back to school whilst we are in the process of the Government's proposed phased return. Parents and carers can make the choice they feel is right for their children

and should not be pressured into a decision they are uncomfortable with."

Cllr Gunn also praised school staff. She added: "Schools have never closed. Staff have been there for vulnerable children and those of key workers ever since the lockdown. They have shown remarkable resilience, care and selflessness. I want to share my thanks and gratitude to all staff who have been working to keep schools open, providing homework and support to parents and carers and, in some cases, delivering food and activities to family homes. Not only have they stepped up to take on these challenges they have gone above and beyond what has been asked of them."

## GANGSTA GRANNY RETURNS



Tickets are on sale now for the award winning children's story by David Walliams which is brought to life at Darlington Hippodrome from Thursday 25 to Sunday 28 February 2021.

It's Friday night and Ben knows that means only one thing – staying with Granny! There will be cabbage soup, cabbage pie and cabbage cake and Ben knows one thing for sure – it's going to be soooooo boring! But what Ben doesn't know is that Granny has a secret – and Friday nights are about to get more exciting than he could ever imagine, as he embarks on the adventure of a lifetime with his very own Gangsta Granny!

From the acclaimed producers of Billionaire Boy and Awful Auntie comes the award-winning West End production of this amazing story by David Walliams, the UK's best-selling author for children. Gangsta Granny runs at Darlington Hippodrome from Thursday 25 to Sunday 28 February 2021. To book or for more information call the Box office on 01325 405405 or visit [www.darlingtonhippodrome.co.uk](http://www.darlingtonhippodrome.co.uk)

## Healthcare Over the May Bank Holiday

**GPs have issued advice on how to access the most appropriate healthcare over the upcoming bank holiday.**

Health officials in County Durham are encouraging people to follow their 'What to do if you are unwell' guidance this May bank holiday. Dr Stewart Findlay, chief officer, NHS County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), said: "Anyone requiring urgent medical care over the bank holiday weekend will be able to access primary care services by calling NHS111 or contacting NHS111online at [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk).

"A trained assessor will determine the most appropriate place for you to receive care and based on clinical need they can also book face-to-face appointments, if required, at one of our Urgent Treatment Centres."

"However we also need people to know what to do, to be able to help themselves and the NHS during this time, by choosing the most appropriate healthcare and following our 'What to do if you are unwell' advice."

• Help Yourself - you can safely treat the symptoms of many minor ailments at home, including hangovers, grazed knees, sore throats and minor coughs with rest and over-the-counter medicines.

• Ask your pharmacist - Pharmacists are an excellent source of health advice, particularly about long-term conditions such as diarrhoea, runny nose, coughs, colds, headaches

and stomach upsets.

• Use NHS online services - The NHS website [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) offers advice on a range of health issues. Health advice is also available to patients by completing an online (eConsult) form on their local practice website.

• Call NHS111 or go to NHS111 online - if your GP practice is closed and you feel unwell call NHS111 to be directed to the most appropriate care. The service is available 24/7. An adviser will ask questions to assess your symptoms and then give you advice or direct you to the best service for you.

• Accident and Emergency & 999 for life-threatening emergencies – Call 999 straightway for chest pains, choking, severe blood loss, blacking out, unconsciousness, suspected stroke or serious injury.

In line with current guidance patients experiencing Coronavirus symptoms: a high temperature, feeling hot to touch on the chest or back, a loss of taste or smell, or a continuous cough - coughing a lot for more than an hour or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours – should seek help and advice using NHS111online services at [www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19](http://www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19) or by calling NHS111.

"The NHS is still here for everyone but it is important that everyone uses it appropriately," added Dr Findlay.

"If anyone has any urgent health concerns they should seek help as soon as possible and not ignore symptoms."

## Roman Launches Desk & Reception Shields

As the leading UK & European shower enclosure manufacturer, Roman is delighted to announce the launch of Desk and Reception Shields. In light of the current COVID-19 crisis, Roman are extremely keen to help and support all customers in every way possible. In April, Roman announced no price increases in 2020; now the focus is firmly on helping customers get open again and trade safely by designing and manufacturing these Shields.

The feet are precision CNC cut from 12mm Glacier White Corian sheet in the Roman Fabrication plant – and have strong double-sided tape beneath them to hold them in place. They offer a tight fit around the glass and can be positioned to suit the installation prior to the tape being activated. Two options exist to suit height requirements. The

Desk Shield is 1470mm long and 755mm high to offer protection around a standard desk height and width. The Reception Shield is designed for a raised Reception desk and offers 1500mm length and 490mm height. Both products feature 6mm toughened safety glass to EN12150. Roman have provisioned extensive stock and these items are now in manufacture - available on a 5-10 day delivery window. Pricing is as follows:

**Desk Shield**

DSHIELD01 - £120

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**Reception Shield**

RSHIELD01 - £100

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## MAX AND KEIRA'S LAW COMES INTO EFFECT IN ENGLAND

Max and Keira's Law – the Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Act, has come into effect this week.

Under the new law, all adults in England are considered as having agreed to donate their own organs when they die unless they record a decision not to donate (known as 'opting out') or are in one of the excluded groups.

Those excluded will be people under 18, those who lack the mental capacity to understand the new arrangements and take the necessary action; people who have lived in England for less than 12 months; those who are not living here voluntarily and those who have nominated someone else to make the decision on their behalf.

In cases, where the individual hasn't expressed a decision, specialist nurses will support families to make a decision, based on what their loved ones would have wanted. If the decision is not to donate, this will be honoured and upheld.

Anthony Clarkson, Director of Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: "We are very pleased that Max and Keira's Law has passed its final round of parliamentary approval and we welcome the new legislation.

"It is important that people know they will still have a choice whether or not to donate. Families will still be consulted, and people's faith, beliefs and culture will continue to be respected.

"We hope this law change will prompt all of us to consider whether or not we would want to donate our organs and encourage us all to register and share our decision with our family and friends.

We want people to know that there is no deadline to making your donation decision, you can register your choice at any time.

"We will continue to provide the very best care and support to organ donors and

their families, in order to help save more lives through the gift of organ donation."

Very few people die in the circumstances where organ donation is possible and currently, even fewer donations and transplants are taking place. While transplants continue to happen, organ donation will not go ahead, if a potential donor is known to have, or suspected of having, Covid-19. We continue to work closely with transplant centres who are considering re-opening their programmes in a phased return to normal as part of the wider recovery of NHS services.

Kirit Modi, Honorary President of National BAME Transplant Alliance (NBTA), said: "I welcome the change in law because eventually it will result in a significant increase in organ transplants and help save lives. I urge people from across Black, Asian, Mixed Race and Minority Ethnic communities to continue to support organ donation and register to donate organs following discussion with their family members. If you haven't considered organ donation before, then please take time to find out more about it before making your decision.

At a time when COVID-19 has had a huge impact on many from the BAME communities, it is important that we continue to work closely with NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) and NHS hospitals to carefully consider and work to address any disproportionate impact on BAME patients."

*Wales already has an opt out system, after changing their law in December 2015. Jersey introduced the opt out system in July 2019 and Scotland will also be moving to an opt out system in March 2021.*

For more information, and to register your decision, visit: [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk)

## Birthday Gift for New Borns

A North East photography studio is sharing its anniversary with babies born during the Coronavirus outbreak by offering a very special gift.

The team at Darlington-based Camera A are celebrating the firm's 38th anniversary by offering all babies born at the town's Memorial Hospital in May a complementary 'new-born' photoshoot and framed print.

Jane Quaintrell, co-owner of Camera A said: "Coronavirus has massively impacted our business, most of which comes from weddings, due to the closure of venues and postponement of the special occasions. But we also know that there are happy events happening at Darlington Memorial Hospital that we wanted to add a little cheer to during this dark time.

"The NHS teams are working under immense pressure throughout the hospital and, having had both of my children there, I know just how hard the team on the maternity ward work. This is a particularly troubling time to have a baby, with new mothers and babies forced to isolate for 12 weeks, unable to introduce their new bundle of joy to family for a significant period."

A spokesperson for County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, said: "This is an incredibly generous offer and new mums already receiving their voucher are very touched and excited at the prospect of having a professionally taken photo.

"Childbirth is still a very exciting time, despite Coronavirus, and our maternity teams are working hard supporting mums emotionally as well as clinically. Even with visitor restrictions we want to ensure they have the best possible experience during and after the birth of their baby."

The photographers, which is still co-owned by founder, and Jane's mum, Ann Simmons, launched the initiative by providing birthday cakes to the staff at the hospital's labour ward and are looking forward to meeting the new arrivals at their studio.

Jane added: "Being in business for 38 years is a huge milestone that we are very proud to have achieved. We have grown to offer not only wedding and family photography, but also editorial and press shoots with a skilled team.

"While COVID-19 is leaving its mark, we want to do the same and hope that by spreading a little positivity we can brighten the first few months of these newborn's lives and give them a positive memento to keep forever when we're able to reopen our studio." For more information about Camera A, please visit [www.cameraa.co.uk](http://www.cameraa.co.uk)

## Excelpoint Helps Customers Implement a Working from Home Strategy

North East software innovator Excelpoint is working through this unprecedented time to support its customers to adapt to the current global crisis.

With Coronavirus taking a firm grip on the world, businesses have adopted working from home strategies for employees to support social distancing and isolation to safeguard employees and reduce the potential impact on world health care systems.

Following the announcement in March that businesses, where possible, work from home, managing director Ian Brown immediately briefed staff and implemented a working from home policy. The nature of the business allowed this transition to take place seamlessly with staff setting up home-based working that afternoon.

This new way of working will affect many organisations as staff will crucially require access to key business processes to enable them to carry out their day-to-day tasks and remain productive. With remote working on a grand scale now taking place, Ian believes it is the responsibility of the tech sector to ensure home-

based working is effective and sustainable enabling organisations to continue to operate during this challenging time.

Ian commented: "The agility of our software platform enabled our staff to immediately move to a remote workforce status within an hour and continue to develop the Excelpoint platform with new innovative features. We have continued to assist our customer base supporting current customer software systems and building new functionality to existing business processes to enable customers to adapt. As a business, we are also playing a key role in supporting frontline organisations to adapt to their new challenges, developing and implementing new solutions to emerging problems at rapid speed to meet an ever-changing environment."

"Remote working has always been a key requirement of many of our customers when implementing our software to achieve digital transformation. Our experience enabled one of our large corporate customers to position over 400 mobile devices across a national operation,



providing remote workers with access to the entire business processes on handheld devices."

As an advocate of staff wellbeing, Ian is considerate of the impact the current situation is having on home-based workers. "It is a crucial time to consider the welfare and mental health of staff, ensuring they do not feel isolated from the business."

Excelpoint has also supported many charities over recent years, offering software to enable them to operate efficiently and

cost effectively. Many of its chosen charities are key to the current situation including, Age UK, Supportive, Nacro, Veterans at Ease and If You Care Share. "We are maintaining our close relationship with the charities we support to ensure we assist them in any way we can."

Ian is realistic during this challenging time, Excelpoint's recruitment drive is currently on hold, and he is focused on the numbers ensuring the business can sustain the current level of activity and be in a position to recommence its business plan. It is also utilising the time to develop and implement a new website and brand image, which will be launched shortly.

## Temporary Stopover Areas Closed as Appleby Fair Cancelled

Temporary Stop Over Areas (TSOAs) in County Durham will not be in operation this summer as a result of Government guidance on coronavirus.

Durham County Council usually provides 10 areas across the county as stopovers for people travelling to and from Appleby Horse Fair as well as Gypsies and Travellers who travel as part of their culture and lifestyle. However, this year, the authority has taken the decision not to open them in line with Government guidance on social distancing and following the decision by the organisers of the fair not to go ahead with this year's event.

The TSOAs which are located at Binchester Corner, Westerton layby, Gurney Valley, Tindale Park, Wackerfield layby, Broomielaw picnic area, Stainton Bank, Winston Corner, Shaw Bank Field and Guide Post Corner, Bowes, will remain closed until further notice.

Members of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are being encouraged not to travel to County Durham during the lockdown period and are being advised that

accommodation will not be available at the TSOAs at any point in the near future. Owen Cleugh, Durham County Council's public protection manager, said: "We know that many Gypsies and Travellers choose to stop in County Durham during May and June as they head to and from Appleby Fair. Usually we support this by providing designated TSOAs with facilities such as toilets and water bowers.

"However, with the cancellation of this year's fair and the need for us all to abide by social distancing measures, it would not be appropriate for us to encourage groups to gather in the county by opening our usual TSOAs."

The council is liaising with key partners, including residents at the county's six permanent Gypsy, Roma, Traveller sites to share information about the decision not to open the TSOAs and general public health messages. It is also warning those from outside the county that it will consider enforcement action against any unauthorised encampments. For more information, visit [www.durham.gov.uk/travellers](http://www.durham.gov.uk/travellers)



# CALL YOUR LOCAL POLICE

# 101

## IN AN EMERGENCY ALWAYS CALL 999

**101 is now the number to call when you want to contact your local police - when it's less urgent than 999**

**WHEN SHOULD I CALL 101?**

To report less urgent crime or disorder and for general police enquiries, for example:

- if your car has been stolen;
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- when you suspect drug use or dealing;
- to report a minor traffic collision;
- to give information about crime in your area;
- or
- if you would like to speak to your local police officer

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## Smooth Move Leads to Queen's Award



A slide sheet designed by a Darlington nurse, which helps move patients in safety and comfort, has been awarded a prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise 2020, in the Innovation category.

The Versal slide sheet was designed by Diane Hindson, a member of the back care team at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. Diane explains, "Moving patients with limited or no mobility of their own can be difficult and one of the best ways to do it, while protecting yourself from potential injury, is by using a slide sheet. This is positioned underneath the patient, however, there are different slide sheets for various situations and I realised that it wasn't always clear to colleagues which one to use, for instance, when turning a patient or when transferring them from a trolley to a bed. Using an inappropriate sheet is potentially risky. So, I set about trying to design a single slide sheet that could be used in every situation, removing the uncertainty. "I've always enjoyed sewing and am quite

innovative, so I got my sewing machine out and after several designs, we found one that worked. The Trust were very supportive and, once we'd had a supply manufactured, began using it very quickly. When it was marketed there was a lot of interest from other Trusts and healthcare providers across the UK. The trust's commitment to encouraging innovation amongst staff meant I shared the royalties. We initially called it the ReDi slide – an amalgamation of the colour of the original slide, red, and my name. It was later re-named 'Versal', reflecting its versatility. It's now owned by GBUK Banana, part of GBUK Group in Selby, which specialises in patient moving and handling technology.

"Being responsible for such a useful, successful product that supports both patients and staff has meant a great deal to me, although I couldn't have done it without the support and encouragement of colleagues and the Trust. For Versal to receive a Queen's Award for Enterprise makes me really proud."

## Hippodrome Thanks Customers for Support

Generous customers have made over £10,000 of donations to the theatre's A Place for Everyone fund since the temporary closure of the theatre due to Coronavirus on 16 March. Since the temporary closure of the venue on 16 March, theatregoers have raised more than £10,000 in donations to Darlington Hippodrome's A Place for Everyone fund. Ticketholders for cancelled productions were offered full refunds but were also given the option to donate some or all of the value of their ticket.

Heather Tarran-Jones, Programming and Fundraising Director, says "we have been incredibly heartened by the proportion of customers who have chosen to make a donation to the Hippodrome at what is a difficult time for us all. As well as donations via the box office during the refund process, we've also received a number of generous donations from customers who have written or emailed in. These donations are hugely appreciated and will help the theatre to weather this storm and go forth into the future. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel a



number of shows, but the vast majority have been rescheduled for a later date. We're really missing our customers and can't wait to welcome them to the venue again as soon as it's safe to do so."

The theatre's A Place for Everyone fund opens up the theatre to audiences, practitioners and performers, regardless of social, physical or economic barriers. Heather Tarran-Jones continues "the country is in a time of great economic uncertainty and when the venue re-opens, it will be more important than ever to enable people from all backgrounds to come to the Hippodrome and experience the

transformative power of theatre and the arts. Donations from the public will make this possible which in turn supports the running costs of the theatre."

If you would like to make a donation to the theatre's A Place for Everyone fund, please telephone the box office on 01325 405405 or email hippodrome.boxoffice@darlington.gov.uk. You can also name a seat in the theatre as a special gift or a fitting tribute to a loved one, and payments for this can be spread over ten months. For more information, contact the box office or visit www.darlingtonhippodrome.co.uk

## SEVEN DRUNKEN NIGHTS TOUR

Following recent successful appearances in Darlington, Seven Drunken Nights is back as part of a fifth anniversary tour playing at the Hippodrome on Saturday 22 May 2021. Tickets are on sale now for Seven Drunken Nights – The Story of The Dubliners for its incredible fifth anniversary tour.

In association with legendary Irish pub O'Donoghue's, the place where it all started for The Dubliners back in 1962, Seven Drunken Nights tells the story of a career spanning 50 years and invokes the spirit of Ronnie Drew, Luke Kelly, Barney McKenna, John Sheahan, Ciaran Bourke and Jim McCann.

This hugely talented cast of musicians and singers bring the music of this iconic group back to life and will have you singing and dancing in the aisles with this brand new show for 2021. It is without doubt the ultimate feel good Irish show.

Seven Drunken Nights is at Darlington Hippodrome on Saturday 22 May, 2021. To book or for more information call the Box office on 01325 405405 or visit www.darlingtonhippodrome.co.uk

## CREDIT UNION OFFER LOW COST LOANS

Dear Sir,  
The Coronavirus outbreak presents everyone with challenges, and we wanted you to know that all of us here at NEFirst Credit Union hope you and your family are safe and well during these unprecedented times. We're closely monitoring the developing situation and wanted to let you know we are open for business (within social distancing guidelines) with our face to face contact with members by appointment only. As always, the safety of our members and colleagues remain our number one priority and we are here to help.

We continue to work hard to maintain services for you and to develop new ways to help you manage the financial impact. We understand many of you may be experiencing some financial challenges at this time due to the coronavirus and the impact that it is having on everyday lives, so we would like to let you know of two new loan products we have at the moment that you may find helpful to yourself and your family.

**Family Loans – INSTANT LOAN (up to £500.00)**  
Our 'Family Loans' allow all families/individuals in receipt of child benefit to

have a loan of up to £500 from the Credit Union. This will be conditional upon child benefit being paid directly into your account with the Credit Union. We will not perform a credit check; however, bank statements will be requested for an affordability check.  
*Example - £500.00 x 12 months @ £50.23 – Total payable = £602.66*  
**Payroll Deduction – £500.00 INSTANT Loans**  
To qualify for an instant loan you must already be paying into your NEFirst Credit Union account by payroll deduction through your employer.

We will not perform a credit check or request recent bank statements in this instance.  
*Example - £500.00 x 12 months @ £50.23 – Total payable = £602.66*  
To apply for either a Payroll or Family loan please visit our website at www.nefirstcu.co.uk and quote Family or Payroll Loan on your application in order to qualify, otherwise your application will be processed in line with our normal loan processing procedures. If you would like to discuss any of our products or services please don't hesitate to contact us by email birtley@nefirstcu.co.uk or telephone 0330 055 3666



## Programme Schedule

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HOWEVER WE WILL CONTINUE BROADCASTING 24/7  
Updates from MP Paul Howell at 12noon daily**

#### SATURDAY

9-10am	Eurovision Show	Simon Harding
10-12am	Moderation	Jack & Garvey
12-2pm	Kitchen Floorfillers	Cazbo Jangles
2-4pm	Weekly Edition	Paul Baker
4-6pm	Northern & Classic Soul (R)	Kevin Sowerby
<b>"The Saturday Night Experience" Sponsored by Bengal Lounge Indian Restaurant &amp; Takeaway</b>		
6-8pm	Evening Session	Jimjams
8-9pm	Rock the House	Carl Booth
9-10pm	Retro Trance Mix	OZ-DJ
10-12am	Street 'n' Drum 'n' Bass	MC Supa
12-2am	Night Club Session	

#### SUNDAY

9-10am	Church Service	Xcel Centre
10-11am	Yesterdays Music Today	Alan Brown
11-12pm	Random Reiki Master	Phil Hawkins
12-2pm	Country & Americana Show	David Ringer
<b>Blues Show Sponsored by Whitehouse Funeral Service</b>		
2-4pm	Bear Blues Show	Colin & Monica
4-6pm	Folk/Celtic/Rock Show	Steve & Col
6-7.30pm	Jazz Time	Mike Dixon
8-10pm	The Rock Show	CAD
10-12am	Paul's Down Time	Paul Kjenstad

#### MONDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-2pm	Memory Lane	Gary Avery
2-4pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-7pm	60s Show	Karl Simons
7-8pm	70s Show	Peter Rush
8-9pm	80s Show	Gary Avery
9-10pm	90s Show	Paul Baker
10-11pm	00s Show	Producer Dan
11-12am	Teens Show	Andy Fittes

#### TUESDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-2pm	Memory Lane	A DJ
2-4pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-7pm	All About the 60s	Honest John
7.30-9.30pm	Northern & Classic Soul	Kevin Sowerby

#### WEDNESDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-2pm	Memory Lane	A DJ
2-4pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
8-10pm	Alternative Aycliffe	Gaz n Alby

#### THURSDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-2pm	Memory Lane	A DJ
2-4pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-8pm	The List	Colin McNeillie
8-10pm	BeatRoote	Graeme Roote

#### FRIDAY

10-12am	Golden Years	Paul Baker
12-1pm	A to Z of Pop	Richard Smith
1-2pm	Memory Lane	A DJ
2-4pm	Afternoon Aycliffe	Paul Baker
6-8pm	Techno Trance Mix	PVR Studios
8-10pm	29th May - BeatRoote - House	
10-12am	Alternative Aycliffe (R)	Gaz n Alby
12-2am	Night Club Session	

**Check our website for full schedule  
www.ayclifferadio.co.uk**

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# NEW GUIDANCE TO ENSURE TRANSPORT NETWORK IS SAFE

- New guidance published on how to make journeys safely
- Public urged to continue to work from home if they can and avoid public transport where possible to reduce pressure on the network
- Those who have to travel for work should consider changing their travel habits - including cycling, walking or driving, and avoiding rush hour - to help people socially distance from others

New guidance published today provides advice on how passengers should make journeys safely, following the publication of the Government's roadmap and strategy for the next phase of the pandemic. It urges people to consider cycling, walking or driving to help ensure there is enough capacity for those who need to travel on public transport to do so safely.

As the Transport Secretary stated on Saturday, even as public transport begins to

revert to a full service, the 2-metre social distancing rule would only leave effective capacity for one in ten passengers on many parts of the network. The advice sets out that if people cannot work from home and have to travel for work, they should first consider alternatives to public transport. Those driving their own cars have been asked to avoid busy areas.

For those who have to use public transport, the guidance for passengers on how to travel safely recommends:

- Keeping 2 metres apart from others wherever possible
- Wearing a face covering if you can
- Using contactless payment where possible
- Avoiding rush hour travel where feasible
- Washing or sanitising your hands as soon as possible before and after travel

- Following advice from staff and being considerate to others

All transport operators have been issued guidance on ensuring stations and services are regularly cleaned, making clear to passengers how to stay 2 metres apart where possible in stations, airports and ports, and to ensure routes for passengers are clearly communicated to avoid crowding. The Government's guidance also sets out steps operators should take to provide safe workplaces and services for their staff and passengers across all modes of private and public transport.

To help reduce pressure on the transport network so there is space for social distancing where possible, the Transport Secretary has spoken to train and bus operators and local authorities to ensure they increase the number of available services over the coming weeks.



## WAS DURHAM DISADVANTAGED?

Dear Sir,

Recently, the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) wrote to the government asking for more funding to help them survive the Coronavirus crisis. A few days later, when the second tranche of C-19 funding was announced, there was disquiet when County Durham's allocation was £4 million less than the first tranche ... whilst, in the south, Surrey Council was given £8 million more. In its turn, this disquiet was denounced as 'politicising' the crisis. And apologists also pointed out that - where funding per head for Durham across the two tranches was £65.57 - per capita funding in Surrey was only £52.28 (a fifth less); far from being unfair to Durham, it was said, the funding was unfair to Surrey.

**POLITICS?**  
*Both these suggestions need qualifying.*

Firstly, the ANEC letter was not 'political'. Half the ANEC councils are either Conservative, or No-Overall-Control. And, whilst it is true that Simon Henig, Chair of ANEC, is Labour, his vice-Chair Heather Scott, leader of Darlington Council, is Conservative. It is worth mentioning also that the councils in the Yorkshire and Humber region are currently considering issuing a statement that they have run out of money; and that a further 17 local authorities are considering issuing 114 Notices (the LA equivalent of going into administration).

**FAIRNESS**  
*So not political, but was it 'fair'?*

Since 2010, the government has worked on the principle that, to be 'fair', funding needs to be allocated on a per capita basis - why should the south-east get less grant-aid per person than places like the north-east?

Such an approach is, however, challenged by the Councils of the north-east, from whom 'fair' is not fair unless it takes account of 'needs'. Since the destruction of the region's industrial staples in the 1980s/1990s, the north-east is England's second-poorest region. This regional inequality, moreover, is steadily widening; if Britain had stayed in the EU, County Durham would next year have been classified as a 'less developed' region of the EU (along with, e.g., Poland and Romania) because recently our average income has dipped below 75% of the EU's

average income.

**FINANCE**

Consequently, the north-east has a range of significantly inflated needs. Some of them are directly the result of being regionally poorer - worse health, greater child-poverty, substandard housing etc. Others stem from behaviours which accompany social deprivation - alcoholism, smoking, domestic abuse, etc.

This has been especially evident during the Coronacrisis. County Durham has disproportionately large numbers of people who are in care homes, are aged 65+, are medically vulnerable, or are living in poverty - factors which have increased our vulnerability both to the disease itself, and to its financial and social consequences.

So the ANEC letter was anything but political, and neither was it a 'poor me' appeal for victimhood - it was purely transactional. We incur significant extra expenditure (most of it on services statutorily required by the government) and we need extra money to meet that expenditure.

But not just to meet that extra expenditure - if we are ever to move away from forever asking for handouts to meet our needs, the north-east is going to need EVEN MORE money to correct the social and economic deprivation which creates those extra needs.

**BACK TO POLITICS**

I have of course, been saying this for years, but since the 2019 election - since the Tories acquired the red wall constituencies - our Prime Minister has (as recently as last weekend) been firm that "unlike any other Conservative government ... we are going to make sure we level up right across the country and keep faith with the people who voted for us".

That statement is very welcome, and it is to the benefit of everybody in the County that people get behind it, whatever their political party ... but, surely, particularly our newly-elected local Conservative MPs. Doing so will involve them in lobbying to secure significant additional funding to level up our social and economic infrastructure, but also in challenging, not defending, the Treasury when its funding does not meet our Prime Minister's assurances.

John D Clare

# Major Drive to Recruit New Officers

A major drive to recruit new officers to one of the top-performing police forces in the country is set to begin at the end of the month.

Applications to join Durham Constabulary as a police constable open on May 29, with potential new recruits having until 5pm on Friday, June 12 to submit their application.

The force is looking for individuals who are hardworking, relish a challenge, can apply common sense and who possess a minimum of two A levels.

In return, the force is offering a generous benefits package including the ability to complete a Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship in conjunction with Northumbria University.

Under the degree apprenticeships, student officers will study towards a degree in Professional Policing Practice as part of a three-year training programme while working as a police officer.

The university fees will be paid for by the force and students will be paid police officers from day one, with a starting salary of £24,177. Graduates who apply may be able to complete a two-year shortened diploma course.

The recruitment drive is part of a national campaign, which aims to recruit 20,000 new police officers over the next three years. Successful candidates will join the force from January 2021.

Assistant Chief Officer Gary Ridley said: "We are looking for motivated individuals to join a high-performing organisation.

"Policing is a challenging role and we would like to hear from all sections of the community.

"During your time as a probationer constable you will see operational aspects of the force.

"We are looking for people who can make a difference."

The force is also keen to hear from applicants from underrepresented and diverse groups.

Steve White, Acting Durham Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner said: "Policing is not for the fainthearted particularly at this challenging time.

"As a police officer, you will be expected to run towards danger when others are running away.

"It's a role which brings immense responsibility but also a huge reward in contributing to keeping the people of the Durham Force area safe.

"As one of the top forces in the country I am looking for top people from all walks of life to join the service.

"There has never been a more exciting time to join policing.

"Even if you are unsure of the challenges that you would face speak to the force to find out more."

Professor Peter Francis, Deputy Vice Chancellor at Northumbria University, said: "Northumbria University is delighted to be working with Durham Constabulary.

"This is an exciting opportunity for driven and talented people to gain a degree in professional policing practice, while working as an officer, shaping the future of Durham Constabulary."

Think you've got what it takes to join us?

Find out more now or download your application pack (from May 29) here: [www.durham.police.uk/Joi.../Police-Officers/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.durham.police.uk/Joi.../Police-Officers/Pages/default.aspx)

We will also be hosting LIVE Q&A sessions on our Durham Constabulary Facebook page on Monday, May 18, at 2pm; May 20, at 6pm; May 27 at 6pm and May 29 at 2pm.

## OFFICE UNITS TO LET



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# QUARTER OF PARENTS DON'T WANT SCHOOLS TO REOPEN UNTIL SEPTEMBER

Two in three parents believe lockdown should stay in place until at least June, with 27.8% saying the lockdown should remain until September, according to a UK-wide poll of 3,550 parents led by learner provider, Exemplar Education.

Despite widespread anxiety about children returning to school prematurely, research from the company also found that parents are increasingly concerned about the impact of lockdown learning on their children's education. Nearly two thirds of parents (59.3%) revealed

their concerns that lockdown would have a negative impact on their children's learning and academic performance while a further 58.8% reported that their children were struggling to focus on their schoolwork.

The research also suggested that parents too are suffering in silence due to the new homeschool routine with as many as 35.2% reporting difficulties in supporting their children with learning from home. In a clear sign that many parents nationwide are feeling the strain a further 37.7% said they do not feel equipped to support their children's learning.

Steve O'Hara, Director of Education says, "The Covid-19 pandemic has had an unbelievable impact on the day to day lives of families everywhere. Parents and children are in unfamiliar territory and trying their very best to face the challenges that learning from home brings. Many are extremely concerned about lockdown coming to an end too suddenly, yet are anxious about their children's learning and their own personal ability

to support them at home. It's vital for parents to be able to talk freely about these challenges and to take care of their own mental wellbeing over the course of the lockdown. Sharing worries will help all of us feel less stressed and concerned and help us take some of the pressure off."

Exemplar Education recently offered their maths programme for free and since lockdown began over 10,000 UK households have signed-up for free access to their online lesson, tutorials, study guides and assessments. Attainment on the platform has since hit an all-time high. The average pass mark on all online maths tests is 95.7% and 10,000+ lessons a day are now being successfully completed by young learners.

# New Archdeacon of Durham, Libby

A Sunderland based vicar has just been appointed as the next Archdeacon of Durham and Director of Mission, Discipleship and Ministry in the Diocese of Durham.

The Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham is delighted to announce that Revd Canon Libby Wilkinson has been appointed as the next Archdeacon of Durham and Director of Mission, Discipleship and Ministry for the Diocese.

Libby was ordained in Durham in 2005 after training for ordination at NEOC and served her curacy in Harlow Green and Lamsley in Gateshead before becoming Priest in Charge at St Barnabas, Burnmoor. She then became Vicar of Bishopwearmouth St Gabriel's, Sunderland in 2016 and was made a non-residentiary Canon of Durham Cathedral in 2019. Libby (54) is married to Jon who is also ordained

and they have two grown-up daughters, Rebecca and Hannah. She previously had a career working in economics, finance and insurance with Norwich Union before she moved to the North East in 1999 when husband Jon became Team Rector of Gateshead. After the children arrived, Libby was thinking about going back to work but she couldn't get excited about her old job even though she loved it. At that point, a friend's comment got her thinking. Libby said: "I had always shied away from even thinking about being a vicar, then a friend said 'you're just running away from being a vicar' and that was the thing that spurred me into saying to myself - 'I've got to look into this'."

"I was sort of hoping that the church would say no, but they didn't and the rest, as they say, is history." In her new role, Libby will lead the Mission and Ministry Support Team and serve as Archdeacon for the Deaneries of Durham and Lanchester, a role that she says is a dream job that is tailor-made for her. Libby said: "If I could have written my own job description that would have been it, and it picks up all sorts of things around mission and ministry

that I find challenging and exciting. And for me, discipleship is the bedrock of Christian faith and my dream, my hope would be to see every church member engaged as a courageous and confident disciple of Jesus Christ."

The Rt Revd Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham said: "Libby comes to the role with a wealth of experience and understanding both in terms of the spiritual needs of the Diocese and of what makes the people and communities of the North East tick."

"She has been a valued member of my leadership team for several years as Women's Adviser in Ministry and through her new role, she will be instrumental in helping us to shape our response to Mission, Discipleship and Ministry across the Diocese."



"Please hold Libby and her family in your prayers along with the people of St Gabriel's and the Mission and Ministry Support Team."

Libby's licensing and start date will be in late summer at a time still to be finalised, and her final Sunday in St Gabriel's will be announced shortly.

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# VITAL ROUTES KEPT OPEN THROUGH SUPPORT PACKAGE

• Government pledges support for freight services to protect flow of goods between the UK, mainland Europe and Northern Ireland

• UK, Ireland and France also agree joint commitment to protecting freight during pandemic

• Light rail systems in Sheffield, Manchester, West Midlands, Nottingham and Tyne and Wear also set to receive support

• Thousands of volunteers from transport sector are put on standby to support frontline services as new 'Transport Support Unit (TSU)' established, alongside hundreds of Government vehicles from the transport network

Vital routes for supplies and people have been protected today through a coronavirus support package to keep the flow of goods and services running smoothly in and out of the UK, and around the country, throughout the pandemic.

A multimillion government support package for essential freight services includes:

- up to £17m for critical

routes between Northern Ireland and Great Britain;

- up to £10.5m for lifeline ferry and freight services to the Isle of Wight and the Scilly Isles;
- and further support for critical routes between Britain and the European mainland.

The funding will ensure the ongoing supply of critical goods into the country during the Covid-19 pandemic, with up to 31 routes eligible for support, subject to discussions with operators.

The UK is working closely alongside French and Irish partners and today pledged in a joint statement to "strengthen partnership and share best practices", to ensure the continued movement of freight across the continent.

The freight and passenger support package covers seven routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; routes to the Isle of Wight; the Penzance-Scilly ferry; and 26 routes between Britain, France, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands,

Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden, including Eurotunnel.

Alongside the protection for freight routes, the Transport Secretary also committed to fast track the launch of a new trial using drones between the mainland and St Mary's Hospital on the Isle of Wight, helping ensure it is equipped to tackle the virus.

This follows £28m awarded by the Government earlier this year to Southampton and Portsmouth councils to carry out drone trials of this kind as part of a wider future transport zone trial.

# Local Key Worker Recognition

Hi it's Jess Webb here again trying to develop my skill in journalism once more. I have interviewed another key worker from our town, to again recognise and applaud their hard work and dedication in this difficult unprecedented time.

This week the key worker is **Katie McSkelly**.

Katie has been a store assistant in one of our local shops for 5 years. Katie's job role includes carrying out tasks such as serving customers, and making sure stock is readily available at all times. This is to ensure customers are able to easily buy a variety of foods, whilst purchasing an economical shop and hopefully make

healthy choices. Katie strives to ensuring that she provides a safe and clean environment for customers especially during this period of covid 19, and aims to always provide an overall positive experience for the customer.

Katie's job also holds a lot of responsibility including being accountable for the money that goes in and out of her till, meaning she needs to be a whizz at counting; to prevent short changing customers and ensuring her cash balance is accurate at the end of her shift. Katie is responsible and answerable to ensuring customers are the appropriate age to purchase the product they are buying. Which I can imagine can be quite challenging at times especially with being a teenager myself. So make sure you have your valid ID handy if you're trying to get through Katie!

Katie has had previous jobs which she reports helped her in her current role. She has dabbled in a bit of bar work and waitressing which provided her with essential customer service skills and gained her experience with food hygiene and cleanliness in the workplace.

For Katie's job, she said you need:

- \* Excellent customer service skills;
- \* A friendly, caring and outgoing personality;
- \* Mathematic skills;
- \* Organisation skills;
- \* To be hardworking and;
- \* Throw in some conflict management skills when needing to deal with customers trying to buy all the pasta, hand gel and toilet roll.

When asked what she enjoys most about her job, Katie replied "Appreciative customers mean a lot to me as that's what it's all about, it shows community spirit and makes my job worth while. My work colleagues also make my job a lot more fun as we have a laugh and all get on great working as a fantastic team. I also love the busy environment that my job provides, which some people might find weird, as some can class it as stressful, however I love the hustle of the shop".



When asked what Katie likes least about her job, she reported "impatient and rude customers are a negative part of the job definitely, as it's really not necessary. When the shop is unfortunately short staffed, or when having too much stock and not enough space can also make it difficult".

When asking Katie who is her inspiration in life, she reported her grandparents. When asking what she does for fun she said she enjoys going to the gym, socialising, hiking and playing the Xbox. Here's hoping she can do these things again soon. Her favourite film is 'Beauty and the Beast' and favourite food Chinese.

I hope Katie's interview might provide some inspiration for some to pursue a career in the food industry. I am sure you would like to join me in thanking Katie, and recognising the key and vital role she plays in our town and society. Thank you Katie!

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# More than £76m Paid to County Businesses

More than 7,000 grants have been paid to County Durham businesses to help them deal with the effects of the Coronavirus outbreak.

To date, Durham County Council has now paid more than £76 million, which is 85 percent of the overall sum that was originally expected to be paid.

Last week, updated government guidance extended the support grants to charities, meaning an additional 427 organisations would benefit from the grants across the county.

Council staff have worked

tirelessly to contact all qualifying businesses, including those charities that were originally not included in the scheme, while continuing to process all other claims received as quickly as possible.

The council now expects to pay just under £95 million once all 8,697 grants have been paid to those businesses that are eligible.

The grants of either £10,000 or £25,000 are designed to help small businesses that have been affected by the Coronavirus outbreak, with many business owners continuing to praise the council for the way it has worked with them to establish simple claims processes.

Paul Ruscoe, the managing director of R&R Bearings Ltd in Consett, said: "The speed in which this support has been

provided is mind blowing. After seeing some green shoots over the last two years, we were cautiously optimistic about our future.

"Unfortunately, our telephones have become quieter because of COVID-19 and we have some serious challenges ahead. However, this grant will help us massively over the coming weeks and make a big difference to our business."

The grants are also helping some owners to diversify and strengthen their business. Guidelines around which businesses are eligible for the grant have been set by the government, and the council is doing all it can to be as flexible as possible within the constraints of the national guidelines to which it is working.

One of the key eligibility

criteria is that a business must have been occupying a qualifying business premises that was listed in the council's rating list at 11th March. Businesses who were not listed do not currently qualify. That means some of the applications which have been received from businesses that don't operate out of a building in the ratings list haven't been able to be processed. They have instead been reported to the Valuation Office Agency to see if they will amend the ratings list and back date it,

which will allow payments to be made to them in the future. You can find more details around eligibility online at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/ndrgrants>

It's really important to look after your own health, and the health of your staff, during these uncertain times. We have updated our Information for Businesses page with resources including NHS Mental Health and Wellbeing, MIND and Every Mind Matters. <http://www.durham.gov.uk/covid19business>

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Paul Howell, Member of Parliament for Sedgefield

Over the last week we have seen first steps out of the coronavirus lockdown. I hope that most of you have been able to enjoy a little more fresh air and possibly even a return to work. Clearly a return to work is only possible if safe conditions are in place, both for when you are at work and getting to and from.

We must all remember that we individually have a responsibility to follow the guidance rules too. I get representations about businesses not doing things correctly, which we then engage on but I also receive complaints about people who have been in an organisation that has tried to do everything correctly and then they leave and see a number of their colleagues from different households get in the same car to go home. Please remember you have to take responsibility for your own actions as well both for you and your colleagues.

This week is also mental health awareness week and that is particularly poignant given the circumstances of the coronavirus lockdown. The need to socially isolate can put many additional pressures on anyone who has a concern of their mental health and we need to be cognisant of one another in this situation. The theme of the mental health awareness week is being kind and there is some great information and support on the website [mentalhealth.org.uk](http://mentalhealth.org.uk).

We can all do many things to support the mental health of ourselves and others, for example just calling your family or friends to check up with them can be therapeutic for both you and them. It is also an opportunity to do little things that can help enormously so going for a walk or keeping a set routine in your life all help to make things seem better. It is very important

to remember that you don't know what you don't know, and therefore if someone is having a bad time or just wants to talk, remember it's okay to not be okay and you don't know what has happened in their world.

Please, if you do need help, talk to someone, or if someone talks to you remember they're looking for support and the fact that they trust you is a huge compliment so please give them the support that they are looking for.

Back in my world, we will return to Westminster on 2nd June which will be another step towards normality. We continue to do some committees and debates virtually for now but there is so much work that can only be done by being there. Our staff will continue to work from home and it will be interesting to see how the house is reconfigured to allow us to return.

One of the strongest debating points at the moment is of course the return of children to schools and unfortunately we are seeing far too much false messaging leading to confusion and misunderstanding. It is clear to me that the schools cannot open until it is safe to do so and it is incumbent on all parties to do everything they can to help to create that safe place. This will allow children and families to take another step out of lockdown and remember it is typically our most disadvantaged children who will suffer most from missing school.

To conclude for this week please be kind to yourself and others, try and listen and understand what they are saying before you judge, maintain social distancing at all times and of course Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives.

**Paul Howell**  
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## Community Centres Help Scheme Extended

Community venues across County Durham are being encouraged to apply for financial support to help them through the coronavirus pandemic.

With the government's Business Support Grants scheme having now been extended, Durham County Council is urging community centres and venues, which might not have thought themselves eligible, to apply.

To date, the council has already paid out 8,693 grants totalling more than £92 million, almost 95 per cent of the total it's expecting to pay, and council officers are now working hard to increase the number of businesses that will be supported.

Extensions to the Business Rates grant scheme are allowing the authority to prioritise small businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders who have fixed premises costs associated with their business but who don't have their own business rates assessments and bed and breakfast operators who pay council tax.

The extension also covers charities that pay little or no business rates because of charitable rate relief, but who otherwise would have been entitled to small business rate relief or rural rate relief and are therefore eligible to support under the original scheme.

Under the current scheme the council is reaching out to not for profit organisations, community centres and venues across the county to encourage them to make a claim for a grant.

With support of the council's Area Action Partnerships (AAPs), three community centres have already benefitted from a one-off grant of £10,000 to help meet ongoing costs.

Cassop, Quarrington Hill and Coxhoe community centres have each been awarded the grant.

Jane Bellis, East Durham Rural Corridor AAP co-ordinator, said: "We've had several community centres ask for help. One applied for £600 to cover urgent expenses for utility bills but we were able to direct

them to the grants relief instead and they found they were eligible for a £10,000 grant. That will help to keep the centre afloat during the crisis as well as helping with future planning, and we really would encourage other centres to look into their eligibility too."

Cllr Carl Marshall, Cabinet member for economic regeneration, said: "We're pleased that we've been able to pay out more than £92 million in grants to help more than 8,600 businesses across the county but we know that there are other businesses who are eligible for this support too who have not yet made an application and we're determined that they access that."

"Many businesses, particularly those not for profit organisations such as community centres across the county, might not have realised that they're eligible for the £10,000 grant and we'd encourage them to apply. We know that money would make a big difference, in not only helping their efforts to support out local

communities during these difficult times, but also in ensuring they are there for our communities in the future.

"We welcome the extension to the scheme to help support those businesses that were not eligible under the initial scheme and are pleased that the government has listened to our request to expand it. Details of the extension were only published on 13 May and we are working to ensure that we make the scheme available to those businesses that can now be supported as quickly as possible. The funding is limited and the scheme will need to reflect that so not all businesses will be eligible for a grant but we will do whatever we can to ensure everyone who is eligible is provided with these grants."

Guidelines around which businesses are eligible for the grant have been set by the government. Businesses can find out whether they are eligible and get more information by visiting <http://www.durham.gov.uk/ndrgrants>



OK, who is this higher self bloke and how do I meet him?

Put simply you are your higher self and you access this part of your personality whenever you do anything that shows gratitude for the blessing you have, and you take steps to improve or raise your current level of awareness, knowledge and understanding.

Everything is energy defined and designed by vibration and frequency. Unfortunately we spend most of our time swamped by mindful confusion of stress, anxiety and tension, brought on by everyday responsibilities, issues and problems.

To actively engage your higher self you need to find a way to separate yourself

from this overload of mental chatter. The person who says there is only one way only knows one way, that just happens to work for them. This is personal development literally at its highest level and you have to find your own way there in order to access or plug into a higher level of wisdom, knowledge and understanding available from the universe.

Some meditate or withdraw to their special place. Some seek the solitude of nature, while others find the seashore is all they need to allow the higher self of their own personality the time and space necessary for it to directly access the universe and provide the answers and guidance they are looking for.

## Tackling Covid-19 Loneliness & Distress

As social isolation continues during the Coronavirus lockdown health officials want to encourage people across County Durham and Darlington to seek help if they are feeling lonely or distressed.

A range of support is available, both nationally and locally, but people often don't know where or how to find it.

Talking Changes is a self-help, counselling and talking therapies service supporting the mental health and wellbeing of people living in County Durham and Darlington.

It offers a range of support to deal with common mental health problems such as stress, anxiety or depression as well as panic phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The work is led by the Durham, Darlington and Teesside NHS Mental Health and Learning Disability Partnerships including NHS County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), NHS Tees Valley CCG, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, local authorities and healthcare service providers from across the Durham, Darlington and Teesside area.

NHS North of England Commissioning Support (NECS) commissioning delivery manager Steve Bramwell said: "Keeping connected during the Coronavirus lockdown is incredibly important as part of looking after your own wellbeing and that of others."

"One in four people will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year and people are at greater risk being isolated from family and friends at this time."

"Psychological wellbeing and talking therapies are available to support people who are experiencing depression, stress, anxiety and are a proven, effective way of helping people cope with emotional and mental health problems - we would encourage anyone to speak to their GP or nurse or

contact Talking Changes if they feel they need help."

Contact Talking Changes, Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5pm, on 0191 333 3300 or self-refer at [www.talkingchanges.org.uk/contact-us/](http://www.talkingchanges.org.uk/contact-us/)

The Government has launched a major effort to tackle loneliness and social isolation during the coronavirus outbreak. The #Let'sTalkLoneliness campaign has been rolled out to get people talking openly about loneliness, which includes new public guidance offering useful tips and advice on what to do to look after yourself and others safely [www.letstalkloneliness.co.uk](http://www.letstalkloneliness.co.uk).

Advice includes, keeping in touch with friends, family and neighbours, asking for help if you need shopping or medicine, setting a routine with regular tasks, including daily exercise. Other tips from the Government campaign include, looking for clubs and groups online, from choirs to writing groups and exercise classes, many have been offering online activities and events. Volunteering is also a really valuable way to meet people and connect. Full guidance on volunteering safely, including links to online platforms with volunteering opportunities, is available on the gov.uk website. If you need to find a support group that suits you, there are lots of organisations online offering support such as Every Mind Matters [www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters).



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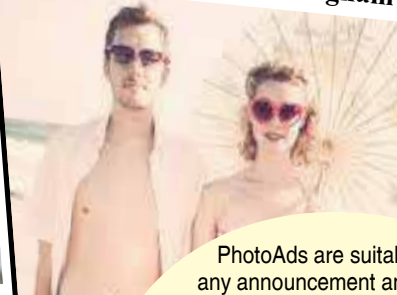
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We are currently working on an archive site which will bring you ALL the past issues of the Newton News as far back as 1948!



## PCVC Amends Plan to Support Constabulary Response Pandemic

The Acting Police, Crime and Victims' Commissioner (PCVC) Mr Steve White has agreed with the Chief Constable an amendment to the 'Work Plan', to ensure that the Constabulary is held to account effectively during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The 'Work Plan' sits behind the Police, Crime and Victims' Plan, and adds actions under each priority. Those actions are how the PCVC asks Durham Constabulary to deliver the outcomes and priorities in the Police, Crime and Victims' Plan. The PCVC then holds the Chief Constable to account on these actions at monthly Executive Board meetings.

The amendments to the Work Plan are focused around how the Constabulary will adapt, and respond effectively to the changing environment of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, whilst maintaining the principle of policing by consent and independence from the government. The close monitoring of the

amendments will also ensure that the Constabulary can respond to the recovery from the pandemic as quickly as possible. The amendments include:

- Ensuring that the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the officers and staff is a top priority. This includes the adoption of appropriate working practises including social distancing and the provision of PPE.

- Effective response to changing trends in crime and Anti-Social Behaviour. Particularly around the potential increase in domestic abuse cases and fraud.

- How working with our most vulnerable people will be suitably adapted.

- How practices will be changed within the custody suites to protect detainees.

- How to communicate the Durham Constabulary approach to enforcing the Government's social distancing instruction and maintain policing by consent. It is a legal requirement for the PCVC to issue a Police,

Crime and Victims' Plan, after consulting with the Police and Crime Panel. An Acting PCVC cannot issue a Police, Crime and Victims' Plan or vary an existing one. However an amendment to the 'Work Plan' can be made to respond to changing demand. This amendment does not need to be approved by the Police and Crime Panel, however the PCVC has liaised with the Police and Crime Panel and they are supportive of the inclusion of actions to help the Constabulary focus and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chief Constable Jo Farrell said: "I have welcomed the amendment to the plan by the PCVC, as it reflects the impact the pandemic has had on policing."

"Crime doesn't stop just because we have been told to stay at home. Crime is changing and the force is very much open for business. Arrests will still be made, investigations will continue and people will be charged."

## You Are Eligible For Coronavirus Test If You Have Symptoms

- Everyone in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with coronavirus symptoms can now get a test

- Anyone experiencing a new, continuous cough; high temperature; and now also a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste can book a test by visiting [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)

- 21,000 contact tracers in England now recruited

The Government has today announced that anyone with symptoms of coronavirus is now eligible to book a test, ahead of the rollout of the test and trace service.

The expansion in testing eligibility comes after all four UK Chief Medical Officers confirmed that anosmia has been added as a symptom of COVID-19. Anosmia is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell, and it can also affect your sense of taste. This means people should self-isolate immediately if they have a new, continuous

cough; high temperature; or a loss of or change in their normal sense of smell or taste. All members of their household must also self-isolate according to current guidelines, unless the symptomatic individual receives a negative test result.

### Testing

The extension in testing eligibility comes ahead of the rollout of the new test and trace service and is possible thanks to increased testing capacity across the country as the Government expands total testing capacity towards 200,000 tests a day.

The government has more than doubled the capacity of the NHS/PHE laboratory network, set up 50 regional test centres and 116 mobile testing units, and introduced home testing kits and three Lighthouse laboratories.

The number of tests available for the general population will increase as capacity continues to expand.

## NAFC Fundraiser for Ground Improvements



Like many clubs Newton Aycliffe FC is asking its local community for support this summer. Unfortunately, we haven't played since our season was cancelled in mid-March. However, we are working hard to come back stronger whenever it is decided that football can return safely. Before the lockdown we were able, thanks to a marvellous grant from GAMP, to complete the surfacing of the footpath leading to the ground. We are now looking to improve the pitch drainage and surface. This should both minimise postponements and also enhance the quality of the football.

The club also plans to install a turnstile in the ground in place of the existing "pay hut".

While the club was well on its way to hit our target to fund these plans the early end to the season meant that we weren't able to complete our fundraising. So, we would like to ask our fantastic supporters for their help to make up the shortfall. All donations will go to help us maintain and improve the ground.

[https://www.gofundme.com/f/pitch-work-and-turnstile?utm\\_source=whatsapp&utm\\_medium=chat&utm\\_campaign=p\\_cf+share-flow-1](https://www.gofundme.com/f/pitch-work-and-turnstile?utm_source=whatsapp&utm_medium=chat&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1)

## Drop in Numbers Seeking Help From GP for Domestic Abuse

Health officials have raised concerns over a drop in numbers of people seeking help for domestic abuse during the coronavirus lockdown.

GPs in County Durham are urging anyone suffering from domestic abuse, or anyone concerned that someone they know could be a victim, to ask for help.

Dr Chandra Anand, GP for Safeguarding Children and Adults, NHS County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) said: "Since the government's stay-at-home guidance was issued we have seen fewer people than usual seeking help for domestic abuse in primary care. We need to reassure anyone suffering any form of domestic abuse, including physical violence, psychological abuse or coercive and controlling behaviour that support services including GP practices remain open and available to help during this time."

Anyone in immediate danger from domestic abuse should call 999 - and press 55 on a mobile if they are unable to talk.

"We know that home is not a safe place for those experiencing domestic abuse and the much-needed respite often provided by work and school may no longer be available during these times, added Dr Anand.

"Therefore it is more important than ever that people know there are support services still available to help."

Harbour Support Services is continuing to support people affected by domestic abuse. Services are still open and able to support people in refuges, through telephone and video support sessions. Harbour can be contacted on 03000 202 525 or [clientservice@myharbour.org.uk](mailto:clientservice@myharbour.org.uk).

Help is also available at Gov.uk: Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse.

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