

karbon
homes

At Home with Karbon

Hello.

A very warm welcome to the summer edition of At home with Karbon, where you'll find engaging stories and helpful information.

We extend the warm welcome to our new customers joining us from Leazes Homes – a Newcastle-based housing provider with over 750 homes which became part of the Karbon Group in June. It's great to have you on board and I hope you enjoy the magazine.

In this edition, step into the kitchen at Tudor Court with us on page 4, where residents share how a food hygiene course has not only equipped them with essential skills, but has also fostered a sense of community and friendship within the retirement scheme.

The uplifting articles continue on pages 6 and 7, where we highlight the valuable contributions our contractors are making through social value work. When partnering with a contractor, many of them dedicate time to giving back and making a meaningful difference within communities.

We've also included a special feature on our Community Safety Team who tell you more about their roles and their work to keep homes and communities safe. You'll also find information about our Money Matters Team, offering customers financial support, our Holiday Squad children's activities and employment opportunities.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to provide an update on Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). Understanding our strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement is crucial for all social housing landlords. The Regulator of Social Housing has introduced TSMs to gauge all social landlord's performance through customer surveys, and soon we will share our annual results on our website, in our digital newsletter, Take 5, and future magazine editions. If you'd like to, sign up for the newsletter by emailing communications@karbonhomes.co.uk.

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine and have a great summer.

Ian Johnson

Executive Director of Customer Services

Share your stories or provide feedback

If you have a story you would like to share about yourself, another Karbon Homes customer or a group that's doing great work in your community, please get in touch with us at communications@karbonhomes.co.uk as we would love to include it in a future edition. You can also use this email address to provide any feedback on the magazine.

Special thanks to all our contributors:

Ayesha Adris, Middlesbrough - Iram Akram, Middlesbrough - Sumira Akram, Middlesbrough - Stephen Baba, Tudor Court, Middlesbrough - Colin Blackett, Community Safety Manager - Kari Best, Strategic Planning and Insight Manager - Brian Cross, Safer Communities Officer - Craig Cross, Safer Communities Officer (Byker Community Trust) - Michael Dodds, Safer Communities Officer - Lee Forrest, Money Matters Manager - Howard Fox, Tudor Court, Middlesbrough - Wendy Graham, Assistant Director of Customer Services - Rebecca Higgins, Safer Communities Officer - Rebecca Hunter, Safer Communities Officer - Debbie Kennedy, Scheme Coordinator, Tudor Court - Paul Moralee, Community Investment Manager - Chris O'Neil, Community Safety Team Manager - Linda Paice, Tudor Court, Middlesbrough - Andrew Robson, Director of Operations, Azure Charitable Enterprises - Maureen Rock, Tudor Court, Middlesbrough - Ruth Sutton, Environmental and Energy Officer - Aaron Taylor, Safer Communities Assistant

Linda's Great British Menu

Linda decided to start making breakfast and dinner for the other residents after taking part in a food hygiene course funded by Karbon Homes.

"I love catering. I used to run a bar in Portugal where I would make breakfasts, evening meals, Christmas dinners and cater for parties – you name it, I've done it.

After we took part in the food hygiene course, we wanted to start using the kitchen ourselves to cook for people here at Tudor Court.

I discussed this with our scheme coordinator, Debbie who helped to plan how we could do it and the amount we'd need to charge residents to make it affordable. She also helped sort flyers and menus to let the residents know about the meals.

We make breakfast and dinners three times a week. We run it ourselves, buying all the supplies and then the residents pay me for the meals. I keep the costs low and it goes down a treat.

We do full English breakfasts, bacon, sausage and egg baps and evening meals like roast dinners and pie and mash. The reaction's been brilliant – the other residents love it. We've had a lot of regulars come down to enjoy the meals, plus some people who wouldn't normally eat together have started joining us too. They even make requests for meals. It puts me on a high as well. It keeps me occupied and I love being able to do this."

The feedback from the residents has been wonderful too: "It's marvellous and it's cheap. It really brings everyone together." Howard Fox.

"I'm always excited for the meals. You get nutritious food along with togetherness and friendliness." Dr Stephen Baba.

"If you're on your own and you don't feel like cooking then this is really good. It's good to bring everyone together for a meal." Maureen Rock.

Tudor Court's Scheme Coordinator, Debbie Kennedy loves the new cooking venture: "It's a good way for everyone to socialise and prevent isolation. It's really brought the residents together and the atmosphere is lovely."

As told to At Home with Karbon.

Is there someone who's making a difference in your community?

Drop us a line and they could feature in a future issue of At Home with Karbon. Email [**communications@karbonhomes.co.uk**](mailto:communications@karbonhomes.co.uk)

Our plans to improve your homes

We take pride in your home. Every year, we spend approximately £26 million on our planned investment programme. This money pays for big scale repairs and improvement work on all our buildings.

This programme of investment helps to improve and maintain the quality of your home. It makes them more environmentally friendly, ensuring they meet something called the Decent Homes Standard. This national standard aims to ensure that all homes are in good condition, warm and energy efficient, safe and weatherproof, and have reasonably modern facilities.

We believe that ensuring our customers live in safe, secure and well-maintained homes is our fundamental role as a landlord. We can only do this by investing in our homes, for both our current and future customers, and we're committed to doing so.

Feeling the benefit

We've recently delivered over £3million worth of investment to improve our properties in County Durham and Northumberland. Customers have really felt the benefit:

"We've had new roofing put on which is really and truly beautiful."

Mrs. S Armstong, Haltwhistle.

"My favourite part has got to be the windows and cutting out those drafts. I know it's quite daunting having major works done to your property, but it's well worth having it done. It does make a difference." Ms G. Ward, Haltwhistle.

"The work has included more insulation as well as improvements to the roof. The difference it makes to the warmth of the house was immediate and really noticeable." Mr. C Barnes, Ouston.

"The houses needed some TLC and that's exactly what they got. I just love it and would absolutely recommend it." Ms. P Lowe, Ouston.

During 2024 – 2025, our planned investment programme will improve homes across our footprint. Some of this include over:

- **800** properties in County Durham
- **250** properties in Newcastle upon Tyne
- **300** properties in Northumberland

We'll be in touch to let you know if your home will be receiving planned investment work this year. You can also visit www.karbonhomes.co.uk/planned-investment to find out more about our planned investment programme.

Helping people hit the ground running

Our social value programme is one of the many ways we create strong, sustainable places for our communities. It looks at how our activities and investments can support our customers' lives.

Social value includes partnering with organisations that share our values and aims. One example of this is our work with Azure Charitable Enterprises. They carry out grounds maintenance work for us in Northumberland.

We sat down with their Director of Operations, Andrew Robson, to find out more about the partnership.

Hi Andrew, can you tell us a bit about Azure Charitable Enterprises?

Yes – we're a supported employer providing a range of services, including grounds maintenance, to organisations across Northumberland.

Can you explain a bit more about supported employment?

'Supported employment' is a term we use to describe our commitment to employing and supporting people who face various challenges, often disabilities, who may have frustrated their efforts to secure or sustain employment. Our aim is to enable people to live and work more independently by building their skills through training, mentoring and individual support.

How do you work with Karbon?

We originally started working with Karbon in 2018 – we were given a three-year, grounds maintenance contract, to maintain 40 sites across Morpeth, Mitford, Stannington and Ponteland.

How did the contract impact Azure?

It was a big deal for us, we were able to employ three new, full-time operators and invest in new vehicles and equipment for the contract.

We offer full time employment to our Grounds Maintenance Teams, which can be unusual in this line of work (which is often seasonal) – it's important that we create a stable working environment for our people to succeed in their role. In personal terms, a regular, annual income also supports staff to secure and support their tenancies or mortgages – it means we have a very low staff turnover, and even see staff returning to us after leaving to pursue other roles.

We received an ambassador title from you – what does this mean?

Yes! We granted Karbon our first ever Ambassador award in 2019, as we wanted to officially recognise Karbon's support of our work.

People with disabilities are much less likely to be in work, with the disability employment gap in the North East the biggest in England. As such, we think it is important that we recognise and highlight those organisations not only modelling but delivering values with a real impact.

The relationship we have with Karbon has been, and remains, instrumental in enabling us to extend the range of education, training and employment opportunities we can make available for the people we support.

How has working with us changed since the ambassador title?

We were awarded another "lot" in 2022. We now manage two lots across Northumberland and have received great feedback on the areas we've been working to improve, especially Pegswood.

We now employ 15 people working for Karbon; with our help, supervision and support, the staff can work in roles they may not have been able to before.

The continued support from Karbon means that we are continually developing and improving the services we offer. The jobs supported by our work for Karbon have a material impact on the lives of the people we employ and not simply in financial terms; these roles combat social exclusion/isolation, and they give our people the dignity and personal satisfaction of a job well-done.

We've also been able to introduce taster days, education and training opportunities for prospective employees and students. We also deliver education and training for young people with special educational needs or disabilities and a number of employability programmes.

What's next for Azure?

We're growing as an organisation and want to be able to support as many people as possible – that's why we're expanding and becoming a foundation. Changing the way we work will allow us to further invest money into services and directly into communities and organisations working to improve the lives of our client group. We're also working to secure funds to build a school for young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

For more information on Azure Charitable Enterprises and its work throughout the North East, visit **www.azure-charitable.co.uk**. If you're interested in finding out more about our Unlocking Social Value programme, visit **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/social-value**

Getting to know your Community Safety Team

Ensuring the safety of our communities is of great importance, and for every neighbourhood where our customers live, we have a dedicated team working alongside the police to help keep you safe.

We wanted to share the range of work our Community Safety Team delivers, and you can hear from some of the individuals who work tirelessly to help create secure and safe places for our customers to live.

What does our team deal with?

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is any behaviour that causes or is likely to cause fear, alarm and distress.

Most neighbours live happily and are pleasant to others. However, disputes can happen. If you're experiencing any anti-social behaviour or harassment, make sure to report it to us so that we can help.

Our Community Safety Team specialise in dealing with high-risk cases of anti-social behaviour, as well as protecting and supporting the victims, and they work closely with the police to resolve issues.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading or violent behaviour, including sexual violence.

We do not tolerate domestic abuse, and no one should live in fear of it. That's why we help and support any person experiencing it or feeling threatened.

Priority is always given to the safety of people suffering from domestic abuse. We provide victims with a quick and sensitive response and deal swiftly and effectively with perpetrators.

Reporting tools

iWitness

Our iWitness scheme encourages people to report disturbances and instances of anti-social behaviour when they see it.

A specially trained, independent and accredited team of iWitness officers respond to your reports of disturbances immediately, contacting you directly over the phone. They also provide accurate and credible witness statements.

They're available out-of-hours and they respond to reports and incidents of anti-social behaviour that are happening or ongoing when you call us.

The Noise App

The Noise App is a quick and easy way to record noise which is causing an annoyance or nuisance. Instantly record noise nuisance on your smartphone to create an accurate record of the problem and how it affects you. Once you've recorded your evidence, you can send it directly to us to investigate for free.

Scan here to download the Noise App:



Noise App
on iOS



Noise App
on Android

Domestic Abuse reporting

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, you can report this to us. Your information will be dealt with confidentially and sensitively. You don't have to face your problems alone.

You can contact us by calling **0808 164 0111** or send us an email at **domestic.abuse@karbonhomes.co.uk**. In an emergency, always call the police on **999**.

Colin Blackett – Community Safety Manager

“I have been involved in housing for 33 years now, joining Karbon in January 2024. This role is an exciting opportunity for me to be able to bring a vast amount of knowledge and experience to an organisation who are all about the customer and customer experience. Customers are at the heart of everything we do and the Community Safety Team ensure that we utilise all tools and powers available to us to support customers within their tenancy and take appropriate action against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour and/or Domestic Abuse.

I would urge our customers who are suffering from anti-social behaviour and or Domestic Abuse to reach out to us and not to sit in silence. Working together we can improve someone's quality of life.”

Chris O'Neil – Community Safety Team Manager

“I have experienced a variety of roles within the housing sector and decided to specialise in anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse as I find you can make a real difference to customers' lives.

The role can be very challenging, and no day is the same, it is a very fulfilling role. Being in a position of managing the team, I can have a positive impact on improving communities and increasing the general wellbeing of our customers.”

Rebecca Hunter – Safer Communities Officer

“As a member of our Community Safety Team, I believe it is vital to ensure the wellbeing and security of our community. My journey into this area stems from a deep-rooted passion for protecting and empowering individuals. I firmly believe in proactive measures to address safety concerns and foster a sense of trust and security among our customers. I find it immensely fulfilling to know that I play a role in making our communities a safer place for everyone.”

Aaron Taylor – Safer Communities Assistant

“Within my job role, I operate our CCTV and target hardening service, which involves installing safety and security into the homes of customers who are victims of anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse. I primarily work with domestic abuse victims but also work with other customers, too. The CCTV offers safety and reassurance to our customers, and wider communities, as well as helping us gather evidence to further aid in our investigations. It brings great satisfaction and pride with the help I provide our customers.”

Rebecca Higgins – Safer Communities Officer

“I work with a team of professionals to ensure the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of our customers, as well as to raise awareness and prevent domestic abuse in our communities. I am passionate about helping people overcome trauma and violence.”

Craig Cross – Safer Communities Officer (Byker Community Trust)

“I work out of the Byker Community Trust office managing cases of anti-social behaviour, breaches of tenancy and compliance issues, such as when we access issues in the Byker housing estate and Byker Wall. I have worked in Byker for at least 10 years and really enjoy trying to make a difference for people in the area.”

You can find out more about Community Safety and support we offer at **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/community-safety**

Live your best green life

Did you know that the 6 – 12 July is Net Zero Week? It's the UK's national awareness week looking at how we can make changes to reduce the effects of climate change. Here are small practical steps we can all take that can really help make improvements to the environment and let you...

You can really save some energy during your morning routine:

Take a shower instead of a bath - the average bath uses 80 litres of water, compared to a five minute shower which uses 75 litres. Just keep the shower singing to a minimum and avoid the epic ballads!

If you're a fan of a morning brew, try filling the kettle up with the amount of water you need to reduce the boiling time. Measure out the amount using your mug and pour that into the empty kettle.

Once you've made your brekkie, turn off the kettle and toaster at the plug, plus any other appliances you've used once you're finished with them.

You can take sustainable steps on your commute

Whether it's going to work or dropping the kids off at school, how we get there can make a major difference to the environment.

Whenever possible, opt for things like walking, biking, carpooling or using public transport such as a bus or train which create lower carbon emissions than driving alone.

You can track the emissions from your daily commute using an online calculator such as this one from Ecohedge: <https://ecohedge.com/free-calculator>

Lunchtime – eat green to be green

A lot of greenhouse emissions come from meat production in the food industry. By reducing the amount of meat and dairy we eat and adding more plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains into our diet, we can significantly lower our carbon footprint.

You can find out more about the carbon footprint of your diet by searching online for the BBC's climate change food calculator.

Working smart

We can do our bit at work as well, by doing things like recycling waste and reducing the number of pages we print. Roughly 80% of the world's plastic bottles end up in landfills – switching to a reusable water bottle or coffee cup can save 94.4 kg of CO₂ a year per person.

For those who use a computer or any electronic devices, it's best to shut them down when leaving the office to save energy overnight.

Shop smart

If you're heading to the shops to pick up something for dinner, remember to bring your reusable bags – 160,000 plastic bags are consumed a second, and can cause pollution, even ending up in the ocean and killing wildlife.

Sustainable shopping – buying pre-owned clothes and furniture is an easy way to lower our carbon footprint and save money. We can also donate our own clothes and furniture or swap with friends instead of them going to waste.

When you're making dinner avoid throwing out items that can be reused such as containers.

Make the most out of compost – you can make a compost bin and use it for items such as fruit and vegetable scraps, tea bags, coffee grounds and paper filters and grass clippings. Visit www.recyclenow.com/how-to-recycle/home-composting for more information.

Recycle materials such as paper, glass and metal – recycling reduces the need for raw materials, energy and landfill space, which then helps lower carbon emissions. Many supermarkets now take soft plastics (such as crisp packets) and batteries that you can't put in your recycling bin at home. These recycling bins are often found near the shop's entrance. Find out more at www.recyclenow.com.

Consider getting a water butt for your garden – this is a great money saving way to collect rainwater that can be reused to keep plants watered or clean household or outdoor equipment.

Turn the lights off before bed

Before you go to bed, make sure to turn off all the lights in the house (unless you leave any on for security) and unplug any items such as TVs, laptops and phones – most devices only take a few hours to charge, so leaving them on overnight uses up more energy than needed.

While it's not always possible to take all these steps, even just doing a few can make a real difference.

A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases that are generated by our actions.

How are you helping the environment?

Let us know what you're doing to help the environment by emailing your tips to **communications@karbonhomes.co.uk**

Help us reduce our carbon footprint

Another way we can reduce our carbon footprint is to cut down on the number of things we print, including copies of this magazine.

If you would be happy to receive a web friendly version of At Home with Karbon emailed over to you rather than having the printed version posted out to you, then please contact us at **communications@karbonhomes.co.uk** and we'll switch your subscription over.

Money Matters

Could you be missing out on £15 billion of benefits that goes unclaimed every year?

It's hard to believe we're over halfway through the year! Our financial circumstances can often change rapidly, through factors out of our control, meaning we could be in a very different position to what we were in January.

Being able to understand what we are entitled to when we need some extra support can often be confusing, and we can end up missing out.

Karbon customers David and Emma* recently accessed the Money Matters service, and were able to improve their financial circumstances, through several benefits, including some they didn't know they were entitled to.

David had been unable to work for many months due to mental health issues, and this had significantly impacted the household income, with only one part time income being brought in by Emma. Along with having two dependent children, and under occupying their home by one bedroom, the family were under a lot of financial stress.

David was referred to the Money Matters service by his living well coordinator. The couple were identified as needing a benefit check to try and maximise their income, along with searching for any other benefits they could be entitled to.

As a result of working with Money Matters, the family were awarded an extra income of £871 per month through this benefit search.

Emma said: "The Money Matters Team were brilliant – so helpful.

"We've been able to claim things we didn't even know existed before speaking to Money Matters.

"We'd recommend the Money Matters service to other customers, especially because we didn't know what we could be entitled to."

Lee Forrest, Money Matters Manager at Karbon Homes, said: “Benefit rules can be complicated, and the Money Matters Team is trained to provide specialist advice to help customers navigate their way through the system.

“It’s great to see that these customers have been successful in working with our team, and hopefully the extra income will help to reduce the financial stress they have been under.”

If you feel in a similar situation to this customer’s story, or want to find out more about Money Matters, please contact the team at **money matters@karbonhomes.co.uk** or on **0808 164 0111**.

Remember, you’re not alone and the Money Matters Team are here to help.

*Customers names have been changed for anonymity

Do what you need, when you need

Are you using MyKarbon yet?

What is MyKarbon?

MyKarbon is our free, safe and secure online tool where you can view and manage your tenancy and access some of our services digitally. It's available 24/7 on any device, so you can do what you need, when you need.

What can you use it for?

1. Managing your tenancy

MyKarbon can be used to help manage your tenancy, making those little jobs that bit easier and putting your mind at ease that everything is as it should be.

Use MyKarbon to:

- View your account balance
- Make online payments
- Request a refund (if your account is eligible and in credit)
- See your weekly or monthly charges
- View a breakdown of your charges
- Read your rent statements

2. Managing your repairs and servicing

MyKarbon can be used to help manage your home's repairs and servicing, making it easier to book and track appointments and maintain your home in working order. Use MyKarbon to:

- Log/report a repair
- Book an appointment for a new repair
- View details of your active repairs, including the latest status
- Request an update for a pending repair appointment
- Request a change to an upcoming repair appointment
- View your upcoming servicing appointment details
- Request a change to an upcoming servicing appointment

3. Manage your details

You can use MyKarbon to update your account details to ensure we always have the latest information for you. Use MyKarbon to:

- View and update your contact details
- Change your password

We now have over 10,000 customers with a MyKarbon account!
In the last 12 months, over:

- **6,000** repairs were reported
- **87,000** payments were made
- **1,200** new customers created an account

We've designed it to be easy to use, so if you already do online shopping, banking or even social media then you'll find MyKarbon is right for you!

If you'd like to learn how to use MyKarbon, but aren't confident with using digital tools, then our Foundations for Life Team can help you learn some digital skills.

You can get in touch with them by dropping an email to

foundations@karbonhomes.co.uk or calling us on **0808 164 0111**.

Scan here to sign up for MyKarbon today

Or go to: www.karbonhomes.co.uk/mykarbon

On the page that appears, click register and put in your details, you'll need your name, date of birth, an email address and your tenancy reference number which can be found on any letters you've received from us.



How we'll handle your complaints

Here at Karbon, we work hard to give you a brilliant service. But we know sometimes things do go wrong.

We've recently updated our complaints policy and process to ensure our service is up to scratch. We spoke to Wendy Graham, our Assistant Director of Customer Experience to find out more.

Making a complaint

We'd encourage you to contact us as soon as possible after the issue first arises, as complaints must be raised within 12 months of the incident, ideally when you first became aware of the problem. This is so we can deal with the problem as quickly as possible.

Service request

Sometimes you might need us to take action, but not handle it as a complaint. This is a 'service request' such as a request for a repair or reporting anti-social behaviour. It may also be a query for information or an explanation, or a request to put something right.

Service requests are not complaints. If you are dissatisfied with our approach to resolve the issue, or the outcome, you'll be given the opportunity to make a complaint.

Stage one - Responding to your complaint

We'll look to resolve problems and put things right with the minimum of delay. When you get in touch, we'll establish full details of what's happened and what you would like us to do about it.

Stage two - Reviewing your complaint

If you're unhappy with our response at Stage one you can move your complaint to Stage two. We'll listen to what you feel has not been appropriately investigated or disagree with and work with you to understand the outcome you're looking for.

Not satisfied with our response. You can choose to take your complaint further

We'll always try and resolve complaints. However, if you need extra support or advice during the complaints process, you can contact the Housing and Financial Ombudsman Services, Building Safety Regulator, Citizens Advice or get help from a designated person – this can be a local Councillor or your local MP.

You can find out more about our complaints process by visiting

karbonhomes.co.uk/complaints

Learning from our complaints

We're always looking to improve.

To do this we'll learn from your feedback and try to improve the experience for other customers. Below are just a few examples of the feedback we've had from both customers and colleagues, the actions we're taking in response to this feedback and the results of these actions.

Complaints responded to in timescales

A major piece of customer feedback last year was that we weren't responding to complaints in agreed timescales.

This has been a significant area of focus across all teams. We implemented alerts before deadlines for colleagues and introduced weekly performance reporting to monitor progress. We also provided one-to-one guidance and training to colleagues to ensure they meet timescales and maintain contact with customers.

This has resulted in a notable improvement in our performance, with us achieving over 98% of complaints on time for the last four months.

Accessibility to our complaints process

Some customers shared that we needed to make our complaints process easier to understand and more accessible. We refreshed all our customer complaint materials to make them easier to read. So, our leaflet and video are now much shorter, with the leaflet available in an easy read format too. We've also developed a visual infographic (which you can see below) and offer a translation service too.

Our complaint process

The Housing Ombudsman can help you throughout the process and you can escalate to them after Stage two.



Damp and Mould

In response to an increase in the number of calls and complaints from customers in relation to damp and mould, we've put a number of new processes in place to address the issues customers were raising.

We introduced a Damp and Mould Project Team consisting of colleagues from different areas of the business. The team created a new Damp and Mould Policy, and a new process for managing cases, designed to improve the experience for customers. We are also currently piloting a new case management system and intend to roll out further improvements in the coming months.

We've recruited additional trade operatives and surveyors so that we can respond to reports of damp and mould as quickly as possible. We have rolled out training for all customer-facing colleagues to identify and support customers. We've also updated our website and leaflets, which are available in multiple languages, to help guide customers on this important topic.

Scan here to find out more about our approach to damp, mould and condensation:



Or go to: **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/dampandmould**

Feeling at home at work

In our last issue, we chatted to Shazia Noor whose Middlesbrough-based business Nur Fitness helps empower women in the community.

We've now had the chance to meet her new employees Ayesha Adris, Iram Akram and Sumira Akram who, thanks to our employability scheme New Start, have been given the opportunity to develop their careers with Shazia.

Ayesha, who is 39, was originally from Pakistan, but moved to Middlesbrough 17 years ago with her husband and children. She's now working as an Administration Assistant at Nur Fitness.

"When you come over from Pakistan and your English is not as good, it's quite hard to settle in and it can affect your confidence. I wanted to find work where I can help women in the community with their mental health.

"Working for a place like Nur Fitness has been great. I'm able to tell people that they can come here where it's a comfortable environment where there are loads of opportunities to exercise and take part in free courses – it's a big help.

"I'd struggled with interviews, not just because of the language barrier but also because I didn't have the qualifications. With New Start, Graeme, our career advisor, was able to help us with our CVs and give us advice for interviews. He helped me with my nerves and showed me how to speak more confidently about the skills I have."

Sumira (42) and Iram (40), both originally from Pakistan and now living in Middlesbrough, were both able to find work as cleaners at Nur Fitness.

Sumira wanted to try something new:

"Now that my children are older it gave me the chance to find something.

"I'm really enjoying working here. Shazia who runs Nur Fitness is so friendly and creates a relaxed environment."

This was the first time Iram had applied for a job in the UK:

"I needed the support and New Start gave me that. Graeme made sure we're happy and supports us with our CVs and working on our interviews.

I hope I can build a career. I would love to continue working at Nur Fitness. I feel at home."

New Start is an employability programme that can help unlock your potential, addressing your barriers to employment and supporting you to find the new start you've been looking for. We now have a range of vacancies across Tees Valley, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. open to those living in our properties. Visit www.new-start.co.uk for more details.

Fun for all this summer

Our Holiday Squad has a great range of free activities for children of primary school age living in the North East running during the summer holidays.

They're also special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) friendly, which means that as many children as possible can take part.

We spoke to our Community Investment Manager, Paul Moralee to find out more.

“We believe that all children should have the opportunities to take part in fun, engaging and enriching activities, no matter their background or needs.

“We've been working closely with parents, providers and venues to put as much in place as practical to support children and make sessions accessible to all.

“As part of this, we provide introductory phone calls and venue information to parents, guardians or carers of any child identified as having additional needs or medical requirements.

“We're also flexible on when they arrive and leave, the age of the children and the delivery of the session so it can fit around individuals and make attending easier.

“The feedback we've had on these sessions has been great. We're so pleased that our Holiday Squad activities have made even more people happy.”

“To say Karbon went over and above is an understatement, they were fantastic. My child had an accident just coming into the venue which I needed to sort out. The staff carried on and slotted him easily, it was great they had the heads up without me needing to explain their condition. Thank you.” Kara .

“Absolutely fantastic, thanks so much for your help and effort in supporting our children.” Lisa.

Holiday Squad returns this summer with free activities for children of primary school age.

If you live in the County Durham area and your child is eligible for the Fun and Food programme, please reserve your places using the information provided by your child's school. For all other bookings or additional places on Durham activities, please visit **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/squad**

Coffee time and Karbon Kids

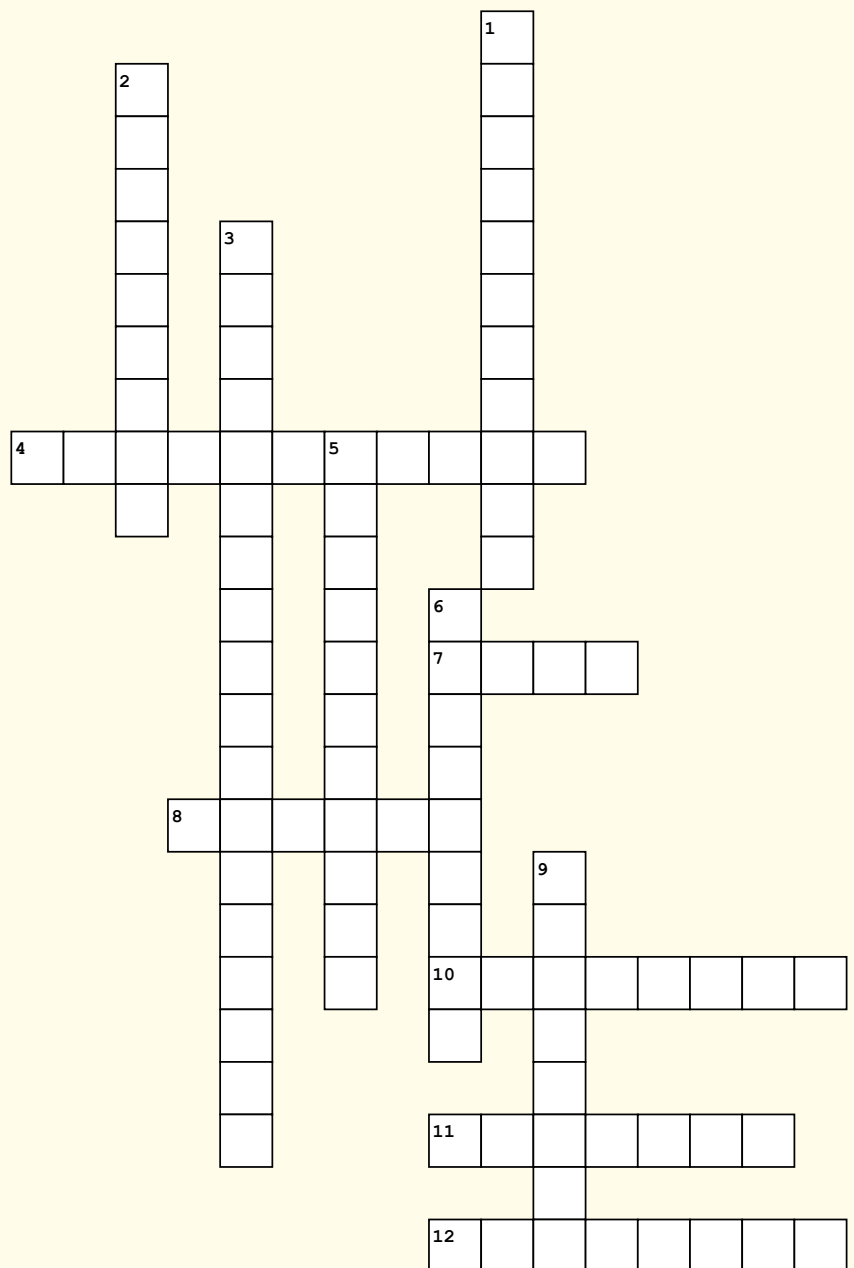
Crossword

Across

- Name of the course customers at Tudor Court took (4,7)
- Character in Frozen who loved summer (4)
- Last year's highest grossing film (6)
- Major football tournament taking place this summer (4,4)
- Converting waste into reusable material (7)
- Frozen dessert (3,5)

Down

- Annual funfair that takes place on the Town Moor in Newcastle upon Tyne in June (3,8)
- Tennis tournament that takes place during the summer in the UK (9)
- Name of our new Holiday Squad mascot (3,3,7,5)
- Music festival that takes place in Somerset in June (11)
- Musician who sang The Boys of Summer (3,6)
- Outdoor cooking (8)



Sudoku

Easy

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

Trickier

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

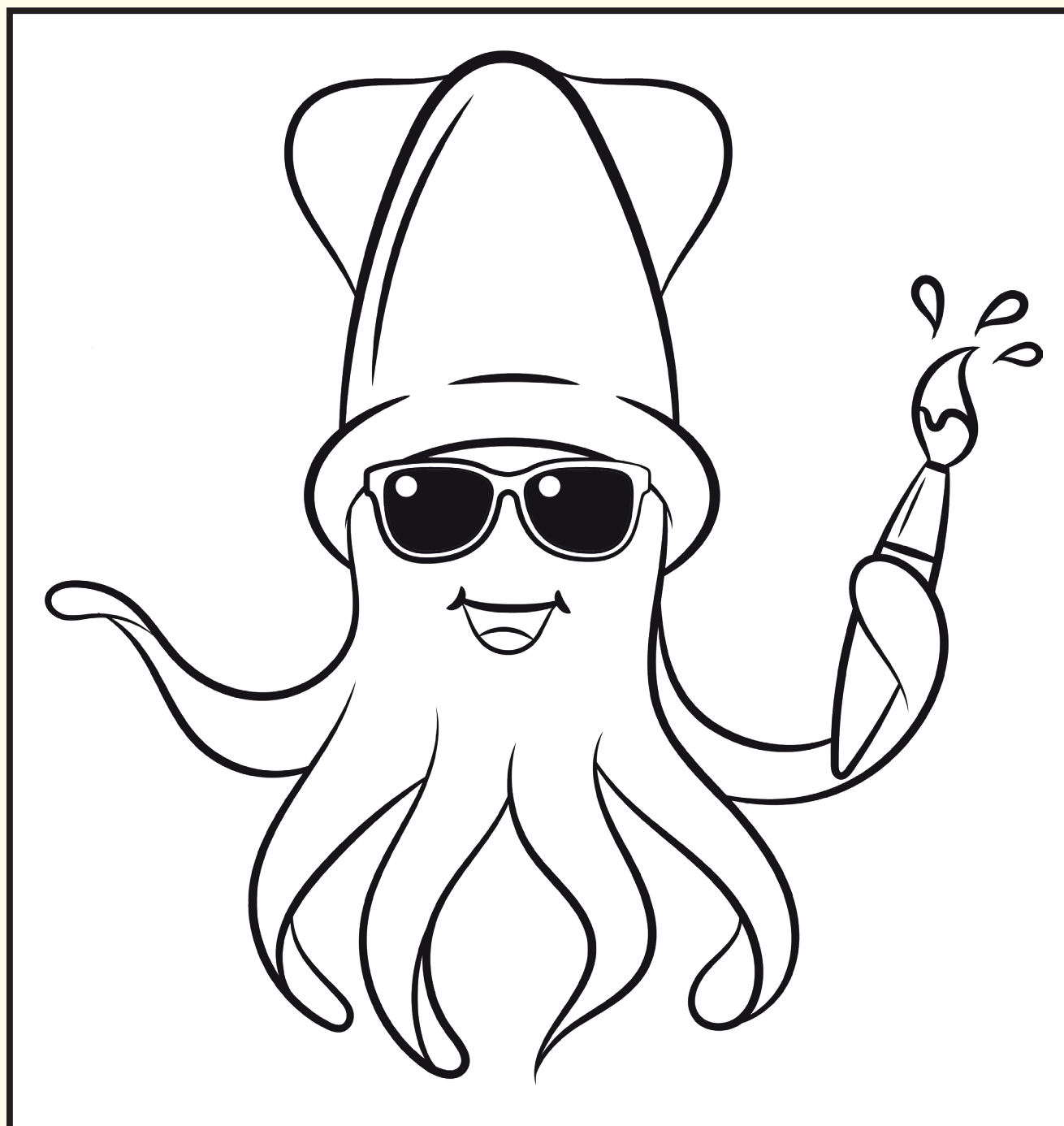
Crossword answers
 Across: 4. Food hygiene, 7. Olaf, 8. Barbie, 10. Euro 2024, 11. Recycle, 12. Ice Cream
 Down: 1. The Hoppings, 2. Wimbledon, 3. Sid the Holiday Squid, 5. Glastonbury, 6. Don Henley, 9. Barbecue

Holiday Squid – colouring competition

To celebrate the return of Holiday Squad this summer, we are giving you the chance to win a £25 gift voucher with our colouring competition!

Grab your pens, pencils, crayons and paints and colour in our new Holiday Squad mascot – Sid the Holiday Squid. Be as creative as you like, you can even add some of your favourite summer holiday activities to the picture as well.

Ask a grownup to share your entry with us by sending a photo of your entry to **communications@karbonhomes.co.uk** and be sure to include your age. We'll publish a selection of the entries on Facebook and in the next edition. Good luck! Turn to page 17 to find out more about our free summer activities as part of Holiday Squad.



Ways to get and stay in touch

Email info@karbonhomes.co.uk

Email is perfect for cancelling appointments or for less urgent enquiries.

Facebook [@karbonhomes](https://www.facebook.com/karbonhomes)

Write to us at:

**Karbon Homes, Number Five
Gosforth Park Avenue
Gosforth Business Park
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 8EG**

Visit us

To see which of our offices are open to customers for drop-ins and which are appointment only, visit www.karbonhomes.co.uk/contact

MyKarbon

www.karbonhomes.co.uk/mykarbon

Use to book and track repairs, check and pay your rent balance and update contact details. It's quick, easy and can be used anytime.

You can now set up a Direct Debit with MyKarbon. It's quick and easy to do. Log in to MyKarbon. Go to 'My tenancy' and select 'Create Direct Debit'. Enter your details and payment preferences. You'll then be taken to a secure site with our Direct Debit partner Allpay. To finish, enter your bank details.

Phone 0808 164 0111

8am – 6pm weekdays

We're here for repairs, rent payments and general enquiries. You can check your rent balance and make a payment anytime, without even speaking to an advisor. Just select the payment option and provide your tenancy number to use our automated service.

Out of hours service available:

6pm – 8am weekdays plus weekends and bank holidays. Automated rent payments, urgent repairs and other emergencies such as reports of anti-social behaviour.