

karbon
homes

At home with karbon

July 2023

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Didn't get your copy of the magazine? You can subscribe or unsubscribe at any time, or if you'd like it in another format, such as translated or audio version, let us know!

Polski - Prosimy o kontakt z nami, je.li .ycz. sobie Pa.stwo otrzyma. ten dokument winnym j.zyku.

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Special thanks to all our contributors:

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Hello and welcome to your summer edition of At Home with Karbon.

There's lots in this issue to help you make the most of the warm weather. Over the pages, you'll find a delicious recipe that's ideal for a picnic sweet treat (page 4), top tips for safe play (page 14) and helpful advice on getting outdoor spaces summer-ready (page 21).

We've heart-warming news from around our Karbon communities too, like customer Carol's special thank you on page 6, our Coronation photo special on pages 8 and 9, and children's holiday feature on pages 16 and 17. Can you spot anyone you know?

There's also lots of useful information to help you make the most of your Karbon services and to highlight our commitments to you.

It's also important for me to acknowledge that we know that some of our customers are having to wait longer than usual for a repair. This is not the usual level of service we expect and we're sorry if you've been affected. We understand how important repairs are and how frustrating this can be, so please rest assured we're working hard to get to you as soon as we can, and we continue to respond to emergency repairs quickly.

We've dedicated space to providing full details on the best way to request repairs and how to stay up-to-date with the status of your repair too, please turn to page 19.

I hope you find your magazine an enjoyable and helpful read.

Ian Johnson, Executive Director of Customer Services

Love Food! – Sahida’s Chocolate Surprise Fudge

Sahida Ditta’s love of sharing food with others has been a driving force in her life. Here, she shares one of her all-time favourite recipes – a sweet treat reserved for special occasions.

Hello Sahida! Tell us a bit about yourself please

I’ve always lived and worked in Teesside and I’m passionate about helping people wherever I can. After a career within the NHS, I set up Amal Project Teesside to support my local community.

When did your love of food begin?

I was brought up within a large multigenerational family and food has always been the heart of our home. My earliest memories are of the kitchen being a hive of activity with my mum and grandma cooking up traditional Pakistani dishes in large silver pots. I remember waking up on the mornings of occasions such as Eid to the smell of food cooking in the kitchen. These memories and the importance of sharing tasty homecooked food is something that has stayed with me throughout my adult life. I love the feeling of sharing a dish I have cooked with someone and knowing that they are enjoying it.

What is the Amal Project all about?

We work to address the needs of the community – whether that is through food or clothing support or raising the voice of people or improving opportunities. We adopt an inclusive approach with a focus towards those from a minority heritage background (BAME). We run one of the first all-inclusive eco shops in Stockton-on-Tees where everyone is welcome to access low-cost foods items in one place, as we also stock culturally-suitable food items. This is something that is much-needed in the current climate, with so many people struggling with the increase in the cost-of-living.

What have you chosen to cook with us and why?

I love to make healthy food but I have a sweet tooth and a single piece of this fudge recipe definitely satisfies that craving! It’s so quick and easy to make, and it will last in the fridge for up to three weeks. You can also easily half or double the recipe, the setting times will just change slightly. Try swapping the chocolate eggs for any other chocolate treat you fancy.

To find out more about the Amal Project, check out the Facebook page at **amalprojectteesside** or email **amalprojectteesside@gmail.com**

Ultimate three-ingredient fudge

Ingredients

1 tin condensed milk (397g)

500g white chocolate

400g small chocolate eggs

Top tip! I use a 9-inch square tin for a nice depth of fudge.

How it's done

Line a tin with baking paper

Chop the white chocolate and put into a heavy-based pan, along with all of the condensed milk

Melt on a low heat, stirring often so that the chocolate doesn't catch on the bottom and burn, and so that the ingredients mix well together

Leave the mixture to cool for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent a skin from forming on the top

Crush the chocolate eggs and pour in three quarters of them (reserving some for the top) before quickly stirring through

Top tip! Your eggs will start melting if your mixture hasn't cooled enough. Just stop mixing and pop it in the fridge for a while if this happens.

Pour the mixture into the tin and smooth it over

Sprinkle on the remaining crushed chocolate eggs and press into the top of the fudge

Pop in the fridge for at least 3-4 hours to set, or overnight if you can wait!

Remove from the tin and cut into squares

Top tip! I find 1-inch squares the perfect size.

Return to the fridge for another couple of hours to finish setting

Enjoy!

Karbon has helped to fund the work of the Amal Project. Let us know if we can help support a community project you run. Drop us an email on

mycommunity@karbonhomes.co.uk or visit
www.karbonhomes.co.uk/community-funding

Got a recipe you'd love to share? Just drop us a line at
communications@karbonhomes.co.uk to feature on these pages.

Thank you, Carol!

Ann Cowell, a customer in Craghead, County Durham, wrote to us to ask if we could say a special thank you to someone she admires in her community. Over to you Ann...

“For years, I’ve admired the hard work and dedication of Carol Roberts who runs the community centre and café at St Stephen’s Centre in South Stanley.

She is so kind and thoughtful. She goes above and beyond, organising anything that the community needs. If anyone is struggling with anything she will come to the rescue and find a way to help. She never turns anyone away.

I’ve seen her organising everything from playgroups for children to meals on wheels for older people – and I only know about a fraction of the stuff she does! It must take a lot of energy but she does it with a smile on her face.

I have three elderly friends who are fiercely independent but need some extra support these days. Carol was the natural person I turned to. I asked if she could help deliver some food for them and the meals the centre produces are amazing. They’re now a real highlight of the week for my friends.

Carol has played an important role in the lives of an awful lot of families over the years and I just want her to know how appreciated she is. It’s people like Carol that really make a community.”

Carol was surprised and delighted to hear Ann had contacted us to pass on her gratitude.

“It’s so lovely that someone would take the time to acknowledge the work we do at the centre! We certainly don’t do any of it for praise but it feels really nice to know it is appreciated.

It’s important to say though, that it’s not just me doing the work here, it’s our whole team. There’s only a few of us and I couldn’t do all of this without such an amazing team pulling together.

I love supporting our community and think it’s a pretty special place. Having grown up and lived here all my life, I know all about this community and the changes it’s gone through. I know the challenges people face and I’ve learned what brings people close together.

“As a mam of five and grandma to 10, I’ve been through a thing or two myself! I’ve had dark times and can draw on my own experience to help others in good times and bad.”

Carol's story

"To be honest, I took over this role of centre manager by chance! I came to work here 17 years ago as an office assistant. My job was to help the founder of the South Stanley Partnership, whose vision it was to create a place to bring the community together.

Unfortunately, he died suddenly and I was left with the decision of whether to let the charity fold or use my knowledge to continue his good work. I decided I owed it to him to build on his foundations as his legacy.

We've come on in leaps and bounds. We just keep adapting to what is needed to make sure we offer a warm and friendly place of kindness, support and community."

To find out more about what's on at South Stanley Partnership visit **www.southstanleypartnership.co.uk** or search SSP Community Café on Facebook.

New! The Bread and Butter Thing food club, which receives funding from Karbon Homes, runs from the community centre. Find out more and sign up for free at **www.breadandbutterthing.org**

Is there someone you'd like to say thank you to in your community? Drop us a line and we'll do the rest! Email **communications@karbonhomes.co.uk**

Coronation celebrations

Bunting, music and afternoon teas fit for a king, the Coronation was well and truly celebrated by the residents at our Extra Care schemes across the North East.

We spoke to several of the residents and teams from some of those schemes to find out more about their celebrations, which included a 'special guest' appearance.

The Manors

The team at The Manors in Prudhoe put on an afternoon tea, a royal quiz and invited guest singer Ian James to serenade the residents.

Beryl felt well taken care of: "Everything's been wonderful. You can't fault them. I've never been this looked after in my life and I'm nearly 90."

Helen, who recently moved into the The Manors, loved the community spirit: "Events like this really bring everyone together. It's like a street party. Everyone has been so welcoming and friendly."

Lorna, Pamela, James and Margaret sat on a table together and had a great time: "It really puts you in the mood for the coronation. It's important to socialise and enjoy each other's company.

"We really want to show our appreciation for the staff as well, they do such a great job and make us all feel like kings and queens."

Scheme Coordinator, Lauren McKie even arranged for a special visit from the King himself... well, sort of. Staff and residents had fun taking a life-sized cardboard cut-out of King Charles III to events at the scheme, as well as touring local businesses and seeing the sights of Prudhoe. His visit even made it onto the news!

"It was surprisingly easy to get King Charles to The Manors for the week, we just ordered a visit online.

"When he arrived, our residents thought he was brilliant and that's when we came up with the idea of taking him on a tour of Prudhoe, as a bit of fun for the wider community."

The Elms

The residents at The Elms in Chester-le-Street also enjoyed a visit from the King Charles cut-out along with a royal buffet.

One of the residents, Richard, felt fantastic: "I really enjoyed being with everybody and getting my photo taken with "King Charles".

Another resident, Jan, wanted to thank the staff for putting on the celebrations: “Lisa and Kim worked very hard and it was much appreciated. It’s important to gather all our friends and people who have lived here. It made us all very happy.”

Lynwood House

Meanwhile, at our retirement living scheme Lynwood House in Lanchester, the residents enjoyed lots of Coronation treats, including a delicious Coronation cake.

Linda Gettings, Scheme Coordinator said: “The celebrations really elevated the Coronation for the residents and helped them to make lasting memories.”

One of the residents, also called Linda, decorated the room for the big day: “I loved decorating the room and seeing people laugh and get together. After Covid had such a massive impact on all of us, it’s great to be celebrating like this again.”

Residents Sylvia, Joyce, Valerie and June all agreed: “It’s important to support the monarchy and to keep traditions. This is good for the country and it brings people and families together.”

Elsewhere in Karbon communities...

There were also celebrations in Karbon communities across the region, including Whitewell Road where residents enjoyed the opportunity to get together and celebrate the day.

They also made sure that anyone who couldn’t attend were supplied with cake and goodies too.

Susan Fenwick, who is the Housing Officer for the community said: “It’s so important for all residents to have a sense of community and wellbeing. Having celebrations like this gives them an opportunity to make sure everyone is alright and meet up with their neighbours.

“Talking and chatting leads to a sustainable community and everyone has an opportunity to find out who their neighbours are.”

We’d love to hear how you celebrated the King’s Coronation in May. If you would like to share your stories and pictures from your celebrations, please email **communications@karbonhomes.co.uk**

MyKarbon – Have you got yours?

Manage your home at your fingertips. With a MyKarbon account you can:

View your balance, recent transactions and make a rent payment

Log a repair and book your own appointment, view outstanding repairs and their latest status, view past repairs

Keep your personal details up to date - meaning you'll not miss any important messages

It's safe, secure and can be accessed anytime, on any device.

We've made it quick and easy to sign up

All you'll need is a little bit of information that includes:

- Your name
- Your date of birth
- Your tenancy number – you can find this on your rent statement or any letter we've sent you
- An active email address.

Is it difficult to use?

Not at all, a few simple clicks are all you need - it's as easy as doing your online shop. It only takes a few minutes to make a payment or book a repair – you won't need to wait in any queues! Customers have logged into MyKarbon over 120,000 times in the past year alone, so join lots of others who are already benefitting from their MyKarbon account. Check out our handy guides, FAQs and videos on our website for more information karbonhomes.co.uk/mykarbon

Need a hand?

Did you know our digital coaches from the Foundations for Life Team can help you get to grips with your account? Just call our Customer Relationship Team on **0808 164 0111** and we can help you get set up or put you through to the Foundations for Life Team.

Facts:

More than 50% of MyKarbon users are over 45 years old

82% of logins are made on a mobile phone

Over 62,000 payments made and over 6,000 repairs logged via MyKarbon in the last year

Money Matters – Ask Lee

Q. I've heard lots about Universal Credit (UC) again recently, what do I need to do? Do I have a choice about moving to UC?

A. Are you on one of the six legacy benefits that UC is replacing? If so, then you might have heard that you will get a letter from the DWP telling you that you have to claim Universal Credit. This process is being called Managed Migration by the Government and is happening over the next five years.

A relatively small number of people – those who only currently receive Tax Credits – will be part of this year's managed migration rollout so it isn't happening yet for most of us. But if you do get a letter and you're not sure what it's asking you to do, then just get in touch and we'll help.

It might be financially beneficial for people on other legacy benefits to make the switch to UC early, however it could make you worse off. We're here to help. If you want a hand to know whether it's right for you to switch now, please get in touch with our Money Matters Team and we'll check it out for you.

Are you missing out?

You might have heard in the news recently that £19 billion of benefits are going unclaimed each year. Could you be entitled to some of that money?

If you've had a change in circumstances recently or you've not reviewed your finances for a while, it could be well worth double checking. A quick confidential benefit check by our Money Matters Team will find out for you. What have you got to lose?

Get in touch

For free, independent support, call the Money Matters Team on **0800 164 0111** or email **moneymatters@karbonhomes.co.uk**

Turning feedback into action

Karbon's Assistant Director of Customer Experience, Wendy Graham and Research Analyst, Peter Stephenson tell us why new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are so important to you, our customers.

The lowdown: what are Tenant Satisfaction Measures?

The Government has introduced a new way to check if social landlords in England are doing their job right, called Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

There are 22 different things that get checked to make sure that everyone lives in a safe, comfortable place with a landlord who cares about them. 10 of them are measured by the landlord themselves, like how quickly they fix things and how easy it is to get in touch with them. The other 12 are measured through a survey with customers, to see how satisfied they are with their home, their landlord and the area they live.

The aim is to make the performance of social housing landlords visible and easy to access for customers. By seeing how your landlord is doing, you can hold us to account properly.

Wendy... Customer care and satisfaction is at the heart of what we do. We already gather feedback from customers in lots of other ways to ensure we are the very best we can be, but this is about setting good standards for the whole housing sector, across England. By highlighting who does what really well within the sector, we can turn to each other for guidance and to share best practice.

Peter... The interesting thing about this system is it doesn't just measure our performance; it also measures perception. We currently ask customers how satisfied you are with a particular service you have received like having a repair, but the tenant perception survey is about how you feel about us, whether you've received a service or not.

Wendy... This gives us another way to understand what's on the mind of our customers and then act on it. We'll learn lessons from customers who are happy, as well as those who are not and we'll use all that insight to make changes. We're striving to constantly improve and to give our customers the best possible service.

Peter... The Government brought this system in nationally on 1 April, but we started gathering customer feedback a year early to get ahead with making improvements. We already have over 2,000 responses to create a starting point to work from. We'll now carry out a monthly survey, which will be compared annually.

What we know already

Here's what you told us when we asked you for your satisfaction levels in 2022/23 on the following:

What we're doing well

89.5% We treat you fairly and with respect

87.4% Your rent provides value for money

87.2% You're kept informed about things that matter to you

84.8% Are satisfied with the overall repairs service over the last 12 months

80.7% Are satisfied with service provided by Karbon Homes

Things we're working to improve

77.4% Time taken to complete your most recent repair after you reported it

77.2% Keeping communal areas clean and well maintained

76.8% Making a positive contribution to your neighbourhood

76.6% Listening to your views and acting upon them

67% Approach to handling anti-social behaviour

65.4% Approach to complaints handling

You said, we did

And here are a couple of examples of improvements we've made following your feedback.

Repairs. You told us it can be frustrating when you're waiting to find out when your repair will be made. We built a new function into the MyKarbon portal to allow you to see the status of any outstanding repairs and servicing in your account. The feature shows appointments booked and updates on your logged repairs, as well a button to request a new repair.

Damp, mould and condensation. A small number of you told us about concerns with damp, mould and condensation in your surveys. We put in place a robust system to spot any problems reported in survey data and pass all relevant information to our property services team to action.

Your chance to tell us how we're doing

Independent research specialists Acuity are helping us to gather impartial feedback from customers via telephone surveys. If you get a call from the team, please consider spending time answering their questions. The survey should take about 12 minutes and will play an important part in helping us understand what's important to you.

Calls from Acuity will come from the number 01273 093 939.

Get out and play!

Laurie Edmundson, Karbon's Community Safety Manager, shares with us some advice to help keep our neighbourhoods safe and harmonious as kids head outdoors.

"Summer's here and everyone wants – and deserves – to be able to enjoy the light nights and warm weather. But how do we avoid running into problems when we're sharing our streets and spaces? Check out these top tips for both children and adults to help encourage safe play and understanding in your neighbourhood."

We were all young once

Playing outdoors as children helps us to develop and become aware of boundaries. It's good to support children to be active and exercise for their health and wellbeing. Some children can't always play at home so it's good for them to be able to play outdoors as well.

It's good to talk

If there are any problems, it's best just talk it over with parents or guardians, explain the problem and see if a positive suggestion can be made as a solution before reporting a problem.

Being a good neighbour

For children playing outside, always play safely and respect your neighbours. Try not to cause any damage, be too noisy and make sure you put any litter in the bin and take any toys home with you. If anything is damaged or anyone does complain, then let your parents or guardians know so they can help to sort it out.

Playing safe

Make sure you let your parents or guardian know where you'll be and use play areas in your neighbourhood if they are happy for you to go there. Avoid playing on the road or near parked cars. It's also best to play with friends rather than alone.

Have fun!

We want young people to be able to enjoy being active and we won't take action against innocent playing. As long as children respect the community and the people who live there then we can all enjoy having fun in the sun this summer.

Safe street play

Over in Meadow Well, North Shields, Karbon customer Sarah McDonald helped to develop a Street Play initiative that created play sessions around the estate.

Sarah, a Community Development Officer at the local community centre Meadow Well Connected, joined forces with neighbouring Phoenix Detached Youth Project. They set up regular games, arts and crafts and sports sessions, part funded by Karbon Homes Community Investment Fund.

Fancy doing something similar in your neighbourhood? We asked Sarah for some tips on getting started...

“It’s easier than you might think. All you really need is a safe space, a few adults to keep an eye on things and a few ideas for games. You’d be surprised by how things get going once a few people get involved.

“There are lots of reasons children aren’t allowed to play out but once there is a feeling of safety then parents have the confidence to let them get involved. We found the adults also enjoyed meeting their neighbours.”

Sarah’s tips for starting your own play sessions

Find somewhere safe to get together – perhaps streets that are not too busy or areas with a green

Talk to your neighbours – ask around to find other parents who’d like to get involved

Invite other streets

Reach out to your local community centre who might be able to help with advice or equipment

Pool your ideas. Kids love to learn different games so think back to your own childhood and share the memories!

Club together to get a few bits of equipment. It doesn’t take much to have some fun. Try a game of rounders or a tug-of-war

You can even organise to close your road and run an event connected to the national Playing Out campaign. There’s lots of great information about how to do that at **www.playingout.net**

Making memories (without breaking the bank)

Create a summer to remember, with amazing activities both your kids (and purse) will love!

Our Holiday Squad offers fantastic free activities to keep school-age children entertained, active and creative throughout the holidays. Also, they all come with a free healthy meal.

Cooking workshops

Circus skills

Nature walks

Art classes

Sports

Science fun

Plus, lots more!

Grab your child's free place now!

To find out more and book Holiday Squad events for your children, visit our Holiday Squad events page on the Karbon website at

www.karbonhomes.co.uk/squad

Free fun and a lovely lunch

Look at the fun we had at our last Holiday Squad events.

“My daughter was so proud to bring home a canvas to decorate her bedroom and had never seen so many art materials, she was talking about it for days!”

Sarah Davies

“I will definitely be on the lookout for the next sessions as my boys keep asking when they can go back.” Helen Hall

“They came home full of chat about their time at the event.” Lisa Watson

“My son learnt how to make a den and cooked bananas with chocolate on the camp fire which he had never done before. He couldn't wait to come home and try it again on our BBQ.” Claire Richardson

“I was impressed with the lunch offering for the children with the soup on the side which was also enjoyed by some parents. A wonderful addition to the activity.” Rachel McNeill

Charge Safe

The danger of lithium batteries in e-bikes and e-scooters has made the news recently. We asked Karbon's Building Safety Manager, Mark Mulhern to explain the risks and how to avoid them.

As e-bikes, e-scooters and even e-skateboards grow in popularity, so do the risks of fire caused by their lithium batteries. If they become damaged or begin to fail, they can explode and catch fire.

Here's how to stay safe...

Buy from a reputable retailer

Many fires involve items, chargers and batteries which do not meet British or European standards or are counterfeit electrical goods. So, always buy from a reputable retailer to make sure what you are buying is as safe as possible. Make sure you register your product with the manufacturer to validate any warranties – this will usually include the battery too. This will make it easier for manufacturers to contact you in the event of safety or recall information.

Don't block your exit

Don't charge or store your e-bike or e-scooter near the exit and where possible, store them outside of your home in a secure shed or a garage. If you live in one of our blocks, your e-bike or e-scooter must never be charged or stored in the communal areas or in a place that blocks a fire escape route. If you have to store them in your flat, do this away from the exit or your means of escape and avoid anywhere that can get excessively hot.

Watch for warning signs

A failing battery can be a fire risk. Keep an eye out for warning signs, such as overheating or swelling batteries and replace them if necessary. If you notice any unusual odours, smoke or hissing sounds, unplug the charger immediately and carefully move the battery to an outside area. Remember: batteries can be damaged if dropped or if you crash, and a damaged battery is more likely to overheat and be at risk of catching fire.

Let your battery cool

Lithium batteries can heat up when used. Let your battery cool down before charging it to avoid overheating. This will also help to extend the life of your battery.

Take care when charging

Always charge your battery in a well-ventilated area, staying away from combustible or flammable materials. Don't cover chargers or battery packs when charging. If you spot any signs of wear and tear to your charger, do not use it any further and replace it. Don't overload sockets or use inappropriate extension leads. Use un-coiled extension leads and make sure the extension lead is suitably rated for what you are plugging into it.

Never leave batteries unattended

It may be tempting to leave your battery charging overnight or when you are out, but this can be dangerous. Never leave your battery charging unattended or while you sleep, you need to be awake and alert so if a fire should occur you can respond quickly.

Unplug your charger

Once your battery is fully charged, unplug your charger. Overcharging your battery can damage it and increase the risk of fire. Make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for charging and maintaining your battery.

Damaged or old batteries

Do not dispose of batteries in your normal household waste or recycling, as this can cause a bin or rubbish fire if damaged during waste collection and processing. This includes any communal bins if you live in one of our blocks. Check with your local council about the best way to get rid of it safely.

What to do if there is a fire

Do not attempt to extinguish the fire. Get out, stay out, call 999.

If you live in one of our blocks, please also follow the fire safety instructions and advice for your building.

Keeping you safe

The fire alarms in your home play a vital role in giving you early warning in the event of a fire. So, it's important not to remove, tamper with, paint or cover them over. If you are able to, you should test the smoke alarms in your home regularly. If you have any concerns or questions regarding the smoke alarms in your home, please contact us at **buildingsafety@karbonhomes.co.uk**

For more information on charging lithium batteries safely, visit **www.london-fire.gov.uk/chargesafe**

Beware of claims companies

Ian Johnson, Karbon's Executive Director of Customer Services, tell us about the rise in activity from claims companies.

Making sure your home is somewhere you can be proud of is so important to us. We'd really encourage you to drop us a line if something isn't up to the standards that we all expect and deserve.

Across the country, social housing organisations – like ours – are seeing an increase in claims management companies contacting customers to encourage legal action when a home falls below these standards. Sometimes this means customers can get 'locked in' to a legal process, which could put them at personal financial risk. These approaches can also be fraudulent.

We appreciate you may want to pursue a claim. If you speak to us first, we can make sure the issue – however big or small – is resolved without delay or the cost of legal processes. This means we can spend money reinvesting in our services and good quality homes.

You can also access free, independent help and advice from other organisations, including:

Citizens Advice Bureau. Tel: **0800 144 8848**

Shelter. Tel: **0808 800 4444**

Housing Ombudsman Service. Tel: **0300 111 3000**

To find out more about reporting repairs, please visit **www.karbonhomes.co.uk/my-repairs**

Putting the heart back into Benwell

Merton Lodge is back in business! Entertainment agency NE14.TV has taken over the lease and Director Bessie Williams tells us what's in store.

We're over the moon to get Merton Lodge up and running again. It's a great facility but was under-used and was becoming a target for vandals.

We've been granted £25,000 in funding from Karbon's Unlocking Social Value programme and we're just getting started with plans to turn that into improvements on the estate.

We've got a few regular activities and courses running now and they are proving popular. We already have lots of ideas but we're keen to find out from people what they'd like to see and how they'd like to use it.

It's great to be back in Benwell

We did a series of street parties and community clean-ups back in 2021 and they were fantastic. I think we've built up a good rapport with people and broken down some of the barriers that were standing in the way of people coming together.

Our aim is to support mental health by providing a positive place to go to get involved in activities. Ultimately, we'd like to support people to become productive within their community by creating work, jobs and opportunities, because a sense of purpose is so important to good mental health.

Already, two people who've studied a customer service course here have gone on to get full-time work and we're starting to find opportunities within television for others through our work in entertainment.

What's on at Merton Lodge

Tuesday

Bread and Butter Thing food club 11am – 3pm. Members only. Find out more and sign up for free at www.breadandbutterthing.org

Thursday

Adults drop-in 10am – 3pm. Tea and biscuits, chat and games. Everyone welcome.

Saturday

Kids arts and crafts 10am – 3pm. Drop-in sessions for ages six and over. Younger children welcome with supervision.

Suggestions or questions?

What would you like to see offered at Merton Lodge? Get in touch to offer ideas or to find out more about how to get involved. Join the Merton Lodge Community Group on Facebook, email mertonlodge@ne14.tv or call 07379 931980.

Get your garden summer-ready

There's no better time to give some TLC to outdoor spaces. Housing Officer, Aimee Lammonby shares her top tips on getting gardens summer-ready.

“As a customer, you are responsible for maintaining your garden and making sure you don't leave bulky items outside. But fear not, there are a number of ways to get rid of unwanted items and some might even make you some money! Here are a few ideas...”

Tip it! If you have transport, take your items along to your local recycling village. Some local authorities ask you to book a slot so check first. Why not share a car and petrol costs with a neighbour if they have items to dispose of too?

Council collection. Your local council will remove bulky items at an affordable cost. Some councils have a reduced rate for certain benefits so be sure to check with them when you enquire about prices. Some offer a flat rate for a certain number of items, meaning you could share a collection with a neighbour to reduce costs.

Remember! If you hire someone privately to dispose of waste for you, it's your responsibility to check they are registered to do this. You could be fined if you give your waste to someone who is not legally allowed to take it. Ask to see their paperwork or check they're on the register of waste carriers on the Government website www.gov.uk.

Need any help? If you need support with cleaning your garden and yard please call us on 0808 164 0111 and ask to speak to your Housing Officer.

Love it or lose it!

As the saying goes, one person's trash is another person's treasure. Why hang on to bits and pieces you no longer want or need when someone else could be making good use of them?

And an added benefit of donating is the recipient will often come to collect from your home. So, next time you're considering throwing something away, think of these options first:

- Local community furniture store
- Charity shop
- British Heart Foundation will collect some items of furniture
- Online sales sites such as Facebook Marketplace and Gumtree
- Freecycle

Ways to get and stay in touch

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.

New! You can now see the status of any outstanding repairs and servicing in your account. Just log in to take a look at the new tracking feature. It shows appointments booked and updates on your logged repairs, as well a button to request a new repair.

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 antisocial behaviour.

Email: info@karbonhomes.co.uk

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

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

Post 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-us**

Summer bank holiday hours

We'll be running our out of hours service from 6pm Friday 25 August to 8am Tuesday 29 August 2023.

Our out of hours service can help you with emergency repairs, reports of antisocial behaviour and rent payments. Just call us on our usual number **0808 164 0111**. MyKarbon is available 24/7 365 days a year.

Our Supported Housing service will remain available during the holidays.