

Welcome to the September edition of our new monthly staff newsletter bringing you all the latest updates and stories from our colleagues across the Council. Each month we introduce the newsletter with a message from a different member of the Council Management Team.

This month, **Director of Environment and Infrastructure, Gordon McNeil**, shares his appreciation for all the hard work involved in the reintroduction of services and the continuation of essential services during the pandemic...

“As we continue to move through the Scottish Government’s Route Map out of lockdown we’ve seen the gradual reintroduction of more of our services and the reopening of some of our buildings.”

“The reopening of our schools, nurseries and early years centres last month was a huge undertaking and I’d like to give a special mention to my colleagues in janitorial, caretaking, cleaning, catering, housekeeping, building services, school transport and crossing patrol services for helping support the safe return of our schools, much to the relief of children and parents, myself included.

“I’d also like to acknowledge all those who have worked out of Underwood Road or one of our Hubs or other premises throughout the pandemic. Your commitment to your role and the application of health and safety guidelines has been key in not only helping to suppress the virus but also ensuring we could continue to deliver essential services.

“I also want to extend my thanks to all those who volunteered to take on different roles in order to support the delivery of new and essential services during the pandemic. Essential services such as waste collection, streetscene, repairs and maintenance of council houses and roads, continued to operate and where services were paused and subsequently restarted, great effort is underway to catch-up with any backlogs.

“We are also working hard to put safety measures in place so that we can safely reopen Renfrewshire House and our other non-essential buildings as soon as the Scottish Government guidance allows, albeit with significantly reduced numbers to facilitate physical distancing. Until then working from home will continue where possible, and it is likely to play a major role in how we continue to suppress the virus moving forward.

“All our decisions have and will continue to be informed by the latest public health, health and safety and government guidance and made in consultation with Trade Unions. As always, your health and safety remains our number one priority.”



What's inside this month's issue?

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- > Working safely during coronavirus
- > Taking care of your wellbeing
- > Our Values in action
- > Spotlight on the Customer services registration team
- > For Your Information: Microsoft Teams training
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Latest information and advice

At its three-week review on Thursday 20 August, the Scottish Government announced that we will continue to remain in Phase 3 of the route map through and out of the crisis and this is likely to continue beyond 10 September when the next review is due to take place.

In order to progress into Phase 4, levels must be low enough that the virus is no longer considered a threat to public health. This is currently not the case.

Due to localised outbreaks, a ban on indoor household visits is now in force across Glasgow city, West Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire and is set to continue until 16 September with a midway review after the first week.

The efforts of Test and Protect continue to be successful in suppressing the spread of the virus as positive cases are confirmed in Renfrewshire and we are all reminded to be extra vigilant at work and at home, follow the **FACTS** guidelines and immediately book a test and self-isolate as soon as any symptoms develop.

The NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) recently released an appeal reminding us of the latest information and protocols around testing. They highlighted the key symptoms of coronavirus as a new

persistent cough, a temperature/fever and loss of taste or smell. It's important to note that you only need one of these symptoms to be tested.

Other symptoms that are typical of a cold or flu virus such as a runny nose or drowsiness are not indicators of coronavirus. Tests should only be requested if one or more of the key symptoms outlined above develop.

Guidance to self-isolate for 14 days if a member of your household develops symptoms or if asked to do so by a NHS contact tracer remains in place. However, a test is not needed unless you yourself develop symptoms.

For more information on testing visit www.nhsinform.scot/



Other key updates over the past month include mandatory face coverings for everyone in secondary schools while moving in corridors and in communal spaces and everyone aged 5 or older while on dedicated school transport.

There are exceptions for people with breathing difficulties or certain disabilities and schools are advised to do what they can to ensure no one is stigmatised for being unable to wear a face covering.

The Scottish Government has also announced that leisure centres can now plan to re-open in line with national guidance. Renfrewshire Leisure has recently confirmed the reopening of most of its facilities from 14 September. For more information go to www.renfrewshireleisure.com

Remember **FACTS** for a safer Scotland

F	Face coverings	
A	Avoid crowded places	
C	Clean your hands regularly	
T	Two metre distance	
S	Self isolate and book a test if you have symptoms	

We continue to follow Scottish Government guidance and you can find the latest information you need on our website at: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

Taking care of your wellbeing

Our 'Health and wellbeing at work' page is there to help whether you are on the front line or working from home.

You can also check out our online learning guides under 'Working at home'. This series of useful guides includes resources to support home and remote working, managing virtual teams, managing in a crisis situation, and dealing with stress.

The Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) are providing free online courses throughout September to help people with management responsibilities support the mental wellbeing of their staff. The training covers maintaining wellbeing, building resilience, an introduction to suicide prevention and mental health in the workplace. You can find out more information on these courses and everything you need to know about resources available to support your wellbeing here www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/10207/Health-and-Wellbeing-at-Work

The Scottish Government has also put together a great package to help people keep body and mind healthy during this challenging time. For ideas on exercising, healthy diet, maintaining a social life and staying emotionally centred visit <https://clearyourhead.scot/>

Don't forget our employee counselling service is still available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Professional counsellors are on hand to provide you with free, confidential support via telephone and digital channels such as Skype. Visit the webpage www.timefortalking.co.uk/ for more information or call **0800 970 3980** for free support now.

We'd love to hear more of your positive wellbeing stories. Let us know what's been bringing you joy during this time at internal.communications@renfrewshire.gov.uk.



Wellbeing story of the month— Fine and "dandie"!

During this time it's more important than ever that we look after our own wellbeing—whether that means dedicating more time to staying fit and healthy, staying in touch with family, friends and colleagues, focussing on hobbies or simply taking time out to relax and do what makes us happy. For senior social worker Karen Turnbull, it meant welcoming a new family member into her home...

Say hello to Gloria or as Karen likes to call her 'Xoranda Party Like a Rock Star'.

Gloria is no ordinary puppy. She is a very rare Dandie Dinmont—a pure bred Scottish Terrier. With less than 200 born each year, Dandies are classed as a vulnerable breed and are statistically more endangered than giant pandas and blue whales.

Reflecting on this special new addition to her home, Karen said, 'I can't class Gloria as a lockdown puppy, since I made up my mind to get a Dandie a long time ago and have been waiting on a breeder's list for over a year! But she couldn't have come along at a better time. She's such an affectionate and intelligent little pup – just what we needed to brighten the lockdown gloom.'

Did you know: Dandies are named after a farmer in the 1814 Sir Walter Scott novel 'Guy Mannering' and are the only dogs in the world to be named after a fictional character?



Celebrating Renfrewshire

Do you work with young people? Or have young family members who live in Renfrewshire? If so, why not help them apply for a share of the Celebrating Renfrewshire fund!

Anyone aged 12–25, or groups who work with young people, can apply for a share of £150,000 for their idea on what will make life better in Renfrewshire. This could be anything from new sports equipment to mental health support sessions - it's up to them!

Schools are encouraged to submit an application—as long as they can show the award would benefit the wider community.

The closing date for applications is Sunday 13 September and online support sessions are available to assist young people with their applications.

Successful projects can be awarded a maximum of £2,000 from three Local Partnerships and will be selected by young people via a vote on the Young Scot website.

For everything you need to know, go to <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/CelebratingRenfrewshire>

Working safely during coronavirus

It is vitally important to be fully compliant with our COVID-19 safe work practices—both in the workplace and when out in the community. We must ensure we are aware of our responsibilities, continue to observe our workplace rules on physical distancing and other measures to prevent infection such as regular handwashing. Together we can prevent the transmission of this virus and keep each other and Renfrewshire safe.

To further support you to adjust to your new ways of working we have developed a new page on the 'Staff info' section of our website with important guides for working safely during the coronavirus pandemic.

For those who are currently working from home, this is likely to continue for some time to come. Please take the time to read the [Working from Home](#) guide which provides you with information on what to do if you develop coronavirus symptoms, ideas on how you can maintain your health and wellbeing while working at home, virtual learning and development opportunities and how to complete the mandatory Display Screen Equipment (DSE) awareness course on iLearn, and then your DSE assessment on Business World.

For those who are currently working at or returning to work at one of our depots, please read our ['COVID-safe depots guide'](#). This guide outlines how to stay safe at work and how to adjust to any ongoing changes, advice on travelling to work, taking care of your health and wellbeing and what to do if you start to feel unwell at work.

The ['working safely at a school'](#) guide provides information specific for education staff in schools and advice on what to do if you start to feel unwell at work or at home or if a child develops symptoms and where to go if you feel concerned or need help.

Full details and access to the guides can found here www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/workingsafelyduringcoronavirus

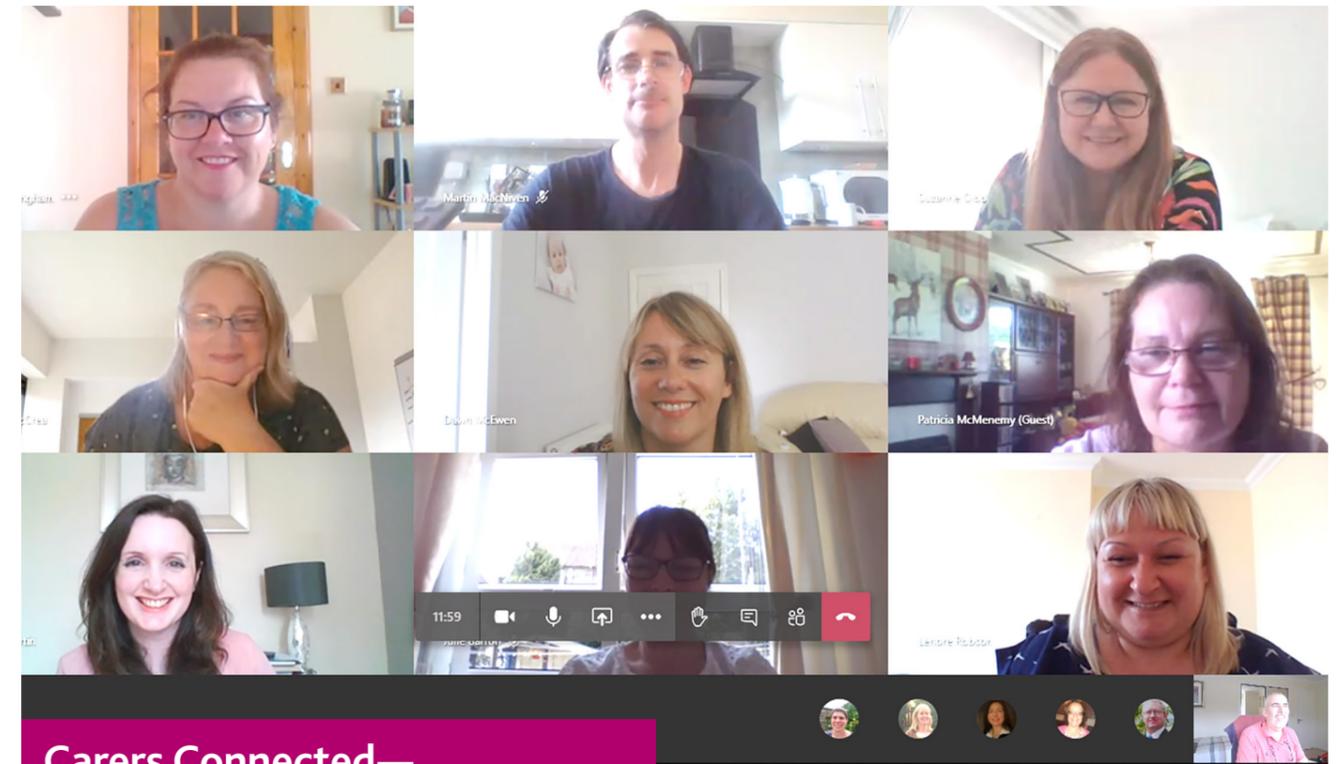
Winter flu vaccinations

In order to help protect yourself, your loved ones and the NHS this winter, we want to encourage you to get a winter flu vaccination.

The NHS have extended the eligibility criteria for their annual flu immunisation programme. Eligible staff members will be invited for a vaccination through their GP as part of the NHS campaign.

To further support our workforce, this year we are more than doubling the amount of vaccinations available through our own council vaccination programme to ensure that all those who need a flu vaccination can get one.

Look out for more information in the coming weeks.



Carers Connected— Self-care for carers

Being a carer is a huge responsibility at the best of times and we know just how challenging it was for many of our colleagues with caring commitments to continue looking after their loved ones during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic.

As part of Carers Week in June we asked our working carers how they were coping and what we could do to help them balance work and their caring responsibilities during lockdown.

Self-care was the number one issue that emerged with many people saying after fulfilling their work and caring duties, they had little time or energy left to spend on their own wellbeing.

So, we followed up by running a virtual Carers Connected session focussing on the theme of self-care for carers. The session was led by senior accountant, **Margaret Martin**, who works in our finance team but is also experienced in supporting people with their personal wellbeing. Margaret used the session to help our working carers and provide them with information, techniques and tips for better self-care.

Look out for future Carers Connected events and find more information about the Carers Connected Peer Network on the staff intranet under **Policies, Procedures & Guidance > HR and Organisational Development.**

We caught up with some of the people who attended the session for their feedback. Here's what they had to say:

"Relaxed after the relaxation session and also provided with tools to help relaxation at home"

Dawn McEwen, Communities, Housing and Planning Services

"Reassurance that I'm not alone and do have excellent support if needed by the employer. Good techniques for relaxing"

Martin MacNiven, Communities, Housing and Planning Services

"I found the session very informative and learned good relaxation techniques which I will be able to use in the future"

Anne Marie Flavell, Finance and Resources

"I learned new facts about: the human brain; beliefs; the causes of stress and techniques to disrupt negative thought processes"

Stephen Whitton, Environment and Infrastructure



Remembering Storie Street Baths

The Paisley Museum Re-Imagined Project team need your help. Did you ever visit or work at Storie Street baths in Paisley? Do you have images of the interior of the swimming pools?

There are lots of stories about the baths and there is no shortage of memories. Many local people remember learning to swim there and walking through the brown pool to wash their feet. Others fondly recall coming out of swimming, getting chips and heading up to the museum to pat Buddy the lion. But what we are missing is photos that show what the pool was really like inside. It seems odd that in the 100 years of its existence we have only found two photos of inside the baths...there must be more!

Perhaps you got a photo immortalising the winners of a swimming or diving competition? Or maybe you visited with friends or family and captured those memories in a snap?

If you think you can help, please get in touch at paisleymuseum@renfrewshire.gov.uk

FYI: Microsoft Teams training



An opportunity to get training on the use of Microsoft Teams is now available to all staff. Our ICT team are running online training sessions between 7–11 September that are open to anyone who currently uses Microsoft Teams or might use it as part of their role in the future. Whether you need help with the basics or want to expand your skills, there is a session that can benefit you. Anyone can register using either their [@renfrewshire.gov.uk](https://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk), [@renfrewshire.school](https://www.renfrewshire.school) or **Glow** email account. The sessions will last for approximately 1 hour 15 minutes and a camera is not required to take part. If you feel you could benefit from Microsoft Teams training, speak to your line manager then follow one of the links below to book a slot.

Basic Training

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/microsoft-teams-basics-tickets-11763477375>

Advanced Training

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/microsoft-teams-advanced-tickets-117638290293>

Our Values in action

We want to hear what our values mean to you and how you live them every day.

Senior planning and policy development officer, **Jamie Gardyne**, recently told us why he values learning to help us innovate, improve and deliver better services. Check out his video and profile here <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/wevaluelearning>

Read more about our values and catch up on all our case studies online where you can also find out how you too can start living our values <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/ourvalues>



Jamie Gardyne

"...we do it every day, we learn from each other, we're open to new ways of working and we're better at engaging with our communities."

Staff Stories and Thanks

Over the past few weeks we have received lots of great feedback from staff and members of the public alike. Take a look at some of the highlights...

"Used this recycling centre a number of times and always find the staff very friendly and helpful you have to remember there is a pandemic and these are very unusual times and I think the staff are doing a excellent job"

Google Maps review of Renfrew Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) by local resident **Billy Shearer**

After our waste collection team completed a bin swap request for an Erskine resident, the lady called our customer services team to provide her feedback. She said she received "such a great service" and wanted to make sure that the team were told of her appreciation. Well done to everyone involved!

Feedback for Soft FM teams

"I'm finishing up today (31 July) but just wanted to let you know that the Cleaning Staff, Catering Staff and Janitorial Staff have been amazing. Everyone was helpful, supportive and got on with things to make it an excellent experience for the children and young people. "I'm proud to have had them as part of this team and wanted to make you aware of how great they have been."

Coordinator at St James' summer childcare hub in Renfrew, **John Kennedy**

"Myself and my colleague John have been co-ordinating the Renfrew Childcare hub at St James PS for the past 6 weeks...I wanted to pass on my thanks from all the staff and children for the fantastic service your staff have provided. They are an asset to your team and helped our team run smoothly as we all worked well together as a partnership."

Family learning Coordinator, **Susan Stewart**



Steven Duffy

Lighting the way

An elderly resident has praised the efforts of Environment and Infrastructure staff after her concern about streetlighting was speedily resolved.

Technical administrator Sharon Ewing received a call from the 80-year-old lady who was uncomfortable in the evenings since the streetlights outside her cottage in Lochwinnoch stopped working.

Knowing the right person for the job, Sharon enlisted the help of electrician **Steven Duffy**, who has over 16 years' experience working with street lighting.

The problem was that the streetlights in question require a type of bulb that is no longer in supply. But that wasn't going to stop Steven from finding a solution. When searching through old stock he managed to find the compatible bulbs and immediately went to work fitting them.

The resident was over the moon with the outcome and contacted the team to thank them for their help.

We can see our values shining through this story as the collaborative efforts of Sharon and Steven meant they could go above and beyond to help a local resident in need.



Valued support

Your wellbeing is always a priority and living our values at work also means that we can support each other when things get difficult at home.

Housing asset & energy strategy manager **Duncan Smith** contacted us to share his story and thank his line manager Louise Feely for all her support over the past two years.

When his daughter Rachel was diagnosed with West Syndrome back in 2018 at just six months old, Duncan's life was turned upside down.

West Syndrome or infantile spasms is a rare neurological condition where infants suffer small seizures that can be extremely damaging for their development and in some cases can be fatal.

Like any parent Duncan was devastated at what this could mean for his little girl. He said, 'The prognosis wasn't good. We were only given a 5% chance that Rachel would make a positive recovery and lead a normal life'.

But there was reason to be hopeful as a new ground-breaking treatment



became available the very same month of Rachel's diagnosis. This year Duncan's dreams came true when Rachel was officially discharged from hospital in June.

During the time of Rachel's illness, Duncan counted on the support he got from his line manager Louise. He said, 'I'm so grateful to her. She did everything she could to support me and offered me all the flexibility I could need to be there for my little girl. She even organised fundraising events, getting the whole team involved and raised almost £1,000 for the Glasgow Children's Hospital Charity. To have a boss that is both understanding and compassionate is one of the best parts of working for the council'.

This wonderful story demonstrates our values in action. When a colleague was going through a tough time, Louise did all she could to be helpful and fair. The collaboration of the team rallying around to support Duncan made that possible and we have no doubt that valuable lessons were learned by all - not least of which, that living our values truly pays off!

More information on West Syndrome can be found on the UK Infantile Spasms Trust (UKIST) website here <https://ukinfantilespasmstrust.org/>.

Spotlight on the customer services registration team



Lauren Crichton

Throughout the past five months our registration team have faced an enormous challenge head on as the coronavirus had an immediate and significant impact on their duties.

These unsung heroes spent the first three months of lockdown helping grief-stricken families register the deaths of their loved ones—always a difficult job, however, with the added impact of Covid-19 the team were finding the early days of lockdown both emotionally and physically testing.

Normally there to offer face-to-face support throughout the registration process, the team had to do their best to guide families over the phone. This didn't stop them however from providing a top-class customer service as proven by the very warm feedback received from appreciative families.

One person said, 'This has been very difficult for our family but the support and information from the registrar has been comforting and helped us with everything we needed to know'.

Local funeral directors also praised the team with comments like 'Of all of the services that have been required to adapt during this situation, the registration service has adapted better than we could have hoped for.'

Another said 'The team have been fantastic throughout the whole time! This has been one of the positives of this pandemic.'

As lockdown restrictions gradually began to ease, the team were relieved to get back to some of their happier duties including marriage and birth registrations.

Having been unable to register newborns for three months, they certainly noticed a difference. Service delivery manager **Roberta McFarnon** said, 'Normally families come in and their little ones are tiny. So, it's been strange to see bouncing babies coming in at three months old!' A sentiment shared by the full team! She added, 'Thankfully things are now moving on and the team have completed all birth registrations well ahead of schedule'.

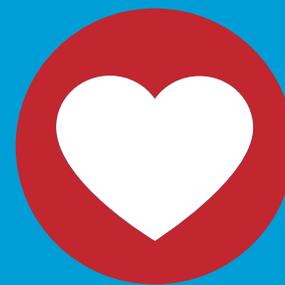
"The team have been amazing. They have adapted to so many changes throughout the past five months and have done this in their usual professional manner.

I'd particularly like to thank district registrar, Louise Cullen and depute district registration services officer, Karen O'Neill for all their hard work and support to the team during the past five months. They really are a team to be proud of!"

Senior service delivery officer, Julie McBride

Social Shout Outs

Our Facebook and Twitter channels have received more fantastic feedback from the people of Renfrewshire recently. Just goes to show all your hard work is recognised and appreciated.



Here are just a few of the comments we have received...

"Thank you, the overgrown grass (view from my window) has now been cut and myself and my neighbours are very pleased with the result! Thank you Renfrewshire council for listening and making it happen 😊😊😊"

Janice Buchan via Facebook

"Brilliant use of the open space at county square to allow people to sit outside and eat /drink while supporting local businesses. Totally transforms a wasted space. Well done to whoever approved this 👍"

Ally via Twitter

"Well done to all involved in designing, creating and maintaining the flower beds at the Cotton St/Gauze St junction in Paisley - they're looking great and a credit to the town."

Roy McLellan via Facebook

"Well done to all at Renfrewshire schools, but particular thanks to our own Julie Bell! The most amazing head teacher! ❤️❤️"

Esme Diane Weatherwax via Facebook

"Excellent service. Well done catching up"

Eloise Helen Thom via Facebook regarding birth registrations

We received some superb feedback from families as our childcare hubs closed for the summer to make way for the reopening of schools. Here's just some of the comments...

"Awesome 6 wks 🌟 with children, young people and staff at Renfrew St James Childcare Hub. Will miss you all loads. Stay safe ❤️🌈"

Susan Stewart via Twitter

"Both my boys have attended the west hub from March and have loved every minute. Staff are fantastic and friendly and have made uncertain times very enjoyable. Thank you all ❤️ xxx"

Donna Blacklock via Facebook

"You have all been amazing - my daughter was at West hub and has had the best time. 🥰🥰🥰 Thank you x"

Gee Dee via Facebook

"Can I please say a massive thank you to all the hub staff who have put themselves out there to volunteer to look after our children so we can work. My daughter has attended Castlehead hub, St Marys, Todholm and currently at West Hub... All the staff through all the hubs have been absolutely amazing. They are the unsung heroes... They have made this time for my daughter as normal as it could be and helped keep a routine for her. They have given my daughter lots of fun happy memories during this not so happy time and for that I will be always grateful. Thank you again for all you have done. It is greatly appreciated"

Kelly McGlynn via Facebook



Share your stories and photos

Don't forget we'd love to hear from you! It could be a photo of you working from home, something interesting from your daily walk, or a photo of your new "colleagues" (furry friends most welcome!). Have you started volunteering or taking on new roles and responsibilities you never thought you would? Tell us all about it and we can share your stories. Send them in to internalcommunications@renfrewshire.gov.uk