

Welcome to the December edition of our monthly staff newsletter bringing you all the latest updates and stories from our people across the Council. Each month we introduce the newsletter with a message from a different staff member. This month, we hear from our Head of Transformation and Organisational Development Lee Neary...

As we approach the festive period and 2020 draws to a close, we will all be looking forward to welcoming in a new year.

"Looking back on this year, I'm constantly reminded of the amazing efforts right across the Council to support the people and communities of Renfrewshire throughout this pandemic.

"We've seen so many examples of our values in action, including the very recent herculean effort in organising the asymptomatic testing site in Johnstone (read more about this in next month's edition). With no more than one week to plan, we experienced many fantastic examples of learning and collaboration.

"For all of this, myself and all the management team are deeply grateful.

"As the dark winter nights draw in, it's more important than ever that we look after ourselves, and each other. Please read the 'Focus on our wellbeing' piece in this newsletter to find out how we plan to help you do just that.

"Looking forward into 2021, we'll be launching our new five-year People Strategy to support the council's ambitious change journey and put people at the heart of our values and culture. The ways in which we work are changing and this strategy will promote a healthy, flexible and innovative approach to ensure we adopt the most effective ways of working. It will place our values front and centre of day-to-day decision-making, changing cultural norms and improving service user and employee experience.

"The coming year will present us with many new challenges. We still have much to do in combatting coronavirus but I am certain from the attitudes, values and behaviours you have shown this year, there is nothing we cannot achieve when we work together. Your commitment and tenacity has been truly humbling.



Head of Transformation and
Organisational Development, Lee Neary

"I'd like to extend my deepest thanks to all staff across the council for all your outstanding efforts this year. I'd also like to shout out to everyone in HR & OD and our Programme Management Unit for the amazing way you have risen to these challenges.

"Finally, I'd like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year. Read on to see a special festive message from our Chief Executive, Sandra Black"

What's inside this month's issue?

- > Festive message from our Chief Executive, Sandra Black
- > The latest coronavirus update
- > A focus on Our Wellbeing
- > Our Values in action
- > Spotlight on the Health and Safety team
- > For Your Information: Skype to Teams switchover
- > Social Shout Outs

All this and more inside!

Festive message from our Chief Executive, Sandra Black



With Christmas and a New Year almost on us, I would like to take this opportunity to mark the close of a year that will leave its mark on our lives for some time.

I also want to express my sincere thanks to each and every one of you, for your unfaltering support to help protect and guide the council and our communities through a health crisis that continues its grip across the world.

Your drive has enabled Renfrewshire Council to play its part in fighting this virus whatever the challenges, doing so with commitment and care. I am so immensely grateful to lead such a compassionate organisation, where the needs of others - especially those who are vulnerable, come first all the time. Every day I have been aware of acts of incredible dedication and thoughtfulness—towards each other and for the betterment of the local communities we support. We have shown public service at its very best at a time of considerable challenge and uncertainty.

I am very aware of the toll this year will have taken on your home life and on many of you personally. So many colleagues went the extra mile; volunteered for new roles; designed and delivered new services; and sacrificed personal time to work extended hours—day and night. Your dedication has provided a lifeline to many; keeping people safe, supporting children and young people at school, and making sure people are able to work and earn a living.

For colleagues who have been personally impacted by the virus and to those who have suffered loss, I want to pass on my deepest sympathies. I understand completely how hard it is to lose a loved one at this time and to be unable to come together properly as a family. I hope everyone can take some time to reflect and remember and to know you are not alone.

Even in the hardest of times, there have been moments of positivity and I am so proud of how we have innovated and adapted, and the way local people have responded—hailing public sector workers as heroes. Colleagues are working tirelessly to deliver services, protect older people and our most vulnerable communities and to keep the wheels of the council turning. So much of this happens quietly and without fanfare and will continue over Christmas to ensure we do everything possible to keep Renfrewshire safe through winter and to deliver the first wave of the Covid19 vaccination programme.

I know many of you will be weary and in need of a rest, others will be desperate to spend time with family and friends, but please, above all else, keep safe. It has never been more important to be here for our loved ones and communities and to look after each other.

While many of us will be able to take some time away from work to relax and reconnect, I would particularly like to thank our colleagues who will continue to work over the festive period to provide essential services and to prepare for 2021 so that we are ready for whatever the future will bring. For those of you who are not able to take a break just yet, please stay safe at work or at home, and remember you will not miss out on your annual leave.

And as we step into a new year, please remember we have reason to feel hopeful. We will emerge from this time and reclaim aspects of everyday life that mean so much to people. You have my assurance we will do everything possible to manage this virus in Renfrewshire and return to some degree of normality. Whatever your Christmas plans are this year, protect the people closest to you and do what you can to follow the guidance on staying safe and well.

Thank you for your service.

Wishing you peace, health and happiness,

Sandra

A Focus on Our Wellbeing



Since the early days of this pandemic we have shared information and resources to help support you with your wellbeing.

It's no exaggeration to say times are tough and we are all facing many of our own personal challenges right now that can have a real impact on our sense of wellbeing.

As the days are shorter and colder, we want to continue doing everything we can to support you to stay healthy and well during this difficult time.

Look out for some great new content including top tips from health and wellbeing experts, plus real-life stories and testimonials from you, our staff including your wellbeing golden tips.

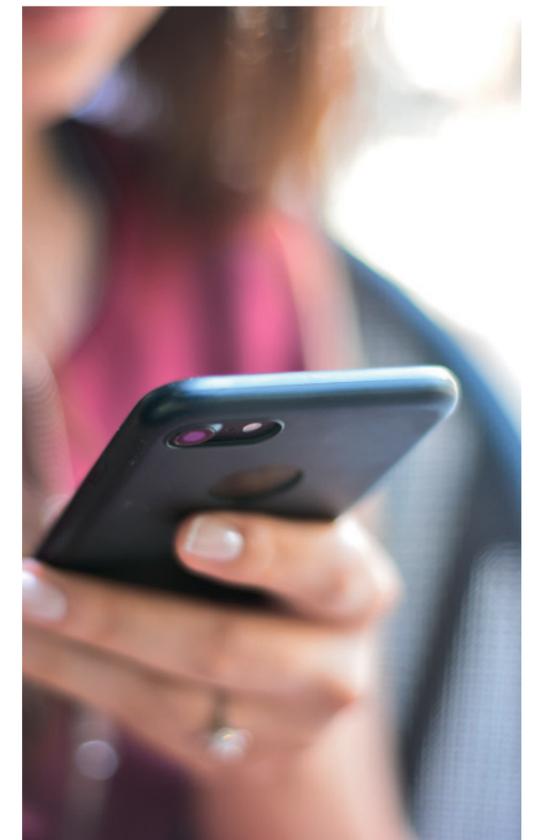
Our 'Looking after your health and wellbeing during the coronavirus pandemic' webpage continues to provide links to a variety of great resources, and we will continue to add to this as we learn more from our partners, experts and in-house contributors on the supports, information and advice available.

We want you to be part of this, to help us build a culture of support throughout our organisation, where everyone feels comfortable coming forward and asking for help when they need it.

So, whether you are on the front line or working from home, please get involved. Speak to your colleagues about wellbeing and mental health, share your advice and ideas and let them know you are there to help.

If you have access to Microsoft Yammer, you can take the conversation online with hashtag #OurWellbeing. Look out for wellbeing content on Yammer, interact with posts, publish your own posts, and help spread that powerful message of support right across the organisation.

Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. Your line manager is there to support you and there are many things they can do to help whether it's a physical or mental health concern. Just reach out.



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

The latest Coronavirus update

For now Renfrewshire remains in Level 3 coronavirus restrictions and the relaxation of rules from 23 to 27 December is expected to go ahead.

During this time we will have the option to form an extended bubble of up to three households and travel restrictions will be relaxed to enable those who stay farther apart to visit their loved ones.

However, as the virus thrives on indoor settings, indoor visits are not encouraged and people are advised to follow the updated guidance and limit their contact.

It's essential we continue to stick to the FACTS during this period and where any indoor meetings do take place, we should take extra precautions including increasing ventilation to help protect those around us.

This information is accurate at the time of publication. For the latest info and guidance go to the Scottish Government website www.gov.scot.

HMRC Working from Home payment

Those who have been working from home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic can claim tax relief on the expenses incurred for additional household costs. It's very quick and easy to do. Just follow the straightforward, step-by-step process at www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home



Winter Flu Vaccination

To help protect yourself, loved ones, the NHS and council services this winter we launched our council flu vaccination programme in October, encouraging all council employees and the wider Renfrewshire public to get a flu vaccination.

Our priority is to keep you safe and healthy at work, and this year given the impact of coronavirus we have more than doubled the number of vaccines available, so any council employee who wants one, and does not qualify for this year's extended NHS programme, can get one.

To minimise the risk of transmission and to provide increased flexibility we also introduced Boots e-vouchers which can be sent directly to your email or phone.

Vaccinations have now been completed for all our teachers and school staff at five school hubs across Renfrewshire.

We would like to thank everyone who has used their voucher and got a vaccination, and for those of you who have a voucher but are yet to book your appointment we would encourage you to do so as soon as possible and before 31 December when the scheme expires.

If you haven't requested your free e-voucher then please speak with your line manager and they will arrange for one to be sent to your phone or work email address.

Demand for appointments is high, so please visit www.bootscorporatehealth.com/book-seasonalflu and use your unique voucher code to book your vaccination at your nearest Boots pharmacy as soon as possible.

The council programme is open to all council staff who do not qualify for this year's extended NHS programme, and runs until 31 December 2020 after which point all vouchers will be unredeemable and anyone who wants a vaccination will have to arrange and pay for it themselves.

This year more than ever, we all have a responsibility to protect ourselves and the people around us, especially those who are most vulnerable and rely on council services.

The flu vaccine can't give you flu, but it can stop you and those you care about from catching it. We all have a role to play in the fight against Coronavirus. So please follow the rules, remember the FACTS and get a flu jab and take the pressure off the NHS and protect those most at risk this winter.

You can find more information about our flu vaccination programme; including how to redeem your voucher, and what to take with you to your appointment on the council website: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/flu Vaccination

Supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse

16 Days of Action against gender-based violence ran from 25 November to 10 December 2020 and though activities were different this year, it's more important than ever that the messages against gender-based and domestic violence are received loud and clear throughout the whole year.

One of the grim realities of the coronavirus pandemic has been the increase in domestic violence and the additional challenges faced by those who are living with abuse. We know the devastating impact this has on individuals and their loved ones.

Last year, we became one of the first local authorities in Scotland to introduce a domestic abuse policy for staff. A year on and our policy continues to reinforce the zero-tolerance approach we take to all forms of psychological and physical abuse. It also highlights our commitment to supporting staff who have suffered abuse with access to 'safe leave' and guidance for line managers to help support staff who are seeking help.

This year, we've been working collaboratively with our partners at SafeLives to deliver a new e-learning course for managers and staff to provide them with an understanding of the supports available and help them recognise the signs of abuse.

The 'Supporting employees experiencing domestic abuse' course is now available on iLearn



under 'Policies and Procedures' and 'Health and Safety'. Scan the QR code with a mobile device for quick access to iLearn.

The Domestic Abuse Policy is available both on our staff intranet or by request to hrpolicy@renfrewshire.gov.uk

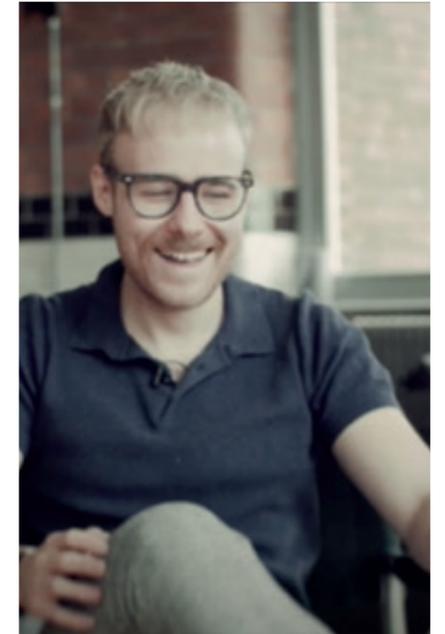


The Reclaim the Night march in 2018

Reclaim the Night

The Reclaim the Night march usually takes place in November each year to mark the beginning of the 16 Days of Action campaign against gender-based violence.

Check out this year's Reclaim the night video on our social media and YouTube channels and go to our website where you can find a list of key contacts and services for helping men, women and children who are suffering abuse. www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-protection



Our Covid Story

Have you seen the videos from some of our local people sharing their coronavirus stories?

We've been catching up with some of our community champions to find out how the pandemic has affected them and how we can all work together to keep Renfrewshire safe.

Sticking with the rules will help protect the most vulnerable in our communities, safeguard our children's education, preserve local livelihoods and support our NHS and local health and social care services over the winter period.

So far in the #OurCovidStory series we've heard from Emma Speirs at Buddie Beats, Sharon McAulay from the STAR Project and Robert Blair from Mill Magazine (pictured above).

And we're not done yet! Look out for more Covid stories and reflections from our local people in the coming weeks.

Check out all the videos so far on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/renfrewshirecouncil

Our Values in action

We've seen our values in action a lot and we have some great examples this month on how our Soft Facilities Management (FM) and High-Rise Concierge teams value learning and being helpful.

Embedding our values through leadership and learning

Our Organisational Development (OD) Team have been busy developing new learning resources to assist us as we continue to respond to the coronavirus crisis and renew ourselves as an organisation with our people and values at its core.

New learning modules for leaders and all staff, designed to embed our values into our working day and right through the full employee journey are currently in development. 'Leading Our Values' for line managers and 'Living Our Values' for all employees will be released early in 2021 as part of our continued values journey.

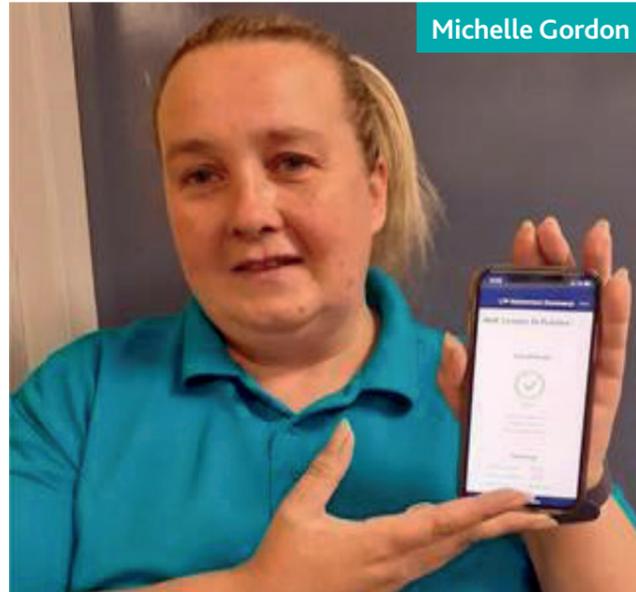
Our upcoming leadership development programme 'Lead to Succeed' features three levels which provide an opportunity to work towards a Chartered Management Institute (CMI) accredited qualification. These will replace the 'Aspire' and 'Leaders of the Future' programmes with new content that is highly relevant for our current and future plans.

A new digital platform with enhanced collaboration tools and modernised e-learning materials will help make learning a more enjoyable experience and next year, we will also be updating our iLearn site so that content is more accessible and easier to find.

The course planner for January to June 2021 will be available early in the new year and will detail the training courses on offer including job-specific training, health, safety and wellbeing and digital skills.

"We are committed to the continuous personal development of our people. Once the Licence to Practice is earned, they can develop upon this with a number of additional skills and further training. In line with the remodelling of our service, we aim to provide all of our operatives with the opportunity to gain a valuable qualification within this field."

Senior facilities co-ordinator Fiona Brown.



Michelle Gordon

Helping protect against COVID-19 with a licence to clean!

We value learning and our Soft Facilities Management (FM) team have been working closely with the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) so they can deliver accredited training to our Soft FM operatives.

Good hygiene and cleaning practices have never been more essential than they are now and this is a hugely beneficial step towards ensuring our staff continue to receive the best quality training. A key defence in the fight against coronavirus.

BICS standards are achieved through the combined expertise and knowledge of highly regarded professionals across the industry. Through the Licence to Practice course, the first step in the BICS Cleaning Professional Skill Suite (CPSS) qualification, students learn key skills and information on health and safety and methods of best practice.

A massive well done to Michelle Gordon the first of our staff members to gain their BICS accredited Licence to Practice.

Positive Praise for Soft Facilities Management

Gallowhill Primary School headteacher Sheila Hood gave a special shout out to the Soft FM team in their latest school newsletter where she said, "A special mention must be given to our wonderful team of cleaners who are working incredibly hard to minimise the opportunities for the virus to be transmitted."

How our concierge staff are helping tenants throughout the pandemic and during winter

We value being helpful and our high-rise development concierge staff are a perfect example. To make sure they are always there to help tenants, they have sustained a 24 hours, seven days a week service since the start of the pandemic and will continue to do so throughout the festive period.

They will also continue to handle emergency repairs calls outwith office hours for all council housing stock and public buildings, with a significant increase in volume anticipated during the colder months.

In order to ensure tenants felt safe and secure from the start of lockdown, the team increased their morning 'welfare' calls to ensure those with little or no family support were checked-in on daily.

They've also been assisting tenants who struggle with their basic shopping and delivery needs and will continue to be on hand to offer help and refer vulnerable tenants for support over the festive period.

Keeping the buildings and surrounding areas safe is a key focus during any winter, especially so this year, and the concierge team are working round the clock to keep paths and entrances gritted and clear.

We are fair, we treat each other and everyone we deal with respectfully and work hard to build trust in Renfrewshire Council.

We are helpful, we care about getting things right and are always approachable.



Senior Concierge Jim McLean

Inside, frequent cleaning is underway to keep all public spaces including foyers and lifts disinfected and safe. The team have also ensured the careful placing of clear signage throughout the buildings to help support physical distancing measures and continue to carry out four fire safety checks a day in each block.

Concierge co-ordinator, Tommy Wright, who also manages the caretaking service across high rise developments has said he feels this is 'the most challenging time the service has ever faced', with everyone doing all they can to keep things running.

But all that hard work does not go unnoticed as some recent feedback from a tenant at Glencairn Court in Paisley shows. They said, 'It's so reassuring to know the concierge are there if you ever need them. They help with the little things like opening doors, carrying shopping, organising repairs... but most importantly for the last wee while, keeping everything spotlessly clean to try and keep us all safe.'

Tommy has even hinted that the team are ready to "deck the halls" this month and will make sure the foyers are gleaming and sparkling in a different sense with Christmas decorations to help bring about some much-needed festive cheer.

We are great collaborators; we work as one team and with people who care about this place.

We value learning to help us innovate, improve and deliver better services.

Spotlight on the Health and Safety team



Under the conditions of a global pandemic, you might just about begin to imagine what some of the health and safety implications would be for organisations everywhere. Previous experience and contingency planning stood us in good stead. But adjusting those plans and quickly putting them into action to protect our staff and ensure our workplaces became covid-safe almost overnight was a challenge our health and safety team could never have imagined.

It was vital we got it right for all our staff. And like so many of our brilliant teams across the council, health and safety met the challenge head on.

Throughout the pandemic, the small team of five have been responsible for supporting council services as well as Renfrewshire Leisure (RL) and the Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board (RVJB).

From the beginning of the crisis, the team worked collaboratively with different services across the council, drafting in support from Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR&OD) and linking closely with Trades Unions (TU), ensuring all council activity was thoroughly risk assessed with a strong focus on protecting key workers.

Developing existing health and safety related policies and training as well as developing new ones for all our staff across all locations was a top priority. Whether staff were continuing to work on the frontline, at a depot or moving to home-based working, there was much to consider.

(above) Health and safety colleagues, Stevie Fanning, Alan Gibson and Gareth Richards at the Johnstone Testing Centre. (Right) Douglas Blair, ready for the shift of the year at his other job (shh!)

A Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) group was established early on and continues to ensure that stocks of PPE are maintained.

Another key consideration was the wellbeing impact on staff. So, the team worked closely with their colleagues in HR&OD and communications to ensure that easy access to a wide range of resources including mental health and wellbeing support services were available to all.

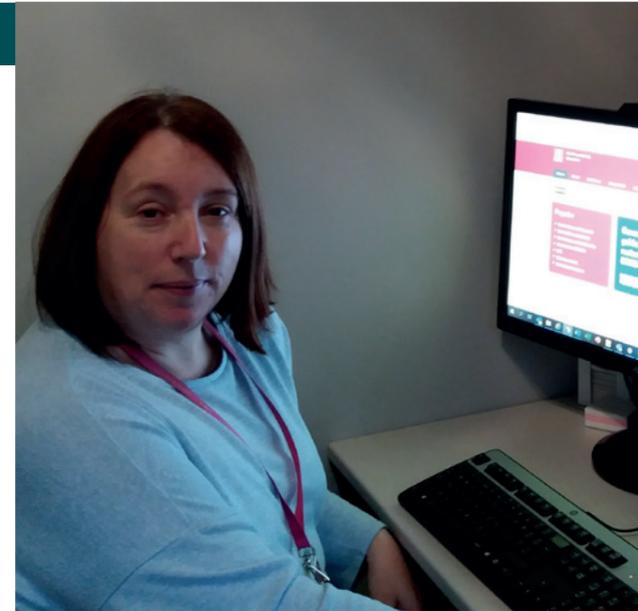
When schools reopened, the team ensured that everything was in place so the large-scale operation carried out across Children's Services and Environment and Infrastructure could be done safely. Senior health and safety officer Douglas Blair said, "I'd like to extend my thanks to everyone we worked with to get this huge job done. I'm particularly thankful to the help we got from property services, without them it simply couldn't have been done."

As the pandemic and the national approach to tackling it continues to develop, the health and safety team are always reviewing and updating their policies and procedures in line with changing guidance and public health advice.

Though coronavirus meant a massive change in how the team worked, regular health and safety matters haven't stopped and the team has continued its essential work in areas like site inspection, accident investigation, reviewing procurement and Freedom of Information requests (FOI) throughout.

Looking back at how the team have coped these past months, health and safety officer Karen Flood said, "I have found responding to the crisis has been both challenging and rewarding. Challenging due to keeping up with government guidance and rewarding as I've been working with various colleagues and contributing to them feeling safe and supported at work".

Douglas said, "I've seen first-hand how this virus affects people. So, the most important thing is that we all stay disciplined and follow the FACTS." Sound advice!



"I feel I have adapted well to working from home. I really enjoy it, although I miss seeing my colleagues in person. Working whilst wearing my slippers is very different!"

Health and safety officer, Karen Flood.



"I've enjoyed working with health and safety during this time. I've seen some great examples of collaboration and teamworking and feel we've really pushed the boundaries of what we can achieve as an organisation. It's been a real eye-opener."

Principal HR&OD advisor, Graham Campbell.



For Your Information: Skype to Teams switch over

For staff who use Microsoft Skype, from 6 January 2021 onwards this will be replaced by the more advanced Microsoft Teams platform.

Our ICT team have been sharing information and guidance to help ensure that everyone who is affected will be ready for the switch over after the festive season.

We want to reassure you that everything you would normally do in Skype can be done in Microsoft Teams.

Teams has been available to those with network access since the roll out of Microsoft Office 365 in 2017, and many of you are already using and are familiar with its functions. If that's you, great! If not, that's okay too!

Microsoft Teams guidance is available on our staff intranet and provides an overview of the platform, including the instant messaging function which is called 'Persistent Chat' in Teams.

If you haven't tried before, why not start using Teams now so that you can become comfortable with it before the switch over? At the very least, make sure you open Teams daily and look out for any notifications and messages from your colleagues!

Teams is particularly useful for those with council mobile devices as it will help you stay in touch with your colleagues and keep you up to date when you are on the go. Simply download the app from the Company Portal to give it a try.

If you have any questions about moving to Teams having read the guidance notes, please send them to ict.business.services.enquiries@renfrewshire.gov.uk and our ICT team will be happy to help. Also, look out for updates to guidance and further information from the team as they take on board your queries and try to answer some of your most frequently asked questions.

Celebrating our pupils' achievements

Our schools and nurseries have been shining with awards and celebrations since pupils returned in August. Here are some of the recent highlights.



St Fergus' Primary School

Deputy Head Girl Emma Lockhart won the Scottish Leaders Engineering Award for her bright idea to help her nana remember when it's time to take her medicine.



Gryffe High School

Pupils worked hard to earn a gold award in UNICEF's UK Rights Respecting School programme, becoming Renfrewshire's first secondary school to win this award.



Lochfield Primary School

P5 pupils spread the word about kindness throughout their school, earning them the title Kind School of the Year, the first time a Scottish school has won that award for eight years.



Brediland Primary School

P2 pupil Eve is just one of the many clever pupils at her school who have worked hard all year round on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) activities that they've earned their school a STEM Nation Award.



Hillview Early Learning and Childcare Centre

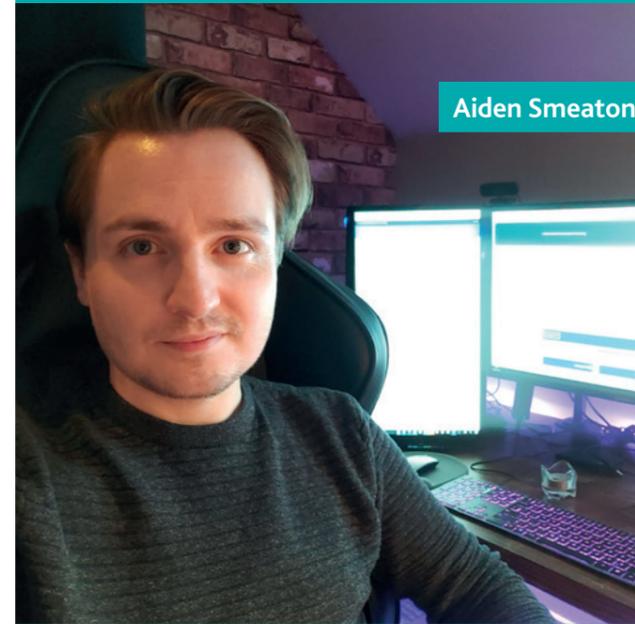
Children helped spread a little kindness by hanging messages on their kindness tree to celebrate World Kindness Day. They also took part in a physically-distanced pumpkin trial with their mums and dads to celebrate Halloween and lift community spirit.



LGBT awards

Johnstone High School have now gained a Silver Charter Award from LGBT Youth Scotland and both Glencoats Primary School and Castlehead High School achieved a Bronze Charter Award for their joint Rainbow Fest initiative involving P5s and S2s.

MyAccount: there for customers online—rain, hail or shine...



Aiden Smeaton

As the nights get longer and the weather gets colder, lots of our residents find themselves needing council services a little more than usual. This is where MyAccount can lend a helping hand.

From reporting flooded roads and broken streetlights to applying for community meals and parking permits, MyAccount offers lots of ways for our customers to reach out as they navigate their way through winter. And the Digital First team are constantly working to put even more services online.

Digital delivery officer, Aiden Smeaton, applauds the efforts of his team as they work to connect residents directly to the department who can help them:

'I'm so proud of how well the team have adapted to working from home this year, and how they've kept up a fast pace creating new digital services. As we've built new forms we've also built new relationships with colleagues across the council.

'The team have worked hard making major improvements to our customer portal MyAccount and our staff portal Dash, and it's great to see an increase in usage every month.'

While recent feedback has praised MyAccount for being 'quick and easy to use', there is also a dedicated team waiting on the other end of myaccount.help@renfrewshire.gov.uk to help any new or struggling users.

Again, we ask our colleagues across the council to remind family and friends to sign-up for MyAccount. It is quick, simple and secure and can be accessed anywhere, anytime.



Douglas McWhinnie



Laura Fulton



Ryan Smith



Tracy Ann Ferris



Simon Law

"The team have worked hard making major improvements to our customer portal MyAccount and our staff portal Dash, and it's great to see an increase in usage every month."

Aiden Smeaton



Stay safe online

As working and shopping online has increased this year, so has cybercrime and phishing emails. These are emails that appear to come from a trusted source and direct you to a false website that looks like it belongs to a genuine organisation. It may then ask you to take an action such as updating your password in order to protect your account or prevent it being suspended but this is a ploy designed to get you to share your personal information.

Take these steps to protect yourself and others online:

Learn to spot the difference between genuine and fake websites as well as secure and insecure payment pages. You can do this by visiting the Cyber Security section on our iLearn platform and reading about current scams and internet safety at www.getsafeonline.org/renfrewshire.

Tell-tale signs to look out for include:

- you receive an unexpected email relating to a prize, refund or payment
- you are asked for personal information such as a username, password or bank details
- the email contains spelling errors or poor English
- the tone is urgent and possibly threatening
- the sender's email address is different from the trusted organisation's website address

Stop before parting with any money, personal information or bank details. It's ok to reject or ignore these emails. Never call a number provided in an email. Always obtain the phone number from a separate website you can trust.

Protect yourself and make sure the website you are using is genuine. If an offer seems too good to be true, it's probably a scam. Check the official website to see if the company mentions known scams using their name.

Report it.

Don't let criminals away with it. If you've been the victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at www.actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Celebrating one year of WRAP

The Working to Reconnect and Achieve Potential (WRAP) service this month celebrates one year of supporting local people through helping to rehouse those who have experienced repeat homelessness and assist them to sustain their new tenancy.

The service, delivered in partnership with Blue Triangle Housing Association, provides an intensive package that helps individuals deal with the personal challenges and issues that put them at risk of homelessness.

Despite the immense challenges we have all faced during 2020, WRAP has managed to support 31 individuals into settled accommodation since its launch in December 2019.

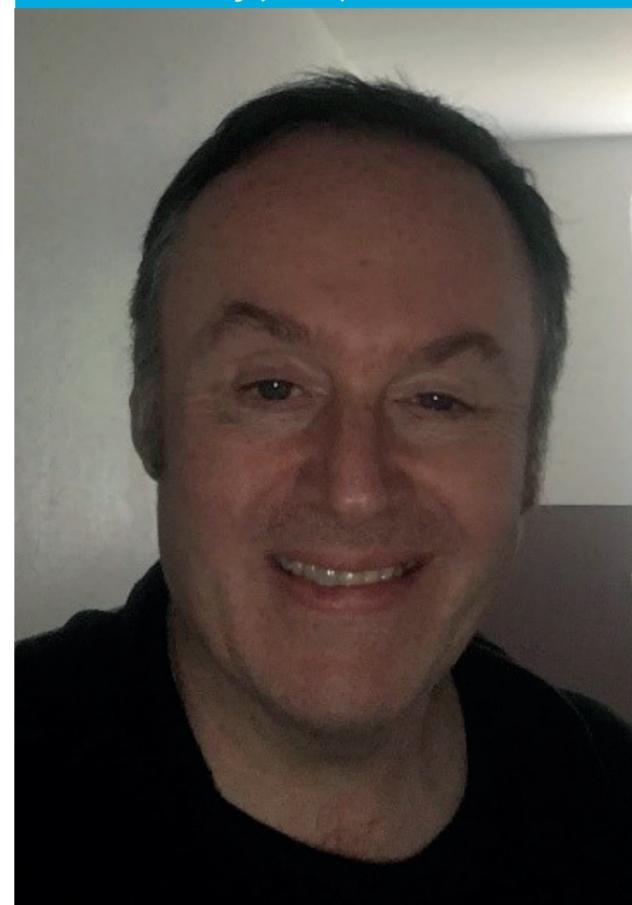
WRAP has recently been awarded a number of tablets and MiFi devices (similar to a WIFI router) for service users from Connecting Scotland. This is a fantastic development, especially as we all rely on technology more than ever to stay connected with family and friends and access services online.

"WRAP is all about being there to respond and help people immediately. Often, we can avoid a crisis by being there to help people deal with their issues in a different way. This helps to build their confidence and belief in their own ability to deal with any similar situations in the future. It also helps them to build trust and positive relationships—often for the first time in their adult lives—which is a really great thing to see."

Karen Perratt, Housing Support Co-ordinator



WRAP support workers Caitlin Hutton (above) and Robert McKay (below).



Happy retirement Alex!

Staff in fleet services recently waved off their much-loved colleague Alex Jenkins as he hung up his social transport keys for the last time before heading off into the retirement sunset.

Alex started his council career as a social transport driver 20 years ago and it wasn't long before he was promoted to the position of chargehand and became renowned for the level of help and support he gave to others. He's well known for his genuine "can do" attitude and colleagues have often heard him saying 'we just do whatever we need to do as they need us'.

Fleet and social transport manager Scott Blyth said, 'I'm really going to miss Alex. He's been a huge asset to the Council, always making a big contribution and even leading the service into the Staff Recognition Awards 2019-2020 and bringing home a trophy on behalf of his team. Throughout the coronavirus crisis, Alex has done so much to support his colleagues and our service users'.

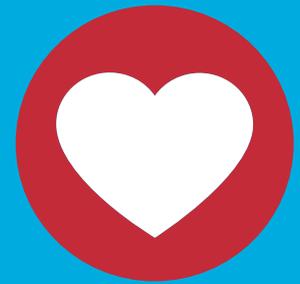
In his retirement Alex plans to keep living life to the fullest and has plenty going on that will keep him doing just that including his five beloved grandchildren and his other great passion, radio. Alex even owns his own radio station, Celtic Music Radio, where he supports many up and coming local stars of all ages with opportunities to be heard they might not otherwise find.

When asked what he wanted to say to Alex, Scott said, 'Alex you have been a rock for the service. We all wish you the very best in your retirement, you will be missed Sir.'

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...



"@RenCouncil @GryffeHighSch Congratulations, well done to all staff, young people and their families."

Elizabeth Morrison

"@RenCouncil Thanks for the opportunity to have our say 😊"

Rotatokitten

"@RenCouncil big thank you to the team that puts up the Christmas lights and then switches them on for Renfrew! Was a great idea having them on for the school run on a dark morning. Squeals of delight (and that was just me) lovely Christmassy chat on the way to school #happydays"

Tracey Lundie

"Hi, not sure the lady's name, maybe Tracy, from the local assistance team called me tonight...as I am isolating. I don't need any help thankfully as I have family nearby but what a lovely lady and she took the time to spend a couple of minutes just chatting about how I am and she really brightened my day. Thank you 🙌"

Mark McLellan

"Went yesterday and it was very quiet. Staff were there every step of the way to tell you what to do, and all the staff were so helpful and amazing. In and out in 10 mins."

Wilma Lewis after visiting the Johnstone testing centre

"That's fantastic, thanks very much for your reply, have a good day, stay safe 🙌🙌"

Hector Dunbar

"Loved the video! thank you @RenCouncil"

Laura Howat on our Renfrewshire Remembers video for Remembrance Sunday

"Well done to all kids and staff. 😊😊"

Pat Palmer on Lochfield PS's Kind School of the Year awards

Not long home from the asymptomatic covid 19 testing in Johnstone, felt completely safe, very well run, everything spaced out and staff super friendly, efficient and professional, well done all concerned 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌 negative test result received within in the half hour!!

Mary-Jane Chalmers

I went this morning and the staff were so nice and helpful , Well done to them 🙌🙌🙌🙌

Janice Houston after visiting the asymptomatic testing centre in Johnstone



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