

A message from our Chief Executive, Sandra Black

This week the First Minister confirmed the careful easing of lockdown measures in Scotland and the small changes that will help to improve our quality of life as we continue to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. As we enter the weekend, I am sure many of you will be planning to meet up with family and friends you have not seen since the beginning of lockdown.

This is such an important marker in our response to the virus and will provide a huge boost to our health and wellbeing. It is down to the commitment and resilience of everyone who has followed the guidelines, and to our colleagues delivering essential services and helping others to remain at home, that we are able to take these very important first steps on our recovery journey.

[Read Sandra's message in full here.](#)

Lockdown latest: Modified, but not over.

Phase 1 of easing lockdown measures means people in Scotland can now meet up with another household, outdoors, as long as physical distancing of 2 meters is followed and you do not share surfaces including cups and cutlery. For many this means the chance to see family and friends for the first time since lockdown began. You can also resume some non-contact outdoors activities like golf, fishing, tennis and bowls. The key message is stay home if you can, follow public health advice and stay local if you go out—[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): staying at home and away from others \(physical distancing\)](#)



Household Waste and Recycling Centres update

Our recycling centres will be reopening on **Monday 1 June**, but on a phased basis for the first four weeks at least.

You should only visit if it is essential, so please note this and pass it on to others too.

Initially, not every site will be open seven days and there are restrictions on what you can bring—including only bagged household waste for the first two weeks—so make sure you check before visiting.

Until further notice, only cars are allowed so when you arrive, join the single file queue and have your photo ID and proof of residency ready to be checked.

You'll be directed from the barrier to a skip where only one person should empty the car as quickly and safely as possible, maintaining physical distancing at all times.

The restrictions are in place to keep our teams and residents safe so visit our website to find out all you need to know—www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-bins—and you can check out a short video on our social media channels.

Gordon McNeil, Director of Environment and Infrastructure, said: "I want to offer a huge thanks to everyone throughout the Environment and Infrastructure service, and from across the council, who have worked extremely hard to put the plans in place which allow us to reopen these sites again safely.

"It's been a difficult task, but one that everyone has handled superbly.

"I know many of you will also be residents in Renfrewshire, so please only visit our sites if it is essential, check in advance for when your nearest site is open and only bring what's permitted in the first instance."

We are continuing to follow Scottish Government guidance on Coronavirus and you can find the latest information you need on our website—www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/coronavirus.



Test and Protect

The Scottish Government has announced details of the new test, trace, isolate, support strategy known as Test and Protect. This strategy sets out the approach to testing and tracing those who may have symptoms of Coronavirus. This builds on the recent expansion of testing that means anyone over the age of 5 displaying key symptoms namely a high temperature, dry cough or a loss of taste and/or smell will be eligible for a test along with other members of their household.

The Test and Protect programme will mean that as well as the Coronavirus test, individuals will be asked to provide details of anyone they've been in close contact with for longer than 15 minutes. For key workers this may include those colleagues you've been working with on the front line.

The programme will prioritise key workers such as those in healthcare roles and will continue to extend as capacity to carry out more tests daily increases.

If you test positive for Coronavirus, you will be asked to isolate for 7 days and all those you have had close contact with will be asked to isolate for 14 days. Your personal information will not be shared during this process and your identity will remain anonymous.

It is important to note that as a council we will continue to do all we can to support our staff members through this time. If you or someone you have been in close contact with tests positive for Coronavirus and as a result you are asked to isolate, you should report this to your line manager as soon as possible. We recognise these are exceptional circumstances and your manager will do everything they can to support you whilst in isolation and as you return to work.

Kindness Counts

Last week we launched **#KindnessCounts**, a social media campaign designed to celebrate the acts of kindness that have been taking place across Renfrewshire communities during the coronavirus outbreak. We are looking for staff and local people to share their own experiences of kindness by using the hashtag **#KindnessCounts** on Facebook and Twitter.

So far, we've heard many wonderful stories about local community groups and charities who have been going above and beyond to support people through the crisis. We've also heard about individual acts of kindness from neighbourly support to anonymous gestures of good will. One proud mum told the story of her 10-year-old boy who instead of birthday presents this year, asked his friends and family to donate to the Renfrewshire Foodbank, raising a total of £350!

What acts of kindness have you witnessed or experienced in recent times? Join the conversation online and share your story on social media using **#kindnesscounts**.

**THANK
YOU**



#kindnesscounts



Successful candidates *Top left to right*—Catriona MacKinnon, John Craig, Alex Beattie and Megan Di Pinto *Bottom left to right*—Richard Ferguson, Elizabeth Revie and Natalie Quail

A wise investment

Back in April we brought you the latest news on how our colleagues in Invest in Renfrewshire's Employability Services were coping under lockdown and continuing to provide their important service helping people across Renfrewshire into work.

Pre-Coronavirus, the Invest Team were working hard to support people into rewarding careers and their popular Invest Healthcare Programme saw a huge level of interest with over 100 candidates attending information sessions for only 10 Healthcare Support Assistant posts. The rigorous programme was delivered in partnership with NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde who put candidates through their paces in order to determine who was the right fit for the job. Of the 48 candidates who attended the NHS recruitment screening only 15 individuals were asked to come back, 11 of them coming from Renfrewshire!

They all went on to begin their journeys with extensive NHS training and further support from Invest. In the end all the hard work paid off and resulted in the recruitment of 10 Healthcare Support Assistants at the Royal Alexandria Hospital (RAH) in Paisley.

One of the participants, Catriona MacKinnon, said 'Invest helped build my confidence, supported me throughout my journey and I couldn't recommend them enough, I love my job and the fact that I make a difference'.

Assistant Economic Development Manager, Laura Neill, said 'Assisting people into careers with the NHS has always been an extremely important thing to do and we were delighted to work in partnership with them to create these great opportunities for unemployed people. However, no one could have foreseen just how vital this would become. We are proud that we have made a real contribution to the staffing levels of our local NHS workforce which will have had an invaluable impact during this difficult time.

'Once employed we continue to assist people in their jobs and at the moment around 50% of those we support are in essential key worker roles. Since lockdown we've continued our work in partnership with the NHS to help ensure they have access to new recruits.'

Denise Pirie and Matt Murray are two recent recruits who have gone into frontline roles at The Louisa Jordan – a temporary critical care hospital in Glasgow, purpose built for combatting Covid-19.

Employability Advisor, Eilidh Kerr, said, 'Both Denise and Matt lost their previous jobs as a result of the pandemic. Matt was a previous client and Denise heard about us through our recent marketing campaign. We supported them both to find and apply for jobs and helped with travel expenses.'

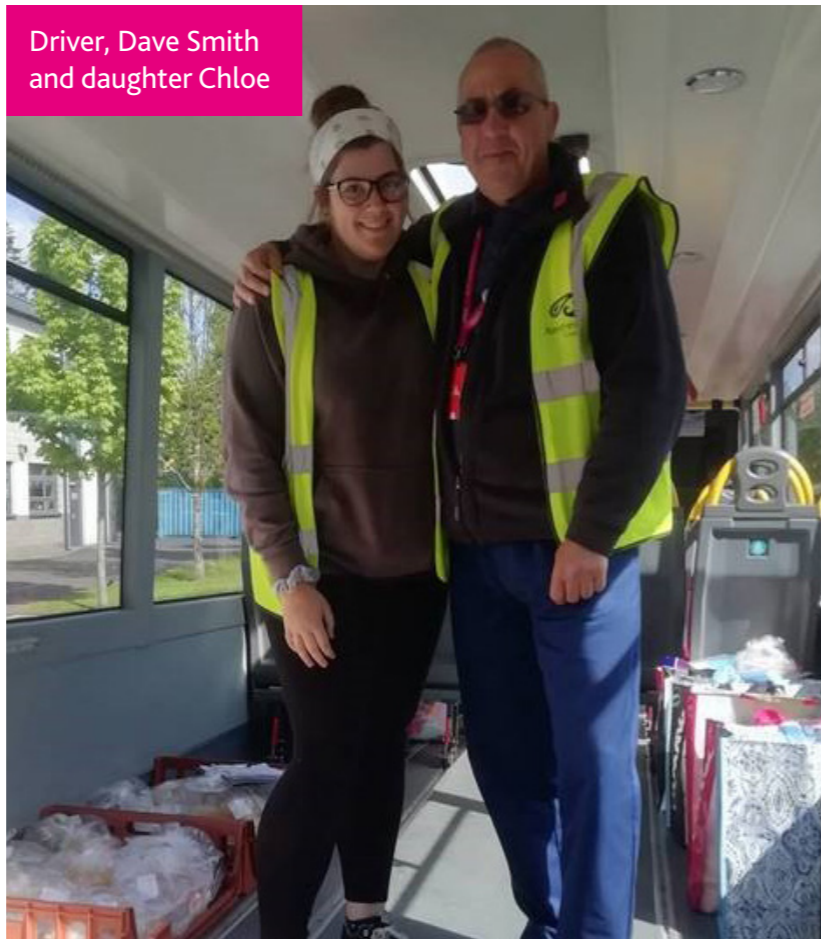
Your wellbeing

Don't forget our 'Health and wellbeing at work' webpage is filled with helpful advice to keep a healthy body and mind whether you are on the front line or working from home. www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/10207/Health-and-Wellbeing-at-Work

The Scottish Government has also put together a great package of ideas on exercising, healthy diet, maintaining a social life and staying emotionally centred. <https://clearyourhead.scot/>

Time for Talking, 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.

Driver, Dave Smith and daughter Chloe



A Family Affair

Chloe Smith has been assisting her dad Transport Driver Dave, as a volunteer in the delivery of shielding support packs across Renfrewshire. Sixteen year-old Chloe, who is a student at West College in Paisley, is an experienced volunteer who recently received a long service award for her work with Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYV).

Chloe has volunteered with PSYV for 3 years helping to steward much loved Renfrewshire events like Paisley's Halloween Festival and fireworks displays. She's even assisted with big ticket events further afield such as the Edinburgh Tattoo and the women's golfing Solheim Cup. As part of her role she also does a lot of fundraising for important causes such as St. Vincent's Hospice and Poppy Scotland.

These days many of us will recognise the ups and downs with working in close proximity to family members – particularly those of us sharing our at-home office with our kids.

Perhaps the Smith family can teach us all a thing or two on how to make it work for everyone involved!

Proud dad Dave said 'It's been brilliant working with Chloe. She is a really good organiser and her customer care is first class. It makes me very proud to see her out helping people who need it.'

Chloe said, 'I'm really enjoying working with my dad, doing our bit for Renfrewshire and helping people together.'



Information Matters

The Information Governance Team are here to make sure we all know how to handle personal information safely and securely. This includes information sharing and how we should respond to data protection and freedom of information requests.

To raise awareness of our responsibilities and provide best practice when working from home, the team have been busy preparing for Information Governance (IG) Awareness Week 2020, which starts this Monday.

Allison Black, Managing Solicitor and the Council's Data Protection Officer told us 'Thankfully, it has been pretty much business as usual for the team during lockdown, we (Emma McBride and I), were even able to record this year's annual refresher training webinar from home without any problem, ably assisted by HR & OD Adviser, Simon Hall.

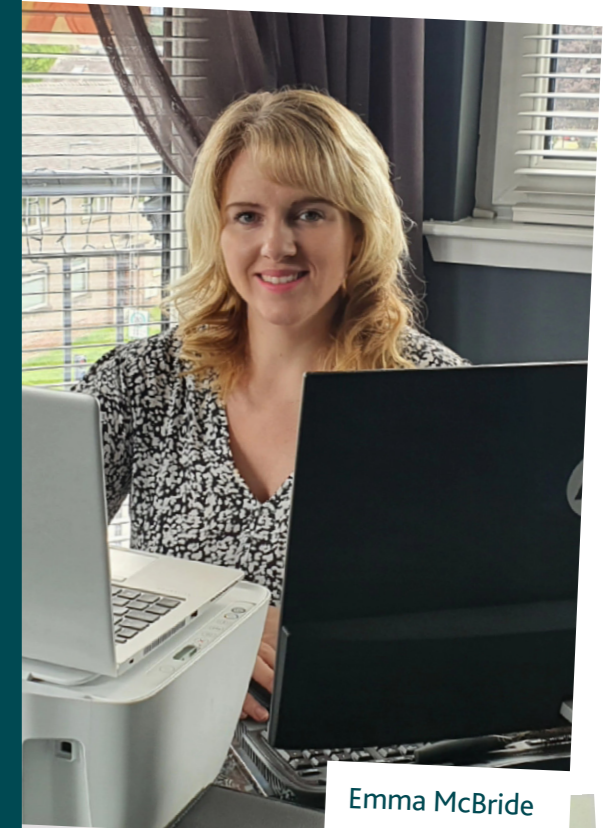
This year's webinar will be launched during Information Governance Awareness Week, when you will also be reminded to 'Think Twice' about handling information, especially whilst working from home. Allison said 'lockdown has resulted in different ways of working. Some people will have more distractions at home, which means it is easier to make mistakes. This makes the council's 'Think Twice' message all the more important.'

If something does go wrong, the team are here to help so get in touch right away. For a guide on how to report an issue such as information being lost or sent to the wrong person go to the following intranet page: Information-Security-Incident-Reporting-Procedure.

On working from home ...

Records Manager, Andy Connor: 'I'm fortunate I can work from home. I don't miss my commute, but I do miss my cappuccinos from the Atrium!'

Information Governance Officer, Donna Cunningham: 'I like the very short journey to work and not having to find a parking space. But I do miss my colleagues. We have a great team and we call, Skype or email each other whenever we need to and regularly check in with colleagues across the council to ensure we are all doing ok.'



Emma McBride



Donna Cunningham

Always remember to **Think Twice** when handling information and you can help avoid potential security breaches.



Angie Muir, Family Support Worker



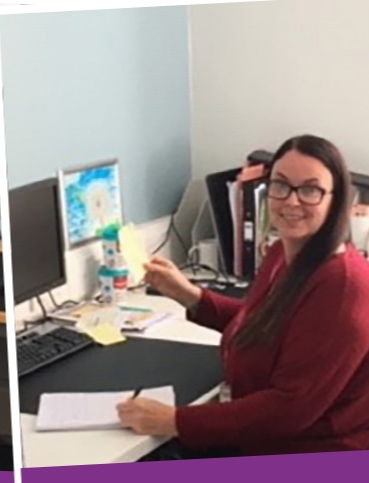
Diane McBride, Social Worker



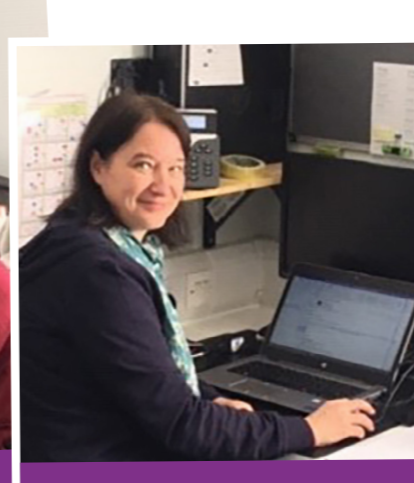
George Hutton, Child Care Case Manager



Tanya Cassidy, Clerical Assistant-Receptionist



Janine Thomson, Senior Social Worker



Clare Cuning, Social Work Manager

Consistent support for vulnerable children

Lockdown is hardest for people who are most vulnerable in our communities and protecting those who need us most has been at the heart of the council's response to the COVID-19 crisis. Our Social Work Services have faced unprecedented challenges, but their energy and ingenuity to stay connected to service users and to each other has shone through. Over the coming weeks we will be looking at some of the different examples of how the service has managed to maintain its vital supports to the people of Renfrewshire.

This week, Children's Services Social Work Manager Michelle McCargo, highlights the incredible work currently being carried out by the teams who protect our vulnerable children and young people and sends her message of thanks.

"Providing care during this pandemic and the resulting lockdown has presented an unprecedented challenge for services across the council and the Health and Social Care Partnership. It has been inspiring to see the remarkable response from all our key workers. I'm very proud of the dedication and commitment of our social workers, support workers and residential workers who have supported vulnerable service users through this very difficult time. I wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you.

"It is a challenging job, even in the best of times, to be responsible for supervising children in care, protecting children 'at risk' from harm and meeting the needs of other vulnerable children such as those with disabilities or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. It takes courage, conviction, friendship and support from a wonderful network of colleagues to get through difficult times. The current crisis has meant we have had to find new ways to be there for the children and families who need us most.

"It has taken care and creativity to work from home and make sure our services continue to run as normally as possible, including visiting—with physical distancing—many of the 1500 children and young people we support. We've also used video calls to connect everyone who needs to be together and in touch. So many of our ideas were quickly brought to life, with a new staff learning programme online, webinars for our wonderful foster carers and virtual yoga for some of the young women we support.

"We opened our touchdown hub at St. James Street to help deliver the service and support our teams, with physical distancing measures in place. Despite the many changes we remain connected as a service.

"Life has also continued as normally as possible in our children's residential houses and our supported accommodation for those who have been in care. I have been so impressed with everything staff and young people have done to stay safe and keep entertained. For anyone with teenagers in the house, you will understand that is no mean feat! And I can't wait to see the fruits (and veg), of the new communal garden built by some of the young adults in our

supported accommodation. Everyone has shown remarkable resilience and I am very grateful to every member of staff who has stepped up to make sure our young people have been able to cope as well as possible.

"It has been wonderful to see the ways in which our social workers and carers have supported families to keep in touch—enabling parents to read bedtime stories via video and helping siblings to play online games together. Remote contact is no substitute for being with loved ones, but this contact in the meantime has meant so much to people.

"I also want to pay tribute to our foster carer and kinship carer households, where many carers have been shielding or are within a higher risk group. This has been a very difficult time, separated from loved ones, providing essential care for children and without all the usual supports around them. You are simply amazing.

"And although it has been very different for all our teams on the frontline, it would not be possible without everyone who keeps the service running behind the scenes in Customer and Business Services. Thank you for staying home and extending daily support to your colleagues. We could not deliver without you.

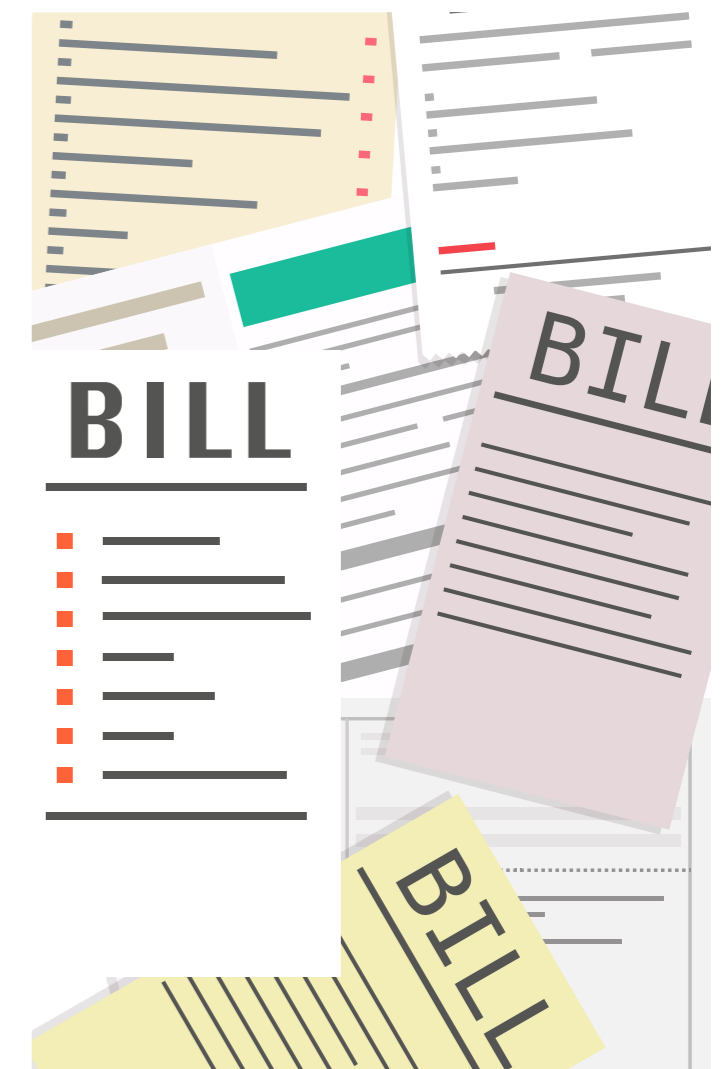
"Well done and thank you to all, our partners and our extended team. You have brought the council's values to life during this crisis and every day you make things better for Renfrewshire's most vulnerable children. Stay safe and please stay connected.

Do you have questions about money, Benefits or debt?

Advice Works is Renfrewshire Council's free, confidential and independent service which will give you advice on these issues in a straightforward manner. The Advice Works team can help with a range of money and debt issues, including budgeting, negotiating with creditors, and mortgage and rent arrears—as well as checking you are getting all the benefits that you and your family are entitled to.

Please call the Helpline on **0300 300 1238** from Monday to Thursday, 8.45am to 4.45pm and Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm. Our friendly, helpful advisers will give you help immediately, or can arrange a telephone appointment if this is more convenient. If you have a benefit form to be completed, for example Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance, then we will make a telephone appointment for the adviser to guide you through the form and offer advice on how to complete it.

You can also contact the team by emailing adviceworks@renfrewshire.gov.uk, or check their website on www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/adviceworks



Staff Thanks and Social Shout Outs



Our Facebook and Twitter channels have received more fantastic feedback from the people of Renfrewshire this week and thanks to staff are pouring in from all directions. Just goes to show all your hard work is recognised and appreciated.

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

A customer who called our Local Assistance Helpline which helps people with Shielding support needs, wanted to let everyone know that their claps on a Thursday evening are "also for all those Council workers who are providing this vital service."

"@RenCouncil @deanmartin15 @scotgov That's great thanks very much for the info"

Alan Frater via Twitter

"Sorry.... could go on all night, so last one... All the refuse collectors who have continued to keep our communities clean, and, take the time to wave and smile and toot at very bored children who stand and wave at the window #KindnessCounts"

Carol Burt-Wilson via Facebook

Senior Communications Officer, Graeme Crawford, wanted to send a "huge thanks to Chris McLaughlan in the Design team for his work on the HWRCs reopening. Made a big difference to the quality of communications that we could put out. Top man!"

"@RenCouncil I am not sure any other announcement has made me this happy! We live in a flat and don't have a bin we always used the recycling centres. There is 2 less bins in the communal area so it has been difficult, managing our waste. 6am bin visits can now end haha. Thanks to staff"

Tracey Lundie via Twitter

"@RenCouncil @Leonie_S_Bell That was great! A really generous, enriching conversation. I want bingo on my street now "

Jenny Niven in response to the launch of #FuturePaisley podcast via Twitter

"@RenCouncil @stcatherinespsy @StDavidsPS @StMargaretsJoh1 @LangbankPrimary @thankateacher @StFergus_ps Mrs.McDougall P7 has been amazing throughout this. The kindness and love shown to her wee gang has been admirable. Can't fault the whole staff team they have all been a great support throughout this particularly Elizabeth and Mrs. MacDonald. Love you all Stay safe"

Tracey Robertson via Twitter



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