

Welcome to the October edition of our new 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 **Director of Finance and Resources, Alan Russell**.

"As we approach winter this year it is more essential than ever that we all continue to do our bit to stop the spread of coronavirus by following the guidelines in place both at home and at work. The Corporate Management Team are currently working hard to put in place a plan of action that will ensure we—as a council, our services and staff—are fully equipped for the months ahead. This includes the expansion of our yearly winter flu vaccinations, more on this to follow."

"2020 has shown that the need for improved technology and reliable digital services has never been greater. I am immensely proud of our ICT team who have worked tirelessly to enable the mass shift to homeworking while continuing to pioneer cutting-edge developments to take Renfrewshire into the future with reliable digital technologies and better, faster connectivity. Read on to find out how we are achieving this through our exciting Connectivity as a Service project.

"I know this continues to be a difficult time. But as I read through this month's newsletter, I am struck by just how committed we are as an organisation to adapting to serve our communities and living our values every day - from stories on collaboration, to the continued dedication we show to supporting learning and development. Look out for information on Learning at Work Week 2020, a week-long programme of events put together by our Human Resources and Organisational Development team, specially designed to help you expand your skills and make the most of the lessons learned during this challenging time.

"I'd like to give a special mention to our Advice Works team who last month celebrated their 20th birthday. Over the past two decades the service has provided a lifeline to many local residents who have fallen on hard times and continues to provide valuable help and support to all those who need it.

"Finally, I'd like to thank all of you for your continued hard work and perseverance, without which we wouldn't be able to meet the challenges of 2020 head on.

"The work of all the teams across Finance and Resources and the wider council has proven to me that we are an organisation capable of great things when we come together and work as one team."



What's inside this month's issue?

- > Latest information and advice
- > Taking care of your wellbeing
- > Working safely during coronavirus
- > Living our values: Building a bright future for Renfrewshire and Learning Makaton at Rashielea Primary School
- > Spotlight on the business team
- > For Your Information: Connectivity as a Service
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Latest information and advice

Further measures to protect the population from the spread of coronavirus are now in place across Scotland.

The additional restrictions are necessary to prevent a resurgence in community transmission of the virus and the potential for a rapid return to the pressures the NHS experienced earlier in the year.

Early data suggests that recent restrictions in west central Scotland have helped to slow the increase of cases. So, by extending household restrictions nationwide in an early and preventative way, it is hoped the measures will help to bring the R number, or rate of transmission down and keep the virus under control.

A summary of the key measures is as follows:



Inside people's homes

- You must not meet people from any other households in your home or another person's home socially, unless they are in your extended household. These rules also apply to children.
- Children whose parents do not live in the same household can move between homes, as can non-cohabiting couples.
- Very limited exemptions apply for childcare and for tradespeople.



Indoors in public spaces

- A maximum of six people from two households can meet in public indoor spaces such as cafes, pubs and restaurants
- Children under 12 from those two households do not count towards these limits



Private gardens or public outdoors spaces

- A maximum of six people from two households can meet in outdoor spaces
- You should limit as far as possible the total number of households you meet in a day
- Under-12s do not count towards the maximum number of households or number of people who can meet outdoors.
- Under-12s do not have to physically distance
- A maximum of six 12 to 17-year olds can meet in outdoor spaces only, with no household limit. Physical distancing is still required.

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



Car sharing

You should only car share with members of your own, or extended household and follow guidance when there is no alternative



Working

You must continue to work from home where possible



Hospitality

- Pubs, restaurants and all hospitality settings are currently required to close at 10pm
- Table service is required in all hospitality premises

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 

Always remember the FACTS and don't forget, if you think you have symptoms of Covid-19, no matter how mild, you should immediately self-isolate at home and book a test straight away.

For more information visit www.nhsinform.scot/.



Flu Vaccinations

With coronavirus still circulating in our communities, it is more important than ever that we do all that we can to reduce the impact of flu on those most at risk, many of whom rely on council services.

Given the impact of coronavirus on the most vulnerable in society, this year the Scottish Government is expanding its vaccination programme to include new groups and increasing capacity to vaccinate more people than ever before.

In addition to this, we want to do everything possible to help you remain fit and healthy at work. So, this year we have more than doubled the amount of vaccinations available through our in-house programme. This means any member of staff, who is not eligible for a free vaccination under the extended NHS eligibility programme, can get one through work.

Our internal programme will begin in early October and conclude by December.

To minimise the risk of transmission and to provide increased flexibility vaccinations will be offered on site at our schools and we've also introduced Boots e-vouchers which can be sent directly to your personal or work email.

This year more than ever, we all have a responsibility to protect ourselves and the people around us, especially those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older people and those with underlying health issues.

The flu vaccine can't give you flu, but it can stop you and those you care about from catching it, so please watch out for the NHS campaign, get a vaccination and help take the pressure off the NHS this winter.

For full details go to www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/flu Vaccination

Living our values

We continue to see great examples of how you live our values every single day.

Assistant communications officer, **Lauren Cunningham**, explained why collaboration, collaboration –working as one team and with people who care about this place– is so important and central to her role.

You can catch up on all of our case studies online and find out more about living our values at <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/ourvalues>



“Collaboration means having a shared goal, a shared vision and each and every one of us doing our bit together to reach that end. I think we are definitely at our strongest when we work together.”

Lauren Cunningham

Working safely during Coronavirus

Don't forget our 'Working safely during Coronavirus' webpages are packed full of important and useful information to help you keep safe and follow government guidelines while working during this time.

Managers can also find a detailed protocol for managing Covid-19 cases in the workplace.

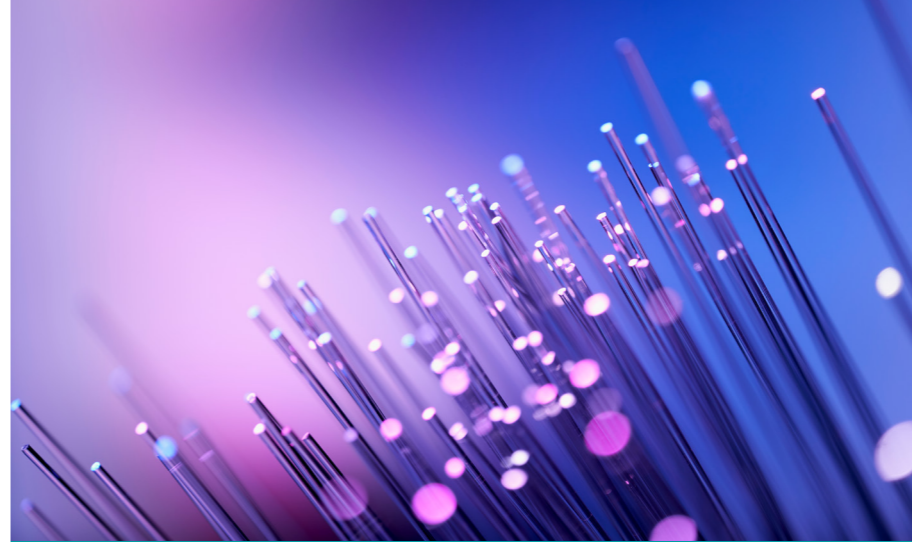
Whether you are working from home, at one of our schools or frontline depots, our online guides have been tailored for you to provide the best advice for your working location. Read the guide most relevant to you for advice on working safely, what to do if you develop symptoms, taking time off and how to take care of your general wellbeing during this time, plus more!

Everyone has an important role to play in ensuring we keep our workplaces safe so we can continue to deliver our vital services to the people of Renfrewshire. The value of your commitment and effort cannot be overstated.

To access all the guides and information on working safely during coronavirus go to <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/10540/Working-safely-during-coronavirus>



Connectivity as a Service (CaaS) delivering a step change in digital connectivity



For staff working from home, connectivity through software such as Microsoft Teams and Skype has been vital in keeping us communicating and providing lifeline services to our communities. This seamless switch to homeworking was enabled by our ICT department who are also leading an exciting new project which is set to greatly improve digital connectivity for the council, and the people and communities of Renfrewshire.

Connectivity as a Service—known as CaaS—is a project that will bring better, faster and more reliable technology to Renfrewshire as we move forward through the new digital age. Led by ICT, a project team is pooling expertise from across roads teams, legal services, estates management, facilities management and health and safety, to ensure the project's success across the board.

Kicking off with a full-scale replacement of our current Wide Area Network with a full fibre network, CaaS will bring the enhancement of connectivity at 180 council buildings including nurseries, schools, local libraries, town halls, community centres and care homes.

In one of the many benefits of the project, by Autumn 2023, primary schools are expected to benefit from 20-times faster connections, while secondary schools will enjoy uploads and downloads 50-times quicker than currently provided.

Patrick Murray, Head of ICT, is rightly proud of his team and everything they have achieved. He said, “I would like to take this opportunity to praise the out-standing efforts of my ICT service—and in particular Gillian, Phil and Richmond – in getting this ground breaking initiative off the ground. Over the last 2+ years they have developed the business case for CaaS and undertaken a significant procurement exercise with the help of colleagues in procurement and legal. The Council has also benefited—and continues to do so—from the extensive market knowledge of our critical friend, Intelligens Consulting. Now that we have entered the delivery stage, I would also like to acknowledge the sterling efforts of other council services involved. CaaS is a wonderful example of team working across Renfrewshire Council—keep up the great work.”



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. Here you can access a range of resources to help keep healthy and emotionally supported. You will even find tips and materials on learning and personal development. Go to <http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/health-safety-wellbeing>

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 including Skype. Visit the webpage <https://www.timefortalking.co.uk/> for more information or call 0800 970 3980 for free support now.

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/>

Building a bright future for Renfrewshire



Each year, our building services team enrolls a select few candidates interested in developing their skills to courses that offer real learning opportunities suited to their job role.

Well done and good luck to Mark Johnstone, Graeme MacFarlane, Ryan Chalmers, Angela Coyle and Fraser Dalglish who secured the five graduate apprenticeship places on a scheme supported by Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). We'll be catching up with them down the line to find out how they get on.

We also caught up with some of our building services staff who are at various stages of their learning journeys to find out how they have benefited from these opportunities:

Technical and productivity supervisor for housing and property, **Chris Adam**, has worked for Renfrewshire Council for 20 years and is now entering the fourth year of his Construction Management honours degree at GCU. He said, "I first started with the council as an apprentice joiner and progressed to become a qualified tradesman then a supervisor. I've always been encouraged and supported to progress my career within the council. The skills and knowledge I've gained through my learning have been very beneficial so far and I've been allowed the freedom to put my studies into practice on site"

Facilities coordinator **Lynne McBride** recently completed her HNC in Facilities Management at City of Glasgow College. She said, "My manager and department are very supportive when it comes to learning and personal development. I'm looking forward to putting what I've learned into practice and I hope it opens up further opportunities."

Chris' colleague **Graeme Macfarlane** agrees. Entering his second year in Business Management at GCU, Graeme said: "It's great that Renfrewshire Council support staff members with opportunities like this. I study in my own time but can attend lectures during working hours which will in turn enable me to achieve a degree I otherwise wouldn't have had the time to complete. In the long term this will benefit both myself and the council as I can carry out my role with more skills and a deeper knowledge."

(Pictured above left) Lynne McBride and Claire Sleeth (Soft FM team leader) graduating in November 2019

Learning at Work Week

We value learning and last year over 400 of us took part in a range of activities organised by our Human Resources and Organisational Development team as part of Learning at Work Week 2019.

This year's national Learning at Work Week (Monday 5 to Friday 9 October) is all about learning journeys.

Ongoing learning is so important to help our services continually improve and respond to change, but it's also vital for our own personal development and growth.

The feedback from last year's programme was really positive and we hope to encourage even more people to take part this year.

We've all experienced new ways of working and communicating in recent months and it's our ability to continue to learn in new ways that has helped us adapt. So, we've changed our approach to Learning at Work Week for 2020 to offer a virtual programme of valuable content and materials with something for everyone.

Whether you're in the middle of your own learning journey or wondering where to start, we hope to inspire you with new themed learning experiences and opportunities across the week on Motivation Monday, Tech Tuesday, Way Forward Wednesday, Teamwork Thursday and Fun Friday.

Look out for our daily emails from 5 to 9 October for more details!



Luke McCutcheon

Learning Makaton at Rashielea Primary

We never stop learning, and that is true even for teachers! At Rashielea Primary School, teaching staff have shown their dedication to learning so that they can provide the best environment they can for pupils like **Luke McCutcheon**.

When Luke was due to start primary 1 at Rashielea Primary this year, his mum Lynsey was feeling all the usual nerves that most parents have when their little ones are about to start their school careers. But for Luke, the beginning of his school journey came with an additional challenge. Luke is hearing impaired and relies on Makaton to help him communicate. Lynsey was concerned that Luke would struggle to fit in with his peers and that the right supports might not be in place as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. But she needn't have worried!

Principal teacher for P1-P3 pastoral care Danielle Steedman, P1 teacher Jill Denholm and learning assistant Lianne McConville made good use of their time in lockdown and completed a level one workshop in Makaton. Danielle said, 'We were super keen to learn Makaton so that we could communicate effectively with Luke and make his transition as smooth as possible'.

They are now modelling their new Makaton skills and sharing their learning with Luke's classmates and the rest of the school. Class teacher Jill explained,

'We've been teaching Makaton to the other children in primary 1 who have all been amazing at learning this new way to communicate. They are beginning to use their Makaton during play with Luke which helps him feel included and it's lovely to see him beginning to make friends'.

To help keep children and staff safe during the ongoing pandemic, Rashielea primary school have altered their weekly assemblies to a virtual format where all classes now log onto Microsoft Teams each Friday to share in their achievements and receive their weekly values awards. Lianne uses this time to introduce Makaton words and phrases to the whole school so that everyone can communicate with Luke. So far, all pupils have learned how to say 'Hello Luke', 'good morning', 'goodbye' and the happy birthday song.

Luke's mum Lynsey has been delighted at the support Luke has received and is over the moon to see how quickly he has settled in at school. She said, 'Luke has already grown and learned a lot. I absolutely love the whole school approach; it has exceeded any expectations I had. Luke comes out of school every day really happy which is very encouraging and a clear sign of how welcomed and settled he feels'.

What a fabulous story of commitment to our values, using learning to help Luke settle in and giving him a fair chance to thrive and succeed. Well done to everyone involved. We wish Luke all the best and hope he continues to enjoy his time at Rashielea Primary School.

Spotlight on the Business Team

Coronavirus has had a tremendous economic impact globally, nationally and locally.

A survey of 500 local businesses in June found 92% had been closed or operating at partial capacity, with 40% expecting to require redundancies in the coming months and more than half cancelling or postponing planned investment.

Against this bleak backdrop, the Council's business team have provided lifeline financial support and specialist advice in a bid to keep Renfrewshire businesses afloat.

The seven-strong team were bolstered by a further 12 members of the wider economic development team, working at pace to approve and award more than £28million in 2,600 government grants for small businesses, hospitality providers and the self-employed.

This was achieved while continuing the in-house Business Gateway service, delivering online workshops and webinars and providing specialist support to companies on the InCube Creative programme.

Last month, the team added even more to their workload with the launch of the Renfrewshire Coronavirus Business Support fund and started distribution of Business PPE packs.

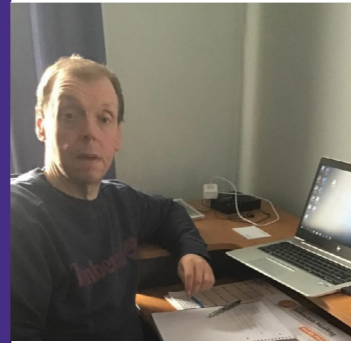


"Working from home has not stopped me being able to support the launch of Renfrewshire's latest Creative hub. Using email and phone calls, I have worked with Ben to launch Bailey's Antiques which has now opened at 34 High Street in Paisley and is supporting 15 other small businesses to operate."

Economic Development Officer, James Edmonds

"A large part of my role was visiting businesses to discuss their issues and develop an action plan to support their growth. This is currently not possible, so I've adapted with virtual meetings and phone calls instead."

Senior Economic Development Officer, Gary Kenyon



"Working from home has its benefits – less travel time, more time to enjoy what's around us."

Economic Development Officer, Robert Kinniburgh

Colette Saez, Assistant Manager Business Development, praised the team for their efforts. She said, 'COVID-19 and the onset of lockdown presented unparalleled challenges to the local business base and it was imperative our team rose to the challenges and provided effective advice and support to assist the sustainability of a significant number of Renfrewshire businesses.

"We had to redesign how we deliver our service and have had support from economic development colleagues and from the non-

domestic rates teams and finance staff. The digital first team helped create online applications and the communications team helped get the messages of support out to local businesses.

"I am extremely proud of how the team pulled together and responded to these challenges and how they have demonstrated a high degree of commitment and flexibility which has ensured we maximised the opportunity to provide the right support at a critical time and in doing so helped to protect local jobs and businesses."



Colette Saez

Goodbye and thanks

The team also want to give a shout out to **Philippa Simms** who recently retired following 13 years as a Business Development Advisor. Philippa was a highly valued team member who always went the extra mile in support of her clients and is now off to enjoy some well-earned free time. All the best Philippa!

Advice Works turns 20!

Happy birthday to our Advice Works service which last month celebrated turning 20. Set up in September 2000, the aim of Advice Works was to improve the quality of life for vulnerable groups and communities in Renfrewshire by helping them to maximise their income and manage personal debt.

The Advice Works team support people with a wide range of finance related queries and assist clients through the entire process from identifying what financial support is available and helping with applications, to guiding them and representing them where needed during appeals processes.

Over the years, the service has helped generate over £204million in additional income for clients. What an incredible achievement and much needed financial boost to the lives of many Renfrewshire residents.

But it's not just about money. Advice Works staff members pride themselves on the relationships they build with clients, whether it's reassuring them during hard times, removing the stigma around asking for help, or building their confidence to become more financially independent.

Income advisor Lorna McGinn explained how collaboration, building relationships and helping others are all central to her role. She said "I think we've built great relationships with the people of Renfrewshire. They know they can trust us to always do our very best for them. We often see clients returning and referring friends and family to our service. We have also established strong links with external agencies which enables us to help people find the support they need. I'm very proud to be part of this dedicated, hardworking team and I couldn't ask for a more fulfilling job."

If you have questions about money, benefit or debt you can call the free Advice Works helpline on 0300 300 1238 from Monday to Thursday, 8.45am to 4.45pm and Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm.



Lorna McGinn,
Income Advisor



Sarah Hindle,
Assistant Income Advisor



"Advice Works has filled a large part of my working life. The only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great worthwhile work. And the only way to do great worthwhile work is to love what you do and to help others where you can."

Income advisor **John Crampsey** describes what being part of such a valued service means to him. Inspiring words!

You can email adviceworks@renfrewshire.gov.uk, or check their webpage on www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/adviceworks for more information.



A spectacular send-off for Mrs Murray!

Clerical officer Monica Murray got a stylish send off as she retired from her post at Lochwinnoch Primary School after 22 years.

Headteacher Julie Bell and a group of parents organised the send-off which involved a ride in an open-top sports car and some live bagpipes for good measure.

Under the guise of a fire drill – which enabled physical distancing outdoors – children were able to present Mrs Murray with their farewell gifts.

Other school staff had created a surprise video montage which they played for Monica at the end of the day before they showered her with gifts and guided her outside to her awaiting carriage.

Headteacher Julie said, "The whole day was a huge surprise to Monica. She said she didn't want a fuss - but we couldn't possibly let the day pass without the send-off she deserved."

"The school office just won't be the same without Mrs Murray's cheerful smile and care. Nothing was ever too much trouble for her, and we'll all miss her loads.

Have a long, happy and healthy retirement Monica."

Julie Bell, Headteacher, Lochwinnoch Primary School

Positive feedback for roads repairs



Residents have expressed their gratitude to our roads repair team who have been busy mending key drainage sites in preparation for the winter months ahead. Here are a couple of the comments received...

"I would like to say thanks to **Gerry** for meeting me a few weeks back despite his busy work schedule. Gerry has managed to get all the gullies serviced on Ferguslie Main Road last week, this has made so much difference and, despite the heavy rainfall over the weekend, this has stopped the flooding."

Stephen Burns, local resident

"Thank you for the excellent job carried out today by **John Clark** and **Abie Reid** of Roads Dept. They identified the problems very quickly. I was most impressed with their experience in dealing with the problem. I also am speaking on behalf of the residents."

John McGinnigle, Bishopton Community Council

2020 MJ Awards Shortlist

Congratulations to Team Up to Clean Up and Youth Services who have both been shortlisted for the 2020 Municipal Journal Local Government Achievement Awards.

This is a great recognition of the fabulous work undertaken by both teams over the past year and during this coronavirus crisis.

This year the awards ceremony will be held virtually. All 116 candidates can log on to find out if they will scoop up one of the 18 awards on Friday 2 October. Best of luck to everyone involved!



Pupils from Glencoats Primary School taking part in our Team Up to Clean Up Big Spring Clean 2019



Members of Youth Service's Youth Voice group

Appreciation for housing services



There's been lots of incredible work going on across our housing services teams of late, with staff regularly going that extra mile to help their clients.

Recently, housing support managed to secure 13 x £100 vouchers for clients from the Homeless Network Scotland "Staying in" fund. These one-off vouchers were distributed to clients in temporary homeless accommodation, or people who have recently taken on a Housing First tenancy.

One recipient, James McMurray, said "The housing support service has been a tremendous help to me... help like this is invaluable to people like me."

James hasn't been the only one to provide glowing feedback. Just look at some of these anonymous comments received recently...

"Thanks so much for being here and being supportive throughout lockdown"

Tenant at Glencairn Court

"She has helped me when I had nobody else to help me with my shopping. She calls to check in to see how I am and if I am needing anything...her help is very much appreciated. She has told me just to call if I need anything—It is nice to know someone is there"

Tenant in Sheltered Housing about their sheltered housing officer

"The efforts from all the staff during lockdown has really been appreciated. They have done their best in keeping everywhere clean and tidy and organised"

Tenant at Maxwellton Court

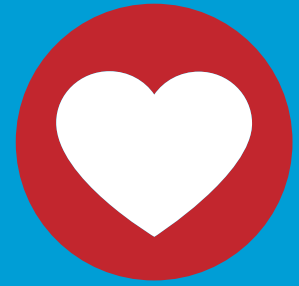
"The food provision has been a lifeline through the last couple of months, I had no food in the house and was unable to go out for supplies due to my low immune system—I am very grateful to everyone"

Tenant in Housing Support

Lynne Ford pictured above with luxury toiletry gift bags for clients and families across Renfrewshire

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 what a great job the comms team are doing getting all the Covid info out in an easy to understand way. Well done to everyone that is involved."

Tracey Lundie via Twitter

"@Rashielea_PS @EdScotOL @RenCouncil @RenEdHWB How fantastic, what a valuable skill for kids to learn. 😊"



Izienka via Twitter in reference to learning Makaton at Rashielea Primary School

"...can I add what a wonderful job Johnstone high school are doing during this pandemic 👍"

Sarah Jane via Facebook

"Great achievement- and I can testify to the excellent nurturing environment, great care is taken of my 2 kids."

Vicki Moffat in response to Renfrew High achieving a Gold award as a Nurturing School Community

"Thank you for continuing to keep us all safe ❤️"

Jenna Givens via Facebook

"I can highly recommend Advice Works. They have literally saved my life at least twice —I'm unable to work because of Mental Health issues...They represented me at hearings and advised all the way."

John Kilpatrick via Facebook

"There is a proposed area for this right in front of my house and I'm delighted. Its progressive and it will encourage a greater range of species."

Fiach via Twitter in reference to proposed plans for Biodiversity areas

"Can I say a BIG thank you for cleaning up the Fountain Gardens today. ★★★★★"

Mr Jamez via Twitter

"You're doing an incredibly worthwhile job. Thanks 👍"

Irene Macpherson 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