

Welcome to the November 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, the Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services, Mary Crearie, talks about how we are getting ready for winter this year and the incredible efforts across the Council in supporting the people of Renfrewshire throughout this pandemic...

"I have really enjoyed hearing from teams across the council about how they have adapted the services they provide and gone the extra mile for customers and communities, to put their safety and wellbeing first during such challenging times. I know this dedication and commitment will help to keep Renfrewshire moving through winter, as we turn our attention to getting RenReady for winter weather—as well as responding to the ongoing health emergency. You can read more about our winter preparations and the support we have to keep Renfrewshire and our colleagues safe and healthy below."

"The response from across the council has been nothing short of remarkable and you will not be surprised to hear how proud I am of my colleagues in Communities, Housing and Planning Services (CHAPS).

"This newsletter shares some of the great work done by the Sheltered Housing and Homeless Services Accommodation teams—just two examples of many which highlight our commitment to the people and communities of Renfrewshire.

"Throughout the pandemic we have developed new ways of working and have been incredibly creative in how we continue to support those who need our help and assistance most.

"It's so heartening to hear the warm feedback not just from colleagues but also from clients and service users who recognise the dedication and hard work being carried out every day.

"I want to finish with a heartfelt thank you to you all. Please stay safe and well."



Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services, Mary Crearie

What's inside this month's issue?

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- > The new tiered approach to coronavirus restrictions—what does it mean?
- > A look back at World Values Day 2020
- > Spotlight on the Sheltered Housing Team
- > MyAccount—helping customers manage their accounts throughout lockdown and beyond
- > Staff stories and thanks
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All this and more!

Ready for winter 2020

With the clocks having gone back and the days getting noticeably shorter, our preparations for winter are well underway.

Adverse weather conditions such as snow, heavy rain and freezing temperatures can have a significant impact on communities, local businesses and council services.

Our Ready for Winter campaign 2020 will shine a light on the people and teams who keep Renfrewshire moving during the winter months.

In the coming weeks and throughout the winter months we'll hear directly from colleagues and teams from across the council about the work they are doing to keep Renfrewshire moving as normal during adverse weather conditions.

They will also provide helpful advice and guidance on the steps staff, communities and businesses can take to help prepare themselves for winter weather, as well as what to do or who to contact if you require support.

With coronavirus still circulating in our communities, this year it's more important than ever that we do all we can to help protect each other, the NHS and the people who rely on council services. So, as part of Ready for Winter 2020, we are encouraging everyone in Renfrewshire to get a flu vaccination and making it available for free for all council employees who are not eligible for the NHS programme. If you are not eligible for the NHS programme, then find out how to access your vaccination through the council at www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/staff.

Your health and safety along with those who rely on our services is our priority, and throughout the pandemic all our decisions have been made with this in mind and based on the latest Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Scottish Government and public health guidance and made in consultation with Trade Unions.

To help support you to adjust to your new ways of working, whether that's at home, a school or a council building, we created the working safely during coronavirus webpages' under the staff information section of our website which we have and will continue to keep up to date with the latest measures on how we are keeping our workplaces COVID-safe.

For our key workers and those travelling to workplace locations, we have completed detailed risk assessments for all our workplaces and bases, and you can find more information about the health and safety measures in place at your workplace, including guidance on making home visits and the updated guidance on face coverings in all council buildings.

Home working has played a crucial role in our response to the pandemic and the working from home section provides useful information on how to make working from home more comfortable and productive including guidance on how to set up your working environment, complete your Display Screen Equipment assessment as well as the process for requesting and collecting ICT and office equipment.

Looking after your physical and mental wellbeing is always important, more so now than ever. This is a new and changing situation for everyone and as part of Ready for Winter 2020 we'll provide employees and our communities with useful links and information on how to reduce social isolation and maintain physical and mental wellbeing this winter.

You can read more about this and the existing support available, such as where to go for financial support and advice and Time for Talking, our free employee counselling service on the health, safety and wellbeing page under **Staff info** on our website.

For more information on how to prepare yourself, your home and your community for winter weather, visit our website at www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/ReadyforWinter

The new tiered approach to Coronavirus restrictions—what does it mean?

The Scottish Government has announced a 5-level protection approach to manage the spread of coronavirus across Scotland. The levels will apply to your local authority area and will be set according to infection data within a local area.

What are protection levels?

The protection levels are 0,1,2,3 and 4.

Level 0 is the least restrictive—closest to normal life, with Level 4 imposing the strictest measures—closer to a full lockdown.

It is important to understand what these levels will mean for you and what you should do to comply with the latest guidance.

From Monday 2 November, the new level 3 protection guidance applies to Renfrewshire with measures largely similar to the restrictions previously in place across Renfrewshire and central Scotland.

We continue to follow the latest government, public health and safety guidelines and have completed detailed risk assessments for all our workplaces to ensure the safety of all our staff.

Level 3 key points:

- You must not visit any other household in their homes in any part of Scotland, limited exceptions apply
- Non-essential travel should be limited to within your own local authority area
- You should only travel out with your local authority area for work, health reasons, and other essential purposes
- For those able to work from home, this will continue for the foreseeable future
- All hospitality premises, including cafes, pubs and restaurants, will now be able to serve food and close at 6pm, without the sale of alcohol
- Only six people from two households should meet in a hospitality setting or outdoors

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	

For those who are on the national shielding group, you will have received a letter or text message from the Interim Chief Medical Officer (CMO). A detailed workplace risk assessment and Occupational Health referral will have already taken place and if you haven't already, please contact your line manager to discuss the contents of your letter from the CMO.

Please be assured that you are not being asked to shield again and it is safe for you to remain at work. We simply want to ensure we continue to have the right measures in place to support you.

We urge everyone to continue playing their part in the fight against coronavirus. If we all follow the guidelines, we can have a huge impact and emerge from this pandemic faster.

Always remember to stick to the FACTS and don't forget, if you think you have symptoms of Coronavirus, no matter how mild, you should immediately self-isolate at home and book a test straight away. For more information visit www.nhsinform.scot/

We continue to follow Scottish Government guidance and you can find the latest information you need at www.gov.scot.

Visit our website at www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/staff

Housing Support Officer
Maureen Murray



'Move-on' up!

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Homeless & Housing Support Services have developed their own 'Move on' project to help 115 people who were homeless move out of their temporary accommodation and into new settled tenancies.

Whilst working to government guidelines at all times and using PPE, the 'Move-on' team has done all it can to ensure the moving process is as straightforward and stress-free as possible for service users during lockdown and beyond.

Their supportive and all-encompassing approach means they organise all the important tasks associated with starting a tenancy on behalf of their clients. From arranging gas safety checks through Building Services and clearing meters, to completing grant applications and arranging furniture and home starter pack, the team has all bases covered. They are also on site to meet new tenants at their property to welcome them and complete lease signing.

Since May, the 'Move-on' team have supported and helped to resettle 115 households, with a further 22 moves already lined up.

Doing all this incredible work without a base has certainly been a challenge for the team, but they are determined to do whatever it takes to give homeless households the best possible new start.



Recruitment Festive Shutdown

Managers are reminded that no recruitment can take place over the festive period. Please note the following key dates for your diary if you are a recruiting manager:

- The recruitment shutdown will take place from 3.55pm on Friday 4 December 2020 until Wednesday 6 January 2021
- The final date for 2020 adverts to be placed on the MyJobScotland (MJS) portal will be Friday 20 November 2020, with all posts having a closing date of no later than Friday 4 December 2020
- If you have approval from Vacancy Management and require posts to be advertised by Friday 20 November 2020, you must ensure that all recruitment paperwork is passed to hr.vacancy.request@renfrewshire.gov.uk no later than 3.55pm on Friday 13 November
- From Monday 7 to Thursday 24 December, the Recruitment Team will have limited availability to collate recruitment documents for recommended candidates, with priority during this period on processing new employee documentation to ensure their payments are processed before the festive shutdown.

If you have a business critical post that you require to be advertised during the shutdown period, please contact **Gary Chittick** on gary.chittick@renfrewshire.gov.uk or **Lisa Rennie** on lisa.rennie@renfrewshire.gov.uk

StreetScene operative David Gray with volunteers



Spotless September and beyond!

We may now be in November, but we're taking a quick look back at September—and what a spotless one it was!

Our Team Up to Clean Up campaign undertook its annual Spotless September event again this year and, despite the current circumstances, our incredible volunteers shone yet again.

225 litter picks took place.

1,233 bags of litter were collected.

And each one was taken away by our colleagues in StreetScene.

An incredible achievement given the current situation we find ourselves in.

Our local volunteers continue to find the time to make their communities a little brighter - and they're supported brilliantly by lead officer, Nicola Drummond, our Wardens Service, our StreetScene team and many more teams across the council.

The campaign continues to be a huge success as it aims to change the culture around littering in Renfrewshire.

Not content on just tackling littering though, the campaign also works to eliminate fly tipping too.

Since the beginning of lockdown in March, we've issued 54 fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for fly tipping as we aim to ensure people know that there are repercussions.

Our teams do a fantastic job of investigating complaints of fly tipping and clearing them to ensure there is a minimal effect on the local environment.

We will continue to strive to do more however and encourage anyone, staff members or residents, to report fly tipping whenever you see it.

Let's continue to **#TeamUptoCleanUp** together!

Scotwest Credit Union— Virtual Learning Event

In partnership with Scotwest Credit Union, the HR & OD team are hosting a free virtual learning event on Wednesday 11 November between 2.00pm and 2.45 pm.

The session will take place on Microsoft Teams and is aimed at staff who want to know more about Scotwest Credit Union and the products they offer for members including saving accounts, loans, mortgages and payroll deduction options.

The course is available to all staff. Those who do not have access to council ICT equipment can access this course via their own personal device.

Once you have booked we will provide you with a link to the Microsoft Teams event. Please remember to check with your line manager first before booking a space.

You can book your space at

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/scotwest-credit-union-online-learning-session-tickets-12622777681

If you have any questions or anyone would like further information contact Fiona Sinclair, HR & OD at fiona.sinclair@renfrewshire.gov.uk or **0141 618 7319**



Our Values

A look back at World Values Day 2020

Our Values have never been more apparent than over these last few months.

We launched our values in June this year, in the midst of this global pandemic, because the positive impacts of these values were evident all around us. And they still are.

World Values Day was the perfect opportunity for us to celebrate our values and remind ourselves of our commitment to living them every single day.

This year, the theme was 'Values in Action'—a fitting choice given the positive and inspiring response of so many individuals, groups and organisations throughout this COVID-19 pandemic.

To mark the occasion, we asked for photos of you with your own personal pledge about how you turn the words into actions.

Many of you answered the call so we put together this short montage of some of the top pledges we received. Check it out on our YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/cGpP98jGrOM>.

We also interviewed four senior leaders to ask how they had seen our values being shown over the year. Here's some of what they had to say:

"Living and working with these values resulted in so many amazing acts of professionalism and displays of kindness which highlighted a clear respect for all the people of Renfrewshire from people in my own service and right across the Council."

Head of Planning and Housing Services, Fraser Carlin

"The values that the council developed in conjunction with staff, residents and partners, prior to the pandemic, have really shone through when delivering much needed services during this crisis in very difficult circumstances. What has been demonstrated really clearly for me is the 'We are Helpful' value. The teams really cared about how they could provide services to those in need and did everything they could to help residents as well as one another."

Head of Facilities Management, Diane Gillies

"Even on the days that were difficult, the remarkable stories of what colleagues were achieving and doing for others gave me faith and immense pride in Renfrewshire Council."

"There were remarkable examples of our values at work, of people helping others, volunteering, innovating, delivering new services, collaborating to support people who needed us most. Providing a lifeline, never judging and going the extra mile."

Head of Marketing, Communications and Events, Louisa Mahon

"I come back to collaboration. Some of the major tests which the organisation has faced—such as the creation of the Local Assistance Teams, re-opening of our schools and keeping our workforce and communities safe—have only been possible through a collective way of working...in essence, the values start to act like a check and balance for every action and decision I take during my working day. They've helped our team act with integrity and confidence through this, the most uncertain of times."

Head of Transformation & Organisational Development, Lee Neary

To watch our senior leader videos and read their full blogs go to www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/10755/Senior-Leader-Stories.

World Values Day is a global awareness day to highlight the importance of values in everything we do and every interaction we have with people. This year saw 75 million people across 67 countries take part on Twitter alone!

It was incredible to see the response at Renfrewshire Council having only launched our values four months earlier. We can only imagine the progress we will make over the course of the next year and cannot wait to see more wonderful examples by World Values Day 2021.

To read more about our values go to www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/ourvalues

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.

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.



Caroline Kyle-Chittick

Being great collaborators pays off!

We love to see different teams across the council collaborating and working together to help the people of Renfrewshire.

A great example of this is the relationship between Advice Works whose central role is to help maximise the income of local residents, and the Improving the Cancer Journey (ICJ) team who provide a holistic approach to find all available supports for clients affected by cancer.

Back in 2006, a specialist income advisor joined the Advice Works team working in collaboration with MacMillan Cancer Support. Due to the success of the project, Renfrewshire Council continued to support the provision of the role and now has three MacMillan income advisors as part of the Advice Works team.

Senior service delivery officer from Advice Works Lynne Kerr said, 'With the introduction of Improving the Cancer Journey in Renfrewshire, we are setting up close working links and referral pathways to ensure that clients from the two teams are receiving the most comprehensive service, using the specialist knowledge of both sets of advisers.'

Clients can be referred between the two services as and when their needs require. The close working relationship means that both teams are able to seamlessly offer clients a real insight to the full range of supports available from both services.

Just recently, ICJ coordinator Caroline Kyle-Chittick referred a client on to income adviser Carol Calderwood in Advice Works for assistance with benefits. This resulted in an increase of over £200 to the client's household weekly income and Caroline has noticed a huge improvement in the gentleman's general outlook and sense of wellbeing. In fact, he recently told her that the overall service he has received between the two advisors 'deserves a ten out of ten'.

Both Carol and Caroline are delighted to have helped make such a significant impact on their client's quality of life. After a recent phone catch up, Caroline said, 'From talking to my client today, I can really hear in his tone of voice how much lighter and brighter he feels. Now that he doesn't have the added pressure of worrying about his finances, he can focus on what really matters, treatment and getting better!'

For more information on the ICJ service visit www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/Cancer-Support-Renfrewshire-Council

For Advice Works go to www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/adviceworks

Sheltered Housing Officer
Kerri Hunter



Some of our "Befriending Walk" tenants



Spotlight on the Sheltered Housing Team

During the course of the coronavirus pandemic, taking care of older people and the most vulnerable has been a top priority. Especially for our Sheltered Housing Team, who, under the direction of managers Serena Murray and June Torrance, look after 300 tenancies and provide health and wellbeing support across ten different complexes in Paisley, Johnstone, Elderslie and Renfrew.

Like most of us, the team have had to adapt to a new way of working since lockdown and have worked extra hard to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents, 7 days a week.

Sheltered housing officer Kerri Hunter said she found it difficult to adjust to working from home and missed the social interaction and hands-on approach she used to have when working with tenants face-to-face.

One of the ways the team ensured continuity of service early on in lockdown was by adding weekly phone-calls with residents as well as the daily checks which continued throughout. Kerri commented, "Although it's been difficult providing support to tenants from home and over the phone I have enjoyed having the additional informal weekly check-ins which gave me a chance to have a blether with tenants as well as checking that they are doing ok and have all they need". She added, "all of the sheltered housing officers were delighted to get back into our complexes every day when the covid restrictions eventually allowed".

More recently the team have introduced physically distant "befriending walks" to help tenants get back outdoors for some physical exercise while enjoying a much-needed natter!

The walks involve a member of the team taking one resident at a time for a gentle stroll near to or around their complex. All tenants have received a hand sanitiser as part of a goody bag which they bring with them for protection, in-case they touch any outdoor surfaces like handrails.

Additionally, the team have been busy arranging the delivery of digital tablets with internet access for tenants. Working in partnership with Connecting Scotland, I Am Me and Foundation Scotland, funding was secured for 20 tablets and mobile devices to be distributed to sheltered housing tenants, with more deliveries to follow.

The devices and internet access are free and the team are on hand to teach tenants how to use their devices and get the most out of online services, building their digital skills and confidence. More important than ever as we all depend more and more on digital services, this builds on the work of the team over the past couple of years to ensure older tenants are not left behind and have the skills and confidence they need to use computers and other devices.

The goal is to offer every sheltered housing tenant in Renfrewshire access to online services and a way to keep in touch with family and friends through online platforms like Skype. The devices can also be used for games like crosswords and puzzles and there is a Facebook group where tenants can participate in weekly quizzes ran by digital participation officer Ross McNicol.

Digital Participation Officer
Ross McNicol and two tenants





MyAccount Team

MyAccount—helping customers manage their accounts throughout lockdown and beyond

Over the course of lockdown, we're pleased to report that many residents have made the switch to MyAccount to access vital services digitally.

From launch, the Digital First team has worked hard to make MyAccount quick, efficient and user-friendly. Since the start of lockdown, the team has worked tirelessly to bring several new processes online including essential Free School Meals and Clothing Grant Applications and Business Support Grants—and the results are certainly paying off.

In the month prior to lockdown (February 2020) a total of 6,630 cases were raised through MyAccount. In comparison, six months later in September, 12,114 cases were raised—an increase of 83%!

"Covid has driven more customers online, and organisations across the world have had to respond to this, we are no exception" commented Customer Services manager, Gary Innes. He continued, "The work of the Digital First team has been outstanding the last seven months, they have responded to every new requirement and delivered in very short timescales. They are a true asset to the Council, and I am really proud of their achievements."

In addition to impressive stats, customer feedback for MyAccount—both internal and external—has been overwhelmingly positive. With users praising its ease of use and senior leaders thanking Digital First for their "expertise and commitment" to delivering digital solutions during a challenging time.

As we continue to face restrictions, it's important that we all play our part and continue to encourage residents to join the growing numbers interacting with us online. Which is why we are asking staff to visit—and bookmark—MyAccount, myaccount.renfrewshire.gov.uk and check out all the services available.

Don't forget that if you live in Renfrewshire you can use MyAccount to make payments, manage Council Tax, report missed bins or tell us about neighbourhood issues such as litter, graffiti and fly tipping.

Staff Stories

Best wishes Billy!

Much loved caretaker William (Billy) Garrott retires at the end of the month, after 26 years working at our high-rise blocks.

Billy, who will soon also be celebrating his 71st birthday, started working for the Council in November 1994, as a concierge in Gallowhill before moving the following year to the position of caretaker at Calside and Rowan Courts, a role he has carried out ever since.

On his retirement, Billy said "The last 26 years have gone by so quickly. I have thoroughly enjoyed working for the Council and serving the tenants in both Rowan and Calside Courts for all these years. I have plenty of stories to take away with me, the good, the bad and the funny, and am now looking forward to putting my feet up!"

The Concierge and Caretaking team have been deemed essential workers throughout the coronavirus crisis carrying out daily fire safety checks and making sure all 14 Renfrewshire Council high-rise blocks are as safe as can be. The tenants and staff at the blocks will all miss Billy terribly, and we would like to thank him for his hard work and years of dedicated service. All the best Billy, we wish you a long, happy and healthy retirement.



Paula Craig coaching her team

Footie Fundraiser

Counter fraud investigator Paula Craig has more in her arsenal than an ability to spot fraudulent activity. She also volunteers as a coach at local football club Gleniffer Thistle FC girls' team.

To help fund the long list of footie essentials like pitch hire, kit, match strips and of course footballs, the team host an annual fundraiser. But this year, the usual race nights and auction events were off the table, so Paula had to think outside the box.

Paula said, 'Due to lockdown the girls were unable to train or play football for the best part of 5 months. So they wanted to kick off a new era with some brand-new kit for all the junior teams to boost their confidence. We were really limited in what we could do to raise funds so I decided to try online fundraising and the powers of social media.'

Paula reached out to players from the Scottish Women's National Team (SWNT), female athletes and sports broadcasters asking them to retweet the team's fundraising page.

Having played football as a kid herself, in a time when women's football was almost unheard of Paula idolised ex Manchester United forward Eric Cantona, but now relates how the girls in her team were most excited to hear that two SWNT players, Nicola Docherty and Jo Love had offered their support. How times have changed!

Paula also sent tweets to Scottish singers and actors who had a connection to Paisley and/or football. The very next day not only did they receive a very

generous donation from Scottish actor and former footballer Martin Compston but also gained his support as he rallied his online followers to get involved.

Within the next four hours the fundraising target was smashed but the support didn't stop there. The team received more donations from other Twitter users including Scottish actors John Gordon Sinclair and Douglas Henshall. The cause even touched the hearts of grassroots football supporters from all over the country and donations came in came in from community organisations including Govan Community and School Pipe Band and Carluke Rovers FC.

All in, the fundraising page was open for one week and brought in a total of £1,640—not a bad result!

Paula has expressed how grateful she is to everyone who helped out and wants them to know just how much of a difference their support has made. 'The girls were over the moon to see the positive comments on social media and overwhelmed by the generosity of those who donated. The fundraiser definitely raised their spirits and they're looking forward to training in their new team training kit.'

Though the amazing sum raised has gone a long way, Gleniffer Thistle FC under 13s girls' are still in need of a new match day strip sponsor. If you know anyone who would like to help them out you can get in touch with Paula on Twitter at @glenny_paula or through email at paulacraig21@hotmail.com.

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...

"Team up to Clean up is a wonderful way of helping your area or helping others clean up yours. All you have to do is contact Nicola, she is only a shout away to get your pick stick and some bags. You will meet lots of wonderful people with the same mind set as yourself. On the otherhand if your lonley or just needing to get out of yourself or just needing time out from the stresses of life this is a way to free yourself from everyday stress, wind, rain, snow or sunshine. Pick 1 bit bag it, it goes to a rubbish tip, so delegate every thing you want to send from your mind into the rubbish bag, I have found this really helpful. I LOVE picking and disposing.... 😂😂😂😂😂😂😂"

Christine Ogilvie

"You're doing an incredibly worthwhile job. Thanks 😊"
Irene McPherson

"@RenCouncil Fantastic effort! 👏"
Anne C Rocks

"Thank you so much for replying and advising me about this... thanks again for the quick reply, I really appreciate this."
Debbie Leitch

"I have only good things to say about the road builders [at George Place]. They are friendly and... even helped me with my pram once lifting it up the stairs. They are hardworking and have often a smile in their face. I feel sorry I cannot offer them a cup of tea in this grim weather due to covid. They do good job and it would be nice to let them know 😊"
Marion Edith

"I used My Account when it first came out and wasn't too keen on it but I've started using it more frequently this year and it's definitely improved... I can check my rent and council tax accounts and I've also used it for special uplifts..."
Lynn McIntyre

"Thanks for keeping us updated.
Would rather know than not."
Lesley Montague

"Thank you , what fantastic work 😊"
Fiona Kennedy

"Fantastic.....great work guys...👍👍👍"
Margaret McGhee

"Brilliant job you are all doing xx"
Dot Mahon



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