

Connect

monthly

February
2020

THE PROTECTORS



moray
council



FEBRUARY 2020

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Editorial

Is it me or does January feel like it's a month of Mondays?

Nonetheless, I expect we're all glad to have survived month one and made it to February. And, if you're reading our main story, one of the reasons you've got this far in hale and hearty shape is the work of our Environmental Health Officers. They're into every aspect of public health, and not just checking the hygiene of our favourite restaurant or chippy. If it has a bearing on your wellbeing, you can be sure our EHOs have made sure it won't hurt.

Elsewhere there's the inspirational story of our colleague, Paul, who made a decision to reduce his weight and stuck to it. On the back of that we've been contacted by others who have fought the flab with great results, and we'll be featuring them next month.

Losing weight often means changing a habit, and there's some habit-changing advice within the strategy talk section in *Connect* about the changes we can make for better mental health. It's the simple stuff, such as getting a proper sleep, moderate exercise, and not ignoring feelings of sadness or anxiety.

With so many celebs and Royalty publicly unburdening themselves of their mental health problems recently, it might appear to be just the latest fad, but there's real benefit in just talking to someone you can trust.

The council constantly updates its policies and guidance to reflect new research and best practice in all areas concerning employee health, and offers a great deal of support where needed.



Peter Jones
Communications Officer



Sharon Dunbar
Media & Communications
Officer



Angus McNicholl
Designer



HeadsUp

Karen Sievwright, Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager

Dear Colleagues

Environmental health and trading standards touch everybody in their private and working life at some point – none of you will escape our attentions. But don't worry, this is not as sinister as it sounds!

The majority of the population will never know we had any effect on their health and wellbeing, but the small, dedicated teams are beavering away in the background protecting you from the villains and idiots that can cause such devastation, either from their intentional actions or, in some instances, due to lack of thought or consideration. Some of the team give insight into these daily challenges later on.

April 1992 (yes, the halcyon days before austerity) I was given the opportunity by the then Director of Environmental Health to transfer from finance to environmental health, becoming a student Environmental Health Officer. Known then as 'Student 2'. This was the start of the most intense four years of my life, completing the necessary honours degree at Strathclyde University, completing the obligatory 12 months on-the-job training during the holidays,

culminating in seven verbal exams in 1996 to ensure I was fit to enter the profession and wield the extensive powers at our disposal.

The teams are small and, as with other services, recruitment of professional staff in the past five years has proved impossible. Both professions now have graduate development schemes to 'grow our own'. By taking graduates, we've reduced the time taken to qualify from 4-5 years to 2-3 years. These have proved successful in that they have produced an EHO and a TSO. We currently have another three colleagues progressing through the scheme.

The lack of professional staff is very challenging, and I praise the teams for rising to the challenge and achieving as much as they do, despite increasing demands from the public, businesses and governments. The camaraderie and willingness to go the extra mile makes the working day significantly less traumatic than it could be.

Both disciplines have evolved significantly and are now more intelligence-led, rather than the old annual visit to determine

if you demonstrated ongoing compliance or not. Fraud, be it monetary or food-related, is big business, and getting more sophisticated every day. We're constantly evolving to try to keep up with the fast-moving digital world where many of the crimes are now based. While the crime may be based in the virtual world, the impact on individuals buying goods from the internet that cause illness, harm and in some instances death is very much in the real world.

Away from work I take to the garden and, while not a Barbara Good, the garden does keep us pretty much self-sufficient in fruit and veg. On the days that it is inclement (yes, a fair-weather gardener) I take to the sewing machine making clothes, interior furnishings, and have recently completed tartan trews and jacket for the other half to show the family doon sooth fit they are missing.

Next project: moving house – arghhhhhh.

Best wishes
Karen



THE PROTECTORS

While the abiding image of an EHO's work to many might be that of people in white coats inspecting the fridges of restaurants for mouldy meats, the reality is far more varied and interesting. For our team it's a different job every day!

There's a shortage of qualified Environmental Health Officers across Scotland and the UK, and Moray is no exception. Outside of the graduate training programme we offer to attract and retain staff, most have to undertake a four-year degree course, followed by a year of professional training, to qualify.

In fact just about everything in the public realm that affects our health is regulated by our team of highly-qualified EHOs. As one member of the team put it: *"If we're doing our jobs properly, nothing happens. If we're not doing our jobs properly, people die."*

From food hygiene to air quality, noise pollution, pauper funerals, water testing, and health and safety – no two days are the same for the team. Not forgetting Moray's 800 private water supplies serving nearly 3,000 properties. A team of three EHOs carry out statutory annual testing of these, including those that supply the 'water of life' to our many distilleries.

Food Safety Officer, Kirsten Clark, joined the team in 2005. She says a common misconception is that inspecting food premises means you'll never eat out in

the area again – which couldn't be further from the truth.

The team must inspect every premises which serves food to the public – currently there are 1,148 registered food businesses in Moray. This includes nurseries, schools, cafes, restaurants, hotels, takeaways and even military bases. There's a yearly plan which sets out what premises the team should tackle but, as Kirsten explains, even the best laid plans...

"Businesses close and new ones open all the time, so we can set out with an idea of what we're facing, but it can change on a daily basis."

Naturally these food hygiene inspections are undertaken to ensure businesses are following best practice to prevent illnesses such as food poisoning, or worse – outbreaks of potential deadly infections like E.coli. However it's reassuring to know our colleagues are ready to deal with any crisis.

"I don't enjoy the prospect of an outbreak," says Kirsten, "but it's the chance to wear another hat, to be methodical and focus on what needs done, and to work with partner agencies like Food Standards Scotland to protect the public. It doesn't matter how experienced you are, these are good opportunities to learn and we always make sure any new members of the team are around to see how potential outbreaks are handled."

The job takes our EHOs to sites across the area, in response to complaints or as part of

planned work. And, talking of planning, EHOs are a statutory consultee on planning applications, particularly if the construction or completion of the project will have an environmental or health impact on residents.

Environmental Health Officer, Douglas Caldwell, said that work at the planning stage of any project always helps it run more smoothly.

"We have to inspect planning applications for any EH impact, but this is particularly crucial when engineering projects such as the flood alleviation schemes, new schools and infrastructure are envisaged," he said.

"In those cases the likely disturbance during construction phase requires careful examination to ensure the contractor has adequate mitigation in place as part of their planning process."

Doug, who has been an EHO in Moray since 1993, said: *"All we do is driven by the need to protect public health."*

"Recently we worked with Network Rail in their project to improve the Elgin station, which involved night-time working to reduce the impact on traffic flow, but thereby adversely affected the residents living close by. The company put in place measures to ensure residents were not badly affected – including moving some out for the duration – and communicated with them all regularly to keep them informed."



“It's a common misconception that Inspecting food premises means you'll never eat out in the area again – which couldn't be further from the truth.”

Kirsten Clark

As you'd expect, the team get complaints about noise and vibration from major sites, and these are always investigated. Pile-driving – although it only lasts a short while – can be very disturbing for those experiencing the vibration and noise for the operation.

Doug adds: *"Sometimes noise is generated at night-time or weekends. This is particularly the case for licensed premises that have events or entertainment that get complained of."*

When this happens, EHOs turn out at night with their meters to measure the noise levels, and can take action to prevent a reoccurrence if it's too loud.

Monitoring air pollution is a statutory function for the section, and monthly reports



“All we do is driven by the need to protect public health.”
Douglas Caldwell



on Moray's air quality are published on the council's website. The level of nitrogen dioxide pollution in the air is measured by small gauges fitted to lampposts across the area, and these are inspected and analysed regularly. The level of the deadly PM2.5 is also measured.

Generated by diesel engines and often dubbed a silent killer, PM2.5 – Particulate Matter – is a microscopic 2.5 microns in width and almost 30 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair. Exposure to indoor and outdoor air pollution was estimated by the World Health Organisation to cause about seven million deaths in 2012, but Moray is fortunate to have generally good air quality.

Andy Stewart has recently been promoted to Principal EHO. Previously a Senior EHO, he oversaw the work of the private sector housing team, responsible for landlord registration, ensuring rented properties are safe to live in

with valid gas and electrical safety certificates and fire warning systems. Also in the remit are inspections of houses of multiple occupation, and bringing empty homes back into use.

He's continuing to manage this team, as well as leading the community safety team of two community wardens, a housing liaison officer and admin support. Supported by a RIO and a Police Partnership Development Officer, the team tackle antisocial behaviour issues like neighbour disputes, noise complaints and abandoned vehicles.

Unsurprisingly the biggest hurdle facing the team just now is workload. Like many other councils, there's a struggle to recruit skilled staff. Talking about tackling the national shortage of qualified EHOs, Andy says the governing body – REHIS – must embrace changing career pathways to encourage and allow young people into the profession.

A recent addition to the team is Tim Betts. Formerly a community warden, Tim is on the graduate training programme to become a fully-qualified EHO. He said that the job is so varied no two days are the same.



“REHIS must embrace changing career pathways to encourage and allow young people into the profession.”
Andy Stewart

"Obviously there is planned work, such as routine inspections," he said.

"But there's always something that requires a prompt response. For example, yesterday I went from arranging an indigent funeral to investigating a complaint about processed meat.

"You never know what's going to come through the door."

Principal EHO Russell Anderson said: "As well as the examples already talked about, that also includes food labelling – those suffering from allergies need to know what's in the food they're eating and trust what the label says.

"There have been cases where peanut oil has been used in a product instead of vegetable oil, and to someone with a nut allergy that can create huge health problems."

The recent tragic death of a young girl after she ate a Pret a Manger product that was incorrectly labelled has highlighted the issue to food producers and the EH profession.

He added that complaints from the public are always responded to.

"They cannot be ignored and we interrogate each one. If someone's had a bad enough experience to complain, it has to be taken seriously."

Describing himself as a 'perpetual student', Allan Park has found his calling as an EHO, qualifying in February

2019 with a Masters in Environmental Health from Derby University. It followed years as a technical officer specialising in contaminated land, before that a job with Historic Scotland looking after buildings including Elgin Cathedral and Spynie Palace and, before that even, he secured a Masters in Archaeology and Classics from the University of Glasgow.

"I went down the graduate route to get my EH qualification like Tim and Lisa are doing, and really enjoyed it; you get to learn on the job and I heartily recommend it.

"It's the first time in my life I've had a career; I feel lucky to have been given the opportunity, and know there's the opportunity for progression.

"This job is good because there's so much variety; this month I'm visiting football grounds across Moray to make sure the capacity calculations are accurate. I could be doing a food inspection in the morning, then dealing with a public health complaint later in the day."

Hailing from Dumbarton, Allan recalls his first visit to Moray in 2003, and says it's a great place to live and bring up his family.

"I remember looking at the house I was going to buy – which we still live in. It was July, 26 degrees and sunny, and so close to a beach. I thought 'Yup, I could live here!'"



“If someone's had a bad enough experience to complain, it has to be taken seriously.”

Russell Anderson



Flipping marvellous, it's that time of the year when we can toss about all our pancake puns.

We've dug out a shrove – sorry, trove – of pan-tastic recipes for you so, no matter your dietary requirements, you can tuck in to a delightful stack on 25 February.



Easy vegan pancakes

(from BBC Good Food)
Serves 4 – 6

Ingredients

300g self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tbsp sugar (any kind)
1 tbsp vanilla extract
400ml plant-based milk
1 tbsp vegetable oil (for cooking)

Method

Whisk the flour, baking powder, sugar, vanilla extract and a pinch of salt in a bowl using a balloon whisk until mixed. Slowly pour in the milk until you get a smooth, thick batter.

Heat a little of the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium-low heat, and add 2 tbsp batter into the pan at a time to make small, round pancakes. You will need to do this in batches of two-three at a time. Cook for 3-4 mins until the edges are set, and bubbles are appearing on the surface. Flip the pancakes over and cook for another 2-3 mins until golden on both sides and cooked through. Keep warm in a low oven while you cook the remaining pancakes.

Serve stacked with lots of toppings of your choice, or serve with bowls of toppings for everyone to help themselves.

Gluten-free pancakes

(from BBC Good Food)
Makes six small pancakes

Ingredients

125g gluten-free plain flour
1 egg
250 ml milk
butter, for frying

Method

Put the flour in a bowl and make a well in the centre. Crack the egg in the middle and pour in a quarter of the milk. Use an electric or balloon whisk to thoroughly combine the mixture. Once you have a paste, mix in another quarter and, once lump free, mix in the remaining milk. Leave to rest for 20 mins. Stir again before using.

Heat a small non-stick frying pan with a knob of butter. When the butter starts to foam, pour a small amount of the mixture into the pan and swirl around to coat the base – you want a thin layer. Cook for a few mins until golden brown on the bottom, then turn over and cook until golden on the other side. Repeat until you have used all the mixture, stirring the mixture between pancakes and adding more butter for frying as necessary.

Serve with agave syrup and a squeeze of orange juice or your pancake filling of choice.

Slimming-friendly oat pancakes

(from Pinch of Nom)
Serves 2

Ingredients

80g Ready Brek or porridge oats, blended finely
100ml milk
3 eggs
2 tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp granulated sweetener
Low calorie cooking spray

Method

Mix all ingredients together.

Spray your frying pan with low calorie cooking spray and heat gently.

Drop in small dollops to make patty-size pancakes.

Allow to cook through before gently turning.

Delicious with sweetened quark, fruit, Sweet Freedom Choc Shot, or Nutella.

HR Noticeboard

Walk challenge

Step out – yep, it's that time again!!

You may be familiar with our Healthy Working Lives Walk Challenge, to walk 10,000 steps per day with a team of four. The winners of the challenge is the team which reaches a set target of steps in the shortest time.

We changed it a bit last year and included a challenge for the cyclists among us too. It went well and there appears to be some keen walkers, cyclists and competitors out there, so the next one is planned for 20 April to 17 May.

Employee discount

It'll soon be Valentine's Day so worth remembering that some local businesses offer staff discount, if you were thinking of treating someone! Whether you're buying a gift, treating yourself to something or fancy joining a gym, discounts are available from council local leisure outlets, retailers and restaurants to make your money go that little bit further.

We've got offerings from jewellers, hoteliers, council gyms and even a furniture and carpet store. So be savvy with your spending and check where you can receive a discount locally before you part with your hard-earned cash.

Offers can be viewed on the interchange:
interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_107629.html

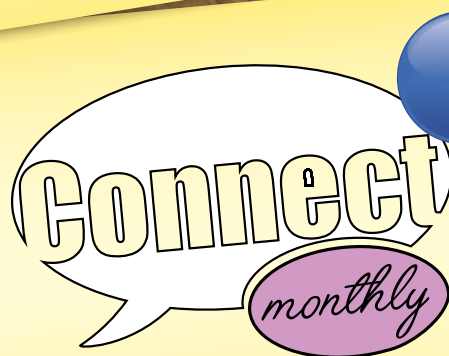
May Day public holiday

The 2020 May Day public holiday will change from Monday 4 May to Friday 8 May to coincide with the VE Day commemorative celebrations. The change will take place as a one-off arrangement, so for this year only.

VE Day, or Victory in Europe Day, marks the day towards the end of World War Two when fighting came to an end in Europe. The holiday will form part of a three-day weekend of commemorative events.

Did you know this is only the second time ever the May holiday has been moved? The first was in 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of VE day.

CLIVE is our online learning management system and enables all colleagues to view and book training, and complete e-learning. The link to CLIVE can be found in the 'Most Popular' tab on the interchange. Current employees can log-on and new employees can create a new account.



email connectnews@moray.gov.uk to get Connect emailed to your personal email address, every month.

Up Helly Aa!

Before joining Moray Council in 2012, Head of Environmental & Commercial Services, Stephen Cooper, worked for Shetland Islands Council for 12 years. He immersed himself in local culture, taking part in the annual Up Helly Aa festivals from 2007-2012.

He took his Jarl Squad outfit to New Elgin Primary School at the end of January to show it to the pupils. Handcrafted by the Jarl Squad themselves, Stephen has brought an incredible part of Shetland's culture to Moray. We couldn't seem to persuade him to put the gear on for a pic though, we'll try again next year!



Greenfingers

Training Project

We are already well into 2020, yet it seems like moments since here at Greenfingers we were knee-deep in Christmas wreaths.

January is our month for planning projects, when we compile the action plan for the year ahead. It

always feels a very quick year in Greenfingers as one season leads into the next, however there are lots of exciting things on the go that we started at the end of last year, in addition to areas that we identified to be that will be developed further this year.

February sees the arrival of our perennial plants from our supplier. This year, to add to the selection of perennials we already have on sale, we will have more 'Amethyst in the Snow', a plant that was very popular last year. We'll also have stocks of Delphinium Magic Fountain, Lavender White Bee, Helenium Helena Red, Kniphofia Flamenco, Lupin mixed colours, Monarda Dancing Bird, Penstemon Arabesque, Veronica and Verbascum – so a real variety of different colours, heights and textures for the garden.

We are also giving our current stock of perennials some love. This means cutting back, dividing and weeding, all great experience for our trainees.

On our Greenfingers site this month we have some annual maintenance and site improvements planned.

Our bothy, where the trainees get changed and store their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), is long overdue a makeover, so they and volunteers have chosen paint to give it a new look.

We hope to have some overgrown trees on the site tidied, and another one of our polytunnels that was damaged in the last stormy weather recovered in the next few weeks.

We are also expecting a delivery of a few tonnes of stone 'chuckies' for us to spread around the site to improve the look and durability of some areas. Spreading 'chuckies' is always a very effective way of keeping warm in the chillier weather! on that subject, the weather has been very unpredictable and unseasonably warm at times so far which is confusing some plants, who don't know whether to bud or stay dormant!

The daffodil and muscari bulbs we planted in pots for sale for Mother's Day this year (22 March, in case you were wondering) think it's already spring and are almost in flower!



Ann's quirky corner!

The spring bulbs are now pushing their welcome green shoots up through the cold soil and the snowdrop leads the way with its delicate pearl-like flower buds.

This shy little flower quietly hangs its head in advance of the vibrant yellows and pinks of the more flamboyant daffodils and tulips yet to come.

The Latin name for snowdrop is *Galanthus nivalis*. 'Gala' from the Greek word for milk,

and 'anthos' meaning flower, 'nivalis' comes from Latin, meaning snow.

Often thought to be native to our country the snowdrop was brought here from cold and mountainous regions of Europe and only became naturalised here in the 1700s.

The Victorians commonly edged graves with snowdrops and thus for them the plant was thought to bring bad luck and may even bring death to the family within a year if brought into the home.

Most folklore and legends from throughout Europe however, believed that, like so many other spring plants, the emerging green shoots were a symbol of hope, protection and purity.

In recent years an extract from the bulbs of snowdrops has been used in medicine in the management of Alzheimers disease.



Jobs for the garden this month – only a few more weeks until spring time!

Continue to keep your garden tidy, getting rid of leaves, any rotting plants and weeds to reduce potential disease and compost them if you can.

Using only horticultural disinfectant, clean and disinfect all of your pots and seed sowing trays to give your seeds the best possible start.

Plan your seed sowing, the daylight time is getting longer so more time for the tiny seedlings to grow.

Divide bulbs such as snowdrops once they've finished flowering and replant elsewhere.

Prune hardy evergreen hedges and overgrown deciduous hedges before the birds start nesting.

Be aware and protect plants that have already started to bud in preparation for sharp frosts.

I hope everyone is making the most of being outdoors and feeling the positive effects that being outside and within the garden can have, especially on the darker, colder days and nights.

Enjoy your garden.

Greenfingers

Be

Well

Mental health (and distress and illness) is getting a lot more attention than, say, a decade ago.

Authors and actors, politicians and princes, scientists and singers, have all shared experience and opinion in the media.

There have been persuasive reports advocating that employers do more to help people stay well, and support staff who have difficulties. Perhaps the most authoritative, commissioned by the UK government, is *Thriving at Work*, October 2017.

It recommended core standards that all employers could implement quickly, and enhanced standards for *"... employers that can and should do more"*. Notably, the report looked to the public sector to lead the way.

However, there's a big 'but'

Encouraging employers to 'look after us' is to be welcomed. And the above report is a prime reference point for us to continually improve our policies, practice and provision.

But it would be a shame if we forgot that our own outlook, decisions and behaviour are very important factors in our physical and mental health.



There are tonnes of guidance about how to eat and drink wisely so, in summary: enough, not excess; balanced; at the right time (unsurprisingly, old-fashioned 'mealtimes'); together – the company of others while eating is good for us.



Sleep, like laughter, is among the best medicines. For each of us there is a 'right amount', and it's what bedrooms are for.

So arrange yours to make sleep more likely and better quality. Declutter and exclude unwanted noise and light. And don't forget about winding down before going to bed: try a warm, milky drink, and have some screen-free time.



Next there's exercise. You don't need to pump iron or pound pavements; 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity, five days a week is good. But, if exercise is a distant memory, start gently. The NHS reminds us: *"Any activity is better than none, and more is better still"*.

Now, where would you go if your tummy had given you trouble for a week, and a bottle from Boots hadn't fixed it? Yes, your doctor. And they should be very near the top of the list of people to talk to if you are experiencing unsettling emotional or mental symptoms.

Respectful and trustworthy family or colleagues might be on the list too, but don't neglect distress too long before consulting a professional. Google 'free mental health training' and you'll find lots. Quality is not always guaranteed – but it is at www.futurelearn.com. This offers fantastic, authoritative and FREE courses on mental health – and much more besides.

Here are some websites that are well worth a visit:

- www.nhs.uk: for info about diet, sleep, exercise and, of course, mental health and illness.
- www.mind.org.uk: info and advice from one of the UK's foremost mental health charities.
- Locally, we have www.moraywellbeinghub.org.uk/mhpathways - a tool to help find appropriate mental health resources and services.
- www.penumbra.org.uk/service-locations/north-area-services/moray: Penumbra is a major Scottish mental health charity AND they have a 'shop' on Batchen Street.

Breathing Space, Samaritans and Scottish Association for Mental Health are all national organisations with a Moray presence.

So, help from employers – necessary and good. But Thriving at Work also aspires to a situation where *'every one of us will have the knowledge, tools and confidence, to understand and look after our own mental health and that of those around us.'*



Safer Internet Day, on 11 February, aims to inspire a national conversation about using technology responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively. The awareness-raising day is now global and celebrated in approximately 150 countries worldwide.

The theme for this year is to encourage young people to explore how they manage their online identity, and how the internet shapes how they think of themselves and others. Although aimed at young people, the message has content we can all take something from.

The day offers the opportunity to highlight positive uses of technology and to explore the role we all play in helping to create a better and safer online community. It calls upon young people, parents, carers, teachers, social workers, law enforcement, companies, policymakers, and wider, to join together in helping to create a better internet.

Want to know more? Visit the Safer Internet Day site:

Safer Internet Day – www.saferinternetday.org

Safer Internet Day UK – www.saferinternetday.org/web/united-kingdom/sid

Got kids at home who seem to be permanently glued to their phone screen? With mobiles being ever popular with young people and with it, the easy access to various apps, you may find the following useful...



Safer Internet Day

11 February 2020

FIFTEEN APPS PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

MEETME



MEETME IS A DATING SOCIAL MEDIA APP THAT ALLOWS USERS TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE BASED ON GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY. AS THE APP'S NAME SUGGESTS, USERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO MEET EACH OTHER IN PERSON.

GRINDR



GRINDR IS A DATING APP GEARED TOWARDS GAY, BI AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE. THE APP GIVES USERS OPTIONS TO CHAT, SHARE PHOTOS AND MEET UP BASED ON A SMART PHONE'S GPS LOCATION.

SKOUT



SKOUT IS A LOCATION-BASED DATING APP AND WEBSITE. WHILE USERS UNDER 17-YEARS-OLD ARE UNABLE TO SHARE PRIVATE PHOTOS, KIDS CAN EASILY CREATE AN ACCOUNT USING A DIFFERENT AGE.

WHATSAPP



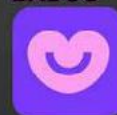
WHATSAPP IS A POPULAR MESSAGING APP THAT ALLOWS USERS TO SEND TEXTS, PHOTOS, MAKE CALLS AND VIDEO CHATS WORLDWIDE. WHATSAPP USES AN INTERNET CONNECTION ON SMART PHONES AND COMPUTERS.

TIKTOK



TIKTOK IS A NEW MOBILE DEVICE APP POPULAR WITH KIDS USED FOR CREATING AND SHARING SHORT VIDEOS. WITH VERY LIMITED PRIVACY CONTROLS, USERS ARE VULNERABLE TO BULLYING AND EXPLICIT CONTENT.

BADOO



BADOO IS A DATING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING APP WHERE USERS CAN CHAT, SHARE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS AND CONNECT BASED ON LOCATION. WHILE THE APP IS INTENDED FOR ADULTS ONLY, TEENS ARE KNOWN TO CREATE PROFILES.

BUMBLE



BUMBLE IS SIMILAR TO THE POPULAR DATING APP 'TINDER'. HOWEVER, IT REQUIRES WOMEN TO MAKE THE FIRST CONTACT. KIDS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO USE BUMBLE TO CREATE FAKE ACCOUNTS AND FALSIFY THEIR AGE.

SNAPCHAT



SNAPCHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR APPS IN RECENT YEARS. WHILE THE APP PROMISES USERS CAN TAKE A PHOTO/VIDEO AND IT WILL DISAPPEAR, NEW FEATURES INCLUDING 'STORIES' ALLOW USERS TO VIEW CONTENT FOR UP TO 24

KIK



KIK ALLOWS ANYONE TO CONTACT AND DIRECT MESSAGE YOUR CHILD. KIDS CAN BYPASS TRADITIONAL TEXT MESSAGING FEATURES. KIK GIVES USERS UNLIMITED ACCESS TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE, ANYTIME.

LIVE.ME



LIVEME IS A LIVE-STREAMING VIDEO APP THAT USES GEOLOCATION TO SHARE VIDEOS SO USERS CAN FIND OUT A BROADCASTER'S EXACT LOCATION. USERS CAN EARN 'COINS' AS A WAY TO 'PAY' MINORS FOR PHOTOS.

HOLLA



HOLLA IS A SELF-PROCLAIMED 'ADDICTING' VIDEO CHAT APP THAT ALLOWS USERS TO MEET PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD IN JUST SECONDS. REVIEWERS SAY THEY HAVE BEEN CONFRONTED WITH RACIAL SLURS, EXPLICIT CONTENT AND MORE.

WHISPER



WHISPER IS AN ANONYMOUS SOCIAL NETWORK THAT PROMOTES SHARING SECRETS WITH STRANGERS. IT ALSO REVEALS A USER'S LOCATION SO PEOPLE CAN MEET UP.

ASK.FM



ASK.FM IS KNOWN FOR CYBER BULLYING. THE APP ENCOURAGES USERS TO ALLOW ANONYMOUS PEOPLE TO ASK THEM QUESTIONS.

CALCULATOR%



CALCULATOR% IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL SECRET APPS USED TO HIDE PHOTOS, VIDEOS, FILES AND BROWSER HISTORY.

HOT OR NOT



HOT OR NOT ENCOURAGES USERS TO RATE YOUR PROFILE. CHECK OUT PEOPLE IN THEIR AREA AND CHAT WITH STRANGERS. THE GOAL OF THIS APP IS TO HOOK UP.

Did you know that the first Monday in February is reportedly when people are most likely to pull a sickie?

Like most of these 'national days' there are a number of theories as to why. One of the factors attributed to this is the first payday since Christmas, meaning people have been out celebrating all weekend. Another theory is that people have a tendency to re-evaluate their career path in January, meaning that a lot of these sickies are actually to attend interviews.

Some examples of more unusual absences noted for this day, amongst a range of employers are:

- *"I can't come in today because my flatmates took my door handle off and I can't get out."*
- *"All of my work clothes are wet so I can't make it in today."*
- *"I've managed to secure a parking space outside my house and I can't risk losing it."*
- *"Goats got into my garden."*
- *"I'm stuck in the bathroom."*
- *"My mum was hoovering the stairs and I couldn't get past."*
- *"My hamster's poorly."*
- *"My trousers split on the way in."*

There are also other theories that it's just a myth, and other national data actually shows that the worst day of sickness is the second Monday in December.

However, theories and national days aside – absence is a 'hot topic' at this time of year and it's worth reminding ourselves of the council's health at work policy which is in place to support staff and take a pro-active approach to attendance. As employees we also have responsibilities to:

- care for our health and to seek medical help whenever appropriate.
- maintain attendance at work in accordance with the terms of the policy.
- keep line managers fully informed of the position if we're unable to attend work.
- be aware of our responsibilities in terms of reporting sickness absence.

If you'd like to find out more you can access the Health and Work policy. Also keep a look out for more information from our Healthy Working Lives Group, which provides information and activities to help you balance your work life responsibilities and provide interesting information on health topics.

NATIONAL SICKIE DAY



THE BUDGET

Some of you may have read that the Scottish Government plans to release its proposed budget on 6 February.

As a council we have to set our budget and Council Tax by the deadline of 11 March. We can only do that if we know the level of grant we will be getting from the Scottish Government, so by releasing budget proposals on 6 February MSPs will have several weeks to debate the proposals and agree a settlement for local government in time.

As far as the level of savings we hope to make, inroads have been made to date on achieving a large percentage of the £9.5 million reduction in our annual spend needed.

Senior managers have been working with finance officers to agree levels of budget reduction, and a programme of transformation has commenced to seek ways to help bridge the gap.

It's likely that Council Tax will rise and some monies will have to be taken from our reserves to balance the budget completely, but the levels of both will not be known until nearer our budget-setting day on 3 March.

Full details will be released on our website as soon as they are agreed by Full Council, and a report will be carried in your March edition of *Connect*.

Moray Council

Employee Development Course Timetable 2020

Course Title	Days	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Building Personal Resilience	½			4								25	
Coaching Skills	1		11							17			
Confident Communications	½					27					6		
Conflict Management & Mediation	½			12			23						
Corporate Induction	½					20							
Customer Excellence	½						16						
Managing the Unacceptable	½		27							23			
Disciplinary Investigations	½			5(pm)			10			8			
Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures	½			5(am)							1		
Health and Work	½				15							17	
Interview Skills (for panel members)	½			11			2				28		
Leading Effective Meetings	½				29							5	
Minute Taking	½		26									11	
Planning for the Future	1		18		28					16		26	
Responding to Aggression & Violence	½			18						2			
Supporting Individual Performance	½				22					10			

Visit the interchange for details on how to book your place on these courses.

If you haven't applied for your new garden waste collection permit, now's the time. You've got until 8 March to apply and pay for the 2020/21 permit to receive it before 1 April.

The first year of the permit scheme saw over 19,000 applications, totalling more than 20,000 permit sales and generating in excess £735,000 of income to go some way towards helping the council balance its budget.

This year, each permit will cost £40 and you'll need to display a permit on every brown bin you use to dispose of garden waste.

Apply online today at www.moray.gov.uk/gardenwaste.



No-one wants to be caught short when they're out and about, so it's reassuring to know that a Moray-wide comfort scheme has been launched, offering free access to toilets for residents and visitors.

Dozens of premises have signed up to take part, including many of our own buildings. It means you can pop in and spend a penny without, well, spending a penny. There's no obligation to buy goods or services from any of the participating businesses.

For details of participating venues, and their respective opening hours, head to our website: www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_41065.html



Denis Collins, who works in HQ and the Annexe as part of our facilities team, celebrated his 60th last month!



Photograph: Becky Sanderson, Highland News & Media



The face of Rothies Primary, administrator Irene Duncan, has retired after 30 years at the school.

A presentation was held on the last day of term before Christmas, to pay tribute to Irene's decades of commitment to the school community.

Homemade gifts were given to Irene, including a personalised photo frame, as well as a teddy and long-service voucher. The Parent Council is also purchasing a trophy, which will be awarded annually in Irene's name.

Head teacher, Faith Sargeant, said she will be sorely missed by parents, pupils and teachers alike.

"Irene is one of the most generous and kind-hearted people I have ever met. She

always goes out of her way to ensure that everything is just right and ready! When school life becomes hectic and busy; Irene shares her calm and peaceful manner and everything seems just fine. She has been an oracle of information and I have learned a lot from her since I first started at Rothies. She will be truly missed by pupils, parents, staff and the wider community with whom she has spent 30 years building relationships.

"We all wish her the very happiest of retirements and hopes she will enjoy the extra time with her own family. We hope she won't be a stranger and will pop by for a cuppa and a piece every now and again. Thank you, Irene for your dedication, hard work, enthusiasm and service our school."

We said farewell to Linda Guild, who worked in our transport section for 15 years. Up with the larks, she was always behind her desk early doors, using her trademark no-nonsense approach to dealing with contractors and transport bods to co-ordinate street and road works in her roles as clerical assistant and technical support officer.

Colleagues gathered at her presentation to hear Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Stephen Cooper, give an overview of her career, some anecdotes and to say thanks for her hard work over the years.

"Linda is one of the most committed and dedicated members of staff that I have had the pleasure to work with. I know that everything we do is a part of a team effort, but Linda is an important cog in the street works wheel, whose performance is consistently recognised is being one of the best in Scotland."

"I speak on behalf of colleagues and friends in the council in saying that she will be sadly missed and that we wish her a long and happy retirement."

Linda thanked those who'd attended the presentation, and put in to her collection, from which she purchased a new Samsung tablet – very nice!



Friends, family and colleagues gathered in the council's Annexe break-out area at the end of January to wish Employee Development Adviser, Martin Kirwan, a happy retirement.

Martin served in the RAF before joining Moray Council some 22 years ago. He's been at the forefront of training and staff development for all that time, including becoming something of a local expert in mental health training.

In his unique style, he told the gathered throng that he's enjoyed his time here, and had worked with some great colleagues.

"I've no complaints from my time here, I've met some wonderful people but the time has come for me to do something else," he said.

Presenting Martin with his retirement gifts and card, Head of HR, ICT & Organisational Development Frances Garrow said that Martin was a warm and empathetic person, a great listener and charismatic and entertaining trainer.

"We've been very lucky to have someone like Martin deliver training for us at the council," she said.

"He has a way of putting people at their ease in classes or one-to-one, while at the same time getting them engaged in the coursework."



How are your New Year's resolutions holding up?

If you're slipping or even falling off the wagon, here's an inspirational story from our colleague, Paul Giles from roads maintenance, that'll put you firmly back in the driving seat.

Last January he tipped the scales at over 26 stone. With a history of yo-yo dieting, he made it his mission to lose the weight for good in 2019, and lost 1.5 stone between January and April. In April, he signed up to a Slimming World class in Fochabers and, on New Year's Eve, no less, hit his target weight – losing a whopping 10 stone in the process.

Incredibly, Paul – who worked

for Aberdeenshire Council before joining us in April 2018 – lost weight every single week over the seven months, averaging 4lbs weekly and racking up multiple awards including Slimmer of the Week, Slimmer of the Month, Man of the Year (Fochabers) 2019 and Mr Sleek (Fochabers) 2019. Impressive!

As the cook for the family, Paul realised that dishing up large portions of grub at home could be impacting the entire household, not just him.

"I'd been lucky that, despite my weight, my health hadn't been adversely affected – my blood sugar, cholesterol, liver and kidney function were all fine. I had started to have pain in my knee, by the end of the

day it was aching but now that I've lost weight, the pain has completely gone.

"Now my family is benefitting from home-cooked meals. I love cooking and food shopping, but rather than picking up a jar of pasta sauce or chilli sauce, I'm making it from scratch so I know exactly what's going into it.

"My wife, Tracey, had said that before I lost the weight, I was obsessive about food in a bad way. Now I'm obsessed in a positive way, spending time cooking and looking for healthier alternatives."

Bad habits had crept in, from sharing a family-sized bag of crisps one night at the weekend, to having a bag each



Paul had a history of yo-yo dieting but now is confident he can keep the weight off. These pictures show how far he's come.

several times a week. That, snacking on chocolate bars and large portion sizes led to his weight gain.

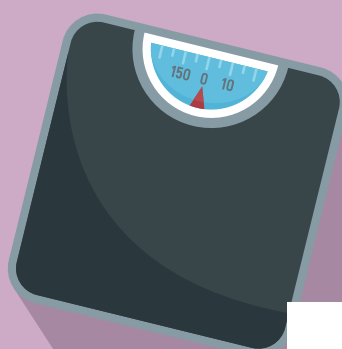
During Paul's weight loss, he joined the FitLife scheme, working up a sweat on the indoor bike and treadmill at Buckie fitness centre while his kids made a beeline for the swimming pool. Now he's hit his target weight, he intends to treat himself to a hybrid mountain bike and make the most of Moray's many cycling routes.

His new approach to fitness and commitment to healthier eating means he's confident that this time, the weight loss is for good.

"Everything is so much easier now; former colleagues who see me can't believe it's me, and sometimes I don't even recognise myself! Losing weight is hard, I've struggled in the past with maintaining it but I'm not getting any younger – I don't want to have to go through it all again."

Paul's top tips:

- **Don't cheat** – stick to whatever weight loss plan you're following and you will see results.
- **Don't deny yourself** – I still have treats (liquorice allsorts and midget gems with my coffee!).
- **Plan** – if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.
- **If you hit a bump in the road, keep going.** It took time to put weight on; it'll take time to lose it.
- **Always have a healthy snack to hand.** If you don't, and you get peckish, it's too easy to reach for a bag of crisps or a chocolate bar.





Seal Rescue

Photographs of 'Donna' the seal pup, by Jill Sowden

The British Divers Marine Life Rescue deals with the rescue and wellbeing of all marine animals in distress

A Sunday morning stroll turned into an unexpected seal rescue mission for two of our colleagues last month.

Equal Opportunities Office, Don Toonen, was on Covesea beach with dog, Scout, when he came across a seal pup which had been brought in with the tide.

Concerned that it could be stranded until the next high tide, and in the meantime bothered by visitors to the popular beach, he contacted

Community Support Officer, Jill Sowden. Jill volunteers with the British Divers Marine Life Rescue, which deals with the rescue and wellbeing of all marine animals in distress.

"With high tide not expected until the evening Cath, also with British Divers Marine Life Rescue but far more experienced than me, and I checked her over before manhandling her into a seal bag", she said.

"Thankfully Cath straddled her while I managed to get her, and not Cath, into the bag! We weighed her at 44lbs, a healthy enough weight, marked her and decided to move her to a safer bay at Cummingston a couple of miles away.

"The pup decided to do a poo while in the bag, which leaked out of the holes, onto my trousers and in the dog cage in my car. That smell will be around for a long time..."