



**April
2020**

WASH YOUR HANDS



LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

moray
council



APRIL 2020

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Editorial

I'm not going to bang on about unprecedented, extraordinary, challenging and all the other words in common parlance at the moment to describe where we are as a team of employees, a council, a nation and world.

We are all finding ways to contribute to our communities, staying safe and to still deliver the services our communities depend on. Credit where it's due, it's a grand job we are all doing so let's all give ourselves a pat on the back.

And that's the thing; for many of us it is only us that can do that pat on the back as we're isolated and working from home. Going to work as part of a team has so many benefits we can all take for granted, chief among these is the banter and chat we all enjoy as part of our daily routine. For all its faults and our regular moans, going to work is a vital part of our routine social life. When it suddenly is stopped or changed drastically we notice.

Now that routine has been disrupted many of us are realising the value of that human contact. Many will be missing our mates, and this can have a gradual and corrosive effect on our mental wellbeing.

So everyone, make an effort to stay in touch. Use a WhatsApp group, share funny vids, create a Facebook group for your team and fellow workers, share private in-jokes or just use these free platforms to check in with everyone. These small actions will make a huge difference in reducing the isolation and, let's be honest, the loneliness we can all feel.

So no jokes this month, just an earnest plea to make sure you all stay in touch with each other and keep ourselves going through the many weeks this is likely to last.

As most of us are isolated from normal working contacts, we're be unable to source much of the content needed for next month's *Connect*. Work info and updates are on the interchange site, which you can access from your personal PC or phone.



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Coronavirus

WWW.MORAY.GOV.UK/COVID19

How we're keeping you informed

We're not going to set out where we are in relation to the Covid-19 outbreak – things are moving so fast that if you read this mag even a couple days after we publish it, it's likely that some info will be out-of-date already.

So, instead, we're going to outline where you can find out the most relevant info, and see how the council is responding to the pandemic.

interchange – Covid-19 section

interchange.moray.gov.uk/

- Regular staff updates – issued several times a week, so keep checking back!
- Links to team briefs issued by Roddy Burns, Chief Executive.
- Links to the latest health advice from the NHS.
- Our social distancing guidelines if you're in the workplace.
- Employee FAQs.
- ICT guidance for homeworkers
- Specific guidance for those working in education or healthcare settings



Moray Council website

www.moray.gov.uk/covid19

- We outline all the service disruption – services we've stopped or reduced due to decreased footfall, staff reduction due to self-isolating, and redeployment of staff to support critical services.
- We signpost you to the NHS links for the latest healthcare advice.
- We've posted the link to the Grampian Assistance Hub, which sets out information and numbers to phone if you need help.

We're constantly updating this information, so make sure you keep checking back. Remember, you can access interchange and Moray Council website from any smartphone, tablet or computer.

CRISIS

Crises of various forms have hit the UK for millennia, but in the inter-connected world we live in today they can quickly become widespread – the reality of which has recently been impossible to escape.

The structure of government in the UK dictates how these are responded to and by who – police, military, NHS, etc – but more often than not it is local councils and their staff who are the unsung heroes that undertake the less glamorous tasks associated with any crisis.

We've become well-versed in dealing effectively with emergencies over the years. Our main experience has been in coping with the devastating floods that have hit the area over the last two decades, thankfully less of an issue now the alleviation schemes we and the government invested £170 million in are up and running. Nonetheless we are still dealing with regular coastal floods that require a rapid response to protect communities.

Keeping calm and focussed in a crisis is imperative, and we have an established emergency planning protocol that sets out who-does-what, where and when, that is closely linked to other councils and partners via a wide partnership spanning the North East and Highland. This behind-the-scenes work is done in the hope it's never needed, but of course experience has shown that crises occur with alarming regularity.

There have been regular events that have caused the activation of the group, including the recent tidal over-topping of the harbour walls at Lossiemouth where sandbags were deployed to protect houses. Before then it has been water shortage, a prolonged power outage in a rural area and – to a lesser degree – a 30-tonne whale washed up onto a beach. All these co-ordinated responses across council, police and other emergency responders need to be activated quickly and effectively if residents are not to come to harm.

At any time before, during or after an emergency, support can be pulled from partner agencies. In practice most of the events that have caused the emergency planning group to be activated will involve police or other blue-light services from the start.

But, as you might imagine, what has stood up our emergency response teams this time is the Covid-19 virus outbreak, which is having a huge impact on our essential services such as schools and homecare. More grimly, we're also working to enhance critical services like death registrations and burial services as the pandemic tightens its grip.

This is without doubt the biggest crisis this country has faced since WW2, and in many respects presents more difficult and widespread challenges. There will be a devastating impact on our economy, our society and beyond.

SERVICE DELIVERY

The council's emergency response team met when the Covid-19 was first declared as present in the UK. As NHS Scotland is leading the response to the outbreak, many of the council's actions follow decisions made at that level by NHS Grampian and Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) teams – which include councils.

As the guidance and advice has developed along with the effects of the pandemic, staff and services within the council are increasingly affected. We have seen a large number of staff self-isolating due to underlying health conditions that identifies them as vulnerable to infection. Others have been asked to work from home, or to go home, with the understanding they may be redeployed to support other critical services.

The Incident Management Team, led by the Chief Executive and comprised of Emergency Planning Officer, Heads of Service, Depute Chief Executives, and communication staff, has prioritised the critical services – things required to support our communities through the toughest challenge of their lives. Of course, as a Category One responder we are legally-bound to provide essential services in responding to an emergency.

This is where the emergency planning protocol comes in, although such an extended period of disruption is unheard of in modern times.

A word from the Chief Executive:

"While the council has plans for most eventualities, the Covid-19 outbreak is testing all of our resourcefulness and resolve.

"Never before have we had to reprioritise the council's services so quickly and comprehensively. I want to thank everyone for their resolve and commitment to making sure we can continue to deliver the most vital of public services. Across many sections: homecare, waste, education, catering, ICT, HR, and beyond, I've been moved by the professionalism displayed by colleagues as we adapt to the 'new normal'.

"I have absolute faith in the teams across all the services in Moray Council. When things settle and this crisis has passed I know, thanks to you, we will have delivered for our communities. You will see elsewhere in Connect good advice on how to look after yourselves and to stay safe at this time; I recommend it to you."



Roddy Burns
Chief Executive

EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE



A Revolution in the Making

As we went to press, the Scottish Government announced it was suspending the August 2020 deadline for the ELC expansion.

While this is both disappointing and inevitable in the circumstances, it would be remiss of us to pass up on a chance to showcase the hard work already done by the team to date.

Robin Paterson, Senior Project Manager with the Early

Learning & Childcare team explains how the expansion programme is nothing short of revolutionary. Over to you, Robin.

"Free childcare can make a crucial contribution to addressing a child's attainment gap as they grow older and, in turn, addresses inequality and poverty. It helps more parents and carers to return to work, or secure more meaningful employment. Offering 1,140 hours per year for all three and

four year-olds, and eligible two year-olds, is almost double what was offered before. It's equivalent to 30 hours a week if taken during school term time, or 22 hours a week year-round.

"The expansion is ambitious and fast-paced and, with our partners, we're delivering nothing short of a revolution in how childcare is provided in Moray.

"It includes a capital build programme, which sees us replace Portacabins with spacious, purpose-built nurseries in Cullen and Pilmuir, offering an increased number of places. Following the handover in March from contractors Morrison Construction, these nurseries will be operational as soon as is practicable (given



ELC IN MORAY

the Covid-19 pandemic), and will be a welcome addition to the extensively-refurbished Lady Cathcart nursery in Buckie.

"Next to follow will be Linkwood Nursery. Following a similar design to the nurseries at Pilmuir and Cullen. Construction on a new-build nursery in Keith is also under way. We're undertaking significant refurbishments at Mosstodloch, Aberlour and Mortlach nurseries.

"A fundamental part of the project – who will work in these buildings – means we have been recruiting an additional 120 childcare practitioners, and our partner nurseries have been doing the same. It's a growing sector supported

by professionally-accredited qualifications, and the modern and graduate apprenticeship schemes described by Kara (see last month's Connect) demonstrates the value of a career in childcare.

"New nursery manager posts have been created, taking the responsibility away from head teachers or depute head teachers in our primary schools. There are many benefits to this; in particular, it allows us to provide early learning and childcare opportunities all year-round and not only during term-time. Through the introduction of these posts we achieve sector parity with primary and secondary school sectors. Each nursery manager is allocated a number of nurseries, and we've just advertised for the

latest round of posts in St Gerardine and Hythehill, Lady Cathcart and Portgordon, Cullen and Findochty, St Peter's and Millbank, and Milne's and Lhanbryde.

"It's an exciting time to be in early learning and childcare. The sector is transforming and our team, council nursery staff, childminders and staff in partner nurseries are working together to make sure we provide the best possible start in life for our children in Moray – what's more important than that?"



NATIONAL STATIONERY WEEK

Are you potty about pens and pencils? Get excited over envelopes? Silly about staples? Ok, maybe none of us fall into this category, but we'd be lost without the everyday essentials. Given many of us are homeworking right now, we may have grabbed some of these essentials before leaving the office, but it's thanks to our stationery gurus that they were there in the first place.

Who delivers on your stationery demands in your workplace? This Stationery Week (yes, there really is one!) make sure you show your appreciation – a wee bit of positivity is going a long way at the moment...



Autism Accreditation

Huge congrats to our hardworking colleagues in Elgin Academy. The schools may have shut abruptly due to Covid-19, but that doesn't take away the opportunity to congratulate the success of the school staff who have worked so hard to secure autism accreditation for a further three years, after becoming the first school in Scotland to receive the accolade, back in 2017.

Assessors highlighted the Support for Learning department, saying it was *"staffed by very knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff who have undertaken significant professional training enabling them to provide effective, and well-regarded, support to staff throughout the school"*.

They were also praised for their interaction with pupils, with assessors noting *"staff interact with each autistic individual in ways that reinforce a sense of self-worth, dignity and self-esteem"*.

The school environment was singled out as a strength, with its colour-coded corridors, clear signage and quiet rooms – used during school dances to enable autistic users to attend and participate at a level they feel comfortable with.

Assessors noted the life and social skills development, saying *"there is a focus on developing life skills which will enable individuals to reach their potential and live a fulfilled life after school."*

Depute Head Teacher, Lizzy Toon, said retaining autism accreditation benefits the whole school community.

"As a school we recognise that best autism practice is also best teaching practice. We are looking forward to continuing to improve our provision at Elgin Academy over the next three-year cycle."

"Sincere thanks go to all the parents, staff and pupils who were involved in this process. Very special thanks must go to all of our young people, who impress us every day with their abilities, progress and achievements. We would also like to recognise the expertise and innovative practice of many of our teachers and in particular our Support for Learning department. This award is testament to the fantastic team efforts of our whole school community and one of which we are exceptionally proud."

HR Noticeboard

With all the info out there about Covid-19, we're starting regular updates for colleagues, setting out the latest measures being introduced by the council, explaining various employment issues and sign-posting you to where you can check for the latest service disruption.

Employee Assistance Programme

An extension of the employee assistance programme – Time for Talking – has been approved. This is a worrying time for many of us; our families may have their income affected, the toll of worrying about loved ones, and the sudden change in routine, from stopping work altogether for the time being, to adapting to homeworking while juggling the kids being at home.

Whatever you're worried about, please use this service. It's free, anonymous and available 24/7. We've extended the provision for at least the next three months.

Find out more on the interchange.

Keep up-to-date with regular staff updates on the interchange.



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

Congrats to our planning colleagues! They received a letter from the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, which fed back on planning performance during 2018-19. Performance was rated as red, amber or green against key markers, including early collaboration, decision making timescales and continuous improvement, with all 13 markers rated green in Moray.

Chair of the council's Planning & Regulatory Services Committee, Cllr David Bremner, has passed on his thanks to colleagues for their hard work, saying *"the staff and officers in planning deserve huge congratulations for the efforts to achieve this, and a nice bit of recognition."*

**STAY
HOME**



**SAVE
LIVES**

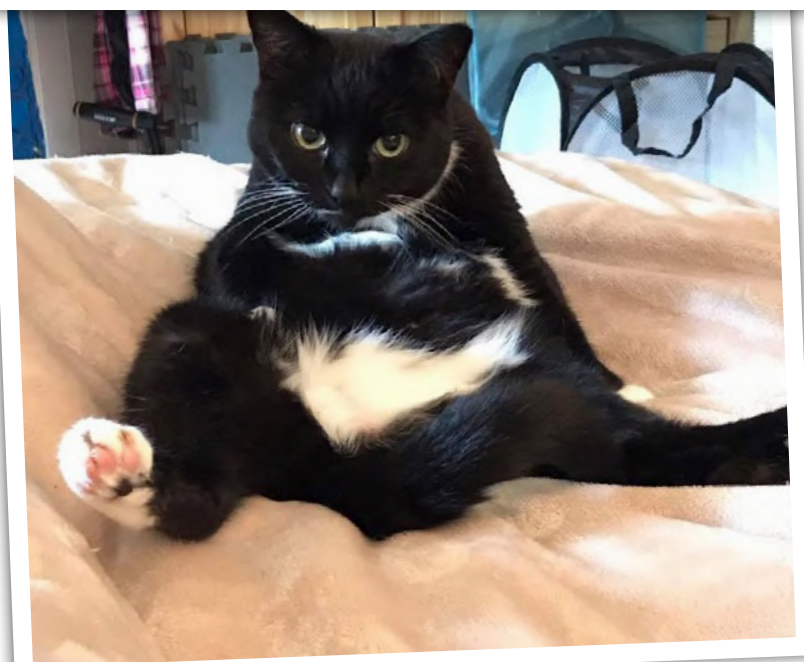
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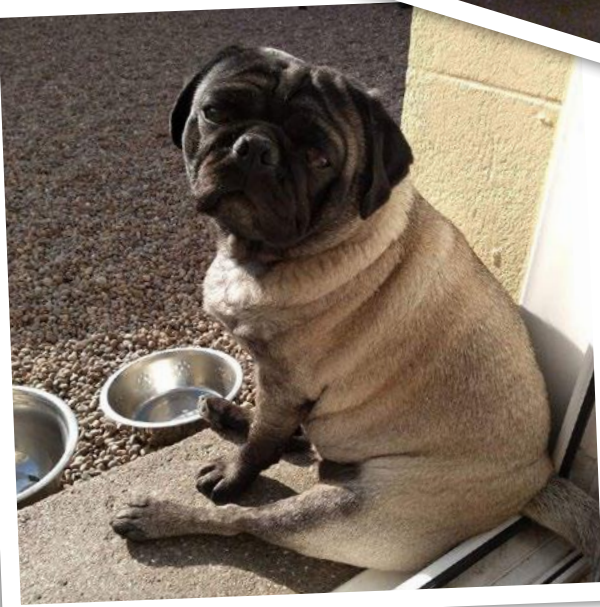
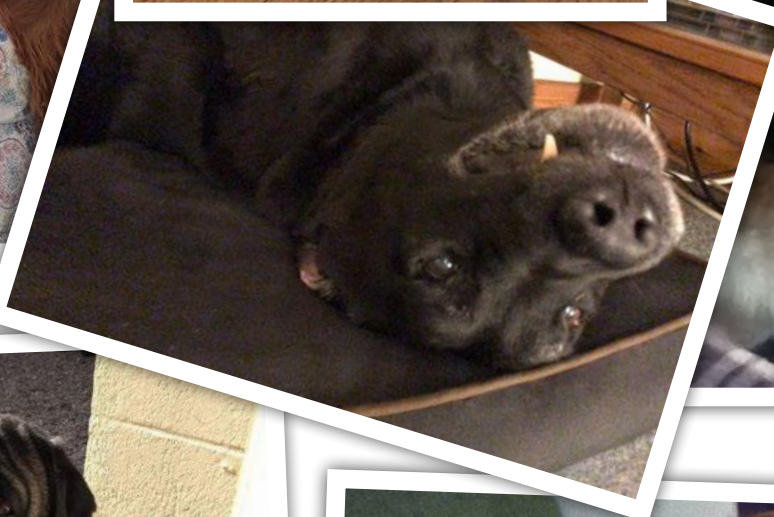
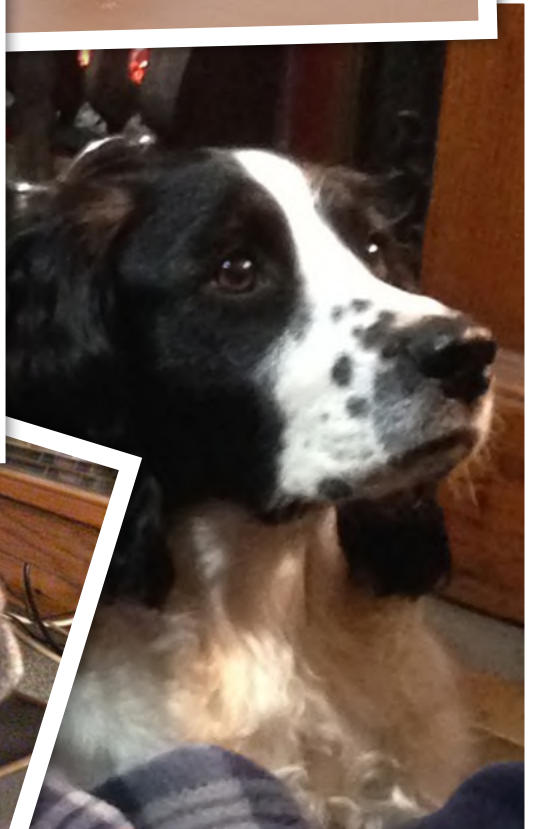
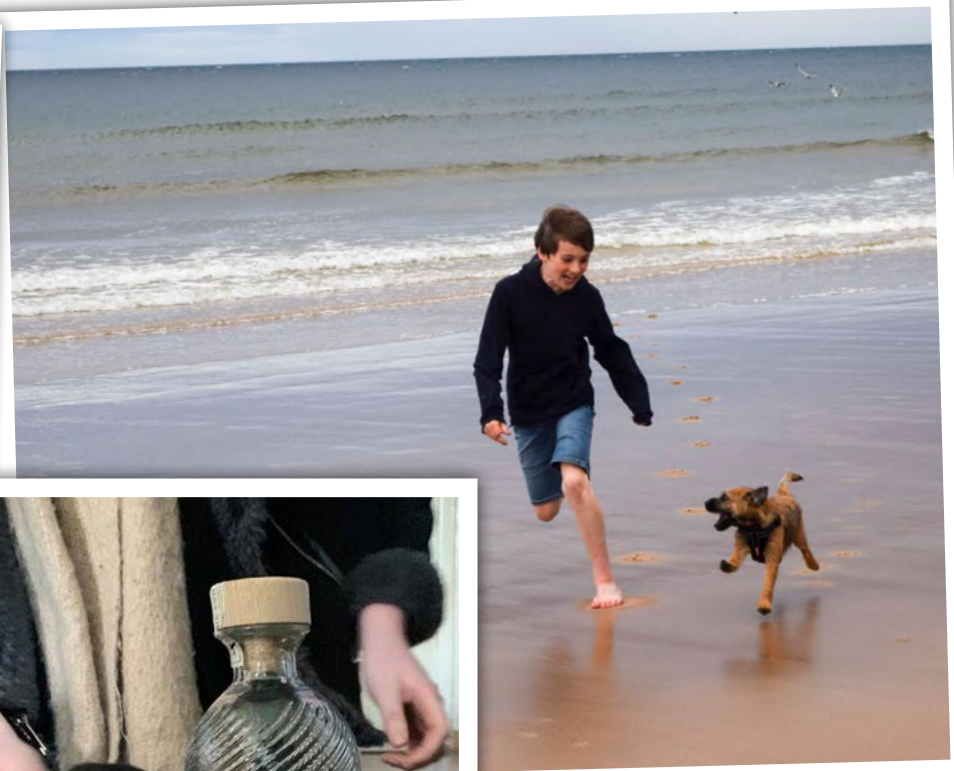
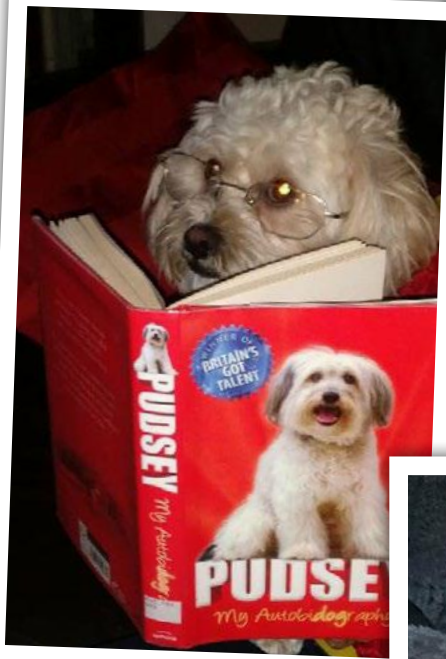


Thanks to those who sent in their pet pics! For those self-isolating, homeworking or following government advice to stay at home, we hope you are well – and bet your pets are enjoying having you around!

This National Pet Month the theme is responsible pet ownership. Check out their top 10 tips for responsible pet ownership:

- Think carefully before getting a pet and learn about its special requirements.
- Ensure your pet is sociable and well-trained.
- Provide a nutritious and well-balanced diet.
- Provide suitable housing and bedding.
- Clean up after your pet and worm it regularly.
- Protect against disease. Your vet can provide you with advice.
- Prevent unwanted litters and neuter your pet when appropriate.
- Groom your pet regularly.
- Control your pet and ensure it is properly identified.
- Take out pet insurance for dogs, cats, rabbits and horses to cover against unexpected veterinary fees and third party liability.







Cherishing the Horses

Housing and property colleagues have raised more than £1,000 over the last four years for four different charities. Their latest fundraising effort saw them donate £415 to Riding for the Disabled, with the money coming from 'dress down Fridays' every Flexi Friday.

Riding for the Disabled has been based at Cranloch for the last 15 years, although has been running for more than 40. They have three ponies, Tim, Corrie and Blair, and hire 19 horses for participants to ride. They welcome 80 riders every week, aged 3 – 60+. Participants take part in showjumping, endurance, and drill riding to music.

With running costs totalling £23,000 each year, every donation is welcome. Thanks to our colleagues in housing and property, they're now closer to their yearly target!

Conference Call Bingo

A wee bit of humour to lighten the mood. Use to your heart's content – HOUSE!

Hi, who just joined?	Can you email that to everyone?	X? Are you there?	Uh, X you're still sharing!	Guys, I have to jump to another call.
[sound of someone typing - possibly with a hammer]	[loud painful echo]	[child noises]	Hi, can you hear me?	No. It's still loading.
Next slide please.	Can everyone go on mute, please?	Sorry, I was talking on mute.	Sorry, go ahead...	Sorry, my dog is really excited about this call.
So [fades out] I can [cuts out] by [inintelligible] Ok?	Sorry, I am double booked.	X, your screen just greyed out.	Sorry, you cut out there.	Can we take this offline?
I'll have to get back to you on that.	Can everyone see my screen	Sorry, I was having connection issues.	Sorry, I think there's a lag.	Sorry, the other call ran over.

need help with money?

Need help with money? This time of year can be challenging for many of us, so if you need some advice or support, the services sign posted below will be able to help.

