

Hi Everyone,

We hope you are all well and staying safe during the current pandemic. As restrictions continue, Voice of Experience Forum has decided to resume its mini monthly newsletter outlining the different supports and advice available from voluntary and statutory bodies as they emerge. We will also provide you with information on Voice of Experience Forum's activities during this time. This edition is supplementary to the quarterly newsletter which will continue as normal.



Welfare Calls



During the initial stages of the Covid-19 outbreak, Voice of Experience Forum provided welfare calls to those who had requested them. In order to continue this important level of support for our members these calls were eventually taken over by North Lanarkshire Disability Forum, for those who wished contact to continue.

Voice of Experience are currently partnering with Airdrie Citizens Advice Bureau to promote a befriending service to older adults in the Airdrie area. For further information on this, or to take advantage of this service, please contact Denis O'Keefe on 07305 692098. This approach aims to ensure that the Forum can continue to meet the needs of its members while continuing to plan for beyond Covid-19.

Voice of Experience Forum 2021 Calendar: Wordsearch Competition

The 2021 Voice of Experience Forum Calendar was issued to all members before Christmas. We would like to remind everyone that the closing date for the Wordsearch competition is the 31st March, so get your entries in before then for your chance to win a £50 voucher for their local supermarket. On the reverse of the Wordsearch is a feedback questionnaire which we would ask everyone to complete and return as soon as possible. This feedback will help the organisation to evidence the need to continue with this resource in the future, as we are sure this is important to you too.



Blue badge renewal



Voice of Experience Forum feels that it would be useful to give an update on parking enforcement within North Lanarkshire Council for the benefit of those whose badges have expired, are due to expire or are awaiting a reply to an application for renewal.

Applications can be made online by visiting the GOV.UK website where applicants can upload their supporting documentation and photograph at the same time.

At the current time, wardens are not operating however this will be reviewed regularly. If you require an update, contact parking@northlan.gov.uk

And in other news

WARM HOME DISCOUNT SCHEME

Overview

You could get £140 off your electricity bill for winter 2020 to 2021 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill, between September and March.



You may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier to find out. The discount will not affect your Cold Weather Payment or Winter Fuel Payment.

Eligibility

There are 2 ways to qualify for the Warm Home Discount Scheme:

- * you get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit - known as the 'core group'
- * you are on a low income and meet your energy supplier's criteria for the scheme - known as the 'broader group'. How you apply for the Warm Home Discount Scheme depends on how you qualify for the discount.

Pre-pay or Pay-as-you-go meters

You can still qualify for the discount if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter. Your electricity supplier can tell you how you'll get the discount if you're eligible, for example a voucher you can use to top up your meter.



GP SURGERIES

General Practices in North Lanarkshire remain open for all non COVID related enquiries. Patients will only receive a face-to-face appointment where necessary – for example, when a physical examination is needed or if tests need to be carried out.

Measures will be in place to ensure safety and physical distancing – for example, reduced capacity in waiting rooms, one-way systems, hand sanitiser and face coverings. Appointment systems will change to avoid queues. You will receive a precise time for your appointment, please do not arrive early or late. Reception staff will advise you on their own process.

SCAMS

There are a huge number of scams around during this time including those relating to Covid, banks, HMRC, energy providers and also face-to-face doorstep scams. We would advise you not to click on any email links that you receive. Always access your accounts through the genuine, official website of the company even when a link is provided to you. Scammers can make fake links and websites look genuine. Do not give out personal details, whether at your door or online. If it does not feel right, trust your instincts and say no thank you.

Report all scams to Advice Direct Scotland on 0808 164 6000 or via their [ScamWatch](#) tool. If you have been the victim of online fraud, report this to Police Scotland on 101.