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News

It may be a short working week, but it has been a busy one for [InformationNOW](#). We have written a new article on [Gardening and health](#), recorded an audio feature with [Radio Tyneside](#), contributed to [ReCoCo's](#) printed newsletter and worked with the City Council web developers to publish a map of emergency food available during the coronavirus.

Look out for the printed newsletter - it will be distributed through the current voluntary sector distribution networks related to food, shopping and essentials.

To use the new [food help map](#), just type in your postcode or ward and then click on a map pin for details. The map is linked to the two food help pages on InformationNOW.

- [Free meals and cheap food](#)
- [Food banks and free emergency food](#)

Don't forget that there is [CityLife line](#) to help you with food and prescriptions too, if you are vulnerable or shielding.

Support for older people

At the present time, we need to spare a thought for people who are older and not able to access digital means to stay connected or keep informed. This is a difficult time for them and there are several organisations working hard to keep in touch with those who are isolated and perhaps unwell, worried or anxious.

[The Elders Council](#) has been ringing round their members to make sure they know that there is help at the end of the phone for a chat or for information about new organisations like [Citylife Line](#). Catch up with the Elders council [online quarterly newsletter](#).

In the West of the City, [Search](#) is active. They provide shop and drop, prescription pick up, charging of electricity meters and they continue to help with welfare and benefits by telephone on 0191 2737 443. They are available Monday to Friday 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. This includes the blue badge and housing applications. They are distributing newsletters with local history and quizzes for their existing members. Get in touch if you'd like to get a newsletter or to be part of their new telephone buddy scheme. Ring the number above or [email](#)

[Age UK](#) are also busy. They offer services in Gateshead and Newcastle. Their services include: shopping delivery; emergency respite sitting service; prescription and pension collection; daily or weekly welfare calls (depending on capacity); information and advice over the phone; hot meals for £3 (or £5 with dessert); pet walking; basic garden tidy. Contact: 0191 477 3559

[Independent Age](#) has volunteers to chat to and a grief chat line.

Coronavirus related updates

Household recycling centres to reopen

[Household waste and recycling centres](#) are due to reopen on 11 May 2020. Social distancing will need to be observed and you could queue for one hour to get in.

Public transport

Nexus have announced changes to local public transport, with reduced bus and metro services. More information is available [here](#).

Post Office launches new cash delivery option to help the most vulnerable

Cash delivery payments are now available for the most vulnerable individuals due to the Post Office working in partnership with the DWP. The cash payments are available to the DWP to use to support their most vulnerable customers, initially in England, who are shielding because of the risk of infection should they leave their home. The Post Office will ensure cash is sent to their home using Royal Mail Special Delivery.

New national helpline number for teachers to support children experiencing domestic abuse

The Operation Encompass Teachers' Helpline 0845 646 0890 launches on 4 May 2020 for all schools in England and Wales. It will be available from 8 am to 11 am, Monday to Friday, to support teachers who are concerned about children experiencing domestic abuse, many of whom are at home. It also aims to assist teachers who are working in very different situations, without many of their usual support mechanisms and under great pressure. The helpline will be staffed by educational / clinical psychologists, who all have extensive experience of providing consultation and support to staff working in schools and education settings. For general enquiries, email infor@operationencompass.org or visit www.operationencompass.org/.

BAME

Show Racism the Red Card has produced a free film available for all on [challenging racism in the NHS](#)

Domestic abuse help

Women's aid safety advice for survivors

How to be an ally to someone experiencing domestic abuse

Latest Cyber Scams

EE Phishing email - do not click on email@moniquemol[.]nl

Microsoft Teams phishing software - this is a fake version of Microsoft Teams intended to harvest your data.

Mental Health

Look out for this [Mental Health and Wellbeing guide](#) dropping through your door and share.

Gardening therapy

In these difficult times, one very important thing hasn't been cancelled, gardening. If you already have a garden, you will know that it is hard to ignore your garden and that you can generate a wonderful sense of well being just being in touch with nature. If you are new to gardening, or think you might like to have a go during the lock down, then our [new article](#) contains tips on how to get started now that May has come. We also appreciate that not everyone has a full garden, so we cover patios, tubs and using your windowsill as well.

Although we have had plenty of sunshine, it has still been cool in the evening. Here are some things to do in early spring:

- cultivate and divide perennials
- put a thick layer of mulch around and between plants
- prepare containers for planting (but leave planting till late May)
- plant perennials to flower in late summer
- sow hardy annuals
- repair fences and border edgings
- mow your lawn

If you haven't managed to get out or have been unwell and can't face the garden then you might feel able to plant a few seeds, write about your garden and what you can see this week or take photos of the changes taking place during Spring. Just connecting with nature will be good for you.

Speedy vegetables to grow at home. These don't take too much maintenance of space so ideal for beginners, patios and tubs. Cress is ready to harvest within 7 days:

- cress
- salad leaves
- radishes
- spinach
- peas

[Gardena UK](#) has a tool to draw your own garden.

Gardening companion helps you to connect with a community of 150,000 gardeners

to answer questions and share success. You can share with Facebook and Twitter.

[RHS grow your own](#) has fruit, vegetable and herb profiles.

Deaf Awareness Week

It's deaf awareness week and time to remind people of a community of people who may be running into additional difficulties during this period. In the current situation many people are working from homes, studying, shielding or coping with the impact of furlough or changed circumstances. However, for those who are deaf or hard of hearing there is another challenge. Trying to find a platform where the signal is good enough to lipread or to be able to see what someone is signing, or that offers live video captioning which is accurate enough to understand what is going on.

There may be additional problems during the actual meeting, such as people stepping away from the video when talking, only using the audio, switching to audio if the video interferes and people speaking over each other.

This is a time when we can see the impact on groups of staff or families who do not have key equipment or accessible and assistive technologies, such as live captioning and screen readers.

There are many live transcribing options and they vary in accuracy and between devices ? see which one works well for you; [Transcribe Live](#) is a popular choice. Skype, Zoom or Google Meet do have live closed captioning which you can set up ahead of the meeting.

Remember you can still get hearing aid batteries and spare tubing during Covid-19 isolation. Emergency hearing aid repairs can also be arranged - if you experience any problems accessing services using email or phone let Deaflink know and contact Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust audiology.

Useful information

[New claim line for Universal Credit](#) if you are deaf or hard of hearing

Contact [Deaflink](#) for help and support or their [Facebook page](#).

Read our article on [Deaf and hard of hearing](#)

Watch [our BSL and captioned film about how](#) to use InformationNOW by scrolling down the homepage.

Benefits of quizzing

I talk to so many people who say that they have just done a quiz - not just general knowledge but drawing or some other online game. This is great news. We are all connecting in new ways and also finding ways to stimulate our brains and motivate ourselves. Learning something new - whether it is facts for a quiz or a skill - from language to crafting or planting for the first time - all gives a sense of achievement. At this time, it may be beneficial to set a goal or a challenge and share the joy of what you have done with others.

On average, as you get older it will take you longer to remember things and to process information. Scientists have estimated that memory lapses are probably on the rise, as people lead even busier and more pressurised lives. So this period of enforced time at home, may be an ideal time to quiz with friends or choose a similar challenge - set a crossword for instance.

They don't have to be online, you can set the challenge and take part over the telephone or send it to someone in the post to complete - the point is to research, learn and answer questions to keep your brain active. Not just sit in front of the TV watching the news which has mainly one subject.

Remember, there is a well known mantra 'use it or lose it' and that is why it is worth keeping our brain engaged in something that tests your memory - it may also help stave off [dementia](#).

To get you started, here is a Living North quiz to see how much you know about the North East.

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