**Looking at the Positives in Lockdown**

**Dougie McPhee, Operations Manager**

“I can’t talk about every area, but the North has been amazing! The level of understanding in our staff teams, whether it’s a cleaner and manager sharing information on a development, or the teams working under each Housing Officer, they have been there for each other.

Our office staff have also had to balance work and personal demands, showing that colleagues often become an extension of your own family. Worries, concerns, good news and happy times continue and the need for teamwork has never been more important.

COVID-19 can affect anyone and the last few months have highlighted the challenges we all face, whether physically, mentally or emotionally.Sometimes a quick email, or call, to see how our colleagues are managing can make all the difference.

The job still has to be done and while most tenants miss the face-to-face interactions with staff, there is a mutual understanding and recognition that physical interaction must be replaced with remote or virtual interaction.

A quick call from a development manager, housing officer or a phone buddy can make all the difference to a resident who may be lonely or isolated in their property.

The services of our teams across the country has also helped to create a core support network for residents, who may otherwise be cut-off from others during the lockdown.

The weekly calls have also helped managers to see the general health and wellbeing needs of some of our most vulnerable tenants, as well as creating new links to relatives and extended family.

Some acknowledgement should also be given to the development of our communications in lockdown. The biggest change, has of course, been the transition to Microsoft teams, which has allowed many more staff to put a face to a name and feel like they can communicate more openly with their colleagues.

I also think we have to give a great deal of credit to our communities, from Distilleries supplying hand sanitiser to food parcels from local supermarkets and milk from local dairy producers.

We have even had letters to tenants from the local scout group to help lift their spirits, which has been simply amazing, but without our on-site managers this would never have happened.

As time progresses, my hope in the next few months is that we see these superb acts of kindness and thoughtfulness continue. I would personally like to see tenants be a part of virtual coffee mornings andtake part in more social activities through virtual platforms.

So I would like to thank everyone who has given their support and made us smile.”