



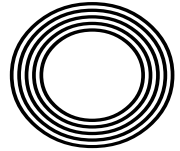
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Editor's notes...

JANUARY 2021



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** BrentwoodOngar. Well, let's just say 2020 was quite a year. There is not a single person in the country who hasn't been affected by COVID-19. As a publishing house, over the course of a few months, we sank to some profoundly low depths; our nose was bloodied. It's fair to say I had sleepless nights over what the future might entail, but looking back on it now I'm left with a sense of having gained from the experience. That might seem a strange thing to say, but in a way, coronavirus woke us up to what we needed as a business. I'm talking about boring financial reviews, the drive for greater efficiency, streamlining, a change to work practices.

And what about the positives we as individuals have discovered? Working from home - brilliant; making more contact with relatives - overdue; paying more attention to our health and fitness - great. Of course, we have all lost a lot, but now, on the dawn of a new era - and a vaccine - let's try to gather in all the things we have gained, while being better prepared and stronger for the new year ahead. With that in mind, I'd like to thank all our loyal customers and readers. We are in this together. Wishing you all a very happy and healthy new year.

Nik Allen

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CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Dean Shaw, Tim Green

At the time of print all content in **VISION** was relevant and up to date according to COVID-19 government guidelines

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The great Dame BARBARA WINDSOR DBE

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND CAREER OF THE QUEEN OF TV

In a troublesome, traumatic year, many saw Dame Barbara Windsor's death in early December 2020 as another profound low.

An only child born in Shoreditch two years before the breakout of World War II, 'Babs' made her West End debut at the age of just 13, in the musical *Love from Judy*.

As the Swinging Sixties swung, so too did Barbara Windsor's buoyant, bubbly, effervescent personality carry forward an industry. From appearances in films *Sparrows Can't Sing* (for which she won a BAFTA), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *The Boy Friend*, to sitcom work with *The Rag Trade* and *Wild, Wild Women*, her acting talent was as admired as it was, at times, underplayed.

Indeed, when the slapstick comedy of the *Carry On* movies came around, while decorated in her roles, Babs became somewhat pigeonholed.

Nonetheless, she re-emerged in the 1970s to return to stage work with *Oh! What a Lovely War* and *Twelfth Night*, among others.

From high jinks to heavy drama, Babs was an entertainment icon in her own right. Never clichéd, never disrespected, she came to represent an era of British entertainment in which our output rivalled anyone else the world over.

And in accepting the opportunity to take ownership of the Queen Vic pub in Albert Square in 1994, Babs' career reinvention proved a masterstroke. A boisterous, no-nonsense, independent pub landlady, she kept a lid on Walford's most tempestuous characters, and remains the only person in *EastEnders'* 35-year history to have tempered the problematic Mitchell brothers, Grant and Phil – her sons.

Of course, Windsor's infectious persona,

effortless charm and cheeky sex appeal saw her decorated with no shortage of admirers. From relationships with Ronnie Kray and comedy sidekick Sid James, she enjoyed a lively 21-year marriage with nightclub owner Ronnie Knight. The pair shared a luxury home on Stanmore Hill. She later married chef Stephen Hollings and wed a third time in 2000, to Scott Mitchell, bridging an age gap of 27 years. She didn't have any children.

Following her passing, the tributes came from far and wide for an actress whose time in front of the camera was really only a platform to a breath-taking life in showbusiness.

The sadness of her death was calmed somewhat by the fact Babs had been in unsteady health for a number of years. In 2014 she retired from all acting duties when diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Undeterred by the darker clouds that she sensed were about to gather, and ably assisted by her husband, she leapt into a new role of raising both funds and awareness for the disease, and continued to campaign up until her death.

While still seen out frequently over the past few years, the toils of public engagements eventually proved too much for someone who had previously bathed in the decorative sunlight of press and publicity.

Slipping away quietly, as she did on December 10, was perhaps the most inauspicious of conclusions to a booming, bustling life full of big personality. And yet, while we all take away slightly different memories of Barbara Windsor, our collective recollections will surely always be of an actress who spearheaded a golden era of British entertainment, always accompanied by a warm smile and mischievous laugh.

Photo credit: Shutterstock



THE WORLD AROUND US

Part 3

In the third part of our environmental series, we look at the key driver in the health and well-being of the planet. In this issue, it's the air above our heads.

In all the trust we place in environmentalists, activists and those passionate about preserving our planet, perhaps when it comes to air we need to invest the greatest level of trust.

On the ground, the world in which we live seems largely pleasant, and as far as air quality goes, our immediate environment is certainly much cleaner today than at any time since the Industrial Revolution, and noticeably so.

Yet in 2020 we are driven by targets – achieving a net zero greenhouse gas equation and an 80 per cent cut in emissions by 2050 being two of the biggest headline grabbers.

The problem for the preservation of air quality is that industry rolls on. We are a long way from the smoggy days of 1950s London, but air pollution still contributes to almost 10 per cent of premature deaths, while costing around £40 billion each year.

Of course, the enforced lockdown in the spring of 2020 was perhaps the greatest exemplar of

how great our footprint is. Within weeks, scientists reported a 40 per cent drop in air pollutants. It showed that protecting our personal health had a hugely beneficial effect on that of the environment.

And yet, when back at full capacity, even the healthcare systems in England will be responsible for an estimated 4 to 5 per cent of our carbon footprint, with 6.7 billion road miles each year coming from patients and their visitors travelling to NHS hospitals and centres.

Never in starker terms was it clear that the play-off between the health of the planet and the health of the people who inhabit it remains a tug of war we will continue to see.

Photo credit: Jarek Kilian/Shutterstock.com



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BIG ENERGY SAVING WEEK...

- CHECK
- SWITCH
- SAVE

JANUARY 18 - 24

What better time to try to reduce your energy bills than in the week before payday when you are undoubtedly feeling the pinch after Christmas?

Plus, you don't even have to make massive changes to your lifestyle to enjoy significant savings. Remember, all the little things really do add up.

1. **Use your microwave more:** Using your microwave is one of the most efficient ways to both heat up and cook food.
2. **Be water-conscious:** Whether you are making a cup of tea or boiling food in a pan, only use the amount of water that you need.

cooker over a whole day only uses the same amount of energy as a lightbulb.

4. **Don't use metal trays in the oven:** Glass and ceramic dishes retain heat better than metal ones, making them more energy efficient.

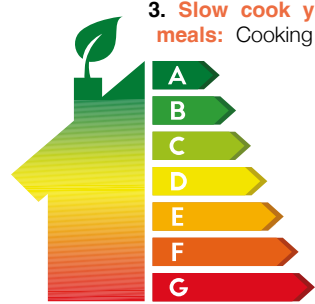
5. **Keep heating rings clean:** Any food that has become stuck to your heating rings will absorb heat, making them less efficient.

6. **Wash your clothes at 30°C:** 90 per cent of your washing expenditure is spent on heating the water, so by reducing the heat to 30°C when possible, you can save one-third on your washing costs.

7. **Unplug any unused appliances:** Unplug or switch the power off on any appliances that you aren't using. This includes charger cables.

8. **Turn down your thermostat:** By turning down your thermostat by just 1°C, you can save up to £80 per year.

3. **Slow cook your family meals:** Cooking in a slow



9. **Use halogen lightbulbs outside:** Halogen bulbs use a quarter less electricity than incandescent bulbs without affecting their brightness, so are ideal for exterior lighting.

10. **Defrost food overnight:** Defrosting food typically halves the cooking time, meaning less energy used per meal.



HOME & DIY

Viva

DRIED FLOWERS

If there is only one interior design trend that you embrace this year, make it the revival of dried flowers. Cost effective, eco-friendly and, most importantly, Pinterest-approved, anyone can dry flowers and arrange a beautiful bouquet to be proudly displayed in their home.

HOW TO DRY FLOWERS

If you want to prolong the life of a bouquet of flowers that has been gifted to you, then drying it out is the perfect solution.

1. Strip off any excess foliage and cut stems to desired length
2. Find a dark and dry area, such as an unused cupboard, and hang your flowers upside down using unflavoured dental floss or string
3. Leave for 2-3 weeks until completely dry
4. Take down and spray with unscented hairspray

WHAT ARE THE BEST FLOWERS FOR DRYING?

If you are new to the flower-drying business, you may want a few ideas to get you started. The below flowers are ideal for drying, although you can dry any varieties: Pansies • Amaranthus • Artemisia • Lavender • Hydrangea • Yarrow • Eucalyptus (although not strictly a flower, this will add lovely greenery to your bouquet)

HOW TO DISPLAY DRIED FLOWERS

Once you have dried your flowers, it is time to carefully arrange them into a delightful display. Below are four different arrangements for you to try out:

- Hanging bunches – tie a few bunches together using twine and hang upside down from a branch or an interior wall
- Wreaths – create a dried flower wreath to hang on your front door
- Mini bouquets – dried posy bouquets look lovely placed in a small vase or as a gift
- Statement displays – if you are looking to create a big and bold display, tie together dried flowers, herbs, leaves and grass. Hang over your dining table for maximum effect.



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HOME & DIY

TOTALLY PLASTERED

get the look



HOW YOU CAN JOIN THE PLASTER EFFECT INTERIOR TREND

Lockdown saw a lot of us going back to basics, rediscovering at the same time simpler, less-complicated ways of life.

It seems that in the throes of one of the biggest cultural resets we've ever known, the lure of stripping back has extended right the way through to our interiors, with plaster effect a new design trend that relies very much on the simplicity of old.

The concept is clear – a modern, mottled, moulded, matt-effect plaster wall that looks like, feels like and responds to a stripped-back feeling of style and detail.

It uses, first and foremost, a base of plaster. For the fully organic effect, you can leave it as is, but many are embracing the idea of using chalk paint, old rags and a natural sponge to

treat, detail and add depth-driven colour to the walls.

The intention is to go rustic and to promote that unfinished look, and less is most definitely more where this is concerned, with over-decoration making the look too perfect and too polished.

A certain generation will shudder as they make comparisons to Artex, but this is a whole world away, and treated properly, even the very rawest exposed plaster can thrive as a brilliant feature.

And if paint and sponges aren't your thing, you can purchase plaster-effect wallpaper, to deliver devastating design dynamism to your walls with a simple splosh of a bit of paste.

Whichever way you go about it, the end effect is something that's detailed, bright, totally unique and great for promoting space and feelings of clarity. You'll also find your walls are incredible durable, as the look can be maintained simply with the use of warm, soapy water.

Photo credit: Annie Sloan via homesandgardens.com, George Home via goodhomesmagazine.com, Matalan via goodhomesmagazine.com



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HOME & DIY



Who says that kitchen storage has to be boring? Check out these super stylish and space-saving storage solutions for your spices that will guarantee you reach for some added flavour every time you cook.

TEST IT OUT

If you have a handful of trusty spices that you use regularly, then this is the spice storage solution for you. Simply purchase a set of test tubes, fill with your preferred seasonings and place in a wooden box that you could make yourself or pick up from your nearest craft shop.

STACK IT, STACK IT

For those who want a practical and attractive option, why not store your spices in mini mason jars or tins that have been labelled using chalk paint? Perfect if you love the shabby chic look. These can be stacked on your worktop or stored in a drawer.

MAGNET MAYHEM

If you want your spices within grabbing distance but you don't want them taking up valuable space on your kitchen worktop, try using magnets. You could attach metal spice pots to the inside of your cabinet doors, under your cabinets or in any other convenient location in your kitchen.

TIC TAC ON-THE-GO

Ideal for taking spices outside your home, whether on holiday or into work. Simply pour your favourite spices into old Tic Tac containers, label and you are good to go. Make sure you thoroughly clean the containers first to avoid a minty taste on all your spices.

HANG IN THERE

For another great way to utilise space underneath your kitchen cabinets, simply hang your spice jars directly on the wall using some small hooks and string. Glass storage jars work best for this so that you can easily see what spices are in each container.

Photo credit: littleblaboo.com, seattlesundress.com, experthomelife.com

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I think we can all agree that the sooner we see the back of 2020 and this dreadful corona virus the better. That said, there are also some heart warming positives that we can take out of this situation. It has often been said that we can only really get to know one another and realise what is truly important in times of crisis. I think few would argue that in this case what has proven to be important is local community spirit.

When talking to the Manager of Cloudy2Clear windows Chris Miller it became clear that these values have been held dear for a number of years. Since starting the business some years ago Cloudy2Clear have remained true to their core values of

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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Couple use experiences to create The Big Lockdown game

A couple from Brentwood used extra time they had on their hands during lockdown to create a new card game.

David and Madeleine Cooper wanted to do something useful with their extra free time and so created The Big Lockdown – a game inspired by what was going on around them at the time.

The pair describe the game as “fun, family friendly and full of tongue-in-cheek references to experiences we have all had”.

The aim of the game is to build the largest stockpile of supplies – toilet paper, food and protective equipment – while avoiding the tribulations of lockdown, such as risk of infection or home-schooling going badly.

Once the concept was born, David spent three months evolving the game before getting it tested by having other people play it and give feedback.

Since then, David and Madeleine have successfully

raised £5,000 through a Kickstarter campaign which ended in December, so they could get copies printed to sell.

People who backed the project received different rewards, including a copy of the game itself.

David said: “When lockdown hit, everyone had their own experiences, their own issues and problems. We had a lot of free time and not many exciting ways to spend it.

“As we explored it, the game we wanted to make was about the experiences we were having, the things we were reading on the news.

“When we first started getting feedback, some of it was quite brutal. Over time we refined it, improved things and now we’re getting some really lovely feedback.”

For more details, including how to play, visit lockdownthegame.co.uk



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Pensioner urges others to get vaccinated against COVID-19



Photo credit: @ArthurJEdwards

A pensioner from Brentwood who was vaccinated against COVID-19 last month has urged others to do the same.

Royal photographer Arthur Edwards, 80, got his first dose of the Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine at the Brentwood Centre on December 17, 2020.

Speaking on *Good Morning Britain*, he said: "I can't tell you how excited I was. I thought the day would never come. I thought it was the day I started to get my life back and started living a normal life again.

"I think I can relax a bit and not worry if someone comes close to me or get stressed if I see someone on the train without a mask on. Those things will just disappear and I will hopefully start to become less mentally stressed by it and by the problems of trying to keep safe."

Arthur shared images of himself being vaccinated on his Twitter account.

Community thanked for supporting appeal

Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) thanked the community for supporting a food donation appeal.

BBC held a Can in a Van appeal on December 4, 2020, with the community getting behind the initiative.

In total, 59 large red boxes full of essentials and goodies were donated, and they will now go to those struggling in the Brentwood area.

During the first lockdown, the council organised a number of Can in a Van days in Brentwood, where it parked a van outside supermarkets to collect food donations.

The same approach was used for the latest appeal, with volunteers collecting food donations outside Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer in the High Street.

Councillor Cliff Poppy said: "It was an amazing turnout and I want to thank all those who took the time out of their shopping to help build up the supplies in the community hubs.

"Our residents are always the first to step up and help out when asked, but this time they have outdone themselves. These items are much needed by many families and individuals around the borough.

"The community hub does a wonderful job of supporting all those who need an extra hand, and this year has been one of the hardest the borough has had to face in its history. The volunteers stood in the rain and carried on and the staff at Sainsbury's and Marks & Spencer went beyond the call of duty to help make this initiative so successful."

School actors take home prestigious prize

Aspiring actors at Brentwood School got some national recognition recently when they won a prize at the Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation's (SSF) Festival 2020.

Performers from the school's much-acclaimed drama department won the ONOScar for Best Site Specific Performance for their production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, beating off competition from more than 600 schools.

Coram SSF's world record-breaking night of theatre #OneNightofShakespeare saw young actors from across the country join together in a bid to keep creativity on the agenda and put drama back in the spotlight.

Sophie Hermosa, Brentwood School Second in Drama, said she was very proud of all the students who took part.

She added: "This award reflects how fabulous the students were in their performance. Taking into account all the restrictions we are under owing to COVID-19, I am incredibly proud of them."

Filming for *Much Ado About Nothing* took part in the School's impressive performing arts studios and Victorian Chapel.



LOCAL NEWS BRENTWOOD



News from THE ROTARY CLUB

Brentwood

Earlier in 2020, the Rotary Club of Brentwood undertook a crowdfunding exercise and raised £15,000 for St Francis Hospice. As part of this exercise, we later received an award and we have used this additional money to support local charities in COVID-19 activities.

Check out the great activities that these charities will now be able to undertake:

- > Brentwood Community Transport: to modify some of its vehicles to protect not only the vulnerable passengers and their carers, but also the bus drivers.
- > Young People's Counselling Service (YPCS): providing equipment and disposables to make the service COVID-19 secure.
- > Brighter Opportunities for Special People (BOSP): to purchase equipment, and in particular internet dongles, which will be provided to families to help make connections and help them avoid isolation.
- > The Dance Network Association CIC: to support the Dance Network to deliver its dance/prop bag project.
- > Special Needs And Parents (SNAP): to support families with counselling sessions and provide additional emotional support in these difficult times.
- > Kids Inspire: a project for 20 isolated, lonely, anxious kids between the ages of 12/13 and 19 who live in Brentwood. They will learn how to express themselves through writing their own songs and performing them



- in Brentwood Theatre.
- > Little Doves Christian Preschool: to support staff and children in activities that are COVID-19 safe.
- > Barrow Farm Riding/Carriage Driving for the Disabled: to provide additional riding lessons for children and adults in Brentwood.
- > Home-Start Essex: to provide education resource and craft packages to vulnerable families with pre-school children in Brentwood and the surrounding areas.
- > Daily Bread: to increase collections to the Food Hub and provide extra home deliveries to people who are self-isolating. To ensure volunteers have the PPE to protect themselves as they undertake this vital work.

Restaurant accused of discrimination

A branch of Pizza Hut in Brentwood has met with fierce criticism from locals after staff said they would refuse to serve customers without face coverings. In England, people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment or a disability are exempt from having to wear one. After a notice appeared stating 'No Mask No Service' at the Warley Hill restaurant, diners took to social media to vent their frustration. One disabled customer wrote: "You do realise that this is blatant discrimination towards those like myself with disabilities!"

A Pizza Hut Delivery spokesperson said: "The health and safety of our customers and team members is our top priority. For this reason, we require a face mask for service in our stores. We understand that not all customers will be able to wear a face mask owing to disability or health concerns, and are more than happy to serve people who cannot wear a mask for these reasons. We are in touch with the store to reflect that in their signage."



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BURGHART for BRENTWOOD



Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar

As we enter 2021, the first swathe of COVID-19 vaccines is being administered to those most vulnerable to coronavirus – the older members of our community, care home staff and health care workers. It's the beginning of the way out of the pandemic restrictions which have caused so much disruption, distress and difficulties in the last year.

Sadly, coronavirus cases were on the rise in Brentwood before Christmas among school-aged children and the over-60s.

We still have many more weeks of handwashing, mask-wearing and social distancing ahead, but the spectacularly hard work put into developing and administering vaccines in the UK and far beyond in the last nine months will be worth it to

stop the terrible effects of this global pandemic.

2021 also brings the UK out of the European Union and we walk alone for the first time since 1973. It's going to be a time of change and will take some getting used to, but I have every confidence our leaving is what the people of Brentwood and Ongar wanted and expected when the 2016 referendum was held.

In the four years since the referendum, we have had two general elections, extensive Brexit debates and negotiations and a global pandemic. I am sure I am not the only person in this constituency to hope for a period of calm in 2021 as we process all that has gone on, and rebuild our economy and self-esteem as a United Kingdom.



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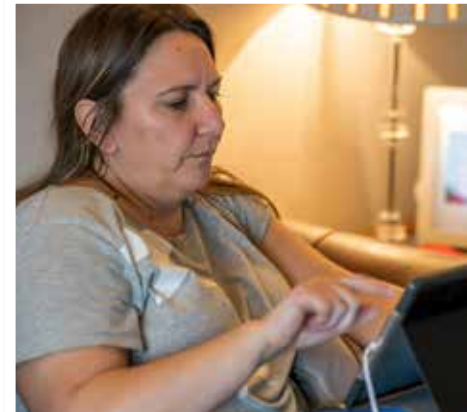
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Anxious or stressed?



We all experience times when we feel like we can't cope, and sometimes this can start to affect our everyday lives and prevent us from doing the things we normally do.

VitaMinds, a local NHS IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service for Basildon and Brentwood, offers a range of support for those who are experiencing common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. They provide online webinars, one-to-one support and long-term condition interventions.

The service is for people 18 and over who are registered with a GP in the Basildon and Brentwood area.

All of the support is available remotely – over the telephone, secure video link and webinars – enabling VitaMinds to be accessible and available to you during this uncertain and challenging time. Interpreter/sensory services are available.

You can access some free self-help resources by visiting www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk

If you need help, visit your GP or self-refer through the website by visiting www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/basildon-and-brentwood or call 01268 977171. You can also email admin@vhg.co.uk

Service opening hours are Monday to Friday, 8am – 8pm, and Saturday 9.30am – 12.30pm.

The VitaMinds team are there for you to talk through your problems and provide you with new techniques to help you have a more positive approach to life.

One patient said: "I've been finding it helpful. It's the first time I feel listened to and you're treating me as me, not just textbook."

Another patient spoke of the team at VitaMinds, saying: "All of the team were so patient and understanding; they made me feel so comfortable."

Contact VitaMinds now and benefit from their short waiting times and wide-ranging support.

First eco and refill shop opens in town

On Wednesday, December 2, Brentwood gained its first eco and refill shop.

The Larder, at 24 Crown Street, is brought to you by Annie Sid of The Greenhouse, Joanna Gardiner and Sam Keating, creator of The Hungry Tribe.

The store provides the community with an alternative shopping experience – locally made products, free of packaging, and with the environment in mind.

It also offers a range of dried goods including rice, pasta, oats, cereal, nuts and spices, as well as a great range of gluten-free products. There is a large range of cleaning products, including laundry liquid and fabric conditioner, and toiletries like hand soap, shower gel and body lotions.

You can buy a bottle to fill at the store or just bring a bottle from home.

The Hungry Tribe is in residence, offering a range of cakes with lots of 'free from' options, as well as lunches and coffee roasted locally in Writtle.

The main ethos of the store is to reduce waste and single-use items that cannot easily be recycled.

Joanna explained: "What we want is for everyone to be changing at least one single-use item and build from there, and we are here to help you on your way."

The store also offers a 'Jar Exchange'.

Annie said: "The shop is not about getting something new and shiny and covered in a plastic wrapper; it is about getting something beautifully made, by local people who love what they are doing."

Alex from The Essex Allotment is supplying the store with his fresh vegetables, Here Bakery with her beautiful sourdough, Juice HQ, CaroB's kombucha and blended teas.

Anyone who goes into the store and quotes **VISION Magazine** will be gifted a free toilet fizzy.



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



LOCAL NEWS ONGAR



Resident plays her part in expanding help for bereaved people

An Ongar resident has helped expand bereavement support for local people.

Sushma Dhami works as a patient and family support manager for St Clare Hospice and, as part of Grief Awareness Week, which ran from December 2 to 8, 2020, Sushma explained why she has been helping to increase the support for local people experiencing bereavement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She said: "Bereavement is never easy, but during the pandemic, navigating grief and loss has become all the more difficult. People are finding that they cannot rely on their usual routines, and that the face-to-face comfort and support of family and friends is disrupted because of social distancing."

St Clare Hospice has transformed its bereavement support during the pandemic; this has included increasing its capacity to support local people,

regardless of where their loved one died, and offering people bereavement support over the telephone and online, via Facebook groups and meetings.

Part of this newly extended support has included a bereavement support helpline – 01279 967670 – in response to a community requirement for immediate emotional support, information and guidance.

The helpline is run by a team of hospice staff and volunteers, trained to deliver immediate emotional support and practical guidance.

Sushma adds: "We know that recently, bereaved people are finding it difficult to navigate changes as a result of the pandemic – things like registering a death and arranging a funeral are not following the usual steps, which can be confusing.

"Our helpline guides people through this process, offering light-touch, emotional support in the process."



Plans for 93 new homes near primary school



Photo credit: BB Partnership Ltd

A planning application for 93 new homes in Ongar has been submitted to Epping Forest District Council (EFDC).

The application has been made to develop land just off Greensted Road.

The new development is proposed to consist of 69 houses and 24 flats, with the application stating that 40 per cent of them

are to be affordable housing.

The homes range from one-bedroom to four-bedrooms.

The application also states that around 1.65 parking spaces will be created per home, with a number of visitor spaces also created across the development.

The design and access statement, submitted as part of the planning application, states: "The proposal is for a landscape lead development of 93 houses set within a permeable environment of open spaces and pedestrian links forming a natural extension of Ongar and playable link to the primary school.

"Green links, wetlands and extensive planting of trees and native planting provides improved ecological habitat and amenity for the whole of Ongar.

"The proposed development represents an opportunity to provide much-needed housing in a high-quality and sustainable environment, without detrimental impact to the existing settlement or the green belt."

More details are available to view on EFDC's planning website. Search for EPF/2627/20.

Get active with a ramble in the countryside

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) has created challenges, including in Ongar, to encourage more people to stay active.

EFDC has created the Doorstep Activity Challenge as a way of encouraging people to be more active and to interact with their neighbours, while observing the COVID-19 restrictions.

It includes an activity targeted at those on the Shelley Estate, with a circular walk starting and ending at St Peter's Avenue.

The route is mainly flat but can be hard work in places because of the mud in the winter. It takes around two hours to cover the route.

The programme also has a variety of other activities, including the opportunity to participate in a colouring competition for all ages.

Councillor Holly Whitbread, cabinet member for housing and community, said: "We hope this programme will boost community spirit during these challenging times.

"It's a fun and inclusive way of encouraging people to be more active and interact with their neighbours, while observing the COVID restrictions."

More information can be found on EFDC's website by searching for 'Ongar Lifewalks Ramble'.

Policing team awarded after busting shop

A policing team based in Ongar have been named Community Service Team of the Year at the council's Civic Awards.

Epping Forest's District Police Community Safety Team won the award after busting a shop that was selling stolen car parts worth more than half a million pounds.

The team was formed in July 2018 with Sergeant Neil Ross, PC Steve Bowering and PC Ben Keith, who were praised for their professionalism, integrity and determination.

Sgt Ross said: "Our work is really varied and focused on solving problems.

"We also use automatic number plate technology and intelligence we've gathered to target criminals travelling into and around the district. As a result, we've arrested a number of suspects for robberies and burglaries and located stolen vehicles."



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SQUEAKY SCREEN

Nobody looks forward to having to clean their screens, and you may leave this frustrating task until you literally can't handle the smudges and streaks any more.

However, screen cleaning doesn't have to be so stressful.

a good idea to polish and wipe down your phone case before reattaching.

COMPUTER MONITOR SCREEN

For general cleaning, use a soft, lint-free cloth to remove dust from your computer screen. To remove stains, slightly dampen your cloth or a sponge and softly rub the screen, making sure no excess liquid gets on it. Leave to naturally air dry. Avoid using alcohol or an ammonia-based cleaner on your laptop screen as this can damage it.

What **NOT** to do when cleaning any screen

- > Use aerosol sprays or solvents
- > Spray liquid directly onto the screen
- > Use your fingernail to scratch off stubborn stains

TV SCREENS LCD PLASMA

These delicate screens should never be wet cleaned; instead, you should dust them with a soft, dry microfibre cloth. For stubborn smudges, use a pre-moistened wipe that is specifically designed for use on electronics. Make sure you don't miss the dust caught in the vents at the back of your TV.

MOBILE PHONE SCREENS

The screen of your mobile phone can get very dirty so it is important to clean it regularly. Start by removing your phone from its case, powering it down and then polishing it with a microfibre cloth. Rub gently with a wipe that is safe for use on electronics – for example, Lysol – to remove any germs and leave to air dry. Polish again using your cloth. It can also be

NATURAL CLEANING SOLUTION FOR SCREENS

If you prefer to make your own natural cleaning solutions, this DIY spray is suitable for most screens. Simply mix equal parts vinegar and water, dab your microfibre cloth into the liquid and gently wipe the screen.



Illuminating
13-0647

Color of the Year
2021
PANTONE

Ultimate
Gray
17-5104

Grey DAY?

Revealing Pantone's Colours of the Year, Ultimate Gray and Illuminating

Across a year that offered so much but delivered so little, it's perhaps apt that Pantone has selected not one, but two Colours of the Year. Combined, they reflect the trials and tribulations of 12 months that have seen the very fabric of our lives ripped from under us; and yet we emerge energised, enthused and even perhaps enriched.

Pantone has chosen a combination of shades to represent these feelings. Yes, Ultimate Gray (17-5104), at first glance, appears stern, solemn and even echoes back to the styles and sensibilities of the 1980s. And yet, look closer, and it provides solidity and fortitude.

Now combine those emotions with Pantone's second Colour of the Year for 2021 – Illuminating (13-0647). At first a yellow that resonates with cheerful, sparky, spring-like abandon, it offers light, vivacity and thoughts of energy.

As a single shade, Illuminating works, but combined with Ultimate Gray the end effect is, in Pantone's own words, "A story of colour that encapsulates deeper feelings of thoughtfulness with the promise of something sunny and friendly."

It is indeed a combination that can reignite your interiors – consider a statement piece such as a grey sofa, with yellow scattered cushions. Or what about an existing white or wooden room patterned with a grey rug and yellow feature wall?

Grey and yellow, together or alone, will combine with almost any colours. There is a chic harmony that blends as much as it stands out – even in the bedroom, yellow curtains can offer a feeling of light on the drabest of days; while grey walls, white skirting boards and yellow pictures present a classy combination.

In summing up, expect the Pantone Colour(s) of the Year, Ultimate Gray and Illuminating, to drop into your consciousness, guiding you to happier and more optimistic times in the weeks and months ahead.

Photo credit: designer.com, diegoibanki.com



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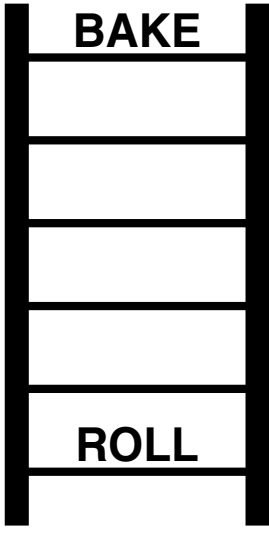
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DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Nepal's flag is the only flag in the world that doesn't have four sides
- ▶ Purple is the most uncommon colour to be used on flags
- ▶ The flag of Belize uses more colours than any other flag
- ▶ Hawaii's state flag contains the Union Jack. It is the only US state flag to include a foreign country's national flag
- ▶ There are 12 stars on the flag of Europe
- ▶ When the Queen goes to Parliament, the Royal Standard is flown from Victoria Tower
- ▶ Denmark has the oldest flag in the world, designed in 1219 and unchanged since
- ▶ South Sudan has the newest flag in the world
- ▶ The study of flags is called vexillology

WORD LADDER



BAKE

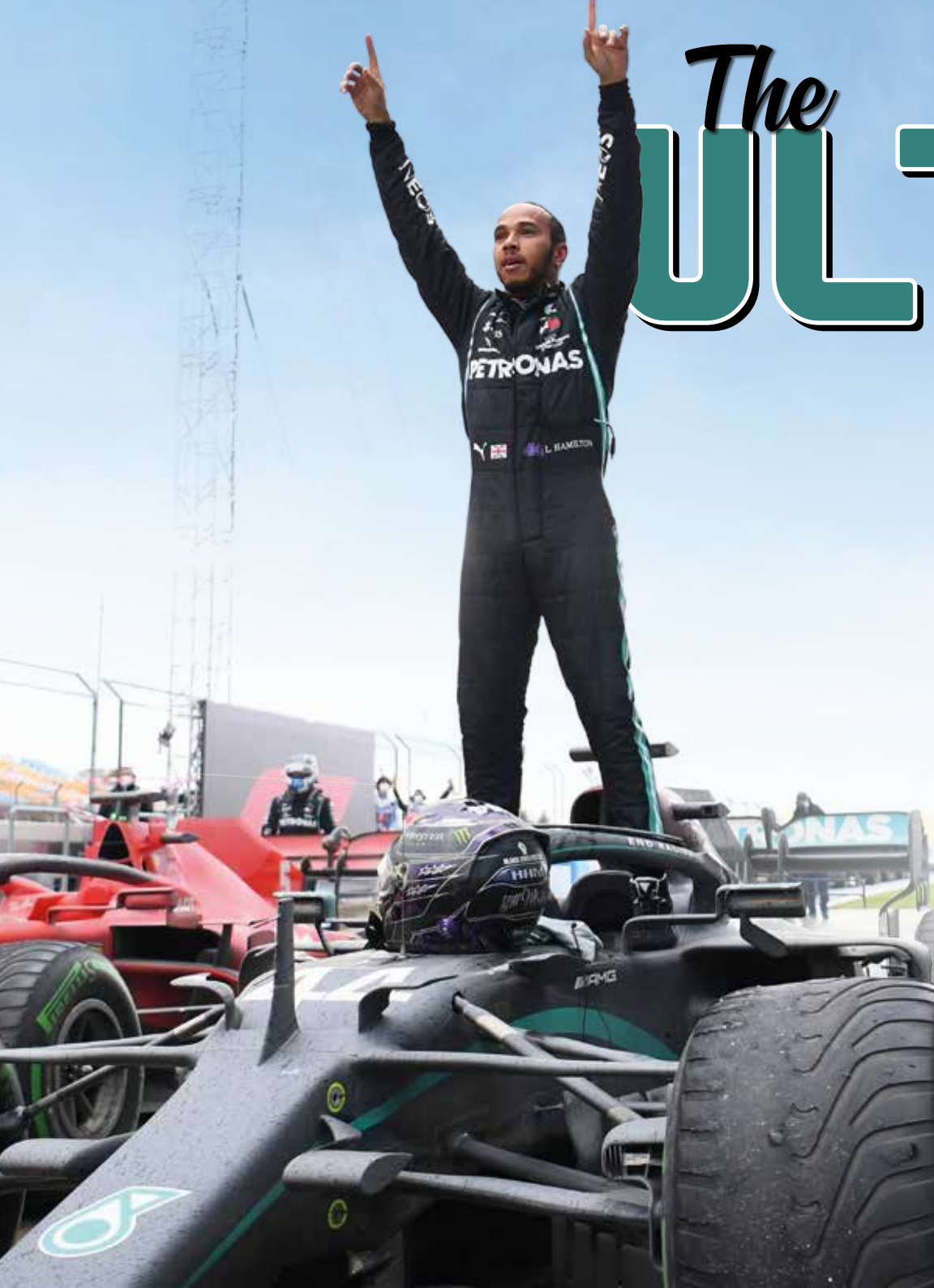
ROLL

THE AIM: Change the word at the top of the ladder one letter at a time to make the word at the bottom.

HOW TO: Change one letter on each step to make a new word. By the time you reach the end, you should have created the new word.

DO NOT rearrange the order of the letters.

TIP: There is usually more than one way to solve this puzzle.



The ULTIMATE formula

Lewis Hamilton's ascent to being the greatest F1 driver of all time

It's fair to speculate that Lewis Hamilton polarises opinion, even in the midst of being unveiled as the greatest ever Formula One racer.

His victory at the Turkish Grand Prix in the middle of November ensured the Stevenage-born speedster equalled Michael Schumacher's record of seven Drivers' Championships, having already surpassed the German's race victory total in October, in another season of unparalleled dominance. By the close of the campaign in Abu Dhabi on December 13, 2020, Hamilton's points tally was 347, a colossal 123 ahead of closest rival Valtteri Bottas.

The champ said: "To all the kids out there, dream the impossible. Seven is just unimaginable, but when you work with such a great group of people and you really trust each other, there is just no end to what you can do together. I feel like I'm only just getting started; it's really weird."

He may just be correct in that statement. At 35, the Mercedes driver has time on his side – the great Luigi Fagioli was 53 when he scored his final race win at the 1951 French Grand Prix.

Certainly, it's becoming difficult to remember a time when Hamilton's grit, speed and desire wasn't present in the sport. Many believe he truly announced himself at the British Grand Prix in 2008, driving for McLaren. Although he'd already clocked up six victories, dating back to Canada a year previously, his mastery of brutally wet driving conditions to win by more than a minute after starting fourth on the grid set a precedent where he was regarded as the driver to beat.

The world title duly arrived later that year in spectacular fashion, as on the final corner of the final lap in the final race, in Brazil, he overtook Timo Glock to snatch victory from the gearbox of defeat.

After switching to Mercedes in 2014, following a fallow period, Hamilton's synchronicity with the technicians and mechanics accelerated success beyond all expectations, failing just once, in 2016, as Nico Rosberg pipped him to title glory by just five points. The German realised he would most likely never repeat that feat, and promptly retired from the sport, never to be seen again.

Wind forward, and even finding himself struck down with COVID-19 at the start of December was not to dampen the determination and drive of Hamilton, a man who now looks towards new heights, the first of which will be making up the handful of race wins required to get to that magic total of 100.

As far as being the sport's 'Marmite man', perhaps it's Hamilton's £40million annual salary; perhaps it's envy at the showbiz lifestyle he has garnered for himself from somewhat simple beginnings; perhaps it's a generic perception across the sport that racers are only as good as the cars they ride in.

In reality, Hamilton gives short shrift to the detractors. He will discuss his knighthood, announced as part of the New Year Honours; he'll reference all those times he's arrowed across the finish line in first position; he'll note the 84 occasions he's started on the front of the grid; and, of course those seven titles. And he'll point to the fact that he is, truly, the greatest ever.

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Meet Ray Tomlinson – he is the man who transformed your life; he is the man who changed the way you interact with other people, and while he was at it, he revolutionised the business world too.



To explain, Ray was the man behind the first ever email. It was sent by the computer engineer from a machine at BBN Technologies in Massachusetts, to a different computer positioned less than 10 feet away.

While the distance covered may have been small, the action was mindbogglingly big. The then-30-year-old, through the simple action of putting a message in a file directory on a different computer, accessible when the user logged in, had provided the catalyst for connecting the whole world in a way never thought imaginable.

In the split second it took the email to arrive at its new location, the manual, functional, time-consuming and expensive way in which we conducted our business and personal lives had changed forever.

While we consider email a modern tool, it's startling to think this all happened 50 years ago. Indeed, one of the first people to send an email in the UK was the Queen, way back in 1976. It was only through the embracing of home computing in the 1980s and 1990s, and the adaption of technology that went with that, did email messaging come into the mainstream. As soon as it did, we were hooked, for life.

No more letters sluggishly sent through the post or sports journalists having to file match reports in a phone box; to fully appreciate what this technology has done for us, just consider the world without email.

These days there are almost four billion email accounts, with 300 billion messages sent every day. Ray passed away five years ago, but his legacy – and his emails – live on.

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VOICE CHANGER: It does what it says on the tin – in one instance you're an alien, the next a robot, or a bee, or a ghost. Amaze your mates with the sort of vocal dexterity previously only seen on a Sam Smith album track.



BUBBLE WRAP: Let's be honest, there are very few things those tech bods haven't tried to replicate in phone form, and the satisfaction of bubble wrap is the latest to come to the fore, with an effortless, screen-tappingly satisfying few minutes to be had by all.



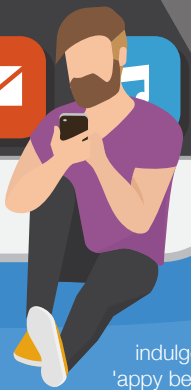
UGLY CAMERA: As we're all so charismatic, intelligent, funny and, most importantly, good looking, it's good to see things from the other side from time to time, so why not install the Ugly Camera to layer a selection of slightly unusual filters over your otherwise gorgeous demeanour.



GOOGLE OPINION REWARDS: Another cool product from that little silicon valley start-up – this Android app periodically asks you questions regarding research projects, the answers to which earn you credits that can be redeemed in the Google Play Store. A decent way to increase your phone's capabilities without spending a penny.



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JANUARY BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH: *Carnation*

If you were born in January, then your birth flower is the delicately scented and long-lasting carnation. Commonly gifted on Mother's Day, carnations are one of the easiest flower varieties to care for.

WHAT DOES A CARNATION SYMBOLISE?

Carnations come in many shades, and each colour has a different meaning:

- > **LIGHT RED** carnations symbolise admiration
- > **DARK RED** carnations represent deep love and affection
- > **WHITE** carnations are used to convey purity and luck
- > **PINK** carnations are used to show gratitude as well as to remember the deceased
- > **YELLOW** carnations convey disappointment and rejection
- > **PURPLE** carnations stand for unpredictability

WHAT DOES THIS BIRTH FLOWER SAY ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

If your birth flower is the carnation, you are said to be fiercely loyal and have unrivalled love for your family and friends. You are also strongly motivated and will work hard to gain a position of power in your career.

HOW CAN I GROW CARNATIONS?

Carnations are relatively easy to grow, although they do need between four and six hours of direct sunlight a day. For best results, plant in drained soil that is slightly alkaline and fertilise regularly. Tall varieties may need support to hold up their stems as they grow. You can grow carnations in flower beds or in containers such as pots.

DO CARNATIONS COME BACK YEAR AFTER YEAR?

Carnations come in annual, biennial and perennial types, so depending on the amount of space you have, you are guaranteed to be able to find a variety to fit your garden. Perennial carnation seeds should be planted in late autumn to early spring and annual carnation seeds can be sown directly in the ground from April to May or in shelter from as early as March.



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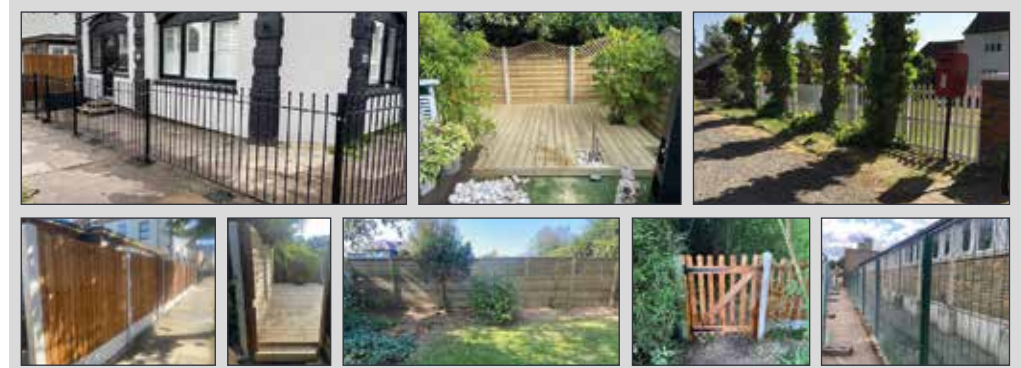


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GARDENING



Horticulture Heroes:

There's nothing quite like learning building knowledge from the ground up, and for a young Ellie Harrison, the wildlife, ecology and wide-open spaces of Zimbabwe provided a fertile and expansive canvas on which to construct her career.

a 100ft lawn or something as simple as a flower bed, the point is that our spaces have all the life and variety that nature and the countryside provide."

From kids' TV to wildlife programming and on to the BBC, stopping off along the way at the Chelsea Flower Show, the now-43-year-old's focus has always been in the embracing of the natural world, even in home surroundings.

At the heart of it is having the right platforms for birds, bees and insects. That will stimulate the impact of genuine wildlife in an area that might be bereft of anything noticeable.

"I'm not sure where the phrase 'wildlife gardening' came from, but it requires little explanation," says the presenter and broadcaster. "As much as I admire the ingenuity and craft so many of us invest in our green spaces at home, I sometimes feel it is a look that can be a bit too contrived and planned.

"It's a case of making natural and organic decisions to decorate your space. Instead of using a dull wooden fence, invest in a living boundary that can feature bamboo, twine, flowers, scent and berries."

"Wildlife gardening is really about embracing living landscapes. It doesn't matter if you're talking about

Similarly, a pond can be used to harvest natural life such as newts, tadpoles, frogs, toads and insects, rather than fish imported in from the local pet shop.

"The exciting thing about wildlife gardening is the creation of a world that grows and evolves in front of you, and all by itself. The phrase 'how nature intended' never seemed so pertinent."

Photo credit: bbc.co.uk

ELLIE HARRISON

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Isn't it funny,
how a bear
likes honey?



On January 18, 1882, A. A. Milne, the creator of Winnie the Pooh, a character cherished by children and adults alike, was born. To celebrate this skilled storyteller, January 18 has become known as National Winnie the Pooh Day. As well as being fun to read, these iconic stories offer some important life lessons that resonate just as well today as they did back then.

"What day is it?" said Pooh. "It's today," said Piglet. "My favourite day", responded Pooh.

As well as teaching the importance of seizing the day, this sweet correspondence between Pooh and Piglet helps to promote resilience and encourages children to put aside their fears and do things anyway.



"Hallo!" said Tigger. "I've found somebody just like me. I thought I was the only one of them."

When children are as young as two, they start to notice that people are different, so it is important that they learn to recognise and celebrate these differences, both in themselves and in others.

"A little consideration, a little thought for others, makes all the difference." (Eeyore)

Although known for being gloomy and depressed, Eeyore does sometimes give out little nuggets of wisdom, such as the advice above. Emotional literacy is crucial in your child's development and this life lesson teaches them the importance of being kind to others.



"Pooh!" whispered Piglet. "Yes, Piglet?" "Nothing," said Piglet. "I just wanted to be sure of you."

A life lesson that most adults today could benefit from, the act of being present in your children's lives, away from the distraction of work and technology, is sometimes all they need to feel loved and connected to you.



MOTORING



SMART CAR

TELEMATICS AND SMARTBOX INSURANCE ...WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WORKS

Nobody likes 'average'. Average is plain, boring, middle of the road, dull. And in terms of motor insurance, if you're an extremely safe driver, 'average' means you're paying the same as a driver who is 'averagely safe'... or, worse still, unsafe. In short, you are subsidising someone else's tendency to, over the course of time, perhaps break the speed limit, undertake, be aggressive, and all the other things that lead to accidents which, in turn, lead to car insurance costs being as high as they are.

That's where telematics insurance comes in. Using the technology found in a smartbox (actually just a small device that plugs in below your steering wheel), this clever piece of tech will measure how well you drive.

In other words, the days of having to pay premiums based on the 'average driver' are no more – what you pay is directly related to how safely you take corners, to how much you respect road conditions

and to how conscious you are of other road users. It especially factors in how far you drive over a period of time, as sensible logic suggests that the more miles a motorist clocks up the more likely they are to be involved in an accident.

When you apply for telematics insurance you'll have to provide information regarding where your car is parked, when in the day you usually drive, the types of roads you use and approximate annual mileage. All being well, you'll be rewarded with an initial monthly cost that's much lower than standard insurance.

You'll encounter few problems if you stick to your promise of driving safely and stay within your mileage quota.

However, be warned: from hard braking to speeding to driving too many miles, telematics insurance may well cost you more in the long run if you fail to keep your motoring promises.



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Are you READY TO GO SOBER?

Although January may feel like the worst possible time to try to give up your favourite tippie (isn't this month depressing enough?), you may be surprised at how great you feel after cutting out alcohol for just one month.

What to expect when you give up alcohol...

WEEK ONE

Undeniably the most challenging week in your booze-free month, you may experience some unwanted side effects in the first seven days, such as headaches and intense sugar cravings, especially if you are a heavy drinker. That being said, you will also start to see the positive effects of giving up alcohol, including: Better decision-making | More energy | An improved sleeping pattern

WEEK TWO

After two weeks without alcohol, you will continue to enjoy the health benefits listed above, as well as a few new ones, such as: Reduction in acid reflux as your stomach lining becomes normalised | Weight loss | Better mental health

WEEK THREE

As you are now past the halfway mark, the effects of not drinking will start to contribute to your long-term health, with benefits including: Improved vision | Better kidney health | A reduction in blood pressure, which can lessen your risk of future health problems, such as heart disease

WEEK FOUR

The final week of your no-booze challenge and the effects on your health will be apparent for everyone to see and will include: Better-looking skin | Reduced dandruff and eczema | Up to 15 per cent less fat in your liver

IS DRY JANUARY WORTH IT?

Although Dry January has become increasingly popular in recent years, is it really worth it in terms of your long-term health if you continue to drink for the other 11 months of the year?

According to Alcohol Change UK, yes it is, with this challenge forcing you to confront how much you drink and to take notice of the harm it can cause.



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MIDDLE OF THE LOAD

Fight the flab after 40 with these steps to prevent midlife weight gain

Cut the calories: Though you may feel as active as ever, your metabolism unfortunately is not as efficient as it once was. However, cutting between 250 and 300 calories per day is enough to keep your weight where you want it to be.

Walk it off: Burning fat only requires a slightly elevated heart rate, which means exercising for a longish period while being slightly out of breath is what you need to aim for. So ditch the gruelling runs and aim instead for a brisk walk or swim.

Use your gut instinct: Beat the bloat with healthy bacteria, best found in natural yogurts and fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi and kefir.

Exercise before your eggs: Studies have shown that working out before breakfast can burn up to double the calories – ideal for those who prefer to do their sun salutations as it rises at dawn.

Go nuts: We all know that fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet, but to maintain blood sugar and control weight you need to be getting plenty of protein too. From a handful of almonds to a bowlful of lentils, or even just a glass of milk, this is one healthy habit you'd be nuts not to try.

Consider HRT: In addition to easing the side effects of the menopause, there is evidence to suggest that hormone replacement therapy can help with weight distribution, which means less fat around the dreaded middle.

Join the resistance: You might balk at the suggestion of using weights in your workouts, yet resistance training is the best way to replace muscle lost through ageing. Pilates, yoga, squats and exercises using small dumbbells are all excellent and enjoyable ways to achieve that toned look.



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Men's skin toning & tightening after one treatment

Men's stomach after one treatment

Clients can see improvements after three sessions. The recommended course is six treatments, however some clients may need additional sessions depending on the individual.



WHAT IS RADIO FREQUENCY

Radio frequency is used to improve skin elasticity, remove cellulite, renew muscles and enhance skin rejuvenation by applying electromagnetic high frequency waves.

The goal of radio frequency treatment is to tighten the skin of the body and dilated pores, smooth fine lines and wrinkles. Collagen and elastin are boosted, cellulite is removed.

Loose skin, wrinkles and fine lines may give away one's age or make them appear older than they are. Fortunately, skin elasticity can be restored using radio frequency therapy. Collagen takes 14-21 days to synthesise, therefore you may see the best results in the 3rd/4th treatment.

RADIO FREQUENCY / CAVITATION BENEFITS

- ✦ Fat Reduction ✦ Cellulite Removal
- ✦ Boosts Collagen & Elastin Process
- ✦ Skin Tightening & Toning ✦ Skin Rejuvenation
- ✦ Improves Skin Texture
- ✦ Smooths Fine Lines & Wrinkles

AREAS TREATED

- ✦ Buttocks ✦ Stomach ✦ Chest ✦ Legs ✦ Arms
- ✦ Face ✦ Hands ✦ Décolletage ✦ Mummy Tummy



'90s HAIR revival



BEAUTY

From Jennifer Aniston's boho beach waves to Victoria Beckham's bob to Winona Ryder's pixie cut, one of the biggest hair trends of 2021 will be the return of hairstyles from the '90s. Think new year, new do.

THE LIVED-IN LOOK

One of the greatest things about the '90s was the effortlessly cool and laid-back style that spread across the nation, in terms of both fashion and haircuts. Spring 2021 will see hairstyles that feel less structured and more lived-in. Whether you go short or long, ask your hairdresser for a natural-looking, low-maintenance cut.

THE BOB

Although the bob has been a strong and unwavering hair trend throughout 2020, next year will see the return of the classic '90s bob. For those with straight hair, opt for a blunt and unstructured bob that is cut to chin level and tucked behind the ear.

THE BOXY CURL

If your hair is naturally curly, then 2021 is all about short and boxy shapes for added bounce. Avoid a straight cut and instead ask for layers and a light fringe. This look is all about texture and volume so you may want to invest in a good-quality volumising spray for added oomph.

THE SUPER-SHORT PIXIE

If you are feeling particularly bold and daring in 2021, you may want to try the super-short pixie cut. Or, if you are ready to take the ultimate plunge, you could even choose a buzz-cut pixie loved by the likes of Kate Hudson and Cara Delevingne.

THE FACE-FRAMING LAYERED LOOK

This look was fairly popular this year but is only set to get stronger in 2021 and beyond. In fact, you won't be able to go five minutes on Instagram without some face-framing plaits popping up on your feed.

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LET IT OUT

Simple daily stretches that will transform both body and mind

Stretching is perhaps one of the simplest actions we make as humans, often without even thinking about it.

While great for suppleness, alertness, injury prevention and a break from long hours in a car or at a desk, it can even work as a weight-loss tool, and will immediately set you en route to daily calorie deficit. Here are five stretches that can transform body and mind:

FOR THE TORSO

The so-called Cobra Stretch is a simple push-up that elevates the torso from a lying start. By extending your top half and raising your neck, chest and head as high as possible, you're creating great elasticity through the body.

FOR THE STOMACH

Many of us have performed this knee-to-chest exercise, which serves the purpose of getting the legs on the move and the knee joints bending (or cracking).

FOR THE SPINE

Twisting the spine to promote flexibility and movement is key, and is done by lying on your side. A good spine twist is great for strengthening the vertebrae, as well as firming up muscle mass around your stomach.

FOR THE BACK

A simple back stretch can make us feel a million dollars, with the energy coming from the middle of the back. Extend the stretch by moving onto tiptoes and pushing your hands and fingers upwards towards the heavens.

FOR THE NECK AND SHOULDERS

And to complete an extremely effective set of manoeuvres, combine neck stretches – which use a hand on the head to gently pull the sides of the neck tight – with a shoulder movement, linking one arm under the other in order to feel a tight, satisfying strain across the back.

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BEAUTY

The best skincare ingredients for your skin

With so many lotions, potions, serums and supposed skin saviours, it can be a nightmare trying to decide what ingredients you should be looking for in your skincare products.

Luckily for you, we have rounded up the best skincare ingredients for 2021 based on the most common skincare problems.

1. Cica Cream – Best for sensitive skin

Cica cream, also known as centella asiatica, was traditionally used to heal wounds, but can now be found in moisturisers and serums owing to its ability to restore skin that is affected by redness and sensitivity. Rich in anti-inflammatories, antioxidants and antibacterial properties, this cream can also help prevent future damage from external environmental stressors.



2. Salicylic Acid – Best for acne sufferers

Salicylic acid is known for its ability to deeply exfoliate the skin and keep your pores clear, so using skincare products that contain salicylic acid can dramatically help reduce breakouts. This acid is also used in higher concentrations to treat acne scars, sun damage and age spots.

3. Retinol – Best for ageing skin

Who doesn't want to wake up with younger-looking skin? Hailed by skin experts as the anti-ageing miracle worker, retinol works by increasing collagen production, as well as increasing the rate of skin cell turnover. Added to face creams, eye creams and serums, retinol can improve your skin's texture, minimise fine lines and even out skin tone.



4. Glycerine – Best for dry skin

Glycerine, sometimes referred to as glycerin or glycerol, is a naturally occurring substance that acts as a humectant to draw moisture to the skin. This skin-saving ingredient is also a great cleanser, helping to remove dirt and oil without stripping your skin.

5. Hyaluronic Acid – Best for dull or damaged skin

Becoming increasingly popular as an ingredient in face-care products, hyaluronic acid is a gel-like substance that has the unique ability to retain moisture. Skin benefits include enhanced hydration, the prevention of wrinkles and healing properties that can reduce the appearance of scars.

NB: Most active ingredients take at least two months to show results, so be patient.



GO NUTS!

With Shrove Tuesday fast approaching, what better time to discover a new tasty topping for your pancakes?

Check out our own version of a well-known hazelnut cocoa spread which is half the calories, vegan and packed full of healthy fats and vitamins.

Super Healthy Homemade Hazelnut Spread

WHAT YOU NEED:

240g raw hazelnuts | 1½ tbsp pure vanilla extract | ¼ cup cocoa powder | ¼ cup pure maple syrup or unrefined sugar | ¼ tsp salt | ½ cup vegan milk (or normal milk if you do not need a vegan recipe) | 2 tsp oil

HOW TO MAKE:

- > Set oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6
- > Roast hazelnuts for 6–8 minutes
- > Leave to cool slightly and then rub off skins
- > Blend the nuts in a food processor until they are the consistency of butter
- > Add all the other ingredients and blend until smooth

Not just for pancakes, try using your homemade hazelnut spread in these yummy

recipes that the whole family will love.

Hazelnut Hot Chocolate

All you need to create this dangerously addictive hot chocolate is cocoa powder, milk and some hazelnut spread. Simply mix all the ingredients together and pop in the microwave for 2 minutes.

Caramel Cream Nutty Chocolate Lollies

The perfect little treat for tiny hands, simply dissolve 70g of hazelnut spread in a pan over boiling water and set aside half. Pour a thin layer into small, round silicone moulds and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Take out and place a hazelnut-sized piece of salted caramel cream in each mould and cover with remaining spread. Place a lolly stick in each and refrigerate for a further 5 hours.

Nutty Iced Biscuits or Cake

If you are bored with your usual icing, why not use some hazelnut spread instead? Just warm some of the nutty mixture in the microwave for 10–20 seconds and then gently spread over biscuits or cakes. It makes a great cake filler too.



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Surprisingly FREEZABLE foods

Whether you are trying to save money, visit the local supermarket less or you are simply fed up with wasting food, you may be surprised to find out just how many different foods you can freeze.

Bananas

A firm favourite in many households, bananas are cheap and cheerful, yet sadly they do not last very long. Luckily, over-ripe and fresh bananas can be frozen, either with or without skin, and used at a later date.

Potatoes

If you buy your potatoes in bulk to save money but you are often left with half a bag of "sprouters", then you will be pleased to hear that you can freeze the humble potato. Simply peel, blanch in boiling water for five minutes, put in a bowl of iced water and leave to cool. Then freeze in airtight bags.

Milk

If you hate waking up in the morning only to realise you've run out of milk, then buying extra and freezing it is the ideal solution. However, milk does expand when frozen, so make sure you decant it into a larger container first. Once defrosted, mix it and consume within three days.

Cheese

You may not want to freeze cheese that you plan to serve with crackers as it can become crumbly. However, cheese cut into chunks or grated, placed in airtight bags and frozen, is perfect for sprinkling on dishes that will be heated, such as lasagne or cauliflower cheese.

Avocados

Avocados are extremely nutritious, yet they can be expensive. Fortunately, if you see them on offer, you can buy several and freeze to consume at a later date. Cut into pieces or mash them before squeezing lemon juice on the flesh to retain colour and placing in resealable bags. Best for use as an ingredient rather than eaten raw as freezing can change the texture.





Are you addicted to SUGAR?

Did you know that adults are advised to have no more than 30g of free sugars per day (the equivalent of seven cubes)? To put that into perspective, a single can of Coca-Cola has 35g of sugar, 5g more than your total allowance for the day. So, are you addicted to sugar? Let's find out.

AM I ADDICTED TO SUGAR?

If you are worried about your sugar consumption or you think you may be addicted to the white stuff, then you should look out for the following most common sugar addiction symptoms:

- Headaches
- Feeling tired or lethargic
- Intense sugar cravings
- Muscle pain
- Nausea
- Bloating

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BREAK A SUGAR ADDICTION?

You will be pleased to hear that you can break a sugar addiction in as little as 10 days. This is because the more sugar you eat, the more you crave it. However, once you stop, or cut back, you will find you want it less and less each day.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF GIVING UP SUGAR?

There are many health benefits to giving up sugar, including:

- Increased energy levels
- Better ability to focus
- Enhanced mood
- Decreased inflammation
- Less stomach fat
- Better-looking skin
- Less risk of tooth decay
- Weight loss

TOP TIPS TO HELP STOP CRAVINGS AND SATISFY YOUR SWEET TOOTH...

Going cold turkey when trying to give up free sugars (sugars that are added to food, rather than naturally occurring) can be a challenge.

Fortunately, there are ways to make the process easier:

- Eat three meals and two healthy snacks a day
- Go for a run or a brisk walk
- Eat fruit in the morning on an empty stomach
- Focus on protein at every meal
- Try a fibre- and protein-rich chia seed pudding
- Chew sugar-free gum



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QUIRKY OVERNIGHT STAYS TO ENJOY IN THE UK

BOATHOUSES

Not quite boasting the seclusion of a desert island, a number of former boathouses and pumping rooms have, however, been converted into cool little overnight abodes. The Whitby Boathouse, sleeping two, features a narrow bridge separating guests from the not-so-distant 'mainland'.

BUSES

With original features such as iconic winding stairs, original seats and even the steering wheel handily in place in what is now a downstairs bathroom, converted double-decker buses give travel fanatics the ultimate experience... just don't expect it to stick to the timetable (not that it ever did).

PLANES

Fancy the thrill of flight without the faff of the airport? Look no further than The Jet Star. Tucked away in Redberth, Pembrokeshire, this little-known Welsh wonder was originally a first-class private plane from the 1970s. Grounded, it now sleeps up to four people – you don't even need to remember your passport.

FIELDS

Wherever you wish to roam in the British countryside, you are sure to be within reach of a traditional shepherd's hut. Originally an essential place for farmhands to seek refuge from inclement weather, the advent of the Airbnb revolution has seen them transformed into cosy and sometimes luxurious boltholes – the ideal way to bask in the beauty of nature without having to pitch a tent.

TRAINS

Finally, for train fanatics, how about staying in a converted restaurant carriage? Rather than slumming it on bumpy rails, this static wagon, positioned overlooking the Rother Valley Railway in Kent, provides more room than you'd expect, and dates right the way back to use during the Second World War.



Photo credit: www.lovewhitby.com, coolstays.com, applecamphn.co.uk, coolcamping.com, railwaytravels.co.uk



The PROPERTY Bug?

HOW COVID-19 HAS TRANSFORMED NOT JUST OUR LIVES, BUT THE PROPERTY MARKET TOO

While so much of our COVID-19 focus in 2020 was on health, employment and income, the pandemic's impact on the property market has been extreme, with further fluctuations due over the next few months as the industry reflects the variable conditions we find ourselves living under.

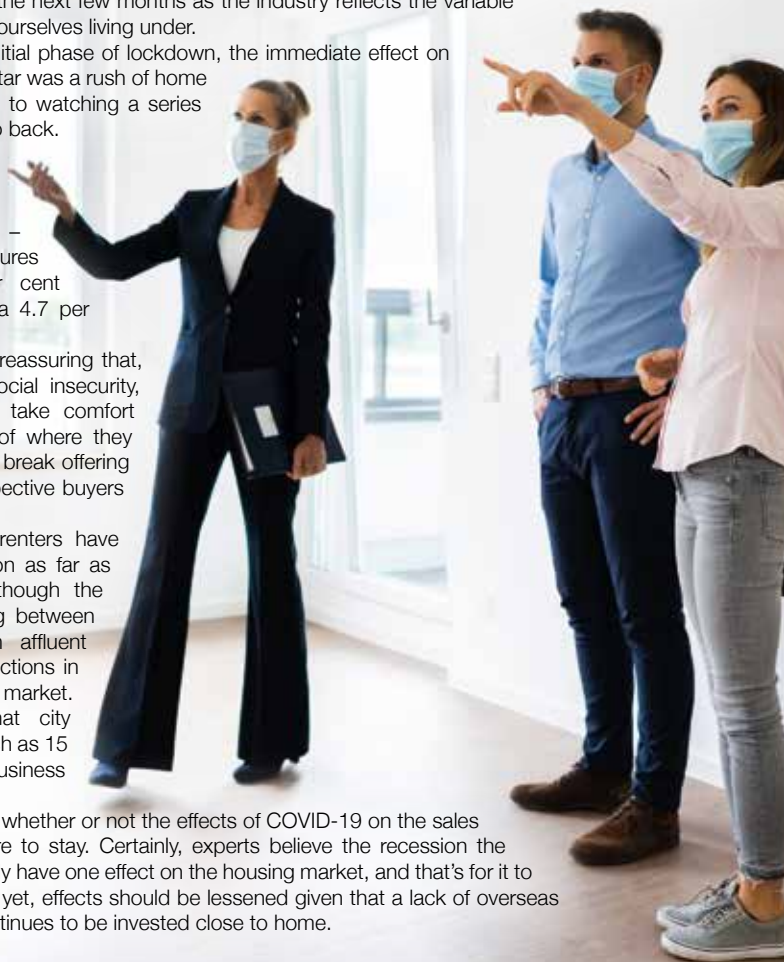
Certainly in the initial phase of lockdown, the immediate effect on our bricks and mortar was a rush of home improvements akin to watching a series of *DIY SOS* back to back.

Sure enough, the Land Registry – generally considered the best guide to house prices in the UK – published September figures that indicated a 1.7 per cent month-on-month rise and a 4.7 per cent increase year on year.

For many, then, it's been reassuring that, through a time of great social insecurity, homeowners can at least take comfort from the increasing value of where they reside, with the stamp duty break offering a further incentive for prospective buyers to go in with higher bids.

And at the same time, renters have enjoyed increased protection as far as tenancy conditions go, although the market finds itself diverging between an increase in rentals in affluent areas and fewer new instructions in the bottom portion of the market. Research also shows that city centre lets are down as much as 15 per cent as some urban business areas become ghost towns.

It all leaves us speculating whether or not the effects of COVID-19 on the sales and lettings market are here to stay. Certainly, experts believe the recession the economy is suffering can only have one effect on the housing market, and that's for it to follow suit into decline. And yet, effects should be lessened given that a lack of overseas travel means the pound continues to be invested close to home.



ON THE MONEY

Financial advice from our financial adviser Karyn Vogel
Contact 01277 654153



GETTING FINANCIALLY FIT FOR A NEW WAY OF LIFE

With millions of people affected financially by the pandemic, it's possible that your finances no longer match your lifestyle and needs, so take some time to review your situation to keep on track.

such as income protection and life insurance should be considered. If you already have policies in place, review them to ensure they still offer the most suitable cover.

BUDGET AND DEBT PLANNING

Regularly review your income and outgoings, particularly if your circumstances have changed. Also make sure you prioritise clearing any debt you have, including credit card balances.

LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Don't let short-term events divert you from plans for the future. Investing into a pension, no matter what age you are, is imperative.

If you have any questions, talk to us. We can help you see the bigger picture, weigh up all your options and make a balanced plan for your individual needs.

BUILD A FINANCIAL SAFETY NET

Start saving asap. If you have been fortunate enough to save during lockdown, channel some into a savings account, considerable peace of mind can be gained from having a minimum of three to six months' income as a buffer.

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Remembering DIEGO



SPORT

A hero of the game, a villain to himself

The gap between hero and villain has perhaps never been better exemplified – in sporting terms, at least – than through the life of Diego Maradona.

When the Argentine departed us on November 25, football, sport and the world as a cultural sponge lost someone whose notoriety was as decorated as his talent.

In the space of four short minutes in the Estadio Azteca, in Mexico City, on June 22, 1986, Maradona showed the two sides of his character in the sort of perfect juxtaposition usually reserved for a Shakespeare play. The tragedy came first – that ‘hand of God’ moment that we all know, even if few of us, now, here in 2021, actually saw it happen live.

And then, the comedy, even if it was again England’s footballers being derided, as a dancing, pirouetting, sauntering, bulldozing run through the Three Lions’ defence rubbed salt in our wounds,

while offering up a perfect apology to that same deity for the forward’s earlier misdemeanour.

When that higher force claimed the 60-year-old in November, football fans the world over began to ponder again the best ever – Puskás, Pelé, Ronaldo, Messi. Of course, Maradona would never enter into such debate.

He may have led an average Argentina side to World Cup glory in 1986, and an even flatter version of themselves to the final four years later. He may have performed miracles in guiding unfancied, unfashionable Napoli to Serie A success in Italy. And in later life as drugs, gangs, sex workers and other lurid temptations possessed a man whose only passion, really and truly, was to kick a ball, he may have lost sight entirely of those dusty, poverty-stricken streets in Buenos Aires where he grew up.

And yet, through it all he stayed true to himself: ‘I am black and white... I’ll never be grey.’

Photo credit: Carlo Fumagalli/AP/Shutterstock

NATIONAL PULL A SICKIE DAY ON



According to UK statistics, the first Monday of February is the day when employees are most likely to pull a sickie. Although excuses may be limited this time round, that doesn't mean we can't take a look at some of the more inventive reasons that people have come up with over the years. You can't make this stuff up!

“My only pair of work trousers is in the wash”

Not the best excuse, as what would you do if your employer simply told you to come in your casual clothes?

“It's my dog's birthday and I need to arrange a party for him”

Even though we are a nation of pet lovers, we can't see too many bosses accepting this far-fetched fabrication.

“My grandmother poisoned me with her ham”

Yes, somebody really did use this as a reason why they hadn't turned up for work. Although, to be honest, this might just be crazy enough to actually work.

“I'm too drunk to drive”

Although this may actually be true, we are not sure that this reason would go down too well with HR.

“I can't come in today, the show I've been watching just released a new series”

Another truthful explanation, and to be fair, we've all been there. Damn you, Netflix!

How you should call in sick to work

- > Contact your employer as soon as possible
- > Keep your reason brief
- > Be as helpful as possible
- > Make sure you speak to the right person
- > If you are struggling with your mental health, be honest and say so, but you are not required to go into details
- > Only text if your employer has previously okayed this method of calling in sick
- > Consider remote working if you feel able to



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