

# Internal Communications

**thinking**  
differently

  
Sunderland  
City Council

# Introduction

- **Establishing a rhythm**
- **Employee voice**
- **Reward and recognition**
- **Internal comms developments**

# Methods of internal communication



## ALL STAFF EMAILS

Updates and important information  
Covid updates



## COMMUNICATOR APP

Instant messages sent by Internal Communications via Microsoft Teams  
To be used for prompts / reminders / informal communications



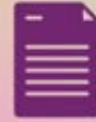
## TEAMS

Used widely across the organisation by all employees who have AD accounts to instant message and collaborate  
Those who wish to send emails to large groups will be encouraged to use Teams



## MONTHLY STAFF NEWSLETTERS

Monthly staff newsletters sent to all employees with the latest updates, news, initiatives, good news stories, case studies and events within the organisation



## MANAGER'S BRIEFING

Fortnightly comms sent to all managers within the council with line management duty with key messages and updates



## YAMMER

An internal social media network for council workers to collaborative, have discussions, ask questions and innovate.  
Employees can create groups and use Yammer to post their own content, instead of emailing large groups



## THE HUB

Our employee intranet. News section and homepage managed by Internal Communications with all the latest news and invites and important information  
Employees can request information to be shared on this platform

# 2020 the year in numbers

**MONTHLY**

Manager Briefing's  
sent to managers

**31**

Editions of Workwise:bite-size  
sent to employees

**DAILY**

Covid-19 Comms sent  
employees during  
the first lockdown

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launched

**Continuing into 2021 with  
regular comms**

# Our newsletters – Microsoft Sway

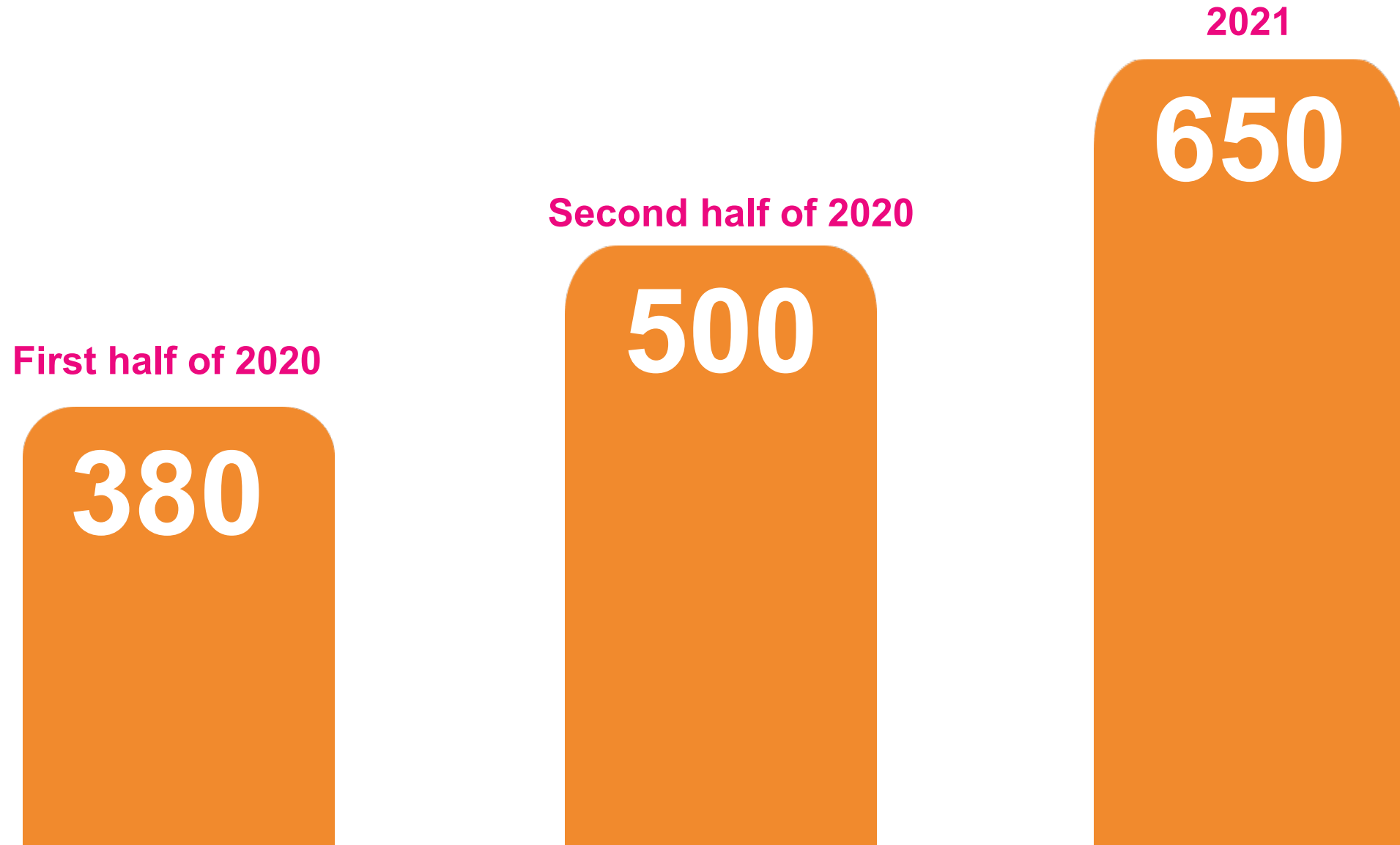
Microsoft 365's free app, **Sway**, is a great engagement tool for **sharing information organisation wide** (Covid updates/wellness info/news/incentives and other updates). We introduced Sway for internal staff newsletters in November 2020. Prior to launching Sway, **Campaign Monitor** was used to send these newsletters in an email format. Manager's briefing was also transferred over to Sway mid 2021.

## Launching Sway allowed us all to work more efficiently for several reasons:

- It is **connected with everyone's Microsoft 365** – this means, it works really well with all the other O365 apps (Forms, Stream for adding videos)
- We **can include more content from around the council** – i.e. share more good news stories, local initiatives, competitions, updates (Covid) etc.
- It is **less restrictive** for users and for editors – you can have anything in it, anywhere and you can view it from any device if you are logged into your O365 account
- We can also continue to share information with staff who do not have corporate email addresses

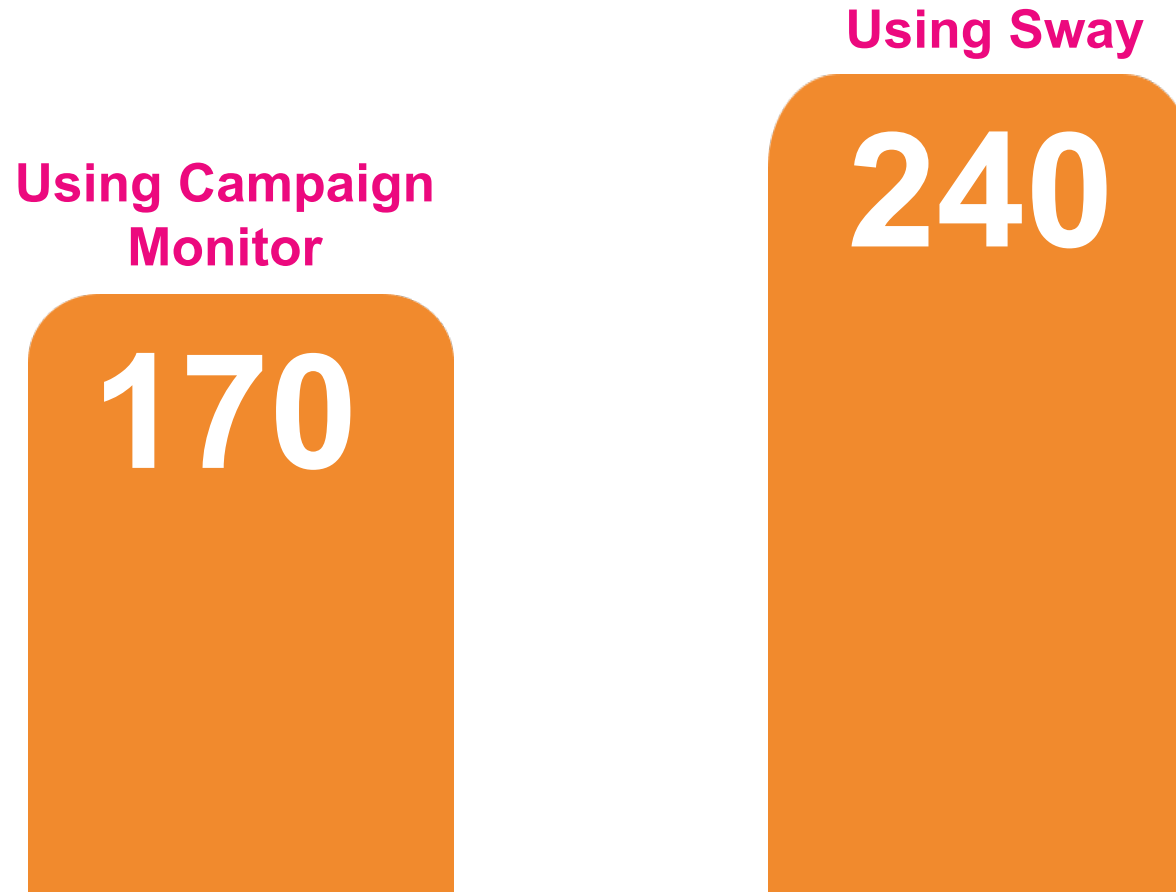
# Monthly average reads

(WorkWise: bite-size newsletter)



# Average reads

(Manager's briefing)





# Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams was implemented in 2020 and employees were encouraged to use this tool to **chat** and **collaborate** with each other. It has been an **instrumental tool during the pandemic** and will continue to do so, in regards to staying connected with one another.

With Teams being an every day norm for most employees, the use of '**Communicator App**' was introduced mid 2021, to **broadcast messages** to all **SCC** and **SCAS** employees.

This also helps with email fatigue, and creates an extra channel of communication for the less formal messaging, albeit important. For example, wellbeing comms.

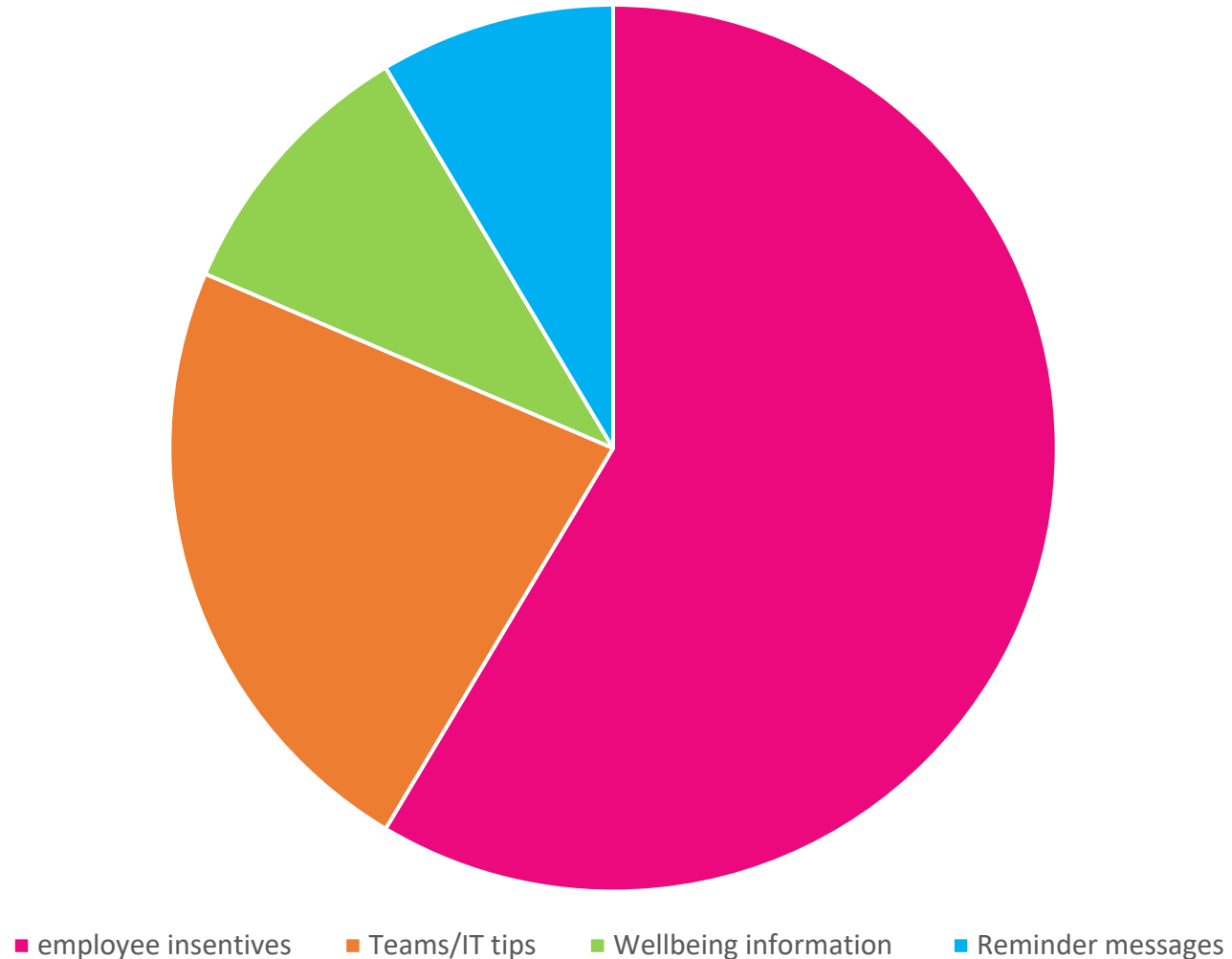
# The stats

**3,000**

messages are sent in less than one minute to SCC and SCAS employees

We cannot yet tell if the messages are read, but those who are actively using Teams should see any messages sent

**The most engaged with messages**



# Email

Regular all staff emails are still used to communicate with all employees. They are either sent via Internal Communications, COVID comms or Patrick Melia.

- **Internal Communications emails**: important information/all staff event invites
- **COVID comms**: updates and important information regarding Covid
- **Patrick Melia**: important business updates/news/thank you messages

During the first lockdown, daily emails were sent to all employees via COVID comms and they have continued to be sent as and when required.




COVID-comms

To COVID-comms

Retention Policy 90 Days Mailbox Item Retention (90 days)

Expires 20/01/2022

 This message was sent with High importance.



Reply



Reply All



Forward



Fri 22/10/2021 14:28

Dear colleague,

Covid infection rates are rising locally and across the country.

You can watch the latest video from Gerry Taylor, Director of Public Health who talks about the [current Covid picture in Sunderland](#).

Cases are rising across all age groups and it is a stark reminder that Covid is still with us.

In order to make sure our council services and buildings are as safe as possible for staff we would like to remind you of the current guidelines we have in place.

Staff should continue to work from home where possible. Those who are coming into the workplace should continue to observe the one-way systems in council buildings and wear face coverings in communal areas and vehicles. You can find further [Covid employee guidance on the hub here](#).

Vaccination continues to be our best defence against Covid and we have latest information about the vaccine programme and details about latest walk in clinics on our website [here](#).

By continuing to take these steps together we can help protect ourselves and others.

# The Hub

TH

The Hub Home

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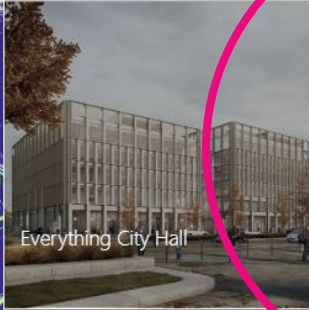
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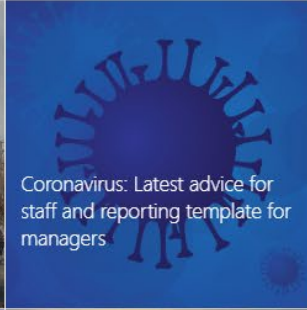
COP26 - 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference

Find out what it's about


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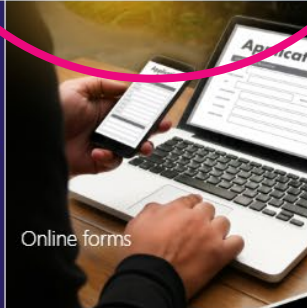
Everything City Hall



Coronavirus: Latest advice for staff and reporting template for managers



smarter together agile  
**thinking**  
Sunderland collaboratively digitally



Online forms

Summer join the chat

Quick links

## Staff information: Coronavirus

The health and wellbeing of our staff and residents is our top priority. We are continuing to follow advice from Public Health England, and from Government, and are taking all the precautionary action necessary to protect our staff and residents and help safeguard services.

Information for Managers:

- [Coronavirus Guidance](#)
- [Critical worker letter](#)

Information for all staff:

- [COVID-19 staff testing guidance](#)
- [Daily emails](#)
- [COVID Weekly updates](#)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- [Working location and leave](#)
- [Agile working](#)
- [Wellbeing](#)
- [Health and Safety](#)
- [Staff redeployment information](#)
- [Temporary workplace - car mileage claims](#)
- [Vulnerable person return to work risk assessment](#)
- [COVID-19 task based risk assessment template](#)
- [COVID-19 Premises specific risk assessment template](#)

There is a lot of false information online. Please follow only official advice and guidance:

- The latest information from the NHS is available at [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19)
- We also have a page on our website [www.sunderland.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/coronavirus) which will be updated regularly with information about how the latest developments are impacting residents and businesses in Sunderland. This also includes information for staff [www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/17063/Council-services-buildings-and-staff](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/17063/Council-services-buildings-and-staff). This information is on our external website as not all of our staff have access to the Hub. Please pass this information to any of your colleagues who cannot access the Hub
- We have information on [financial support and money advice](#)
- Please also follow the councils social media channels for latest information. Facebook: [@SunderlandUKOfficial](#) Twitter: [@SunderlandUK](#)

If you have any specific questions, please contact your line manager in the first instance.

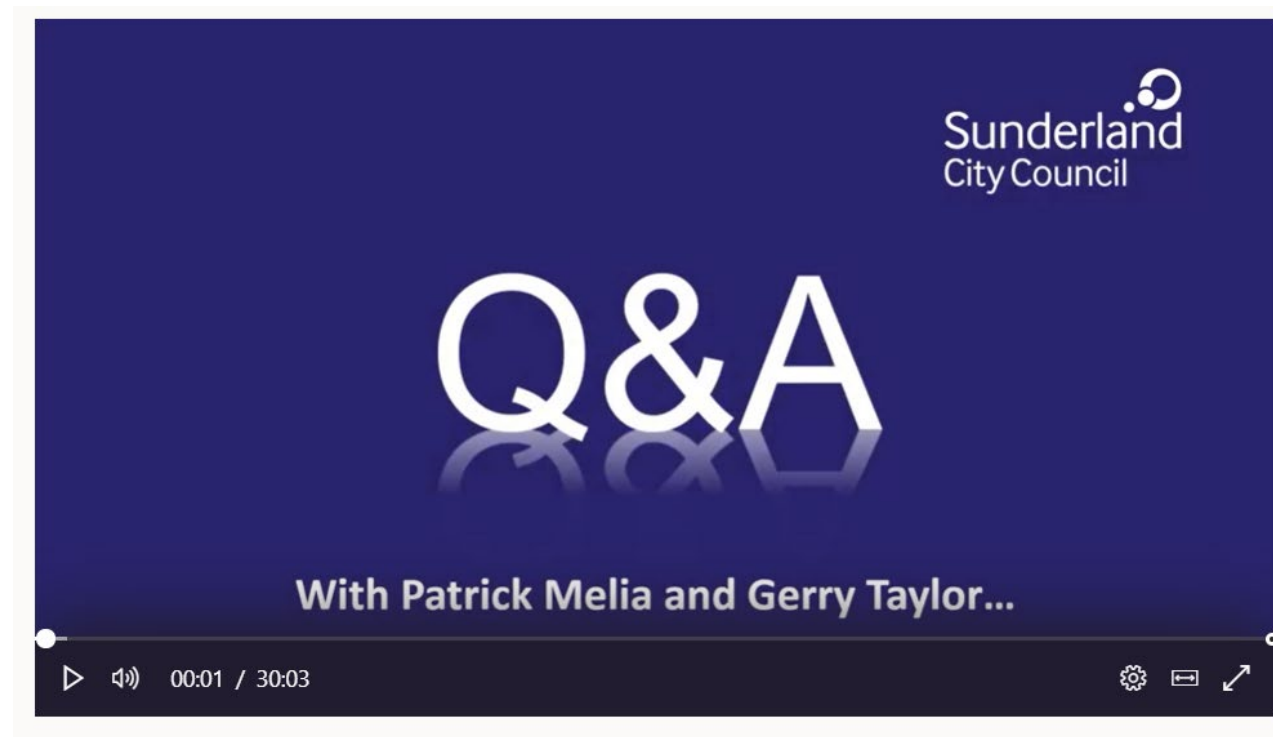
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7 people liked this 9409 Views Save for later

# Video

With using **Microsoft Teams to remotely record video** has been an effective **way of sharing information** with employees. Internal Comms facilitated a video recording with **Patrick Melia** and **Gerry Taylor** to produce a **Covid Q&A**.

This was edited and shared with all staff and has had nearly **700 views**.




# Yammer

Yammer is part of the Microsoft 365 family and is an **internal social media platform**. Yammer is not a place for comms to post constant updates, it is for all employees to post to. However, it is **a place to share key information** with all employees to encourage take up etc. For example, Gerry Taylor posted about the Flu jab.

Over **3,000 people are signed up to use Yammer** and frontline workers will soon be invited to use it also.


Internal comms can post 'announcements' however and they have so far been successful, attracting more than **2,000 views**.


**Gerry Taylor**  
Oct 22


Seen by 1,970


Thanks to our Occupational Health Team for giving me my flu jab this week. If you're eligible, it's really important you get the flu jab this year along with all recommended doses of the Covid vaccine. Find out more [Help stop flu, get the jab! \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Let me know if you have had yours in the comments.



 Like

 Comment

 Share

You and 8 others



# Employee voice

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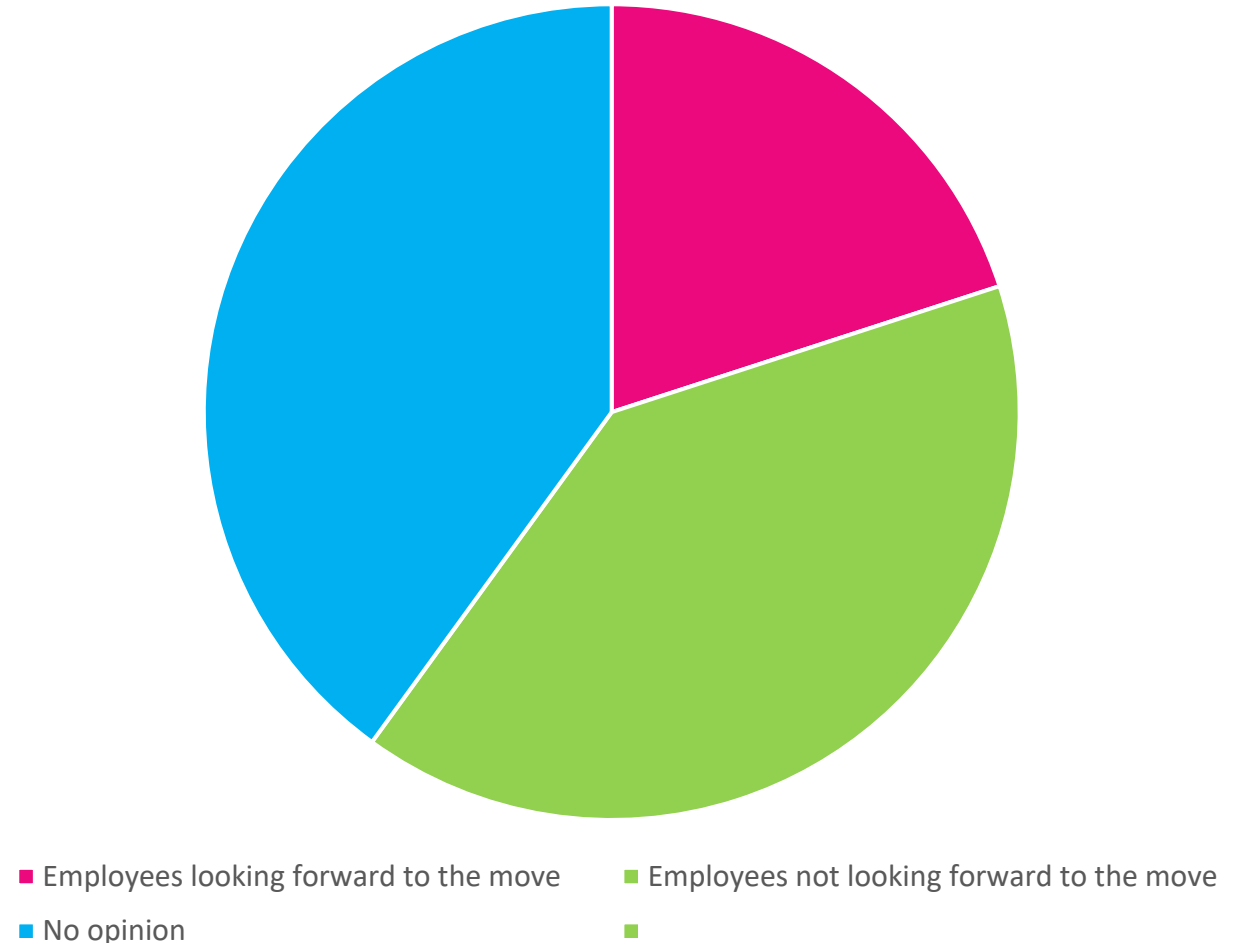
  
Sunderland  
City Council

# Agile working survey

We launched an all employee survey in early 2021 to understand employee's thoughts and feelings around agile working and the move to City Hall. Employees were asked questions about how they feel about agile working, whether they feel supported, do they know how to access wellbeing information and if they were looking forward to the move.

The survey took place before our City Hall comms plan was launched to understand how people feel. The results showed that 20% of employees were looking forward to the move, 40% were not and 40% did not have an opinion.

We hope through various channels that this mindset has now changed and will be conducting the survey again.



# Ask away / live events

- With the use of Microsoft Teams in place, this allowed the Internal Communications team to start using Teams Live Events to broadcast and address all employees.
- In December 2020 we launched our first live event with Patrick Melia hosting, to communicate to staff the current Covid situation, thank employees for their efforts and wish all employees a Merry Christmas.
- Since then, we have ran monthly live events to address all employees on the move to City Hall.
- These have been broken down into subjects/themes.
- The live events always have the Q&A switched on. Questions are submitted and answered on the call and if they were unable to be answered, posted on the FAQs area of the Hub after the event.
- On the next slide you can view all events and how many employees they have reached.
- All live events are recorded, circulated to employees (including frontline) and posted on the hub.

# The stats

City Hall - the  
launch (March  
2021)

295

Attendees

+519

views of the recording

Agile and home  
working (April  
2021)

500

Attendees

+375

views of the recording

Employee  
wellbeing (May  
2021)

466

Attendees

+181

views of the recording

Staff travel (June  
2021)

700

Attendees

+250

views of the recording

Embracing new  
technology (July  
2021)

520

Attendees

+190

views of the recording

# Continued...

City Hall – the  
next steps  
(October 2021)

**620**

Attendees

**Next live event: City Hall – generic updates**

**22**

**November**

# Everything City Hall pages on The Hub

TH

The Hub Home

Home

People Finder

Document finder

News centre

Edit

+ New


Page details

Analytics

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Everything City Hall

smartertogetheragile

thinking

Sunderlandcollaborativelydigitally

Coronavirus: Latest advice for staff and reporting template for managers

Online forms

Remember to join the chat

Quick links

# City Hall

In 2021 the council will open its doors to a new home, **City Hall**. This gives us a huge opportunity to change the way we operate within the council, from **collaboration** to **agile working**. City Hall will **revolutionise** how we work.

Find out the **latest news**, updates on the **build**, **frequently asked questions** and your service areas **communications champions** in this dedicated area for all things City Hall.

[View City Hall address](#)

## Civic Centre floor closures

Floor three

0000

dayshrsminsec

31 October 2021

Floor two

0000

dayshrsminsec

22 October 2021

5

Useful links ↓



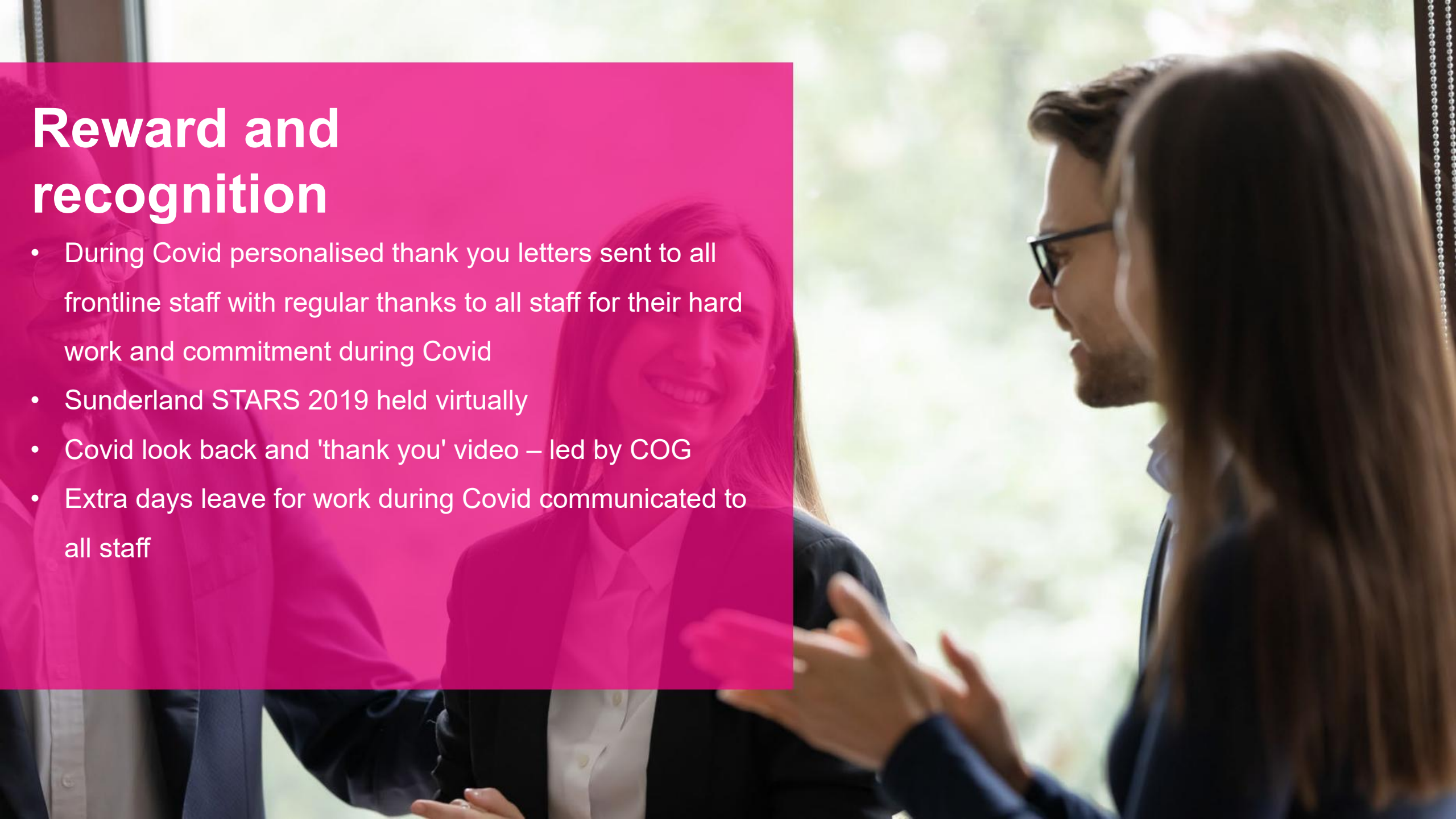
# People forums

- People forums are another name for a focus group.
- They are hosted over Microsoft Teams.
- Internal Communications own this initiative but have people management on hand to support.
- The purpose of a people forum is a safe place for employees to chat and learn from one another.



# Reward and recognition

- During Covid personalised thank you letters sent to all frontline staff with regular thanks to all staff for their hard work and commitment during Covid
- Sunderland STARS 2019 held virtually
- Covid look back and 'thank you' video – led by COG
- Extra days leave for work during Covid communicated to all staff



# Reaching the frontline

- During Covid personalised thank you letters and call out for frontline workers (without AD accounts) to sign up to hear from internal comms
- This was sent to 1,000 employees
- 400 of which have signed up
- They receive newsletters from us with all relevant information
- Frontline workers will soon be introduced to Yammer





# Other future developments

- A new and improved intranet, so that all employees can access, including those without corporate email addresses
- Management community – an online community for managers to support each other and share best practise
- The opening of City Hall
- Introducing Yammer to frontline workers
- Introducing our values and recognition work

**Thank you**

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