

Thu 21/05/2020 18:50

Dear Colleagues

Furlough Scheme

Last week I wrote about the extension of the Government's Job Retention scheme which allows FSC to furlough staff. I know that we'd like some clarity and certainty on what this means for us all. I cannot provide absolute certainty. That's partly because at the time of writing the chancellor has yet to publish more guidelines, and partly because the guidelines have a habit of changing anyway. What I can do is clarify FSC's approach to the scheme and our thinking around its extension, even though there are some unknowns.

FSC needs to maximise the use of the job retention scheme. It is a rare example of a government scheme doing exactly what it says on the tin. By furloughing as many staff as possible, FSC's cash reserves will last longer to help see us through until business returns. It's possible and even likely that some furloughed staff may remain furloughed for some time. However, getting our centres 'Covid Secure' will require input from key staff teams and we may need to un-furlough earlier than expected. All of us will need to get used to new procedures and many of us will need to do some training. The extension of the furlough scheme beyond its original three months has also highlighted the need for us to look at whether we can cycle some staff in and out of furlough to share the workload.

I know it's unsettling and it's rather similar to being in air traffic control where there are many staff in a holding pattern. Whilst in that pattern, the government are paying the wages but that stops the moment we bring people in to land. Therefore we have to work out exactly who to land and when, and many of those decisions cannot be made until more government guidance across all four nations is published.

Clarification about reduced working hours and office closures from 1st June

We will be informing customers that FSC will be open Monday – Thursday. However we know that some staff both value and need the flexibility of fitting their hours around other responsibilities and this may include working on a Friday. We are therefore happy for staff to arrange and agree their new working hours with their managers.

Next All Staff Zoom

I am aiming to schedule a meeting for next week, probably for Wednesday but at the moment I cannot fix a time....more to follow

Doing our bit

Staff from Pembrokeshire centres have responded quickly to a specific request from the Welsh Blood Service to donate blood in their local area. If blood donation is something that you are able to consider, details can be found here for [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#). Being interested in citizen science, it's not surprising that other colleagues are taking part in a large scale [COVID Symptom Study](#) that has been developed by King's College London. Finally, please take just 5 minutes to help one of our own scientists Laura Jones, Epping's HE Student who is [doing a survey](#) into wasps for her dissertation.

It's easy to lose track of time, but with another bank holiday weekend coming up I hope that you will be able to take some time to relax and enjoy it.

Like many of you I will be clapping for the NHS this evening, keep well and stay safe

Mark