

Dear Colleagues,

Feedback from the Finance and Administration Committee

The F&A committee met yesterday and Nick Lapthorn as the staff rep provided excellent feedback on the progress and challenges of the consultation, your perceptions and questions. I keep a close eye on the questions, so in response I thought that it might be helpful if I took this opportunity to clarify some of the roles and responsibilities during the restructure.

The role of trustees

Trustees share ultimate responsibility for governing our charity. Their focus is the strategic direction of the charity, making sure it's doing what it was set up to do and has the resources to do that. Routinely they delegate responsibility for implementation of agreed strategies and the day to day running of the charity to the executive (SLT). They also hold the SLT to account. There is a good guide on the role of charity trustees and their legal responsibilities on the [Government website](#) and [The National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) for those who would like more information.

In the case of the current consultation on proposals, the trustees carefully considered these in some detail on 2nd July and directed the SLT to implement them. Trustees had another opportunity to further consider the proposals with the benefit of updated information on the 16th of September and agreed as a collective to maintain the agreed direction of travel. Trustees are kept very well informed about what is happening and are also copied into these catch ups. They are all too aware of the issues and difficulties that staff are facing. I know in the past there has been an FSC tradition of staff raising operational issues directly with trustees but their role is clear and by doing so, staff can place trustees in an invidious position.

There are of course a number of ways in which issues can be raised through the proper channels and the systems that we have set up. We also have staff representatives through the governance mechanism in a way which is unusual in the charity sector because of the high level of staff involvement. Nick did an excellent job yesterday as does Sophie at Board of Trustee meetings. He conveyed the frustrations, concerns and also areas of support eloquently. The trustees are routinely made aware of the issues and concerns but their ultimate responsibility and mine must be the survival of our charity.

My role

My role in the restructure itself is that of 'final arbiter' and this means that I will be the person who will hear any final appeals. Because I have delegated responsibility to hear any appeals, I have to remain 'neutral' and let the agreed process take its course. I cannot get directly involved in the individual decisions as I may be needed to arbitrate on a decision later. 'Neutral' does not mean that I am uninvolved, uninformed or uncaring. I care deeply about the impact of Covid-19 on individual staff members and FSC as a whole. It's one of the reasons for a big focus on lobbying and working with the sector to get the guidance changed (see below). I hope that this addresses some of your concerns or at least explains the processes a little more clearly. I am very happy to discuss this, our current position and what we are doing to try to save our charity and as many jobs as possible at the next all staff zoom on Tuesday 13th 13.00 to 13.30. An invite will be sent shortly. If you want to send in questions in advance so that I can try to group them into themes and try to ensure I cover them, please email them to Joy. Just bear in mind the restrictions of my role as final arbiter when sending them in.

Next steps on Future FSC and the Collective Consultation

Thanks again to everyone who has been contributing to this process. The final questions and proposals from staff via elected reps have been received this week ready for responses and discussion next week. The final collective consultation is on 15th Oct. The revised documents (structures, job descriptions and staff handbook) will then be discussed with the F&A Committee on 21st Oct. The papers will be shared with all staff in advance of this meeting, as usual. The focus will then turn to the next stage which is individual consultations later in October. This is where specific options and questions will be discussed with staff whose role is affected. The consultation about TUPE and pensions continues until 3rd November.

Lobbying and Media Work

Work continues apace on getting the guidance changed across the UK to allow residential. The campaigns are also getting some considerable media traction with some of the broadsheets now getting involved. Some of our local MPs (particularly Tim Farron for Castle Head those new in post such as Neil Hudson for Blencathra and Robin Millar for Rhyd-y-creuau) have been particularly active. Tim Foster has been busy working in Scotland where the campaign to save centres continues to build and will be doing a radio interview on Friday.

I have written to schools standards minister Nick Gibb about the impact of the guidance on attainment and we have been working this week with Telegraph journalist Camilla Tominey who is looking to start a Telegraph campaign on the issue, partly due to two of her children being disappointed that their school trips were cancelled. If you want to hear what triggered this, listen to [Any Questions](#) from about 27 minutes in when an excellent question was fired in from an outdoor learning centre in Wales. Camilla's campaigning zeal kicks in at 33 minutes. I will also be writing to Welsh Minister Vaughan Gething to put right his assertion that it is not possible to offer covid secure residential.

Feedback from the C-19 OPT (Covid operational planning team)

The C-19 OPT have been working through and addressing the points raised in the recent staff survey relating to health and safety. Concerns relating to face coverings have been addressed in the shared guidance and staff should have FSC face coverings available to them. Dan Romberg has joined the team to represent education and now that teaching is once again taking place at centres our systems are being tested and we are receiving feedback on how to improve them. Improved signage is available thanks to publications, and this should help remind both staff and visitors about the rules. Enforcing them remains a challenge and we must all remain vigilant.

Return to work forms and conversations

The 1st November is not that far away and in gearing up for your welcome return (whether that is working from home or returning to a workplace) it's really important that everyone completes their return to work form as soon as possible. This isn't a tick box exercise. Your safety and wellbeing, and that of those around you remains paramount. For some staff there may be some really important health or other concerns that need to be discussed. Don't wait for your manager to initiate the conversation but please make a start by filling in the form which can be found [here](#) along with other

useful information. Remember some managers are not yet back at work and many staff will be on leave in the coming days so please don't leave this important issue until the last minute.

Zurich's Employee Assistance Programme

My thanks to Zena for sending me this helpful reminder about the services available to FSC Staff from Zurich. I am attaching the document and the password and login details are on the bottom left. The site has a wealth of help and advice. None of us are invincible and it's a difficult time for many staff and our families as we face yet more months of uncertainty. Please do make use of what is on offer.

Keep well and stay safe

Mark