

Thu 15/10/2020 13:24

Dear Colleagues,

More lockdowns, second spikes and apparently a great deal of uncertainty about how best to tackle the issue of rising Covid cases. We continue to plan and prepare for the return of our customers and to lobby hard for a blanket ban on residential to be replaced by a delegation to the common sense of school leaders and to ensure that we are deemed eligible for the government's financial support schemes.

New Covid-19 Tiers

The new 3 tier system announced this week for England - which had been predicted by Covid Operational Planning Team (C-OPT) Chair Helen - should help reduce the confusion of local restrictions. Travel for work and education can continue, but its impact on FSC is most likely to be around the Stay with Us offer. Without going into all the complex details of travel within and between different tiers, the guidelines advises against travelling or staying overnight in certain cases depending on the tier that you have come from, as well as the tier that you are going to. This is likely to create some additional booking and admin changes. Government has produced some handy at-a-glance posters that sum up the main guidelines in each tier and we are adding these to the Staff Health and Wellbeing pages. C-OPT have produced something similar to set out what measures can be expected and what we can offer at centres depending on the level of lockdown.

Across the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland has just announced a two week half term and Wales is introducing cross border travel restrictions. We are expecting possible tier changes for Scotland at the end of the month with faint hope of some more alignment to make the C-OPT work easier. We anticipated increased local lockdowns and systems were put in place in advance to help our customers deal with the inevitable disruption.

Government support and lack thereof

A disappointing government response to the petition [Change DfE school guidance to allow overnight educational visits](#). showed that a large number of completely wrong assumptions have been made about the entire sector and its ability to offer Covid Secure learning in appropriate bubbles. We will be addressing this with MPs as work also continues with them and in the [media](#) to get the guidance changed from a blanket ban to guidance that would allow individual schools to make decisions on residential. We are still seeking clarification as to the help available for businesses such as ours where we have not been ordered to close, but the reality of a blanket ban on residential has prevented us from carrying out our core business.

Education Select Committee: asking for a new inquiry into outdoor learning

As part of Our Bright Futures, we are one of the 32 signatories who have written to the Chair of the Education Select Committee to ask for an inquiry into ensuring more outdoor learning opportunities. This is in response to key asks from the young people themselves involved in OBF projects across the country. It has struck a chord and has been followed up in the media including [TES online](#), the [Independent](#) and most importantly [BBC Newsround](#) whose discerning audience voted 83% in favour of more outdoor lessons in an online poll.

Wild LIVE tonight at 7pm

One of our partner organisations The Wildlife Trusts have gathered a panel of experts to discuss the Government's proposed planning reforms in a livestreamed Wild LIVE event. Wildlife is declining and WLT believe that the proposed reforms will make a bad situation much worse. One of the panellists is Emma Greenwood, a 16-year-old member of Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Youth Panel, Youth MP for Bury and climate justice activist. You can [sign up](#) for the event and share it with the young people you know and encourage them to submit questions.

Comms and Catching up with Staff Talks and All Staff Zooms

The staff talks hosted by Philip Turvil are a really good use of 30 minutes. A lot of information and light hearted comment gets packed into each one. With input from staff from right across FSC, it's one way in which you can keep up to speed with some of the big changes to some people's work in the last few months as well as find out what business as usual has been like for others. You get introduced to staff that you may not have met or have wondered what they actually do. You can catch up [here](#) with the Staff Talks and my All Staff Zooms. A copy of my presentation from this week's zoom will be on the [Weekly Catch Up](#) page of the staff website. I am also encouraging HoGs to keep in very regular contact with all their teams to keep them updated". In a previous catch up I mentioned an internal communications protocol and you can now see this on the [staff news](#) page and don't forget to check out the new items on the [Staff Wellbeing](#) pages.

Finding a slot for more regular All Staff Zooms

Continuing our response to the Staff Survey, I am planning more regular all staff zooms to keep you all up to date with the key changes that are happening to FSC and it's a chance to ask me questions direct. I'm aware that there are several regular zooms that already have well established slots, so if you host one of these, could you please let Joy know when they are so that we can try to avoid as many clashes as possible. In the meantime, I am looking to arrange a very short all staff zoom on Monday 3rd November because that's the day when we finally welcome all staff back to work (whether that is back to working from home or back to their usual workplace). Our new Higher Education Placement Students will be joining FSC then too. The Zoom will then continue into the usual Welcome Back meetings hosted by Helen and Nick.

Special Mentions

I have received two nominations this week. One is for all involved in the development and roll out of Cinolla. We didn't know it at the time, but it enabled more successful working from home during the pandemic. The nominator (who was clear that they had no input into the project) pointed out that with government digital failures aplenty in the news, Cinolla was a great example of cross-cutting collaboration between external people, some of the digital services team, and many administration staff and like successful national security operations it can be judged on how little ripples it has caused rather than how many.

The other is a thank you to Mel and Mary in the marketing team who have done a lot of work on the FSC Website to really set out our new offers and courses clearly and in a very customer focussed way. It's also easier for staff to find the information they need to help customers with their questions.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark

