


Thu 27/05/2021 09:40

Dear colleagues,

### **Lessons Learned**

Yesterday we saw Dominic Cummings arrive in parliament with a sack of stones to throw around in the glasshouse. Whatever weight you may give to his reports of a fairly chaotic response to Covid-19, the Lessons Learned Inquiry will no doubt see more accusations fly. At the start of the pandemic, our own Covid Operational Planning Team (C-OPT) started a useful log of lessons learned (entirely free from acrimony and accusation) which they fully expected to write up within three months “when things calmed down”. We are still waiting for the calm, but many of the lessons learned have been acted upon as we have gone along. Not the least of these lessons is the painful one now being learned by those areas impacted by the Indian variant: crucial and contradictory government information really does slide out as an update to a website without being picked up as a government news story or even in the daily email updates that arrive at 8.30 every morning. Neither is there any particular pattern as to what gets into the daily updates. Weekly vegetable prices? Yes. Essential guidance on travel? Not always. Members of the team have been sweeping government websites regularly for over a year to check that essential information hasn’t just dribbled out last thing on a Friday. All this has stood us in good stead and ensured that we have not just been responsive but have been able to be proactive too.

### **Operations Coordination Team**

As we have started our slightly bumpy road back to business as usual, the role of planning and delivering to customers on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team falls to the Operations Coordination Team (OCT, and I apologise for another acronym). The terms of reference can be found  [here](#). The cancellation of the National Citizen’s Service bookings and moving other bookings intended for Wales into the available slots elsewhere is one of the big pieces of work being undertaken at the moment (we are keeping the NCS deposits however). Government guidance continues to change and as “back to normal” is looking precarious for the June 21 date. On that basis the C-OPT group will likely be needed for some time to come. It will operate as a sub group of the OCT, continue to be chaired by Helen and will carry on its work of monitoring all the relevant Covid related guidance and flagging up the resulting issues to the OCT.

### **Ofqual wobbles**

We do live in fast changing times and so the conventional 12 week consultation period is sometimes shortened, but when Ofqual gave just two weeks to comment on proposals for the 2022 arrangements for fieldwork and non-exam assessment we expected bad news. Ian’s email yesterday set out the key issues for us. We do know that many teachers value the whole outdoor learning experience for more than just its ability to cover the curriculum, and we can see that with increased bookings and centres that are filling up. We also know that many geography teachers see the absolute nonsense of teaching *about* fieldwork but not enabling pupils to *experience* it at first hand. We hope to see them at our centres anyway. But the woeful reasons for this panicky set of proposals to carry over last year’s reductions in fieldwork do nothing for the government’s plans for catch up, levelling up or for the much touted irreversible route out of lockdown.

### **What Works in School Based Nature Interventions**

With Ofqual looking in the rear view mirror, the importance of connecting to nature has not gone unnoticed by others. Last week I included an update on the Nature Friendly Schools project and here is an [article by Anne Hunt](#) from the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom who may be known

to many of us. Here she again highlights the links between nature connection for schools and the recent welcome focus that it had in Mental Health Awareness Week.

### **Special Mention**

This week I want to thank many members of FSC staff that have been willing to travel to other centres to help out, whether it's with catering, hospitality, maintenance, teaching or a combination of these. I did start compiling a list of names, but it grew rather long with so many staff going the extra mile and this also increased the risk of missing someone out. The disruption caused by not being able to welcome school residents to our Welsh centres has been significant and many Wales based staff have moved but staff from many other centres including from Scotland have moved too. Thanks to your flexible approach we can make sure that we can look after the customers that we do have coming.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark