

Dear Colleagues,

They think it's all over

A week of varying fortunes for the home nations on the football front is good time to update you with the varying home nation's plans for lifting restrictions as they stand at the moment. In England, 19th July remains the target date for ending restrictions. The first minister of Wales announced a 4 week pause on further lifting of restrictions, but the rules will be reviewed again on 15 July. In Scotland the aim is to lift all major restrictions on 9 August but from 19th July the outdoor social distancing requirement will be removed. Yesterday the Scottish guidelines changed to allow some room sharing which is good news. I'm sure we all expect a number of measures to be in place for a while to come including for education settings in the autumn term.

Working From Home

As you know the government guidance continues to be that everyone who can work from home must do so. It is probably worth reflecting upon what might change after the 19th of July. The answer of course is we do not really know and so to try to give some certainty and breathing space for planning we will be continuing to maintain the present posture that "everyone who can work from home must do so" until at least 6 September. There has been much talk about the options for future working in the media and with this in mind I would like your views. HR will be contacting those staff affected in the near future to gather your thoughts, to give us time to consider your responses and give a clear direction of travel well in advance of 6 September. I should of course add the strong caveat that any decisions will be subject to the relevant public health guidance at the time.

Furlough

You may have heard in the media today that the government's contribution to salaries has reduced by 10% today and will reduce again in August and September. I just wanted to reassure anyone still on furlough that your salary will not be affected by this change as FSC will be making up the difference to 80%

Education News

Not all the news, but a good chunk of it has really focussed on education this week as expert after expert and report after report highlighted the cost, impact and scale of the loss of time in school.

In England, the short lived Catch Up Tsar gave his evidence to the Education Select Committee and really confirmed what many of us suspected about a lack of big bold thinking especially as we approach our second summer holiday of the pandemic. Who knew that there was no central data for example on the length of the school day? Yesterday in the house, Blencathra MP Neil Hudson got his right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Education to agree how important outdoor learning is. It's always useful to have that kind of remark on the record because we will be reminding him of it. You can catch it [here](#) at 12:42

Wales has a new Minister for Education and the Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles, and the education recovery plan [Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression](#) has been published and makes clear that they want to focus on progression do not want to use the phrase catch up because "this avoids a deficit based model". The subtlety of this argument may be lost on many who have – and there is no other way to put it – missed out on a lot. However it's all essential information for the marketing team who are already tailoring the autumn marketing messages to schools.

Even Matt Hancock knows that a leader stating their full confidence in you is the kiss of death. In Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, after insisting she had full confidence in the SQA exams body announced that it would be scrapped. This was after the long awaited publication of the OECD review into Scottish Education, mysteriously delayed until after the election. Why the photocopier of state wasn't fixed on time might be explained by the Guardian's headline '*Scottish education system to be overhauled after damning OECD report*', cleverly spun by a straight faced Scottish Government as '*OECD review backs school curriculum*'. With such a long complex document the truth is likely to be somewhere between the two. What is welcome is that a more systematic approach to curriculum review and a more structured and coherent communications strategy

Speak up and help beat coronavirus

FSC isn't short on people who like to speak up or get involved in citizen science and I know that staff have volunteered on many covid related projects in the last year. There's now an opportunity to get involved in a project that seeks to discover if algorithms can use voice data, including cough recordings, to detect COVID-19. The information is [here](#) and it should only take 5-10 minutes. It involves a form, a recent lateral flow test and then recording your voice and a cough and sending it in.

Hats Off to the Feather Folk

Today marks exactly 100 years since the passing of the Plumage Act that banned the importation of feathers. The Edwardian love of wearing whole dead birds, osprey, grebe and egret plumes on their heads killed 5 million birds a year. A group of formidable women set up the Fur, Fin & Feather Folk society which eventually became the RSPB. Campaigning included sending notes along the church pews during services to point out to the fashionably dressed just how their hats were made, persuading the Duchess of Portland to campaign, although wearing game bird feathers in her hat whilst doing so created a mixed message. Even the Queen who owned dresses decorated with hummingbird feathers got involved. One of the founders of the campaign was Etta Lemon and she was inspired by the work of Scottish naturalist Eliza Brightwen a generation earlier. We don't always know what our work will inspire or lead to, but my special mention goes to a 9 year old girl on an FSC minibeast hunt this week "I have a passion for collecting slugs. I'm doing better here than I do at home".

Keep safe and stay well

Mark