

Thu 27/01/2022 13:42

Dear Colleagues,

Covid OPT review of Public Health Guidance

As I indicated last week the Covid OPT were going to take a look at the latest public health guidance and how it might apply to us. In England, it is suggested you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and indoor spaces where you may come into contact with people you do not normally meet. We will continue to ask our customers to follow this guidance in order to keep our staff safe in their workplace. Face coverings are still required in most indoor public spaces in Scotland, and in Wales, you are still legally required to wear a face covering in most indoor public places. We recognise that implementing this at Centres can be challenging, as it has been throughout but we need to provide our staff with a safe workplace and provide customers with reassurance and confidence. We will continue to review our policies in accordance with changes in public health guidance.


Working from Home Guidance

As you probably know on 19 January, [Boris Johnson said that the government was no longer asking staff to work from home](#) and said that people should now speak to their employers about arrangements for returning to the office. In Scotland from Monday 31 January, [the government will no longer recommend home working wherever possible](#) and employers are being asked to let workers return gradually. In Wales, employers are still being encouraged to let people work from home where possible. Whilst the public health situation remains so varied and so uncertain, we would like to give some confidence to those staff who are affected and help them to plan their lives. When the SLT met on Tuesday it was agreed that authority would be delegated to line managers to determine what working arrangements they want staff to adopt from 1 April, subject to the public health guidance at the time, i.e. whether affected staff should resume working from the office, can continue working from home, or adopt a combination of the two.

Annual Leave

At the Board meeting in December, the trustees discussed a proposal to increase FSC's annual leave entitlement as a recruiting and retention initiative. While broadly supportive at the meeting, the trustees asked for further details to be provided for them to consider out of committee. Having now had the opportunity to consider the additional information provided, the trustees have unanimously approved the proposal which will be backdated to 1 January. Full details will be circulated early next week.

FSC Strategy: Quadrant 1

Last week I set out the basic headlines of our financial situation and the direction of travel over the coming year. As part of unpacking the  [FSC Strategy](#), I want to take the first Quadrant and just give a brief update on some of the work done under the banner of *Optimise our processes and structures in order to enhance our efficiencies*. Some of this work, which included getting our finances into a better state just before Covid-19 struck, was one of the key factors that have helped us survive and maintain the confidence of those lending us money, when so many others in the sector risked going under.

I know that changing our structures and operations to provide a better match with the patterns of customer demand was a difficult process for many, but will stand us in good stead as we continue to recover. We have implemented a new Account Management system to make sure that we optimise and build on our relationships with our top 100 customers. Another big change has been to ensure that we really become evidence led and data driven in our decision making. The work of the Digital and Data team provides us with almost real time data linked to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that tell us the things we really need to know. Greater control over a number of processes such as new projects going through the Change Management Board or more robust financial procedures (see the example in the special mention below) are all making a difference.

Carbon and Nature Recovery Plan Progress

As part of our Carbon and Nature Plan, extensive survey work has been carried out at centres including identifying the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species that make their home with us. UK BAP priority species are those that have been identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The list of these welcome creatures include spotted flycatchers, otters and water voles. The surveying work has also identified less welcome invasive species such as American skunk cabbage. Staff at some of our locations have had the training and equipment required to deal with the most pressing issues that managing these species can cause. Management plans are in place or being drafted for all our locations. We will update you with more of our finds as the data becomes finalised. Thank you to those who took time to comment on the Carbon Plan; some very good points were made. These are being looked at to see if they are covered elsewhere and if not, how the suggested ideas and actions can be taken forward. The Green Fund attracted 20 applications which included some really interesting projects. The panel are currently going through all of them and the outcomes will be announced shortly.

Special Mention

I've had some nominations for the finance team. Well done to Emma Trevett who has gained an overall Distinction in her level 3 Association of Accounting Technician Exams. There's just one more level to go. Also to Chris Price. Purchase orders and our financial regulations may seem rather dull and pedantic, but by insisting we follow those rules Chris has prevented FSC paying £17k we did not need to over the past month.

Stay safe and keep well

Mark