

Dear colleague

Apologies for the late Monday update. The first few days of this week have been back to back meetings. I hope you are all well. One of the positives in being late is the opportunity to share some really good news with you – there were no deaths reported across the whole of Wales so far this week, and there have been just a handful of new cases and none of these have been across Gwent. We've waited over four months for this so it's a big deal.

On Monday some significant changes took place, with the 5 mile distance rule in Wales being taken away and you can now form a bubble with one other household. Both of these changes are going to really help some of you. You can now reconnect with family members that I know many of you haven't seen for months. Remember – still no hugging allowed!

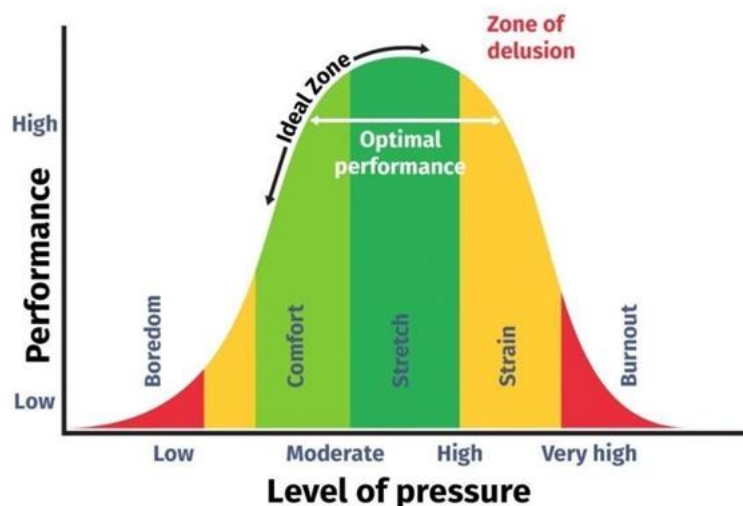
Next week we will start to see the return of hospitality and tourism business. These are really important to our local economy and will help with the attraction of shoppers to our high streets. I don't know about you but I really have missed popping out for a coffee. Our "shop local" campaign is gathering pace and I know for some, being able to book an appointment with your hairdresser is a big moment (I am taking a day's leave to mark the occasion!).

Lots of other re-openings are being considered at the moment, including playgrounds, leisure facilities and non-contact sports. I'm expecting some of this to feature in the First Minister's update on Friday.

The Leader and I spent a few socially distanced hours with the Free School Meals team earlier today. It really is an impressive collective and military operation with all parts of the council working alongside volunteers, delivering high quality food to our free school meal pupils and their families. Helping to deliver these tasty meals to those families who need them, really does focus your mind. It was quite an emotional moment and it reminded me, once again, of the massive difference you are making each and every day. It really was a proud moment and it was lovely to see all the staff really enjoying what they were doing, in the knowledge they are making that difference.

Much of my time so far this week, has been working with Welsh Government colleagues planning the return to school in September. It hasn't been agreed at a national level yet, but I'm expecting some developments later this week. We clearly want to see as many children back in school for as much time as is safely possible.

We still don't know if there will be a second spike in the Autumn but we are planning in readiness for it. I know the hours you are putting in and I also know that not enough of you have had a decent break for a long time – this has to change now. Take a look at the picture below which I picked up from Twitter earlier this week.



Many of us have been operating under intense pressure. Burnout is not where I want any of you to be – we really need to manage our energy levels over the long term especially as this is a marathon not a sprint. So please, please take some leave over the summer period – you have definitely earned a rest so please take the rest. I'm certainly looking forward to some time off in August to recharge my batteries, so please do the same.

The first Caerphilly Cwtch session went really well last week, with many questions being asked of me. The next session later this month will be with CMT so you will have the opportunity to ask them anything you like (within reason), so I look forward to hearing from you next time.

Catch up later in the week – until then, take care.

Regards
Christina

Christina Harrhy

Prif Weithredwr | Chief Executive

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili | Caerphilly County Borough Council