

## **A message from the Chief Executive – 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

Dear Colleague

Well, that was quite an interesting political weekend wasn't it?

We now have a divergence of approaches to confronting Covid19 across the UK. I think it's important that we remember as public servants, that everyone is trying their best and sometimes there are just different views on the best way forward. It will certainly give journalists something to analyse, but fortunately we can just watch this play out, because we remain absolutely clear on what we are about – "Protecting our people and place".

As you are aware there is no immediate solution to COVID19 until a vaccine is developed and that is some time away yet. For now, our plan is to help drive down the "R" value so we can contain the virus and save lives. As a reminder "R" measures the rate at which the virus is spreading in our communities, and the further it is below 1, the better. The weekend saw a continuation in low numbers of new cases in our county borough, which is good news, albeit, the amount of testing in Wales continues to be very low, so we have to be aware that we are never seeing the complete picture.

In terms of Wales, there have been some changes to the rules:

- We can now leave our homes to exercise as often as we like but we cannot drive a distance from home to exercise.
- Garden centres will open – although I really cannot understand the importance of this in the overall scheme of things!
- We are asked to plan to re-open our household waste recycling centres (HWRC's) and libraries – the former appears to be a sensible step and we will get ourselves ready to open shortly, although we will have to heavily modify the operation to ensure everyone remains safe. However, I remain to be convinced on the argument for libraries. Whilst it is a very valuable service, all of our colleagues from libraries, are totally engaged in helping to provide other priority services. I will need to give this some careful thought prior to advising Members over the next day or so. Whilst I accept this service is valued by many, it does not appear to justify a journey at this time. I am also worried about the impact on our support for shielded and vulnerable people if I have to re-task these staff.

Just to reiterate, schools are not scheduled to re-open any time soon and parks will remain closed for the next few weeks.

You may have seen some drive-thru fast food outlets have been allowed to re-open again, promoting unnecessary journeys to get a bit of chicken or a burger with consequential litter all over the place, but again this is not in our gift at the moment.

Whilst I know the picture is getting increasingly complicated, the primary message, remains in Wales, as **"Stay at home, save lives and protect the NHS"**.

I continue to receive so many wonderful messages of support and celebration for everything you do and I wanted to share with you this touching poem, from the staff at Bryn Primary school, entitled "Rainbow children" - I hope you enjoy it!

<http://pic.twitter.com/G4i3bQntRo>

So, in conclusion, I don't foresee any changes to your current working arrangements over the next 3 to 4 weeks. You are working brilliantly and you are working as safely as we can manage, so let's keep it going, and let's keep it going with a smile!

Have a good week. Take care and stay safe.

Regards  
Christina

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