

Update from the Chief Executive – 18th May 2020

Dear colleague,

I hope you enjoyed a relaxing weekend and are re-energised for the week ahead.

I've mentioned a number of times our local health indicators, which give us a picture of how the virus is affecting us across the county borough. This data is available to you on the Public Health Wales website (updated daily): <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

On the whole the downward trend across our area continues, which is pleasing, but there are three "buts" that I need to remind you of:

- These numbers are based largely on testing conducted in hospital settings and are of symptomatic key workers.
- Universal testing of care homes is only just being introduced
- Community testing is still not in place.

So the evidence we have has a few fundamental gaps and we need not to lose sight of this. The need to roll-out community testing and tracking is absolutely imperative and you will know that we are doing all we can to mobilise this with our partners, using automation and key staff to assist. However, this will not commence across Wales until early June (assuming deadlines are hit). So things therefore "seem" to be improving, which is good, but that "R" number which is currently hovering between 0.7-0.9 is still far too high.

I shared with you last Friday the Welsh Government Road Map as well as the Framework for Education and schools. Hopefully you've had a chance to take a look at them both, but I just wanted to reiterate that nothing much is going to change in the next fortnight. It's been disappointing to follow the national media over the weekend and see a bit of an attack upon teachers. In my view this is totally misplaced. I think all of our school-based staff have been outstanding in supporting our Hubs for key worker children, as well as providing distance learning for all learners and having special regard for vulnerable learners. I know that when they are asked to change focus across the county borough, they will, because they are a huge part of our team and know what roles they have and what is required of them. But as I said last week, it is highly unlikely that we will see any school openings for a number of weeks and even then only for limited numbers of children.



Attendance levels across the organisation are really positive at the moment, but understandably I know that some of you are starting to feel a bit disconnected and, dare I

say, lonely at times. This week is **Mental Health Awareness Week**, and I can't think of any other time where our mental wellbeing is so important to us. In my last update, I shared with you the importance of taking regular breaks using your annual leave. This remains my position. I know that some of you are thinking, that the approach is a little harsh, but it is not a position that is unique to us in Caerphilly. The importance of having regular breaks using annual leave has been recognised by the Trade Unions and Employers across the UK, so the approach we have taken has been agreed nationally between the Employers and the Trade Unions and supported locally with our Trade Union colleagues.

You would have received separate emails, highlighting all the support we have in place for you, to assist you to look after yourselves both physically and mentally, so please do call upon any of them – as they certainly will help. You may recall I shared with you some principles a few weeks ago, and I have included them again, below for you to remind yourselves.

Working Remotely – COVID-19 Principles

1. You are not “working from home”, you are “at your home, during a crisis, trying to work”.
2. Your personal physical, mental, and emotional health is far more important than anything else right now.
3. You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours.
4. You will be kind to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping.
5. You will be kind to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping.
6. Your team's success will not be measured the same way it was when things were normal.

So please don't beat yourself up if you are having a bad day. If you are having a good day, please reach out to somebody you haven't spoken to for a while – as you may be the person to make a difference to someone else – please don't underestimate the difference you can make.

You know we love a “cwtch” here in Caerphilly and I've been sending you many virtual Caerphilly cwtches over recent weeks. I thought I'd share with you this video which did make me giggle but it got me thinking that maybe our Caerphilly cwtches will look a little different in the future!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4KElvEKRqM>

I hope you have a great week. I'm so grateful for your efforts over recent weeks and in anticipation for everything you will bring over the next week – I offer my heartfelt thanks to you.

Best wishes
Christina

Christina Harrhy

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