

LIVE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

YOUR PANDEMIC STORIES

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What is the Live Learning Partnership?

We are a group of eleven organisations, representing business, the third sector, policy and academia. We came together in a learning-by-doing collaborative experiment to try to capture the voices and experiences of people across Wales in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a deliberately cross-sector project.

The Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) and the Wales Co-operative Centre (WCC) led the partnership, along with Business In the Community (BITC), Cardiff Business School (Cardiff University), Care Forum Wales, Community Housing Cymru (CHC), Cymorth Cymru, The Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST), Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and Y Lab (Cardiff University/Nesta). The project was further supported by the Cynefin Centre.

Given the unprecedented times we found ourselves in, we wanted to understand the ongoing impact of the pandemic on individuals, work, the community and the world around us, and to do this we needed to listen to people's experiences or 'stories'.

To gather these 'stories' we used the online storytelling tool SenseMaker®. Our aim was to collect experiences and stories from as many people as possible - and from as wide and diverse a population as possible.

This story book has been compiled by The Cynefin Centre to share these stories and experiences and the insights that people had upon reflection. We hope that this story book will act as a historical reminder of what happened during the Covid-19 and as an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others.



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THE TIMELINE



The timeline diagram displays the day where a story occurs across each chapter. The height of each vertical line depicts the number of stories on that day i.e. a short vertical line is one story for that day while taller lines represent multiple stories on that day. Furthermore, on a particular page the timeline will have red lines and grey lines, the red indicates the current stories situated on that current page.



CHAPTER 1

1ST LOCKDOWN

0 RECORDED STORIES

During this time of unprecedented confusion and uncertainty, the Live Learning Partnership was forming in response to the chaotic and complex situations we found ourselves in. By establishing the project in the early part of the pandemic we were to capture the subsequent stories and lessons learned throughout the remainder of this book as the pandemic unfolded.

#STAYHOME



CHAPTER 2
EASING OF
1ST LOCKDOWN

44 RECORDED STORIES

HOME WORKING

JULY 28TH 2020

I have worked from home since 1 March

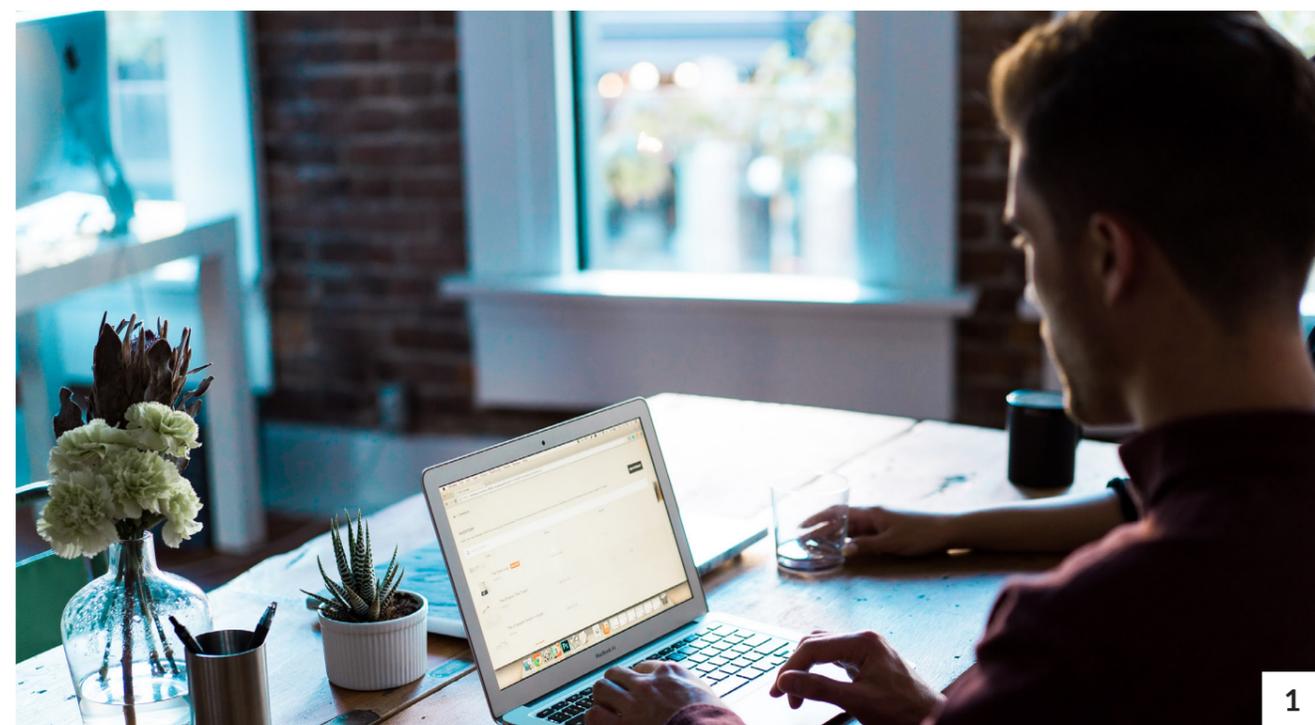
Lesson Learned: It has been good that people have been able to continue working from home throughout this period and we could learn from this in the future, so people don't have to commute so much.

HOME WORKING

JULY 28TH 2020

As a result of the lockdown, I have been working from home entirely since I have started my new job, which began at the end of May.

Lesson Learned: Many people have acknowledged that "returning to normal" is unlikely even in the long-term. It is important that we understand people's experiences of working from home to ensure that it is as comfortable and positive as possible for everyone who has to do it in the future. This should be in terms of well-being as well as productivity. In addition, it can have a positive impact on society as a whole, given the reduction in commuting, and increasing the possibilities for people to work where they live, rather than encouraging people to move to big cities.



1



HOME WORKING

AUGUST 11TH 2020

I have been working from home since lock-down and it has impacted both positively and negatively on my working life and my home life.

HOME WORKING

SEPTEMBER 1ST 2020

Started a new job in context of working from home during lockdown

Lesson Learned: Lots of different impacts on individuals coming from lots more people working from home. Will bring wider impact on communities and the economy.

SHOPPING

SEPTEMBER 3RD 2020

I am going to give the example of shopping for food - this has changed dramatically for me and I have now got used to shopping out of busy times and queuing and one way systems and taking only what you need. It has also made me thoughtful about using everything and no waste!

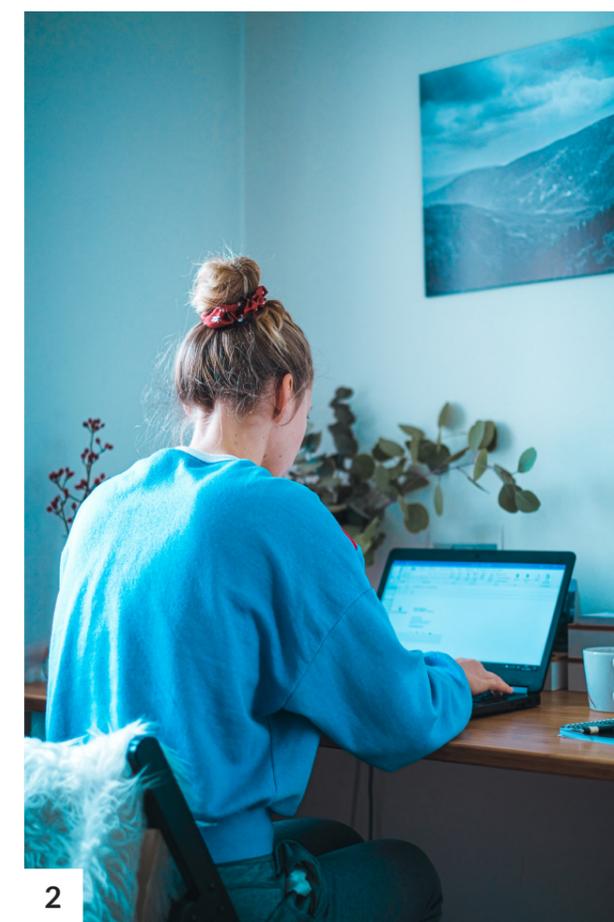
Lesson Learned: We could all be more thoughtful about food and one another.

HOME WORKING

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2020

Whilst you can still remain connected virtually, it can be very lonely and isolating. I know maybe this is something we need to get used to - but nothing beats the buzz of an office and bouncing off each other. As a single parent work and interacting with people is really important to me.

Lesson Learned: We maybe need to think more creatively about how we interact. Whilst virtual meetings are good, it is not the same - although I appreciate we have little choice atm. Obviously as restrictions have eased, we have met in teams out door, socially distanced which has been great. But things are changing all the time and with a potential second lockdown looming it is difficult for staff. Our organisation has been great organising loads of well-being activities and special thank you's - and I know they care about our mental health and well-being. I don't think as an organisation they could have done anymore than they have.



2

HOME SCHOOLING

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2020

Working from home with two teenagers had it's own up's and down's but the home-schooling element and lack of consistency from the secondary school teachers was a minefield. Working, whilst trying to engage two reluctant learners was really difficult. Every time I was on a zoom meeting they would see this as their opportunity to run for their bedrooms and not return.

Lesson Learned: I think that WG, Local authorities and schools need to approach home-schooling differently. Just setting work on various sites doesn't cut it. They need to provide IT equipment and teach via Zoom. Single parents are really disadvantaged especially if they are working because they simply can't cut themselves in two. They can't work, be a teacher, and a parent. We had a lack of IT equipment - this needs to be addressed and the whole virtual teaching experience not just setting work which never got marked with no feedback. It is apparent that a lot of schools will be home-schooling again as local lockdowns take hold or year groups have to self isolate as cases are identified.

RESIDENTIAL ENGAGEMENT

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2020

We ceased traditional print publications but when the pandemic happened we realised that not all residents would be contactable online. So we came up with a new publication to engage and keep residents informed. We have produced two so far and they have been really well received.

Lesson Learned: That whilst technology is amazing - we need to continually adjust and be proactive where our residents are concerned.

HOME WORKING

SEPTEMBER 15TH 2020

Since lockdown, I've worked from home. Meetings have been virtual. I've not wasted time travelling to and from meetings and have been able to organise and attend meetings at shorter notice. I've not spent any money on fuel or travel for work purposes and as a result have more money left at the end of the month.

Lesson Learned: Less travel in a work context. It's not always necessary. The job can be done just as well with the same outcome. I have more money at the end of the month to spend in local shops and restaurants and not travelling via car every day is better for the environment.



FURLOUGH LIFE

SEPTEMBER 16TH 2020

March 2020 saw us get chucked in to something that no one has experienced, my role as it is, completely up in the air and there was so much uncertainty - but I knew that at my organisation we would be dealt with as fairly as possible. It wasn't long before I was placed on furlough. Having never heard of furlough before this concept was very new and unknown. The first 2 weeks saw me not sure what to do with myself, being confined, as we came to know it was going to be very hard. My initial feelings were I've gone from seeing my work family everyday to not at all, unable to see family and friend, unable to go anywhere and unable to help the people I do on a daily basis. On the third week I could feel myself adapting, I cleaned my diet up, started getting home exercise in, started to make an effort to contact those I couldn't, and started to reflect. Time pre-

lockdown seemed to pass me by and now I had lots of it and I was having time to think. What were my goals, what was my purpose, what can I do to help. These questions propelled me to focus on my second job - my own business and I used social media as a platform to help others! I found empowerment from being confined and shared that with others. The resilience of everyone around me was spurring me on. Fast forward 6 months, I'd been super productive in lockdown, cleansed some detrimental friends out of my life, learnt a lot of life lessons, spent time with my close family, built up my business and was now getting ready to come back to work! I suppose lockdown, even with it's all it's angst has shown that you can not bring us as humans apart, we will ALWAYS find a way to connect with each other and come together. We will always adapt.



CORONACOASTER

SEPTEMBER 17TH 2020

Since that date I have most definitely been on the coronacoaster along with many others. Swinging from fine to fear and back to fine again with many other tremors in between. The sense that things were about to change dramatically for the foreseeable hit me in a supermarket in the middle of March when the muzak stopped and a customer service announcement told everyone in there to stay at least a trolley length away from fellow shoppers, to wash hands when you left to stop the spread of the virus. For a minute I was sucker punched by a feeling of fear and sadness and it all felt like I was in a sci-fi film. Then the craziness of my children being sent home from school for the foreseeable - unprecedented and sad for my daughter who was to miss most of the last year in Primary school. Watching the kids line up two meters apart and say goodbye to their teacher with an elbow bump brings tears to my eyes as I type. They left the yard for once not being thrilled that there was no school - a sudden realisation that you don't know what you got till it's gone. That same night my phone pinged and pinged as people got in touch saying Boris has closed the pubs and restaurants from tonight!! We own a pub and a restaurant and another sucker punch landed. The sense that we were all heading into uncharted territory was strong and I encouraged the kids to write their corona chronicles and keep a box with reminders in including

the letter from 10 Downing Street explaining lockdown. Then came the working from home YAY love it and the home-schooling Boo within a day my homeschool was in special measures. Now I may be a freak but around this time I also had a sense of excitement I love it when the norm is challenged I love it when something throws routines up in the air and shakes them up. The pandemic definitely did this. Here I am still healthy thank goodness as is my family and now I saw it as a chance to shake things up. To change the things that didn't work or find new ways of doing things. I am not a teacher but we found other ways of learning things that maybe wouldn't happen in a school. We learnt a song or two on the guitar, we asked older relatives for tips on growing veg, my aunty a fantastic knitter (who has since died) gave my daughter some simple patterns and on zoom she taught her how to knit. We learnt new board games like back gammon. We made good use of our time. We didn't drive anywhere for a month or more. We loved the peace in the skies and on the roads and noticed that the air was cleaner and we noticed more wildlife and discovered walks we hadn't done before.

Lesson Learned: That even when fear and change are thrust upon us, if we can see the positives we can change for the better. Maybe we would never make those changes if our hands weren't forced.



A CONNECTED HOUSING SECTOR

SEPTEMBER 28TH 2020

I have experienced a sense of connectedness with others in the housing sector. This includes more communication with my peers across Wales and collaboration on key areas of shared interests.

Lesson Learned: That in times of crisis, people identify common goals very quickly and reach across divides for common good.

HOMELESSNESS AND RETURNING TO WORK

SEPTEMBER 29TH 2020

I have experienced becoming homeless and also coming back to work after a period of illness related to being homeless.

Lesson Learned: From a personal perspective I find that I can relate to people who make applications and are homeless and potentially suffering from mental health issues because of their situation so can handle the conversations a bit better.

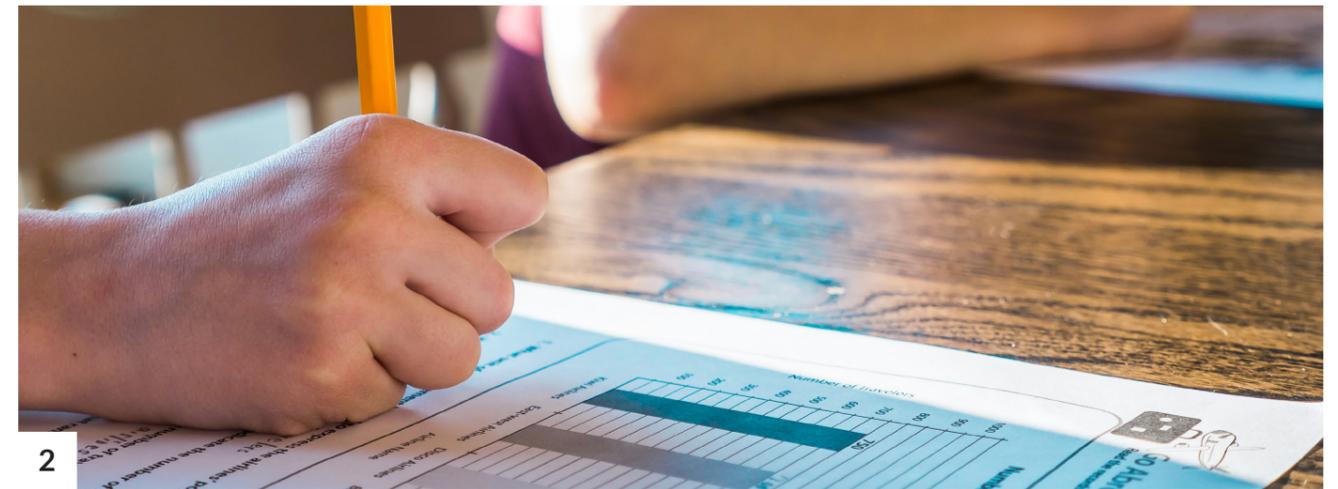
PANDEMIC PARANOIA

SEPTEMBER 30TH 2020

I have experienced living on my own for the 1st time since ever! I am going through a marriage break up and moved out of the family home just prior to lockdown in February 2020. I initially moved in with a friend, and whilst that was fine, I still needed to see my children and manage my own emerging anxieties around the pandemic and, of course, my marital breakdown. I therefore moved into an apartment on my own. That feeling has been strange. Spending time with just myself 24/7 is unusual. I am ok with my own company, but I have realised that a misanthrope I am not, and human connection in tangible, physical terms is critical to my well-being. I am also able to contextualise my own personal challenges and contrast with others who have had to deal with sadness and grief during this time. I am safe and healthy as is my family. My parents died several years ago, and so I don't have to worry about older relatives and the threat COVID poses. The friend I stayed with in the early days was very worried about his elderly parents, and his anxieties were clear for me to see. Sadly, his father (who I had known for almost 40 years) passed away recently, but not of COVID.



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2

HOME WORKING/SCHOOLING/CARING AND SELF-CARING

SEPTEMBER 30TH 2020

The biggest difference in life since 1 March 2020 has to be the amount of time I have spent at home. And not just 'working from home'. Schooling from home, trying to maintain good physical health and mental well-being from home, isolating, caring for sick family members. Doing all this at the same time, while 'working from home'.

Lesson Learned: Well-being, both physical and mental, have to be carefully monitored, more so than ever before. I would never have anticipated working from home causing so much stress/anxiety, even depression. At the moment everything is so reactive. We had to react to a national lockdown and schools/offices closing, then react to the relaxing of lockdown measures, then react to conversations around the 'new normal', then react to the reintroduction of local lockdowns. It is hard to prepare a healthy work/life balance while life is so unpredictable. I imagine a lot of people are thriving while working from home, and managing a work/life balance very well. But this shouldn't be assumed. Personally, I am probably in the worst physical and mental state of my life. I can imagine a world where I enjoy working from home, perhaps with a lot less unpredictability. But for people like myself, at the moment, well-being really needs to be prioritised and monitored.

LIVING IN THE NEW NORMAL

SEPTEMBER 30TH 2020

Many things have been different in the new normal since Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown. I have worked from home on a full time basis. My current home is over a hundred miles from my base office so this is a real change. I have held many zoom, Skype and teams meetings, but do not feel that the quality of my work has been impacted. In fact although there have been ups and downs I feel more productive. Less time is wasted stuck in traffic trying to get to meetings. So if anything I feel less stressed. Thankfully, I have not to date been personally impacted by the virus, although I obviously worry about the potential impact on my 91 year old mother. This is not just in the concern that she may catch the virus, but the fact that she has become very socially isolated in the last six months, which makes me feel guilty. I have missed actual face to face interaction with family and friends, colleagues and clients. However, I have saved money, exercised more and feel that overall my general well-being has improved, as I have been able to get off the day to day hamster wheel of life. Talking with friends and colleagues who have had a difficult experience during this period and whose well-being has been significantly impacted, or who have had real issues worrying about their job security, family health or juggling work life balance, it almost makes me feel guilty to say that I have had a positive 2020.

Lesson Learned: As individuals and as organisations we do not take the time and opportunity to question our regular day to day actions and activities. It is only when a major shock occurs that we reappraise what we have previously taken for granted. As always this year has seen the manifestation of the best and the worse side of society. Somehow we need to enact both individual actions and policies and procedures on an organisational and Government level that emphasis the sense of community and collaboration that manifested itself throughout the pandemic.



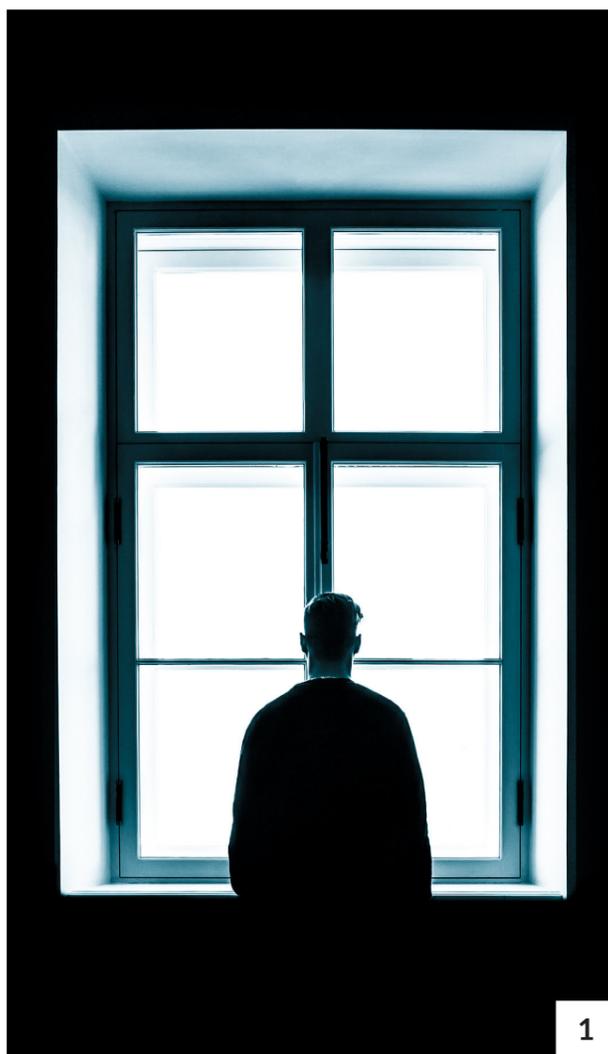
Easing of 1st Lockdown

LONELINESS/LOST

SEPTEMBER 30TH 2020

Since the lockdown started there has been a complete difference how we connect to people, no longer do we meet and greet by the shaking of hands and a quick chat, its now a Zoom or Teams meeting which don't just happen so there is no spontaneous conversations or ideas. This has left a hole an emptiness which I crave, sometimes it almost feels robotic. It now has to be arranged conversations, taking / Making notes prior to meetings or conversations so that things aren't forgotten.

Lesson Learned: I am not sure if I am honest, We all work and socialise differently and our needs are so diverse, we need to bring back the spontaneous ways of chatting and communicating using different methods, chat pages within the virtual environment.



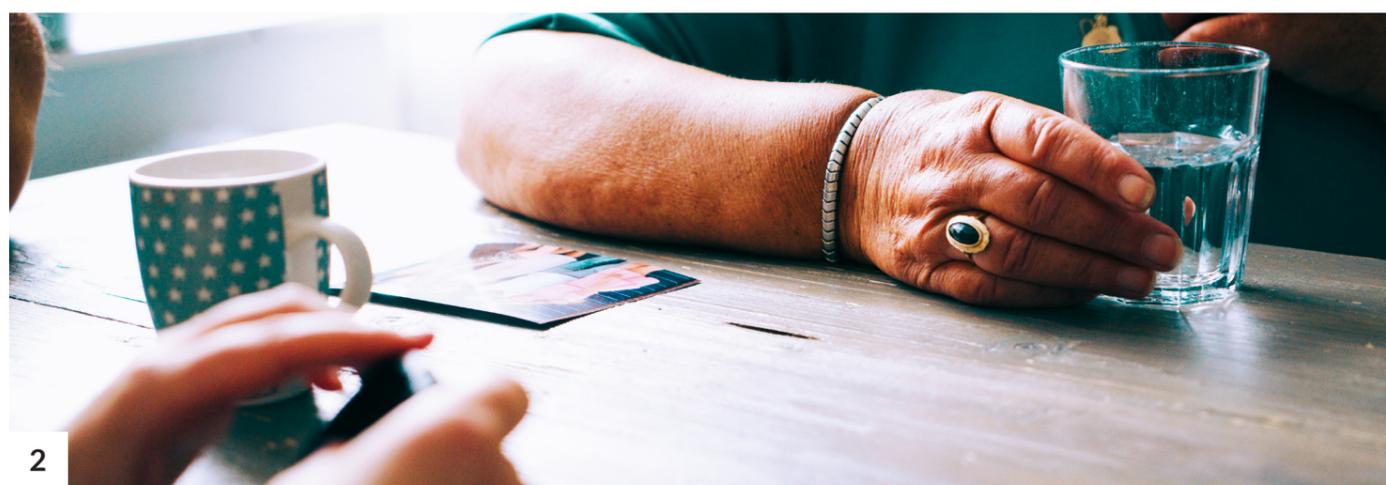
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THE BEAUTY OF LOCKDOWN

OCTOBER 1ST 2020

Lots I suppose! I've worked from home which is different. Usually I am in the office Monday to Friday at 7.30am! Even though I am an early riser, mornings still felt a little rushed. Not so much now. I still start work early but I am learning to relax and start a little later since realising that a good morning routine is better for my mental health/general well being than starting work at 7.30am. This change or difference has meant that I have been able to help my Grampa more, and taught me how much he needs me. Before I was busy just getting to work, but since lockdown I have been going over my grampa's every morning to walk his dog. Double whammy - helping him feels great and a 2 mile walk before work helps me enormously. More recently I have even started swimming in the sea at ridiculous o'clock before work - sunrise swims!! Something I just would never have done prior to COVID/working from home because life was too busy. So I guess work/life balance is better. BUT that being said it's hard at times too - I do miss the office chats and feeling connected with my colleagues. Thank god for Zoom eh?! And that's been the other thing, been to so many more good meetings because I can just hop on zoom! That's been a huge positive difference. I think a lot of relationships with external partners are better too - a sense of we're all in this together how can we work better to support each other. I've read more, I've exercised more, I've eaten better, I've listened to more podcasts, I feel I understand better about what makes me happy, and it's the really simple things, coffee and cake with friends, swimming in the sea, walks in nature having peace and quiet!

Lesson Learned: That everything is ok?



2



3

WORK - THE EARLY DAYS

OCTOBER 1ST 2020

It started off with a super stressful period. I was having to make plans in work to make sure we could deliver a service to vulnerable people in a landscape that I'd never travelled through before. Throughout this period, I felt really supported by the staff I work closely with. I know it's a cliché but I really did feel that we were all in this together. We were all open with each other than we were making it up as we went along. My husband would say that I was using my knowledge and experience but I often felt like I was just plucking answers out of the air. But, there was a real sense of 'just give it a try'. We knew that we had to start doing things differently. I looked to management, directors and chief executive for guidance but found out pretty quickly that they were in the same position as me, it was just that their workload was different. I could've felt scared by this but accepting that they were just humans too pushed me to take responsibility for my part of the jigsaw and just concentrate on that. It helped that we were living through the same pandemic as residents. When I was met with anger, I'd point out that I was also living through the situation and that I was just doing my best. It was a tricky balance as this stopped some people from blaming me or Coastal, but I had to temper it with an offer of 'we've got this' to some residents who needed to think things weren't spiralling out of control and they rely on us. My colleagues helped get me through the early days. Regular zoom meetings were enough to keep me feeling connected and I never felt like I was alone. There was no competition, no one looked down on anyone else, we all supported each other and we were all open about feeling overwhelmed some days and could rely on the others to help us through. We talk about a new normal like it's something that we're going to reach some day, but every day has been a new normal to me and fortunately I've been ok with that.

Lesson Learned: It takes an emergency situation to put things into perspective. It focusses the mind on prioritising what has to be done immediately and what needs to be planned for because you know it's coming. At times of crisis, people often shine. People are more adaptable than I thought. I work with good people.



Easing of 1st Lockdown

REMOTE WORKING AND RECRUITMENT

OCTOBER 1ST 2020

I have joined a housing association as a non-exec director through an entirely virtual/remote recruitment process. Other than over Zoom I haven't met any colleagues in person yet.

Lesson Learned: It is possible to have a really positive experience of joining an organisation using technology to do everything remotely.

DEEPER, ALBEIT DIGITAL, CONNECTIONS

OCTOBER 1ST 2020

I have experienced deeper connections with work colleagues when connecting with them over video chat, even colleagues that aren't in my usual circles.

Lesson Learned: That humans are more adaptable than they sometimes realise, especially when thrust into a situation not of their choosing.

HOME WORKING

OCTOBER 5TH 2020

I started a new job at the end of April and I have been based at home and I have only met my new colleagues virtually. I think what is amazed me is how well home working is! And how enjoyable I have found it and the fact that I really do feel part of the team and the wider organisation. I live in rural mid-Wales and under "normal" circumstances of being based in an office full time, I might not even have tried for the role, as it would have been an impractical commute/work life balance.

Lesson Learned: That people throughout Wales can apply for jobs and opportunities throughout the Principality, without having to live in major conurbations.





REALISING WHAT IS IMPORTANT

OCTOBER 6TH 2020

The main change for me has been spending lots more time at home, both working at home and during free time. This has meant lots less travelling, especially to and from work and much more time with my daughters, who were not in school for 3 months from the end March. As a result I've generally felt positive and enjoyed spending more time at home with my family but it was very stressful working at home and trying to teach young children. I am mostly hopeful for the future and that this will be a time when we start to be more considerate of each other and the planet and get more balance in our lives but I don't think this will be a quick or painless transition, especially in our cities and towns as they change and we see an inevitable increase in unemployment

Lesson Learned: We have a great opportunity to use the way we've had to adapt in the future to reduce our carbon footprint, get a better balance between home and work and generally rediscover the benefits of 'local' and 'communities'. Thinking about how we travel and work are really important to ensure we can make the changes we need to but we also need to think carefully about how we protect those who suffer as a result of the transition and how we avoid areas such as city centres falling into decay. Real vision and imagination and working with communities is what's needed rather than a top down centrist approach so we can build back something that is not only better but more sustainable and resilient. We also need to think about how education supports this. My experience of

teaching my own children showed how inflexible many of the practices and approaches are in education and how a real focus on each child and ensuring they are reaching their potential, rather than an a fixed level, will ensure children and young people are prepared for a great future.

LIFESTYLE BALANCE

OCTOBER 6TH 2020

Greater sense of family time and support. Being able to spend more quality time with my children doing the simplest of things, for example board games, cards games and cooking. Unfortunately due to my wife working from home this has also caused stress worry and sometimes a hard to balance lifestyle. General worry and anxiety have undoubtedly been felt due to security of jobs, financial dealings and lack of social interaction with both extended family, friends and work colleagues.

Lesson Learned: To make sure you always look after yourself and your family as mental ill health can effect not only you but others who care and support you. To have more of a work/personal lifestyle balance. Even if you are tired or stressed from your normal working life.

RUNNING AND MENTAL HEALTH

OCTOBER 8TH 2020

I started running in may to help combat my mental health. This was triggered both by covid and my home getting flooded in Feb. I felt that my experience was heightened as I didn't have anything to do during lockdown as such, I was watching people getting on with things in their houses and I wanted so much to be able

to do this but it had been taken away from me. I grew more and more frustrated and homesick and decided I needed to do something more to help get rid of the stress I was feeling. Couch to 5k helped me take control over my life and I could vent my feelings out running. I am now running 5k roughly 5 times a week and I feel so much better for it.

THE EFFECTS OF WORKING FROM HOME

OCTOBER 8TH 2020

The first thing I can think of is how we have gone from office working to working from home and how I have found it. It means I have to change the way I work and that is not always easy. Whilst I am the type of individual that will happily work on his own in an office environment, I also thrive on office discussions. The ability to stop, grab a cup of tea and have a chat in the kitchen and then go again. Being in the house on your own and not being able to do that, I can find that hard sometimes.

I sometimes find it hard to concentrate, as it doesn't always feel like I'm in work sometimes. The discussions I have in the office, can also drive my work and find it a great soundboard for the ideas I have. Being in the house on your own, I feel like I get more mental blocks than I would usually have. When my wife is home, she always apologises if she interrupts my work but I actually don't mind it, as I am able to run ideas by her and that "thinking" aloud is exactly what I need sometimes.

Lesson Learned: Whilst having the ability to work at home is important for a number of reasons, I don't think it is something that should be a permanent fixture in the future.

LIVING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

OCTOBER 8TH 2020

I have experienced trying to work full time at home with my husband doing the same while trying to look after 2 young children for 6 months. Life was very difficult, boundaries between personal and work life were very blurred and I felt a loss of control over all aspects of my life. This led to issues with my mental health which I've never experienced before. I felt like nothing I was doing was being done to 100% of what it should have been.

Lesson Learned: To try and take more positives from negative situations, be kinder to myself, try and put myself and family first before work.

A PARTING

OCTOBER 9TH 2020

During February 2020, I left my family home. I was married on August 3rd 2002, 2 years after meeting my future wife. We would have been together 20 years this November. Like any relationship split, there is always a back story, but ultimately our parting was fundamentally down to a different outlook on the future, and an increasing inability to communicate properly. We have brought 2 wonderful boys into the world and despite obvious feelings of guilt and fear of having ruined their life..."the kids are alright". They no doubt are having their own stuff to handle during lockdown, but I guess my greatest fear for them during this time is their future prospects, their disrupted education and their ability to live a free and unfettered existence. Childhood should be a treasured place, and full of joyous memories. I know from speaking frankly with them both, they are happy people, and know that their mother and I have done our best to make their place in the world one full of joy and rewarding experiences.

Divorce at any time is sad, painful and distressing. Despite there being an enormous burden lifted from my shoulders, I do feel sad. Sad, when reflecting on that beautiful day in August 2002, I hadn't planned for it to end in this way. I did think it would be forever. However, it hasn't proved to be, and so I need to look to the future rather than dwell on the past. COVID-19 has got in the way of my planning, but has allowed me to do things that I might not otherwise have done. An apposite time for reflection, compelled to just "be". Turning to activities that give me joy, music, films, guitar, running, swimming.....spending irregular, but quality time with my children. I have not lived on my own.....ever! It is unusual, and can be tough. I am writing this at 0530 in the morning in an apartment that has just me in it. I won't see my kids this morning and send them on their way to school. I will message them or try to call, but life is busy for them too. As my eldest enters his adult life, and my youngest forges ahead into teenager-dom, I am left focusing on my future plans....I know what I want and that's a good thing....just need COVID-19 to "do one"...

Lesson Learned: How to remain positive for a better future despite difficult times.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

OCTOBER 9TH 2020

Before March I would regularly go out and about and out for lunch a couple of times a week. Now I take the path of least resistance and just stay in, it seems easier than running the risk of covid and negotiating all the conflicting regulations. Some things I don't miss but it can't be healthy to avoid all human interaction beyond my immediate family so I have to rebalance somehow. Still not sure what that new normal looks like though.

Lesson Learned: I don't think I am the only person who feels like this - what does this mean for services, society and communities going forward?

LIFE EXPERIENCE

OCTOBER 9TH 2020

I volunteer as a lifeboat crew member at my local station and during the lockdown we have had zero exercises which has had an impact on how to maintain our competencies, however it has been very frustrating that during the lockdown period the number of lifeboat calls to persons cut off by the tide, I understand that locally we might have seen an increase due to more of us enjoying the weather and walks, but the calls I attended were to persons from out of the area, in fact out of Wales and in one case from France.

Lesson Learned: Greater awareness of what is and isn't permissible in a country where freedom is important however in some circumstances rules must be followed.



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2

WORK AND HOME

OCTOBER 13TH 2020

Things feel very different now (October). There seems to have been a shift in the media, including the comments I see on social media. You can see that some people have had enough. We're in local lockdown where I live but it looks as though the whole are the UK has a lockdown ahead of us that will be similar to the early days in April. The work hasn't really changed, apart from some members of the team are asking for more clarity. This isn't something we can definitely give and this mirrors what is happening in the UK at large. For me, the work is only affected by how I'm feeling. Everything seems a bit less hopeful. Work then was planning for a time when things got better, but much of my work in recent weeks has been planning for a period where things could get a lot worse again. The 'we're all in this together' attitude seems to be disappearing. I see so much about people wanting to go against government guidelines, although I don't know whether this is because the people are still adhering to them are keeping quiet now. Personally, the last thing I need with this going on is people threatening a 'revolt'. It's a worrying time as the worst days feel like they're ahead of us.

Lesson Learned: To use the best of what worked during the first wave and adapt it to fit what is coming. That being subject to collective moaning is detrimental to my well-being.



1. Image By Engin Akyurt From Unsplash
2. Image By Annie Spratt From Unsplash
3. Image By Diego San From Unsplash



Easing of 1st Lockdown



1

BELIEVING IN YOUR ABILITY

OCTOBER 14TH 2020

Realising I could do something that before we relied on external consultants to do, believing in my ability.

UNMOTIVATED AND FRUSTRATED

OCTOBER 14TH 2020

I'm finding it difficult to stay motivated, primarily because everything is so slow. I understand that everyone is incredibly busy during these testing times but I am finding it hard to focus on my work because I can't really progress with anything. Waiting over a week for responses to basic emails is incredibly frustrating. I feel that my work is not valued, therefore I get pushed to the back of the queue or meetings consistently get rearranged because something more pressing has turned up.

Lesson Learned: I'm not really sure. I think I need to speak to my line manager and express my concerns and frustrations.

CRISIS PERIOD, NOT NORMAL LIFE

OCTOBER 15TH 2020

Cut myself some slack and paused some of the big projects I have on the radar.

Lesson Learned: To recognise that I can forget to adapt my expectations of myself and others at the moment. The projects I need to undertake are disruptive to the business and I need to remember this isn't a normal period of time; people (myself included) could be, or are being, exposed to extremely difficult situations privately and to then enforce change and uncertainty in work through new technology deployments could be the last thing they (or I) need at the moment.

WILL IT EVER END

OCTOBER 15TH 2020

I'm experiencing the emotional draw of caring for family. Feeling overwhelmed at the moment and feel like it is a struggle to keep going. I'm not sure how to get things resolved but am keeping going. The strain that Covid brings is like building problems on top of problems. I'm usually a cool headed person - great under pressure but not sure why, this week feels like I'm coming to the end of my ability. Been to doctor, had tablets to help me sleep and help with anxiety but am trying to resist as I know how much of a hell I've had to go through in the

1. Image By Comeback Images From Adobe Stock
2. Image By Clement Falize From Unsplash

past when I come off them

Lesson Learned: Likely this is replicated around the country. If second lockdown is imminent, I am not sure how we will cope

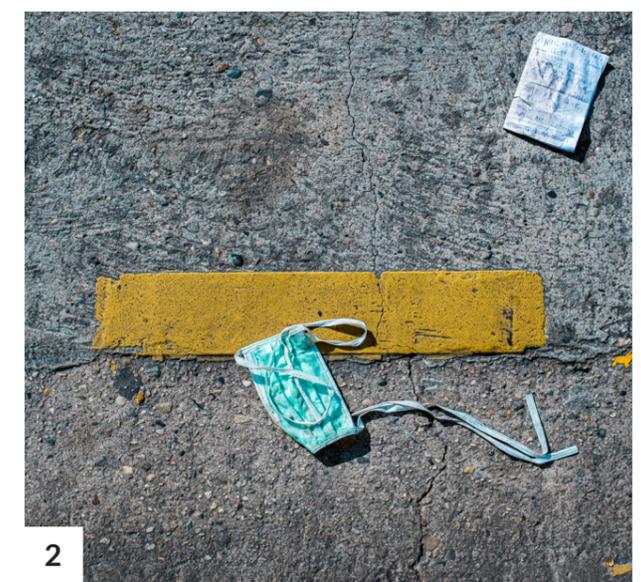
ONLINE CONFERENCES ARE THE FUTURE

OCTOBER 15TH 2020

Online sector conferences, with international contributors sharing practice, skills, insights and experiences that have helped me rethink how I work and given me fresh ideas for making changes. Also, networking is easier - more intentional and able to direct message attendees to arrange catch ups instead of having to rely on ad hoc connections in lobbies! I also felt more confident to ask questions of speakers through chat or by switching on cameras / audio without having to be affected by people around me. Finally - able to have my dog on my lap, use my own toilets, not stay in soulless hotels, eat my own food and save the planet with less travel. I can't think of a reason to go to a real conference again - unless the format is designed completely differently.

Lesson Learned:

- learning from international practice/expertise
- cost savings to organisations
- intentional, purposeful networking thing they (or I) need at the moment.



2





personally think it should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize! I miss the start line, the banter, the laughs, the friendliness. I miss the crowds of people at the start - in Porthcawl, numbers of participants can exceed 400 each week. It is brilliant for the community and the local economy as people descend on the local cafés afterwards for coffee and a bacon roll! I miss it. I want this pandemic to end so I can resume my event running, but more so because I want to see people at the start line!

Lesson Learned: The power of the group, the gathering. "New normal" is my most detested expression. I like change! I do, but not when it compels you to be away from people. Can society seriously believe that there will never be another Glastonbury, that there will never be 60,000 people at Anfield cheering Liverpool on, that there won't be a desire to be in a group....meeting people. What about dating! Is the human race destined to die out not because of Covid, but because there will be no pro-creation?

SECOND LOCKDOWN DISCONTENTMENT

OCTOBER 22ND 2020

Things have changed again this week as we prepare to go into the national lockdown on 23rd October. Things feel very different though as the 'we're all in this together' mindset seems to have all but disappeared. I appreciate that I'm in a protected bubble because my job feels secure, so my main worries are about others who are not as fortunate. It feels like it is now widely agreed that the economic cost of keeping people safe and well is too high a price to pay. I have seen a lot of short fuses this week and I've felt short tempered too. It feels like hope is in short supply. Work hasn't really changed for me yet so we'll see what the new lockdown brings.

2020, A YEAR OF CHANGE

OCTOBER 16TH 2020

The organisation responded well to suddenly having to work remotely. Some manual processes became digital very quickly, bringing forward some of our plans, and the business responded to them well. Our carbon footprint reduced overnight and the challenge now is to establish what the new normal looks like.

Lesson Learned:

- Change can be positive
- Reducing our carbon footprint can be achieved

LIMITED INTERACTION AND LOSS OF SPONTANEITY

OCTOBER 21ST 2020

A lot more time at home and missing human interaction - limited interaction with teams , loss of spontaneity.

Lesson Learned: The importance of face to face contact.

RUNNING MAN

OCTOBER 22ND 2020

I am an avid runner. I have been running since 2004 when I finished playing football. I ran my 1st ever marathon on November 6th 2005 in New York City. It was a breathtaking experience, quite literally at the finish

line as I was so overwhelmed by completing it on what would have been my mother's 67th birthday, I became quite emotional. I have had some running setbacks over the last few months with injuries and just time. Travelling between Swansea and Bridgend eats into my time as I strive to see my children. Counter-productive as running plays such an important part of my health and well-being. It has occurred to me that I miss company. I thought I was quite misanthropic, but I am not it seems. Every Saturday pre-Covid, I would participate in the 5k "free" Parkrun on Porthcawl sea-front. An international movement, Parkrun has established itself across the UK and the world as a place to enjoy running/walking in a 5k course week in week out. Relying exclusively on the running community's volunteer movement, is has been massive in helping people realise their health goals. I





CHAPTER 3
FIREBREAK
LOCKDOWN

16 RECORDED STORIES



1

Firebreak Lockdown

FAMILY BONDING DURING LOCKDOWN

OCTOBER 27TH 2020

For the first time as a family we have really made use of different science based learning on YouTube. During lockdown and since then we have watched experiments, watched space shuttles take off, watched astronauts fix the ISS, sent questions to Brian Cox about the universe and found out how your body makes poo. It's been a real bonding experience for us with the children, a real surprise and a different way to do home-schooling.

Lesson Learned: There is something to be learnt about a shared sense of purpose and how to create that through shared learning opportunities and beneficial use of social media.

IS IT ME?

OCTOBER 27TH 2020

As we have now entered another lockdown, it has made me think of what we did in the first lockdown and how quickly we adapted into that new norm. This time round it feels ever so different, members of the public seem less willing to engage with what is considered to be the best approach, political parties seem to be at odds with each other and local administrations want to gain points from the public by the way they are reacting. So my point I hear you ask, well it is simple, as much as it feels that our liberties are being taken away, the hospitals are filling up, the number of cases are increasing day in day out and yet still we want to go shopping meet up, have a party, why? the stacks seem higher now as Wales seems to be harder hit than it did the first time round. So yes its a little bit of difficulty for 2 weeks, we all knew it was coming so we did have time to prepare to but that handbag, new shoes etc. so come on will 2 weeks of no shopping bar for food really hurt us, then we can see where the numbers are going.

Lesson Learned: We need to have a clearer understanding of what is actually happening, it seems to me that the economy is starting to take the focus away and our leaders are frightened to make big calls, how can I meet and perhaps work with people whom I don't know and yet family who have been faithful to staying at home are now left alone again when really the bubble could and should have remained, we can forecast when the lockdown was going to happen and advise what aspects of life would be reduced.

1. Image By John Mark Smith From Unsplash
2. Image By Antonio Janeski From Unsplash

CHALLENGING

OCTOBER 28TH 2020

Work has been challenging initially making loads of huge decisions and then having to revisit them several times as guidance changes, being at home all the time is challenging, finding a work life balance when working from bedroom.

Lesson Learned: Definitely need to look after people including myself - these are challenging times and it affects us all not necessarily in the same way at the same time.

CONNECTIVITY

OCTOBER 28TH 2020

Like many others I have spent much more time working from home. This has involved increasing use of technology in respect of meetings (Teams, Zoom, Skype etc.). So whilst there has been limited face to face meetings, I have experience no reduction in terms of workplace interaction, in fact this has probably increased due to an increase in meetings.

Lesson Learned: Take the positives from any new situation and learn to adapt.

FANTASTIC COLLEAGUES

OCTOBER 28TH 2020

I have experienced colleagues going over and above, doing what is right and just getting on with it.

Lesson Learned: Values not policies and procedures are important. People can be trusted to do the right thing.



2

ONLINE MEETINGS

OCTOBER 28TH 2020

I have been doing a lot of on line meetings and meeting people for the first time through on line services, such as Microsoft teams and zoom. This has had advantages and disadvantages. Advantages being: once I became familiar with the services, I found using them a lot easier; situations where I may have been anxious about have been a lot easier by doing them on line. Disadvantages being: I find it harder to pick up on auto queues on when to speak and when not to; disruptions to peoples internet connection can sometimes make it difficult. I'm am now a lot more familiar with using these services and feel a lot more confident using them. I can now do training on line to others, sharing my screen, and this is very beneficial. It's been a great asset during difficult times.

CHANGING OUR WORK LIFE BALANCE

OCTOBER 29TH 2020

I have seen a huge change in the working environment of my organisation. From being driven by time sheets and flexi we have moved to a trust based approach which recognises that our staff will do the right thing and that in fact our biggest risk is presenteeism. Staff has responded to this by living the underlying values of the organisation. Even though we are mostly working remotely the work has still got done and internal controls have been maintained. Within the climate I have noticed a willingness for more honest conversations about how home and work life interact. Whilst remote working can cause isolation I have seen an increasing willingness to both share and understand each others lives. Dogs and children have appeared in the background of our virtual meetings and there has been an increasing understanding of the complexity of people's lives and how by working flexibly we will make this an increasing organisation of choice. This has made the leaders of the organisation more able to admit vulnerability and has been met by kindness. In the middle of a terrible pandemic the value of human interaction still prevails.

Lesson Learned: How we ensure that we do not use this learning when/if we snap back into a post Covid world. My view is that this learning will not be lost because it is underpinned by strong values set within the organisation and I think this is the most important thing. We need to learn from how this learning has made us feel and ensure that our language, policies, systems and leadership reflect this. I think as leaders we need to



Image By Glenn Carstens Peters From Unsplash

learn the importance of humility. Our resilience during Covid-19 is due to the actions each of our staff take every day and they have taken an additional step to share more of their lives with us. We need to value this and treat it as a gift of trust.

COMMUNICATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY

OCTOBER 29TH 2020

The enforced changes to the way in which services are provided as a consequence of Covid has resulted in a more person centred approach to service delivery. Personal circumstances of the recipient of the service are now considered in greater detail and services are more tailored with a focus on communication.

Lesson Learned: The benefits and importance of good communication to service recipients and the impact of maintaining extended communication.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

NOVEMBER 2ND 2020

Having the ability to work from home and having the work life balance which had been missed for several years.

Lesson Learned: Companies to enable there employees to have the flexibility to work from home to ensure they achieve the work/life balance. By having this I am more proactive and my health has improved. I feel less stressed.

BETTER CONVERSATIONS

NOVEMBER 2ND 2020

We have completely started to change the approach we take with the people we support and rewritten all our paperwork to support and facilitate a psychologically and trauma informed conversations with the people that use our services.

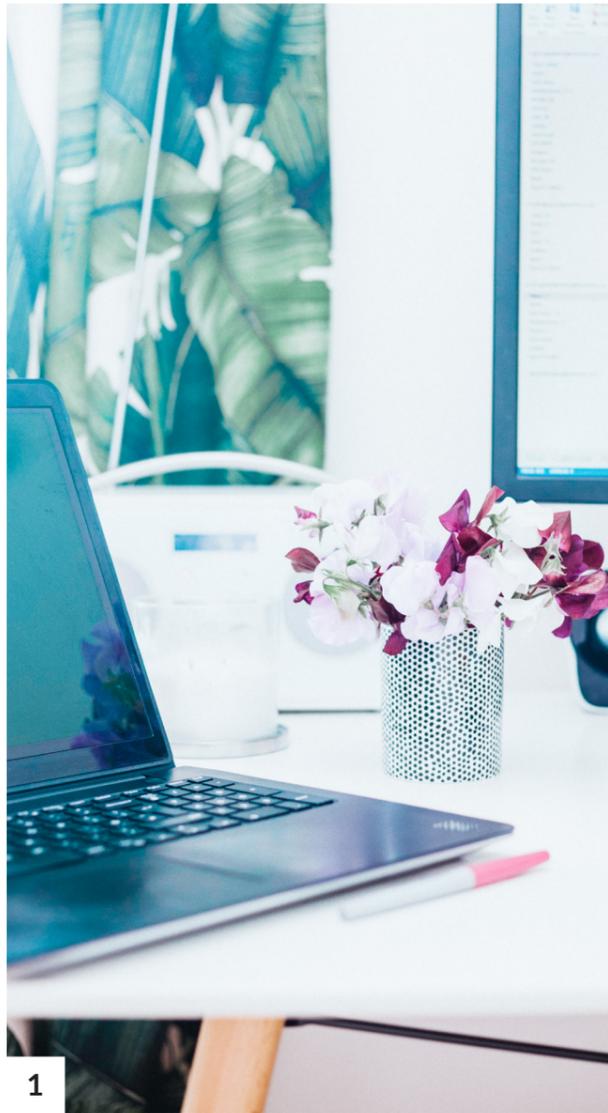
Lesson Learned: How to approach conversations and how we support people.

SHARING CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

NOVEMBER 2ND 2020

Established WhatsApp groups for rapid communication between members

Lesson Learned: How to use new ways of communication.



1

WASTE OF TIME NOVEMBER 2ND 2020

Spent time battling with other professionals.

Lesson Learned: That using senior positions to beat other professionals does nothing more than cause serious damage to working relationships.

A HEALTHY NEW NORMAL NOVEMBER 2ND 2020

I have been working from home, which is new. I actually really enjoy this, it's given me a nicer work/life balance. I think if I combined this with normal life I'd be pretty content. I have also lost a bit of weight, because I have felt more freedom to explore a healthier lifestyle due to working from home.

Lesson Learned: That people want more flexibility in their working lifestyle where it is possible.

CRISIS WORKING NOVEMBER 2ND 2020

Last week I experienced crisis working for the first time, a block of flats was without water and we were tasked with working late and accommodating all of the people who needed it and ringing around to find out who could manage with bottled water over the weekend. This brought some tense calls our way and some hard conversations especially as we are in the two week fire break situation. Everyone's needs were different and some people had covid symptoms or were shielding so it was challenging to get through.

Lesson Learned: That people want more flexibility in their working lifestyle where it is possible.



2



SUPPORTING CHANGE NOVEMBER 4TH 2020

Rolling out and providing ongoing ICT support for the enforced (by circumstances) change from an office-based workforce to a home-based workforce, whilst trying to maintain front-line services and other business functions and support colleagues in new ways of working. This would include everything from supplying IT and telephony equipment, assisting with setting up workstations at work and home, training and support for working in virtual environments (Teams, SharePoint etc.) and finding ways to continue projects that were halted by COVID.

Lesson Learned: I think most businesses have already learned the lessons from transitioning to home-working, but for me the key lesson is to trust your employees to do you proud! By this, I mean that people who buy into the values of their organisation have been shown to be incredibly adaptable, resourceful and accommodating and prepared to go to great lengths to do their jobs, almost regardless of the difficulties they have to overcome. Because the transition from office to home was unplanned and frankly chaotic, equipment was often in short supply, individual help couldn't always be provided, and the work environment at home was sometimes less than ideal. However there are very few instances I'm aware of where people weren't able (or willing!) to find ways to make it work. Over time most of the initial problems have been addressed and the correct equipment and support has now largely been provided, but I can't praise my colleagues enough for delivering service-as-usual in very unusual circumstances.

FIREBREAK LOCKDOWN - NEW CHALLENGES NOVEMBER 4TH 2020

We're 3/4 of the way through the 'firebreak' lockdown and it feels very different to the initial lockdown. Last week, I discovered that my 21 year old daughter has tested positive for covid. That brought worries because she lives in Cardiff and I live in Swansea, so I didn't feel able to offer practical support. Fortunately, she feels fine so I didn't have the added worry about concerns for her health. One thing that happened to her got me thinking about residents and the wider community though. She and her partner had to self-isolate, but were unable to get a slot with any of the supermarkets for home delivery. It made me think about how tempting it must be, for people in her situation who have no support outside of their household, to think 'I'll just nip to the shop' especially if they don't feel unwell. I was able to discuss this at the NPT Safe & Well partnership

meeting. At the start of the first lockdown, we had focused on making sure that elderly and vulnerable people were able to access food, medication, etc. There were groups of volunteers both from the community and from third sector organisations. Although we could get back in touch with them to check that they were still ok, potentially there is now a group of people who aren't elderly or vulnerable, but still need community support for essentials to ensure that they stay at home. These services are now open to them, but if they are not 'service users' usually, they may not be aware that services like this exist. With so many more positive cases in this area, this is likely to be a challenge for anyone without support outside of their household. Added to the anger that can be seen on social media and the apparent rise in 'non-believers', it feels like the perfect storm, let's hope that the firebreak lockdown works!

Lesson Learned: A different, or additional kind of service is needed compared to the early days of lockdown.



CHAPTER 4
EASING OF
FIREBREAK
LOCKDOWN

66 RECORDED STORIES



1

NEW JOB IN LOCKDOWN

NOVEMBER 11TH 2020

I started a new job, in the middle of March just before lockdown. It was extremely hard as I couldn't meet anyone I work with, I was unsure of how my work would develop and I have two small children at home who were not in school. I felt that I did everything in my life really badly and it is really important to me to do things well. I found it hard being isolated from my colleagues and it was very hard to develop any kind of relationship with people via video calls. I had the feeling that I didn't fit in or have a defined role in the organisation which made every day quite depressing. Everyone was busy but there were a lot of brilliant, supportive people who helped me find my way. Although my employer was really proactive in helping me settle in, there were people in my team who were not supportive, and it was very hard not to let other people's negativity and hostility have a really damaging impact on how I settled into the job.

Lesson Learned: That people need contact with other people - preferably face-to-face. Whilst virtual meetings and working from home are great in so many ways, it is really important for lots of people's mental health to meet other human beings. It's also important in terms of working toward shared goals effectively, sharing ideas, creating enthusiasm and a sense of team spirit. In a pandemic all this was impossible, but I would hate this style of working to take over completely in future as it isn't all positive. I do think this disproportionately impacts on women with children, as they still often have so much caring and household responsibilities that means they are just overstretched all of the time.

LITTLE CHANGE FOR ME

NOVEMBER 11TH 2020

Unlike a lot of people, the way I live, work and play has changed very little since March. I live in a very rural setting so my partner and I have few neighbours or people in the vicinity. I have been home based for work for the last ten years so have the space, technology and experience to do so easily conducting online meetings and collaboration has been part of my working practice for a while. Living in a National Park my recreation has always been walking in the surrounding area, I have always seen shopping as a necessary activity, again being in a rural area an hour or more from major urban areas online shopping has been normal apart from food, DIY materials and other essentials obtained from the nearby town. The only real differences have been not going out for meals with friends so often but we socialised outdoors when we were permitted. As for family, their summer stays with us haven't happened but they have visited for a day when possible. I know I am lucky being an introvert, with very little change in my work and living in a nice area with a garden and views. I do sympathise with those who have had to deal with much more impact on their lives than I have.

Lesson Learned: It is a very personal reflection and not sure what others could learn from it.



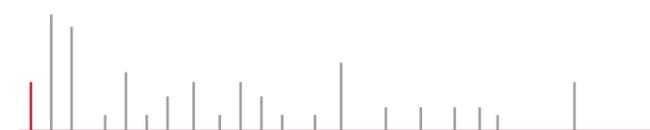
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DYSCHRONOMETRIA NOVEMBER 11TH 2020

The world certainly seems to have shrunk in a personal sense, both in terms of the people I interact with and the things I do. There is a sense of timelessness because every day is spent uniformly - same rooms, same people, same routine - and one loses a sense of which day of the week it is. Even weekends become almost indistinguishable. Home and work tasks become blurred and there is a sense of trying to achieve too much. Yet this is counterbalanced by the positive aspects of working from home - less travelling, environmental benefits, family dynamics improved.



3



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

I'm planning for a restorative meeting between two households. The session will have the usual complexities given that we are all different, but COVID has brought new challenges into the process:

- Can the meeting be face to face?
- Do we have a big enough space for the people involved to meet safely?
- Has anyone in either party at greater risk if they contract covid - age? Underlying health conditions?
- Are both parties willing to meet face to face in the current climate?
- If the meeting is held virtually, are both parties able to get online? Do they have WIFI and suitable devices?
- Do both parties have access to zoom?
- GDPR and zoom meetings
- Will we have to have a 'shuttle' type meeting, but will it be over the phone rather than moving between rooms?

This year has brought so many more challenges to a process that is already highly emotive and is likely to make it more challenging for the people involved to reach resolution. Or, will the challenges of working and living in 2020 have a positive impact on the process?

Lesson Learned: We have to have processes that take into consideration the limitations that we are currently working under.



2

MANAGING A REMOTE TEAM

NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

I have been pro-actively managing a remote team building in daily opportunities for interaction via a staff drop in session on Microsoft teams. We have a very small team four of us in total and one of those team members lives alone... one team members role was prior to covid very community based and one is a brand new team member recruited during lockdown. This daily opportunity for a staff meeting has been crucial to keeping up morale, getting to know each other for the new team member, supporting each other during the lockdown, keeping on track with work and troubleshooting common issues that we were all facing early on in our home office set ups. We are flexible with the time of the meeting although it is generally at 4.30 and not everyone attends everyday.

Lesson Learned: I have seen a lot of people on twitter say that a weekly opportunity to meet up is useful... I also know of some teams who don't even meet up weekly but for me and my small team we could not imagine not meeting at least every other day... once a week is just not frequent enough. I can imagine people think it is far to onerous or a waste of time but we have such positive outcomes for our work and well-being that we see it as essential to how we work together.

WORKING FROM HOME

NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

Unable to see colleagues or tenants. Processes we have used have changed sometimes on a daily basis making it very difficult to keep up with this way of working. It has been harder to ask colleagues questions as video calls do not really facilitate meetings in an open/sharing information way. This was particularly hard to return to after being ill with the virus in April/ May. My mental health suffered considerably.

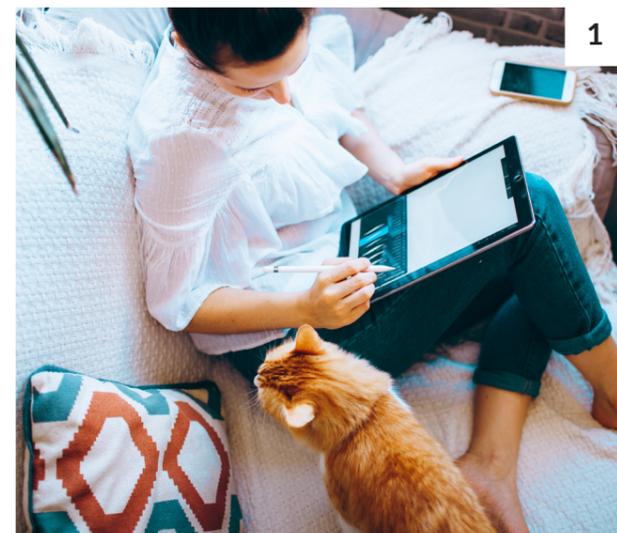
WORKING FROM HOME

NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

This has been a different experience as I was full time office based prior to March 2020. It has reduced my travel time, carbon footprint and improved my work life balance. It has however reduced who I connect/talk with from different departments within work.

Lesson Learned:

- How a business can operate under total agile working.
- How staff react to challenging working situations
- How a business can support with well-being



1

WORKING FROM HOME

NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

Worked from home for the first time ever which was very unsettling at first and I felt unable to focus and structure my days in the beginning.

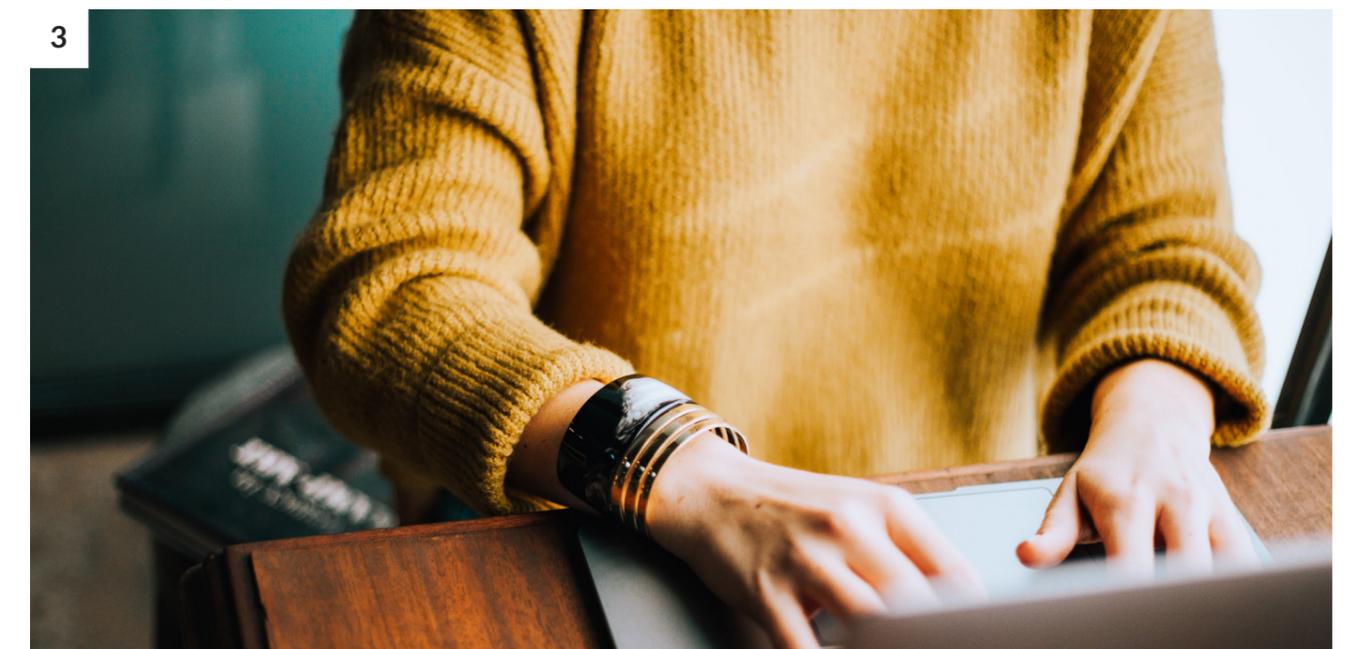
Lesson Learned: How a different way of working can be a positive experience and one which makes you want to change for the better although this was not evident to begin with.

ISOLATION

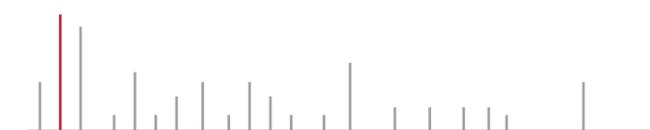
NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

I have experienced a feeling of isolation and loss of liberty of the things that I would like to do.

Lesson Learned: Self resilience, coping mechanisms, get on with it. There are people in a much worse position than I am, be grateful for what I have. Acceptance of situation that is out of my control.



3



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown

WORKLIFE BALANCE NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

Hours away from my home has obviously drastically changed... I work condensed full time hours so 9 hours 15 a day but in a flexi system with every Friday off. Typically prior to lockdown I would leave my house at 7.00am and return home at 8.00pm if I had to pop to the shops on the way home. I routinely was the last person in the whole office leaving when the security guard comes to close the building at 7.00pm During the winter months I would be getting up in the dark driving to work in half light and returning in pitch black. I would return... very quickly cook something to eat or get a takeaway or pick up a takeaway and have no evening really to relax before I had to bath and then get into bed ready for my alarm at 6.15am. Now I wake at 7.30 I am online at 8.00am I have a short lunch and generally finish work at around 5.30 or 6.00pm. I have noticed that I have occasionally been happy to attend a quick online meeting on a Friday which gets added to my flexi time, I actually also worked two half days during a weeks annual leave but I didn't mind at all because it was added to my flexi time and I knew that would mean I can finish even earlier during the week. During the summer months finishing work a little earlier on some days I was able to sit in the garden with a drink in the sun with my Husband at about 5.00pm relaxing and able to cook much nicer meals during the week... there was plenty of time for a relaxing evening before having to go to bed. The positive effect on my well-being for me and my husband has been amazing...

Lesson Learned: I always had the option to work from home and a supportive boss but life as it was so office based it made it impossible to work from home regularly.

3 STAGE DECONTAMINATION FACILITY NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

In February 2020, we started a Covid-19 risk assessment. During our research, we came across an article in the Lancet, about protecting healthcare workers. The evidence came out of Wuhan. The one example which stopped me dead in my tracks was of a pre-op patient who managed to infect 14 healthcare professionals before the onset of a fever. It was at this point we knew we were facing something extraordinary - Asymptomatic transmission. The other key moment for me was the early cases in Wrexham Maelor hospital, which were traced back to a petrol pump. Petrol pumps, delivery drivers, what are they delivering? I was very

fortunate to have served 25 years in the RAF, my facilities manager also served 16 years in the Army. We had the skills to do what was required during a biological threat, which is what we saw Covid as being. My facilities manager and I drew upon our forces training in Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare. We built a 3 stage decontamination facility where everything coming into the home is sterilised. Both my facilities manager and I spent many a good day in NBC suits and S6 respirators. We both knew about decontamination before entering a bunker. One of the first lessons learned in a biological or chemical threat environment is that you must keep everything, including oneself meticulously clean. Contact transmission from contaminated equipment and supplies is highly likely. This is an area which I feel the experts did not pay enough attention to at the beginning of the pandemic. Footfall across the threshold was also identified as a high-risk area because at that time, we had a very cost-effective shift system running. Short 3 hour shifts during busy periods such as 7 am to 10 am and 5 pm to 8 pm etc. This meant a number of shift changes throughout the day. We redesigned our rota into a 3 day on and 3 days off 12-hour shift pattern. We had no testing at the time, so the 3 days gave time for symptoms to show, thus allowing us to detect a symptomatic person before they entered the bunker. We purchased a 12x12 military mess tent. This was set up as the first stage of our decontamination (red zone). We sited this in front of our atrium. The atrium was then divided into two sections with a stud wall covered by polythene sheeting. This made both amber and green zone rooms. The red zone is where everything is sterilised, staff health monitoring/temp checks. My facilities manager is also a qualified plumber. Fortunately, we had an old kitchen pot wash sink, which he installed in the zone for hand washing. Shoes are also changed in the red zone before proceeding into the amber zone where staff get changed into on-site laundered uniform.

The other side of the stud wall is the Green zone. This is our healthcare professional visitors consulting room. We bring our residents into this to meet doctors and nurses etc. All visiting healthcare professionals don coveralls and standard PPE before entering the green zone. The coveralls are required in order to keep any potential contamination inside the suit. We had a problem getting BCUHB to accept our requirement for coveralls because they were very focussed on the conventional use of PPE which is to protect the wearer, they didn't see that the wearer needed protecting unless going into a contaminated area. I raised this with senior IPC officers within BCU, and they finally came around to our reverse use of PPE. I would love to add more, but running out of time LOL...

Image By Joshua Lawrence From Unsplash



PANDEMIC THROUGH MY EYES

NOVEMBER 12TH 2020

Since March my life has changed so much specially at work, where physical interaction is so needed, it almost feel like the previous months before that date never existed. Trying to fit the new way of living has been harder as mentally I have felt unfit in some occasions, anxiety and stress and not knowing if we will ever be back to what we know and how long what we don't know is been very hard. But at the same time how we have managed to keep going myself and my family has been extraordinarily, getting to understand each other more and being able to actually cohabit together as long as we have is really something I didn't knew. Things still moving, is days when I feel that everything is getting better and almost like back to normal feeling and then as soon as I check the news or social media that terrifying feeling of the unknown comes back.

Lesson Learned: That we are still looking the way to adapt, that we got to keep going.

WORKING FROM HOME

NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

My working life has changed dramatically. No more commuting, no more face to face interaction.

Lesson Learned: Working from home works! People are productive and happier.

CHANGING COMMUNITY PATTERNS

NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

I have better connected with the community in which I live due to working from home. This has changed my relationship with the community in which I live. I was less connected with it previously. Now it is where I spend most of my time so I increasingly shop locally and interact with more people from my community. My daily habits now incorporate my community. Previously, I may have gone to lunch with a work colleague in the area where I work. Now I go to my local village for a takeaway treat instead. This transaction feels much more personal.

Lesson Learned: I think its about understanding the impacts of the changing world of work moving forward and the opportunities for new and different businesses that can benefit from changing work styles / agile working / more time spent within the communities in which we live.



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown

VALUING WHAT I'VE TAKEN FOR GRANTED NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

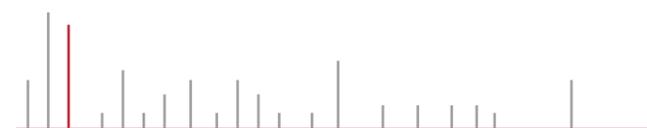
Valued being able to do things such as going to the gym, seeing my friends, going on holiday.

Lesson Learned: Don't take things for granted, make the best use of life after lockdown (before it is limited again).

COMMUNITY TEAMWORK NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

The 1st of March brought a lot of uncertainty to our lives, from home life, social life to work. For me personally I experienced a vast amount of gratitude, for the people around me, the place I live and call home, my work and my colleagues. We all worked together at the start of a lockdown we thought would only last a few weeks, to being months in and still working together to keep our tenants, families, friends and community safe. Our community rallied together and began a project to provide PPE to front line staff, raising money to help this project, with the help of the whole community they raised over £30,000 and provided visors for staff across Wales while also providing their local village with visors to use in the local shops, opticians, health centre and also the Older person scheme. We as a team of colleagues worked together to deliver tenants their daily meals to their doors, delivering prescriptions and their weekly shopping and papers, helping the more vulnerable people to have a little normality in such uncertain times.

Lesson Learned: That in hard times, uncertain times our team here and our local community would all pull together to help each other and those around us. That kindness and generosity does exist even at the most difficult times.



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE - BUT CORONAVIRUS HAS FORCED SOME MUCH NEEDED CHANGE

NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

I've changed a process that used to involve a lot of paperwork between departments and contractors to a paperless system, which is something I wanted to do but was always met with a form of resistance. Lockdown removed any need to keep fighting for it or justifying it and it gave the perfect excuse for change. I've experienced a lot of innovation from colleagues and contractors but, conversely, I have also experienced a lot of 'down' periods because I am not seeing colleagues properly. Teams meetings can only convey so much and a lot of the personal aspects of my job have disappeared. I don't like this. My whole department feels disjointed, despite great efforts made by management. This is, I feel, unavoidable to a point. I have experienced angry and frustrated tenants who want things to carry on as normal. I have experienced uncertainty over other people's jobs and have questioned whether some people are indeed working from home or actually taking longer breaks than they should.

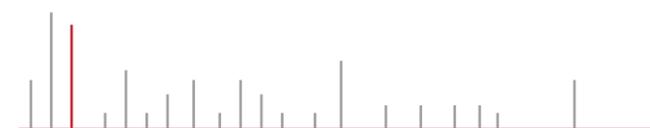
Lesson Learned: Effective communication and accountability - no need for anything else.

HOME WORKING

NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

I have been home working mostly since the beginning of March and initially found this difficult, I like to interact with others and feel a sense of belonging in work. I do find that all the restrictions made me anxious in the early days and I struggled with this. As time has passed I have felt that this has eased and have found a lot of positives in the situation. Staying connected has not been too difficult and virtual meetings have been a great way to meet with colleagues. Everyone has stated that they have felt supported this way and given that the team was fairly new in post I do believe we have forged good relationships and a mutual trust. I didn't believe initially that this would happen and I'm so glad it did.

Lesson Learned: That working environments can take different forms and be as productive as it needs to be.



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



HOME STAY NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

Spending so much more time at home and not being able to travel away. Feeling of groundhog day.

FOOD SOURCING NOVEMBER 13TH 2020

We have set up a new delivery service to our tenants from our shop, this has helped them to get food supplies at the toughest time during the pandemic. We were even struggling to get stock, however myself and my team were driving all around Swansea, linking in with local shops to get the food needed for our tenants. We understood tenants couldn't get out to get cash etc. so we have made a specific account for each tenant to pay as and when they can. This helped a lot and we had a lot of feedback from the tenants explaining that if we didn't do this then they wouldn't have known how to get food as the shopping slots were horrendous, we have vulnerable and lonely tenants with no family. We will probably continue this delivery service even when the pandemic has gone.

Lesson Learned: I think we adapted extremely well considering we have never been through something like this before, however I would say prepare for the worst, get more links with local shops, groups etc.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS NOVEMBER 15TH 2020

Virtual meetings rather than physical meetings.

Lesson Learned: Virtual meetings have been a great way to continue many aspects of our work during Covid-19. As we have had more experience of using these platforms, they have operated more smoothly and we have ironed out problems and bugs. That is something that could only have happened with experience, that we likely would not have happened if the lockdowns and social distancing measures had not occurred. We have also learned the limitations of these platforms, and the fact that having too many in quick succession can lead to fatigue and a lack of interest.

VOLUNTEERED IN A CARE HOME NOVEMBER 16TH 2020

Volunteered in a care home due to Covid 19. I volunteered weekly on a Sunday in Linc's care homes to help support the care staff, simple things like supporting with meal times, taking residents to the garden and general conversation.

Lesson Learned: How important engagement is on mental health and well-being during Covid 19.

FREEDOM TO THINK NOVEMBER 16TH 2020

Working from home gave me more freedom to think.

Lesson Learned: The view of working and an understanding that work is not my priority.

THE NEW DINING EXPERIENCE NOVEMBER 16TH 2020

I have been out to dinner a handful of times since March and each establishment seemed to have a different interpretation of what the rules are? In one night I went to two places which were different ends of the spectrum in terms of what was required of us as patrons - so what is right and which went too far? The first was a restaurant where we sat as a table of 8 (this was during Dine Out to Help Out) and one of us had our details taken for the track and trace, we were directed to sanitise our hands on entry and wear a mask whilst approaching our table (and at any time where we had to leave the table) - the waiting staff had visors and service pretty much continued as it normally would have with no apparent changes? The next place we went to was a bar and when queuing we were asked for all of our details, sanitise our hands. At this point we were directed that there was a one way system around

the outdoor area, we were only to go inside to use the facilities and would be escorted by a member of staff, we weren't to talk or turn to any neighbouring table and to motion to the staff to order drinks. This seemed very over the top and if it wasn't done in the other place - where had these rules come from? Did that mean that the first place weren't keeping to basic guidelines? In another establishment where the server process was initiated using a QR code, this is a good thing to review the menu - but knocks the dining experience down because it doesn't have the personal feeling of conversing with the staff, taking recommendations, menu specials etc. I feel that the experience has been spoiled.

Lesson Learned: making the guidelines concise to follow - otherwise they are so ambiguous it spoils the potential of the business. What is right and what will bring people back out. Limited numbers are fine, but it seems pointless to go out when you can't enjoy yourself.

WELL-BEING NOVEMBER 16TH 2020

We organised out concerts for people in Nursing/ Extra Care Schemes and well-being packs.

Lesson Learned: Due to older people unable to see their family and friends since March in some cases, their well-being was not being thought about. Some people had started to refuse drink and food and had lapsed into a depression. Obviously this was incredibly dangerous.

COVID IMPACT NOVEMBER 17TH 2020

- Working from home
- Spending more time with family by taking and picking children up from school daily
- Adapting services to enable duties to be carried out from home
- Developed systems to capture COVID related circumstances
- Started gardening
- Home schooling
- Missed close family due to social distancing

Lesson Learned: Trust, commitment, reliability. Realisation of how many homes could be created through office spaces, especially when office have been converted from homes. It could help solve the housing crisis. How important it is to see people face to face to understand underlying issues. Mental health impact of being so isolated.



TAKING CHARGE OF CHANGE WITH DYNAMISM LEAP

NOVEMBER 18TH 2020

The change in work environment since March has of course been the biggest change, with a distinct difference in the way colleagues interact meaning positive and negative change in the working dynamic. Initially, it was difficult focus and prioritise, with workload management and visibility to others the most difficult elements to navigate. Getting separation from the working day was also problematic until new boundaries were establish, distinguishing social space from working space. Equally, the fluidity in work/life environment and schedule meant it was possible, if necessary, to extend the working day easily if private appointments meant time during the day was needed. Spending less/no time commuting has also changed the work separation dynamic and techniques for getting into 'work mode'. However, on the upside, it has enable for later wake ups. Fantastic, if not particularly a morning person. And of course, the reduction in diesel used in commuting and wear on the car is very helpful for the pocket and environmentally beneficial. In honesty, well-being has been a factor, again with workload management being particularly challenging, particularly with the transition between teams. However, acknowledging this, I was able to compartmentalise and get the 'helicopter view' which is not always possible when immersed in a jobs list. Through this experience, I have become more resilient and dynamic in my self management. Also, very much value the connection with colleagues and others, regardless of geographical position. Although sometimes intrusive and distracting, the ability to hold ad hoc virtual meeting can be hugely beneficial to progressing with tasks strategically, effective allocation of sub-tasks and general mutual support.

Lesson Learned: Take proactive steps when change is coming, don't be too reticent and realise there is support. We don't work in silos and, to a greater or lesser extent, everyone has similar struggles to manage. No one is alone. Crisis can also breed opportunity for betterment on the other side when such things are compartmentalised and rationalised.



2020 ROLLERCOASTER

NOVEMBER 18TH 2020

Lots of video calls and working from home. I have spent a lot less social time with friends and family and doing the things that I would normally do for downtime. Instead of downtime I have spent a lot more time completing DIY tasks at home and in the garden and also a lot more pro-active development at work to include the implementation of a new booking system.

Lesson Learned: Things can change very quickly and it is important to be able to adapt both physically and mentally.

SECOND LOCKDOWN ENNUI

NOVEMBER 20TH 2020

Since the firebreak lockdown, life has seemed, I don't know as it's hard to quantify the feeling, boredom, maybe? Ennui? Existential angst?

Lesson Learned: Learning about how people are feeling as the pandemic restrictions continue.

COLLABORATION

NOVEMBER 20TH 2020

A joint effort to work together across departments internally and across agencies externally to provide the best support and service for the communities.

Lesson Learned: Less safeguarding of individuals own area of work/budgets means better joint working with better overall outcomes for everyone.



WORKING FROM HOME

NOVEMBER 20TH 2020

The main difference has been working from home full-time. On 17 March, my colleagues and I were told we would need to work from home and we have done so ever since. That's the last time I saw any of them face-to-face.

Lesson Learned: I think the longer people are working from home, the more the impact changes. People were quite positive at first. It was nice to spend more time with family and whilst the weather was sunny people could enjoy their own gardens more. However, as time has gone on, children have returned to school and the weather has become bleaker, I am finding it more of a mental struggle. Some days I find it hard to stay motivated and focussed, and don't feel I've achieved anything. I am lonely a lot of the time. I am also finding that I'm putting weight on. Some days I just walk from my bed, to my desk, with a couple of trips to the kitchen and bathroom, and that's it. The learning is that working from home permanently has a negative impact on mental health and physical health.

WORKING FROM HOME

NOVEMBER 20TH 2020

Working processes have been vastly different since March 2020 - person to person interaction (which is extremely important in my job role) has not been possible.

Lesson Learned: A potential new way of working in the future, regardless of the pandemic.



VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

NOVEMBER 22ND 2020

I have experienced that it is not necessary to be physically present to develop rapport and professional working relationships. Moreover it is not necessary to be physically present to maintain or develop existing ones. This is the result of joining a new organisation just before lockdown and having spent more time in the job working from home than in the office.

Lesson Learned: A new way to organise and run businesses without the assumption that we must all sit in the same place (an office) in order to function as a team or group effectively. That it is possible to develop and grow interpersonal professional relationships via video conference technology.

B G REACH

NOVEMBER 23RD 2020

Half way through a project we had to completely change the way we were delivering it.

Lesson Learned: Making sure that people are more digitally informed to make communication much easier.

ONLINE EVENTS

NOVEMBER 23RD 2020

I have attended online comedy/film festival events, these events have also been shared by the team I am in at work. This has been due to the physical event being cancelled due to covid restrictions. These events have

been available online and streamed to my TV. It has been a change to the dynamic and feel of the event with although it being enjoyable to watch, it is missing the theatre and energy of attending in person (and the mid session interval ice cream!). It is something I will continue to virtually attend as it is important to support the arts so they are available to attend in person when the situation changes.

Lesson Learned: Sharing within teams for social and well-being elements. Working to support sectors so that they are available to us once the pandemic is over.

THIS YEAR WORKLIFE CHANGED FOREVER

NOVEMBER 23RD 2020

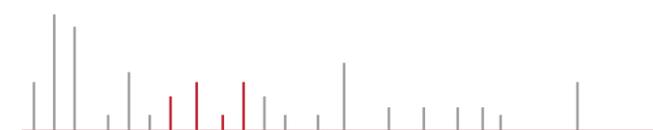
Everything has been different.

BLEAK NEW REALITY

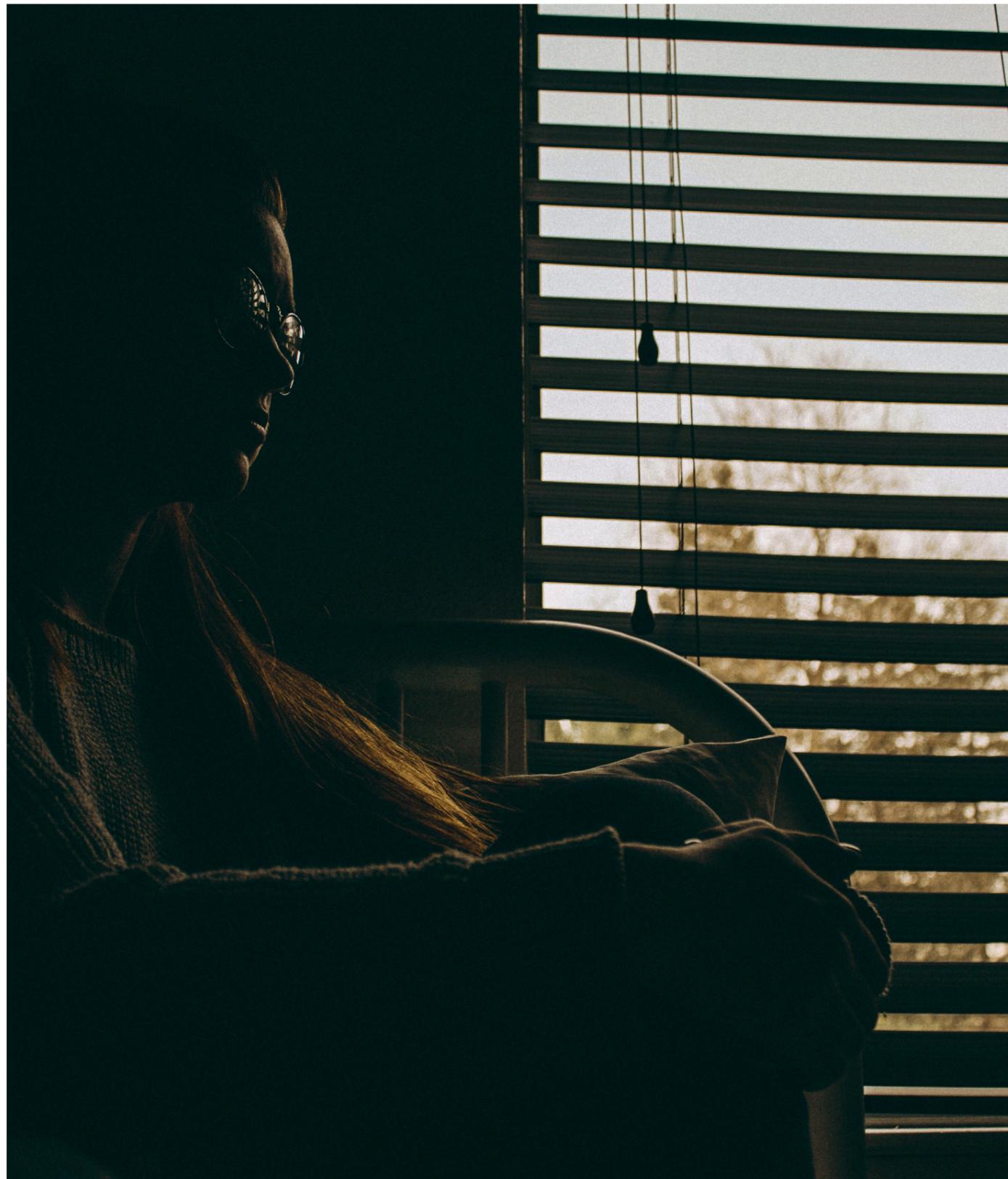
NOVEMBER 23RD 2020

Our entire focus became about Covid 19, protecting our residents, staff and relatives as much as possible. Everyday interactions that we took for granted were now lost as we had to change our approaches completely. We lost residents at unprecedented levels over a three month period, saw many of our colleagues become acutely unwell and tried our best to do our jobs as the morale dropped over time.

Lesson Learned: Ways that we can support our staff in terms of their mental health and offer our appreciation for all their hard work.



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



HOME WORKING

NOVEMBER 24TH 2020

I have been working solely from my home.

LIFE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY

NOVEMBER 24TH 2020

Since March I have been working from home. I've never worked in this way before having always been based at Head Office and spending my days working alongside my team. It was a bit of shock and really challenged me both personally and professionally. The biggest impact it has had has been on my well-being and ability to switch off from work and enjoy being at home with my partner. It is hard now to establish when the work day starts and finishes. My work space is also where I eat, sleep and enjoy my downtime - so this lack of boundaries has started to take its toll.

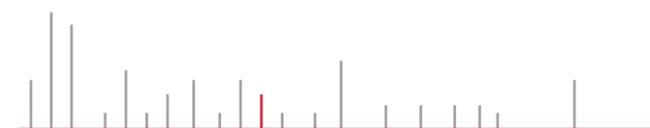
Lesson Learned: How to manage and improve my own well-being. Now less able to utilise the support of others.

CHANGES TO OUR LIVES DURING COVID

NOVEMBER 24TH 2020

We have been effectively shielding since the end of March - my dad is disabled and my sister and brother in law are key workers so my husband and I have decided to shield as much as possible so that we are always able to help my dad if needed with as little risk as possible to him. This means in practice:

- We have not been to the hairdressers since March (usually I would go every 7 weeks)
- We have not been to a restaurant or pub including outdoor spaces since March
- We have not used a public toilet since March
- We have only been into shops about 10 times instead having click and collect or deliveries
- We have not really been very far from our home not been to places we would usually go Barry Island, Cardiff Bay, because we are avoiding people and using public toilets
- We have not met with friends even outdoors
- We have not stayed at a hotel or been on holiday (we had to cancel two lovely holidays)
- We have not visited Cardiff
- We have been cutting our own hair!! lol with mixed results, saving a lot of money and going very grey
- We have built a shed in the garden with a wood burning stove in it and that is our new going out/pub/ holiday
- We have been able to meet with my mum and dad outdoors with my sister and her family at a distance - the winter weather is having a very detrimental effect on all of our spirits not being able to meet up (we were thrilled this week as the weather was mild enough at the weekend for us to be able to do it again)
- We have been taking up new hobbies, propagating succulents, gardening, listening to interesting live podcasts and broadcasts including a Welsh History conference that was fascinating and we would never have gone along to
- We have been having plenty of time for each other rather than constantly being with family- now it is once a week to deliver the shopping/sit in the garden rather than more often than that
- We have discovered some lovely local walks some of which we have never done before despite us both living in the area for over 40 years
- Work life balance is so much better I will never return to the hours I used to work in the office with the commute



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown

WORKING CHANGES NOVEMBER 25TH 2020

Working from home, virtual meetings in order to deliver services and adhere to contractual requirements. The pace of working has increased considerably and 7 months in I feel that the strain of this intensity is having an impact on peoples well-being and resilience. There are many benefits to working virtually but nothing can replace the human contact and relationships that face to face meetings can nurture. There have been challenges in ensuring that staff working in isolation are fully supported and added pressures of managing family commitments with work.

FREEDOM FROM THE DAILY COMMUTE NOVEMBER 29TH 2020

Worked from home 100% since 17th March 2020. Less tiredness due to the removal of the commuting (1 hr each way); as a result I've been able to become a community (co-opted) Governor at my local secondary school.

Lesson Learned: Release of non value adding activity (Travelling) to something that is value adding (being a governor) at a local secondary school with the time released.

build up so we donated the remainder of the fabric paid for by the fundraiser to another volunteer group and refocused our energies on making flags and banners for upcoming TV and film productions.

Lesson Learned: Keep a finger on the pulse of supply and demand and adapt accordingly.

RE-FRAMING CULTURAL PARTICIPATION NOVEMBER 30TH 2020

Our organisation - a cultural organisation - has radically refocused our work beyond our buildings, to reach communities and people who have been further excluded by COVID, in many cases working together with other organisations that are our long established partners. We established inter-departmental task and finish groups to get cross fertilisation of ideas and quicker decisions, across all areas of service to the public. In part these activities have been digital, but we know that a substantial minority of people in Wales cannot or do not access the services they want via the Internet. For this reason we have also used traditional mail, and a range of organisations across Wales that operate at grassroots level to address a wide range of social challenges. We have also worked closely with health boards and education services to take cultural experiences into field hospitals, care homes and schools in new ways.

Lesson Learned: The need to review what cultural services should look like, where they happen. Culture is a way of thinking and acting in the world, not just a building or a set of cultural assets, or a space where cultural programmes take place. Also to bring cultural practice in as an essential resource for support and delivery of the Welfare State at a community level, which means rethinking the Welfare State as well as rethinking culture.

ISOLATION NOVEMBER 30TH 2020

Since March I haven't been able to see my family very much, including my parents. Though this has been an important part of keeping people safe, it has been a difficult period. This experience has had a negative impact on both me and my family, with limited face to face contact there have often been periods of feeling isolated for all of us.

Lesson Learned: The impact of loneliness on people of all ages.

EYE TEST NOVEMBER 30TH 2020

I had an eye test. This has been delayed and cancelled several times this year due to local and national lockdowns. As I use computers most of the day for my job role, I was keen to get a test as I have started to get headaches. Whilst using the computer. I was able to have my eye test on Friday and for the appointment you need to keep your face mask on. This proved a challenge as the lenses used for testing kept steaming up. It was a bit concerning that this may cause the test not to be as accurate as normal. Also trying glasses on with a mask is tricky to get the feel on your ears, but also quite amusing as I was wearing a dog face mask so I looked like a dog wearing glasses (its the simple things that we can find joy in). I was impressed by the lengths the opticians went to with cleaning and staff/customer protection. Overall it was an interesting experience compared to pre Covid eye tests.

FOCUS ON OTHERS AND STAY SANE AND HEALTHY! NOVEMBER 30TH 2020

I have focused on professional and voluntary activities; providing me with a positive focus and also assisting others in the process. It is the antidote to living alone, not having any family live locally (so no bubbles for me), managing a serious personal health scenario and minimizing my risk of contracting COVID.

Lesson Learned: The continued importance of answering questions such as "Is this a good use of my energy?", "What really matters?" And on focusing on what I can do, rather than what I can't do.

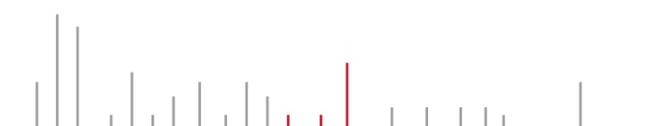
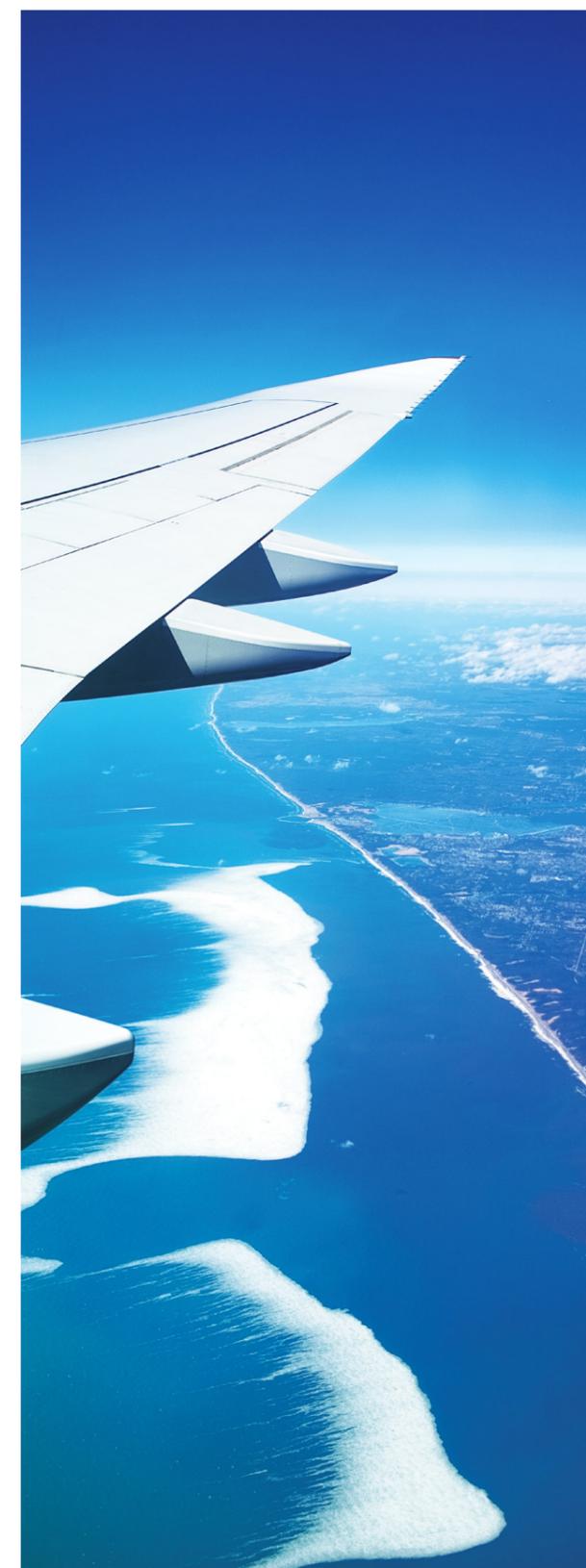
LACK OF HOLIDAY NOVEMBER 30TH 2020

I have experienced a lack of holiday.

Lesson Learned: You have to find alternative ways to wind down and relax.

THE INSTINCT TO PROTECT NOVEMBER 30TH 2020

The instinct to protect my team and the longevity of the business kicked in fairly soon after the pandemic hit. I looked at every angle possible to see what I could do to ensure we had work coming in to pay overheads and wages and to date we haven't closed, haven't laid anyone off and have managed to keep up the momentum. Early on we engaged with Welsh Government and helped with the production of SCRUBS for the main contractor but it became evident after several weeks that as a manufacturing business which doesn't mass manufacture as the norm, we were losing money to the benefit of another business. We knew that another businesses in Wales also joining the effort to produce scrubs are being funded by ESF funding via the Welsh Government so staff would be getting a wage whatever they made, so with the realisation that there wasn't a level playing field, we pulled the plug on the mainstream effort and instead focused on producing scrubs through a fundraiser with the support of our established client base we raised c.£8,000 and recruited an army of local volunteers who produced red scrubs tunics and trousers which we then donated out free of charge to care homes, front line and health workers UK wide. While that went on for several months the flag making business rebounded and the orders started to



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



1

WORKING FROM HOME

DECEMBER 1ST 2020

I have been working from home whereas normally I would be office based.

Lesson Learned: Working from home can be productive for some tasks, however working from home long term in a role that relies on collaboration is becoming tiring and difficult. Everything is slower, teams are becoming more silo'd and we feel disconnected from each other.

HOME SHOPPING AND DELIVERIES

DECEMBER 1ST 2020

Home Shopping and deliveries to our door for multiple people - Since March 2020 to date Nov 2020 I have very rarely physically shopped in a shop. I have been to garden centres and B&Q multiple times but as regards supermarkets, clothes, restaurants, bars, pubs etc. I have probably had to call in for essentials in between home deliveries about 10 times. All my food and my mum and dads food and supplies are now delivered to my door via Asda, Ocado, Iceland, Amazon and some other smaller suppliers. This is dramatically different for our shopping habits, reducing food waste, reducing time spent, changing our diet according to what is in stock or who is delivering. We have also had a huge number of food deliveries including bakers, ramen, ribs, take away restaurants that we wouldn't usually eat from, Chain restaurants, Michelin Starred Restaurants, organic food, pop up food providers including Lebanese Barbeque etc. Many of these weren't offering a delivery service prior to Covid. We realise that we are really lucky to be able to afford these and to be in a location where they will now deliver. This has completely changed our usual shopping habits I would usually spend quite a lot of money on hairdressers ever 7 weeks, clothes, make up and general impulse purchases when I was out and about... we would go into Cardiff probably once a month and have a long day of shopping and eating and drinking. None of this has happened since Covid. I have ordered about 10 items of clothes from the internet but that is significantly less than I would usually be buying, I feel I just don't need any more stuff- I have too much stuff now... and as I am only working from home there is nowhere to go or to wear it.

DISJOINTED

DECEMBER 4TH 2020

Feeling disjointed from other members of the team.

Lesson Learned: I think the organisation needs to look



2



3

at how solitary working impacts on the individual teams and its individual members.

LIVING AT ONE REMOVE

DECEMBER 4TH 2020

Much of my life has moved on line: worship, business meetings, campaigning, learning, arranging online public meetings.

Lesson Learned: Coronavirus forces us to live online for the time being. It has taught us that we can travel much less, work from home much more IF WE HAVE RELIABLE BROADBAND. It costs less to live quietly at home, mainly in much reduced use of the car locally and fewer journeys across country by public transport. I already knew (as I worked from home prior to retiring) that a good working wifi set up was essential. In the rural area it has always been a problem - we live in one of the tiny percentage of areas where BTOutofReach has still not replaced prehistoric cabling. For 7 years we have used first satellite, and now mobile to aerial instead. Since the covid lockdowns began, the signal has deteriorated badly. We get wifi from a company in Bala (using EE signal) and mobile phone from Phone Co-op (Using EE). EE acknowledge signal problems for hours at a time almost every day. EE belongs to the BT group.

CHASING COMPLAINTS

DECEMBER 7TH 2020

I deal with complaints for the organisation and am finding it increasingly difficult to achieve responses from people as I can only chase them electronically and they can ignore emails or messages. If I was in the office I could seek them out and speak to them face to face about the outstanding complaints and when I need responses by.

Lesson Learned: People can prioritise work and set their own reminders and deadlines to avoid me having to chase them up all the time.

WAITING AROUND

DECEMBER 7TH 2020

I am finding things so much more difficult with certain areas of my work because I am constantly waiting for responses from other people which holds me up from being able to do things myself and being able to finish a job properly.

COVID-STYLE LIVES

DECEMBER 8TH 2020

Remote working, all meetings via Teams, Zoom and using media apps a lot more to keep connected with colleagues and friends and social occasions instead of the usual physical meetings. Saved a lot of money on petrol, new tires etc. Much less stressed due to working from home and being able to go for a lunch time walk in the woods nearby most days. Really appreciated the rare occasions I've been able to physically meet colleagues and friends.

Lesson Learned: That we don't have to drive miles to be able to connect/communicate and do our jobs, however we do need physical contact and meetings some of the time to feel connected, it's a balance and some meetings don't really need to take place in the physical, virtual meetings do work.

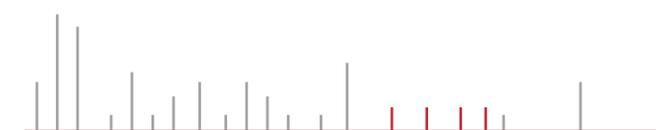
TOP DOWN COMMUNICATION

DECEMBER 8TH 2020

My communication with line management/directors and CEO has improved due to the use of Teams/Virtual meetings. I found the use of virtual meetings has aiding the communication of top down information. This is because it has been easier to speak to managers because of increased availability. Without the need to find meeting rooms/space managers and myself having been able to 'drop in' on staff to speak when required. It is true that it can sometimes be frustrating that someone's status says they are always in a call but I have found it easier to chat within Teams allowing them to phone me after where if I was in the office I might not of been able to find the staff member and never thought to phone staff who were in the same building as myself. The frequency of information via email has also improved with weekly Friday update emails from our leadership team.



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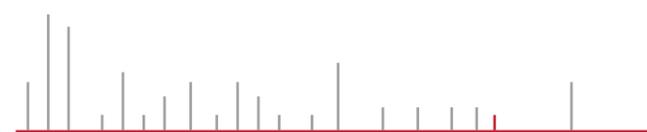
Easing of Firebreak Lockdown

FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVES IS A GREAT WAY THROUGH ANY PERIOD OF DIFFICULTY

DECEMBER 9TH 2020

Just experienced another two week isolation period. Unlike the first period of isolation, in March / April this time any novelty, as well as the nice weather had gone. This meant having to juggle work and childcare all week, with no nursery or family support to enable either myself or partner to work more than two hours in a row. This meant working four of the five evenings - the weekend we agreed had to be work free - to just get close to working our contracted hours. However difficult moments were, we know and massively appreciate how lucky we are. We're both employed in stable organisations, where the risk of furlough and redundancy is low / non-existent. This means we don't have the financial worries others are facing, while health wise, our friends and family are all doing well. We are also not physically isolated or alone. Focusing on the positives is a great way through any period of difficulty. However, there has to be acceptance that old productivity measures are too crude. Everyone's situation is different and without supportive managers then job pressures can add to the negative spiral, and the further down a spiral someone goes, the harder it is to recover. Countering this, organisations and colleagues need to recognise that we can't just continue to 'fire fight' until this pandemic is over. We need to ensure we find time to step back, re-evaluate and make changes so we can work smarter. The issue is some changes won't result in immediate benefits, meaning buy-in for implementing these is limited as they feel that they have to focus on the immediate priority of supporting as many of our tenants as possible. Finding the time to achieve all the above, while taking into account colleagues' personal situations, is going to be an extremely difficult challenge.

Lesson Learned: The importance of personal circumstance, but also the bigger picture.



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



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GRADUATED UNI IN THE PANDEMIC

DECEMBER 14TH 2020

I graduated university during the pandemic- meaning all my exams were moved online, teaching moved online and graduation was cancelled. This was a very weird way to finish my university experience and meant I felt like I missed out on a lot of my third year.

Lesson Learned: Universities can learn that online learning has to be done pro actively. Even more effort is needed for online university than in person university.

READING

DECEMBER 14TH 2020

I have read more books than I used to do before.

LEARNING

DECEMBER 14TH 2020

I have had to learn a new job and work remotely for the first time ever at the same time.

WORKING FROM HOME

DECEMBER 14TH 2020

Working from home rather than in the office.

Lesson Learned: That working from home is a genuine possibility, and an effective staffing arrangement for organisations. But also that face to face interaction is crucial and very effective in communicating.

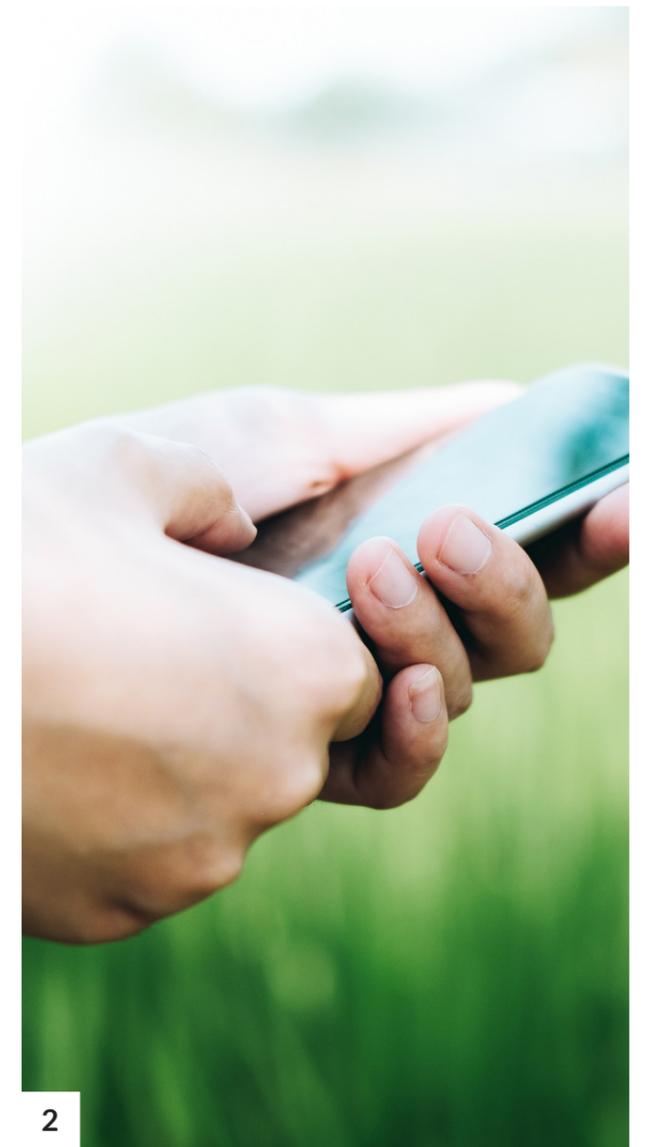
SELF ISOLATION - TRACK AND TRACE APP

DECEMBER 21ST 2020

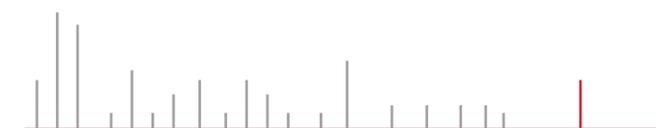
Self isolation. I had to self isolate after receiving confirmation of being near someone who tested positive for covid, this was through the track an trace app. I had been logging where I had been for food etc. and it turns out a spot of lunch at the garden centre was where there was someone who had covid. I was notified when I had 7 days left to self isolate, meaning that I had been out and about for 7 days before being notified. This goes to show how easy it is to be with someone who has covid and not know and for that person also not to know they had it. It has made me even more careful with where I go, limiting who I see and come in to contact with. I have been very lucky as I work from home and could continue working, however my partner was not in this position and had to miss a weeks work due to having to isolate.

1. Image By Soundtrap From Unsplash
2. Image By wichayada From Adobe Stock

Lesson Learned: for people to be careful with going out. Even though I was within the rules at that time of visiting somewhere for lunch, it was not something I needed to do and therefore further self reflection and action to really think about where we need to attend is needed. I have altered my behaviour since to make sure I minimise where I attend and do not go on trips that are not needed



2



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



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2

LONELINESS

DECEMBER 21ST 2020

It's so fast moving! Regulation relaxed over Christmas and now complete lock down. I get it and have a partner - what about those who have no one around? I hate to think of anyone on their own and lonely. I hope people look out for one another.

Lesson Learned: strong community cohesion where people look out for each other. We all have a role to play in this. Are we doing it?

NEW STRAIN - NO RELIEF

DECEMBER 21ST 2020

Finished for Christmas, work anxiety fading. New lockdown means I've accepted that we were going to spend Christmas on our own, but have got news today that my Mother has tested positive. Fell sick with worry, really low and news of mutation and easily spreadable new virus! Just wanted to enjoy Christmas and feel normal, needed the break and now just feel more anxious.

Lesson Learned: "Really hard to say. I need resilience and coping mechanisms in place myself. I just feel helpless - watching from afar. Also makes me realise how relentless it is for front line staff, seeing this day in day out, with no light at the end of the tunnel."

IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR COMMUNICATIONS

DECEMBER 21ST 2020

Communication from the Welsh Government has been good - Glad we're living in Wales and not the UK.

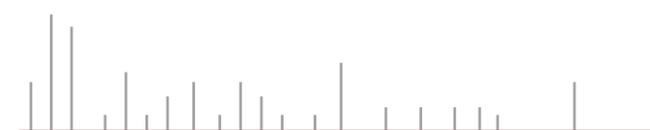
Lesson Learned: "Clear, concise communications is really important. People might not like what's being said, but it's clear and the rational is evidenced and understood they will get it. The way the UK government have handled the communications in my opinion has been shambolic. Mixed messaging, not one source of truth, backtracking and taking and communicating decisions too late has certainly cost lives."

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

DECEMBER 21ST 2020

Being part of virtual meetings in work rather than in person meetings.

Lesson Learned: That in person meetings are very helpful for organisations. But also that virtual meetings work when needed and that our organisations are very resilient.



Easing of Firebreak Lockdown



CHAPTER 5
2ND LOCKDOWN

29 RECORDED STORIES



CHRISTMAS DAY

DECEMBER 29TH 2020

Christmas day was quite different this year as normally my partner and I are torn between being together for Christmas or seeing our parents... and then which parents do you see or do you go your separate ways, every year so far we have gone our separate ways to please our parents and a little bit of me wishes I was having Christmas at home. Christmas 2020 turned out to be very different to what we all expected and having the discussion with my parents about not having the festive period with them was tough, however everyone understands it was safety first. I will admit that I did travel on Christmas day to drop off gifts and have a cuppa in the garden with my parents. I didn't realise until this point how much I wanted to be able to go inside, cuddle my parents and spend the day with them, but sadly due to the pandemic this was not an option. I was grateful for the ability to spend the time I was there but I totally respected the decision by the government to limit the time from 5 days to just Christmas day (although this should have been the case from the start and it was rather obvious that it was going to happen... come on government, just be upfront with these things, same with duration of lockdown). So, for the first year, I had Christmas dinner at home with my partner (and the dog). This pandemic has made me realise just how fragile our life is and how quickly things can change.

Lesson Learned: To make sure you maximise your family but to be safe and sensible.

CHANGES IN ME

JANUARY 4TH 2021

I have become more anxious, I suffer with depression anyway but have noticed the effects of this more acutely the more time I spend alone and I seem to feel less confident than I perhaps did previously.

HOMEWORKING AND CHILDCARE

JANUARY 5TH 2021

The experience of living, working and home-schooling all from home.

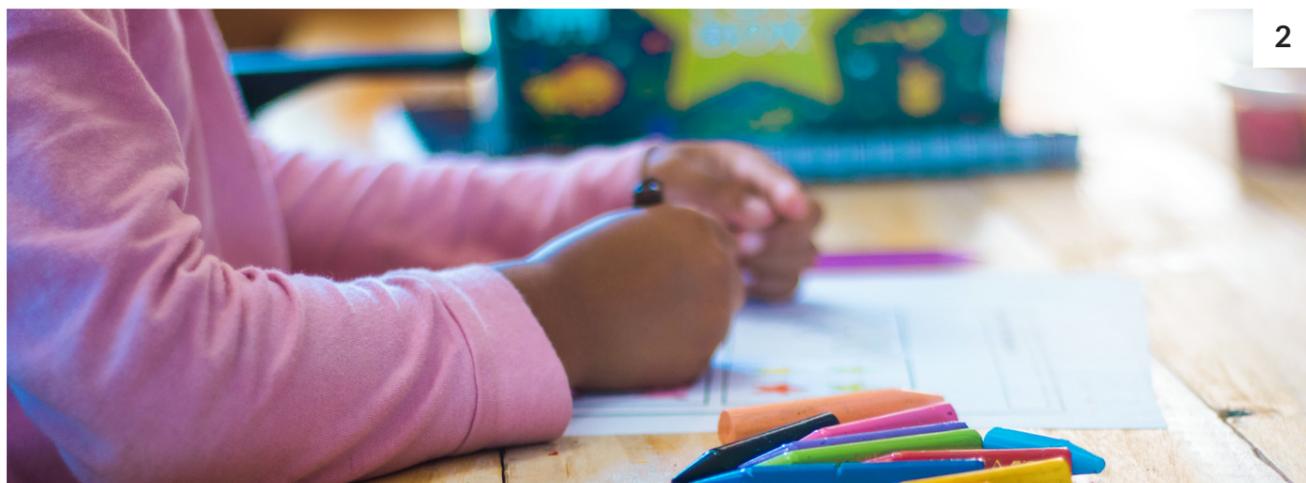
Lesson Learned: Impact on services, workers, families, education, individual.

MISSING THE JOYS OF 'ALONE TIME'

JANUARY 7TH 2021

Are having to deal with a lockdown where schools and childcare are closed/disrupted, meaning a return to balancing work and looking after children. We've done it before so feel confident in being able to cope, however this time it is cold, wet and dark so we are more house-bound plus there is the fatigue factor. It's becoming difficult to remember a day were I could just do what I wanted. I am lucky that I don't live alone and have wider family living close by, however this means that you can't escape and spend most of a day alone getting on with the things you want / relaxing on the sofa with no interruptions! Considering isolation is a major problem during this crisis its almost perverse to be worrying about the opposite.

Lesson Learned: Being self aware and understanding that individuals have different needs as they are experiencing things differently.



HOME IMPROVEMENTS JANUARY 11TH 2021

“Working from home - using my home as my regular place of work, deciding how to segregate work/home space in my home and how to work with my team and colleagues. Changed interactions with colleagues from 50% face to face to 100% digital video/phone calls.”

Lesson Learned: That change can be productive, efficient and fast.

PPE JANUARY 12TH 2021

Wearing masks.

Lesson Learned: I have learnt that it can have a massive impact on the spread of viruses and on the negative side it can cause panic attacks and disorientation when entering a building wearing glasses that steam up and when you feel like you cannot breath.

WHAT DAY IS IT TODAY? JANUARY 18TH 2021

Needing to differentiate between weekdays (working days) and the weekend!

DELAYS IN RESPONSES JANUARY 18TH 2021

Becoming increasingly frustrated with people not responding to issues by email, not responding to chase ups and not being able to go and speak to them in person.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE 'FEAR' CAMPAIGN JANUARY 21ST 2021

Due to the high numbers in hospital, the high number of reported deaths but probably more of the horror stories about the conditions and the spread of the virus in local hospitals, people we know are now too frightened to do anything. They are locking themselves away from the world. Yes, that is partly the point of a national lockdown, but I think there will be lasting mental health consequences. How will people interact again? What will their response be to a sneeze? Will they visit their GP if they are worried about something?

Lesson Learned: The importance of the message being communicated. The failure of our leadership. If you look on a scale, from America/Brazil to New Zealand/

Australia, in regards to their response to this, we are much closer to America/Brazil... Academic and medical studies into the long lasting mental impact of this pandemic and how this varies between countries will evidence the consequences of the approach taken here.

ONLINE SHOPPING DUE TO SELF ISOLATION JANUARY 27TH 2021

I always use the track and trace app and I received a message to say I needed to self isolate due to being in proximity to someone who had Covid 19. When contacted I had 6 days left to isolate. I worried that during the time it took to be advised to self isolate

I could have been spreading Covid 19 if I had it. Thankfully I had no symptoms. I changed to using online shopping as I was notified on the normal day I would go shopping so was low on food, the cost of delivery was £10 which was a little annoying as it could easily be a deterrent to not use online shopping as it raised my shopping bill by 20%. When my shopping was delivered more than 50% had been lost/not packed so I had no vegetables, dairy or meat. I was refunded the difference but was told to reorder the missing bits online again, when doing this I was charged again for delivery even though it was the shops error (needless to say, I complained and received a delivery charge refund after more than 2 hours on the phone). It was a very poor experience and since I have not online shopped and risked going to the supermarket to get my weekly food

shop. Shops charging ridiculous delivery charges for people self isolating is a very poor thing to be doing and shows how during a pandemic supermarkets are taking advantage.

Lesson Learned: That large organisations have a duty to not penalise people who are self isolating and cause undue financial penalties for staying home and doing the right thing.





A YEAR TO FOCUS ON HEALTH & FITNESS

JANUARY 29TH 2021

I lock down 1 and 3 to really focus on my well-being, health and fitness. For me, Covid brought the issue of weight to the forefront. For too long, I feel, we have been telling ourselves you can still be heavy and healthy. But Covid hits the heaviest hardest. After the realisation that weight does indeed matter, I decided to use this time to focus on my health. I took advantage of the long walks, shopping local, cooking from scratch and no pub meant no alcohol for me. I will continue this into 2021.

Lesson Learned: We should stop telling people heavy is healthy, Covid is showing us that its not.

TOO MANY MEETINGS!

FEBRUARY 1ST 2021

Because we don't need travel time in between - people are filling diaries. It's crazy.

Lesson Learned: "We need to get much better at managing our own diaries and also respecting others. Blocking time out for breaks, and checking people's diaries to make sure just because it's convenient for me, doesn't mean it's convenient for them."

HOPE!

FEBRUARY 1ST 2021

My parents are getting their vaccine today! I could cry! They were offered it first a few weeks ago but my dad had just been discharged from hospital having had COVID and they had to isolate. I am so grateful that they are getting in now.

Lesson Learned: Clear communication on the roll out timetable to manage expectations and ensuring if people miss their 'turn' that they're not forgotten about and kept in the loop.

FROM JANUARY 2021

FEBRUARY 4TH 2021

"Things feel very different at the start of 2021. The feeling of hope that I had last year, when we looked forward to getting back to normal by the end of the year, has been replaced with a kind of resignation. I try not to think too much about what this year may look like as the goal posts keep moving from day to day. I just live in the moment to avoid feeling disappointed if things don't get better. The vaccine roll-out gave hope last year, but I don't feel as confident any more that it will make enough of a change. This feeling has worsened since reports of virus mutations. I try to avoid watching the news or current affairs programmes now."

LOCKDOWN FEBRUARY 2021

FEBRUARY 11TH 2021

As lockdown February 2021 continues, I still feel that I'm planning for the future less. I don't like winter, so this time of year would usually be spent planning for Spring and Summer but this feels a bit pointless this year because who knows what it will look like? I'd rather not plan than have to cancel plans. In work, its difficult to plan for the next year of the service without knowing if we'll be back in the office and whether we'll be able to safely visit residents in their homes. We have had a lot of training to make sure that we are working in a way that encourages communities to work together instead of relying on a 'service'. I wonder what those communities will look like when we can start to leave our homes again.

IN ALL THE GLOOM THERE IS A HEAP OF NEW POTENTIAL BURSTING TO GET OUT

FEBRUARY 12TH 2021

I attended training on Virtual Facilitation Skills. I have always thought we should make more of Virtual Meetings. The pandemic has shifted this up a gear and so much more. Having no option but to embrace the virtual environment is opening up so many possibilities. But we need to learn how to use it well

Lesson Learned: The increasingly near universal access to virtual meeting spaces is really exciting.



1

THE SUN IS OUT

FEBRUARY 12TH 2021

I think the weather is having a greater impact on my well-being than ever before. The snow days were brilliant. They were a break from the norm. The concerns of having to try and commute in the snow were non-existent. Instead it was all about making the most of with my children. The sun is out today. It's freezing cold but wrapping up warm is one of the cozy aspects of winter we sometimes forget. The downside is that on the grey, wet and cold days, I think we are all a little more depressed. However, when thinking back to your childhood how many grey and wet days can you remember? I bet you can remember far more sunny days. We need to remember this, the next time it's a grey and wet day. We also have to consider this went engaging with colleagues and customers, as well as friends and family.

Lesson Learned: The increasingly near universal access to virtual meeting spaces is really exciting.

MISSING FRIENDS

FEBRUARY 15TH 2021

See less of my friends which is really hard as I live alone so I have spent so much time on my own since that date.

WAITING ON RESPONSES

FEBRUARY 15TH 2021

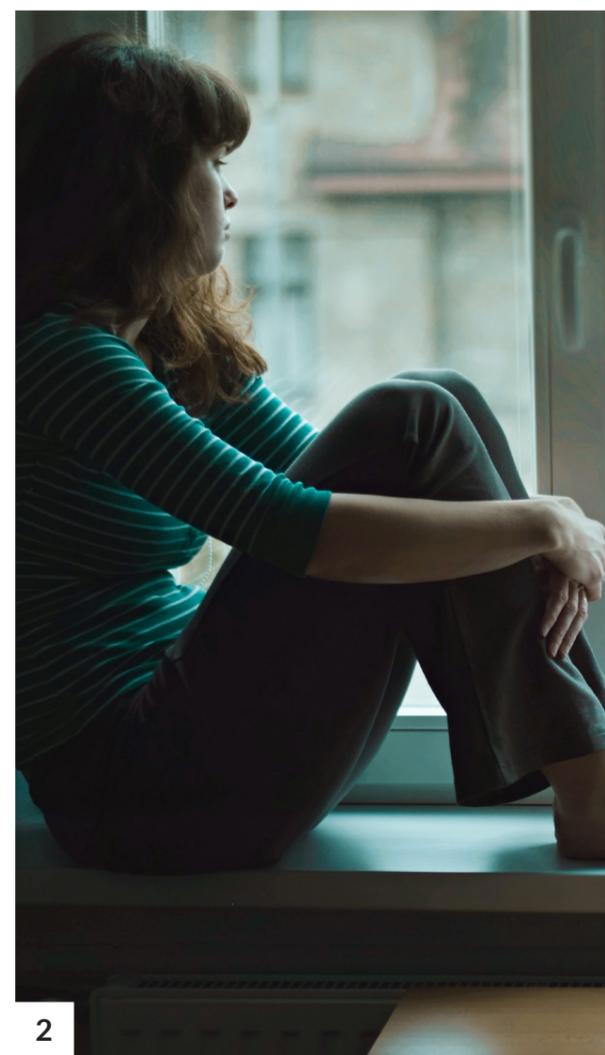
I find myself getting really frustrated with lack of communication from some people - its too easy to ignore an email or an electronic communication and I'm no longer able to just pop and see that person in the office

CATCHING UP ON LIFE ADMINISTRATION

FEBRUARY 15TH 2021

For me it has been a time of catching up with personal administration you might say. This would involve digitising (some data) and disposing papers kept over the years; thinking about what needs to be done for the future; investing in IT knowledge and equipment (laptops). This made staying at home more productive and worth while.

Lesson Learned: The Government needs to expand the pension dashboard concept to cover all of an individual's wealth i.e. ISA's, Property etc. It would start simple and develop with individuals. An essential item would be the



2

visibility of future income from pensions etc. Following input data from connected accounts or manually by the user, it would show income in every future year based on (1) assets and (2) assumed continuation of the income. Thus an individual would be able to decide to retire at any age depending on savings and investments made and future income required.

HARD NOT TO SEE MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY

FEBRUARY 16TH 2021

I'm a really social person, so it has been hard not to see my friends and family. I've become a nan for the sixth time in February... Goodness knows when I will get to meet my latest new granddaughter face to face. I am

1. Image By WrightStudio From Adobe Stock
2. Image By Tunatura From Adobe Stock

retired, but work a couple of days a week helping organisations with change and culture. Working from home has been very different! I have found it important to have a routine to keep myself motivated and positive. Delivering virtual workshops has been a real challenge, as I am used to delivering face to face, but I keep reminding myself that keeping off the roads is good for the planet, and saves huge amounts of time too. I live with my husband and two youngest sons, aged 27 and 20. It's a good thing we all get on so well! The summer lockdown wasn't too bad for us. We all stayed well, and I love my garden so was able to spend lots of time making it beautiful. At times, it was difficult to believe that the pandemic was raging around us and that so many people were getting so poorly, or worse. These past few weeks have been more of a struggle for us, with the bad weather, and hearing of so many people we know having the virus. We are so glad to have great access to technology. The phone and video calls, along with Facebook ad Twitter, have kept us in touch with those we love. Spring is coming, and with it better weather and many more vaccinations. I definitely value the simple things in life more now than ever before, and will continue to do so.

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS!

FEBRUARY 17TH 2021

Half of our team work on site, with participants, renovating properties. To comply with social distancing and the Government guidelines, we have had to cap our participants to 4 a day to enable us all to keep safe. We've also had to introduce a new set of risk assessments, and make sure the participants understand and adhere to them. We can work around a lot of different people in one day, and the spread of the virus has really brought home the importance on PPE. The other half of the company are working from home for the time being. At the beginning of March we were informed that one of our biggest funders were suspending their project funding which they reviewed their own financial objectives, so overnight we had lost a huge chunk of our income. We have also struggled with not being able to meet new potential funders and suppliers. Everything combined has caused some sleepless nights to say the least! So we have had quite a few hurdles to get us into the new year. We are adapting though and have made some significant changes.

Lesson Learned: How much of what we do is connected with other business' and people, so we need to be aware that it can all change in an instant.

RISING STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FOR STAFF IN THE MAGISTRATES COURTS

FEBRUARY 17TH 2021

Working in the magistrates courts has been and is an ongoing traumatic experience for staff - it seems that covid has been the straw that broke the camel's back. Our justice system in England and Wales probably was already broken (courts, prisons, police and probation) as exemplified by the backlog of cases created (not by covid) but by a decade of austerity, which has included closing hundreds of magistrates and crown courts. Here's a link to a story as the govt now back peddle trying to open up "Nightingale" courts. Staff are worried by covid, but we have been forced to continue working as if "business as usual" because we are classified as "key workers". I haven't heard any rounds of applause for court staff...? Not only worried about catching the virus, we have had our working practices turned upside down and the introduction of IT/technology without proper support guidance and training - Our union, PCS has been by-passed in the rush to set up all these new working practices. At the best of times running a court is stressful because it is a contested process (i.e. conflict), but due to backlogs and covid, we are being required to work in very difficult, exhausting and stressful circumstances. The annual staff survey has unsurprisingly revealed a rocketing negative mental health situation and a concern about unmanageable workloads. + There is simply no end in sight. Very stressful, and totally UNSUSTAINABLE...!!

Lesson Learned: 1) People are not machines and need to be handled and treated much more sensitively; otherwise they break...!

2) We are delivering a public service (civil servants) but treated with total contempt and bullied at its worst.

3) The nature of our work is quite technical so that the public don't really understand what we do nor appreciate or value our work.

4) We have created a stress and mental health time bomb not just in the courts, but probably across public services.....!!!!!!

5) Things could be done differently but we need the political will to do things differently. It isn't there at the moment.

6) Due to the backlogs those of us in the service for many years saw this day coming - REGARDLESS OF COVID, but exacerbated by Covid.

7) You have to pay for the criminal justice system that you want. If you don't pay, this is what happens...!!

8) "Justice delayed is justice denied".

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND CO-PRODUCTION VIA TEAMS AND ZOOM

FEBRUARY 22ND 2021

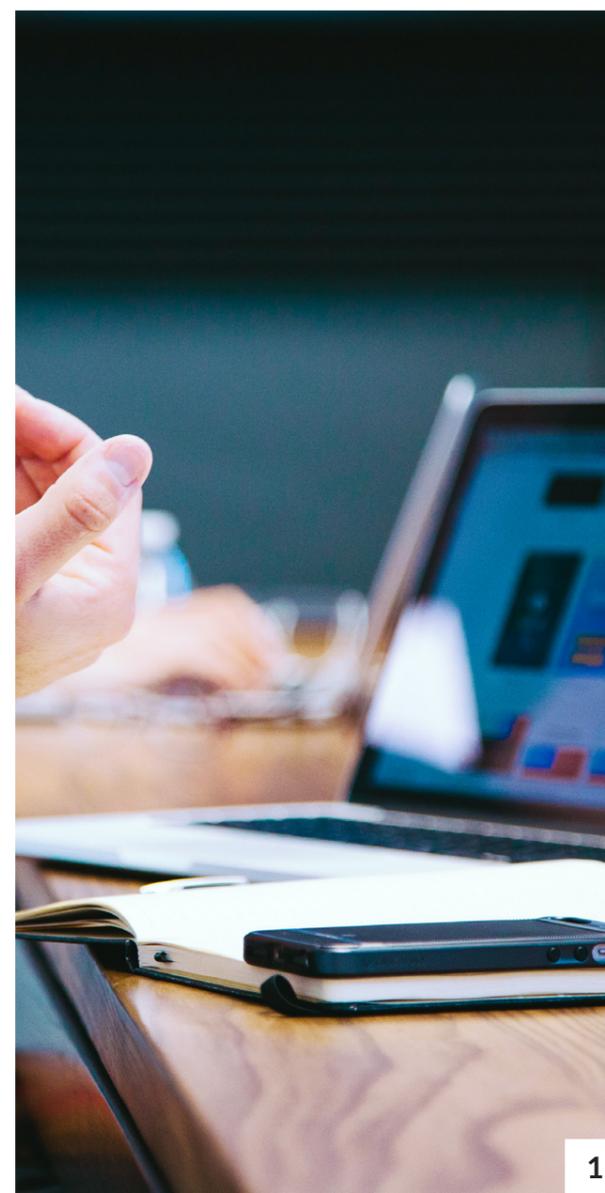
We are very involved in a number of exciting projects in partnership with other RSL's and partners including Local Authorities and health boards etc. It has been a really interesting exercise to be able to regularly meet with series of quite large groups of people online (around 30 for one meeting) and focus our attention on specific work activities, in full partnership. We did meet before the pandemic but meetings were a lot less frequent, more emphasis was on reporting on activities that we were doing and sharing good practice rather than planning the delivery of exciting large scale joint projects on the ground. This work would not have developed in this way if we weren't doing it online. I can't imagine that we would be able to get that many people in a room on a regular (sometimes weekly) basis. This is also happening with some internal work within our organisation too- we have a number of time critical projects at the moment that have regular weekly meetings with people from multiple departments- and Microsoft teams channels to facilitate work outside meetings that seem as if they may not have happened so regularly or with such high levels of attendance if we were in the office.

Lesson Learned: If we ever go back to office based working- we need to remember to continue to facilitate remote and online working as important work methods - not return to the old ways of doing things.

HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE AND IT IN PANDEMIC TIMES

FEBRUARY 22ND 2021

99% of my daily work is operated via a tablet attached to a larger screen. We are increasingly working with other partners delivering presentations, training, and co-production and our IT equipment is absolutely vital- it causes me a huge amount of anxiety not knowing if my IT is going to work when I am about to deliver training or a presentation. I feel that we need huge investment in the improvement of our hardware and also an understanding that we are working with multiple partners in lots of new innovative ways using new programmes and that our organisation needs to facilitate that so that staff aren't paying for Zoom accounts out of their own money because our IT Department doesn't support it, helping us to sign up to corporate accounts for products such as padlet and being open to new ways of working. We are often working with other



organisations who don't use other products e.g. one partner no longer uses any Microsoft products so the use of teams is impossible. So we need to be as flexible as possible to enable the joint working I have recently realised I will have to use my own IT equipment for some training I am doing to ensure that it is reliable. I worry that I am fortunate enough to be able to buy additional equipment and software and have the best Internet providers - but other staff, tenants and community members are being excluded or are feeling stressed about having to use out of date equipment.

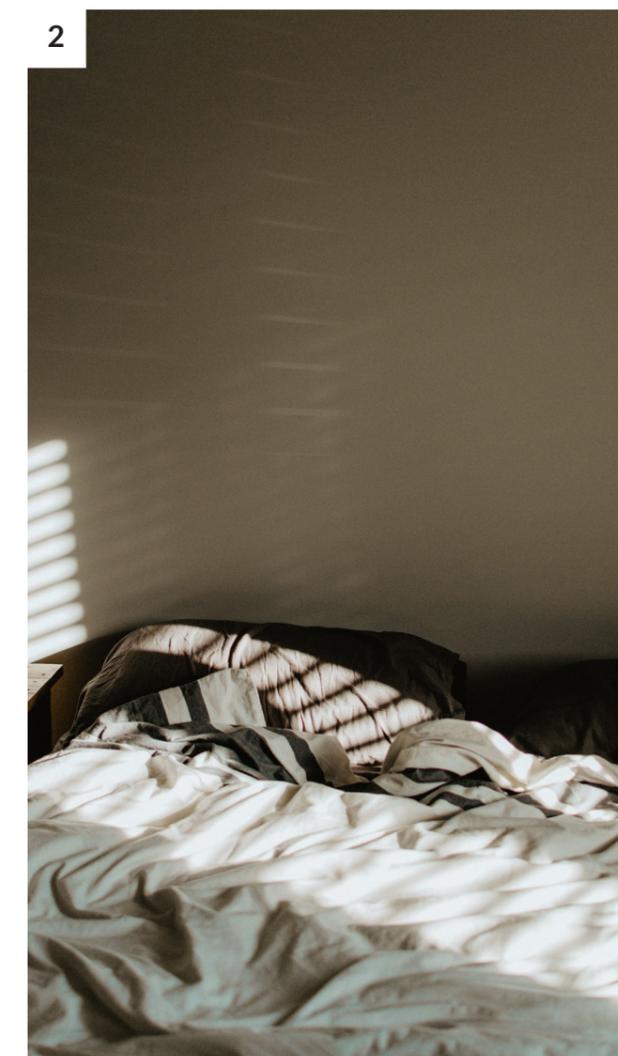
1. Image By Headway From Unsplash
2. Image By Becca Schultz From Unsplash

GLIMMERS OF HOPE BUT STILL ON THE TREATMILL

MARCH 3RD 2021

Moments where you experience life, but then the crushing feeling of waking up the next day and realising that you are still stuck in your bubble. Work commitments are still there. The closure of the four walls around you. The same things around the house. The lack of personal freedom. The desire to scream and shout "\$*£@ off" to the world! It's the saying its the hope that gets you in the end, is so true.

Lesson Learned: See the negativity of it and try and look at the positive.



FACE TO FACE

MARCH 3RD 2021

Not being able to see staff and tenants on a very informal basis. Seeing people online has been great especially engaging tenants digitally reached more tenants which is great but it doesn't replace face to face informal contact. I miss seeing and sensing peoples well-being. Our CEO has been very visible which I think has been really crucial. She has led from the front talking about the bad days as well as the good.

Lesson Learned: How much we all value personal contact.

ONLINE WORKING

MARCH 7TH 2021

I have become the chairperson of a committee entirely online and have never met the committee members in person.

Lesson Learned: We have worked well online but it is difficult to build personal relationships over zoom.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

MARCH 11TH 2021

"I've recently started feeling that there is eventually light at the end of the tunnel. Since before Christmas 2020, I'd stopped making plans for the future because they may have to be cancelled. I felt that I would rather not make plans than be disappointed if I had to cancel them. Recent months have been pretty depressing, including one period of actual depression for me, things had started to feel hopeless to me. Things were terrible in the second peak when the daily figures just kept increasing. Now that we are on the way out of the second peak, things are looking more positive. This, added to the roll-out of the vaccine has made life in lockdown more bearable. I am hoping to have my vaccine by the end of March. It feels as though we are nearly there now. I know that the local health board are already making plans for another wave in Autumn/Winter 2021, and because of what we've been through, I don't feel that confident that we are actually nearing the end of the crisis, but my attitude towards it has changed. I'm more accepting that life may not return to normal any time soon instead of feeling upset about it."

Lesson Learned: Stay flexible in response to what going on around me.





CHAPTER 6
LIFTING OF
2ND LOCKDOWN

4 RECORDED STORIES

Image By Ginger Jordan From Unsplash

COMMUNICATIONS CHARTER

MARCH 15TH 2021

We are developing a new communications charter. We introduced so many new ways to keep in touch messages are fired at you from all sides. Everyone is finding it a chore to individually work out the best method. So we are embarking on a new initiative that will hopefully resolve some of these issues. We can use the right communications tool for the job. I feel full of enthusiasm for the project which will kick off with training for everyone on Microsoft Teams.

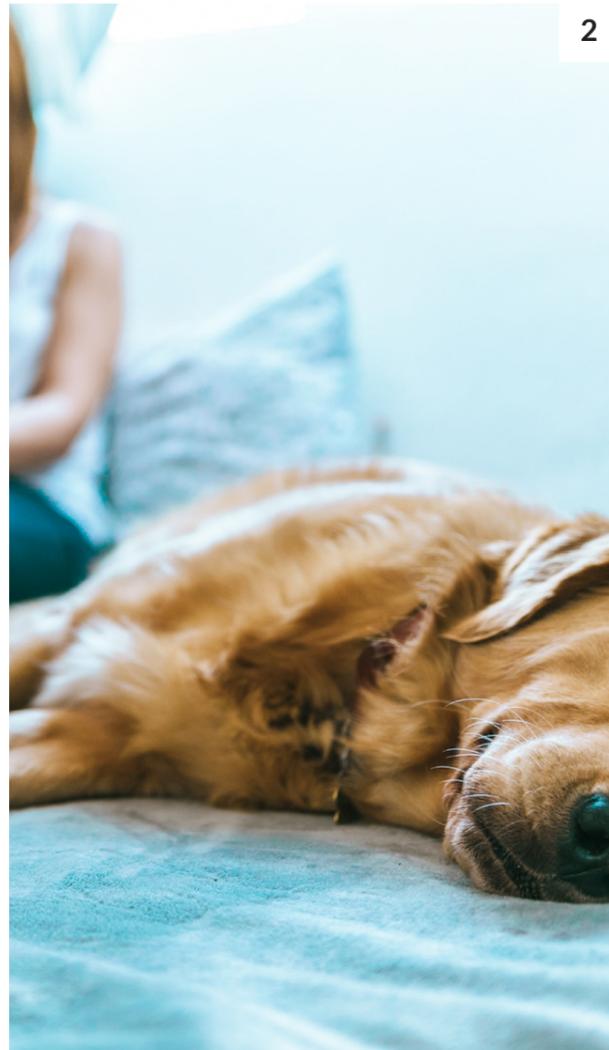
Lesson Learned: Hoping to learn that investment of time and thought in internal communications will make work more pleasant and improve service

WORKING OUT THE WORK/LIFE BALANCE

MARCH 19TH 2021

Mainly just working from home. We didn't have much opportunity to freely work from home before lockdown and I've seen great benefits but also the pitfalls of it. I was lucky to be in a situation where I was living with a family of 4 around me, with one member of my family on a similar working schedule. Once I had a set up I felt sorted, but then struggled with shutting off at the end of the day and feeling trapped as I worked, relaxed and slept in the same room. In February I was able to move house and found a place where I could have a separate room as an office. It's a little more isolating but it has improved my work/life balance because I can just shut a door after I log off and don't use the room again until the next day. When I was working and sleeping in the same room, I really struggled with my sleep pattern and had to use sleep meditation just to be able to function the next day, since being able to have the separation between work and rest I haven't needed to use the meditation tools and mostly still keep to a good routine for me.

Lesson Learned: Employers should ensure to the best of their ability that there is a need for work/life balance and have support systems in place for people to find those.



FEELING DIFFERENT, FEELING TRAPPED

APRIL 26TH 2021

I feel sad or low for no apparent reason, I miss actual contact with people but at the same time I am wary of meeting up with people again as well. I am very used to my own company but now almost feel trapped and although we are able to go out more now I often don't want to.

RETURN TO THE OFFICE

JUNE 7TH 2021

April/May/June 2021 seems different... despite most of our team not having had both vaccines and the Indian variant on the rise- there seems to be a small but significant move towards people wanting to have meetings in person. We are able to undertake activities with tenants now out of doors which feels like the right thing to do for people's well-being and my team are happy to get out and about but we are not sure about discussions about returning to the office or having face to face meetings that are not necessary just because 'it will be nice to see you'. I am very concerned about rushing back to the office or face to face meetings completely unnecessarily. I realise that for some it is a well being issue and they are counting down the days before they can return to the office but that isn't true for all. There is a fear that the gains we have made around home working in an agile way that have really improved productivity and improved well-being for many will be lost very quickly the minute meetings start to be placed in people's diaries and that some form of hybrid meeting where some people are face to face and some people are dialling in is not ideal. I feel that this return to the office is an inevitability and comments suggesting that we don't want to return to the office can be regarded as negative.

Lesson Learned: I hope that senior management are fully considering the process... and not just blindly starting the process of returning to business as usual... they are saying that we are agile working but some of these decisions will affect how that works in practice.

1. Image By Adem AY From Unsplash
2. Image By Bruno Emmanuelle From Unsplash
3. Image By Marten Bjork From Unsplash



FINAL CHAPTER CONCLUDING REMARK

What worked?

Having multiple organisations working together meant we had a large network, encompassing different industries, and could access a lot of different people. The diversity of the group meant that there was a lot of creativity and innovation, with different skills and ways of working being brought into one project.

Three organisations taking a leadership role in the project meant that important but time-consuming issues could be dealt with efficiently – our colleague from Sensemaker itself said that this group was one of the most productive and quickest that they had worked with in projects of this nature, giving us great hope for the future. Regular meeting slots were easy to build into diaries, and people were motivated to work together.

What did we learn?

As with any project like this, there has been a lot that we can learn from for future collaboration. It may have been more productive to start with just the three organisations who took a leadership role, keeping the project as simple as possible, and building it out from there. This would allow for more specialisation, with less time waiting to agree on things, but this would of course come at the cost of losing some skills and valuable input.

We also noted that a project of this scope needed proper resourcing from the start, rather than just being done 'on the side' of core work and particularly within the fast moving initial stages of the pandemic. This could have been in the shape of a paid project co-ordinator, rather than several people giving up bits of their work time to contribute.

As with most research projects, we would have loved to have expanded our audience further. The participants in the research were diverse in terms of location and sectors, but similar in that they were generally people working from home in organisations providing social services, particularly housing, social care and social enterprise. While these industries were hugely impacted by the pandemic, capturing an even wider proportion of the population would have been even better.

We wholeheartedly believe that collaboration like this in the future would be hugely beneficial and lead to innovative projects that can make a significant contribution to policymaking and the Welsh public sphere. We were motivated to do this because of the tumultuous times we were living through, but this itself of course made it harder for people to work, adapt their working practices, and commit the time necessary for the project. It would be great to see how this would work during more "normal" times.

Practically, we learned that getting the project live as soon as possible and building from there would allow for more focus on engagement and reaching our intended audiences. Similarly, we would suggest making the research instrument simple and concise, while still managing to ask the thought-provoking questions that the project intended.

We believe that in future, the benefits of having a core leadership group on a project of this nature, with a wider working group with fewer but specific responsibilities, would be an organised approach that would still give the benefits of cross-sector and multi-organisation working. There is no doubt that innovative work in this space can be hugely beneficial, and we look forward to continuing to work this way in the future.

Conclusion

The Live Learning Partnership team would like to thank every colleague and organisation that took part in this project, and are proud of what we achieved together: the Institute of Welsh Affairs, Wales Cooperative Centre, Community Housing Cymru, Business in the Community, Cardiff University, Care Forum Wales, Cymorth Cymru, Ethnic Minorities Youth Support Team (EYST), Nesta, WCVVA and Y Lab. We're also grateful for the support from the Good Practice Exchange Team at Audit Wales and Professor Michael Muthukrishna, Associate Professor of Economic Psychology at the London School of Economics. We are delighted that the results will continue to be available to all those who wish to access them, and believe the stories shine a light on how some people in Wales experienced one of the most all-encompassing crises that many of us will live through. We will take the lessons from being involved in this project and ensure that they will positively influence how we work in a collaborative way in future, to ensure that the best possible data is available for policymaking in Wales.

For any further information please contact info@iwa.org.uk

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LIVE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

YOUR PANDEMIC STORIES



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