

COVID19 Blog: DEVELOPMENT

This standard is all about the balance between keeping people safe and giving everyone the chance to develop their potential. This feels so relevant at the moment, when we are balancing so much risk with so much need to learn new things and fast, to problem solve creatively, to support others to adapt.

Two months ago how many of us had done something **new** recently? Now we all have!

This last two months has been a constant learning opportunity. Every day something new. Learning to love and then hate Zoom, learning about viruses and how they spread –we are desperate for knowledge! learning how to be with people in their loss and distress when hugs aren't possible, and learning about writing a blog! You will have daily challenges, working out how to run your service safely and humanely, how to keep things going with all the restrictions. And how to support people doing new things that they are not comfortable with.

I've been PUSHED out of my comfort zone much of the time – forced to do things differently, but this has unexpectedly led to getting some good things done that I've been intending for ages. Like fixing and repurposing things because the shops are shut. Like reaching out to people in new ways because the old ways aren't available any more, like clearing clutter because I'm home all day looking at it all the time. And working out the tech to go online, and making a Zoom quiz look impressive, and so the list goes on.

And doing all these things when there's less support around, helplines are busy, friends with the skills are in high demand, and because basically now the world feels out of control, everything is prone to feeling harder than usual. But the situation has necessitated it, and often the outcome has been surprisingly positive.

Getting support to try these new ways of doing things has been a big help and makes everything feel more possible. I haven't had any aerobic exercise in 2 months and was beginning to really feel it. Meeting a friend for a morning sea swim has made a huge difference. This isn't about life and death risk, but it is about overcoming serious discomfort for the sake of mental and physical health. But the discomfort! it would be cold – for sure, it would hurt – it always does, I'll feel foolish screaming as I inch my way – always. But the feeling of exhilaration is like nothing else. The risks are worth it. Every day its hard, but it feels so good to do it anyway. And so much easier to do it when a friend is screaming too!

We are all being pushed out of our comfort zones at the moment. Getting and giving support and encouragement is really important. It really helps.

Development always involves managing risks well. It's too easy to become risk averse and back away from life's challenges. But its vital we help ourselves and help other people to reach out beyond what feels easy and safe, because the risks to our mental health, our physical wellbeing and our community are too great if we don't at the moment.



Tiny the cat has been taking more risks every day, exploring, adventuring, sitting on the skinny ledge outside the window surveying the danger. She's howled and yowled to mark her territory, and fled back to safety when it's too much, but she keeps on venturing out a bit further each day risk-assessing every situation as she goes. She seems happier and more relaxed every challenge she overcomes.

My Mum's been 'cocooned' at the care home for months now. She's so high risk it's terrifying, as they all are there, so no contact seemed possible. And then it was her 90th birthday, and with the care home staff we made a plan for her to sit in the doorway 4 metres away. We all drank prosecco, sang happy birthday and ate cake. Who knew everyone could be so creative and accommodating. Now it's what we do every Sunday, it's become the 'new normal' as they say. There are many people in confined spaces, feeling frustrated and confused, really struggling with the isolation from their friends and family, and finding it hard to express their distress.

Two months ago, so much was unknown. We have adapted and learned, helped others change and seen what we'll keep doing, and what we'll stop doing as soon as we can. I heard a good suggestion early on in the lockdown – every time you hear yourself say "once this lockdown is over I'm going to....." Make a point of writing it down on a post-it note, and when you can, **do it!** And really appreciate it!

This has been a time of such change and adaptation and can be a catalyst for good change in both ourselves and in how we work. These questions I heard recently really struck a chord and reminded me of the potential of this time to step beyond what we have known and create a better world.

*What have we **started** doing now*

- *That we should continue*
- *That we need to stop*

*What have we **stopped** doing*

- *That we should bring back*
- *That should remain stopped*

Are there totally new things we might need now?