



Rhyse, Operational Manager, Salford and Trafford

The past month and a half has certainly been a testing time for us all, the speed in which we have had to make changes at the beginning of the pandemic was crazy as the world went into overdrive as we prepared ourselves to 'boldly go where no one has gone before!' Excuse the Star Trek pun...but the latest instalment of the franchise Picard has been a pleasure to watch during the lockdown mass TV binge to fill the hours of isolation.

How have I coped? Very well, thanks! I normally spend so little time at home as once I have finished my work I often have meeting and community events that I attend as I am a Councillor which keeps me busy evenings and weekends. So this enforced lockdown has come as a welcomed time to spend with my family. I could roll out the jokes about how terrible it has all been, but for me it has actually been really lovely...(the same may not be said from everyone else!).

The time has been good to reflect on the things that are important and the things we often take for granted. The amount of material things that we have in our lives and the amount of flurry we put into living. Philosophically, I have found myself thinking that as much as we miss the ability to go out and shop, pursue our leisure activities and carry on 'life' – that the time we have had to spend with our closest and the ones that we have not been able to share our time with really puts things into perspective. During these past few weeks many of us will have lost people that we know or are close to us and the realisation that 'life' is a gift is one that has been the most prominent thought in my mind.

Being connected to our friends and families is something to embrace going forward; I think that we often forget that this is really what life and living is all about and this slower pace of life is certainly something we should all try and maintain in some way or another.

Working from home has brought with it pleasures and challenges. I don't miss the traffic and the stresses of driving around to get to meetings or worrying about parking tickets...these are small but significant things that one takes into consideration during the working day. I have been struck by the level of productivity that I have had. Mainly because I am sat down typing away and /or talking with staff and colleagues not driving about!! We still are here providing the best service that we can. I have been proud of how we have adapted and innovated and stepped up to the challenges that we all are facing nationally. It's not the same and it's not as good as being out there talking face to face to our families, but that does not mean that we have not taken positives from this period of change. There are definitely things that we have learned and continue to learn as each week goes by. I miss my colleagues and the relationships that I have invested in over 15 years at Early Break. I have the same passion that I started with and know that the work we do for the children and the families that we support in our operational areas is essential. For some families this period of time will not be easy, increase in mental health problems, complex substance misuse and toxic relationships can have a devastating effect on both children and adults in those environments and lockdown will be for some of our children and young people a living nightmare.

My children have coped pretty well with the lockdown, they have been able to see the bigger picture, which for teenagers is often a difficult thing for them to do. They haven't really complained – they have learnt new chores like sweeping and mopping, dusting, polishing, cooking al carte style meals and how to use a washing machine. Not quite nailed the ironing yet but it does leave me with some thing to do. The dogs have drove me crazy but they are cute and funny with their own little characters. Bruce, often sits next to me on a chair, charges around the house looking for cats to bark at and crying for doggy treats. Everyone wants to walk the dog now, it's like a new world revolution....it's normally an argument to get the kids to take them out! So on the bright side of things the kids have learnt amazing new life skills and my wife and I have been able to sit down and point out the things that have been missed. It's no wonder my work suit no longer fits, which is where the down side of things really have kicked in. My wardrobe of clothes is ever shrinking and it is going to be a herculean effort to slim down.

My lovely and long suffering wife has also been working from home so we have been literally in each other's pockets which is why I have no money left [joke].

It's strange when we log off from work and then settle into the new routine of shutting the laptops down, putting them into the bag [I feel that this ritual has been important, as a way of closing off work]. My office is now the dining room and my daughter has to get up as her bedroom has become my wife's customer contact centre. It's not that quiet where we live as there are flood defences being built at the end of our street but it has been a reminder that some people along with our NHS and carer colleagues are working day in and day out on the front line to keep us all safe which is why it's important that as we start to think about what the future looks like post lockdown. We continue to follow the advice that the Government and Scientists tell us in order to keep safe and protect our essential services so that we can continue to support people at the point of care when and where they need it the most.

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