



## How to cope with furloughing and being furloughed?

By Louise Bennett, Joint CEO, IDPE

Until a few weeks ago, most of us had never heard of the verb 'to furlough', let alone would have envisaged being furloughed or being responsible for furloughing colleagues. 'We are living in unprecedented times' is becoming a rapidly over-used phrase, but it is the reality, and furloughing staff is just one way of schools ensuring their sustainability during this new reality.

### For development staff being furloughed...

The most important message to remember for anyone being furloughed is that furloughing is not a reflection of your skills or your performance, but a cost-saving exercise that ensures your school's survival. The government has offered organisations the opportunity to reduce their costs during these challenging times, and from a business perspective, it makes absolute sense for all schools to look at ways of reducing their costs at a time when income is either reduced or under threat.

Furloughing staff avoids redundancies; it is precisely because your school values you that it is applying to the government's [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) to ensure you continue to be paid (in fact, in many cases, schools are topping up the additional 20% to ensure there is no financial impact on furloughed staff). The need for development will still be there after this crisis, in fact the need for increased funding is likely to be greater than ever. Furloughing allows the school to retain you, your knowledge, your expertise, your relationships, so that in the long-term, your school's fundraising and engagement programme will not suffer.

### So, what do you do now?

The government has been clear that if furloughed, you cannot work. However, being furloughed does not stop you from continuing your professional development or from volunteering.

#### 1. Reach out

You're not alone, keep in touch with the IDPE community through [our online regional meet-ups](#), [online discussion forums](#), and [members forum](#).

2. **Stay informed**

[Send us](#) your personal e-mail address along with consent to receive our regular communications, and we will keep you up-to-date as to what is happening across the sector.

3. **Volunteer**

We are currently developing a new online resource area. Why not [get in touch](#) and find out how you could help us advance our resource area, and support the IDPE community?

4. **Learn**

You can still access [our resources](#), from podcasts to webinars, guides to case studies. Why not use this time as an opportunity to upskill and develop your knowledge?

## For development directors who are furloughing staff

Furloughing members of your team will undoubtedly involve challenging conversations, ensuring you provide the right information, you ask the right questions, and of course, offer reassurance. There is government guidance on the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#), and your school will undoubtedly have accessed professional expertise to ensure you have created an objective framework and process for furloughing staff, but what is important for you, as development directors:

1. **Be prepared**

Write a brief script to ensure you cover the key information during your meeting and are ready to answer any questions your team have. It's also important to find out what are your team members' priorities, and is there information or processes they can share with you, so you have the confidence and knowledge to move forward, whilst your team are furloughed.

2. **Be reassuring**

Staff will undoubtedly feel worried about being furloughed, reassure them that it is short-term, share with them the positives (there are some – for example their annual leave will still accrue and if the school is topping up the additional 20%), and ensure they realise their value to you and to the school.

3. **Be encouraging**

Furloughed colleagues can still volunteer and access training, encourage them to look for opportunities to learn through IDPE and other organisations, or to volunteer locally – help them to see this as an opportunity for personal and professional development.

## So, what can you do now?

It's important to remember you can't do it all. No matter how big your team or how many of your colleagues have been furloughed, you will not have the capacity to take on all their workloads (as well as your own) and undoubtedly you will have recruited staff, who will have skills and expertise in specific areas that are different to your own:

### 1. Re-prioritise

A lot has changed in the last four weeks, and with less resource, it is unlikely your current strategic priorities will remain the same or that you will be able to deliver them alone. Take a step back and consider what is it you need to do now and what, can you alone, realistically deliver.

### 2. Stay in touch with your team

Whilst furloughed staff can't work, but it doesn't stop you from checking in with them to see that they and their families are safe and well.

### 3. Reach out

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## We are all in this together

Furloughing is a short-term means to an end, to get through the challenging circumstances that we find ourselves in. It's important to remember that the communities we work with are experiencing the same challenging circumstances – if you can't respond immediately, the school magazine has to be put on hold, a reunion has to be cancelled – your community will understand.

As the Queen stated in her address to the nation on Sunday night, *'we are all in this together'*. Whether you have been furloughed or have furloughed staff, do reach out to the IDPE community for support as by supporting each other at this time *'we will succeed - and that success will belong to every one of us.'*