

**Request to allow charity employees to volunteer whilst on furlough**

8th April 2020

Dear Local MP/Government official

I am writing to propose a change to the rules for UK charities in relation to furlough.

We are asking that furloughed charity workers be allowed to go back and volunteer for their charities, or continue working for them, to deliver their valuable charitable mission at this critical time.

Never have charities been needed more than now, and the current rules mean the generous furlough scheme introduced by Government, which has been hugely important in saving jobs, has left us with an impossible dilemma. If we furlough our staff to protect our charity’s future so it survives, then we must halt work on delivering our charitable mission and helping people. Conversely, if we continue working to deliver our mission for public good, then our dwindling reserves will soon run out and we will cease to exist.

Therefore, we are simply asking for a change to the rules on furlough, to permit charity employees to continue working or volunteering for part of their time for that charity whilst their pay is supported by the furlough scheme. Currently the rules allow them to volunteer for another charity, but not to save their own.

The result is so many UK charities will go bust (or close in a measure manner as is required by the charities commission) at the single time in history when the Government is paying their wages.

We ask you to reconsider these rules to better fit these exceptional times.

I am the CEO of xxx Science Centre, an educational science centre in [city]. As a registered charity, we bring the latest science to half-a-million children and adults each year, inspiring them and sharing the importance of science in our modern world and encouraging them to participate in the scientific process.

We are a vibrant part of the cultural landscape and work with disadvantaged communities, schools, teachers, universities and industry. As a member of the UK Association of Science and Discovery Centres we contribute to engaging and educating over 20 million people with science annually, across our nation.

We shut our public venue due to the Coronavirus crisis, and our income was immediately shut off, but our work to engage people with contemporary scientific issues has never been more critical.

Our work is now focussed on rapidly creating interactive content to engage audiences, school pupils and teachers with science online, whilst developing programmes on how science can help with future challenges. However, our public venue, car park and events business provided the revenue for our charity, and now it is closed we are left without income and our cash reserves will soon be depleted. As such we have turned to the furlough scheme to continue paying our staff to increase our longevity.

The furlough scheme was introduced to allow organisations to survive and to keep their staff employed. For commercial organisations it makes sense that they should not be making money whilst subsidised by the government. But for charities, whilst furlough is supporting their salaries, their work has ceased and the essential social benefit of charities across the nation is brought to a halt. If charity employees were still allowed to work whilst on furlough, then they would be financially supported and their public good would continue, at a time when they are needed more than ever. Coronavirus has made charities extremely vulnerable as they struggle to pay their staff, yet they are key to social resilience in this crisis. Therefore, having charity staff across the country on furlough whilst still serving their communities is the perfect solution.

Our plea is for the government to make this simple change to the furlough rules. It would cost no extra money, as staff are already on furlough, but it would unlock a great resource for social good, which is currently suspended as the nation’s charity staff are forced to sit idle during this crisis.

Yours sincerely,

**ASDC would like to thank Donna Speed, Chief Executive Officer of We The Curious for writing part of this, edited by Dr Penny Fidler, CEO of ASDC**