

20th March 2020

**Re: Henshaws response to Covid-19**

Dear Friend

I am writing to you as we appreciate that this is an uncertain time and we want to reassure you that we are still here and ready to support you, and anyone else who is living with sight loss. Our First Step team are very much available to talk to on **0300 222 5555**, 9.00am until 4.30pm Monday-Friday, for any information, advice and guidance you may need. Alternatively, you can email us on **info@henshaws.org.uk**

Unfortunately, given the current situation with Covid-19 and in line with government and Public Health England advice, we have made the decision to close our hubs across Greater Manchester to service users, with immediate effect. This means that any planned coffee mornings, social groups, training and appointments have been postponed at all of our venues until further notice.

We recognise that when times are tough, it is the people who already face challenges that can be affected the most. This is why we are writing to you, to reach out and ask whether you need our support at this time. We can support you remotely in the following ways:

* Provide information on services and support available within your local area (provided by both Henshaws and other organisations).
* Book a telephone appointment for you to talk to a member of our Digital Team, so that you can discuss technology that could help reduce your social isolation and increase your independence.
* Provide telephone support from our Patient Support Officers, who can help to explain medical information and offer advice on relevant aids and equipment.
* Offer an outreach service to individuals by pro-actively calling our service users to ask whether any support is needed.

Please note that we have had to re-deploy staff and amend working hours, so it may be that we call you outside of our normal working hours (up to 9pm at night or at weekends).

Please also be reassured that we are looking into ways to support individuals in different ways during this time. You can access the free online resources in our **Knowledge Village**, which is full of videos, blogs and e-books that contain useful tips, tricks and information about living with sight loss. You can access all of this information on our website at **www.henshaws.org.uk/knowledge-village**

You can also keep up to date with news from Henshaws across our social media platforms:

Facebook: [**www.facebook.com/Henshaws**](http://www.facebook.com/Henshaws)

Twitter: **www.twitter.com/Henshaws**

Instagram: [**www.instagram.com/henshaws\_uk**](http://www.instagram.com/henshaws_uk)

We would also like to let you know that the national RNIB Helpline is available to support you. They can give you advice on 0303 123 9999 and are available 8am-8pm weekdays, and 9am-1pm on Saturdays.

We’ve launched an urgent fundraising appeal so that we can ensure everyone gets the help they need during this crisis. Please help us by letting people know about the appeal. The more donations we receive, the more people we can reach. Anyone can donate to the appeal by visiting **www.henshaws.org.uk** by sending donations to us at the address below, by telephoning **0300 222 5555**, or by bank transfer by using the following details: Sort Code: 20-55-34 Account number: 30457469 Reference: Appeal. Thank you.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to wish you good health and we hope to see you soon.



Robert Cooper

Director of Community Services