

henshaws

beyond expectations

Children & Young People's Newsletter



Spring 2020



We are a charity that helps people living with sight loss and a range of other disabilities achieve their ambitions and go beyond expectations.



Greater Manchester:

4A Washbrook House, Lancastrian Office Centre, Talbot Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 0FP

Merseyside:

St Vincent's School, West Derby, Liverpool, Merseyside L12 9HN

Phone: 0300 222 5555

Visit: www.henshaws.org.uk

Contents

Page 2	Welcome message
Page 3	Henshaws Resonse to Covid-19
Page 3	Lockdown Life!
Page 5	What's coming up?
Page 8	Our inspirational young people
Page 8	Other news and events
Page 9	Henshaws online/Knowledge Village
Page 10	Contact details of Henshaws staff

Hi and welcome to the spring newsletter for children and young people (CYP) and their families at Henshaws!

Wow, well never did I imagine I'd be writing this from the comfort of my sofa after working from home for the last ten weeks! I hope this newsletter finds you well and coping in these strange times. A lot has happened and changed since our last newsletter and even since we wrote to you in March at the beginning of lockdown. We wanted to share a newsletter with you to keep you up to date with what we've been up to, how we've been adapting and what we're doing to keep supporting blind and visually impaired children and young people (and their parents!) during this period.

While the last few weeks have been challenging for most people, we have continued to be here, supporting with information, advice and guidance, providing a listening ear, producing lots of content for our Knowledge Village and keeping children and young people connected (while still having some fun!)

Keep reading to find out more about how our children and young people's service are reaching out as well as our plans for the future!

We hope that we're able to see you at our face to face activities soon, until then, get involved virtually and stay home and stay safe!

Fiona Berry (Community Services Manager, CYP)

Henshaws response to Covid-19

The Children and Young People's Team have now been working from home for over 10 weeks, since March 17th! It's definitely been a learning curve for us and we had to adapt quickly and come up with new ways to support families remotely and virtually.

The first thing we did was to communicate by letter to over 700 CYP on our database to let them know we were still here and able to support. We then set about calling everyone on our database to provide a personal Hello and ask if there was anything we could do to support. There were a few common concerns amongst families, mainly around food supplies and home schooling! It was really nice to touch base with families, both our regular families and people that haven't accessed our services for a while and we hope it's been a good reminder of what we do and we hope to see some of you activities in the (hopefully) near future! Don't forget we're still here on the end of the phone if you need us, please do get in touch!

Lockdown Life!

As most of you will know, our CYP service is mainly delivered through face to face activities and events, so, being faced with social distancing and lockdown posed a few issues for us! We have however been able to use our skills to come up with new and inventive ways of staying connected to you all and still providing information and fun while we all stay at home!

Knowledge Village -We have been able to really start making use of Henshaws Knowledge Village, our online resource full of information, top tips, blogs and videos full of great stuff for living with sight loss. So far we have produced in two months more content than we usually share in about 6 months, including our Tuck Shop video which has had almost 300 views and our blog on keeping your VI child educated and entertained at home which has had 442 views! We have even had one of

our young people, Orla write a blog for us about all her favourite VI bloggers! If you would like to have a go, get in touch!

So far we have produced:

Videos on You Tube

- Tuck Shop video
- Touchdown Dance 1 (Wake Up, Shake Up)
- Touchdown Dance 2 (Movement with Ball)
- Touchdown Dance 3 (Legs - standing)
- Touchdown Dance 4 (Legs - moving)
-

Blogs

- Tips for keeping your VI child educated and entertained at home
- Engaging the other senses in children with VI -with 3 printable make and play at home activities
 - Sound Bingo
 - What's in the Bag?!
 - What's that smell?!
- Keeping children with VI active at home
- Mindfulness for children with VI

Keep an eye out for more fab and helpful content coming soon and if you've found it useful, let us know!

Facebook - We continue to grow and utilise our Facebook pages to share information and stay connected. It is the quickest and simplest way to get great information out to you so if you're not already a member, please join us! We currently have three groups covering Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Oldham but by the end of May we will be closing the Merseyside and Oldham groups and changing the name of our Manchester group to Henshaws Children and Families North West. Look us up on Facebook and join!

Virtual Activities - If you're like me, you probably never heard of zoom or Microsoft teams before coronavirus! Now we seem to be doing everything from family quizzes to yoga on zoom and it's been great fun!

We've found most of the video calling apps really accessible which is great news for people with vision impairments! However, if it's something you haven't been able to access or master yet, do give us a shout and our Digital Team may be able to help get you started. We also have a blog on Knowledge Village about Zoom and its accessibility which may help.

Our virtual meet ups and activities with children and young people have been proving fun and popular, with sound games and chocolate quizzes, Social chats and music, we've been finding ways to keep us all connected. We've got lots of fun things coming up, take a look at the next section to find out more!

What's coming up?

'I Can Do It' Course - This time of year we are usually busy planning for our next I Can Do It residential at The Children's Adventure Farm, due to take place in August. Given the situation, we are as yet unsure as to whether this will go ahead. We continue to closely monitor guidance and will keep you updated and while we really hope we'll be able to do our residential but the safety of our young people and staff is paramount.

In the meantime, we are currently starting to deliver some I Can Do It activities virtually (Live Bake Off anyone?!) and are now looking at ways to have an online course available for children to do at home. This would be a fantastic opportunity to learn new skills, make new friends and gain confidence even if we can't meet in person! For more information contact Lydia (details on last page).

Returning to School Tips - We know that after all this time there may be some worry about going back to school. We're currently developing some top tips for parents and teachers to help make the transition for children and young people with vision impairments a bit easier. Please keep an eye on our Facebook page and Knowledge Village for updates.

Virtual Activities - Our virtual activities are a way for children and young people to keep connected with friends and reduce feelings of isolation. They are fun too! With everything from a simple chat and catch up, to quizzes, jokes and an online bake off (!) get involved and have a laugh and catch up with staff and other children. Our virtual events are scheduled for every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, usually around 4pm. We also now have a session every other Saturday. Join our Facebook page and keep a look out there for all session to be advertised. Below are some coming up soon! We take online safety and wellbeing very seriously and ground rules will be discussed beforehand with children. We will also send parents our Virtual Activities Guidelines. **To join WEEKDAY sessions and for more information contact Lydia.waker-craig. For SATURDAY sessions contact Marie or George. Contact details on back page.**

Tuesday 26th May

4:30pm age 11-19 Tech Talk

Are you struggling to use assistive technology at home? Want to know about assistive tech that you don't know you already have?

Join us for our friendly Tech talk. Henshaws technology guru Richard will answer your questions and offer guidance for the problems you're currently experiencing with tech! All visual impaired young people, parents and carers welcome.

Thursday 28th May

4:30pm age 8-13 Fun and games sports session

Are you up for a challenge? Fancy playing some fun sports games at home and together during this virtual session? We will send you a sound ball and instructions in the post so you are ready to join in and compete live each other. Book your place by Friday 22nd of May.

Mon - Friday 29th May

Henshaws has got talent & challenge week! Look out on Facebook where we'll be sharing some fab and fun challenges for kids to have a go at and share their results either with a video or photo! We also want to see all the great things you've been up to in lockdown, something new you've learned or been practicing, something you've made or a fun talent you have!

Thursday 28th May 4:30pm

8-11 Fun and Games

Fancy a laugh? Join us for a fun and games. We will share some jokes and play some games together. You might even win a prize!

Tuesday 2nd June 5pm

14-19 Social Club

Need a break from lockdown stress and study? Do you want to meet other VI young people and catch up with your old Henshaws Friends? Join us for chat, laugh and whatever else you want to do!

Thursday 4th June

4:30pm age 8-13 Fun and games sports session

Are you up for a challenge? Fancy playing some fun sports games at home and together during this virtual session? We will send you a sound ball and instructions in the post so you are ready to join in and compete live with each other. Book your place by Friday 22nd of May.

Saturday 13th June

12:30pm 11+ Funny Lunch!

Bring your favourite sandwich and jokes for this lunchtime joke telling session. We'll also discuss your sandwiches, tell us did you make it, can you prepare a sandwich for yourself and we'll be giving some tips around safe techniques! With Marie.

Saturday 27th June

12:30pm 11+ Topic TBC. With George

Saturday 11th July

12:30pm 11+ Music Quiz!

Name the musical instrument quiz, tell us your favourite song! With Marie

Saturday 25th July

12:30pm 11+ Topic TBC George

Our Inspirational Children and Young People



We want to give a massive shout out to ALL children and young people during this time! It's been a testing time for most of us but a lot of our CYP have shown great resilience and understanding about the need to stay home and stay safe, so credit to them all (even if they haven't done as much school work as you'd like!)

We want to say a massive 'well done' though to Poppy Dobson, who at 9 years old is using her time at home to practice her mobility and cane skills!

Poppy's dog Woody has been helping her and we think they be on Cruft's together soon! It was lovely to see Poppy's dad share a video of her and Woody practicing together on our Facebook page. Well done Poppy and keep up the good work!

Another 'well done' goes to Orla who has used some of her time to write a blog for Henshaws to share her knowledge of all the useful bloggers with a vision impairment out there! Bloggers help to raise awareness and share their stories to give other people confidence and information and help them feel less alone. Thanks Orla! You can find Orla's Blog about Bloggers on our Knowledge Village.

Other News and Events

Positive Eye

If you haven't already seen, then where have you been?! The wonderful Gwyn from Positive Eye has been sharing her fun and interesting characters from her stories for children with vision impairments and other disabilities. Gwyn is running Positive Eye's Idea Machine with loads of fun ideas and live videos, check her out at <https://www.facebook.com/PositiveEyeIdeaMachine/>

RSBC

Our partners on our Live Life Go Further project, RSBC have loads of virtual sessions available for young people to get together and chat, get creative and work out! Check out their upcoming event on their website or Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/RSBCcharity/>



Look

Look have also created lots of virtual meets ups as well around mindfulness, poetry and yoga as well as Q&A events on various topics. <https://www.facebook.com/LOOKnational/>

VICTA

Victa's Facebook page is full of load of content and ideas for keeping the kids busy. They also have lots of useful information in their Parents Portal <https://www.victa.org.uk/introducing-victa-parent-portal/>

Henshaws Online

Did you know that you can keep up to date with news from Henshaws across our social media platforms?

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Henshaws

Twitter: www.twitter.com/Henshaws

Instagram: www.instagram.com/henshaws_uk

We also have closed Facebook Groups for Manchester - search **Henshaws Children & Families North West**.

You can also sign up to our **Henshaws Knowledge Village**, our online tool full of useful tips, tricks and information on living with sight loss. Videos, blogs, eBooks and more provide a wealth of knowledge and we are starting to add to the existing collection with some specifically for

children and young people! Sign up to receive free monthly e-newsletters at www.henshaws.org.uk/what-we-offer/knowledge-hub/

We also have our own You Tube channel where you can watch our Life Hacks videos and much more, including recent videos featuring some of our young people on the last 'I Can Do It' residential! Please subscribe to our channel at www.youtube.com/user/Henshaws1837

Final Note!

We are still here! Henshaws CYP Team are still here to support you with whatever you might need help with. If we don't have the answer we will try find someone who does! We know this has been a weird few weeks and we don't know how much longer it will continue, but for however long we will keep finding ways to reach out to you, keep sharing useful tips and information and keep children and young people with sight loss engaged and connected.

We are planning a schedule of summer events but we don't know at this stage of they will be able to go ahead, we will keep you posted! We will meet again but until then stay home and stay safe!!

We wouldn't be able to deliver our services without funding, so we would like to thank the following organisations for their support:



Stoller
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P. H. HOLT
FOUNDATION

Meet the Children and Young People's team:



Fiona Berry

Community Service Manager, Children & Young People (CYP)

Email: fiona.berry@henshaws.org.uk

T: 0300 222 5555



George Ferguson Enablement Officer Children & Young People (CYP) Holiday Activities and I Can Do It - Merseyside, and Weekend Activities - Greater Manchester

Email: george.ferguson@henshaws.org.uk

M: 07970 637 687 DL: 0161 786 3650 T: 0300 222 5555



Carly Ferry

Enablement Officer Children & Young People (CYP)

Holiday Activities - Greater Manchester

Email: carly.ferry@henshaws.org.uk

M: 07970 637 391 DL: 0161 786 3697 T: 0300 222 5555



Marie Hansen

Enablement Officer Children & Young People (CYP)

Weekend Activities - Merseyside

Email: marie.hansen@henshaws.org.uk

M: 07970 637 019 DL: 0161 786 3651 T: 0300 222 5555



Lydia Waker-Craig

Enablement Officer Children & Young People (CYP)

I Can Do It - Greater Manchester

Email: lydia.waker-craig@henshaws.org.uk

M: 07894 097 633 DL: 0161 786 3653 T: 0300 222 5555



Rachael Dickens

Enablement Officer Children & Young People (CYP)

Oldham

Email: Rachael.dickens@henshaws.org.uk

M: 07970638604