

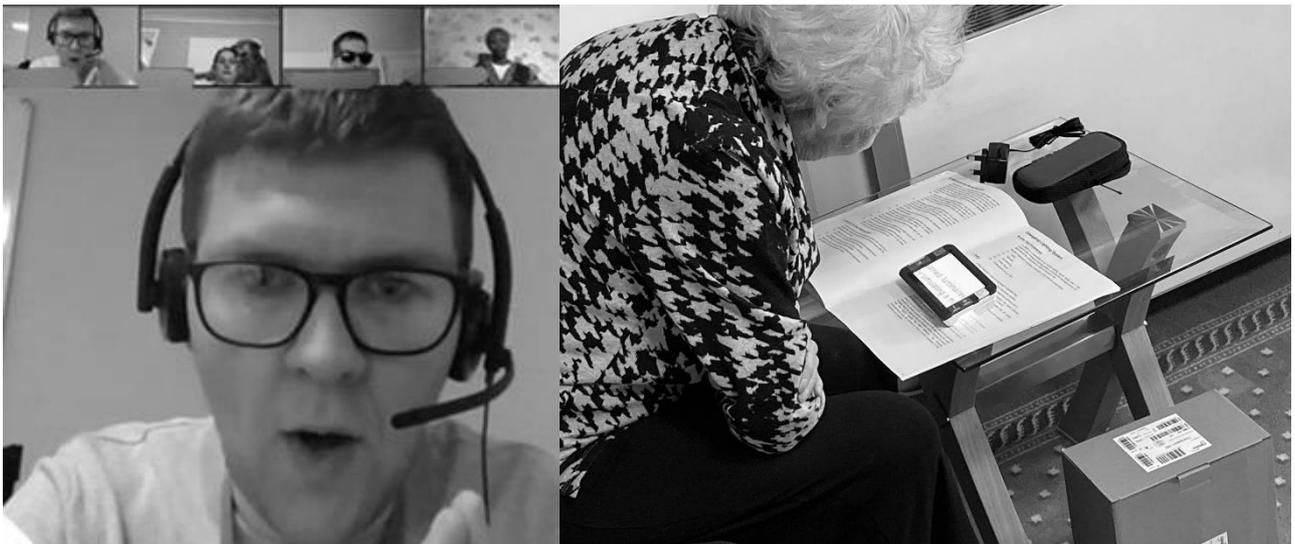


community  
services

# Don't Face Winter Alone

Winter 2020/21

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



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Photographs on the front cover show our Manchester Enablement Officer Josh leading a Living Well With Sight Loss course via a Zoom video conference call, and one of our service users Marjorie receiving training on using her new digital magnifier at home.

## **Hello and welcome to this special ‘Don’t Face Winter Alone’ newsletter from Henshaws.**

“I hope that this newsletter finds you well, even though we are facing the most challenging public health crisis for generations. Everyone at Henshaws has been going the extra mile to ensure that our blind and visually impaired community has not been forgotten amidst the pandemic panic - from ensuring people had access to groceries in the early days, to helping individuals to get their confidence and independence back once restrictions began to ease.

Just to give you an idea of what we have been doing since the first lockdown back in March, we have made 10,576 outgoing calls to blind and visually impaired people and supported 3,642 unique individuals. There have been 6,691 information, advice

and guidance interventions, given to 2,832 people, and 149 befriending calls made on average per month to 85 people.

We wanted to get this special ‘Don’t Face Winter Alone’ newsletter to you to remind you of our services and to encourage you to contact us if you need any support at this difficult time. This newsletter includes practical tips to help you through the long winter months if you are living with sight loss, as well as some guidance about looking after your mental health, protecting yourself against scams, and the importance of keeping warm and getting the flu vaccine.

This will sadly be my last newsletter welcome message as I will be departing Henshaws after the Christmas period. I will be taking up a national position with the RNIB, focusing on the transformation of the adult sight loss pathway and building on the work we have started at Henshaws. I will look back fondly at my time here, which has provided me with a great foundation for me to build upon. My greatest achievement was the development of our Pathway to Independence model which we launched in 2014 - I am proud to say that our Pathway has supported 5,174 new people since its inception, as well as supporting our existing service users. I personally would like to thank all the staff who supported my service ambitions, our unsung heroes the team of volunteers who support the our Friendship Matters groups, and to all those who have turned to Henshaws for support. I wish you all well for the future.

Finally, I hope we are all able to spend some quality time with our loved ones over the festive period, but above all stay safe.”

**- Robert Cooper, Director of Community Services**

# **Top tips for winter if you are living with sight loss**

Our Senior Rehab Officer, Simon Merrills, has put together some useful tips for you to consider as we enter winter:

## **Tip 1: Taking extra care in the dark**

Well the clocks have gone back so it is dark earlier, and soon it won't be light until later - and with a dark cloudy sky can seem like it's never going to get light! Remember all these things can contribute to reducing your residual vision. If you want to check your residual vision, do so in a controlled area such as your kitchen with the lights on (this will give you a better idea of how your sight is). The outdoor conditions at present can make it seem worse when you are out and about. Things will be more difficult to see, so be careful. Take your cane as it's reflective and wear a brightly coloured coat. The weather can make it tricky too, as the rain will reduce contrast, add noise and make you want to put your hood up, so be extra careful.

## **Tip 2: Think about other people who support you**

It is worth thinking about the people you help or that help you - will you feel as inspired to go out, and will they? It is worth planning ahead. When you are out at the moment remember there are generally less people about - think about this if you often ask for a little bit of help when you're out.

## **Tip 3: Focus on your mental health and reducing isolation**

How about giving some of your family, friends or neighbours a call? It's great to have a chat, plus it's nice to show you care - and likewise it's nice to know that people care about you! We

have written a few guides to looking after your mental health during the pandemic (read about this in the next section).

#### **Tip 4: Check your lighting**

Make sure all your lights work, including external lights if you have them. Check you have good bulbs that give good, consistent light. The new LED bulbs give off a good light and are cheap to run. If you want to convert to LED, ask someone to help you pick if you are not sure (they usually have a conversion on the box, letting you know the equivalent wattage - for example, an old 100-watt bulb can be replaced by a 15- or 20-watt LED bulb). Smaller LED bulbs use minimal power; you could use one in a lamp to keep your house lit, so you don't have to walk into a dark room. Think about using a timer plug and a lamp - could this come on at night and morning to eliminate dark spots? I have a torch in my bag, and one in the house, it just helps sometimes. I always know where they are, they both have batteries in and work.

#### **Tip 5: Plan your shopping**

Plan ahead and try and keep some supplies in. Decide what you want to eat as a fallback plan, as the dark days can be a little low on inspiration when cooking. If you are on a diet or just watching your weight, you'll want to think about filling up, as it's easy to sit in all night and snack. Remember it may be less inspiring or not possible to get as much exercise as you would like. If you are fortunate enough to have someone help you with your shopping, get them to read our useful tips for shopping for someone with a visual impairment on our website here:

<https://www.henshaws.org.uk/12-top-tips-for-shopping-for-a-visually-impaired-person/>

## **Tip 6: Get your heating ready for winter**

Check your boiler or heating system, as it may have been a while since you used it. Re-familiarise yourself with the timer and thermostat (this is a good time to put some new batteries in your magnifier if you have one!) Another common problem with boilers is low pressure in the system. If you are unsure get someone to check the pressure clock on the boiler and see if it needs topping up as boilers can sometimes lose water pressure over summer. If you are not sure get a plumber to check it, or get your boiler serviced. If you use electric to heat your home keep the heaters and vent clear - think safety. While we are at it check your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detector too (if you have a fire, wood stove or gas fire).

## **Tip 7: Getting out and about safely**

As we said it is getting dark, wet and windy. Plan your journeys, add a little time, get your winter coat out and (if you've got one) use a backpack as it keeps both hands free. Take your cane as it is reflective and makes sure you are visible. Dark coats are difficult to see for drivers and other pedestrians, so make sure you have some good visible contrast or wear a reflective coat/waistcoat. I wear a peaked cap, as it keeps the rain off my glasses which helps a bit. I don't like wearing a hood as I cross the road using my ears, so I don't cover them up. Most people with sight loss will use their ears more than they think, so try not to cover them. Watch out for streetlights, furniture, A-boards, road signs, etc. as they all hide in the gloom and hurt if you walk into them. Keep away from the kerb as puddles mean splashes, which means spending the rest of the trip wet. Mind you don't slip in the wet leaves - they'll be gone soon but are

slippery as they rot away. They can make it tricky to identify the kerb, so take your time and use your long cane.

### **Tip 8: Be mindful of frost and snow**

Yes, it's coming - not 100% sure about the snow, but as some point we will get frost! Make sure you aren't in a rush, plan ahead, keep your hands free, and put your gloves on if you can. Frost is a nuisance but with good footwear and a bit of planning you can reduce the risk. I wear boots or shoes with some good grip, no flat soles for this weather. Check you have turned the outside tap off and drained the hose if you have one, as they could freeze if you don't. If your path is frosty and slippery, you could sprinkle some salt on the path and step. You will need to give it time to work and check it's all defrosted - dishwasher salt is usually in a big bag, some of this will do, plus it's not as messy as grit sand. You will still need to wipe your feet when you go in, and mind you don't slip on the laminate flooring.

## **Support through the COVID-19 pandemic**

We have been producing and sharing information with our service users throughout the pandemic, either online or over the telephone, but we thought it would be useful to share some of our guidance here too, which we hope you find useful.

### **Look after your mental health**

With our lives seemingly turned upside down, it can be difficult to stay positive and keep a healthy mind. It is key however to try and overcome the negative emotions that you feel and do things that are good for your mental health. We've put together some tips to help you look after your mental health:

**Have a routine:** When you have no structure to your day it negatively affects your mental health as you have too much time on your hands to dwell on the bad. Give your day purpose by having some routine, get up at a similar time each day, and have times in the day that you want to have something done by.

**Keep in touch:** This time can feel lonely for us all but more so if you are out of touch from family and friends - communicate with those you may have even lost touch with over the years. Try and think of creative ways to socialise - possibly quiz nights over the phone with family/friends.

**Keep positive:** Be grateful for the things in your life that others are not fortunate enough to have. Keep your mindset positive and think about things that you can do and not things that you cannot.

**Practice breathing techniques or even do some yoga:** This will keep you calm and bring you peace. Shut everything else out and play relaxing music, then sit with your eyes closed and take deep breaths in and out.

**Take care of yourself:** This could possibly be the most important of them all - do some exercise and eat as healthy as possible. A healthy body equals a healthy mind.

### **Volunteer story about living through the pandemic**

We thought we would share an article that one of our volunteers, Nina who is visually impaired herself, wrote for us during the lockdown.

“Hi, my name is Nina, and I am a 38-year-old blind woman, a wife and mother to two amazing young boys. As you probably already know, the last few months have been a very strange and unexpected time. I follow The Blind Poet (Dave Steele), and there was a line in one of his recent poems (‘I’m lost within these COVID days, I’m drowning in the doubt’). This line jumped out at me because it does at times feel like I am drowning; not just drowning in the pandemic crisis but drowning back within my sight loss.

This has been brought on by the lockdown and the restrictions to my independence. I was coming to the part in my journey where I felt my feet were grounded, and I was starting to accept and become friends with my disability. I was starting to think that people were looking at me like I was able again. Then, without notice, the world changed, and it felt like we were left behind and not given the correct program for the show.

As for many people, the change in circumstances has been challenging. We were fighting for our independence before lockdown and now we are fighting for it again. But it feels like there is more judgment on us, as we don’t keep socially distant or wear a mask - I have felt very uncomfortable on several occasions being out in the public.

Although there have been fears, opinions and challenges throughout, and most likely are many more to come, I have chosen to take the positives from this experience. It has given me quality time with my son and family, and it has allowed me to take part in some online courses and seminars which I wouldn’t have been able to attend under normal circumstances.

Things are going to be different but that is something that I and many others with sight loss are used to. Facing change is our superpower! Take care and stay safe.”

## **Protect yourself from coronavirus scams**

As long as we have been around, there have also been dodgy people, or criminals happy take our money or possessions in devious ways! Unfortunately, in common with most other crisis situations, fraudsters have created lots of new ways to defraud their unsuspecting victims during this coronavirus crisis.

We have put together a useful article on things to look out for to help you spot a scam, as well as detailing some of the most common scams being reported at this time. You can read this at [www.henshaws.org.uk/guide-to-covid-19-scams/](http://www.henshaws.org.uk/guide-to-covid-19-scams/)

There is also a useful guide to scams provided online by the Money Saving Expert, which you can read here: [www.moneysavingexpert.com/team-blog/2020/04/coronavirus-scams-protect-yourself/](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/team-blog/2020/04/coronavirus-scams-protect-yourself/)

So, what can you do if you're struggling for ideas to help you move forward from the lockdown? Why not give us a call on 0300 222 5555 - we have a team of enablers that can offer practical help. They will have ideas and solutions to your problems or will know someone who does. Why not give us a call for a friendly chat, maybe make a Personal Plan. You may feel like joining one of our Living Well with Sight Loss meetings, or we have peer support groups and can offer counselling too. Read about all of services in the next section.

## **Our services**

### **Important - keeping your information up to date**

We would be grateful if you could get in touch with us on 0300 222 5555 to double-check that all the details we have on our system for you are correct. Your help with this ensures we have up to date and accurate information about you and helps us to provide information in the way that is most appropriate and accessible for you.

Many thanks in anticipation of your help with this and we look forward to hearing from you.

### **First Step Team**

The specially trained sight loss advisors in our First Step team can provide you with information, advice and guidance, as well as emotional and practical support, to help you overcome everyday challenges and take the next step in your sight loss journey.

When you have a visual impairment or other disability, it can be difficult to find information about what services are available, but our friendly team is here to help. We can also signpost you to other relevant organisations who may be able to help you, so give us a call on 0300 222 5555 between 9.00am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

### **Patient Support Service at eye hospital locations**

At this time a face-to-face appointment may not be possible, but we are still here to help and are available for phone appointments and enquiries. Our Patient Support Officers

provide emotional and practical support right when people need it most. We offer:

- Someone to talk to in confidence.
- Support during your appointment and a link with your consultant if you need to know more or need something explained further.
- Medical information explained in a clear way that is easy to understand.
- An opportunity to discuss your concerns.
- Information about practical help, advice on local services, equipment and benefits.
- Help with the registration process.

If you would like to speak to a Patient Support Officer, you can have a phone appointment from home. To arrange an appointment or find out more please call 0300 222 5555 or email [patientsupport@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:patientsupport@henshaws.org.uk)

## **Living Well with Sight Loss courses**

If you are wondering, “What’s next for me?” then why not join one of our Living Well with Sight Loss courses. We meet once a week for four weeks, covering a wide range of topics to help you live well with sight loss. We will explore what is available and useful to help keep you independent.

We are currently delivering these meetings over the phone or by video call (don’t worry we’ll help find the right way for you to join a meeting!) Then when the time is right, we will start holding these meetings in person. At the end of the course you will understand what services are available to you both locally

and nationally to support you to live independently; you will have gained the support of others new to sight loss and possibly made some new friends; be more knowledgeable about simple technologies that can help with daily tasks; and have an improved confidence about moving forward and where to go if you ever feel stuck.

The courses we have planned over the next few months are as follows:

**Bolton:** Starting 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Manchester:** Starting 4<sup>th</sup> (online) and 11<sup>th</sup> (phone) November

**Oldham:** Starting 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Salford & Trafford:** Starting 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Tameside:** Starting 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020

If you are interested in attending a course, please get in touch with our First Step team (call us on 0300 222 5555 or email [info@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:info@henshaws.org.uk))

## **Exercise sessions**

We are trialling a new virtual exercise group for our Trafford-based service users, which is being run in partnership with Unlimited Potential. The sessions start in November and are being delivered using Zoom conference call technology. The first session is 'Chair Yoga' with Esmerelda which starts on 25<sup>th</sup> November for four weeks, with the final four weekly sessions taking place after the Christmas break.

It is hoped that following a successful trial, we will be able to offer similar exercise sessions in our other hubs across Greater

Manchester. If you are interested in joining the waiting list for this activity, please contact our First Step team on 0300 222 5555.

## **Getting out and about**

Our Enablement Team are out and about in your local community (rain or shine!) with our new Community Confidence programme. Enablement Officers are currently offering to accompany service users to get out of the house independently for a familiar short walk, a spell of fresh air, a chat, and a change of scenery.

A brisk 10-30-minute walk not only helps make your heart healthy and builds stamina, but it is also proven to increase your mental alertness, energy, and positive mood. According to the Mental Health Foundation, participation in regular physical activity can increase your self-esteem and can reduce stress and anxiety.

We are here all weather for you to give our Community Confidence programme a try. If you would like to know more call us today on 0300 222 5555 to chat with the Enablement Officer in your area and make a start in building a new positive routine into your day.

Please note that Henshaws are fully compliant in following Government Guidance related to Covid-19 in ensuring service users and staff are safe by implementing simple precautionary measures.

## **Children and Young People's Service**

Our Children and Young People's (CYP) Service team in Greater Manchester and Merseyside specialise in working with children and parents with sight loss, offering information, advice and guidance, and practical and emotional support.

Our families receive their own dedicated CYP newsletter and can keep up to date with all our events in our Facebook groups. Please call on 0300 222 5555 for more info about the services we offer to young visually impaired people and their families.

## **Counselling service**

It can be difficult to come to terms with being diagnosed with sight loss. It is perfectly normal to feel overwhelmed, but it can help to have someone to talk to who can empathise and help you process the many emotions you can feel after your diagnosis; that's why we offer counselling across Greater Manchester. We are also offering counselling to those service users who are struggling mentally throughout this time.

Our Community Counsellor, Deborah Haydock, is currently offering telephone sessions for people living across Greater Manchester. Please contact us on 0300 222 5555 for more details.

## **Telephone befriending service**

We are very fortunate to have a dedicated team of volunteers who have helped us to establish a telephone befriending service since the pandemic began earlier this year, offering regular phone calls to some of our most vulnerable service users to try

and reduce social isolation. If you are interested in finding out more about this service, please contact us on 0300 222 5555.

## **Social groups**

Due to COVID-19, we have had to close our hubs and postpone any face-to-face meetings/events until government guidelines enable us to re-start our programme of regular sessions.

However, we do have some activities that are being carried out over the telephone or using technology, as follows:

### **Bolton virtual social groups (over the telephone)**

Tuesdays (weekly), 1.30pm-2.30pm

Thursdays (weekly), 1.30pm-2.30pm

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Carlton on 0300 222 5555 or email [carlton.milenkovic@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:carlton.milenkovic@henshaws.org.uk)

### **Manchester virtual social groups (over the telephone)**

Tuesdays (weekly), 10.00am (North Manchester Group)

Thursdays (weekly), 11.00am (Wythenshawe Group)

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Josh on 0300 222 5555 or email [joshua.deegan@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:joshua.deegan@henshaws.org.uk)

### **Oldham virtual social groups (over the telephone)**

Mondays (weekly), 3.00 - 4.00pm (Monday Clubbers)

Tuesdays (weekly), 10.00am - 11.00am (Royshaw Group)

Tuesdays (weekly), 3.00 - 4.00pm (Tuesday Clubbers)

Wednesdays (weekly), 11.00am - 12noon (Pennine Group)

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Kate on 0300 222 5555 or email [kate.nattrass@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:kate.nattrass@henshaws.org.uk)

### **Salford virtual social groups (over the telephone)**

Tuesdays (weekly), 2.00pm - 3.00pm

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Nina on 0300 222 5555 or email [nina.rios@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:nina.rios@henshaws.org.uk)

### **Tameside virtual social groups (over the telephone)**

Tuesdays (monthly), 2.00pm

Thursdays (fortnightly), 11.00am

Fridays (weekly), 11.00am

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Kathryn on 0300 222 5555 or email [kathryn.riding@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:kathryn.riding@henshaws.org.uk)

### **Trafford virtual social groups (over the telephone)**

Wednesdays (weekly), 11.00am - 12 noon

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Nina on 0300 222 5555 or email [nina.rios@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:nina.rios@henshaws.org.uk)

## **Digital services**

Many of our service users have had the support of the Digital Enablement Team before this unprecedented period of disruption due to Covid-19. Our support is totally free and includes assessments, training, and telephone support. Until such time as the venues we deliver our services from re-open, it is our intention to carry out home visits if you live in Greater Manchester.

If you would like any help with your existing equipment or want to discuss how new technologies could help you, then please do not hesitate and get in touch with us on 0300 222 5555 or email us at [info@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:info@henshaws.org.uk)

At our monthly Tech Talk sessions, we discuss the latest tech

news, new ways to use existing tech, and personal knowledge and experience. The groups are a mixture of beginners and experts, and plenty of knowledge is shared around. We use Zoom to deliver these sessions at the following times/dates:

**Bolton Tech Talk** (video conference call on Zoom)  
First Thursday of the month, 10.30am-11.30am

**Oldham Tech Talk** (video conference call on Zoom)  
Fourth Wednesday of the month, 10.30am-12.30pm

**Trafford Tech Talk** (video conference call on Zoom)  
Fourth Thursday of the month, 10.30am-12.30pm

If you would like to find out more about Tech Talk, please contact Richard Powell on 0161 786 3654 or [richard.powell@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:richard.powell@henshaws.org.uk) or Chris Garry on 0161 786 3665 or [chris.garry@henshaws.org.uk](mailto:chris.garry@henshaws.org.uk)

## **Henshaws Knowledge Village**

Henshaws Knowledge Village continues to grow with new content, including recent videos about filters and tints, magnifiers, and dictation solutions. We also publish three blogs each month on our website, on topics such as new apps and technology, top tips to help when you are out and about, and guest blogs by people within the sight loss community.

Please make sure you visit our Knowledge Village to explore our valuable resources at [www.henshaws.org.uk/knowledge-village](http://www.henshaws.org.uk/knowledge-village) You can also subscribe to our YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/Henshaws1837](http://www.youtube.com/user/Henshaws1837) where we release a new video every Wednesday.

If you would like to receive fortnightly e-mails so you can keep up to date with new content on our Knowledge Village, make sure you join our mailing list through the website at [www.henshaws.org.uk/sign-up-knowledge-village](http://www.henshaws.org.uk/sign-up-knowledge-village)

## **Fundraising News**

We are currently working on a fundraising appeal to help us to continue to support blind and visually impaired people across Greater Manchester through the long winter months. If you have consented to receive information from our fundraising team, you will shortly receive an appeal letter with more information.

If you would like to find out more about the ways in which you and your family can support our charity, please give our Fundraising Team a call on 0300 222 5555 or visit [www.henshaws.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give/](http://www.henshaws.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-give/)

## **Other support for the winter**

### **Keeping warm and healthy**

When the temperature drops to below 8C, some people are at increased risk of heart attack, stroke, flu, pneumonia, falls and injuries, and hypothermia. Cold weather can also affect people with mental health conditions, such as depression and dementia. Very cold weather can affect anyone, but you are most vulnerable if you are 65 or older, on a low income (so cannot afford heating), have a long-term health condition (such as heart, lung or kidney disease), you're disabled, or you have a mental health condition.

Top tips include being prepared by keeping up to date with weather forecasts, keeping your home warm (draw curtains and

keep doors closed to block out draughts), claim financial and practical help with heating your home (Simple Energy delivers government-endorsed advice on 0800 444202 or at [www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk](http://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk)), and protect your health in the cold.

Some tips for keeping well in the cold are have the flu jab (see details below), wear several layers of clothes rather than one chunky layer, use a hot water bottle or an electric blanket at night, have at least one hot meal a day, stay active, and stay indoors during very cold weather if you have a heart or respiratory problem.

## **Protect yourself from flu**

Three facts about the flu jab:

1. It is best to have it done at the start of the flu season in the autumn, but it's still worth getting vaccinated any time before the end of the season in March.
2. If you are in an 'At Risk Group' you need to have the jab every year as different flu viruses can circulate each winter, so last year's vaccine may not be effective.
3. Everyone in an 'At Risk Group' can have the flu jab for free. Just contact your local GP surgery or local pharmacy team.

It is more important than ever to understand and recognise the symptoms of flu, and you can help to protect yourself and others by following some basic hygiene guidance. This year it is more important than ever for the people who need it most to get vaccinated, to help protect against the double threat of flu and coronavirus this winter. For more info visit:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/)

## **Support for vulnerable people across Greater Manchester**

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority have established Community Hubs in each local authority area to provide support for the most vulnerable in each borough. These hubs coordinate support for those who do not have any other way of sourcing food and medical supplies. They are also helping vulnerable residents to access hardship grants. The phone numbers for all ten boroughs are below:

**Bolton 01204 337 221** (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday: 9.00am to 1.30pm)

**Bury 0161 253 5353** (Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm)

**Manchester 0800 234 6123** (Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm)

**Oldham 0161 770 7007** (Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 5.00pm)

**Rochdale 01706 923685** (Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 5.00pm)

**Salford 0800 952 1000** (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 6pm, Saturday: 9am to 1pm)

**Stockport 0161 217 6046** (Monday to Thursday: 9am to 5pm, Friday: 9am to 4.30pm)

**Tameside 0161 342 8355** (Monday to Wednesday: 8am to 5.00pm, Thursday: 8am to 4.30pm, Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm)

**Trafford 0300 330 9073** (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.30pm)

**Wigan 01942 489018** (Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday and Sunday: 9.00am to 12 noon)

**Greater Manchester Textphone 07860 022876** (messages will be responded to by the next working day)

## **'Blind perceptions' by The Blind Poet**

We wanted to finish this newsletter with a poem written by our ambassador Dave Steele, The Blind Poet.

“I know there’s strength inside of you, though all you feel is numb,  
Don’t be afraid as eyesight fades, for what is still to come.  
You will adjust, in these words trust, we share these tunnelled eyes,  
A mix of strength with anxiousness the same in me applies.  
My shins are full of bruises and my confidence misplaced  
At time self-isolated, felt the world too much to face.  
So I’m here to remind you all the times we fail don’t matter,  
There’s lots of misconceptions still, let’s remind them of the latter.  
It’s not that complicated, change how blindness is defined,  
Let’s educate, articulate, the many ways we’re blind.  
It’s never all or nothing, many shades and different views,  
Yet there’s a stereotype they keep on printing in the news.  
No wonder some of us have fears when out in crowded place,  
They see the cane, but can’t explain why we look them in the face.  
There’s some of us who stay at home convinced of the excuse,  
That because we don’t look blind enough, there’s a need to be recluse.  
Don’t waste your life on people whose opinions are way off,  
Just swipe your cane with courage, hold your head with pride aloft.  
So never doubt what we’re about, despite what some believe  
Come join me on my mission, change the way we are perceived.

Won't let the haze that fills my eyes consume the rest of me,  
There's more to life than edge of knife, despite what I can't see  
Try not to care as people stare with looks of vague suspicion  
But why should I explain to them the terms of my condition?  
Though it's much simpler to stay home, won't waste another  
day,  
Their pity's just an obstacle that's getting in my way.  
Though I am blind won't be confined by others misconceptions  
This poetry that spills from me will change their blind  
perceptions.  
Though anxious chest and days depressed have far from  
disappeared,  
I've learned to breathe while I still grieve, control these things  
I've feared.  
My kids look on, not on what's gone, but all each day I teach  
For if tomorrow their eyes pay life's dreams are still in reach.  
So I'll not cry as vision dies, won't focus on the blur,  
No point in holding on to how those days and eyes once were.”

#TheBlindPoet

## Where to find us

Our hubs are spread across Greater Manchester:

**Altrincham Hospital** - Railway Street, Altrincham WA14 2RE

**Bolton** - The Sensory Centre at Thicketford, 336 Ainsworth Lane, Bolton BL2 2QL

**Manchester Royal Eye Hospital (MREH)** - Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9WL

**North Manchester** - Venue to be confirmed

**Oldham** - Medtia Place, 80 Union St, Oldham OL1 1DJ

**Salford** - Venue to be confirmed

**Tameside** - 3-4 Wellington Parade, Dukinfield SK16 4LE

**Trafford** - Venue to be confirmed

**Wythenshawe** - Wythenshawe Forum, Simonsway, M22 5RX

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

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/Henshaws](https://www.twitter.com/Henshaws)

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

YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/Henshaws1837](https://www.youtube.com/user/Henshaws1837)

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