

Our Community Confidence Strategy

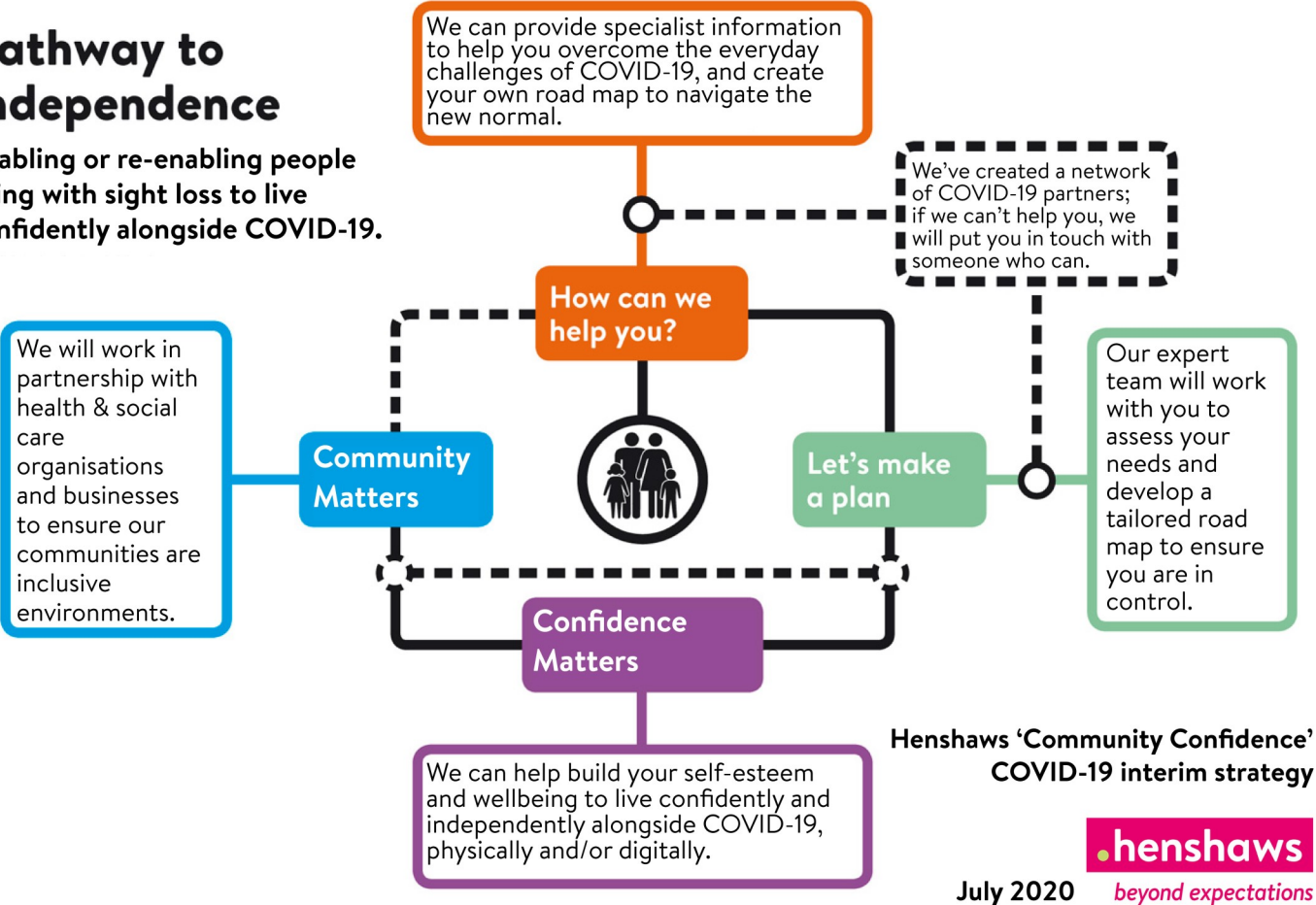
The key aim of our Community Confidence strategy is to enable or re-enable people living with sight loss to live confidently alongside COVID-19.

Our services include the First Step Team offering specialist information, advice and guidance, a Patient Support Service in two hospitals, Enablement and Digital Teams supporting people to create their own personal road maps and engage with technology, specialist counselling, Children and Young People’s services, and our online Knowledge Village support.

We will work in tandem with our NHS partners to ensure people newly facing sight loss have the support they require to ensure no person is diagnosed without support.

pathway to independence

Enabling or re-enabling people living with sight loss to live confidently alongside COVID-19.



For more information please contact:

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our community services / knowledge village COVID-19 response



The challenge:

The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest health crisis for generations, and it is having a devastating impact on the lives of people across the world. We recognise that when times are tough, it is the people who already face challenges that can be affected the most. This graphic shows the key statistics of our support to blind and visually impaired people across the North West since March 2020.

Our COVID-19 response at a glance:

 Reached out to our service users by sending letters to 5,906 people at the start of Lockdown #1 in March	 Made over 4,000 support phone calls to our most vulnerable service users in Lockdown #1	 Surveyed 955 visually impaired people to create a report that was shared across the sector
 Increased digital content production by 483% to provide remote support to the sight loss community	 Digital reach over the year increased by 43%, with non-UK visits of 16% on website, 52% on YouTube	 Developed a Community Confidence strategy in response to identified needs of our beneficiaries
 Article about our COVID-19 response included in No Going Back GM-wide voluntary sector report	 Delivered a comprehensive programme of support via telephone, video calls and home visits	 Carried out pre- and post-lockdown assessments with service users to demonstrate outcomes

Henshaws Community Services / Knowledge Village COVID-19 response timeline

23 March: COVID-19 response begins

Letters of support sent to almost 6,000 service users across Greater Manchester and Merseyside.



Staff pro-actively called our service users to assess welfare needs using a red-amber-green (RAG) system to determine vulnerability and inform our actions (more than 4,000 calls were made).

30 March - 12 June: COVID-19 survey

Survey carried out with 955 visually impaired people. Key findings included variation across GM in terms of support from local authorities, lack of public health messaging in accessible formats, and 25% of respondents classed as extremely vulnerable.

“I am concerned that due to this pandemic some visually impaired people are isolated and they may lose their hard-won independence.”

March onwards: Digital content focus

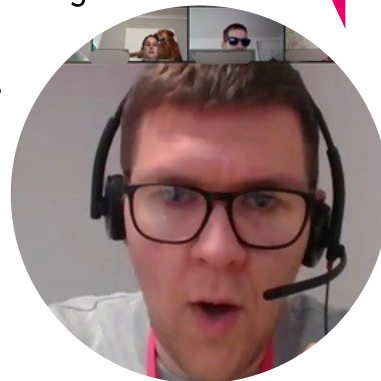
When we had to cease face-to-face services in line with government regulations, we ramped up our digital content production by 483% to support visually impaired people remotely.



All front-line staff trained as **Certified Champions of Mental Health** ensuring we provided the best support to our community.

On-going: Delivery of remote services

We delivered a comprehensive programme of services to blind and visually impaired people across GM and Merseyside, utilising phone support, video conferencing, and home-visits (when restrictions permitted). This included virtual social groups, technology training, counselling, Living well with Sight Loss courses and more!



15 September: Article published

We had an article published in ‘No Going Back: Voices from Manchester’s voluntary, community and social enterprise sector on the response to COVID-19 and their thoughts for the future’ which was published by the charity Macc (Manchester Community Central).



28 July: Community Confidence Strategy

As the first lockdown began to ease we developed the Community Confidence Strategy, in response to the identified need that visually impaired people needed specific support around navigating the post-lockdown environment. We carried out assessments with our service users, showing that 70% had concerns about restrictions being eased, and 60% had reduced independence.

6 October: Awarding of funding

Key findings from our COVID-19 survey were presented to the GM Elective Reform Programme to form evidence for ‘Ophthalmology: Pilot to support those with sight loss.’ Funding was secured for this pilot project to create a centrally-held GM Certified Vision Impairment (CVI) register and information, advice and guidance (IAG) service to all people living with a visual impairment who need to access services from a central team.

10 October: Journal article submitted

Robert Cooper and Helen Doyle of Henshaws Community Services co-wrote an article entitled ‘A Fractured System: Have existing problems in health and social care for visually impaired people been exacerbated by COVID-19?’ This has been submitted to the Voluntary Sector Review journal for publication.



13 November: Sharing of assessments

Findings from the post-Community Confidence Strategy assessments with service users show that following an intervention by us:

- People feel more confident about getting out and about.
- People feel more confident about socialising with friends and family again.
- People’s independence rating was back to pre-lockdown levels.

