

Communication from Deafblind Scotland during the COVID-19 Pandemic

6th July 2020

With restrictions easing, life might soon be a mix of getting back some freedoms and pleasures we once enjoyed whilst still going out a bit less and using virtual (online) activities more than ever before. This mix of virtual and real-life opportunities might become the “new normal” for many of us for a while. Therefore, this issue is focused on that “new normal”.

Where we can, through additional support provided by the Government’s well-being fund project, we have been reaching out to as many members as possible and have been working to support those who are experiencing higher levels of isolation, loneliness and boredom during lockdown. Many Deafblind Scotland members are shielding or self-isolating due to being older or living with additional underlying health conditions. In fact, 30% of our members are over 85 years old.

As a deafblind person you will know only too well about the isolation and Gerard has shared his story which captures just how difficult lockdown has been for many members:

Gerard said, “life has been very difficult living alone and with no physical contact with family members”. Gerard explains that he doesn’t have enough sight to enable him to watch television or read newspapers and doesn’t have hearing to listen to the radio which makes him feel isolated. This also limits his ability to gather information

on the current restrictions during lockdown. However, with the support of our Guide Communicator service we have been helping members to remain connected. Some members have shared these experiences through writing a blog for our Facebook page under the theme of 'Waking up to Smell the Roses'. These blogs or personal stories are inspired by one of our members and Co-Chair of our Board of Director Issy McGrath. Her experience of taking up gardening for the first time and other blogs describe new things people have tried during lockdown or old connections or pleasures they have rekindled. One of our members Evelyn told us that she has been enjoying spending time making paper kites. Evelyn was also one of our members to receive some donated wool and is looking forward to crocheting, something which she has not done for many years but has always wanted to try again and feels that now is the perfect opportunity.

Finally, we thought it important to highlight how even the simple experience of getting a little bit of normality back has felt wonderful for some of our members. We were delighted to support Deafblind Scotland members Gerry, Eliza and Clark to come together to celebrate Clark's 60th birthday. Clark's friends from football had arranged for BBQ food to be sent to his garden, along with a birthday cake and bottles of beer for the football season starting. The trio thoroughly enjoyed being able to meet up and spend time chatting and sharing food and drink together. If like Gerard, you are missing social contact please do get in contact with us and we can see what we can do to help bring a little joy back into your life.

Deafblind Awareness Week

During Deafblind Awareness Week we raised just over **£700** and were able to celebrate and appreciate the achievements of Deafblind people through this year's 'Dare to Dream' theme. It was a wonderful week and we hope to build on the enthusiasm and inspiration which has been created through 'Dare to Dream'. Thank you for any support you were able to provide in raising awareness of Deafblindness.

A big piece of news this week is that we have been successful in our pitch to STV to be one of the charities advertised on TV every night as part of their local lifeline campaign. So, if you can look, out for Deafblind Scotland beaming into your houses of an evening.

Easing of lockdown

It's likely to be a little while yet before we are allowed to open the centre. Although hopefully we will be able to do this towards the end of the Summer. We will also take our time to get the charity shop health and safety right before opening too. However we aim to do so in the first week in September. But meantime we haven't forgotten about members who are missing our activity programme in the Centre and as promised we will be looking at what more we can do online for members from next week and will bring an online activity programme to you shortly.

Meantime the good news is that there will soon be more places you can go in the community. Here are some of the key dates that the First Minister of Scotland has laid out in her plan to ease lockdown:

29th June – Most non-essential shops with outside doors (not big arcades or those in shopping centres), visitor attractions including zoos, outdoor sports courts and playgrounds will reopen.

3rd July – Five-mile travel distance relaxed, most self-catering holiday homes and second homes can be used

6th July – Outdoor hospitality including beer gardens and cafes can reopen

10th July – People can meet in extended groups outdoors and with two other households indoors. Face coverings to be mandatory in shops.

13th July – Shopping centres can reopen, organised outdoor contact sports for children can resume, dentists can reopen for most routine care

15th July – Pubs, restaurants and all holiday accommodation can reopen, as can hairdressers, barbers, museums, cinemas, libraries and childcare

11th August – Schools to return full-time with no physical distancing between pupils.

It is unlikely that other steps planned for Phase 3 will take effect before **23rd July**: These will cover indoor entertainment such as nightclubs, bingo, theatres,

music venues, indoor and outdoor live events, communal worship, indoor gyms and reduced restrictions on attending weddings and funerals. This phase also includes: the reopening of offices, call centres, and phased return of universities and colleges.

Face Coverings

It is now mandatory to cover your face on public transport and will become mandatory in shops from 10th of July. To help you adjust to this we have provided a washable face covering with this issue for your use. Please make sure you loop the mask over your ears and cover your mouth and nose. These should be washed at 60 degrees after every use.

Test and Protect – SCAM PREVENTION ADVICE

NHS Scotland's Contact Tracing Programme is extremely important in the fight against coronavirus and it's vital the public cooperate with it. So, if you have symptoms of the virus you should contact the NHS and help them by telling them who you have been in contact with recently.

For more information about Test & Protect there is a **Test and Protect Process Video** including audio and subtitles explaining the 9-step process, which you can find here: https://youtu.be/nPN_CoSTwQM

Unfortunately, criminals will exploit every opportunity they can to defraud innocent people of their money or steal their personal details.

To help protect yourself from any such scam be aware that contact tracers **WILL**:

- Get in touch by phone call or text message.
- Introduce themselves, state the reason for their call, and will always identify the call recipient by name.
- Only ask for information about your movements and the people you have been in close physical proximity to.

Contact tracers will **NEVER**:

- Ask you to dial a premium rate number to speak to them.
- Ask you to make any form of payment, including a charitable donation.
- Ask for any details about your medical history.
- Ask for any details about your bank account.
- Ask for your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts.
- Ask you for passwords or PINs or ask you to set up any passwords or PINs on the phone.
- Ask you to purchase a product or attempt to sell you anything.
- Ask you to download any software to your device or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet

Near Me

The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland are looking at a secure form of video consulting service that lets people have health and social care appointments from home or wherever is convenient. All you need is a device for making video calls like a smartphone and an internet connection. This new service is called “**Near Me**”.

The Scottish Government would like to know what people think about this way of having social care and health appointments. To have your say complete the survey at:

<https://www.nearme.scot/views>

Accessibility for disabled people

Another survey you might want to consider filling in is from a charity called “Euan’s Guide” and this is about venue accessibility and disabled people’s concerns. Also their requirements going forward and what would help to make things feel a bit safer overall.

<https://form.jotform.com/201662738224959>

Virtual Museum

Deaf Scotland’s “Virtual Museum” is due to go live soon. There are a few more displays left to fill. Can you help them?

You may have some items from your family which could help tell a story. It could be an old photo of school days or a family photo with a bulky hearing aid box.

You may have found an object recently from an old job which may have brought back experiences and memories. How did your deafness affect you then? How did you communicate with colleagues?

As lockdown is starting to ease soon, you may wish to do something different so Deaf Scotland would love to hear from you with your stories. You could tell them what it's been like in lockdown.

Stories about the Coronavirus impact would help the Scottish Government and public bodies learn for any future pandemics.

You can record your story as an audio file or as a film, either speaking, signing, by email or word document. Assistance can be given.

If you want to know more about the Virtual Museum project, how to start your story or get assistance with photos or films for sharing, please get in touch with Stewart at admin@deafscotland.org.uk

Solar Bear - Solar Flares: Deaf Heritage Project

Solar Bear have been awarded a National Lottery Heritage grant to explore Deaf Heritage in Scotland.

What does Deaf Heritage mean? What does it look like here in Scotland today?

This year they plan to explore Deaf Clubs, Deaf young people and technology.

Stories/projects about Deaf Heritage in Scotland will be shared with as many people as possible (both Deaf and hearing).

For more information about the project contact Trudi (Project Co-ordinator) at trudi@solarbear.org.uk or, if you can, join their Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3247974532095283>

Deafblind Scotland Helpline

Please call or text our helpline if you need to chat about anything or have any questions. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you are feeling lonely or have any concerns that you feel we can help with. We are here for you and no question or problem is too big or small. Call us during office hours on: **07715 421399**