



Hilton Lighthouse, 4 Tomatin Road, Inverness IV2 4UA

19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

On behalf of our Board of Trustees I am writing to you to inform you of Reach4Reality's response to the COVID-19 (also known as coronavirus) outbreak and how this might affect you.

**Reach4Reality's response:**

1. At their Board meeting yesterday evening, the Board took the sad but necessary decision to cease, with immediate effect, all face-to-face contact between all staff, volunteers and young people/adults and their families and carers. This is in line with Government advice to limit the spread of the virus and to protect our staff members, volunteers and you, our young people and families – especially those who are in the high risk category or where a member of their household is in the high risk category (over 70's, those with an underlying medical condition that increases their risk, pregnant women)
2. Our Project-Co-ordinator, Sylvia Longbottom will be working from home but our family liaison workers, Colin and Carol whose work primarily consists to face to face contact with young people and their families/carers will be unable to do so. They are however willing to be contacted by service users should you need some support or encouragement. Telephone and email contact details are given at the bottom of this letter.
3. As it is a very fluid and changing situation we will be continually reviewing the situation as things progress and will endeavour to keep you updated via a variety of means: phone calls, emails, letters, on our website and via our social media platforms of Facebook and Twitter

Tel: 07796 905339

Reach4Reality is registered with OSCR as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation: SC043934 and is supported by the Short Breaks Fund

## What does this mean for you?

- **1:1 sessions:** all 1:1 sessions will be cancelled with immediate effect for the foreseeable future
- **Day activities:** these will cease with immediate effect
- **Weekend camps:** we are cancelling our March and April camps at Abernethy Trust. Thereafter we will be reviewing whether to run or cancel our weekend camps on a rolling month by month basis: so if, for example, we have to cancel our May camps, this decision will be made in April and those concerned will be notified. Although this may leave things a bit uncertain for you, it also means that we can hope to then be in a position to resume camps as soon as possible once the crisis eases
- **5 day camps:** Ardeonaig 6-10<sup>th</sup> July: we will make a decision in May as to whether to cancel this camp; 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> October: at the moment we would hope to be able to run this camp but will make a decision nearer the time
- **Small group short activity sessions:** as many of you know we have gradually developed a series of short, small group activity sessions throughout the year (foundation trail biking, mountain biking, canoeing, climbing, badminton and more recently archery), and were hoping to continue and offer these again in the new financial year: these will also be cancelled with immediate effect
- **Duke of Edinburgh Award:** those working towards their DofE awards with us are still encouraged to continue with their activities, but obviously taking into account the current Government advice. DofE are determined that young people shouldn't miss out on the opportunity to achieve their Awards and will be sharing on their website practical ideas on how they can continue working towards them:  
<https://www.dofe.org/coronavirus/faqs>  
With extra time on their hands, it may be that some other young people may be interested in starting their DofE with us: please get in touch if you would like to know more
- **DofE expeditions:** we may have to cancel our planned DofE expeditions: 29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> May (Silver practice), 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> July (Silver qualifying) and 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> September (Bronze): we will keep abreast of the Governments' DofE's advice and will keep those involved updated accordingly. If we cannot run them on these dates we will endeavour to run them at the earliest opportunity.
- **Sailing camp:** 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> May: if we are unable to run this as planned we will work with Glencoe Outdoor Centre to arrange an alternative date in the future

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### **How can we support you?**

We are very much aware of the additional stresses and strains this whole situation may put on you, our young people and families, especially now that schools are closing, and we are looking at ways that we as an organisation can keep in contact and support you through this time of uncertainty.

- We will try and contact you by phone during the week beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> March to discuss this with you.
- Some ideas we discussed yesterday were 1:1 chats with young people/carers via an appropriate and secure platform e.g. Skype, Facetime or equivalent and setting up online groups/chats: as you know some of us are not so tech savvy as you are, so it may take us sometime to do this!
- If any young person is struggling with their understanding of the virus and its impact, the National Autistic Society has given some links to a social story which may help: <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf>
- They have also provided this link to an easy read document produced by Mencap: <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Information%20about%20Coronavirus%20ER%20UPDATED%20130320%20SD%20editsAH.pdf>
- I also have access to a PDF produced by Amanda, the Autism Educator, who has produced a social story on coronavirus and school closures: copy attached to this email
- If you are self-isolating and are struggling to get essential supplies of food or other items, then please let us know: if we can't do anything ourselves we may be able to put you in touch with someone else who can
- If any of you have any ideas of how we can support you, then please do let us know: we do not want you to suffer in silence!

### **The longer term future:**

I am sure that you will appreciate that at this moment we do not know what the long term future holds in terms of Reach4Reality and other small charities. But we want to assure you that the whole team of staff, volunteers and Board members will be doing their utmost to ensure that R4R as an organisation will come through this to provide in the future the valued and much needed service that we have been providing these last 7 years.

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## Finally, what can you do to help:

### Please:

- Keep in contact with us, let us know the best way for us to contact you, and let us know of any changes to your contact details
- Think about how we can best support you
- Keep yourselves fit and well (both physically and emotionally) by following the advice of the government, NHS Inform and other bodies
- At the moment it is still ok to go out for a walk or go on a bike ride, especially in the countryside
- You will have heard lots of news items about the financial support the Government are putting in place for businesses, but we haven't heard anything on how they might support small charities and social care providers such as ourselves: there may be ways that you can help raise the profile of third sector organisation such as Reach4Reality: we will let you know
- Please notify us if any of the young people/adults we work with are diagnosed with coronavirus: we have a duty to notify the Care Inspectorate of this.
- Think about how you can support others for example an elderly neighbour, relative or someone who is self-isolating or unable to get to the shops
- Remember that this is only a temporary situation and that things will return to a more normal situation in the future!

With our best wishes,

*Sylvia*

*Colin (also known as Slice)*

Sylvia Longbottom  
Project Coordinator

Colin Hall  
Vice Chair

### Contact details:

Sylvia: 07796 905339 or [sylvialongbottom@reach4reality.org.uk](mailto:sylvialongbottom@reach4reality.org.uk)

Colin: 07956 758722 or [coling@reach4reality.org.uk](mailto:coling@reach4reality.org.uk)

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