

30th March 2020

Dear all

I am writing to you in these extraordinary and challenging times to share with you some of the ways in which we think Sands might be impacted by external events, and what we need to do as a result.

I know that we all want to keep Sands safe through these difficult times so that once this is all over we can continue to make a difference to all those whose lives we touch. In order to do this we need to make some difficult decisions.

Potential impact on income

One of biggest challenges we face is an anticipated **drop in fundraising income** of potentially between 50 percent and anything up to 75 percent until the end of August and possibly beyond. This significant decline is because more than half of our income during this period comes from mass participation and community fundraising activities that are being cancelled or postponed, and from individuals and businesses who are feeling financial pressure themselves.

Sands is not unique in facing these unprecedented challenges with the entire charity sector having to tackle this crisis. We need to take urgent action now to ensure that Sands comes through this challenging period ready to pick up where we left off and ready to grow again.

Making savings

It is clear that we need to make substantial savings, and in order to do that we need to consider what it is that is essential for us to continue to do in light of the current external environment, and also to identify what needs to be paused in the meantime due to the current restrictions.

We face making some difficult decisions. At the heart of these decisions is the principle that we want to work together, as the Sands' family, to find a way through – with everyone being held and supported, everyone playing a role, and everyone contributing to solutions.

Sands is such a wonderful and unique organisation – I know that by working together we will come through this difficult time by being there for each other and by doing the right thing.

What it is essential to continue:

1. Ensure we are providing bereavement support for all those that need it in as many different ways as we can remotely (I have outlined these ways in the attached sheet)
2. Support healthcare professionals and the NHS in whatever way they need us to
3. Support work to identify the effects that COVID-19 may have on pregnant mothers and babies, and also the effects that the strain on the NHS might have – and ask government to take these into account

What we can do to save money:

1. Cut all non-essential expenditure and pause all our face-to-face activity until further notice (including training, events etc.)
2. Ask every single member of staff to take a reduction in salary, with more senior colleagues such as myself, directors and senior line managers taking a larger pay cut than other staff
3. Furlough a third of our staff in order to save money and avoid making redundancies

What we are doing to raise money in different ways:

1. Expand the number of ways for all supporters to fundraise online and through virtual events
2. Access government support where possible (such as furloughing staff)
3. Identify other funds and grants being offered to help charities at this time

Despite this period being extraordinarily challenging and worrying for everyone, I am heartened to see how diligent and professional every single member of staff has been. There is a genuine understanding of the need to take decisive action and I have been truly impressed by the breadth of ideas to help all of Sands get through this critical period.

What this means for you

After considerable thought we have had to take the very difficult decision to **temporarily reduce the number of Network Co-ordinators to two**. The Network Co-ordinators chosen to take on this role are Sarah Finnigan (West Network Co-ordinator) and Christopher Somerville (Scotland Network Co-ordinator) and between them they will provide a full-time presence for all Groups. By having two Network Co-ordinators covering five days a week between them, and supported by the bereavement support staff, we believe we will be able to provide you with support through this short time-limited period.

The remaining Network Co-ordinators will be furloughed as part of the government's scheme to help employers retain staff through this highly challenging economic period. Furloughed Network Co-ordinators will remain on the payroll but not permitted to work, and they will receive 80% of their salary which will be paid for by the government.

I do understand that for some this could be worrying. However, we believe we will have in place enough resource to ensure that you are supported in the wonderful work that you do. **This remains an absolute priority.**

Although it will mean that you may not have your own Network Co-ordinator to contact for the next few months, you will have access to a Network Co-ordinator five days a week who can help and support you. You will also have access to all the remote bereavement support services either for yourselves or to signpost parents and families to.

Of course I cannot promise things will run as smoothly as normal during this period, but what **I can promise you is that we will try our very hardest to support you as effectively as we can to get you through the next few months until we return to normal operations.**

What will happen now

Given the rapidity with which the Coronavirus crisis has unfolded, along with most of the charity sector, changes we are compelled to make will have to happen quickly.

I personally would have liked to be able to work with you to identify what you might need and how to transfer to the new, albeit temporary, way of working. But in order to take advantage of the funds available from the government for April, we are having to ask the Network Co-ordinators who are being furloughed to finish work at the end of the day on Tuesday 31st March (tomorrow).

This is an extraordinarily short timescale, and I know how difficult this is for you and for them. The team of Network Coordinators is working extremely hard to try to hand over as effectively as possible, and many of them will be trying to reach out to you today and tomorrow. Please understand if they are unable to get hold of you in the time available. I so wish that we could be doing this another way and with more time, but I am afraid that is just not possible.

We will write to you on Wednesday with additional information about accessing support in the next few months, and then Christopher, Sarah, or Richard will be touch directly over the next week.

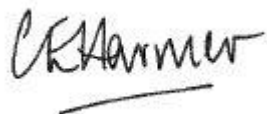
I know how difficult this is for everyone, and I am so sorry this news has come at such short notice. We truly live in unprecedented times. Like everyone else in this situation from the government, to the rest of the charity sector and to individuals, we all need to make short-term changes in order to keep Sands safe for you and for all bereaved families.

Staying safe and supporting you

This has been an incredibly difficult letter to write. I want you to know how much you are valued, how much your work means to Sands, and how important it is that we are able to continue to support you.

I know that by continuing to work together, as the Sands family, we will get through this and come out the other side able to keep making a difference for everyone affected by the death of a baby.

With many thanks for all you continue to do and please know that we are here for you always.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clea Harmer', with a horizontal line underneath.

Clea Harmer
Chief Executive Sands