

## **Letter to families 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020**

Dear all,

We realise how challenging, worrying and unsettling the past few weeks are likely to have been for many of you – you are never far from any of our thoughts and we can't wait to see you back at the hospice once it is safe for us to reopen.

With strict social distancing measures in place, and with the majority of our families shielding for 12 weeks, we've been able to take advantage of the government's job retention scheme and furlough the vast majority of our staff. This has helped immensely with our previously precarious cash-flow situation and has removed, for now at least, the very real threat of closure that we were facing just a few weeks ago. The team are missing you immensely though and can't wait to be back at work once it is safe for us to return.

### **We're here if you need us**

While we can't currently provide services in the way we'd like, we are always at the end of the phone. Debbie and Jane have been busy contacting families, predominantly those we thought might be most in need of support, but if you haven't had a phone call, and would appreciate some help or advice, then please don't hesitate to get in touch. Jane and Debbie can be reached Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm by calling 07794 240812, or by email:

**Jane Jones, Head of Care, [jane.jones@thedonnalouise.org](mailto:jane.jones@thedonnalouise.org)**

**Debbie Askey, Head of Care-Coordination, [debbie.askey@thedonnalouise.org](mailto:debbie.askey@thedonnalouise.org)**

### **Facebook fun**

A closed Facebook group has been set up for families as a way of sharing fun activities to keep everyone entertained and to help us stay connected while we can't be together. It's proving really popular with the families who have already joined, so if you are not already a member, follow this link and click 'Join.' It's a closed group so nothing shared within the group is visible to anyone outside the group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/528435077872865/>

### **Resuming services**

It's too early to say when we'll be able to get back to life as 'normal' but we hope to resume some additional services shortly. Our priority, as always, is the safety and wellbeing of families and staff, so for the time being, these will all be delivered over the phone or by video conference. Details of how to access these services will be circulated once available.

We are also working to introduce video consultation for symptom management. This will be a new development for us, with Dr Sarah Thompson and Dr Laura Roe using this to help manage children's symptoms remotely, minimising the risk to both children, families and staff. We hope that this will be available in the next few weeks.

### **The 2.6 challenge for The Donna Louise**

While there is never any obligation for you to get involved in fundraising, you might have seen lots of charities talking about the 2.6 challenge. On Sunday, the nation will unite to raise money for their favourite charity by taking on a challenge involving 2.6 / 26 and we hope lots of people are going to

choose to do their 2.6 challenge for us. For example, I'm going to be riding 26 miles on my bike and donating my hourly salary for the time it takes. Justine in fundraising has opted for a less energetic option and will be enjoying a virtual 26-minute catch-up with friends and donating the money she'd have spent had they been to the pub! Details of how you can get involved are on our Facebook page here - <https://www.facebook.com/TheDonnaLouise/videos/223369455616151/>

### **Keeping you up to date**

Things continue to develop and change regularly as the country adjusts to government advice and we are working hard to stay abreast of the latest advice and what this means for our services, children, young people and families. As always, any significant changes will be posted onto our website <https://www.thedonnalouise.org/coronavirus> and notifications sent out via text and social media.

We recognise just how worrying and unsettling the whole situation is, but we will continue to do our very best to safely support you, in whatever way we can. Stay safe and hang in there!

*Dot Gillespie*

Director of Care, and all the team at The Donna Louise