

**RNIB NI Welcomes the Accessibility of the StopCOVID NI App**

As part of RNIB NI’s ongoing campaign to address accessible healthcare information, they have been working with the Department of Health and Digital Health and Care NI, to ensure that the new StopCOVID NI Proximity App is accessible. Particularly for those individuals with a range of physical and sensory disabilities. This includes the 55,600 blind and partially sighted people living in Northern Ireland.

The mobile phone app has been benchmarked against RNIB guidelines and international standards for accessibility and informs users if they have been in close contact with another user who has tested positive for Covid-19.

StopCOVID NI is free to download and went live on the 30th July on the Apple App and Google Play stores. The app has already been downloaded more than 250,000 times.

The ability to readily access accurate health information has seldom been more important than during the current Covid-19 pandemic. As a society, we are being asked to come together to help suppress the virus and protect each other from infection. To do this effectively, we must all be able to participate.

RNIB NI Director, Dr Jacqueline Witherow said: “We commend the Department of Health for their pro-active approach to ensuring the accessibility of the StopCOVID NI app. We welcomed the opportunity to engage during the development of the app and to represent the needs of blind and partially sighted people in Northern Ireland. Additionally, we are reassured by the Department’s ongoing commitment to addressing any operational issues with the app should they emerge.”

“We are hopeful that blind and partially sighted people will feel able to fully engage with this important tool in the fight against the virus. The app will significantly contribute to their ability to protect themselves, their families, friends and the wider community.”

The feedback RNIB NI has received to date, with respect to accessibility has been positive and we will continue to monitor the progress of the app. going forward.

Dr Eddie O’Neill, Product Manager leading on the development of the app **–** “We have been really grateful for the help and guidance provided by the RNIB. It was really important to us that we got this right. Having this positive feedback demonstrates the value of developing a partnership approach, in helping us meet the requirements of blind and partially sighted service users in NI.”

Tony Barclay, an RNIB NI Committee member who has sight loss stated: “The app is very simple and straightforward to use. I also found it easy to set up. It gives me peace of mind and is a simple way of giving yourself an extra level of protection.”

RNIB NI hopes blind and partially sighted people who wish to download the app and are able to do so, will find that every effort has been made to ensure it is accessible.

**Notes to Editors:**

For more information contact Aideen Kennedy on 07565201178 or at Aideen.Kennedy@rnib.org.uk

The Apple and Google links for downloading the app are

Playstore - [https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.hscni.covidtracker(external link opens in a new window / tab)](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/GNlKCE0Z2s3j4ANuNNobH?domain=play.google.com)

Appstore -[https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/stopcovidni/id1519404160(external link opens in a new window / tab)](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/8VMCCGMY2u193yQI7ezUo?domain=apps.apple.com)

The StopCOVID19 app is interoperable with the one already in use in the Republic of Ireland and is also highly likely to be compatible with apps introduced in future across the UK and Europe.