

JR/ss

24 April 2020

Dear Member

When I last wrote to you in January this year I was very optimistic and enthusiastic about our plans for the coming year and explained some of the things we had hoped to do to attract more members and outlining a number of the proposed actions for the year ahead. Little did we know that the coronavirus would attack and have such a major effect on our plans. As you know we made the decision that our first priority was to safeguard our members and staff and have therefore followed government guidelines which led to the temporary cessation of branch meetings and other gatherings since the middle of March. We have also taken the unprecedented step of not allowing the central office staff to work in the office but to work from home. Let me emphasise that although central office staff, Debbie, Kay and Sherry are not in the office they are continuing to work from home. The office telephone is monitored daily and any calls to that number will be responded to as quickly as possible. I particularly want to emphasise that they can all access their emails as though they were in the office so if you have any difficulties please don't hesitate to contact them by phone or email.

As I write this letter today 24<sup>th</sup> April there is absolutely no certainty as to when the lockdown rules will be relaxed but it is clear from the news that social gatherings will not be allowed for some time. I am particularly keen that members are engaged over the next few months. The branches are making valiant efforts to make sure their members are contacted inevitably some are not on email or involved with social media and may not have benefitted from this contact. If you are one of these members please don't hesitate to make contact with central office who will ensure that someone is available to contact you. If you are a postal member who feels isolated and would like a friendly conversation or guidance on accessing help again please don't hesitate to contact central office staff.

There are many local organisations making all sorts of arrangements for those who have to stay at home and self-isolate if you have not been able to benefit from these schemes and need any form of help please contact central office.

A number of our members have joined our Facebook page and if you have not already joined I would encourage you to because you will find some interesting information on what other members and branches are doing.

I am keen that we help each other and keen to know what you are doing locally e.g. knitting, sewing etc. It would be good to know what our members are doing please let me know by contacting central office.

It would also be interesting to know what members are doing given these restrained circumstances for instance have you taken up a new hobby? On a lighter note are there any humorous things that spring to mind e.g. Audrey Harris a trustee and our past Chairman was clearing out her freezer and found some home bake bread dated 2000! Can anyone beat that? Audrey and her husband Martyn confirm that once baked it was still delicious!

Whilst I am very proud of what the organization is doing to help its members if you think there is anything else we should be doing please email me at [info@nhsrf.org.uk](mailto:info@nhsrf.org.uk)

Regrettably a number of our members will succumb to this virus and I am particularly sad that we have recently lost Dorothy MacDonald from the Wolverhampton Branch, as one of the founding members of "The Wolverhampton Health Workers Fellowship" Dorothy had been a most committed and active member from the very beginning and at various times over the years she had held the Office of Treasurer, Fundraiser and Chairperson. She was a delightful person who was one of the first members I met when I joined the Fellowship in 2013 and she has been a huge supporter.

The enclosed newsletter includes your new membership card. Last year a number of cards were thrown away in the envelope so this year it is part of a letter and you have to detach the card. This is a lifetime membership card in an effort to reduce our plastic consumption and will not be renewed annually.

To access the Benevolent Fund please contact Central Office before submitting an application because the office post is not being collected.

Some of you will know that our Patron Ethel Armstrong MBE was hospitalised again recently with gall bladder problems. She would like me, on her behalf, to thank all those members that sent good wishes and to ask that contact to her is preferably by email rather than by telephone.

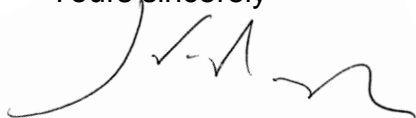
There are a number of vacancies for trustees of the NHS Retirement Fellowship. If you would be interested and would like to put your name forward please contact Central Office.

Finally I am confident that together we will come through this pandemic and I am looking forward to meeting many of you in the future.

Stay safe.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely



John Rostill OBE  
Chief Executive