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HSBC UK DOUBLES AVAILABILITY OF ACCOUNTS TO HELP HOMELESS PEOPLE GET ACCESS TO BANKING

HSBC UK has doubled the availability of its service that enables people without a fixed address to open a bank account, making the service more accessible to thousands of homeless people, the bank announced today.

Following a successful pilot in Liverpool, HSBC UK launched a service in December 2019, where people without a fixed address can open a bank account when accompanied by their caseworker from charities such as Shelter, Crisis and Centerpoint, using the address of the charity supporting them. Homeless people can now open a Basic Bank account with HSBC UK, without the need for photo ID or proof of address. HSBC UK has now made the service available in 77 branches across the UK and 235 of its staff have been trained to provide specialist support.

The availability of the service, which has helped more than 430 people to access a basic bank account so far, is being extended to provide double the coverage across the UK. It comes as winter approaches, which is typically the most challenging time of the year for those with no fixed address, living on the streets, in hostels or sofa-surfing with friends or family.

The Government recently asked local authorities in England to house all rough sleepers and those in hostels and night shelters, in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus. This was an opportunity to discuss their financial circumstances and provide the help needed to move to the next step of setting up a bank account for many homeless individuals. HSBC UK has opened 100 bank accounts for homeless people since March, despite the challenges.

Maxine Pritchard, Head of Financial Inclusion and Vulnerability at HSBC UK said: “Homelessness is a huge issue affecting the UK and this is a critically challenging time for many people. Having access to a bank account makes it easier and safer to receive benefits and salary, and is an important building block for financial independence and security.

“Since we launched the service, we have delivered specialist training to all customer-facing colleagues so they can have these sensitive conversations, and we are pleased to now offer the service across 77 of our UK branches - because no-one in today’s society should be without a bank account.”

Traditionally, banks require photo identification such as a passport or drivers licence as well as proof of address, which could be a council tax or energy bill - documents which many homeless people may not have or can find difficult to keep safe without a fixed address. Having a bank account can make it easier to claim benefits, receive wages and pay rent.

Maxine continued: "We have worked in close partnership with charities such as Shelter to ensure that we can offer help to customers without a fixed address across our UK branch network and we continue to explore ways that we can further support."

John Glen MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said: "I firmly believe that everybody should have access to financial services, regardless of their circumstances. That's why I welcome HSBC UK's efforts to make bank accounts more widely available to vulnerable people who don't have standard ID or a fixed address. It will help even more homeless people access basic banking services, and provide a stepping stone to other opportunities like a job and rented accommodation."

Polly Neate, chief executive of Shelter, said: "This pandemic has intensified our housing emergency, making thousands of people newly homeless and in some cases plunging people into street homelessness."

"With this deadly virus still at large, the sanctuary of a safe home has never been so important. Having to battle the weather and survive day-to-day on the streets is difficult enough. But not having a bank account can make life that much harder, in terms of receiving wages or accessing financial support."

"So we're pleased to continue our partnership with HSBC UK as they expand this important service across the country. Meaning more people who are street homeless can be given the financial independence that will help them re-build their lives."

HSBC UK is the largest bank in Europe to offer accounts for homeless people. The scheme is based on its pioneering 'Survivor Bank' service which involves working with human trafficking and modern slavery charities to open bank accounts for survivors.

For more information visit: www.hsbc.co.uk/togetherwethrive

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Notes to editors

HSBC's No Fixed Address service is available at the following branches:

- Aberystwyth
- Andover
- Barnsley

- Belfast
- Birkenhead
- Birmingham New Street
- Bishopsgate City of London
- Blackburn
- Blackpool Oxford Square
- Bolton
- Bootle
- Bournemouth Old Christchurch Road
- Bradford Market Street
- Bridgend
- Brighton
- Bristol Cabot Circus
- Bristol Filton
- Cambridge
- Canterbury
- Cardiff Queen Street
- Carlisle
- Castleford
- Chatham
- Croydon Central
- Doncaster
- Dover
- Durham
- Edinburgh
- Enfield
- Exeter
- Gillingham
- Glasgow City
- Halifax
- Hanley
- Haverfordwest
- Hounslow High Street
- Huddersfield
- Hull
- Isle of Wight (Newport)
- Kendal
- Leeds City
- Lewisham
- Lincoln
- Liverpool Lord Street
- Liverpool Allerton Road
- Llangefni
- Manchester St Anns
- Middlesbrough St Alberts Road
- Newcastle City
- Newport
- Northampton
- Norwich
- Nottingham Clumber Street
- Oxford
- Palmers Green
- Peterborough
- Plymouth
- Portsmouth
- Putney
- Richmond
- Rotherham

- Scarborough
- Sheffield City
- Southampton
- Stafford
- Stratford
- Sunderland
- Swansea
- Swindon
- Tenby
- Torquay
- Walthamstow
- Wellingborough
- Weston-Super-Mare
- Westwood Cross (Thanet)
- Winchester
- WrexhamYork

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<https://www.about.hsbc.co.uk/news-and-media>

HSBC UK

HSBC UK serves around 14.5 million customers across the UK, supported by 32,000 colleagues. HSBC UK offers a complete range of retail banking and wealth management to personal and private banking customers, as well as commercial banking for small to medium businesses and large corporates.

HSBC Holdings plc

HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of the HSBC Group, is headquartered in London. HSBC serves customers worldwide from offices in 64 countries and territories in our geographical regions: Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa. With assets of US\$2,923bn at 30 June 2020, HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

About Shelter

Shelter is the UK's leading housing and homelessness charity and believes that everyone should have a safe home. It helps millions of people every year struggling with bad housing or homelessness through its free emergency helpline, webchat service, and local advice, support and legal services. And it campaigns to make sure that one day no one will have to turn to Shelter for help. For free and expert housing advice visit: https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help

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