

*“Charlie Beeston is 16 and is severely sight impaired, with Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, Nystagmus and Ocular Albinism. He lives with his family in Lincolnshire.

Charlie has already made good use of RNIB services - but with the new challenge of home schooling, RNIB Bookshare has proved invaluable.

The COVID-19 lockdown has made learning more challenging for everyone, but even more so for partially sighted people. Charlie however, has been able to carry on with his studies despite the lockdown, thanks to RNIB Bookshare.

“Even in this lockdown, obviously with schools closing and home school, it’s allowed me to just carry on with my studies and continue that work towards the next steps.”

Charlie has been able to access all the books he needs on Bookshare, including academic titles and textbooks. He gets most of his work electronically in pdf format and uses the Supernova programme to read the books to him on his laptop.

“I really can access any book within a matter of minutes, if not seconds. As long as I know the title of the book or the ISBN number, it’s unbelievably easy. Every single book I’ve needed so far has been on Bookshare, all the academic titles and textbooks.”

Charlie’s mum Christine explains that her friends were finding home schooling such a challenge and wondered how Charlie was able to manage so easily, but since introducing them to RNIB Bookshare they have found it much easier.

“It’s fantastic to be honest with you, because if Charlie didn’t have that access, then there would be very little studying to be done. It’s one of those resources that just makes independent learning so much more accessible and easier.”

Charlie’s family are currently busy preparing to move house, so Christine has her hands full packing and relies on him to take charge of teaching his sister during lockdown. He has only been able to do this through the resources provided by RNIB.

“Charlie has actually been teaching my daughter, which has been absolutely fantastic. She’s a year younger than him and autistic, so she’s

been finding it a real struggle. If Charlie wasn't able to help, she would have had to gone to school.”*