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A special interview with the Deaf Chefs



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Choosing whether or not to get a cochlear implant



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Top tips for all ages from a sleep expert



National Deaf Children's Society

families

“
The
small
wins are
the best
wins.”

How Genevieve (8)
is now learning to
speak and sign...





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My deafness didn't stop me...

...becoming a DJ

By Jenny Hamrick



Starting out spinning tunes in his bedroom, Will Kirk (23) never could have imagined he'd become the first deaf DJ on BBC Radio 1.

Will, who is severely to profoundly deaf in both ears, used to make mixtapes for his friends at school. At 17, he bought a DJ deck and has since grown his passion for dance music, nightclubs and DJing.

In 2020, he was selected as a host for Radio 1's Christmas show. "It was a very surreal time," Will says. "It's not something I ever could have imagined before."

In the music sphere, people are surprised to find out Will is deaf. "People's first interaction with me has always been music," Will explains. "It's only after I've shown my ability that they realise I'm also deaf. Because of this, any interaction about my deafness has been positive."

Wearing hearing aids, Will sometimes finds it a challenge to hear through his headphones over venue speakers when he DJs. After some trial and error, he now uses a pair of noise-cancelling headphones that fit over his hearing aids. "If I'm struggling to hear someone in the venue," he adds, "I'll ask them

to type what they're saying into my phone or to come outside where I can hear better. Deafness isn't a barrier to getting the most out of music or DJing, only a hurdle you get around."

Being deaf can also be helpful as a DJ. "I don't hear bad song requests," Will jokes. "But jokes aside, it means I have to know my songs better to mix them in, which is always a good thing when DJing."

Will would like to see more deaf people working in music. "As a society, we aren't deaf aware enough, which fuels misconceptions about deafness. So every little helps to break them down. If you're interested in DJing, go for it! Don't ever let your deafness be a reason not to do something you want to do!"



Listen to Will's tracks at www.soundcloud.com/willkirk or his new radio show on the underground dance music station, Goat Shed.

Find out more about making music accessible for your deaf child at www.ndcs.org.uk/hobbies.

Will



Deafness isn't a barrier to getting the most out of music or DJing, only a hurdle you get around.

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Hello

Parents often tell us that making decisions for their children, when they're too young to make them for themselves, is their biggest challenge. For many parents of deaf children, one of the hardest decisions to make is whether their child should be given cochlear implants or not. It's a decision entirely personal to each individual family and there's no right or wrong choice. But we know this doesn't make it any easier. In this issue, we've spoken to many parents of deaf children to find out how they went about deciding whether their child should have cochlear implantation surgery, and if they feel they made the right decision for them at the time. You can find their thoughts in Sara's column on page 10, Olive's story on page 12 and our How do I... feature on page 22.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we've spoken to a sleep expert about why many deaf children and young people are struggling with sleep right now, and the best tips for helping them get a good night's kip. We're also helping you and your child navigate the dreaded return of exams on page 28.

I hope you find this issue useful; please do send me any feedback you have using the email address below.

Kerrina

Kerrina Gray, Editor
✉ magazine@ndcs.org.uk

The National Deaf Children's Society depends almost entirely on generous support from individuals and organisations. **The public is responsible for 95% of our income**, and without this we wouldn't be able to support families of deaf children and young people. See pages 44 to 45 for more information on supporting our work.

families

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how her parents decided if cochlear implants were the right choice with her additional needs



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how she embraced her identity as a Welsh speaker



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how he excelled in his engineering apprenticeship



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Mandy and Coco's story

how the Deaf Chefs made it in the culinary world

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FAMILIES

Dan's representing deaf young people in Wales

We're excited to announce that the first deaf young person elected to the National Deaf Children's Society's seat in the Welsh Youth Parliament is Dan Downton (12), from Barry.

"I didn't expect it," says Dan. "But I'm really excited to be joining the Welsh Youth Parliament. I'm also excited to be working with the National Deaf Children's Society. One of my main issues is for all deaf children to have as much help at school as I have."

Dan started work in January and will be a member for two years. He'll be using this opportunity to put forward the voice of deaf young people.

A big thank you to Biba, Tegan and Yahya for also putting their names forward.

Go to [buzz.org.uk/articles/welsh-youth-parliament-blog](https://www.buzz.org.uk/articles/welsh-youth-parliament-blog) to find out more about Dan's policies and campaigns.



Thank you, Philomena

Philomena dedicated her life to looking after children; she had five of her own and ran the local nursery. When she started to lose her hearing in later life, the lack of understanding from strangers frustrated her. So, when it came to choosing a charity to include in her will, with her knowledge of the challenges deafness presents, we were the obvious choice. We're very grateful to Philomena and her family for this wonderful gift that will help more families get the support and advice they need.

If you'd like to find out more about including a gift for us in your will, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/giftsinwills or email us at giftsinwills@ndcs.org.uk.

Are you ready for a Big Day Out?

We're excited to announce that our Big Day Out events will take place across the UK over the coming months.

Designed for deaf young people aged 8 to 14 and their families, these events provide an opportunity to meet other families and take part in fun and inclusive activities. You'll be able to ski, rock climb, do crafts or enjoy an exciting, science-filled day! At every Big Day Out, our advice and guidance officers will share information and answer your questions.

Booking is essential, so visit www.ndcs.org.uk/big-day-out or contact our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880 to find out about and book our upcoming events.



Look out for the leaflet about educational membership in *Families*; we'd love you to pass it on to your child's school or nursery!



Our superstar siblings!

Brothers Henry (7) and Arthur (9) have a very special relationship. Henry is profoundly deaf and mum Hannah is proud of how Arthur looks after his younger sibling. "Arthur is so understanding, particularly when translating for Henry what people have said," Hannah says. "Siblings of deaf children play such an important role. Henry wouldn't have the confidence he has now without Arthur. He's an ace big brother!"

Sianna-Rose's starring role

Rising star Sianna-Rose, who has bilateral conductive hearing loss and long-term glue ear, has just landed her biggest film role to date. Back in November, she walked the red carpet at the premiere of *On the Other Foot*, a light-hearted story about race and life in the UK.

Sianna-Rose loves acting, but it hasn't been an easy journey for her. At 11 years old, she's already had seven operations. Mum, Charlotte, is proud of her daughter's achievements and grateful she's had the opportunity to follow her passion. "Producer Fredi Nwaka was the only person who didn't turn Sianna-Rose down. He happily made reasonable adjustments so she could play her part smoothly," she says. "He's a prime example of fairness in an industry that can create barriers for deaf children."

As a deaf performer, Sianna-Rose was also pleased that fellow actor, Rose Ayling-Ellis, represented young people like her on *Strictly Come Dancing* last year. "I'm happy that there are more people who are deaf on TV," she says. "It should be like that anyway because we're all important!" Find out more about the film at www.ontheotherfootmovie.com.



Baby Sign success

We have enjoyed welcoming lots of babies and toddlers to our interactive Baby Sign classes recently, hosted by Kathryn Halsey, founder of Little Hands Baby Sign.

The classes cover signs for daily activities, including bedtimes, mealtimes and days out with family and friends. The families loved signing along to their favourite songs in a friendly environment, so it wasn't surprising that 100% of them said they'd attend another series of Baby Sign. One parent told us, "I loved it and learnt so much!" Another said, "The enthusiasm Kathryn showed was so engaging."

Baby Sign has many benefits, including boosting your child's language development and strengthening the parent and child bond. Find out more about upcoming classes at www.ndcs.org.uk/baby-toddler-sessions.

Did you know?

The Smurfs was the first animated show to have a character use sign language.

Sign of the season Spring



Comment

Knowledge is power

All successful campaigns need solid evidence to back up the case for change. Local campaigns, often led by dedicated parent campaigners, are no exception. Knowing how vital this evidence is, we've collected information about specialist education services for deaf children for over a decade, which can now be found on our new interactive map. We hope this information will encourage you to take action, regardless of how experienced you are at campaigning. If you aren't sure what to do to improve things for deaf children where you live, the map is a great place to start.

On the map you'll be able to see how staffing levels in your area have changed over time, how many children there are for each visiting Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) to support, and how all this compares to your neighbouring areas. See the map at deafeducationmap.ndcs.org.uk.

I was particularly interested to see that, in the area where I live, the ratio of deaf children to each ToD appears to have slightly improved over the last three years. Why not have a look at the map and see what's changed in the last three years where you live?

Parents often tell us that they like to know how their local area is doing and how it compares to others across the country. We hope that this map will help you to feel more informed. Turn to page 39 to find out more.

Do let us know what you think of the new map and any ideas for information you'd like us to add to it.

If you use the information on our map to make a change locally, we'd love to hear your story. Your experience may inspire other parents to improve the support available in their area for their deaf child. By creating a ripple effect across the country, we can make sure that all deaf children have the support they need to fulfil their potential.


Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive





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Top tips...


Preparing your child for trips away


School trips, residentials, going out or going on holiday with friends are all great for social and emotional development, and increasing confidence. Our experts recommend ways to prepare your child so they're safe and happy on their path to independence.


Key ● Early years settings and primary school ● Secondary school ● Further education settings and university


- 1** If your child is going on a school trip for the first time, it might be useful for those children or teachers who don't use British Sign Language (BSL) to learn some fingerspelling.
Jacqueline Barnes-Jones, National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).



- 2** On a school outing, make sure your child won't be left with the responsible adult. Make sure that they let your child mingle with other children, within eyeshot and earshot.
Alison Skinner, Deaf mum to three children, two of whom are Deaf.


- 3** Before an outing, do a role-play with your child at home. For example, have a movie night. 'Buy' tickets, then sit and watch a film together in the 'cinema'. It'll help prepare them.
Helen Latka, Teacher of the Deaf.



- 4** Before a residential, discuss activities your child may take part in. Suggest they discuss adjustments with their teachers. Use a waterproof box to store kit safely overnight and during water-based activities.
Josie, mum to Maia (16) who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.


- 5** To help their confidence while away, try and get your child to meet their leader, and other children going, beforehand. On the trip, make sure your child has your mobile number so you can text each other.
Jacqueline Barnes-Jones, National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).


- 6** If travelling alone for the first time, don't stress. Deaf people travel alone all the time. If you can't understand a tannoy announcement, tell a member of staff you're deaf.
Martin McLean, Senior Policy Advisor.


- 7** Before travelling, make a note of the nearest audiology department. Pack equipment spares including batteries! For overnight stays, make sure others know when you'll be without hearing.
Nicky, mum to Isabelle (3) and Jack (3 months). All are deaf.


- 8** Check out what you may be eligible for in terms of support as a deaf person. If you enjoy the cinema, you may qualify for a CEA card and get one free ticket. Apply for a Disabled Person's Railcard too.
Kirsty (19) who is moderately deaf.



➔ For more information and tips, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/leisure-time. For advice on preparing children for school trips, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/school-trips. If you have a teenager who is travelling on their own for the first time, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/independent-travel.

Sara Says



The decision we made for our family



Sara is mum to Sam (14), Matthew (12), Oliver (10) and Charlotte (8). Charlotte's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

📌 www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI
🐦 @deafprincessni

“
The decision felt huge and at times overwhelming.”

Charlotte was diagnosed with bilateral, profound, sensorineural hearing loss when she was 10 days old.

We had no experience of deafness, so everything was new to us, despite us both being nurses. We began researching everything, and that's when we first heard about cochlear implants; from the hospital, from our local support group, Sound Friends, and when reading information on the National Deaf Children's Society's website. We were eventually referred to our regional auditory implant centre, and many tests later, we were told that Charlotte was a suitable candidate for cochlear implants.

We now needed to decide whether we wanted her to have them. We'd been ferociously researching; getting as much information from personal experiences as we could, from anyone we met who was deaf or had family members who were. But how do you make a decision about something that will undoubtedly change all of our lives, especially Charlotte's, forever? It felt huge and at times overwhelming.

Cochlear implants would mean that Charlotte would hopefully be able to access sound. This meant she should be able to attend the same school as her brothers, the local youth groups and, most importantly, find it easier to communicate with family and friends. At all times though, we were aware that some individuals are unable to access sound adequately with cochlear implants, are unable to hear or talk, or just don't like sound and ask for their devices to be removed when they're older. We'd also spoken to members of the Deaf community who believed deaf

children shouldn't receive implants, and should permanently live in the Deaf world, being true to their Deaf identity.

We're very proud of Charlotte's deafness and, whilst we decided to opt for cochlear implants to give her the opportunity to listen and speak, we believed that her Deaf identity was very important. So, we also decided to use sign language and join the Deaf community locally.

Charlotte was implanted at 11 months. She loves being both hearing and Deaf. She uses her cochlear implants for school and her Scout group, but at home in the mornings, and for swimming lessons, she prefers to be Deaf and expects us to be expert signers to converse with her. Charlotte particularly loves attending events with Sound Friends, and Action Deaf Youth, as this allows her to have friends just like her. She's a chatterbox with our regional Northern Irish accent.

We've not regretted our decision to get cochlear implants, though the decision is so individual to every family.



For more information about making a decision around cochlear implants, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/CI-decision, or turn to page 22. We're running an event called Cochlear Implants: Making the right decision for your family, on 14 May. Sign up at www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

Zahra's Zone

Finding a new home in Singapore



After a 13-hour flight, I arrived in Singapore, where I didn't know a soul.

Why was I entering this unfamiliar world? The growth of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) in the East, the appeal of an international student body, a Liberal Arts curriculum, different accessibility arrangements, new cultural experiences and the challenge of the unknown had all drawn me to join Yale-NUS College (YNC) in Singapore.

There were challenges as soon as I arrived. Entry into the country was difficult, as strict Covid-19 laws were in place. Arriving into a quarantine hotel, I had to explain my deafness and why I needed someone to enter my room in an emergency as I may not hear an alarm. It didn't get any easier once I got out, because, in Singapore, wearing a mask everywhere is mandatory.

Before accepting my place at YNC, I exchanged several emails with their accessibility advisor. She was extremely responsive and even agreed to provide clear masks for the entire university. Her commitment to understanding my needs before even attending made me feel supported.

My classes were moved online for the first seven weeks of the semester. But, despite the challenges of using Zoom, I'm thankful to have started my university journey online because it helped me learn people's names more easily, and I could use the chat function to have clear conversations with my peers without background noise.

Once classes moved in-person, it was difficult to hear while being socially distant from peers and wearing

face coverings. My deafness doesn't normally come up immediately in a conversation, but here I realised I must wear my disability more openly and take advantage of technologies like my FM system. As uncomfortable and daunting as it was, I forced myself to stand up in front of my classmates and explain why I needed them to wear the clear masks that had been provided. By being open about my feelings of isolation, people understood me better. This led to many more people wearing clear masks in seminars, which meant I could access oral discussions and take more control over my own learning.

I told myself that my deafness shouldn't hinder me from joining university societies. I found activities that were suited to my hearing needs. For example, I successfully applied to be a chef in my college's butchery and a student assistant in YNC's Intercultural Engagement Office. Here I can raise awareness through events and advocate the use of Singapore Sign Language when distributing food orders.

Despite the extra challenges that come with taking this riskier path, I haven't regretted my choice to study abroad. I love my course content, am captivated by conversations with my peers, am in awe of the city's skyline and have formed genuine friendships.

Zahra (19) is our young person's columnist. She's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.



Here I realised I must wear my disability more openly.



For more information about higher education options, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/highereducation.



Olive's choice

By Caity Dalby

When deciding whether cochlear implants were right for Olive (4), who is profoundly deaf and has cerebral palsy, mum Jennie wanted to provide her with as many communication options as possible.



Olive's story

• **Providing Olive, who wears cochlear implants, with the choice of whether to hear or not was really important for mum Jennie and the rest of the family.**

• “We wanted her to have that access to sound and hearing, as that’s how we communicate,” says Jennie. “We come from really loud, chatty families and love music. It was really important to us for Olive to have the opportunity to access all of that.”

• Olive was diagnosed as profoundly deaf at around eight weeks old.

• “We and the medical professionals suspect that she wasn’t born deaf, but that it was an acquired deafness shortly after birth,” explains Jennie.

• “We were originally really shocked because it came completely out of the blue. But over time, mixing with the Deaf community and meeting lots of deaf adults, we don’t actually see deafness as a disability for her and we’re really happy with how she’s supported.”

• “With having multiple disabilities, you can’t say one’s worse or one’s more important than the other. But, we came to terms with her deafness before we knew about the cerebral palsy. So we see her cerebral palsy as a disability and a priority because of her complex physical needs.”

With lots of decisions to be made, choosing the right hearing technology for Olive was very important for Jennie and Olive’s dad, Rhys. When she was first diagnosed, she was given bilateral hearing aids, which is commonly done to keep the auditory pathways open. “They didn’t really make any difference to her hearing,” remembers Jennie. “The audiologist said that because Olive’s hearing loss was sensorineural, she was most likely a good candidate for a cochlear implant. We found out she qualified for an implant on one side.

“We did think about it for a long time, because you’re sending your small child for a big operation that’s not medically essential. We went ahead, as we always wanted Olive to have that choice when she’s older. Ten months later, she qualified for a second implant on the other side. Many children get both sides done at the same time, so it was even harder deciding to send her for a second operation. She had responded so well to the first implant, we decided to go ahead.”

The family know opting for cochlear implants is an individual choice for every family. “It’s important when considering cochlear implants to think about how important sound is to you, how much does it factor in your lives



We always wanted Olive to have that choice when she's older.

and would your child be able to access implants at a later date?" says Jennie.

"But, more importantly, speak to people. Find your gang so your deaf child can have role models and you can get advice from deaf people who have had implants, people who wish they'd had implants or people who have had them and regretted it. Build up a really good picture of all the positives and negatives before you make such a big decision. It needs to be individual and you need to think about whether it's right for you."

With the decision about Olive's hearing technology made, choosing how to communicate with her was the next priority. "We learned sign language because we knew she wouldn't be getting her implants until she was at least 18 months old and we wanted a way to communicate with her," says Jennie. "But, when she was around nine months old, we also realised that, physically, she wasn't developing quite as she should be.

"We eventually went through the process of getting a diagnosis of quadriplegic cerebral palsy, which means that it affects all four of her limbs. She can't walk, sit or stand unaided, but she's a very determined little girl, and that doesn't seem to stop her doing anything.

"Her cerebral palsy is a big deal for us. She's in a specialist, resourced nursery setting with some mainstream peers. She should have started Reception by now but we were allowed to defer a year.

"When she starts school in September we've decided to send her to a special school because of the barriers she has to communication."

Olive's diagnosis of cerebral palsy came as another shock to the family and led Jennie, a speech and language therapist by profession, to opt for a total communication approach with Olive. "She's what we call a total communicator," explains Jennie. "Her understanding of spoken language is within the expected range for her age, so she's semi-verbal and uses speech, British Sign Language (BSL), which



is slightly hindered by her cerebral palsy, a lot of facial expressions and a communication aid as well."

The importance of providing Olive with many ways of communicating is apparent on the days or weeks that she chooses not to hear. "Sometimes she doesn't want her 'magic ears' on," says Jennie. "If she's cross and has had enough, or if she's tired, she'll take her implants off. She's getting better at telling us when she takes them off and she'll tap her ears or tell us that she wants them back on too. On the days she wears her implants, it's clear she loves listening and enjoys sound.

"We try not to make her put them on though, as the whole reason we got implants for her was so that she could make the choice. If she's said no, we try and respect that and we then sign."



For more information about choosing the right hearing technology for your deaf child and to find out more about cochlear implants, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants.

For others' views on cochlear implantation surgery, turn to page 22.

EARLY YEARS



Your spring checklist

✓ Choosing an approach

Choosing a communication approach for you and your deaf child is an important decision and one that may change as they grow and develop. Whether you choose speech, British Sign Language (BSL) or combine the two, you can find out more information on our website.

www.ndcs.org.uk/choosing



✓ Delaying starting school

If your child's birthday is on or between 1 April and 31 August, you could send them to school a year later than others if you think that would be beneficial. A delay in starting school can help deaf children to develop the language, communication and social skills they need.

www.ndcs.org.uk/summerborn



✓ Elephant and the Lost Blanket

Our children's book, *Elephant and the Lost Blanket*, is a delightful story for children aged 0 to 5.

Join Elephant (who wears hearing aids) as she uses sign language to look for her lost blanket with the help of her friends Tiger, Giraffe and Lion. You can buy the book for just £6.99.

www.ndcs.org.uk/elephant





Genevieve's journey to communication

By Kerrina Gray

After contracting meningitis at five weeks old, Genevieve has been through a lot. Now she's a bubbly eight-year-old and has begun to use speech and sign.



Genevieve's story

- **In the playground at school pick-up time, one of Genevieve's classmate's parents approached her mum Mary and asked if she'd help out at the school fair.** "I thought, 'Are you serious?'" says Mary, who's a single parent. "I have to drive to Manchester Hospital three times this week and you want me to bake cookies?" In the playground, every child was always healthy and able-bodied with two parents. They cared about things that I couldn't even think about caring about."
- Genevieve had a very difficult start to life with a meningitis diagnosis at five weeks old. "We've really been through it," explains Mary. "She had seizures up until recently and she's partially sighted."
- "When I first found out she was going to be profoundly deaf too, it was like being swallowed by a black hole. The charity Meningitis Now funded some counselling for me. After everything we'd gone through, to be told your child is completely deaf, I just thought 'Are you kidding me?'"
- Mary was lucky enough to have

a very supportive family. "At one point, I remember I had to have a few weeks' break. I gave my mum the children. Admitting you need help is the hardest part. In my head I had planned out the kind of parent I wanted to be. When that didn't happen, it was hard."

Genevieve got her cochlear implant at just eight months old. During the treatment for meningitis, Mary was told her ears had begun to ossify. This is where, if a child has hearing loss after meningitis, there's a risk of excess bone growth in the cochlea after recovery which can make hearing loss worse and treatment more difficult. "The doctors said she wouldn't be able to have the implant if this happened," Mary explains. "It was very scary because the operation is so close to the brain. We'd refused other operations after the meningitis because she'd been through so much, but this one was important to us."

Looking back, Mary wishes she'd known that cochlear implantation isn't a quick fix. "The implant was turned on and it wasn't like you see in the news.



It took a long time for Genevieve to process sound.

Nothing happened. Those internet videos are so misleading. It took a long time and a lot of work for Genevieve to process sound.”

In fact, it has taken Mary and Genevieve eight years of hard work. “In the beginning I did a lot of singing to her,” Mary explains. “The doctor said she’d be more likely to pick up on sing-song noises. I used to get in trouble with my neighbours because we’d make so much noise!

“We were also told about the importance of play, and I loved that because I’ve got a Media Performance degree. My whole family did a sign language course, but even before I did the course, I’d made up my own signs to use with her.”

Mary worked hard to put all the advice from Genevieve’s support staff into practice, but it didn’t always feel like it was working. “There were many times during the journey when I wondered if she would be able to communicate at all. I thought, ‘Oh my god, she’s not going to ever talk, she’s never going to be able to tell me how she feels and she might get manipulated because of it.’ But I just kept going.

“The small wins are the best wins. They can catch you off-guard. My favourite was the first time she signed ‘sorry’ to her brother through gritted teeth and with an upset look on her face. That incorporated everything for me. She was communicating, she understood the emotions of the situation, she knew she’d done something wrong, but she wasn’t happy about it. It was amazing.”

Finding the right school for Genevieve has also been a journey. “When it came to choosing a school, we chose her brother’s mainstream school,” says Mary. “I don’t drive so it was the only accessible place. Genevieve was the first disabled child they’d had, and they were supportive with her Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, but the curriculum wasn’t catering for her and she was slipping further and further behind. She was good at communication without

speech; she’d get up and show you, she has a very emotive face and uses expressions. But her friends babied her. They were too young to slow down and learn how to communicate with her.”

Feeling lost, one day Mary turned to Google and found a deaf-specialist school, which uses a total communication approach, not far from their home. Luckily, Genevieve could get a taxi there. “It’s fabulous,” says Mary. “Since moving at the beginning of Year 2, she signs a lot more and her speech has come on hugely. They use a radio aid which really helps as she gets distracted easily. Every single person at the school has to know sign language. I actually asked them once, ‘What, even the cleaners?’ And they nodded.”

Now Genevieve’s eight years old, Mary feels like the family can see the light at the end of the tunnel. “She speaks differently, she’s still struggling and she’s very behind,” Mary says. “But her speech is progressing all the time. She’s just started stringing sentences together, she’s started asking ‘Why?’ and ‘When?’ She sings now and loves Abba!

“She’s learning to write her name, and she’s working at school on learning to socialise. She even has a best friend now!

“We make jokes in my family all the time about the things Genevieve will go on to do. I just know she’s going to change the world.”



For more information about meningitis and deafness, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/meningitis.

For advice about developing your child’s communication skills, including sign language and spoken language, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/communication.



PRIMARY YEARS

Your spring checklist



Creating a good communication environment

Developing language skills can be part and parcel of normal life for deaf children. By adapting your home to make it a good audio-visual environment, you can give your child access to everyday social information and communication. Find out how to establish good communication habits in the family home on our website.

www.ndcs.org.uk/communication-environment



Family sign language

Learning sign language can seem like a daunting task. We’ve created lots of videos to introduce you to British Sign Language (BSL) and give you practical and fun examples.

www.ndcs.org.uk/familysignlanguage



Emotional health and wellbeing

We often talk about our physical health, but we’re not always as good at talking about our mental health and emotional wellbeing. Visit our webpages for advice on how to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of both yourself and your child.

www.ndcs.org.uk/mentalhealth





Miriam speaks for herself

By Jenny Hamrick

As a Welsh first language speaker, Miriam, who is mildly deaf, is now embracing her uniqueness and learning to express herself independently.



Miriam's story

• **Diagnosed with glue ear when she was six years old, Miriam (15) had actually been lip-reading for several years without her family realising it.** "I felt awful that we'd missed it for so long," says Mum Ffion. "We realised her older brother, who is very vocal, was talking on her behalf."

• Although Miriam had passed her hearing tests at school, Ffion was not convinced and took her for further tests. However, as the family speak Welsh as their first language, it wasn't a straightforward process to get Miriam the help she needed.

• "Going to audiology appointments, especially when Miriam was younger, I had to translate everything for her," says Ffion. "Now she's older and understands English this isn't an issue, but the initial stages were more difficult."

• As the only deaf person in her family, Miriam has also found it difficult to speak up about her needs with those close to her. "One time, while walking in the mountains with my family, my aunt was talking to me," recalls Miriam.

"She looked so happy that I felt I couldn't tell her I didn't understand her, I just smiled and nodded. Family gatherings could be difficult – they're very noisy and chatty. I used to escape to my room to hide."

• Miriam now attends a mainstream secondary school where Welsh is the primary language. While her school has provided a pastoral assistant to help communicate Miriam's needs with staff, she's one of the few deaf students there. "I enjoy school, but it can be tough sometimes," says Miriam. "Some people forget I'm hard of hearing as I don't wear hearing aids."

• "Although she's not profoundly deaf, she still doesn't hear everything, and she processes things slightly differently," explains Ffion. "It has taken Miriam a while to be able to tell people, 'Sorry, I can't hear you', and we're very proud that she is getting to this stage now."

• Miriam now feels able to turn to her friends for help in class. "My friends are really supportive," she says. "If I'm far from the teacher or I don't hear



Having an extra difference hasn't fazed Miriam, it has made her more accepting.

something, I feel comfortable enough to ask them what the teacher said, and they will happily explain it to me.”

“It's the tiredness of being with people that's the main issue now,” adds Ffion. “She comes home exhausted after hours of actively listening and trying to decipher what others are saying.”

To decompress after school, Miriam spends time alone playing with her Nintendo Switch or with her tortoise Blaidd (whose name means ‘wolf’ in English). “It can get overwhelming,” says Miriam. “Doing something that I enjoy is helpful.”

Miriam also channels her need for quiet time into creative pursuits, sometimes spending several hours in her room making her own stop-animation films. She's now taking Drama, Food Technology and Design Technology for her GCSEs in the hope of pursuing a career in film.

“I would really like to get into film and study that at university,” Miriam says. “I used to want to be an actor, but now I would rather be building sets behind the scenes. There's a Welsh TV channel and it would be cool to work for that.”

Miriam's Welsh identity and ability to speak two languages has helped her in other ways too. “Being a Welsh family, being a minority in the UK, it makes you much more aware of other cultures,” says Ffion. “Because of our background, we're different. Having an extra difference hasn't fazed Miriam, it's made her more accepting.”

“It's a great asset to have more than one language,” says Miriam. “It may be a bit more of a challenge if you're deaf, but you should definitely go for it and learn a different language. It's really helpful for your future and for your life in general.”

Although she's surrounded by Welsh speakers at school, attending a mainstream school means Miriam didn't know any other deaf young people. So she decided to attend residential trips and events with the National Deaf Children's Society, making friends with other deaf young

people, including those who also speak Welsh.

“It's helpful hearing that other people are going through the same challenges as me,” says Miriam. “I can hear their experiences and learn from them, and I can give my own experiences to them as well.”

Meeting others like her has raised her confidence. Last year the family noticed this when Miriam went on a rock climbing course and spoke to her instructor ahead of time to make him aware of her deafness. “Before, I or my husband would do this on her behalf,” explains Ffion. “As Miriam is getting older, she's embracing that independence and has more confidence.”

“I'm constantly filling in the blanks when people are talking,” says Miriam. “The hardest part is trying to figure out what people are saying. If I get it wrong, I sometimes feel embarrassed, but I've learnt to embrace it and laugh along. It's a challenge, but it's also sometimes a good icebreaker – you can laugh with people when you mishear them.”

Miriam has also used her experiences in school to help others by joining the National Deaf Children's Society's Young People's Advisory Board (YAB). “I really wanted to make a difference in deaf young people's lives,” she says. “We campaign for deaf awareness in schools, and I'm really enjoying it. I think that Welsh schools would benefit from it, and I bring experiences from a Welsh school to the YAB as well.”



Our Freephone Helpline has a fluent Welsh speaker who is available Monday to Wednesday. Call 0808 800 8880 or visit www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline.

For more information about the work we do in Wales, as well as our Welsh-language resources, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/wales.



SECONDARY YEARS

Your spring checklist



Additional support in Wales

In Wales, if your child has a learning difficulty or disability that makes it harder for them to learn when they're not given extra support, they may have Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and might be eligible for an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

www.ndcs.org.uk/aln-wales



Staying safe online

Accessing the internet can be a fun activity and a good way for deaf young people to communicate with their peers, but it's important to stay safe and be smart online.

Visit our webpage, developed in collaboration with Childnet International, for advice and tips for helping your child stay safe online.

www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety



Recording school absences

Deaf children often have to miss school for audiology or other medical appointments. If you've given the school advance notice of your child's absence for a medical appointment, it should be counted as an authorised absence.

www.ndcs.org.uk/absence





Ifan's ideal apprenticeship

By Lydia Hextell

After embarking on an apprenticeship, Ifan now works for a world-renowned engine manufacturer and loves to travel in his spare time.



Ifan's story

• **Ifan's parents didn't know he was profoundly deaf until he was around three years old, when a new hearing test system came into place.** When he finally received his hearing aids, he had a lot to catch up on. "I couldn't hear but I was reacting to the vibrations, so my parents didn't realise I was deaf," Ifan explains. "I was also misbehaving, and they thought I just wasn't listening. When they found out, everything changed."

• Attending a mainstream school, Ifan (now 22) felt like he was behind his classmates, but he had a positive experience with fantastic support in primary and secondary education. "Welsh is my first language, so I was playing catch-up with my English, but I had amazing one-to-one support in lessons and from a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) who visited once a week," he says. "My parents always encouraged me too. I was really lucky, and with help I was able to do well."

• Whilst studying his GCSEs, Ifan found exams difficult and quickly realised that he preferred practical work. "I would

get extra time in exams and that helped, but I didn't like them," he says. "I found I'd rather work with my hands and build things." Ifan studied GCSE subjects he enjoyed, including PE, Technology and, his favourite, Engineering. "BTEC Level 2 Engineering was the best thing I've ever done," he says. "It gave me an understanding of what's involved in engineering and was an important stepping stone in the right direction."

For Ifan, choosing what to do after Year 11 was straightforward. "When I finished school, I wanted to focus



We deserve the same experiences as any hearing person.

on practical work,” he says. “I didn’t want to do A-levels, so I decided to go to college.” During his time there, Ifan studied BTEC Level 3 Mechanical Engineering. “It covers a lot of areas within engineering, and I loved it because there was lots of practical coursework. I was marked on how well I built things and I got a Distinction,” he says.

Like his school, Ifan’s college supported him. “I had help from the Disability Support department and I made sure I told them what I needed,” he explains. “If I didn’t speak up for myself, I wouldn’t get the right help. You have to be honest so you can make the most of life – we deserve the same experiences as any hearing person.”

While at college, Ifan attended an apprenticeship fair and found out about an opportunity with Babcock, an aerospace engineering company. “I didn’t think I’d get the apprenticeship because of my deafness, but I had a lovely apprenticeship manager who told everyone that I should apply because I could do it,” Ifan recalls. “I wouldn’t have felt confident applying otherwise.”

The chance to earn and learn made apprenticeships appealing to Ifan, and he knew higher education wasn’t the right choice for him. “I’d have enjoyed university, but there are lots of exams and I’d have been distracted by the social side of it,” he says. “I knew it was best for me to work, get a qualification and earn money.”

For the application process, Ifan submitted his CV and was invited to an interview. “Before the interview, I told them I was deaf and that I needed patience. They were understanding and even showed me the written interview questions,” he recounts. “I had a group task first and I was worried about it, but I knew the people I was with, so they understood how to communicate with me. I made sure I talked a lot and put myself out there. Afterwards, I had an interview and I got accepted onto the apprenticeship!”

Ifan completed his apprenticeship at a Royal Air Force base, where he directed aircraft and fixed planes. Initially, he was concerned about working in a noisy environment and being unable to hear instructions. “I was only 16 and I wasn’t comfortable asking people to change the way they did things,” he says. “After a couple of weeks though, I told a colleague that he needed to face me when talking to



me, and he did! As time went on, I built my confidence. The first colleague was fine with it, so I felt I could ask other people too. Now, I tell people if I miss something and how they can help.

“Engine building suited me the best,” he adds. “It was a controlled area with little noise, and I loved the role. I told the coordinators and focused on this for my second year. I haven’t looked back since!”

After completing his apprenticeship, Ifan felt it was time to move on and now works at Rolls-Royce as an Inspector, performing checks on Hawk engines. He’s currently focusing on work, playing football for Bristol City’s deaf team, and travelling. “I want to discover other cultures,” Ifan says. “My dream is to service engines in different countries, so I can work while travelling the world.”

Ifan encourages all deaf young people to find and follow their passion. “During your GCSEs, find a subject you love and focus on doing something related to it, whether that’s going to university, doing an apprenticeship or finding a job,” he says. “Now’s the best time to figure out what you enjoy, and don’t worry about changing your mind – you’ve got the rest of your life ahead of you and you’ll carry on learning after you leave school too.”



For more information about apprenticeships, traineeships and internships, you can visit www.ndcs.org.uk/employment. If you’re a deaf young person, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice.

YOUNG PEOPLE 16+



Your spring checklist

✔ Max’s apprenticeship

If your child is keen to undertake an apprenticeship, their deafness and communication preferences shouldn’t be a barrier. Read Max’s story to find out about his engineering apprenticeship and how his family campaigned for change.

www.ndcs.org.uk/max



✔ Next steps

Making decisions about your future can be hard. Your options may vary depending on where you live and how old you are. Whatever stage your child is at, remember that support is available, and they have options including college, sixth form, university and apprenticeships.

www.ndcs.org.uk/options



✔ Communicating with doctors

Does your child feel nervous about going to see the doctor by themselves? If so, we have lots of information on the Buzz about going to see the doctor and communicating at appointments. Head to the Health and Wellbeing tab on the Buzz explore page.

buzz.org.uk/articles/communicating-with-the-doctor-secondary



Deaf works as a chef



Cooking up a storm in the deaf community

By Abbi Brown

Keen baker Rhys (16) is interested in a career as a chef, so he interviewed Mandy and Coco, the sisters behind pop-up food truck The Deaf Chefs.



Coco and Mandy's story

- **Rhys (who is severely deaf):**
• **How did you get into cooking?**
- **Mandy (who is profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language (BSL)):**
• I studied food at college, and cooking became my passion. Coco and I have both worked in the catering industry, and we wanted to run our own café or restaurant. It seemed like a lot of pressure and hard work, so we thought running a food truck seemed a bit simpler. We liked the idea of traveling around, selling food at different events.
- **Coco (who is hard of hearing):**
• Growing up, our parents weren't great cooks, so Mandy and I always cooked! When our mum came home from the supermarket, we'd open the shopping bags and pretend we were on *Ready, Steady, Cook!* I've worked in both cooking and education, and always wanted to have a café hub where we could employ younger deaf people and create apprenticeship schemes run by deaf managers. Most kitchens are hearing environments with lots of talking. I wanted to build a whole

business run by deaf people. During lockdown, we had lots of time for reflection. I saw a caravan for sale and decided to buy it and convert it! That's how the food truck started.

Rhys: What are the main barriers you face as deaf chefs?

Coco: The most difficult thing is all the paperwork involved with setting up a business; things like making sure we're following the law, paying the right fees and have the right insurance. We're both creative and like to be hands-on, so we struggle with the business side of things.

Mandy: Yes, the business side of things is quite scary, and it's hard to find the time to keep up with renovating the van, but I hope it's going to be very successful. My full-time job is in a kitchen with hearing colleagues, and the head chef shouts a lot, so although I can communicate with them, I have to come up with ways to understand what they're saying, such as using colours to tell when food is ready to serve. Working with Coco is much easier



Find the thing you're passionate about, keep practising and don't give up!

because we can sign and use more visual cues.

Rhys: Is being deaf an advantage in the kitchen?

Coco: Definitely. The head chef at the restaurant where I used to work said he'd noticed that deaf chefs are more focused on their tasks, whereas my hearing colleagues would get distracted by chatting or listening to music while they work.

Rhys: What's been your most popular dish so far?

Coco: For our first event, we did a Caribbean-inspired menu. It was during lockdown when takeaways were extra popular so lots of people came. We had lots of good feedback about our Greek menu too.

Mandy: We recently did hot dogs, which were really popular. At Christmas, we did Yorkshire pudding wraps, which were great!

Rhys: How has social media assisted your business?

Coco: We mostly use Instagram, and it's helped massively. Mandy and I come from a big deaf family – we're the third deaf generation – and the great thing about being part of the deaf community is that people are so helpful. Lots of people go out of their way to support deaf businesses. The deaf community is powerful.

Rhys: Where do you see yourselves in five years?

Mandy: Once the food truck gets going, we're hoping that we can travel around the UK and then, if we're successful, maybe abroad as well. It would be good to get more deaf people involved to create a stronger business.



Coco: I'm passionate about getting the next generation of deaf young people into cooking. I work in a school as a communication support worker too, and I know many young people can feel a bit lost when they leave school. In five years, I'd like our food truck to be at Glastonbury!

Rhys: What advice would you give to any deaf young people wanting to get into cooking?

Mandy: I'd recommend going to college to learn how to cook or doing an apprenticeship. There are so many different opportunities out there to help you learn.

Coco: I'd recommend doing an apprenticeship or getting work in a restaurant. I think you learn more in a busy environment. Successful chefs have to work hard, and deaf chefs have to work even harder. You won't always get opportunities handed to you on a plate, so find the thing you're passionate about and keep practising. And don't give up!

Rhys: Last question: have you ever had any disasters in the kitchen?

Mandy: That cheesecake!

Coco: We tried to make a vegan cheesecake, using dates instead of biscuit as a base, but our scales were broken so the quantities were wrong, so the base didn't stick together. It was awful! We had to pay our customers back!



Follow Mandy and Coco on Instagram @TheDeafChefs and check out their JustGiving page www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/thedeafchefs.

To find out about deaf-specific careers advice and your rights in the workplace, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers.



YOUNG PEOPLE: CAREER JOURNEYS

Your spring checklist

✔ Deaf Works Everywhere

With the right support, deaf people can work anywhere they want. That's why we run our campaign Deaf Works Everywhere, aiming to inspire young people, encourage employers and inform parents to help more deaf young people into work.

www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere



✔ Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

ESA is an income-based disability benefit for people who are 16 or over and find it harder to work. There are two types of ESA, contribution-based and income-related, with most under-25-year-olds only able to claim income-related ESA because they won't have paid enough National Insurance contributions to qualify for contribution-based ESA yet.

www.ndcs.org.uk/ESA



✔ Role models

Do you ever wonder what your deaf child will do when they grow up? We've spoken to lots of deaf adults about their jobs, what they do day-to-day and how their employers adapt to their needs. From nurses to illustrators, dive into their stories.

www.ndcs.org.uk/role-models





decide if my child should have cochlear implant surgery?

Deciding whether your child should have cochlear implant surgery can feel like a really big decision, and there's no right answer.



Kaya

Jes is mum to Kaya (5) who is profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language (BSL).

Kaya was born profoundly deaf. I knew cochlear implants (CIs) were an option, but when I began to research the process, I was put off by the thought of an invasive surgery when my daughter was a healthy, happy baby.

Kaya wore hearing aids until she was three. One day she took them out and refused to put them on again. She's made her communication preferences clear and has flourished using BSL.

Learning BSL opened a new world to me, and I fell in love with the Deaf community and culture. I stopped thinking about deafness as a disability as I met so many positive Deaf role

models. Kaya is happy being Deaf, has no interest in the world of sound and can express herself beautifully in sign.

If Kaya decides she wants a CI in the future, I would 100% support her decision. I feel that she deserves autonomy in making that choice.

My advice to another family would be, 'don't be afraid to say no'. I feel that many parents are rushed into making the decision before they're fully informed and before the child can express their own preference.

To me, Kaya is perfect exactly the way she is, and her Deaf identity is something to be proud of and celebrated. I like the perspective that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment.



Daisy

Daisy (12) is profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

My parents were asked if they wanted me to have cochlear implants when I was a few months old, but my mum and dad weren't sure if I'd like having a cochlear implant as I was always pulling my hearing aids off! They decided to let me decide for myself when I got older.

Now that I'm older, when I go for hearing tests, I'm constantly asked if I want to consider getting implants. It's annoying because it feels like the doctors are trying to fix me, but I don't need fixing! I'm happy the way I am.

If I lost all my hearing then cochlear implants might be useful, but I have a bit of residual hearing and can manage at home without my hearing aids.

The best thing about being Deaf is that I go to an amazing school with a deaf unit and have lots of friends. I always wonder why my local council offers Hearing Services instead of Deaf Services!

Getting a cochlear implant is a personal choice and it's different for everyone. I like the way I hear and having an operation doesn't appeal to me at all. I think my parents made the right decision.



➔ For more information about cochlear implants, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants. To find out more about BSL, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/bsl.

To learn about the Cochlear Implanted Children's Support Group, visit www.cicsgroup.org.uk.

We're running an event called Cochlear Implants: Making the right decision for your family, on 14 May. Sign up at www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

Kate is mum to Holi (3) who is severely to profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants and Mia (12) who is hearing.

Holi was diagnosed as deaf when she was two-and-a-half and referred for CIs on the same day. Because of the delayed diagnosis, Great Ormond Street Hospital fast-tracked the CI process, and Holi had implantation surgery four months later.

For us, the implantation process was much easier than the journey before her diagnosis. It was exciting to learn about the options available.

My best friend is a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD). She's been an amazing support for our family. Some of her colleagues wear CIs and said they didn't regret getting CIs themselves. Giving my child the opportunity to hear felt

like an obvious choice. The hardest part was just after switch-on, as Holi didn't initially want to wear her processors, but we persevered. It felt hard at the time, but you have to weather the storm to see the rainbow at the end!

We never take Holi's CIs for granted and understand that what was right for us may not be right for another family. I still believe it's imperative to bring Holi up as a proud deaf child and to make sure she can sign, so Holi's sister Mia and I have been learning BSL.

It's important to do what's right for your child and your family, and to seek advice, information and help from different sources. Do your own research as well as listening to the health professionals. Overall, we have no regrets about getting Holi implanted.



Holi

Lewis (13) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

I was fitted with hearing aids when I was four months old. The doctors don't know why I'm deaf. When I was 12, the audiologist suggested I get cochlear implants. I was referred to the cochlear implant centre. The audiologist and the ToD from the cochlear implant centre explained everything to me.

My mum and dad helped me decide whether to get cochlear implants by talking through what life would be like with implants. I decided to get them as they can help me hear more than I could

with my hearing aids.

After the implantation surgery, I had to wait two weeks before the cochlear implants were switched on. I couldn't hear anything during that time. It was very quiet. Now I've got used to the implants, I can hear much more accurately.

My advice to another deaf young person considering having cochlear implant surgery would be to stay calm. If your audiologist tells you that cochlear implants might help your hearing, I'd recommend having them because my life has kind of changed.



Lewis

Welcome to Scribble Club – our activity section for deaf children just like you.



Colour in

Happy Holi



It's the Hindu celebration of Holi on 18 March. Known as the 'festival of colours', it celebrates the beginning of spring. Just like in this picture, there's singing and dancing, and people throw powder paint in rainbow colours in the streets. Make sure you choose lots of bright colours for this picture!

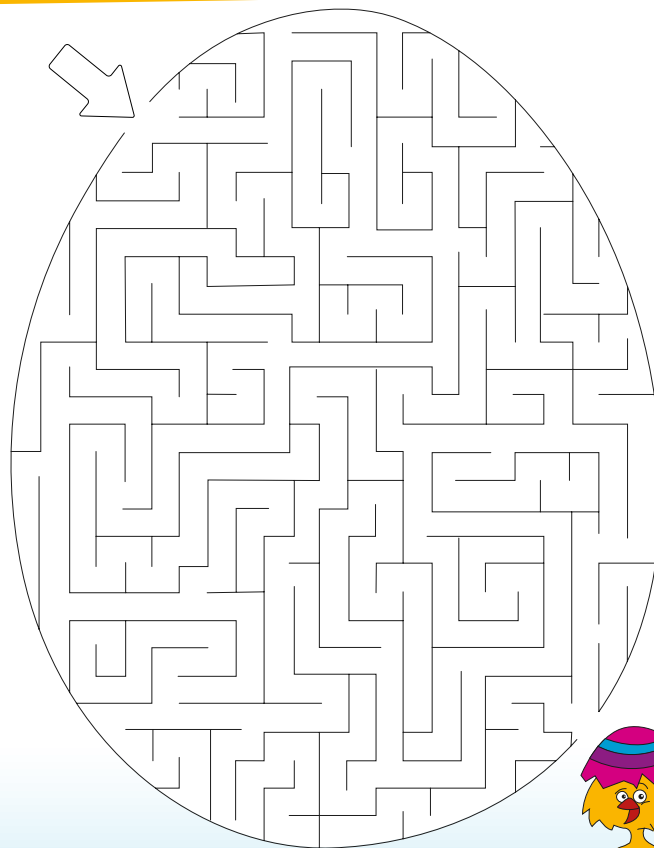
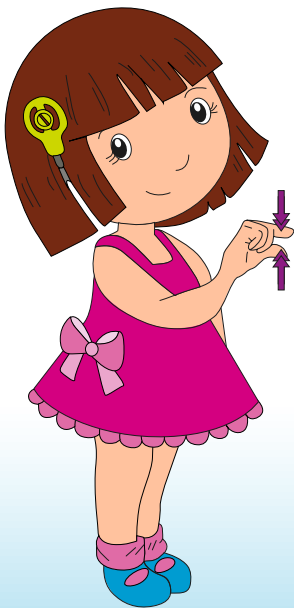
You can learn more about Holi at www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6vh8xs.

le Club

hem to your child and let
y run wild!

Maze

chicken



It's nearly Easter! Can you make it all the way through the maze from the arrow to the chick? The girl on the left is signing the word 'chicken', which the chick will grow into as it gets older. Practise signing the word 'chicken'. Do you know any other Easter signs?



St John's
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St John's has been helping children realise and achieve their full potential for more than 150 years. Our specialist learning spaces support children who are deaf, hard of hearing or have complex sensory or communication challenges.



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Ask the expert

Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Nicola, a sleep expert, shares her thoughts.

What does your job involve?

I'm a sleep practitioner for the charity Scope, supporting children with disabilities and additional needs. I also work on the National Deaf Children's Society's Raising a Deaf Child course and their sleep information sessions.

How do you work with deaf children and young people?

I work with them to find out what their current sleep issues are and find ways to make sleep better for them. I offer advice about good routines and the science behind sleep.

Why do some deaf children and young people struggle with sleep?

A lot of deaf children and young people struggle with fatigue as they generally have to concentrate a lot harder when at school, chatting with friends or family, or even keeping up with a TV programme. We all rely on auditory cues when we're asleep, for example hearing when other people are awake, if the birds are singing or an alarm. Not hearing these things can cause people anxiety about not waking up on time or a fear that they're missing something exciting or have lost the comfort of knowing someone is nearby. This anxiety can affect sleep.

How does a lack of sleep affect someone?

When we're sleeping, our bodies grow and produce hormones and our brains

make sense of the things that we've experienced during the day. A lack of sleep can make all these things difficult and impact on our concentration and alertness, which impacts all aspects of life.

Many deaf young people are struggling with sleep at the moment, why do you think this is?

Technology is the biggest barrier to sleep today. Phones, TV and games all emit a blue light which stops the production of melatonin (the hormone which we release to sleep).

The pandemic caused a lot of sleep disturbance as children and young people fell out of routine and, in a lot of cases, weren't outside as much. Being in the daylight really helps our sleep and wake cycles.

What are your sleep top tips?

- Turn your technology off an hour before bed.
- Try having a snack which contains tryptophan, an enzyme that our bodies convert into melatonin. You can search online for a list of foods that contain tryptophan; bananas, porridge and chicken are all good sources.
- If you have a light on outside the room, make sure it stays on all night. If your child wakes and things look different then they are more likely to be startled and awaken fully.
- Sign up to one of the National Deaf Children's Society's sleep sessions.



Nicola,
sleep
expert



The pandemic caused a lot of sleep disturbance as children and young people fell out of routine.



You can find out more at www.ndcs.org.uk/sleep. To sign up for our next online event on sleep, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

For more advice on sleep, Nicola recommends visiting www.thesleepcharity.org.uk and www.scope.org.uk/family-services/sleep-right.

Education & learning

The return of exams

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

This spring, young people will be taking a variety of exams from GCSEs to Highers, A-levels and vocational and technical qualifications. For some deaf young people, this is the first time they may have sat important exams.

.....

Exams play an important role in young people's lives, providing the stepping stones to the next stage of education or into work. Deaf young people should have the same opportunities as their classmates to achieve their goals and aspirations. So, what can you do to help your child navigate revision, exam stress and results day?

Which exams will my child be taking?

GCSEs are the qualifications taken by 15 and 16-year-olds in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. They have a 9 to 1 grading scale, with Grade 9 being the highest grade and Grade 1 the lowest. Grade 4 is the minimum level that students need to reach in English and Maths, otherwise they will continue to study these subjects as part of their post-16 education. Find out more on the government website at www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-new-grading-scale-factsheets.

National Qualifications (NQs) are one of the most important types of qualification in Scotland. National 1 to 5 qualifications are available in a broad range of subjects and are generally taken by pupils aged 16 (in Scottish school year S4). Students can take up to eight subjects, including Maths and English, although the exact number varies from school to school.

Post-16 qualifications include A-levels, Highers, T-levels, technical and vocational qualifications and apprenticeship certificates or diplomas. Although young people can officially leave school on the last Friday in the June following them turning 16, many will stay in full-time education. Find out more about the range of qualifications your child could take, including the new T-levels at nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice/career-choices-at-16.



Planning for exams

By the age of 13 or 14 your child will be thinking about their education, career goals and which subjects they would like to study. Most young people will need to take English and Maths but there will be a wide variety of subjects and pathways offered through your child's school and college. Have conversations as early as possible about their hopes and aspirations and how these are best achieved. It may help to share our resource at www.ndcs.org.uk/nextsteps with your child's school.

Exam access arrangements

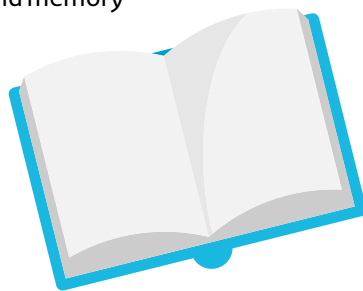
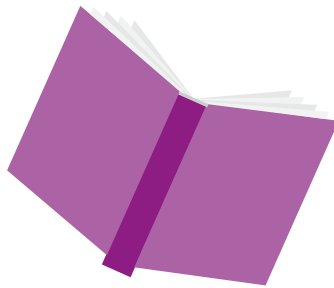
Whatever stage of education your child is at, they are entitled to reasonable adjustments to make sure they can access tests, assessments and exams fairly and equally to all other students. These adjustments are called exam access arrangements. They could include extra time or British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation. It's important to make sure these are put in place as soon as possible, so speak to your child about talking to their teachers about it now. Take a look at our webpage on access arrangements for examples of the kind of arrangements that can be asked for and how to go about putting them in place: www.ndcs.org.uk/exam-support.



Revision tips

Revising for exams is a skill which gets better with practice. Due to exams being cancelled for the last two years, it might take a bit of time for your child to settle on a revision strategy that works for them. Here are some ideas to help your child get the most out of their study time.

- Having goals and dreams clearly displayed will help your child to stay motivated and remind them where exams could take them.
- Set clear goals and time frames with your child in which to complete tasks.
- Encourage them to identify the areas in which they need extra revision or support. Find out from their school what extra help sessions are offered in the run up to exams.
- Support your child to identify how and when they learn best, for example first thing in the morning or through sharing learning with friends. Encourage your child to share their revision plan with you and others.
- Your child may want to use colour-coding, diagrams, mind maps and trigger words to help expand memory and remember key information.
- Prepare glossaries and definitions of important vocabulary and practise putting them into meaningful sentences.
- Encourage your child to manage their time carefully. More time spent studying does not mean better learning. Build in breaks, rest periods and time out.
- Don't allow your child to become overwhelmed. Encourage them to problem solve and remind them they're not alone.



On the day

The school or college will let your child know what they can take into the exam on the day. Remember to also plan for your child's hearing technology and make sure everything is charged, working and they have spare batteries!

If access arrangements are not adhered to on the day then put your concerns in writing to the school or centre immediately. You have the right to appeal final results. For more information, go to www.gov.uk/appeal-qualification-result.

Results day

Whatever their results on the day, you will be key to supporting your child move on to the next stage of their education or into work feeling resilient and positive. Access to tailored careers advice will help them be fully informed about all the opportunities and pathways open to them. Our webpage has lots of information on careers and the support that is available to deaf young people. Share the information with your child at www.ndcs.org.uk/careersadvice.

Supporting your child's education this spring

✓ Learning language

Watch our video series, made in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, about how to support your deaf baby or toddler's communication development. The videos cover any level of hearing loss, from mild to profound. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/developing-language-communication.



✓ Start signing

Have you been thinking about learning to sign with your child? Our webpage gives you lots of information about British Sign Language and where you can learn this new skill. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/signlanguage to find out more.



✓ Communication matters

There are so many different types of communication that deaf children may use, from Makaton through to tactile fingerspelling. Want to find out more? Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/acn.



Technology

Turning trash into treasure

By Gavin Songer (Technology Research Officer)

After sadly having to suspend our Technology Test Drive in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we're delighted to announce that it is now back up and running! But did you know that our popular loan service started nearly 40 years ago?

1985

Children's TV show *Blue Peter* launched the Lend an Ear Appeal to raise money to provide radio aids and a lending library of specialist equipment for deaf children. The appeal asked children across the UK to collect old coins, scrap metal and unwanted keys. They raised over £100,000 in just ten months!

1987

Using the *Blue Peter* funds, the National Deaf Children's Society Technology Information Centre was officially opened in Birmingham. Parents of deaf children could borrow technology to try out at school and at home.

1995

The services were transferred to London. A fully equipped technology room with communication aids, educational toys and the *Blue Peter* loan service was opened in the following spring.

1996

Due to the vast amount of equipment to choose from, we decided to take our technology out on the road to reach families across the UK. A sponsorship deal from Midland Bank (now HSBC) made it happen, and our Listening Bus was officially launched by soon-to-be Prime Minister Tony Blair.

1997

Before it reached its first birthday, 8,500 visitors had climbed aboard our Listening Bus. Exciting new products were being added all the time such as the *Sign Now!* multimedia CD-ROM and high-tech videophones!

2015

A brand new Roadshow bus was launched, replacing the previously named Listening Bus. This continued to travel all over the country demonstrating technology and resources to deaf and hearing children, their families and professionals.

2018

We partnered with Phonak to launch a new Borrow to Buy scheme. This service offers deaf children, their families and the professionals working with them immediate access to Phonak products, which can be borrowed for up to 60 days before deciding whether or not to purchase them.

2022

After a suspension of nearly two years, because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the temporary closure of our head office, the Technology Test Drive relaunches to all of our members.





Bellman & Symfon Vibio Bed Shaker
£79.98 – available to borrow for free from our Technology Test Drive service.



This product is a wireless vibrating alarm clock that connects to your smartphone via Bluetooth. The free Vibio app allows you to create multiple alarms, adjust the vibration power and receive notifications from calls or messages.

Dinah (18), who has a moderate to severe hearing loss, said:



“It was very easy to set up and follow the instructions. The app is also very easy to use. The product looks much more modern than other alarm clocks designed for people with hearing loss, especially as there are no wires! It’s very easy to set multiple alarms and has a variety of settings for the strength of the shaker and the snooze time. The default settings woke me up well and the battery also seems to last a long time.

I felt that a flashing light feature was missing. There are lights on the alarm, but these are hardly visible when the device is under a pillow. One time, I forgot to sync the alarm clock with my phone when I changed the time, so it didn’t wake me up. I have since got used to it and didn’t make the same mistake again. With a bit of trial and error, this product is great. I think that older deaf young people would benefit from this as the portability would be great when travelling or moving between home and university.”



Geemarc CL7400 Wireless Headphones
£143.80 – available to borrow for free from our Technology Test Drive service.



These wireless headphones are used for listening to music or watching TV. They’ve been designed specifically for users with hearing loss and offer a 50-metre wireless range from the transmitter, which plugs straight into your TV.

Polly (17), who has a severe to profound hearing loss, said:



“I found the instructions were mostly clear, but it helped to have a thorough read of the manual beforehand. I chose to charge the headphones with my own MicroUSB instead of the charging base, however the battery ran out within 30 minutes of usage. I’d recommend using the charging base provided.

I found the set-up relatively straightforward with my phone, but the medium-length cables made this trickier when it came to the TV. The headphones are adjustable so they could expand to fit the user’s head and I liked that they can be folded to maximise storage space when put away.

However, a key issue with this product was that it was extremely loud when used with my hearing aids. I had to use it without my hearing aids and the volume was much better this way, but the sound lacked clarity. The amplification meant that a lot of sound leaked out, causing other people to hear what was being played through them.

I wouldn’t recommend this product to those who are severely to profoundly deaf. I prefer to use my Roger Pen radio aid to listen to my phone and the TV.”



Did you know?

We actually have two technology loan services!

- **Technology Test Drive:** This free service allows members to borrow assistive technology, such as alarm clocks, alerting kits, listening devices, headphones and streamers for up to 30 days. Anyone can apply to borrow our technology by visiting www.ndcs.org.uk/technology-loans.
- **Borrow to Buy:** This scheme gives members the opportunity to trial Phonak products, including radio aids, streamers and soundfields for a period of 60 days. At the end of the trial, the products can either be purchased or returned. Applications to this scheme must be supported by a professional working with your family. You can find out more at www.ndcs.org.uk/borrow-to-buy.

Reviews

Books and products for deaf children – tell us what you think!



Phoenix

Happy Little Ears hat

Available from www.happylittleears.com
Price: From £8.99

0 to 4



Oliver

I'm Deaf and That's Okay

Written by Emily Bisby
Available from bookshops
Price: £5.99

5 to 10



Key

This resource is most suitable for the following ages:

0 to 4

5 to 10

11 to 14

15 to 18

19 to 25

Parents



Alice

British Sign Language Caterpillar Sign

Available from www.theschoolsignshop.co.uk
Price: From £12

0 to 4

5 to 10



We're always looking for more reviewers! Email magazine@ndcs.org.uk if you'd like to join the team.



Roxanne is mum to Phoenix (1) who's moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.

Happy Little Ears winter hats are designed with mesh sections that sit over the hearing aid, causing less feedback and disruption than regular winter hats.

The products are from a small business, and I was extremely impressed with both the look and quality of the hats when they arrived. The fleece-lined bobble hat is extremely soft and cosy, and has been perfect for our walks and trips to the park. The beanie hat is not fleece-lined so

is a great choice for slightly warmer spring days and outdoor play at nursery. Happy Little Ears provides size guides on its Etsy store which I would recommend checking before ordering. The hats fit well and have a slight stretch so Phoenix should be able to wear his next year too!

At times, the hats moved and twisted while being worn and had to be readjusted to make sure the mesh part covered Phoenix's hearing aids still. However, this could have just been life with an active one-year-old who often tries to pull his hats off!

I'd definitely recommend this product

instead of a regular winter hat and will certainly be purchasing more once Phoenix has outgrown these.

Nikki, who runs Happy Little Ears.

You could say that Happy Little Ears was born at the same time as my daughter, when, at 10 days old, my little girl was diagnosed as deaf. At six months, my baby discovered her hearing aids and could get them out with the speed and stealth of a ninja. So I decided to try to make something myself that was practical and looked good. I hope you and your little one love the products as much as we do.

Oliver really enjoyed *I'm Deaf and That's Okay*. The book tells the story of Timmy and his day in Year 2 at school. Timmy is a bit sad when the other children don't want to play with him because they think he's ignoring them, so the next day he explains to his class that he's deaf and couldn't hear them talking as he wasn't facing them. It really hit home with Oliver and addressed some of the problems he faces at school but didn't really understand before as he's so young. This book has really helped.

Oliver's favourite part is where Timmy tells everyone about his superpower – lip-reading! Again, this is something Oliver can do but has never really understood how cool it is! It's a fun book which is also very helpful in understanding the problems a deaf child might face in a mainstream school. Oliver loved it so much that he took it to school, and his teacher read it to the class, who all really enjoyed it too!

Angie is mum to Oliver (7) who's severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.



I'm Deaf and That's Okay was written by Emily Bisby, one of our deaf young members who featured in last summer's *Families* magazine. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/being-a-carer to read her story.

I've always loved the style and clarity of Cath Smith's *Let's Sign* BSL resources, and her new boards are a great addition for educational settings.

Each board includes a different group of vocabulary, such as signs for questions, signs for family members and so on.

The fun caterpillar designs make them attractive to children and, being bright and colourful, they will grab anyone's attention, sparking an interest in copying the handshapes and learning the signs. Alice, one of the children I support, (pictured on the right), enjoyed feeding the caterpillar with a spoon. The boards can be hung inside or outside, and will complement any early years or primary

environment.

While young children will be unable to interpret the sign graphics, these boards will support primary-aged children and adults working within an education setting to develop their sign language skills and to become more deaf aware.

As a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD), I find Cath Smith's resources extremely useful for supporting families and staff teams who are new to sign language to develop their skills. I see these boards being invaluable in promoting deaf awareness and the inclusion of deaf children within a nursery or school.

Louise is a ToD from the Berkshire Sensory Consortium Service.



Resources

What's new

Auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder (ANSD)



What type of information is it?

An updated webpage with information and advice on auditory neuropathy spectrum disorder (ANSD) which can be found at www.ndcs.org.uk/ansd.

Who's it for?

Parents and carers of deaf children with ANSD.

What's it about?

It provides a summary of ANSD; it outlines the causes, the process of identification and the technology available for children and young people with ANSD. It's packed full of useful information if you have just found out your child has ANSD.

You might also like:

Our webpage on the many different causes of childhood deafness. You can access this at www.ndcs.org.uk/causes.

Special schools for deaf children in the UK



What type of information is it?

An updated list of the 22 schools for deaf children in the UK which can be found at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafschoools.

Who's it for?

Families and carers of deaf children and young people who may want their child to attend a specialist deaf school.

What's it about?

It includes a list of the 22 special schools for deaf children in the UK, organised by nation and area. If you would like a printed copy of this information, please contact the Helpline at www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline.

You might also like:

Our webpage on choosing deaf-friendly schools. You can access this at www.ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool.

Glue Ear: A guide for parents



What type of information is it?

An update to our information booklet explaining the condition of glue ear and possible treatment options. You can find it at www.ndcs.org.uk/glueearguide.

Who's it for?

Parents of children who have been diagnosed with glue ear.

What's it about?

It's widely accepted that glue ear can cause temporary deafness and delayed speech development. This booklet aims to provide information on what glue ear is and the support that is available to you.

You might also like:

You can watch a fun animation, *Ninja Phoenix and DJ and the Gloopy Glop*, for children who have glue ear at www.ndcs.org.uk/glueear.



Helpline



📞 Freephone 0808 800 8880
✉️ helpline@ndcs.org.uk
💬 www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline



My son (aged 12) started at a mainstream secondary school last September. He has moderate to severe hearing loss and is struggling to make friends. He thought there would be more people like him at his new school, and he doesn't like to wear hearing aids because he's worried that he'll stand out. I'm unsure about what I can do. Do you have any suggestions?

Starting secondary school is a big step and most teenagers don't want to stand out. It's important to know that your son isn't alone.

Awareness of their deafness is really important for young people developing a positive deaf identity. This can help deaf young people feel empowered and confident when dealing with the challenges they may face because of their deafness. It can also have a positive impact on their self-esteem and enable them to build strong relationships. You can find out more at www.ndcs.org.uk/building-deaf-identity.

Your son's teachers should be able to identify some like-minded classmates your son can trust and feel safe with. Consider your son's interests and talk with the school about available clubs and activities.

Deaf awareness training for staff and sessions with the children in your son's year could also make a big difference and may be something

your Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) could help arrange. Sharing resources like our *Deaf-Friendly Guide to Teaching in Secondary Schools* can also help staff to better support your son's social and emotional wellbeing, and understand his communication needs so they can facilitate conversations between him and his classmates. You can find the guide here: www.ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-secondary.

Having friends we can relate to is an important part of childhood. It may be



helpful for your son to meet other deaf young people outside of school.

There are lots of ways for deaf young people to meet one another, such as through our local groups. Find your local group at www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup. We also host online events for deaf young people at www.ndcs.org.uk/youthevents and have lots of information on the hobbies and activities young people can participate in at www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyactivities.

Our new website, the Buzz, is a safe and friendly space where deaf children and young people can connect with each other, ask questions and share their experiences. Encourage your child to visit the Buzz by going to buzz.org.uk.

I hope things begin to settle in time. If you would like to discuss anything further or there's anything else we can help with, please contact our Freephone Helpline on **808 800 8880** or visit www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline.

Join Your Community

We have a parents' forum where you can chat to other parents of deaf children about anything you like! To get started, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community and create a new account.



We have lots more information booklets and factsheets available for download on our website. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/resources to find out more.

Looking for stories with deaf characters?



Our range of picture books can help children of all ages to understand deafness. Each book features a confident deaf character and communication tips.

Books are £6.99 each



➔ Order your books online at www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books.

Roadshow

Back on the road!

After many months of being grounded due to the pandemic, we were delighted to finally get back out into the community with our Roadshow bus late last year, starting off with a visit to Marland Hill Primary Resource Base.



Luke

Luke Collins-Hayes, one of our fantastic Roadshow team, who is deaf.

“We’re back on the road again! We’ve been looking at how we can continue to offer our face-to-face visits in a Covid-19 safe way, and it now feels so good to be able to respond to requests for workshops from schools up and down the UK. We want to empower deaf children and young people and raise awareness of

deafness amongst their friends, families and teachers.

Face-to-face visits, like our first one back in Rochdale, have such a fantastic impact on the lives of deaf children and young people. It’s amazing to see that first-hand.

By sharing information and developing everyone’s understanding of deafness, we’re working towards a world without barriers.

We want to remind every deaf child that they have incredible potential and should be aiming high. With the right support, they can do anything anyone else can do.”



Charlotte

Charlotte Elliott, teacher at Marland Hill Primary Resource Base.

“The children loved their experience on the bus and are already looking forward to a future visit next year, with other children from around Rochdale and our feeder high school. One of our children said, ‘The bus is perfect!’, which to us, sums up just how much they enjoyed it.

All of the staff here were proud to see our children interacting independently with staff on the bus during the sessions.

All of our children are from families with hearing parents, so it was excellent for them to interact with deaf adults, like Luke, and see such positive role models.

Your sessions will continue to have a positive impact on our children as we’ll be further exploring many of the topics raised, like emotional health and wellbeing, and technology.”



All of our children are from families with hearing parents, so it was excellent for them to interact with deaf adults.



If you’d like to find out more about our workshops, whether digital or in person, or register your interest, visit our website www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow or email us on roadshow@ndcs.org.uk.

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Campaigns

Discover more with our new map

We already use maps to show you everything from contact information for local groups to deaf schools in your area. And now, we're excited to be able to share a lot more data with you in our brand-new interactive map!

Our map will help you to improve your local services and to campaign. It's easy to compare your area to neighbouring ones and to take action, whether it's talking to your local service or starting a conversation with a politician.

Poor support in education continues to hold deaf children back. Our map will focus on showing you insightful education data, specifically about deaf children. You can see whether the number of Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) has gone up or down and how many specialist units there are to support deaf children where you are.

Thank you to all the parents who helped shape the map and who gave feedback on early designs. We hope you like it!

“Having data about the number of ToDs in Waltham Forest, along with their caseload numbers and the ratio of ToDs to children, and being able to compare this to our neighbouring boroughs, helped me feel more confident in holding the local authority to account and demanding better provision and resources. Being armed with real facts made the argument more convincing and empowered me to be a better advocate for my child.”

Katsura is mum to Naia (4), who has moderate to severe hearing loss.

→ Go to deafeducationmap.ndcs.org.uk to start using the map right now!

We plan to make more maps like this in future. If you have ideas for other information you'd like to see, let us know by emailing campaigns@ndcs.org.uk.





Phonak Sky Marvel. Combining world's first technological innovations to bring love at first sound to children with hearing loss.

Connects to smartphones, TVs, Roger and more

Sky Marvel is the world's first paediatric hearing aid that connects directly to most smartphone and Bluetooth™ enabled devices. In a world where modern devices can be a central part of a child's life, Sky Marvel enables intuitive access and quality streaming for speech, apps, music, e-books and much more!

Full day of hearing

With a 3-hour charge time, Sky M-PR provides a full day of hearing including 10 hours of Roger or streaming media. Parents and children can enjoy peace of mind knowing the hearing aids will stay powered on from morning to bedtime.

24% better speech understanding in noise

Phonak Sky Marvel features Autosense Sky OS, designed to adapt throughout a child's day giving children clear, rich sound even in the noisiest of situations.

Sky Marvel and Roger

The Phonak Sky Marvel seamlessly connects to Roger devices without the need to attach external receivers. Your child can now wear 42% smaller and 32% lighter hearing aids, making for a more comfortable experience at home and in school.

To find out more please email sales@phonak.co.uk or visit www.phonak.co.uk

Sky Marvel offers:



Clear, rich sound



Connects to smartphones, Roger™ mics and more



Rechargeable



Child-specific design

Campaigns

Your chance to check in

The last two years have been extremely tough for young people across the UK. We asked three deaf young people, Josiah (15), Siena (16) and Labake (21), to share their top tips for parents and other young people on getting through a challenging time.



Josiah's tips

- Don't worry about the past, don't worry about the future. Focus on the now.
- It's OK to have some downtime to yourself.
- Others should try to be more responsive to deaf people, instead of ignoring them. Try to listen to us more.



Siena's tips

- It's OK to talk to people about the issues you feel that you're having. Don't feel like you're a burden.
- Be patient if others can't find the right words or struggle with communication. Just because I have a disability, doesn't mean you can treat me differently.



Labake's tip

- Even though you're not in the position to understand where I'm coming from, at least try to meet me in the middle and show empathy and respect for my experiences. Validate me and understand where I'm coming from.

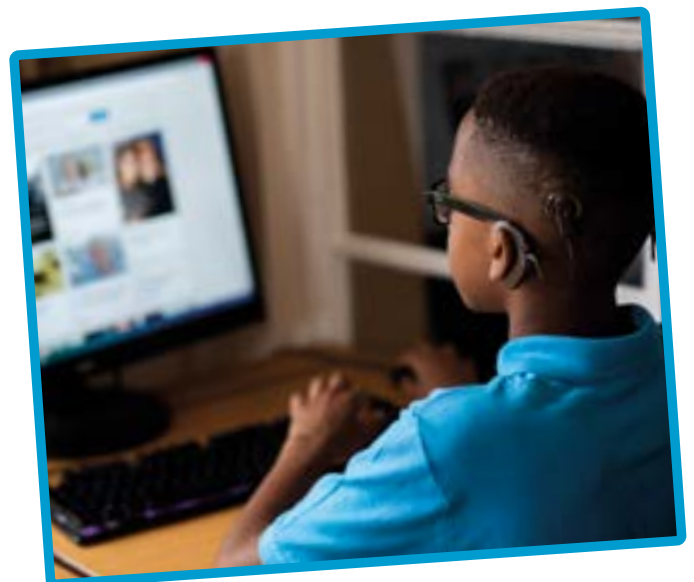


We want deaf young people aged 13 to 25 across the UK to tell us what they think needs to change when it comes to mental health. So, we've put together a survey for them to fill out. Their ideas will help us to campaign for the changes young people want to see.

Please share our survey with any deaf young people you know. You can find it at cypteam.typeform.com/to/DmSf8u41.

There aren't any right or wrong answers, we just want to know how you're doing and what we can do to help you. We know that sharing your mental health experiences can be difficult. All responses will be kept anonymous, but if you need support then please visit our young people's website buzz.org.uk or email cyp@ndcs.org.uk.

Plus, one person who takes part in the survey will be selected at random to win a £20 Amazon voucher!



Words: Rosie Eggleston

Events



Liam

Our online events for parents, carers and families

All our events are interactive and offer information, support and the opportunity to share experiences with other parents and carers.

- Navigating Benefits
- Supporting Parents New to Hearing Loss
- Technology
- Choosing the Right School for my Child
- Baby and Toddler Coffee Mornings
- Bounce Along to Baby Sign
- Building your Child's Self Esteem
- Hearing Care
- School Holiday Activity Sessions: For children and families
- Real-life Experiences: Hear from our amazing volunteers
- Raising a Deaf Child: Including sleep, behaviour, communication and staying safe online
- Family Sign Language: For families with deaf children aged 0 to 11
- Expert Parent Programme: Getting the best outcomes for my child
- Parents as Partners
- Introduction to Campaigning

We are now running an in-person event too, Supporting Parents New to Hearing Loss. Other in-person events will be following very soon.

A problem shared

Cristina, mum to Liam (9 months) who has moderate hearing loss, met other parents and learnt more about how to support her son at our first in-person event since the pandemic started.

“Liam was born during the pandemic and our family lives in Spain. We don't have many friends with children and don't know any deaf children.

I'd heard a speech from a deaf young adult who said that something she found helpful was going to events with her parents and getting involved with other deaf children. So, when Liam's Teacher of the Deaf recommended we go to the Supporting Parents New to Hearing Loss event, I signed up.

It was the first time I'd attended an in-person event and I was really looking forward to it. It would give Liam a chance to socialise and us the chance to meet other parents of deaf children who are going through the same thing. I was hoping also to get more information about deafness and meet other parents of deaf children. I personally was a bit nervous, because it was the first time I'd left Liam in a crèche, but the organisation of the event was brilliant.

The event was in two parts, both with breaks between them. The first part was more technical – about deafness and communication, and the second part was testimonies from people with hearing loss.

We were given time to talk to other parents, the speeches were really interesting and everyone was very helpful. I learnt more about the hearing aids and the technological tools that Liam will be able to use to overcome some of the difficulties he might face in the future.

I found everything interesting, but

particularly listening to how much people with hearing loss can achieve – it was reassuring and inspiring. One of the best things about this type of event is realising that there are a lot of people in your situation, there is help if you need it, other people understand your worries and there is access to a lot of information to help you understand about hearing loss.

A big worry I think most of the parents shared was that when they found out that their child had a hearing loss, they didn't know how it would affect them or if it would limit them. But listening to inspiring stories was great; even if our son has a hearing loss, it doesn't have to be a barrier for him.

I would definitely recommend this event to other parents. I'm really thankful for all the support we've received.”



Listening to how much people with hearing loss can achieve – it was reassuring and inspiring.

Cooking up a treat!

Matilda (8), who is severely to profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, attended our online Cookery Workshop where she had fun making falafel and flatbreads!

“I applied for the cookery session because I love cooking with my mummy, and we thought it might be fun. The session was on the computer, and I was in my kitchen.

The session leaders made everyone feel welcome with an icebreaker at the start. We had to say our names and what food we like and don't like – I said I liked chocolate ice cream, but I didn't like sprouts!

The session was good fun. I just needed to watch the teacher very carefully to make sure I got the recipe right, but my mummy was there to help with the tricky bits. My favourite part was when we got to eat the falafels at the end.

The cookery session was a bit different to how I thought it would be. I really enjoyed making lunch for my whole family, and I liked that I could do lots of it by myself. I made something I hadn't cooked before, and I did it with Mummy. We had fun and laughed a lot.

If you're thinking about joining an online event, just do it! Try not to be worried; all the people are really nice.”

I liked that I could do lots of it by myself.

The workshop also gave Matilda and her mum, Karen, quality time together doing something they enjoy.

“Matilda loves helping me in the kitchen, so when we saw the event, we thought it would be fun to do together. It was a really well-run session, and it was helpful to get the list of ingredients beforehand so we could be prepared. It was also a small group, so that was nice.

I think it helped with Matilda's confidence, as she had to answer a few questions in the session (although there was no pressure to do so). Matilda really enjoyed it, and so did I – it was quality time that we spent together doing something we enjoy. As Matilda said, we laughed a lot!

I would recommend giving a workshop like this a try. We'd never done this type of event before, but it was great, and the session leaders make you feel at ease.”

Arran, the Cookery Workshop leader, gave his thoughts.

“It's important for young people to build their skills and confidence in their journey towards independence. Cookery can be a good place to start – that's why we worked with Yvonne from Yumma Food to create this fun workshop.

By the end, the group had got to know each other, learned a new recipe and gained some useful skills.”



Matilda

Our events for children and young people

We have a range of fun events and activities for deaf children and young people to get involved with. They're a great way to meet other deaf children and young people, make friends, learn new skills and grow in confidence. Some of the events we're currently offering are listed below.

- Clay Workshop with an Artist
- Dream Big: Creative jobs
- How to Choose School Subjects and Start Thinking About Careers
- How to Feel Calmer: A mindfulness workshop for you and your family
- Get Informed: How to spend and save your pocket money

If you'd like to tell us your thoughts or have an idea for an event you'd like us to offer, please email enable@ndcs.org.uk.



All our online events are free, with closed captioning and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. Places are limited, so booking is essential. For full details of all our events and to book your place, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events or, if you don't have access to the internet, call our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880.

Fundraising

Put a spring in your step

Put your best foot forward and join us in taking on the 50K in May Challenge.

Walk, run, jog or cycle a 50km distance in the month of May to raise money and get active. Every step you take, and every pound you raise, will help to bring us closer to a world without barriers for deaf children.

Take part in 2022 by joining our Facebook group for the event, completing the short registration form and creating a fundraising page. Once you've signed up, we'll be in touch with your 50K in May fundraising pack and free T-shirt, as well as being with you every step of the way to help you complete the challenge.

Last year, the fantastic families who took on our 50K in May challenge raised over £60,000 for us! Here they tell us why they enjoyed it so much...

"This challenge allowed us to spend time as a family whilst raising money for a charity that has supported my son and us as a family when we most needed it."

Nicola, mum to Ben (7) who is deaf, and Oliver (4).



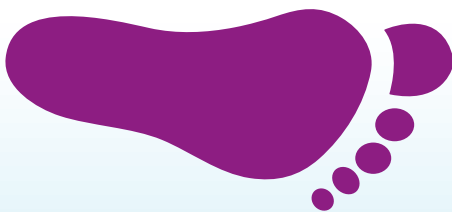
Nicola, Oliver and Ben

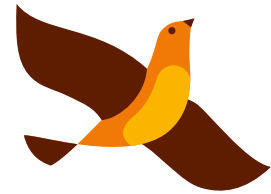
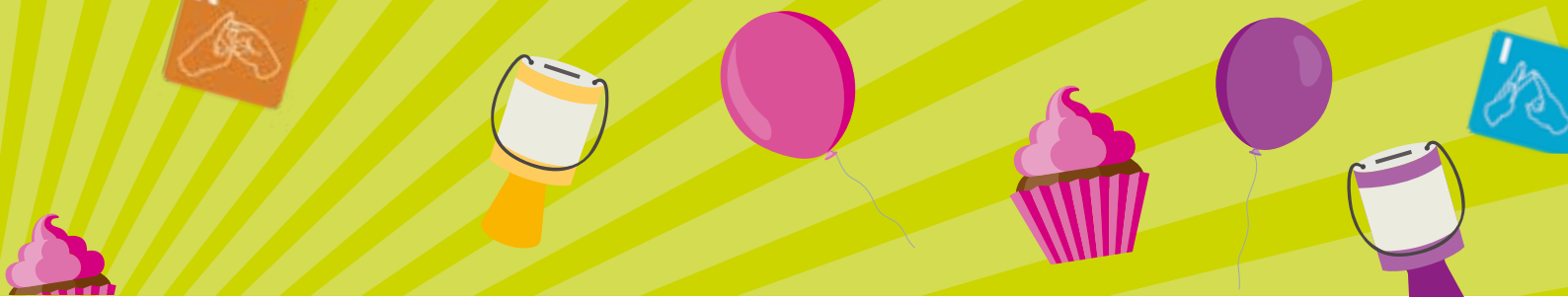
"As I enjoy walking for general fitness, the 50k challenge seemed like the perfect opportunity to combine walking with fundraising. We had some lovely walks – although not such lovely weather!"

Ann, mum to Daniel (15) who is deaf.



Daniel and Ann





“The children in my class loved the idea of 50k in May and couldn’t wait to complete it. They all cheered each other, were very proud of themselves, and afterwards we had biscuits to celebrate.”

Teacher Ellie completed the challenge with her year group by doing laps of the school’s playing field. One of her students is deaf and uses cochlear implants.



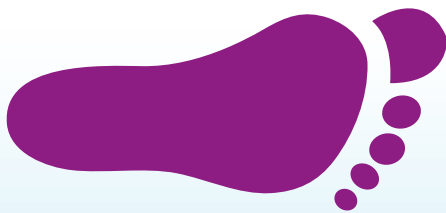
Ellie and her class

“We decided that 50km wasn’t enough of a challenge so set ourselves the target of 200km. Among the highlights for us were walking the Elie Chain Walk, the Dumyat Hill Path, Anstruther to Crail, the Pineapple in Dunmore and several trips to the famous Falkirk Wheel and Kelpies statue.”

Holly, mum to Noah (13), Josie (11) who is deaf, and Benjamin (7).



Holly



If you’d like more information, you can get in touch with our fundraising team at community.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk or visit www.ndcs.org.uk/get-involved.

When I'm a grown-up

DEAF WORKS EVERYWHERE

Do you ever wonder what your deaf child will do when they grow up?

Deaf people share their experiences of the world of work, including how their employers and colleagues adapt to their needs.

I'm a heating engineer and plumber because...

It combines problem-solving and practical skills with my passion for providing great customer care and service.

A close family member who's a gas engineer influenced and helped me get where I am today. I have bilateral hearing loss, my right ear is profound and the left ear has moderate to severe hearing loss, aided by a behind-the-ear hearing aid.

Communication on my training courses had its challenges, however I had lots of visual one-to-ones and hands-on practice. I also had plenty of handouts from classroom work which helped.

I usually work on my own but have help if the job or workload needs it. I contact my customers and suppliers

via SMS or emails. I rely on my hearing aid with Bluetooth connection, and on visual and physical motions, to detect some faults while working.

In the last three years, I've gone self-employed with my own plumbing and heating company. I'm now starting to see the rewards and success.

It's important to be confident in yourself and your ability. If you can dream it, go for it. Take every opportunity you are given. You may come across challenges, but never give up.

Jake Francis



I'm a paediatric audiologist because...

I'm passionate about spreading awareness about hearing loss.

I have bilateral moderate hearing loss and wear two hearing aids. My own deafness helps me empathise with my patients and they can see that wearing hearing aids is not something to be ashamed of. After audiology was mentioned to me as a career option, I did a BSc in Healthcare Science Audiology. I was especially popular with the other students because they could practise on me!

I work in the best place for someone with a hearing loss, as my colleagues and I spend our days communicating with children who have hearing loss too. Be open to colleagues and don't be afraid to ask for support to help you with your job.

Through Access to Work I was given a microphone and FM receivers for my hearing aids. The microphone really helps – especially in virtual meetings as I can hear more clearly through my hearing aids.

I also volunteer as a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) ambassador, giving career talks to schools. One of my favourite activities is teaching the pupils the alphabet in British Sign Language (BSL).

Alice Hurst



I'm a film producer, director and writer because...

It offers me a chance to promote people who don't normally see themselves onscreen.

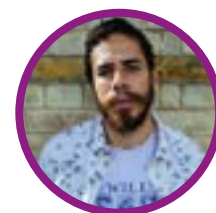
As a hearing-impaired person, I want to change the industry and work with more people with disabilities, whether visible or invisible.

My hearing loss started when I was a child, because of meningitis. I have little to no hearing on my left side and I have a hearing loss coupled with severe tinnitus on my right side. I wear hearing aids and I'm now learning BSL.

I started as a runner at 18, at a post-production company, and at 19, became a videographer. At 24, I studied film at Manchester Film School, and in 2017, I put together a proposal to turn a photography company into a video production company. A few years on, I'm now the company's managing director.

The most important thing, working in the arts, is not to give up. Network with the right people and be open about your disability. It became my superpower and it can become your superpower too.

Jobe Wolf



Be inspired by other deaf people at work in our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign video at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.

What does your child want to be when they grow up? For more information on careers, check our section about life after leaving school at www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool.

We continue to support healthcare professionals and clients offering remote real time video assessments and home visits. Call us now on 01978 820714



KINDERKEY



www.kinderkey.co.uk



NEW
Kinderkey
Junior Care Bed

Promoting safe sleep, our unique cots and beds can be made to any size your room will accommodate.

With options of height adjustment, four part profiling and Trendelenburg tilt they meet the needs of children, adults and their carers. Ensuring a good night's sleep for everyone.

Our new Junior Care Bed complies with the new standards for children's medical beds. The mattress size is 1700mm x 700mm and it has profiling and height adjustment.





Happy children learn...

Mary Hare is a school where you'll find happy, confident deaf children enjoying life, their education and the friendships they make.

With small class sizes, the very latest classroom technologies and a team of highly skilled, specialist teachers, we are committed to giving hearing impaired children a high quality education that supports them, challenges them and is adapted to recognise their learning needs.

Outside the classroom we offer a wide variety of sports and activities to enjoy in our extensive grounds and facilities.

We are proud to be a school where our students leave us as confident young individuals, ready and prepared to embrace their futures.

Most of all, we know that children who are happy will enjoy school and learning. So to see for yourself what makes Mary Hare School such a happy place, feel free to get in touch with us and arrange a visit.

Call us on: 01635 244233

Send an email: admissions@maryhare.org.uk

or visit our website: www.maryhare.org.uk



Securing the future of deaf children and young people