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We celebrate the success of the BSL Act



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Working as a deaf freelancer



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How I help my deaf child make friends



National Deaf Children's Society

# families

## Managing multiple disabilities

**“His deafness does get pushed to the side. I don't think people quite realise how much it impacts him.”**







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# My deafness didn't stop me...

## ...becoming a stand-up comedian

By Jenny Collen

Steve



**Growing up, Steve Day was inspired by the comedians he saw on TV.**

"When Ken Dodd or Billy Connolly came on, the whole family would be happy," he says. But when Steve became severely to profoundly deaf as a teenager, his dreams of being a comedian suddenly seemed very far away. "I thought my hearing would make it impossible," Steve explains. "I worried people would laugh at me."

Persevering despite his fears, Steve found that he did make people laugh, but for all the right reasons! He also found that being deaf helped him in his early career. "For a long time, I was the only deaf performer on the UK club circuit," Steve says. "There are more deaf comedians now – something I'm happy about – but having this unique selling point was very helpful."

"I don't set out to raise deaf awareness with my performances, but I think it helps just by me getting on stage and demonstrating that it's possible. I do talk about my deafness, but it doesn't define me, and I'm most certainly not looking for sympathy."

However, being deaf has presented unique challenges for Steve. "When I started, the only way to get booked for a gig was by phoning up, and I had tremendous difficulty using a phone," he says. "Email and texting make it a lot easier to get gigs now."

He also learned to ask for adjustments when performing. "In theatres, the professional lighting makes it harder to see the audience," he says. "That's a problem because I need to see them to gauge their reaction, so I need the house lights slightly on. Sometimes I've forgotten to ask and have made it difficult for myself."

After a 20-year career, Steve now has advice for deaf children and young people looking to become comedians. "Just do it," he says. "I wasted 20 years thinking I couldn't. Deafness can be a pain in the bum, but don't let it beat you. These are the best days of my life."

Find out more about Steve and his upcoming gigs at [stevedaycomedy.co.uk](http://stevedaycomedy.co.uk).

If your child dreams of being on the stage, check out our tips on how to make performing arts more accessible at [ndcs.org.uk/performing-arts](http://ndcs.org.uk/performing-arts).

**I thought my hearing would make it impossible. I worried people would laugh at me.**







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# Hello

The summer has passed in the blink of an eye and it's time to go back to school. In this issue, we have advice on lots of things you may be thinking about this September. We're also looking ahead to the future with tips on choosing a school for your little one (page 14) or applying to university or further education if you have an older deaf child (page 28).

Deafness may not be the only disability your child has, and we know that how their hearing loss interacts with their additional needs can cause challenges. This autumn, we've spoken to a range of families who live with multiple disabilities, including Griffin, who has Down's syndrome, Jasmine, who has multi-sensory impairment, and Dom, who has a musculoskeletal condition. For these families, life can be complicated but also rewarding. I hope you'll find their stories useful.

We're also celebrating the fantastic news that the British Sign Language Act is now law, making sign language an official language of Great Britain. On page 40, young people tell us what this success means to them. But Daniel, a long-time campaigner, tells us why this is only the start on page 16.

Finally, we're launching a survey in this issue to find out what you love, and what you'd like to improve, about Families magazine. Find the insert inside this magazine or fill it out at [surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZVVBQ2N](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZVVBQ2N). I can't wait to hear what you think!

Kerrina

Kerrina Gray, Editor  
✉ [magazine@ndcs.org.uk](mailto: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 page 45 for more information on supporting our work.

## families

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**Jasmine's story**  
how mum Pamela chose the right school for Jasmine and twin Daya's additional needs



**Daniel's story**  
how he became a prominent campaigner for the deaf community at age 16



**Dom's story**  
how he overcame a tough time to learn more about his black disabled identity



**Ella's story**  
how she gets support in British Sign Language (BSL) as a freelancer and actress



# FAMILIES

## Using BSL to contact 999 in an emergency

The new 999 BSL Emergency Video Relay Service helps British Sign Language (BSL) users make emergency calls by connecting them to qualified BSL interpreters who will then relay the conversation to a call handler with emergency authorities. The service, which went live in June, can be used to contact the police, ambulance, fire or coastguard.

The 999 BSL service is free and operates 24/7 every day of the year. It's for emergency situations only, for example if someone is seriously injured or lives are in danger. For less urgent situations, BSL users can use SignVideo to contact the police on 101 and the NHS on 111.

### To use the 999 BSL service, you can:

- download the free 999 BSL iOS or Android app onto your phone or tablet go to the 999 BSL website: [999bsl.co.uk](https://999bsl.co.uk).

### In an emergency, there are three very simple steps to follow:

1. Open the app or web page.
2. Press the red button 'Call 999 Emergency now'.
3. Connect to an interpreter.

For more information about the 999 BSL service, a list of FAQs, and how to download the app, visit [999bsl.co.uk](https://999bsl.co.uk).

## New education guidance in Northern Ireland

The Education Minister in Northern Ireland, Michelle McIlveen, recently met deaf young people Zak and Conor at Stormont to celebrate the launch of our new deaf-friendly education guide. Written by us for the Department of Education, the resource is aimed at anyone who works with deaf children in educational settings in Northern Ireland.

Both young people shared positive examples of what their schools were doing to make learning, sports and extracurricular activities more accessible for them. They also told the Minister how getting it right for deaf children can improve learning for everyone.

We know that many teachers don't feel that they receive appropriate training on how to teach deaf children, so please make sure that teachers and staff in your child's setting know about the new guide at [ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-ni](https://ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-ni).



## Our autumn superstars!

Super-mums Kristy and Elin took part in the 100-mile RideLondon cycling event this year, raising more than £2,000 for the National Deaf Children's Society. They wanted to raise deaf awareness after their daughter Ffion-Haf (12), who is profoundly deaf, struggled to communicate with doctors and nurses while she was in hospital with a severe ear infection. "Seeing the finish line, we both became very emotional," said Kristy, who is also a Teacher of the Deaf. "We felt proud, elated and exhausted!"



## Take on the London Marathon for deaf children

Applications to run the London Marathon for the National Deaf Children's Society are now open for 2023, and we'd love you to get involved! Visit [ndcs.org.uk/LM2023](https://ndcs.org.uk/LM2023) to find out more.

### Our heroic team of runners will receive:

- one-to-one support from a dedicated member of our team
- a Facebook community to share training tips and experiences with your teammates
- family-friendly cheer points to give you the support you deserve
- an exclusive post-race reception to celebrate with your friends and family, enjoy refreshments and get a free massage.

"Running the 2021 London Marathon for the National Deaf Children's Society was a dream experience," says Jadie. "The support I received from them throughout was fantastic. I loved the atmosphere from the whole group of staff, runners and supporters."

## Young ChangeMaker up for prestigious award

We're proud to announce that Ciara (18), one of our young ChangeMakers, has been nominated for a National Diversity Award for her work to raise disability awareness in schools.

Ciara lives with multiple disabilities, including profound deafness, cerebral palsy and autism. In 2021, she founded The Inclusivists, bringing together a small group of students from different backgrounds and experiences. It aims to raise the profile of marginalised groups within mainstream education, starting with disabled people.

"As a person with multiple disabilities, I felt that there wasn't enough representation surrounding my experiences going through mainstream education," Ciara explains. "I wanted to become that representation for young disabled people."

Ciara is currently working with the National Deaf Children's Society as a ChangeMaker – our group of deaf young activists from around the UK who work to improve their communities for deaf young people. To find out more, visit [ndcs.org.uk/changemaker](https://ndcs.org.uk/changemaker).



## Haptic suit allows deaf festival goes to feel the music

Vodafone has developed a suit to help deaf people feel the music in real-time at festivals. The 5G-enabled suit delivers vibrations to touchpoints on the wrists, ankles and torso. It also uses receptors to capture crowd noise and feed it back through the suit to convey the atmosphere of the crowd.

Kyle Springate, who is profoundly deaf, got to trial the suit at the Mighty Hoopla festival in London after seeing it advertised when buying his tickets. "It was surreal and thrilling," Kyle says. "The vibrations were on beat with the music, so it brought a great extra dimension to the festival that I haven't experienced before. I could feel the vocals when the artist was singing or feel the crowd clapping."

## Did you know?

Speech-to-text reporters can type upwards of 200 words per minute with around 98% accuracy.

Words: Jenny Collen

## Sign of the season Pumpkin



# Comment

## We want to hear from you!

I love reading Families magazine each quarter, especially the stories of deaf children and young people showing how they achieve whatever they set their hearts on.

In the last two years, we've featured deaf children, young people and adults doing a wide variety of things – rowing the Atlantic, starring in 'EastEnders' and working as lawyers, doctors and teachers. We've also spoken to young people about issues that are important to them, including deaf identity, racism, the environment, and being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Some stories are tough to read, some leave you with a huge smile on your face, all show us there are challenges to being deaf but there are plenty of joyful moments too.

We want to continue to provide you with the stories you want to read that inspire and inform you. The purpose of Families is to give you up-to-date information and allow you to hear from other families like yours, so you know you're not alone. We've been slowly making changes to the look and content of the magazine over the last two years, and now we'd love to get your feedback.

We'd really appreciate it if you could fill in the questionnaire enclosed with this magazine and return it by popping it in the post box for free. Alternatively, if you'd prefer to complete it online, you can find it at [surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZVVBQ2N](https://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZVVBQ2N) or by scanning the QR Code.

All completed questionnaires received by 29 September will be entered into a prize draw to win a £25 Amazon voucher. Good luck!



Susan  
Susan Daniels OBE  
Chief Executive





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# Top tips...

## Supporting your child through bullying

There's nothing worse than finding out your child is being bullied. Our experts suggest ways to tackle bullying and how to best support your child.

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

- 1** I focus on prevention through education. I remind my daughter that we're all different and that's OK. I answer questions honestly and teach her how to respond in a positive way when people are curious about her cochlear implants.  
**Nicky, mum to Isabelle (4) and Jack (9 months). All are profoundly deaf.**
- 2** Knowing what a good friendship should feel like can help your child notice the difference between a healthy and unhealthy friendship. If a friendship leaves your child feeling bad about themselves, support them to move on and find new friends.  
**Hannah, mum to Elodie (7) who has moderate hearing loss.**
- 3** Ask your child's school, activity groups or clubs for their bullying and inclusion policies, to guide you, the teachers and other staff on how to deal with any bullying issues affecting your deaf child.  
**Keri Tebbit, Family Course Development Manager.**
- 4** I encourage my girls to be compassionate. We discuss the importance of being sensitive towards others' feelings both online and face-to-face, and encourage them to be alert and speak up if they witness any hurtful behaviour.  
**Josie, mum to Maia (16) who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.**
- 5** Create an environment where your child can offload any difficulties. It might not always be bullying but hurtful comments from peers. Check in with them. If they say they're fine, ask gently again.  
**Kirsty (19) who is moderately deaf.**
- 6** Bullying can be very painful but it's important that you don't suffer alone. Tell a parent or a teacher about what's happening to you. Schools and colleges usually have systems in place to support you.  
**Martin McLean, Senior Policy Advisor.**
- 7** Although bullying is hard, remember it will end. It won't follow you forever and you'll come out on top. Don't retaliate. Talk to someone you trust and surround yourself with positive people.  
**Lucy (23) who is moderately deaf.**
- 8** While still unacceptable, sometimes bullying comes from ignorance and other people not understanding deafness. Consider offering some deaf awareness training to your peers.  
**Kirsty (19) who is moderately deaf.**

➔ For more information and tips on how to cope with bullying, visit [ndcs.org.uk/bullyingguides](http://ndcs.org.uk/bullyingguides). For tips on making friends, turn to page 26.



## Sara Says



# Taking responsibility

**As parents, you'll understand how different all of our children are and how they develop at different times and at different speeds.** These variations make them unique and wonderful, but this unpredictability can sometimes be frustrating.

In the early days after your child is identified as deaf, there's a lot to learn about communication methods, technology and checking for causes of deafness (and possible medical conditions). These days can be long, exhausting and confusing, with so much information to take in. It feels like we're alone trying to deal with it all. For many of us, this will be at a time when we're also dealing with the challenges of becoming a new parent.

Now that Charlotte is eight years old, there are a lot of differences from those early days. She's started doing a lot of things independently, like eating, dressing and washing, all in her own time. The biggest difference for us is her ability to look after a lot of her own hearing needs.

She decides when to put on her cochlear implants and when to take them off. She hasn't yet decided to try waterproofing technology, so she can't hear anything at bath time, in the shower, swimming at the pool or when on the beach. She also doesn't like hearing on weekday mornings, leaving her implants off until we're ready to leave the house for school. At these times she likes to talk, but the rest of us must sign and she'll use lip-reading too. She'll use her implants for most TV programmes and movies, and she loves to listen to music.

She also chooses to go to bed with them on when having her cousins to sleep over, so that she can join in with the chat once the lights go out.

Charlotte is able to change her own batteries, magnet covers and FM/non-FM battery covers. She loves to decorate her implants by using different coloured battery, microphone and magnet covers. When reminded, she'll also pop her equipment into the drier overnight and reassemble it in the morning.

When making a new friend recently, she was more than happy to take off her implants to show them what they look like, how they work, and describe what she hears, both with and without them on. She even let her new friend attach the magnets for her!

All of these small steps allow Charlotte to take control of her own deafness; she can decide to let her batteries run out and have silence for a while, or to replace them immediately if she prefers. We believe this control allows her to find her own deaf identity, which is so important for her self-esteem and self-confidence. As parents, these small steps also take the pressure off us, which is especially important on busy days when we're trying to get to work and get the kids to school.

➔ For more parent tips on how to encourage your child to use their hearing technology independently, go to [ndcs.org.uk/usetechology](https://ndcs.org.uk/usetechology).

## Zahra's Zone



# My religious community



**I've been brought up in the Ismaili Muslim community, a branch of Shia Islam.** Growing up I attended weekly religion classes, several camps, prayer ceremonies, and have been an active volunteer. Similar to the challenges associated with any educational institution or socialising within the hearing world, there are communication difficulties within my religious community too. But the community strives to create inclusive spaces, allowing me to integrate myself into the faith.

For me, there's a feeling of peacefulness inside the prayer house where the routine ceremony takes place twice a day. Prayers are often recited in Arabic or English. I may not be able to hear every word, but I'm familiar with the routine and have been taught at home and in classes what the meaning of the prayers is and how to pronounce them. When asked to recite them, there are some I'm less comfortable with, for example, if it involves singing as this is challenging for me. I'm conscious that my pronunciations are not accurate in a different language, so I prefer to stick to English mostly.

I feel lucky to have the option of taking off my cochlear implant and saying my own personal prayers. At large religious events, there have been deaf interpreters and I'm part of my own d/Deaf Ismaili group – a community within the community!

As an Ismaili Muslim, service to others is a central tenet of faith and I've been volunteering since I was about 10

years old. I started off serving water to senior members of the community. The community project that I'm most passionate about, though, is when I co-created an introductory course to British Sign Language (BSL) online during the pandemic, called Talking Hands. We ran a 10-week course where participants watched the BSL teaching videos we created, and we hosted weekly Zoom sessions to practise the signs. As well as teaching BSL, we incorporated deaf-friendly tips into the programme to raise deaf awareness within the community. These videos were also shown on our global Ismaili TV channel.

The feeling of being part of the Ismaili community gives me a sense of belonging as it's an important part of my identity. There are always challenges in the hearing world, but the Ismaili community is committed to ensuring we're as inclusive as possible. Volunteering has been part of my life forever and I'm grateful for opportunities to do this for the National Deaf Children's Society as well. I'm proud to be a part of both communities.

➔ We have tips to make sure deaf children and young people can join in at places of worship at [ndcs.org.uk/worship](https://ndcs.org.uk/worship). For more information about making religious celebrations deaf-friendly, go to [ndcs.org.uk/religious-celebrations](https://ndcs.org.uk/religious-celebrations).

Sara is mum to Sam (15), Matthew (12), Oliver (10) and Charlotte (8). Charlotte's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

📄 [www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI](https://www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI)  
🐦 @deafprincessni

“The biggest difference for us is her ability to look after a lot of her own hearing needs.”

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

“There's a feeling of peacefulness inside the prayer house.”





# Griffin's twin needs

By Caity Dalby

**When life feels like a blur of medical appointments for Griffin, mum Clarissa makes sure his deafness is taken as seriously as his Down's syndrome.**

Already a mum of five, Clarissa had a difficult pregnancy with her now three-year-old twin boys, Griffin and Phoenix. "I had quite a traumatic pregnancy and birth because we knew there were lots of problems and they were twins as well," explains Clarissa. "The whole pregnancy, we had to have lots of scans because there were new problems being flagged up at every appointment. But all they could really say was that there was an abnormality with one baby. We could have had invasive tests done and had a definitive answer, but we decided it didn't matter either way. He was going to be who he is."

During the first month and a half of Griffin's life, which was spent in hospital, his Down's syndrome was confirmed and he was referred on after his newborn hearing screening. "There wasn't really much support for his deafness in hospital. We weren't given any leaflets or anything," remembers Clarissa. "All we were told was that, as he didn't pass his newborn screening and once he was released from the

hospital, he'd be passed over to Audiology to confirm the deafness. We were also put in touch with a Portage Worker [a professional who visits children at home to help them develop skills] and a Teacher of the Deaf. That was lovely. They came round and got to know Griffin really well."

Griffin was confirmed to be severely deaf by his audiologist when he was three months old. "His audiologist was absolutely fantastic from the word go. They explained everything really clearly but it was still a big shock. On top of everything else, this was something we hadn't thought about in any way, shape or form," explains Clarissa. "We think he's got severe hearing loss in both ears but they can't do all the audiological tests properly at the moment. It's caused by his Down's syndrome, because his different genetic make-up causes smaller ear canals."

"Navigating his different medical needs has been a massive part of our life since he was born. He's had a lot of respiratory problems and we've been in and out of hospital over the winters.

**“ Navigating his different medical needs has been a massive part of our life.**

There are loads of different medical appointments for everything, so it does feel like a juggling act at the best of times. But it's just part of life now. As crazy as it is, you get used to it."

Clarissa finds interacting with the various medical professionals Griffin comes into contact with can be a double-edged sword. "We've found there are a lot of doctors who are really quite interested in Griffin because they haven't seen children with Down's syndrome and deafness, even though it's quite common," says Clarissa. "There's been quite a few that want to get my take on things. It's nice to know that even I can sometimes have more information than the doctors! As a general rule, most people understand that his Down's syndrome makes him who he is, but his deafness does get pushed to the side. I don't think people quite realise how much it impacts him. There's so much involved in it, it's a whole third of his condition I'd say."

With lots of appointments, it can be a challenge to keep a toddler entertained. "He's absolutely fascinated by books so having a couple under the buggy that you can pull out is a good thing," says Clarissa. "It's about finding those things he really enjoys so you can bring a little bit of fun to that appointment."

Another big part of Griffin's life so far has been his hearing aids. "He's been wearing hearing aids since he was four months old. When he has them on, you can tell how much the world opens up to him," explains Clarissa. "In the morning he'll be quite quiet and reserved, then the second you put his hearing aids in, he usually smiles. It's amazing."

When deciding how the family was going to communicate with Griffin, Clarissa's background as a teaching assistant and experience using Makaton with her daughter, Aurora (4),



led them to use a combination of spoken language and signs. "A lot of his communication is speaking and listening but I do use a lot of signs with him and have been to lots of Baby Sign classes," says Clarissa. "He absolutely loves trying to sign songs, but he's only just starting to sign and make basic baby sounds."

"We attended the National Deaf Children's Society's Baby Sign events and they're brilliant. There, I also got to speak to other parents who are at different stages of their journey. Now the whole family is learning some signs, including Griffin's hearing twin Phoenix and even my teenagers! It means so much to Griffin if someone goes up to him and signs, you can see him staring intently at their hands. You've made such a special connection with him."

"My advice to other parents is to do what feels good and what will work for you. But if you give your child the option, you might find that the communication route you want them to take, might not be the route that's best for them. Give them all the options, they're sponges at that age. Even if they're not talking or signing back to you yet, one day they might and it'll feel amazing."

➔ **For more information about deafness and Down's syndrome, go to [ndcs.org.uk/downsyndrome](https://ndcs.org.uk/downsyndrome). To find out more about newborn hearing screening, visit [ndcs.org.uk/newbornhearingscreening](https://ndcs.org.uk/newbornhearingscreening).**

**To apply for a place on one of our online baby and toddler sessions, go to [ndcs.org.uk/baby-toddler-sessions](https://ndcs.org.uk/baby-toddler-sessions).**



EARLY YEARS

## Your autumn checklist

### ✓ Choosing an approach

Choosing a communication approach can be difficult for parents of deaf children. To start, your choice will be guided by what you think is best for your child. As your baby grows and starts to reach their first milestones, you will be able to monitor their progress and consider whether a different approach is needed.

[ndcs.org.uk/choosing](https://ndcs.org.uk/choosing)

### ✓ Olive's choice

When Olive was identified as severely deaf and with cerebral palsy, her family opted for cochlear implants and a Total Communication approach. Find out more about how Olive and her family use speech, British Sign Language (BSL) and a communication aid.

[ndcs.org.uk/olives-choice](https://ndcs.org.uk/olives-choice)

### ✓ Disability benefits

We know that many families of deaf children don't consider deafness to be a disability. However, even if you don't consider your child to be disabled, you may still be eligible for disability benefits to help with the additional cost of raising a child with more support needs than their peers.

[ndcs.org.uk/disabilitybenefits](https://ndcs.org.uk/disabilitybenefits)





# Asking the right questions

By Kerrina Gray

**Twins Jasmine and Daya both had additional needs, so mum Pamela knew it would take time and research to find the best school for them.**



Jasmine's story

**Sitting across the table from Jasmine's teacher at parent's evening, it was an emotional night for mum Pamela.** "We were both crying," Pamela laughs. "She told me Jasmine was doing really well and I just couldn't believe it."

Jasmine (5) and her twin sister Daya were born prematurely, and Jasmine was identified as profoundly deaf with multiple additional needs, including multi-sensory impairment.

"All of the developmental milestones were delayed for Jasmine and we slowly learnt more about her additional needs," Pamela says. "You just keep wondering again and again, 'How do I accommodate this?' I felt completely out of my depth."

Daya was then diagnosed with an aggressive stage 4 metastatic cancer, neuroblastoma. "I was going to five different hospitals a week for Jasmine already," Pamela says. "I was trying to do all I could for her and learn more about her deafness: attending National Deaf Children's Society events, speaking regularly to my Teacher of the Deaf (ToD), and making sure I was

there every time she made a sound so she had consistency in response. I could have grieved for a long time but I just got stuck in." Daya is now in remission after nearly three years of intensive treatment, but still has long-term health issues.

Pamela was also having to think about the future and, in particular, nursery and school placements for the twins. "Before the girls were born, I had them down for a local nursery," she says. "Obviously things didn't work out as I expected, so I looked into others. But my local nursery was great from the start. They offered to sign up a staff member to study British Sign Language (BSL) Level 1 and they made it their mission from the beginning to support us completely."

The girls had a fantastic experience at nursery. "The whole nursery learnt to sign the morning song and still signs it today!" Pamela says.

With the girls' complicated additional needs, Pamela also decided to start looking for a primary school early. She began her search when the twins were



two, visiting a school for deaf children. "At that stage Jasmine was newly implanted and wasn't talking as much as she is now," Pamela explains. "She was struggling with walking too. I went to see what the environment was like and was quite overwhelmed. I didn't know the right questions to ask and what I should be looking for."

The family decided to apply to the deaf-specialist school, but as time went on they began to doubt their decision. "My ToD asked if I'd considered mainstream schooling for Jasmine," Pamela says. "Jasmine was speaking a lot more now, so the ToD thought she might benefit from an aural environment.

"I spoke to friends with deaf children who had gone to mainstream and a lot said there was some ignorance and discrimination there. But I wanted Jasmine to be in an environment that would support her signing and speaking.

"I began my research by making calls to schools in the local area – this was during the Covid-19 pandemic, so I couldn't visit them. I found that just because a school has previously had a deaf child, it didn't make it the best. Lots of schools would even try to put me off choosing them and that, while disappointing, helped me to rule them out quickly."

Pamela would check Google Maps to see the location of the school and consider if it was near a noisy road. She would do online tours of schools, read Ofsted reports and speak to other parents who had children there. "But mostly I based it on my conversation with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) at each school," Pamela says. "I'd ask how many days a week they worked, what the acoustics and lighting were like, if anyone signs, how set up they were for a child with balance issues, what the playground was like. I also asked about their approach to challenges, which was quite revealing. The answers were all very interesting, but I was mostly asking to get a feel for their attitude.

"In the end I chose a new local school.

**I wanted a teacher who was excited to teach my children and here she was.**

The SENCO there said 'yes' to everything I asked. When I said to her, 'Do you want to go away and consider if you can accommodate them?' she said, 'No, I know I can.' I wanted a teacher who was supportive and excited to teach my children and here she was."

Although the girls started school amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the school allowed them, along with their nursery teacher, to come and visit before starting, to get familiar with the staff and environment.

"We've had teething problems since the girls started, but the school have never worked with a deaf child before and are learning and invested in making the changes needed," Pamela says. "We have a lot of conversations. For example, I wanted them to start using signing and they're now sending out weekly signs of the week. Jasmine struggled at first with all the noise and stimulation; the teachers weren't always using the radio aid and she found it very tiring and was very quiet. Now, working together with the teachers and teaching assistants to make changes, Jasmine's really grown in confidence.

"My main piece of advice for others looking at schools is not to worry if a school is mainstream or deaf specialist. Find the school that's right for your specific child. Oh, and use the National Deaf Children's Society's 'Choosing a School for Your Deaf Child Checklist'. I didn't know it existed, but it would have been so useful!"

**For more advice on finding a school for your child and to download the checklist, go to [ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool](https://ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool).**

**Find out more about our events about starting school at [ndcs.org.uk/events](https://ndcs.org.uk/events).**



PRIMARY YEARS

## Your autumn checklist

### Starting primary school

We have lots of resources for you to pass to teachers and other school staff to help them support your child's learning at the start, and throughout, primary school. There's information you can share with teachers, special educational needs staff and other education professionals.

[ndcs.org.uk/startingprimary](https://ndcs.org.uk/startingprimary)

### Routine

With the start of the new school year and days becoming shorter, getting your deaf child back into a good routine can be a struggle. We have advice and tips from other parents of deaf children on how to build a good routine at home to combat listening fatigue.

[ndcs.org.uk/routine](https://ndcs.org.uk/routine)

### Emotional health and wellbeing

Maintaining positive mental health for both you and your deaf child is important. Visit our emotional health and wellbeing hub for information on how to support your child's mental health and advice for looking after yourself.

[ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](https://ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing)







# Daniel's campaigning for change

By Abbi Brown

**After beginning his campaign for a GCSE in British Sign Language (BSL) when he was just 12 years old, Daniel has become a prominent campaigner within the deaf community.**



Daniel's story

It was during Deaf Day at City Lit, an adult education college, that Daniel (now 16) first came across the idea of a GCSE in BSL. "We saw BSL awarding body Signature's stall and they were talking about the prospect of a BSL GCSE," remembers Daniel. "I thought, 'I'd love that!' When you look at the GCSE curriculum, you can learn subjects like Spanish, German, French or Welsh. Why not BSL? Deaf people should have the right to learn and achieve a recognised qualification in their own language."

"Signature were facing a lot of barriers. I realised the only way to move this forward would be to get other people behind the idea, to build enough momentum to challenge the educational system at a systemic level. It wasn't that I wanted to start campaigning. I needed to."

For Daniel, the idea of challenging the education system was nothing new. His mum, Ann, has been fighting for his rights in education since he started school.

"Daniel can't benefit from hearing aid or cochlear implant technology," explains Ann. "He's full BSL but attends a

mainstream school."

During primary school, Daniel worked with a retired interpreter to access lessons but, when he moved to secondary school, the local authority struggled to recruit fully-qualified interpreters.

"I explained that his access to the curriculum is only as good as the interpreter working with him," says Ann. "Interpreters are often paid the same salaries as teaching assistants, which doesn't reflect the level of skill and experience that Daniel needs. Our biggest battle was convincing our local authority to pay Daniel's interpreters the kind of salary which would attract qualified interpreters." Ann's hard work paid off, and Daniel now works with two interpreters, both of whom have Level 6 qualifications in BSL.

"They're not just good interpreters, they've also built a fantastic rapport with Daniel," explains Ann. "When you're working closely together at school all day, that's really important."

"Another battle was getting Daniel's Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) in place. It was

**“It wasn't that I wanted to start campaigning. I needed to.”**

written into Daniel's Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan that he needed to attend a school with a deaf resource base and a full-time ToD onsite, but when it was time to transition to high school, there were no deaf resource bases in the area." After more campaigning by Ann, Daniel's high school set up their own deaf resource base, which now benefits lots of other deaf children.

"Our local authority is definitely frightened of my mum!" laughs Daniel. "She's assertive; she gets things done. She's not afraid to stand up for her rights."

Inspired by his mum's success, Daniel raised the question of a BSL GCSE with his local MP and worked with the Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb MP. Daniel then crowdfunded £6,000 to cover the cost of legally challenging the government's failure to provide a GCSE in BSL, on the grounds of discrimination and unlawfulness. In 2018, the legal challenge was successful, and the Department for Education began working with exam boards to create the BSL GCSE.

"I'm used to advocating for Daniel, so it's nice to see him learning to do that for himself," says Ann.

However, despite Daniel's successful challenge, a combination of cabinet reshuffles and the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the development of the new qualification.

"It's really frustrating," says Ann. "It's been four years since our legal challenge. Our MP regularly reminds Parliament about the issue, but every year the GCSE gets delayed, another cohort of deaf young people is missing out on the opportunity to take it."

"It's not just about supporting deaf people," adds Daniel. "The GCSE would also help hearing people, not only to engage with the deaf community, but to develop deaf awareness from an early age. That's why it's so vital."

In the meantime, Daniel's continued to campaign for the rights of BSL users. During the BSL Bill rally outside parliament in January, Daniel stepped up

to the podium and gave a moving speech about deaf identity.

"I think BSL is really important to deaf identity," Daniel explains. "Some younger deaf people, especially those who are more oral, might not have such a strong deaf identity. Attending deaf events makes you feel part of the community."

"Addressing big events like that feels a bit strange because I don't really want that much attention, but it's not about me. The most important thing is raising awareness."

In April, the BSL Bill, which recognises BSL as an official language of Great Britain, was given Royal Assent, passed into law and became the BSL Act. "I was elated!" says Daniel. "I know we need more legislation to be put in place, but it's a step in the right direction. I hope the Act will improve our access to interpreters in healthcare and education, and lead to broader recognition of BSL in society. I think it gives BSL users a stronger footing."



"My advice to other young people who want to start their own campaign would be to have a clear idea of the people you need to target," says Daniel. "For example, my campaign was in the context of education, so I targeted specific people in the education sector."

"My advice to parents is categorically, without a doubt, learn sign language! There have been huge advancements in technology like cochlear implants and hearing aids, but those things aren't a guaranteed solution. I think it's really important that deaf children have the opportunity to learn BSL and recognise their deaf identity."

**Every deaf child is different, and what works for one family may not work for another. For advice about choosing a communication approach for your child, visit [ndcs.org.uk/choosing](https://ndcs.org.uk/choosing).**

**If your child wants to change the world for deaf young people, check out our ChangeMaker groups at [ndcs.org.uk/changemaker](https://ndcs.org.uk/changemaker).**

**For more information on the BSL Act, turn to page 40.**



SECONDARY YEARS

## Your autumn checklist

### Getting involved

If you're a deaf young person, or you have a deaf child, who is interested in making a difference in deaf young people's lives, you can get involved through volunteering with us or adding your voice to our campaigning work.

[ndcs.org.uk/dyp-get-involved](https://ndcs.org.uk/dyp-get-involved)



### Starting secondary school

We have lots of resources for you to pass to teachers and other school or college staff to help them support your child's learning and make them feel happy and included. This includes deaf-friendly teaching for teachers, special educational needs staff and other education professionals in secondary schools.

[ndcs.org.uk/startingsecondary](https://ndcs.org.uk/startingsecondary)



### Going to parties

Parties can be an exciting part of your teen's social life. With Halloween around the corner, and as they get older, they may be invited to them more frequently. It's normal to wonder how your deaf teen will get on with loud music, dark rooms and lots of noise, but they don't have to miss out!

[ndcs.org.uk/teen-parties](https://ndcs.org.uk/teen-parties)







# Embracing every part of Dom's identity

By Kerrina Gray

**Dom (17) had a very tough time growing up, but now he's learnt more about his identity as both a disabled and black man, he's using his voice to empower others.**



Dom's story

After five years of hearing very little, Dom was fitted with a bone-anchored hearing aid (commonly referred to as a BAHA) and a whole new world opened up for him. "It was our miracle," says mum Lyina. "We didn't notice much when Dom first put it on, but when we got to the road outside the hospital, he literally fell to the floor because he could hear the cars for the first time. When we got home, he ran into the garden with his sisters and pointed to all the things he could hear."

Born with axial mesodermal dysplasia, which causes various musculoskeletal deformities, Dom doesn't have a fully-formed outer right ear (known as microtia). "In the first 24 hours of his life he needed surgery," says Lyina. "It was a shocking time for us, the absence of the ear was the most shocking for me because it was visible. We lost quite a few friends because of it. We wouldn't put up with negative comments around him."

"It wasn't until he was two that I noticed he wasn't speaking either. The doctor initially told us there was

nothing we could do about his deafness, but when we were referred to Audiology, they gave him a hearing aid. He started school without any speech and we used Makaton around the house."

Once his BAHA had been fitted, Dom was able to enjoy primary school – a mainstream school which specialised in supporting children with disabilities. "I enjoyed primary school because it was the norm for children to look or be different," Dom says. With the help

**The first thing people see is that I'm black and then that I have no ear. The assumption is I won't achieve anything.**

of speech and language therapy and much hard work at home, slowly Dom was able to speak in full sentences and express his emotions.

Sadly, though, mainstream secondary school was much tougher for Dom. "The first time the bullying happened, someone pulled Dom's BAHA off his head and took it away," Lyina explains. "They'd crush up his lunch, call him names, then it got physical. I called the National Deaf Children's Society for advice, and eventually I got the hospital involved."

Dom has since moved to a new sixth form college and made a fresh start. "I don't want to concentrate on all the negatives," he says. "The new school is great. They've given me a scribe and I find it really useful."

Studying Applied Science at sixth form, Dom also plays the piano and is naturally talented at languages. He's the only one of his five siblings who has learnt any Shona – the Zimbabwean language his parents speak. "It's been really important to me to learn more about my history, especially my African side and the languages they speak," Dom says. "I also enjoy learning about African music, culture and how people migrated from one part of Africa to another. I think researching my family history is a particular passion of mine."

"I was able to visit Cape Town in 2014, where my aunt lives, and that's where my interest partly came from. I loved hearing the local language on the train and noticed it sounded similar to my language of Shona. That's when I did more research into languages and found they all stem from Bantu, which just means 'people'. I find it really interesting."

The month of October marks Black History Month, and Dom wants to use his voice to continue to raise awareness of being black and disabled. "Liverpool, where I live, is a very diverse city and you rarely see racism here," Dom says. "Even my bullying was never to do with race. But when people look at me, I'm black first, then disabled. Those are two parts of me. I do think it's important to speak up because not everyone is as lucky to live in such a diverse place as me. It's important to speak up for deaf people and for black people."

Joining the National Deaf Children's Society's Young People's Advisory Board (YAB) has also helped Dom to learn to use his voice. "I joined the YAB because I want to be a voice for those who are at a double disadvantage like



me, being black and deaf," Dom says. "I got to meet another black deaf young person on the YAB too. It was good being able to build our campaign about deaf awareness in schools using many different voices, ethnicities and types of deafness. I just want to see better treatment for all in social environments like schools, workplaces and hospitals."

Through the YAB, Dom even got to ask Labour party leader Sir Keir Starmer a question. "He actually responded to my question about how we can improve support for those who are doubly disadvantaged – I was shocked," Dom says.

Now Dom has found his voice, he has very big plans for the future. "I've found my voice and I think I now need to be speaking up," Dom says. "The first thing people see is that I'm black and then that I have no ear. The assumption is I won't achieve anything, so people don't bother."

"But I've got a whole life plan for the future. I want to do something in the medical field, I want to give something back. Maybe I'll be a pharmacist or something within paediatrics. I would like to continue campaigning too. One day I might be Health Secretary. I didn't see many faces on the TV that look like me growing up; I'd like to inspire others that if I can do it, then they can too."

**To find out more about identity, go to [ndcs.org.uk/deaf-identity](https://ndcs.org.uk/deaf-identity). To read Dom's question to Sir Keir Starmer, and view his video response, visit [buzz.org.uk/articles/growing-up-black-and-deaf-in-britain](https://buzz.org.uk/articles/growing-up-black-and-deaf-in-britain).**

**If you need support with bullying, go to [ndcs.org.uk/bullyingguides](https://ndcs.org.uk/bullyingguides) and turn back to page 9. You can find out more about microtia at [ndcs.org.uk/microtia](https://ndcs.org.uk/microtia).**



YOUNG PEOPLE 16+

## Your autumn checklist

### ✓ Performing arts

Taking part in performing arts can help deaf young people feel more confident, learn new skills and make friends. They're often a big part of life at school, sixth form and college, and can be a great opportunity for your child to get creative, express themselves and have fun!

[ndcs.org.uk/performing-arts](https://ndcs.org.uk/performing-arts)

### ✓ Dating

Relationships are a big part of teenage life and taking the first step into the dating world can feel both exciting and unnerving for any young person. For deaf young people, there can be additional concerns and challenges to overcome. Our webpage has some tips to support your deaf teen as they start to explore new relationships.

[ndcs.org.uk/dating](https://ndcs.org.uk/dating)

### ✓ Rights at school and college

Deaf young people have the right to receive a full education, meaning that schools and colleges have a responsibility to consider support needs and make reasonable adjustments. You may also be entitled to additional support.

[ndcs.org.uk/school-college-support](https://ndcs.org.uk/school-college-support)





## Deaf works as a freelancer



Photos by Pete Le May

# Ella's acting ambitions

By Jenny Collen

**As a freelancer and an actress, Ella has struggled to get the support she needs from Access to Work. But she's determined nothing will hold her back.**



Ella's story

**"I adore the Globe; it's been my favourite theatre since I was six," Ella says, sitting in front of a wall of books filled with classical texts and Shakespearean plays.** Now, at only 17, she graces the stage as an actress with the Globe's Youth Theatre, a dream she's worked very hard for.

Ella began to lose her hearing when she was 11 and is now profoundly deaf and periodically wears two cochlear implants. While she does use spoken English, Ella prefers to use British Sign Language (BSL). "I wouldn't have told you this when I lost my hearing at 11, but my deafness is the best thing to ever happen to me," Ella says, beaming.

One of the good things that came out of losing her hearing was a new attitude towards her career. "I've always enjoyed my drama lessons, but when I lost my hearing, I realised acting could be a viable career, and my deafness could get me into the industry. The casting pool for deaf actors is much smaller, which means I get more acting opportunities than a hearing person would," Ella says.

Currently in sixth form, Ella intends to fully launch her career in theatre and film once she's left school, and has been busy getting as much experience as she can. "I apply for every single opportunity I see," she says. "I have to turn down some jobs because I wouldn't have time for them, but I still apply so I can get my name out there." Ella has now landed acting gigs on stage, in TV shows and in commercials, and has also taken on freelance work behind the scenes for film productions.

Because she's always taking on new jobs, Ella spends a lot of time educating people about her deafness, which can sometimes be tiring. "I went to South Africa last year to do some shooting for a TV show. It took a long time to communicate with them that I couldn't have South African Sign Language interpreters and that I needed someone who spoke BSL instead. Still, my gratefulness for the opportunity outweighs any tedium that comes from having to re-educate people."

With her cochlear implants, Ella can hear about 70% of what is being said,

**"I don't think they expect disabled people to be freelancers."**

but she still needs BSL interpreters for her work. "Without an interpreter, there's a very limited amount of communication I can comfortably do. Considering I'm always working with other people, it's imperative I have them," she says.

Last year, Ella applied for the Globe's Youth Theatre, a training programme for young performers, but she had a rocky start when she was given very short notice for her first audition. "I let them know I was deaf when I applied, but they had a very quick turnaround time, which meant I couldn't get interpreters for my first audition. It was really awkward and difficult," Ella remembers. "Since then, though, they've been incredibly accommodating. It's been my goal for a

long time to become Artistic Director of the Globe, so this is a nice foot in the door!"

Ella has now acted on the Globe stage in scenes from plays such as 'Richard III' and 'Romeo and Juliet'. Ella uses BSL on stage, which is creatively integrated into the performance for audiences who don't know sign language. Ella's lines are left in BSL without translation during moments when the audience can still understand what is happening. At other times, another character will translate by repeating what her character has said.

She enjoys the advantages she has as a deaf actor who uses BSL. "The people who use speech have to fight to get their voice around the massive 1,500-seat theatre, whereas I just get to chill and sign!" she laughs. "When you're deaf, you have better observational skills. Because you have to read body language to understand the context of a conversation, you naturally get a better sense of how people move and act. As a BSL-user, our brains work in a different way, which is more inclined to performance because BSL is so visual."

Ella uses two BSL interpreters for her work with the Globe. "Not only are they there to literally translate for me what's being said, but they also occasionally

advocate on my behalf," she says. "Having them in the room is a big thing – people can see when they can't keep pace, so the whole ensemble will slow down."

Ella's interpreters are funded through Access to Work (AtW), a government grant scheme which provides personal support for disabled people in paid employment. As a freelancer, Ella has to apply for AtW for most jobs she takes on, which can be a tiring and inaccessible process.

"It's so bureaucratic. The main way to contact the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) is by phone. I'm trying to be independent and not rely on my parents to phone for me, so I'll email instead. But my emails don't get answered for weeks, if at all," Ella says. "Also, English isn't my preferred language. What they need to have is a BSL relay service – that way I know I can get in contact with someone as soon as I phone them."

It can take up to six months for AtW funding to come through, which doesn't make it easy for Ella, who often takes on short-term jobs. "It's an absolute nightmare," she says. "Quite often, I have to go on good faith with a company, who may only be hiring me for a week or two, that they'll get paid

[Continues overleaf >](#)







out to people and asking them for opportunities came from the YAB. They showed us you can ask for things, and what's the worst that will happen?"

Despite her struggles with AtW, Ella has continued to strive towards her goals and is enthusiastic about bringing more awareness of Deaf culture through theatre. To make theatres more inclusive for deaf actors, Ella says, "All we really need to do is recognise that deaf actors can play hearing characters, and also make sure deaf actors know what support will be in place for them."

"You don't want to have to fight every single battle for every single job. So it's just making sure actors know that access will be in place from before auditions even start."

This summer, Ella won the National Theatre's New Views playwriting competition for young people for her play, 'Barrier(s)'. Her play was chosen out of over 400 entries and was performed in London's Dorfman Theatre in July. It includes a mix of BSL and English, with actors from the Deaf community.

"Deafness is a privilege," says Ella. "It's very hard to be deaf, but it's such an asset. I have so much to offer; I have sign language to offer, I have a completely different culture to offer. This industry is starting to catch up and realise that disabled people should be involved in creation, behind and in front of the screen. It's such an incredible time to be disabled right now."

➔ For our information and advice about Access to Work, go to [ndcs.org.uk/accesstowork](https://ndcs.org.uk/accesstowork).

You can also find ways to make drama accessible for young deaf performers at [ndcs.org.uk/performing-arts](https://ndcs.org.uk/performing-arts).



back when my AtW comes through. It would be so much easier for a company to hire a hearing person who doesn't need any special arrangements – that's often what ends up happening."

Due to the nature of the TV and film industry, some of Ella's work is unpaid or works on profit share, which means it doesn't qualify for AtW, and neither does any training or voluntary work. "There have been some opportunities I've had to step away from because they don't have the funds to book me an interpreter, I definitely don't have the funds to provide one, and AtW won't cover it," she says. "The system isn't designed to support disabled freelancers. I don't think they expect disabled people to be freelancers."

But Ella learnt how to advocate for herself at a young age when she had to apply for her own Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan at school to get support for her education. It was a frustrating process, and it took a year to get a full-time communicator put in place, but it taught Ella how to legally stand her ground.

"I went through a really traumatic process when applying for the EHC plan, so when I apply for AtW, I feel angry and ready to fight," says Ella. "At the same time, it's made me well versed in legal standpoints."

"I also developed my campaigning and advocacy skills while on the National Deaf Children's Society's Young People's Advisory Board (YAB). My proactiveness in reaching



**YOUNG PEOPLE: CAREER JOURNEYS**

## Your autumn checklist

### ✔ Communicating at work

It's normal to feel nervous about starting a new job. For a deaf person this can include worries about whether you'll be able to communicate easily with the new people you'll meet. However, there are lots of things your new colleagues and employers can do to help.



[ndcs.org.uk/work-communication](https://ndcs.org.uk/work-communication)

### ✔ Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

PIP is a disability benefit for people aged 16+ in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, whose disability means they find aspects of daily living or getting around difficult. It isn't means-tested and can be claimed regardless of whether they're working, studying or receiving other benefits.



[ndcs.org.uk/PIP](https://ndcs.org.uk/PIP)

### ✔ Support at university

Deciding whether university is the right choice can be more stressful for deaf young people, who may not be aware of the support they can access there. You can reach out to disabled student service staff and disability advisors for help applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

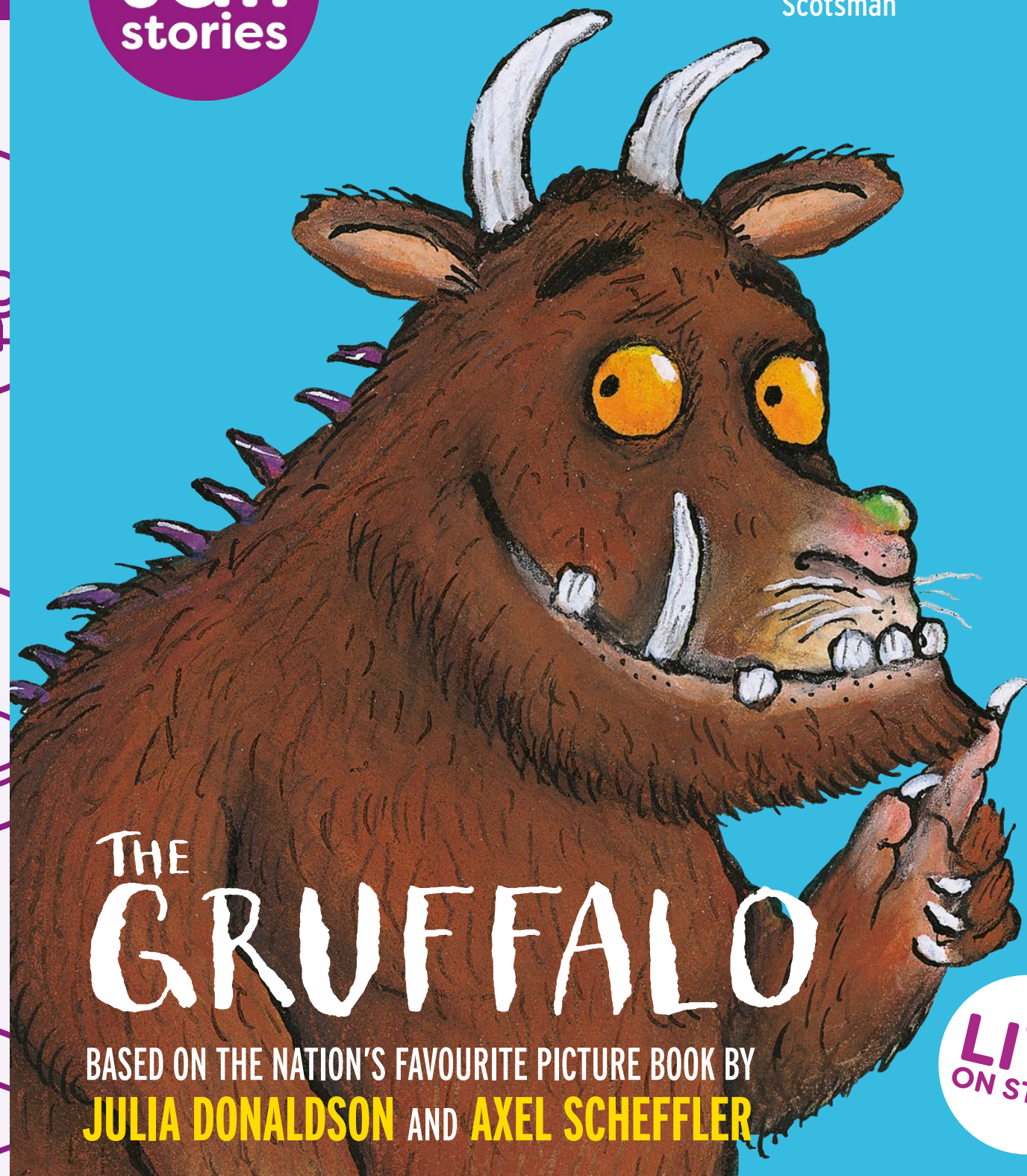


[ndcs.org.uk/university](https://ndcs.org.uk/university)



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The Gruffalo © Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler 1999 - Macmillan Children's Books



# Scribble Club

Tear out these pages, give them to your child and let their creativity run wild!

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

## Colour in



It's time to head back to school! This boy's mum is wearing a radio aid so she can talk to him next to the busy road. What are you most looking forward to this new school year?

## Fingerspelling wordsearch

Bonfire	Firework	Trick	Treat	Pumpkin

A 10x5 grid of hand signs representing the alphabet from A to Z. The signs are arranged in rows and columns, with letters A through Z labeled above each sign.

There are so many fun things to celebrate this autumn, including spooky Halloween on 31 October and firework-filled Bonfire Night on 5 November. Can you find the Halloween and firework-themed words in this fingerspelling wordsearch?





## help my deaf child make friends?

For deaf children, communication barriers can make it difficult to form friendships. Here, three parents and one young person share their advice about what you can do.



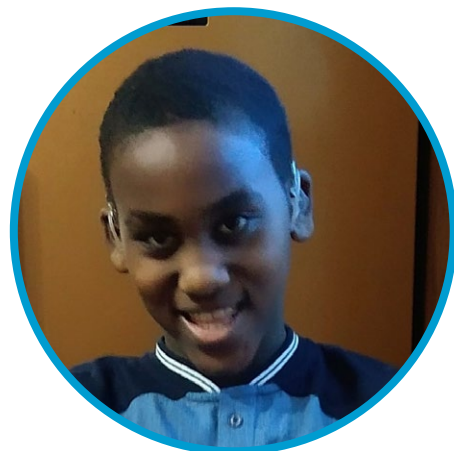
Penny and Jessica

**Oli is dad to Jessica (11) and Penny (8) who are profoundly deaf and wear cochlear implants.**

When Jessica and Penny have had difficulty making friends, it's usually because of other children not understanding that the girls can't hear what's being said in passing. If they're in a large group, they'll miss out on the conversation. They find it better to talk one-on-one, which can affect how many friends they make. We remind the girls that they may misunderstand subtle gestures and cues when they can't hear the context. Once their peers understand their needs, the good ones will accommodate that and repeat things if they don't hear first time round.

We also make sure the girls spend time with other deaf children, because it's important for them to understand deafness is not an outlier. It's something other children have too, and they're just as 'normal' as Jessica and Penny are!

My main advice to other parents would be that, for deaf children, deep friendships may take longer to develop because they need to spend more time alone in a quiet space getting to know each other. Don't expect your child to have loads of friends straightaway! That's OK – particularly when they're in primary school and are growing so quickly. It's not important to have loads of friends, just someone they can confide in and enjoy playing with.



Nuuh

**Hayat is mum to Nuuh (9) who's severely to profoundly deaf and wears one hearing aid and one cochlear implant.**

Nuuh has autism and global developmental delay, but at his specialist playgroup no one thought him any different. He was welcomed and even began playing with other children. When Nuuh started nursery, his only friends were his brothers. Nuuh doesn't speak and, at the time, he barely signed. At school, he began to make friends, but the school didn't run any after-school activities and social gatherings were difficult for him due to sensory overload. Nuuh loves going to the park, the beach

and for walks in the forest, so we tried to find activities he could manage, and we'd invite a neighbour or family member to join us.

What really helped Nuuh to make friends was when he was invited to a birthday party by his classmate. Nuuh enjoyed the party, and we learned the classmate was part of a local group for deaf children and their families, which we joined. They met up once a term and organised deaf-friendly activities, like meeting a signing Santa. I was nervous, but Nuuh coped well, as he could follow what other children were doing. Most of the children signed and the older ones made sure he was included. Nuuh really enjoyed socialising with the group.



**Being deaf isn't a barrier to making new friends.**



To find out more about GB Deaf Swimming, visit [gbdeafswimming.org](http://gbdeafswimming.org).

Applications for our next Pen Pal scheme close on Friday 9 September. Visit [ndcs.org.uk/penpals](http://ndcs.org.uk/penpals) to apply to be a pen pal!



Lucy

**Lucy (17) is profoundly deaf due to CHARGE syndrome and uses British Sign Language (BSL).**

My first school was a mainstream primary school. I felt very isolated. When I was five, my mum decided to move away from all our friends and family so that I could attend a deaf primary school. All the staff and pupils signed, and I was very happy there as I never felt left out.

When I moved to secondary school, my complex medical needs meant I had to attend a special school. I was the only deaf child. I began to feel isolated again, although I felt happier when a deaf girl from my primary school joined my secondary

school and some of my peers started learning to sign.

I signed up for the National Deaf Children's Society's Pen Pal scheme because I wanted to make more deaf friends. The scheme helped me realise that being deaf isn't a barrier to making new friends and building a bond with like-minded people. The confidence I gained through corresponding with my pen pal, Ella, enabled me to take part in the Pen Pal scheme for a second time! After the scheme ended, Ella and I exchanged phone numbers so we could text each other. We also exchanged gifts at Christmas! I hope to meet Ella in person one day.

**Fiona is mum to Angus (11) who's severely deaf and wears hearing aids.**

Recently, Angus made a PowerPoint presentation about his deafness, explaining how best to communicate with him, which made a lot of parents less anxious about inviting him to parties and playdates. I've also found that joining clubs has helped. When Angus was younger, I tried the scatter-gun approach and allowed him to join lots of different clubs, which didn't work as he needs longer than my hearing children to understand what's expected of him at a club and to bond with the coach. We reduced the number of clubs he attends to his two favourite

activities, which are currently rugby and swimming. Now, as he does those several times a week, he has a ready-made circle of friends.

One of the best things we did for Angus was joining the GB Deaf Swimming Club, which was the first time he made deaf friends. It's so good to be with swimmers who all understand each other's disabilities. We go to Deaf Action events, too. He was utterly thrilled when Rose Ayling-Ellis appeared on 'Strictly Come Dancing'. Representation helps to make being deaf seem less different, which I think helps other children and particularly other parents be less wary of us.



Angus



# Education & learning

## Aiming higher

By Martin McLean (Senior Policy Advisor)

**Higher education covers everything from university degrees to apprenticeships. If your child is considering it for next year, read our tips and checklist for a successful move.**

### Higher education is not all about university degrees

Thousands of deaf students go into higher education every year. Often it's assumed this means going to university, however, higher education can be done in local colleges too. In fact, it's defined as any qualification at Level 4 or above (degree courses are at Level 6). There are young people who take a one-year Higher National Certificate course (Level 4) or a two-year Higher National Diploma (Level 5) rather than a three or four-year degree.

If you're the parent or carer of a young person who's unsure about whether university is the right option for them, then it's worth asking them to consider other options too. For example, higher apprenticeships have the advantage of no tuition fees, but there aren't that many of them and they usually require four days per week in a workplace.

### Visiting universities or colleges

Deciding where to study often feels like a huge decision. Your child will need to consider all sorts of factors, like the reputation of the institution, what courses are on offer, if it's rural or urban, the cost of accommodation, and so on.

Deaf young people can have additional things to think about, such as the quality of support on offer and whether they'll have a deaf peer group. When your child visits universities or colleges, they should ask to talk to the disability team to find out about the support they can offer. However, the Equality Act (or Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland) means that a deaf student should be able to attend any institution of their choice, provided they meet the entry requirements.



### What do they put on a UCAS form?

A UCAS form is the form you need to complete to apply for an undergraduate higher education course. There's an option to state if you have a disability on there. A deaf young person doesn't have to disclose their disability, however the advantage of them doing so is that a university or college's disability services are made aware of their application and can then hold discussions about their support.

Many deaf young people turn being deaf into a strength in their personal statement; it can show they've overcome challenges in their life or it's given them a different perspective on things. Legally, a university is not allowed to reject an applicant just because they're deaf.

### Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

DSA is a grant that pays for the additional cost of a disabled student's support, beyond what's normal for a university or college to put in place. For deaf students it can be a lifeline because it can cover things like:

- radio aids
- sign language interpreters
- study support tutors
- trained notetakers
- palantypists.

DSA is capped at £25,575 in England, and there are similar caps in Wales and Northern Ireland. If you're in Scotland, it's possible to be granted a higher cap (£41,040) for communication support costs. If your child's support costs more than that, universities or colleges are expected to cover the remaining costs, provided they're reasonable.

To make the initial application, a young person should visit [gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa](http://gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa).

Medical evidence of their disability will need to be sent in with the application. This can be a letter from your child's audiologist or GP confirming they are deaf and this has a significant impact on their daily life.

After an application has been approved by Student Finance, a young person will be asked to meet a DSA assessor who will ask questions about their needs. The assessor then writes a report with recommendations about how much DSA the young person should get and what it should pay for.

### A deaf young person's checklist

#### September to January: Apply for your place

- Find out about the different types of support you can get in higher education. If you have a Teacher of the Deaf, ask them for their advice.
- Read the websites of different universities and colleges, arrange some visits, and find out which offers the best course and support for you.
- Send in your application through UCAS. The deadline for a university place starting in 2023 is 25 January, unless applying to Oxford or Cambridge or to most courses in Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry.

#### April to June: Apply for DSA

- Obtain medical evidence of your disability before applying for DSA. If it takes a while to come through, it will delay your DSA application.
- Once you have received an offer of a place to study and obtained your medical evidence, apply for DSA if you think you might need it. It's better to apply earlier, so try and get your application in from April.
- After Student Finance approves your application, make an appointment with a DSA assessor using the contact details given to you.

#### June to September: Before starting your course

- Contact your chosen university or college's disability team to discuss any arrangements for your support when studying.
- If you're planning to use communication support, make sure the support provider has a copy of your timetable.



For more information about higher education, visit [ndcs.org.uk/university](http://ndcs.org.uk/university).

### Supporting your child's education this autumn

#### Back to school

Now the summer holidays are over, your child will be settling into a new year at school. We have information on our website which might be useful, whatever stage of education your child is at. This includes writing a personal passport, creating good listening conditions, and how to get additional support if your child is struggling.

[ndcs.org.uk/backtoschool](http://ndcs.org.uk/backtoschool)

#### Deaf awareness

Has your child's teacher taught someone deaf before? If not, it might be helpful to give them some simple deaf awareness tips that they can make sure to use in the classroom and share with the rest of the students too.

[ndcs.org.uk/toptips](http://ndcs.org.uk/toptips)

#### Tiredness

Having to start waking up early again can be a shock to the system for us all! But for deaf children and young people, a long day spent lip-reading or following signed conversations can be exhausting. We have information about how concentration fatigue affects deaf children and tips for dealing with it on our website.

[ndcs.org.uk/tired](http://ndcs.org.uk/tired)





## Single-sided deafness

By Gavin Songer (Assistive Technology Officer)

**Unilateral or single-sided deafness refers to hearing loss in one ear, which can range from mild to profound. There are different types of hearing technology, such as hearing aids and bone conduction hearing devices, which can be helpful for children with unilateral deafness. We explore some of the options...**



### What hearing technology is available for my child?

Various hearing technology is available for children with unilateral deafness, dependent on the type and level of hearing loss in the affected ear.

- **Hearing aids:** These are typically worn behind the ear and their job is to make sounds louder and clearer. They can be fitted for permanent deafness, and can also be used on a temporary basis for children with glue ear. An audiologist will programme the hearing aid to suit the hearing loss in the child's affected ear.

- **CROS (contralateral routing of signal) aids:** These are intended to be used by children with a profound unilateral deafness. They look similar to a hearing aid, but don't amplify sounds. Instead, they consist of two units – a microphone and a receiver. The microphone is worn on the deaf ear and connects to the receiver worn on the hearing ear via wireless technology. The sound signal is sent from the unit on the deaf ear to the receiver worn on the hearing ear, allowing a child to hear the sounds from their deaf ear's side.
- **Bone conduction hearing devices:** These are suitable for a child with unilateral hearing loss or conductive deafness, where the sound can't pass efficiently through the outer and middle ear to the inner ear. This could be due to blockages, glue ear, persistent middle ear infections, microtia (under-development of the outer ear) or atresia (under-development of the ear canal). They work by transmitting sound vibrations through the skull bone to the cochlea of the inner ear. There are various types available, non-implantable and implantable, and they can be worn on a band, attached to the head with a surgically-implanted abutment, or connected magnetically to an internal implant.
- **Personal radio aids:** These are suitable for mild or unilateral hearing loss, and can be used if your child doesn't wear a hearing aid. They are worn like a hearing aid on the hearing ear and wirelessly receive the radio signals from the radio aid transmitter (microphone), sending the sound directly to the child's ear to enable them to hear the speaker more clearly. The microphone can be worn around a speaker's neck, such as a teacher, or plugged into a multimedia device.

➔ For more information about unilateral deafness, visit [ndcs.org.uk/unilateral](https://ndcs.org.uk/unilateral).

### Other technology for unilateral deafness

As well as hearing technology, there's lots of other technology that works with hearing aids, CROS aids and bone conduction hearing devices, that might be useful. It's worth trying these out with your child and seeing if they work for them. Some of the technology mentioned can be trialled for 30 days using our free Technology Test Drive loan service. Go to [ndcs.org.uk/testdrive](https://ndcs.org.uk/testdrive) for more information.

- **Streamers:** These can be useful to use with hearing aids and bone conduction hearing devices. They transmit audio from a range of sources directly to the hearing device. Manufacturers tend to make streamers that work with their own hearing devices so check out the brand's website. Streamers can consist of TV transmitters, wireless microphones and Bluetooth receivers, that can stream audio from compatible technology like your TV or phone.



- **Headphones:** There are mainstream products which may work for your child. Look out for headphones with a separate volume control for each ear. Also, make sure the ear cups are large enough to fit comfortably over any hearing aids worn.



- **Music-Link-D 50/50:** This is essentially a pair of earphones for use with hearing devices. It consists of an earhook that's worn over the ear to transmit audio to the hearing aid or cochlear implant using its integrated telecoil program. The other earpiece is a standard earphone that is put into the hearing ear. The device is simply plugged into any 3.5mm audio jack to listen to sounds and music from a phone, tablet, or other multimedia device.



### Tina, mum to Charlie (11), shares her son's experience of using technology with a single-sided hearing loss.

"Charlie was born with left-sided microtia atresia and wears a Cochlear BAH6 [a type of bone conduction hearing device] to help him hear. Charlie thinks the best thing about having the BAH6 is that it gives him so much more hearing than if he didn't have it. On the flip side, the only negative he can think of is that it's quite noticeable on his head.

Charlie enjoys connecting his BAH6 to his phone or iPad which he uses to stream music and videos. He also has a Cochlear Mini Mic 2+ [a type of streamer] that connects to his BAH6, which comes in handy when we're in noisy places or if Charlie is sat in the back of our seven-seater car! Also, Charlie's teacher sometimes wears his Mini Mic in the classroom."

➔ Microtia UK supports those born with microtia and their families. Go to [microtiauk.org](https://microtiauk.org) to find out more about their work.





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



Darcie-Jane

### Angelique's Hearing Bands

Available from [angeliqueshearingbands.co.uk](http://angeliqueshearingbands.co.uk)  
Price: £25

0 to 4



My two-year-old daughter Darcie-Jane is profoundly deaf and has had cochlear implants fitted for just over a year now. We have always kept the processors on safely by using headbands.

We ordered a headband from Angelique in a pattern called 'rainbows and unicorns,' as it looked really pretty. It arrived two or three days later, and I was very happy with how it looked. The

material felt nice, soft and comfortable. Darcie-Jane took it straight off me and tried to put it on herself which she's never done before, so that was a great start!

The headband has an adjustable strap at the back which I've never come across before on a band. It's a perfect add-on as it means we can adjust the headband as Darcie-Jane grows. The headband also has little hoops to hold the wires to the

processor. We don't use these, but I can imagine they'd be useful for other children.

Angela, the lady who dealt with our order, was very helpful and gave me tips on how to take measurements to make sure we got a perfect fit.

**Cherie-Jane is mum to Darcie-Jane (2) who's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**

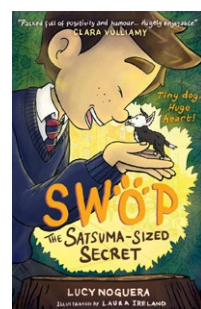


Martha

### 'Swop the Satsuma-Sized Secret'

By Lucy Noguera  
Available from bookstores  
Price: £6.99 RRP

5 to 10



'Swop the Satsuma-Sized Secret' is about Ernie, a boy who's just moved from the countryside to the city. He finds a tiny dog and names him Swop. When Ernie has his first day at school, Swop comes with him without Ernie knowing. Then a boy in his class discovers his secret about this creature. They have a long day and get through it.

The book is good for boys and girls, but I think deaf children would be especially happy with it because there is a character named Ivy (Ernie's sister) who is deaf. When I read the first chapter, I felt curious and excited because I love animals in books,

especially dogs, and a tiny one made it even better. It was easy to read by myself because I was engaged when I was reading it. I know how Ernie feels trying to keep a secret, but things keep happening that make it really tricky! I also related to Ivy because she wears hearing aids like me.

'Swop the Satsuma-Sized Secret' reminded me of another book I read recently called 'Noah's Gold' by Frank Cottrell-Boyce. They're both about adventure and trying not to cause trouble. It also reminded me of 'A Dog So Small' by Philippa Pearce, a book my mummy read to me at bedtime.

'Swop the Satsuma-Sized Secret' definitely made me think about deafness because Ernie used signals to communicate with Swop. I liked that there were several illustrations with Ivy using sign language, and there's a fingerspelling alphabet at the end. The book helped me to see what it feels like to start a new school. I'd buy it because I'm deaf and I want to read stuff about deafness. I'd recommend it to a friend because it's a fun adventure about a boy and his tiny dog, and most of my friends love dogs!

**Martha (10) is moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids.**

### 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



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



Ollie

### Phonak ComPilot II Streamer

The ComPilot II is only compatible with Phonak Venture and Belong hearing aids. To find out more about streamers for other types of hearing technology, visit [ndcs.org.uk/streamers](http://ndcs.org.uk/streamers).

Price: Around £200 including VAT  
Available to try for free for up to 60 days through our Borrow to Buy scheme at [ndcs.org.uk/borrow-to-buy](http://ndcs.org.uk/borrow-to-buy).

0 to 4

5 to 10

11 to 14

15 to 18

19 to 25

The ComPilot II is an advanced Bluetooth system designed for people who wear Phonak hearing aids. You put the ComPilot II around your neck, there's a switch where you can turn it on and off. If you turn it on or off, there should be a voice saying, "ComPilot on/off," through the user's hearing aids. I have used the ComPilot for nearly two years.

There are several advantages that I think make the ComPilot II so attractive for deaf people. Firstly, the technology has the ability to connect to multiple devices, such as tablets, phones, televisions and game consoles. Mine came with a TV base unit (this can be

purchased separately) that allows you to charge it and connect it to the TV. The battery can last for several hours. Another positive is that you can control the volume of what you're listening to from the ComPilot itself. Finally, you can test the sound by turning it on while pressing the middle button.

In my opinion, there are very few disadvantages. The only thing I can suggest is that you cannot listen to multiple devices at the same time; for example, I can't talk on the phone and play my video games at the same time. Also, if you don't know how to manage the volume, it can be very loud.

I would recommend the ComPilot II to anyone with Phonak hearing aids. For me personally, this device has really helped me over the past couple of years. I can listen to the TV and my iPad without the loud sound annoying my family. As a hearing-impaired young person, I think technology is really important and using it has been so much easier with the ComPilot II. I think we're edging near the next generation for deaf technology. I hope that this review will encourage you to purchase the ComPilot II.

**Ollie (10) has a severe hearing loss and wears hearing aids.**



## What's new

### Child Disability Payment (Scotland)

### Deaf-friendly Standard

### 'Meningitis and Childhood Deafness'

#### What type of information is it?

A webpage explaining the new disability benefit for children in Scotland at [ndcs.org.uk/child-disability-payment](https://ndcs.org.uk/child-disability-payment).

#### Who's it for?

Parents of deaf children who are thinking about applying for disability benefits in Scotland.

#### What's it about?

It outlines what Child Disability Payment is, how deaf children and their families may be eligible, and how to apply for it.

#### You might also like:

This information is part of a new section of the website on the new disability benefits available for deaf children, young people and their families in Scotland at [ndcs.org.uk/benefits-scotland](https://ndcs.org.uk/benefits-scotland).

#### What type of information is it?

A webpage of updated information on our Deaf-friendly Standard at [ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlystandard](https://ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlystandard).

#### Who's it for?

Anyone to share with the organisations that they come into contact with, such as activity providers and entertainment venues, to help them be as inclusive as they can for deaf children and young people.

#### What's it about?

The Deaf-friendly Standard is a set of training, policy reviews, practices and resources created to help organisations be inclusive, accessible and meet legislation.

#### You might also like:

If you'd also like to share information on how to be deaf-friendly with friends and family, we have lots of tips on deaf awareness and communication at [ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly](https://ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly).

#### What type of information is it?

An update to our information booklet about deafness following meningitis, written in collaboration with Meningitis Now. You can download and print it from [ndcs.org.uk/meningitis-and-childhood-deafness](https://ndcs.org.uk/meningitis-and-childhood-deafness).

#### Who's it for?

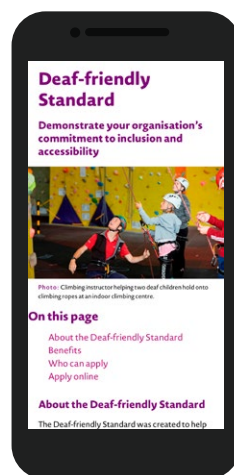
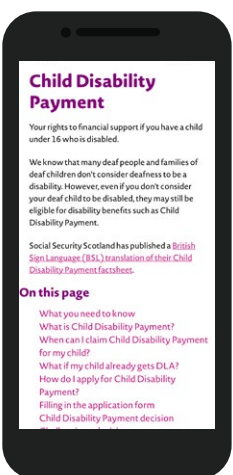
Parents of children who have had meningitis. Deafness is the most common after-effect of meningitis.

#### What's it about?

It provides information on the hearing tests carried out following meningitis, the effects of any deafness, what can be done to help, and the support that's available. It also includes information about common side effects of meningitis, including tinnitus and difficulties with balance.

#### You might also like:

Our webpage about meningitis and childhood deafness. You can access this at [ndcs.org.uk/meningitis](https://ndcs.org.uk/meningitis).



## Helpline



Freephone 0808 800 8880  
[helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk)  
[www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/helpline)



**I'm a single dad and my 15-year-old daughter was diagnosed with unilateral microtia and a moderate hearing loss as a baby. Recently, she's started to feel self-conscious about the appearance of her right ear and has been talking a lot about cosmetic surgery. I'd really like us both to be as informed as possible so I can best support her in making a decision.**

We know that for many parents and young people, discussing and making decisions about whether to undergo reconstructive surgery for microtia can be a difficult and anxiety-provoking time.

Deciding on whether to have reconstructive surgery to change the way their ear looks is a very personal choice for your child, and it's important to understand all the options available. Ultimately, there isn't a right or wrong choice. But it's always important to take time to consider any surgery carefully and not to feel pressured by others.

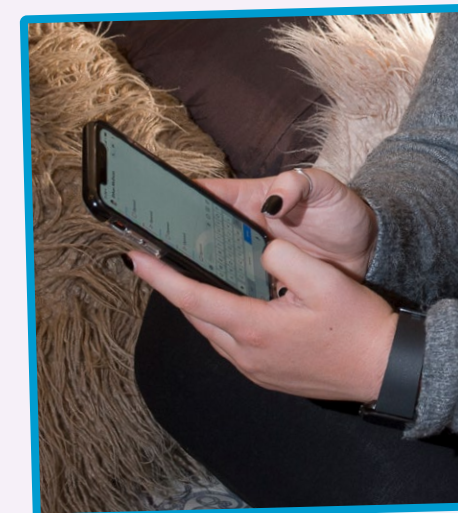
Surgery is not essential, and many older children and adults with microtia choose to embrace their uniqueness. Others may decide surgery is the best option for them. There are different options for young people with microtia wanting to change the way their ear looks. Find out more in our guide at [ndcs.org.uk/microtia](https://ndcs.org.uk/microtia).

It's also important to be aware that there are always risks with surgery and you should understand the expected

outcome before you agree to go ahead. Your daughter's audiologist or GP would be able to make a referral to discuss this with a specialist surgeon. There's a list of questions to ask them on page 8 of our factsheet (linked previously), which can help you and your daughter make an informed choice.

It may take your daughter some time to make a decision. Our Buzz website is full of content created by deaf young people sharing their experiences and talking about their deafness at [buzz.org.uk/microtia](https://buzz.org.uk/microtia). There are also helpful tips for young people who are feeling self-conscious at [buzz.org.uk/articles/feeling-self-conscious-microtia](https://buzz.org.uk/articles/feeling-self-conscious-microtia), and for those who are considering where to have surgery at [buzz.org.uk/articles/surgery-for-microtia](https://buzz.org.uk/articles/surgery-for-microtia).

It can be invaluable for parents and children to connect with others about their experiences too. Microtia UK supports families affected by microtia and provides evidence-based information. Microtia Mingle UK is an




online support group (on Facebook) for families and adults affected by microtia. Changing Faces is a charity for people whose faces or bodies look different to other people's. They have a webpage which includes lots of great tips for feeling comfortable and building confidence.

If you would like to discuss things further, please contact our 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](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community) and create a new account.

 We have lots more information booklets and factsheets available to download on our website. Go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/resources](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/resources) to find out more.



Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Keith, a grandparent, shares his thoughts.

### What does being a grandparent mean to you?

It has been our pleasure to give as much practical and emotional support as we can to my two profoundly deaf grandsons, Thomas (21) and James (18), and to my son and daughter-in-law. We were absolutely devastated when we first found out Thomas was deaf, we had so many questions and were so unsure of the future. But as they've grown, if it's possible, I feel even prouder of them both.

### What's been your favourite thing about being a grandparent to a deaf child?

So many lovely memories come to mind, but seeing the difficulties and obstacles they've personally overcome, however large or small, has been very special and inspiring. We've had a lot of fun together too.

### What's been the hardest thing?

Undoubtedly, how deafness is misunderstood. Our personal low moment came at the transition from primary to secondary school when we lost a Tribunal. It impacted upon us all severely but we came together as a family and found a way through.

### How did you learn more about deafness?

We found out all the information we could; the National Deaf Children's Society was invaluable, but we also joined local deaf groups, met other families, visited a deaf primary school, threw ourselves into the boys' social activities, attended audiology appointments and learnt to sign.

### How do you support your child with his children's deafness?

My son and daughter-in-law are working parents so there's very little we've not done, especially once we retired. We've supported them practically with the school runs and babysitting. But also through being there for our child, giving him encouragement and support.

### What advice do you have for grandparents who can't always be around?

We used to live further away, so understand it can be difficult. Coordinating our diaries helped us make the best use of our time, but it was lovely to use Skype to keep close. My son was also very good at making short videos to keep us up to date.

When the boys were young, we were all working. We were mindful that parents have a lot of admin to do so we'd have the boys at the weekends so their parents could concentrate on completing a Disability Living Allowance (DLA) form, for example. We also recognised there were times when they didn't need our help and wanted their own space.

### What top tips do you have for other grandparents of deaf children?

Get all the information you need to help make informed decisions, support your own child as well as your grandchild, and always involve siblings and wider family. Where you can, attend your grandchild's audiology appointments as you'll get a great sense of how they're progressing. Also play lots of games with your grandchildren – it'll help you develop that important bond.



Keith

“Seeing the difficulties and obstacles they've personally overcome has been very special and inspiring.”

→ We have more information for grandparents, and tips from other grandparents, at [ndcs.org.uk/grandparents](https://ndcs.org.uk/grandparents).

Did you know grandparents are welcome at all of our family events? You can join with or without your family and get the same information and support. Visit [ndcs.org.uk/events](https://ndcs.org.uk/events) to find out more.

Words: Kerrina Gray

# Busting the myth around music

As a self-confessed noisy person, Luke has always loved drumming. And Sheffield Deaf Children's Society have been on hand throughout his life to help nurture that passion.



Luke (19) was born with Enlarged Vestibular Aqueduct (EVA), a progressive hearing loss that deteriorates each year. He's now profoundly deaf in one ear. He currently plays the drums for a hard rock/metal band called Atomic Samurai.

### What adaptations do you make in order to play the drums?

My inspiration stems from the profoundly deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie; she's able to almost feel the music. She uses that to keep her beat to play along to. I do that too, but with our bass player. He's plugged into the PA system and the speakers are behind my drum kit, allowing me to feel the bass through the floor and in my legs.

### What would you say to anyone who believes music isn't for deaf children and young people?

What on earth gives you that impression? If you can see your child getting into music, encourage it. Never let anyone, especially hearing people, say you can't do it.



### How has being part of Sheffield Deaf Children's Society helped your love of music?

When I joined the band, they wanted to support me in any way possible and raised money to buy me a set of cases for my drum kit. To say thank you, I wanted to bring some of my drums and other instruments in for the kids to have a music lesson. Explaining to them how to play, it wasn't as easy as you think!

### What advice do you have for other deaf children and young people who are interested in music?

One thing I've always said is never let a disability get you down. I haven't, and I don't believe anybody should. I don't think it matters what disability you have. I'd also say give anything a go. Professional musicians have always said music is the one universal language we can all understand, and I agree with that.

### Luke's mum Claire, a committee member at Sheffield Deaf Children's Society adds:

Music has brought Luke friends and good times, we think music enhances anybody's life. Why would people think that deaf kids wouldn't want to enjoy music?

→ To find out more about accessing music, go to [ndcs.org.uk/musical-instruments](https://ndcs.org.uk/musical-instruments).

To find a group in your area, check out our map at [ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup](https://ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup). Groups run online activities and keep in touch with each other via Facebook as well as arranging activities and events.

Whether you want to join a group, become a volunteer or even set up your own group, we're here to help. If you'd like to know more, get in touch with the team on [connecting.families@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:connecting.families@ndcs.org.uk).

Words: Annie Bell



# Award-Winning Deaf Academy

Now open for applications for 2023/24

We are a day and residential provision purposely designed to maximise the learning of Deaf young people with additional needs, catering for ages up to 25 in the beautiful seaside town of Exmouth, Devon.

If you're looking for the next steps for your young person, why not visit us, explore our campus and discover how we **know and grow every learner**.



Scan the QR code or search [www.thedeafacademy.ac.uk](http://www.thedeafacademy.ac.uk)  
01395 203130



# Roadshow

## On the road to a new school

Starting secondary school is an exciting time: new subjects, new teachers and the chance to make lots of new friends. But change can be daunting as well, and your child might have lots of questions about what this new stage in their life may look like.



When your child starts a new school, it might be the perfect time to book a Roadshow visit. Our Roadshow workshops and events give young people the opportunity to talk to deaf peers about the changes ahead, learn about the technology, and discuss their deaf identity. Our Roadshow team can visit your child's school to talk to the group in-person or digitally via an online visit.

**Faye (11), who is deaf, and her mum Louise explain why the Roadshow helped her.**

"Faye came away from the Roadshow visit feeling quite buoyant and happy. She's never met any other kids who are deaf or hard of hearing and she really enjoyed meeting them today."

Faye adds: "It made a difference to me. I'm more confident about going to my new school now."

**Maise (11), who is deaf, found it a good time to have a visit.**

"I liked hearing that I wasn't the only person nervous about starting big school."

**Cara, Head of Service at Stockport Sensory Service, was pleased she organised a visit.**

"These sessions are so good for our deaf students! The children were able to meet different deaf adult role models who are well-equipped to support them to explore issues in the workshop, issues that cannot be discussed in the same way without a deaf lived experience. The Roadshow team was quickly able to tune into the varying needs of the students and adapt accordingly. It kept their attention and delivered the session with good humour."



### Here are five last-minute top tips for preparing for the move to secondary school.

1. Have a chat with your child about some of the differences between their primary school and their new secondary school.
2. Practise the journey to school.
3. Get your child to practise with you how to tell people about their deafness, and how to ask for the adjustments they need.
4. Think of ways you can give your child new independence. This might be as simple as trying out a vibrating alarm clock so they can wake themselves up in the morning.
5. Once your child has been introduced to their new teachers, make sure they know who each teacher is and who they should go to if they have any questions or problems at school.

➔ If you'd like to find out more about our workshops, whether digital or in-person, or register your interest, visit our website [ndcs.org.uk/roadshow](http://ndcs.org.uk/roadshow) or email us on [roadshow@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:roadshow@ndcs.org.uk).

For more advice about preparing for secondary school, go to [ndcs.org.uk/preparingforsecondary](http://ndcs.org.uk/preparingforsecondary).

# Doncaster School for the Deaf

We are a small, friendly school for Deaf pupils aged 4 to 19 years based in Doncaster, South Yorkshire.

Our pupils are taught in small classes led by qualified Teachers of the Deaf and specialist teaching support staff, who have excellent signing skills. High quality teaching accelerates pupil progress and they thrive in this environment.

- Pupils achieve a range of qualifications, including GCSEs, and transition onto further education
- Our residence is consistently recognised by Ofsted as outstanding
- We teach the national curriculum, BSL and Deaf Studies
- We have an experienced team of Speech and Language Therapists, an Audiologist, Nurse and an Occupational Therapist



**Doncaster School for the Deaf**  
Established 1829

Leger Way, Doncaster DN2 6AY

e [secretary@ddt-deaf.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ddt-deaf.org.uk) | w [www.deaf-school.org.uk](http://www.deaf-school.org.uk) | t 01302 386 733





## Changing the law through campaigning

Earlier this year we celebrated some fantastic news. The British Sign Language (BSL) Bill passed into law, making sign language an official language of Great Britain!

The BSL Bill was Rosie Cooper MP's Private Member's Bill, which she launched back in June 2021. A 'Bill' is a proposal for a new law. Most Bills are introduced by government ministers. When a Bill is launched by an MP or a Lord who's not a minister, it's called a Private Member's Bill. Private Member's Bills are much less likely to be successful than Bills introduced by the Government. They have to go through the same stages of approval in parliament, but they're given less time for this to happen. And because they're not introduced by a minister, they're often not supported by the Government. Only a very small number of Private Member's Bills make it into law, which makes the passing of the BSL Bill even more incredible!

### So why was the BSL Bill successful?

The BSL Bill has been a long time coming – almost 20 years in the making! Sign language was recognised as a language in its own right in 2003, but it didn't have any legal protection, like Welsh has, for example. So why did it pass now?

- Rosie Cooper MP's parents are both profoundly deaf and she used BSL growing up. Her personal experiences and passion for this Bill really shone through.
- The Bill gathered lots of support from the Deaf community and many deaf charities and organisations. The #BSLActNow campaign quickly gained momentum, and there was even a rally outside parliament.
- The bill was given support from a government minister. This is unusual for a Private Member's Bill, but Chloe Smith MP, the Minister for Disabled People, publicly supported the Bill and helped it pass.
- Recently there's been more public interest in BSL. During the pandemic, the Where is the Interpreter? campaign, a campaign asking for BSL interpretation of the Government's daily Covid-19 briefings, really raised the profile of sign language.
- The Rose Effect! A few months after the Bill's launch, Rose Ayling-Ellis took part in, and won, 'Strictly Come Dancing', and spread deaf awareness across the nation. She was one of the Bill's most influential supporters.

**In April 2022 the BSL Bill gained Royal Assent and became the BSL Act, making British Sign Language an official language of Great Britain.**

This new law means that the Government will have to do more to promote and use sign language, and report on how they do this. They will also have to create a board of sign language users to advise them.



### So, what's next?

The BSL Act is a fantastic step forward in equality – but there's more to be done. The Government has agreed to a GCSE in BSL and this is nearly ready for public consultation. We hope that it'll be available in schools as soon as possible. To find out more about the campaign for the BSL GCSE, turn back to page 16 to read Daniel's story.

In England, the Government's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) review is looking at changing support for disabled children. This must include solutions for deaf children, and more money for specialist staff, like Teachers of the Deaf, so that every deaf child gets the tailored, individual support they need.

Do you want to get involved in campaigns that change deaf children's lives? Visit [ndcs.org.uk/campaigns](https://ndcs.org.uk/campaigns) to find out more about our current projects.



"This is another step closer to making a real difference in the lives of every deaf person in the country. I grew up with sign language as my first language, both my parents were profoundly deaf, so I saw first-hand the unbelievable obstacles that deaf people face in everyday life. This legislation is a huge first step towards equal access to public services for anyone that relies on sign language."

**Rosie Cooper MP**



"The Bill is important because for such a long time we've had difficulties with access. For example, I've gone to hospital and asked them to book an interpreter, only for them to forget and then I've had to rely on my family, which I don't want to do. It's 2022 and the UK is still not accessible!"

**Jazzy, deaf young person**



"I hope that this will make our lives easier in future. I don't want to feel like a burden, for example, when I'm going to the doctor or going to university. People shouldn't book interpreters as an afterthought. It shouldn't be a problem. It should be smooth."

**Lucy, deaf young person**







Ayaan

## Campaigning for the right support

Shikha, mum to Ayaan (4), who has profound hearing loss, attended our Introduction to Campaigning event to learn how she can help other families advocate for the support and education that's right for their child.

"At the age of three, Ayaan couldn't tell me if he felt poorly, disliked something, or was scared. We wanted him to be in a British Sign Language-rich environment to begin communicating his basic needs, and felt he would be best placed in a school with deaf, signing peers. However, despite reports from Ayaan's audiology team, his Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) was pushing us into mainstream settings. As much as I'd have loved my son to be integrated into a mainstream setting, it wasn't right for him.

My experience with our local council and Ayaan's ToD has been difficult and stressful. On our Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan journey, I met other parents from our county having the same problems, stresses and anxieties. While trying to educate myself, I came across the Introduction to Campaigning event. I wanted to understand how I could help other families struggling to access the right support and education for their child. Not all parents can stay up until 3am every night researching their rights! I wanted to learn about starting a campaign, brainstorming an idea, and how to achieve the desired outcome.

At the event, we introduced ourselves, received information from specialists and discussed a scenario in groups. Working

on scenarios was the most useful part because you use your own experiences and the information you've just been given to resolve the issue presented. Hearing other people's experiences made me realise I'm not just one parent – I'm part of a collective voice hoping to make some positive changes.

I would recommend this event to any parent. Not only do you learn from specialists, but you can learn from the experiences of other parents in a similar situation to you. Having spent the past two years in and out of lockdowns not being able to meet other families with deaf children, and feeling like I was in it alone, the National Deaf Children's Society and its events have been a lifeline."

**"I'm not just one parent – I'm part of a collective voice, hoping to make some positive changes."**

## Katie gets creative with clay

Katie (10), who is severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids, took part in our online Clay Workshop with deaf artist Vicky Barber-Crimes, making a clay face pot complete with its own hearing aids.

"I really like craft activities and wanted to give this workshop a try as I thought making something with clay would be fun. I was very nervous before the workshop, and worried that it would be busy. I was also unsure what exactly we were going to make.

The hosts made sure we knew what to do and did an ice-breaker at the beginning to help us warm up. Even though I was nervous, I managed to introduce myself and this helped me to feel better and more relaxed. There was a small group of 10 of us in the call, including me. We were all on mute so that only one person spoke at a time and you could hear the person who was talking. They had captions, and someone signing if you use British Sign Language too. They sent all the materials we needed in advance.

**"It was so much fun and was even better than I expected."**

My favourite part was making the pot face and putting hearing aids on it. I learned a new skill, and I was able to help my mum make her own pot with the techniques I learnt. I would recommend joining in one of these workshops if you get the chance – it was so much fun, and even better than I expected!"

**Katie's mum Sarah saw the positive impact the event had on her:**

"Katie can be very anxious so this event helped with her confidence. She really enjoyed sharing what she had learnt with me and helping me to make my own pot. I would recommend these sessions even if you're not tech-aware as the National Deaf Children's Society staff can help. It was very easy to access and the subtitles really helped Katie."

**Arran, the Clay Workshop leader added:**

"We understand that joining an event for the first time and meeting new people can be nerve-wracking. If your child is concerned, get in touch with us and we can make a plan to help them feel confident during the event!"



Katie

## 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.

- Your Deaf Identity
- Dealing with Challenges at School (Primary)
- Dealing with Challenges at School (Secondary)
- Scotland Big Day Out

If you'd like to tell us your thoughts or have an idea for an event you would like us to offer, please email [ypp@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:ypp@ndcs.org.uk).

**➔ All of our events are free, with closed captioning online and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. We can also organise other language interpreters if necessary. Places are limited, so booking is essential. For full details of our events and to book your place, visit [ndcs.org.uk/events](http://ndcs.org.uk/events) or call our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880.**





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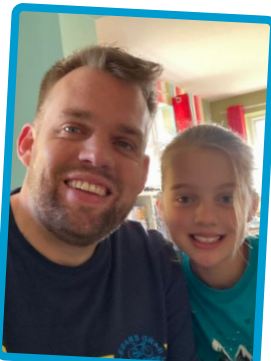
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# Fundraising

## New ways to fundraise

From running multiple marathons to knitting farmyard animals, there are so many ways to raise money for the National Deaf Children's Society, allowing us to continue to make a difference to the lives of deaf children.



### 400 before 40!

In just 87 days, Paul Baker completed 400 miles of cycling and running in time for his 40th birthday, raising over £800.

"The challenge came about after several comments regarding my lack of fitness. Some from close friends and family I could handle, but when complete strangers commented, I felt compelled to do something!

"We knew my daughter Daisy had an issue with her hearing when she was a few weeks old. She got her first hearing aids just after her first birthday. After a steady deterioration in her hearing, the decision was made for her to have cochlear implants fitted. She had her operation in May 2021 and, after a very tough few months, her incredible determination means that we can now say she's hearing better than ever!

"Throughout this process, the support and resources provided by the National Deaf Children's Society have been invaluable. Their vision is for a world without barriers for every deaf child and this is very much a vision that we share for Daisy. This inspired me to fundraise."

doesn't let his hearing define him. His decorated cochlear implant band is his very own superpower and the information supplied to us, as a family, from the National Deaf Children's Society has been incredible.

"On the day, the encouragement shown by everyone taking part, speaking to other runners as you go, and hearing supporters shout your name spurred me on! The atmosphere and support was my favourite part, not forgetting the London sights."

### A multiple marathon mission

Alun Bradshaw completed an epic 156-mile multiple marathon challenge, that's the equivalent of six full marathons in five days! He raised over £5,000.

"I was inspired by my daughter, Darcey, who was identified as deaf at pre-school. After we struggled to encourage her to wear her hearing aids and view them positively, we were directed to the National Deaf Children's Society for support. They've been a valuable source of information since Darcey was diagnosed and, more recently, offered her a place on a weekend away where she was able to meet other deaf children. She now doesn't feel like the odd one out. She's much more confident about wearing hearing aids and more accepting of herself. For us as parents, it's been amazing to see her achieve these things.

"With the challenge, I wanted to push my limits as an athlete and raise lots of money for this great charity because of the support they've given us as a family. It felt wonderful to run down to the finishing point and complete the challenge."



### Knitting across the finish line

Chloe Haines took on the challenge of running the London Landmarks half marathon as part of #teamNDCS. She raised £1,171 with her secret fundraising weapon – knitting Easter chicks, bunnies and Christmas snowmen to sell.

"I was inspired by my little brother Oscar, who has hearing loss. He has a fighting spirit and



**➔ If you feel inspired to fundraise for us, get in touch with our Community Fundraising team by emailing [community.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:community.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk) and we will support you every step of the way.**



# 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 work for Greater Manchester Police because...

I liked the challenge of turning a role, which at first seemed impossible because of communication barriers, into something positive.

I've worked at Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for 13 years, won three awards and am in my fourth post, as personal assistant to police officers and inspectors. Two of my main responsibilities are taking minutes in meetings and, through my interpreter, communicating on the phone.

I'm profoundly deaf and wear hearing aids. With funding from Access to Work, I have interpreters. I also use captions and a microphone with my laptop for video meetings. I use the transcription facility on Microsoft Teams, which my interpreter edits for me before I send out messages to others who I work with.

During my childhood, most hearing people weren't confident that I'd achieve much. But, by believing in my abilities and telling myself that I can do it rather than that I can't, I've succeeded.

A lot of barriers are down to communication and negativity from the hearing community, but I was determined to overcome these barriers and educate people.

I've completed 12 marathons and my running club, Sandbach Striders, has been a great help to me. I've also done seven open water swims.

If I don't succeed at first, I keep going till I get there.

**John Morris**



## I'm a textile artist and craft maker because...

My passion is my art. I'm also a diversity relationship manager with Arts Council England, and a creative consultant.

I've been deaf since I was four, from meningitis, so I've had to be assertive throughout my career to be on an equal footing with my hearing peers. I feel strongly about making a difference and breaking down barriers.

After I graduated from my Textiles course, I became a creative consultant to make the pathways into arts and crafts more open than they'd been for me, and to bring deaf and hearing people together in a creative dialogue.

At work, I use interpreters and notetakers, Zoom and FaceTime. I put in extra time for planning, to make sure that events and meetings are accessible, without last-minute changes.

My achievements include receiving an MBE, being nominated for East Sussex Woman of the Year 2022, my Clore Fellowship Leadership 2019/20, and receiving an art residency in Qatar. Don't be afraid to have a dream. The path to success won't always be straightforward but treat rejections as a positive learning experience. With the support of a good mentor, you can achieve anything.

**Omeima Mudawi-Rowlings**



## I'm an author and creative writing teacher because...

I absolutely love to read and write, and I learn so much from teaching others too. I write literary fiction and have had two novels published, along with short stories and poems. I also teach creative writing.

My daily routine alternates between long periods of writing at home and busy public events. Each publication comes with book launches, book tours, talks and interviews.

I'm moderately to severely deaf and wear hearing aids. My deafness is not a barrier to getting published, but it does affect the other aspects of my job. Dealing with the hearing public can be difficult sometimes. I've started putting my access requirements in my contract for events I'm asked to attend, so that I get the support I need. In the literary world, I'd like to see more competitions, publishers and festivals open to literature that has been composed and presented in sign language.

I'm really proud to have won The Barbellion Prize for my second novel 'What Willow Says', published by Epoque press in 2021. For any deaf young people who want to become authors, my advice is to keep on writing. And keep going if your writing is rejected – everything you write is good practice.

**Lynn Buckle**



roger

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

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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

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To find out more please email [sales@phonak.co.uk](mailto:sales@phonak.co.uk) or visit [www.phonak.co.uk](http://www.phonak.co.uk)

Sky Marvel offers:



Clear, rich sound



Connects to smartphones, Roger™ mics and more



Rechargeable



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life is on

Be inspired by other deaf people at work in our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign video at [ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere](http://ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere).

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

Words: Danielle Simpson and Lizzie Riordan



# OUR BRAND-NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL OPENS SEPTEMBER 2022



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