



**Overcoming  
barriers**

Our strategy  
for 2017-2022

**We are the National Deaf Children's Society, the leading charity for deaf children.**





## Together we will overcome barriers

**Our strategy will change deaf children and young people's lives. It's ambitious and bold, and will set us on an exciting path for the next five years.**

Since we were founded more than 70 years ago, society has come a long way. But deaf children are still falling behind at school. They are still being let down by vital services. And they still don't have the same opportunities as hearing children.

It's not just deaf children in the UK who face barriers. Through our international arm, Deaf Child Worldwide, we support deaf children in developing countries who are missing out on education and family life.

To decide on the focus for this strategy we asked deaf young people, their families and professionals about the barriers they face, and how we can help to change things. Their experiences have shaped the strategy and are central to everything we do.

Deaf children have a bright future – but only if we break down the barriers they face. The support of our amazing members, supporters, campaigners, volunteers and staff will be vital in reaching our goal. Together we can overcome the barriers that hold deaf children back.



*Susan T. Daniels*

**Susan Daniels, OBE**  
Chief Executive



## Our vision

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**Our vision is a world without barriers for every deaf child.**

## Our mission

Together we overcome the social and educational barriers that hold deaf children back.

## Our values

### Families

We help families give the best possible support to their deaf child every step of the way.

### Children

Deaf children and young people are at the heart of our work. We make sure their needs come first, and we help others do the same.

### Choice

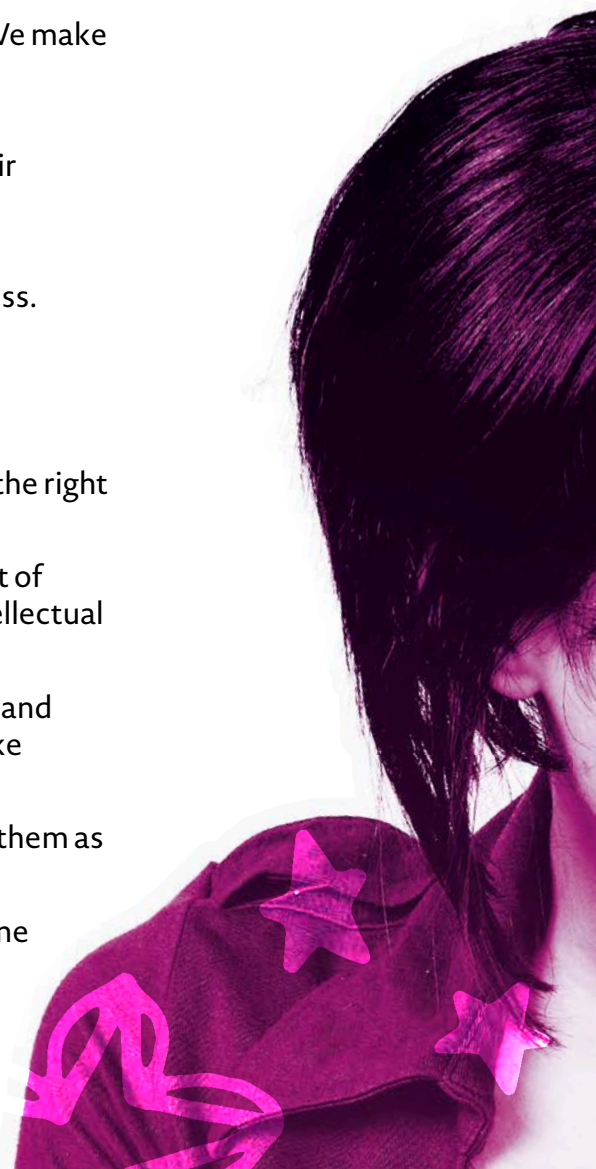
We give expert unbiased support to help deaf children and their parents make informed choices about their lives.

### Challenge

We work together with others to positively challenge unfairness.

## Our beliefs

- 1 Deaf children can do anything other children can do, given the right support from the start.
- 2 Effective language and communication skills lie at the heart of deaf children and young people's social, emotional and intellectual development.
- 3 Families are the most important influence on deaf children and young people, and need clear, balanced information to make informed choices.
- 4 Deaf children should be involved in decisions which affect them as early as possible.
- 5 Deaf children should be valued by society and have the same opportunities as any other child.



# Deaf children face barriers every day

**These barriers aren't caused by deafness itself, but by how children are treated because they are deaf.**

Too often deaf children are excluded and treated unfairly. They are left out by friends, let down by services that don't support them, and they don't get the same opportunities as hearing children.

When this happens, a deaf child can end up losing confidence, cut off from family and friends, and vulnerable to bullying and abuse.

In developing countries, these barriers can be even more difficult to overcome. Poor healthcare means it can be years before a child's deafness is identified. Families often can't afford hearing aids, and there are few chances to learn sign language. Many children are unable to communicate with even their parents – and some never set foot inside a classroom.

Deaf children face barriers every day. That's why we will continue working with deaf children, their families, decision-makers, partner organisations and professionals, to break down these barriers and transform lives.





## Overcoming barriers for more than 70 years

We were founded in London in 1944 by a group of parents concerned about the education of their deaf children. From these small beginnings we've grown into the leading charity for deaf children.

We've accomplished so much along the way, transforming the lives of thousands of deaf children and their families through our helpline, events, information and face-to-face support. We've brought about ground-breaking change including successfully campaigning for hearing tests for every newborn baby in the UK. Alongside this, we've changed attitudes towards deaf children's abilities and raised expectations about what deaf children can achieve.

As of December 2016 we have 64,000 family and professional members in the UK and internationally. We give expert support on childhood deafness, raise awareness and campaign for deaf children's rights. And we're here whenever a deaf child needs us, from diagnosis until young adulthood, no matter what their level or type of deafness or how they communicate.





## Helping families make informed choices

Every deaf child is different and families should be able to make decisions that are right for them. That's why we give independent support, setting out all the options, so families can make informed choices about how they want to communicate, or which type of hearing technology is best for them. We never promote a particular approach above another, and we're always clear about the impact it will have on a child's life.



## A global expert

Through our international arm, Deaf Child Worldwide, we've been supporting deaf children in developing countries for more than 15 years. We've been working with partner organisations in South Asia, East Africa and Latin America to improve opportunities for deaf children living in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the world.



Over the next five years we will build our reputation as a recognised global expert on childhood deafness, developing a wide network of partners and working together to champion deaf children's rights. We'll offer first class training, and share our pioneering research with organisations around the world, so we can reach more of the estimated 32 million children worldwide with a hearing loss.

## What we don't do

We invest our valuable resources in support that makes a unique difference to deaf children's lives. To avoid duplicating the work of other organisations there are some services we don't offer including:

- funding medical research into cures for deafness
- providing hearing aids or implantable devices
- offering financial loans or running credit schemes.



## Our ambition

# By 2030 no deaf child will be left behind – but only if we work together now.

Since we were founded more than 70 years ago, society has come a long way – but deaf children around the world still don't have the same opportunities as everyone else.

We can overcome the social and educational barriers that hold deaf children back, but we can't do it without you.

Together we can take action so that no deaf child is left behind – at school, in their community or at home. Together we can make sure that every deaf child has opportunities to learn, build relationships and achieve their dreams in life.

Our ambition reflects the pledge made by 193 countries to deliver the UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda calls for all countries to promote education and wellbeing and reduce inequality, so that by 2030 no one is left behind.

We will monitor progress towards our ambition by tracking key measures of deaf children's educational attainment and life satisfaction.





## Our focus

To make sure we achieve our ambition, we are working to overcome the barriers that deaf children face in three key areas:

- 1 Local and national services
- 2 Language and communication
- 3 Independence

These are areas where we know we can make the biggest difference, and where not taking action would have serious consequences for deaf children.

This work is taking place within a challenging political and economic environment that will impact on services for deaf children across the UK and internationally.



# 1

## Overcoming barriers in local and national services

### The problem

Deafness should not be a barrier to learning, and yet at every key point in education, deaf children are falling behind their hearing classmates – and too many aren't getting the support and encouragement they need to achieve. The situation can be even more challenging in developing countries, where it's not unusual for a deaf child to completely miss out on school.

After years of cuts public services are at breaking point, and this situation is likely to get worse. Too many deaf children are already being failed by these services, and are waiting too long to get their hearing aids fixed, being ignored at health appointments and left out at after-school clubs.

**In 2016, almost 60% of deaf children in England failed to achieve five GCSEs (including English and Maths) at grades A\* to C.**

### What we'll do in the UK

We'll focus on services that have the biggest impact on the lives of deaf children: audiology, education, childcare, social care and social activities.

We will:

- support and encourage deaf children and their families to stand up for their rights by:
  - › providing up-to-date resources and information about their rights and what they should expect from services
  - › supporting them to have a say in how their local services are run.
- improve services by:
  - › challenging local and national cuts, and advocating for improvements to the quality of services
  - › providing resources, support and training to help activity leaders, professionals and decision-makers to better support deaf children
  - › offering consultancy to decision-makers on how they design and deliver services.



**“I wouldn’t feel so different to everyone else if the services I used were more deaf-aware. We should be able to feel confident about going to the doctors or joining a new sports club.”**  
**– Deaf young person**



## What we’ll do internationally

We will focus on education, working with partners to:

- champion the right of every deaf child to primary education
- prepare children for school and support them once they are in education
- find the best way to support deaf children to stay in education and campaign for this to be made a reality.



## How we’ll monitor progress

In the UK we’ll monitor progress towards our ambition through:

- the attainment gap between deaf and hearing children at the end of secondary education
- deaf children’s and parents’ satisfaction with services.

## How we’ll measure our success

In the UK, we’ll measure our success through:

- the availability and accessibility of national and local services and the impact of cuts
- how services perform against quality standards and assessments
- how involved parents and children are in decision-making and design of services, and how much influence they have.

In the areas that we work internationally, we’ll measure our success through project data on:

- the number of deaf children attending school
- the progress made by deaf children at school.

## 2 Overcoming barriers in language and communication

### The problem

It's critical that everyone has the opportunity to develop language and communication skills – but deaf children aren't making the same progress as hearing children. This can have a huge impact on all parts of a deaf child's life – from being able to share their thoughts and feelings and express their needs, to making friends and learning at school. In developing countries, few deaf children have access to hearing aids or the opportunity to learn sign language – and some aren't able to communicate with even their parents.

**In 2016, 56% of pre-school deaf children didn't reach expected standards in reading.**

### What we'll do in the UK

We'll make sure that deaf children get support to develop vital language and communication skills as early as possible in the language of their choice, and that this support continues as they grow up.

We will:

- develop new training, resources and advice for families and education professionals on supporting language and communication
- work with early years, childcare and pre-school providers to make sure that deaf children get better support to develop these skills
- promote the benefits of technologies that support deaf children to develop language and communication, giving guidance to families and education providers.





## What we'll do internationally

Working with partners, we will:

- promote the importance of early diagnosis and support
- develop new training, resources and advice for families, support workers and education professionals on supporting the development of language and communication skills
- help young people (especially those who haven't had a formal education) to improve their skills and feel more confident about language and communication.

## How we'll monitor progress

In the UK we'll monitor progress towards our ambition through:

- deaf children's language and communication skills as assessed through early learning indicators e.g. at school entry.

**“It's hard for me to communicate with people when I'm out and about... This makes my daily life difficult.”**

**- Deaf young person**

## How we'll measure our success

We'll measure our success in the UK, and in the areas that we work internationally, through:

- how much our projects and programmes have helped improve deaf children's language and communication.

In the UK we'll also measure our success through:

- satisfaction of parents with the language and communication support their child receives
- the performance of language and communication support services against quality standards and assessments.



## 3 Overcoming barriers to independence

### The problem

Deaf young people aren't always made aware of their options when deciding what to do when they leave school. They may miss out on education or career opportunities because other people don't think they can achieve – and because of this too many deaf young people aren't in any form of education, employment or training.

Deaf young people need more support to help them develop confidence, independence and resilience. In developing countries in particular many deaf young people don't have the chance to learn basic life skills.

### What we'll do in the UK

We'll help prepare deaf children and young people for the future by increasing opportunities and supporting them to develop confidence, independence and resilience.

We will:

- encourage and support employers and other organisations to offer more opportunities for deaf young people to get work experience and access to employment and volunteering opportunities.
- advise families and train professionals on how to:
  - › prepare deaf young people for adulthood
  - › support them as they transition into and begin post-16 education, training or employment.
- encourage and support deaf young people to stand up for their rights, understand their options and develop life skills.

**In 2015, 57% of deaf students failed to achieve two A-level passes or equivalent by the age of 19.**



**“People can be very judgmental about us and our abilities because they automatically believe that we can’t do anything.”**  
**– Deaf young person**



## What we’ll do internationally

Working with partners, we will:

- support deaf young people to develop life skills including managing money, relationships, emotional and sexual health
- support deaf young people to gain skills and experience that will help them to get into work or progress their education
- raise awareness about the support that deaf young people need in the workplace.

## How we’ll monitor progress

In the UK, and in the areas that we work internationally, we’ll monitor progress towards our ambition through:

- research into young people’s employment.

In the UK we’ll also monitor progress through:

- government data on the numbers starting and completing further and higher education and apprenticeships.

## How we’ll measure our success

In the UK we’ll measure our success through:

- deaf young people’s knowledge of their rights and the support available to them
- deaf young people’s life skills, e.g. grit and resilience, problem-solving, cooperation
- deaf young people’s friendships (peer support).

In the areas that we work internationally, we’ll measure our success through project data on:

- deaf young people having access to training in skills for life and employment.





## Our promise

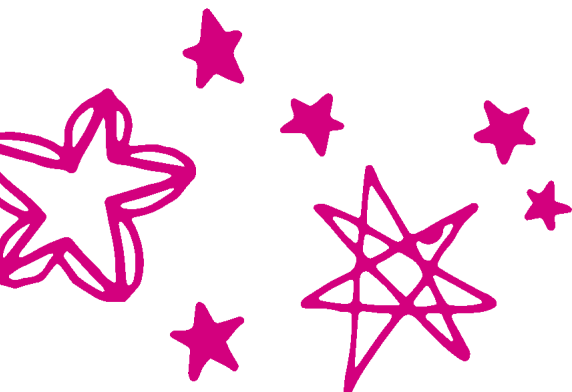
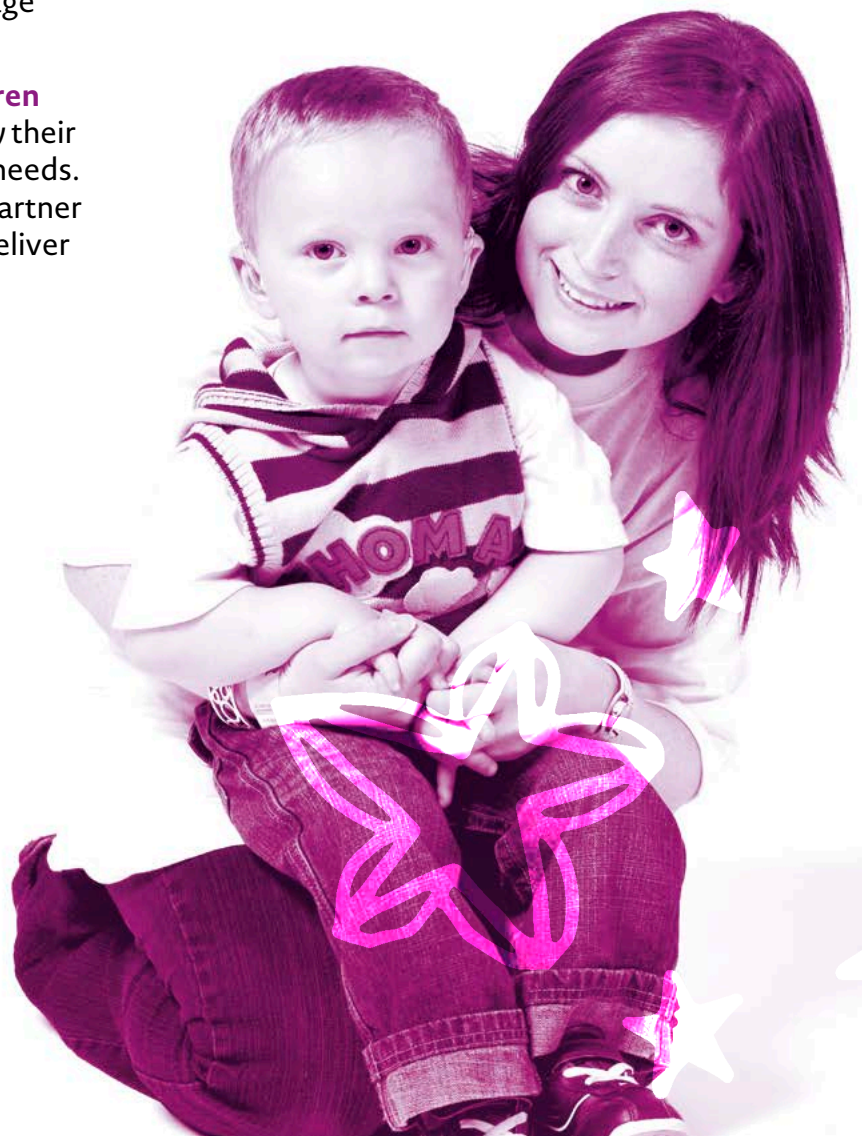
This is our promise to deaf children, young people and their families, our supporters, campaigners, volunteers and staff.

**We will continue to give life-changing support to deaf children of all ages,** through core services including our freephone helpline, training, support officers, resources and events. We will explain all the options so that children and families can make informed choices about what's right for them.

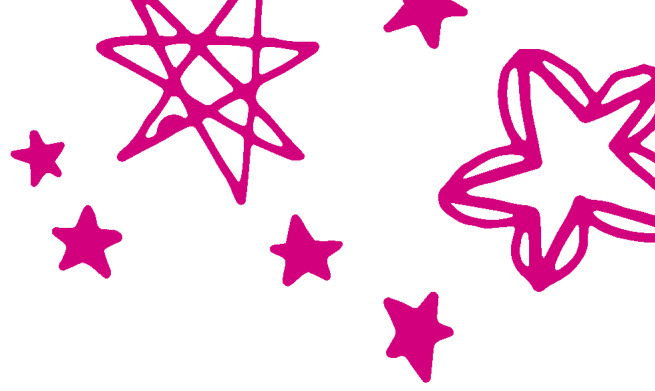
**We will never stop improving our services.** This means making sure we work as efficiently as possible, that everything we do is grounded in evidence and feedback, and that we always evaluate our impact. We'll also make it easier for families to engage with us online.

**We will work closely with deaf children and their families,** and be informed by their views so that our services meet their needs. We'll also work collaboratively with partner organisations, who may sometimes deliver services on our behalf.

**We will reach out to families who may otherwise miss out on support,** including families on a low income, parents of children with mild hearing loss, vulnerable deaf children, and deaf young people over the age of 16.







**We will build our reputation as a recognised global expert on childhood deafness,** developing a wide network of partners and working together to champion deaf children's rights.

**We will continue to value our amazing members and supporters** by fundraising in line with our ethical policy and making sure that every penny we raise is spent wisely.



**Just like everyone else,  
a deaf child longs for laughter,  
learning and fun. They want the  
same things as other children  
– but all too often they  
are let down.**

**Imagine being bullied** because you're different or struggling because your school doesn't know how to help.

**Imagine missing out** on what your friends are saying – feeling left out and alone.

**We can break down the barriers deaf children face** – but we can't do it without you. If we don't act now deaf children around the world may lose out on their childhood, and grow up believing they'll never succeed.

**Together we can stop deaf children being treated unfairly**, and we can stop them being robbed of vital support. Please help us make sure deaf children have the same opportunities as everyone else.





**We are the National Deaf Children's Society,  
the leading charity for deaf children.**

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The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity  
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