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Enjoying music with your baby



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Tips to get involved with the deaf community



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Tackling dinner table syndrome this Christmas



National Deaf Children's Society

families

Communication across the counter



Being honest about your deafness goes a long way in retail.





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My deafness didn't stop me...

...winning gold in the Commonwealth Games

By Jenny Collen



Olivia

The starting pistol goes off, and Olivia Breen shoots forward. Within seconds, she's surged past her competitors to win the T38 100m final in this year's Commonwealth Games. "Winning a gold medal in the 100m had taken me over 10 years to accomplish. It was the most incredible day of my life," she says.

Olivia (26) has cerebral palsy and competes in T38 events, which are for athletes with coordination impairments. She's also moderately to severely deaf, something she feels is entirely overlooked in the sporting world. "In my athletic life, my deafness doesn't count as a disability," she says. "I'm the only deaf girl in T38 but this isn't regarded as an additional disability."

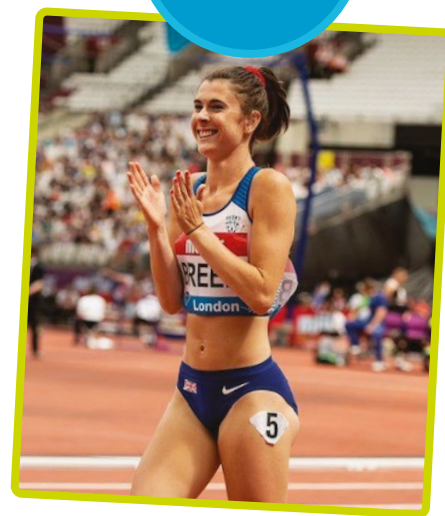
When every second counts, not being able to hear the starting pistol can be a big problem for Olivia. "I have difficulty hearing the gun and have to wait for the other girls to respond before I push out of the blocks, which has always been a disadvantage," Olivia says.

Alongside the 100m event, Olivia also competes in the long jump. "It's

very difficult to communicate with my coach in long jump competitions as coaches aren't allowed by the pit," Olivia explains. "I can't hear what he's saying and have to rely on lip-reading, which is a disadvantage for me."

Despite the challenges, Olivia has worked hard and won many medals in her career. She also has no trouble advocating for herself both on and off the track. "I'm not a shy person. If I can't hear what someone's saying, I'll ask them to face me so I can understand them," she says.

Olivia is now looking forward to the IPC World Championships in Paris next year as well as the 2024 Paralympic Games. She has some words of advice for other aspiring athletes: "Find a sport you enjoy, work hard, believe in yourself and never give up."



Photos by Gary Mitchell



Learn more about Olivia Breen at oliviabreen.co.uk.

You can find advice on making sports deaf-friendly at ndcs.org.uk/hobbies.

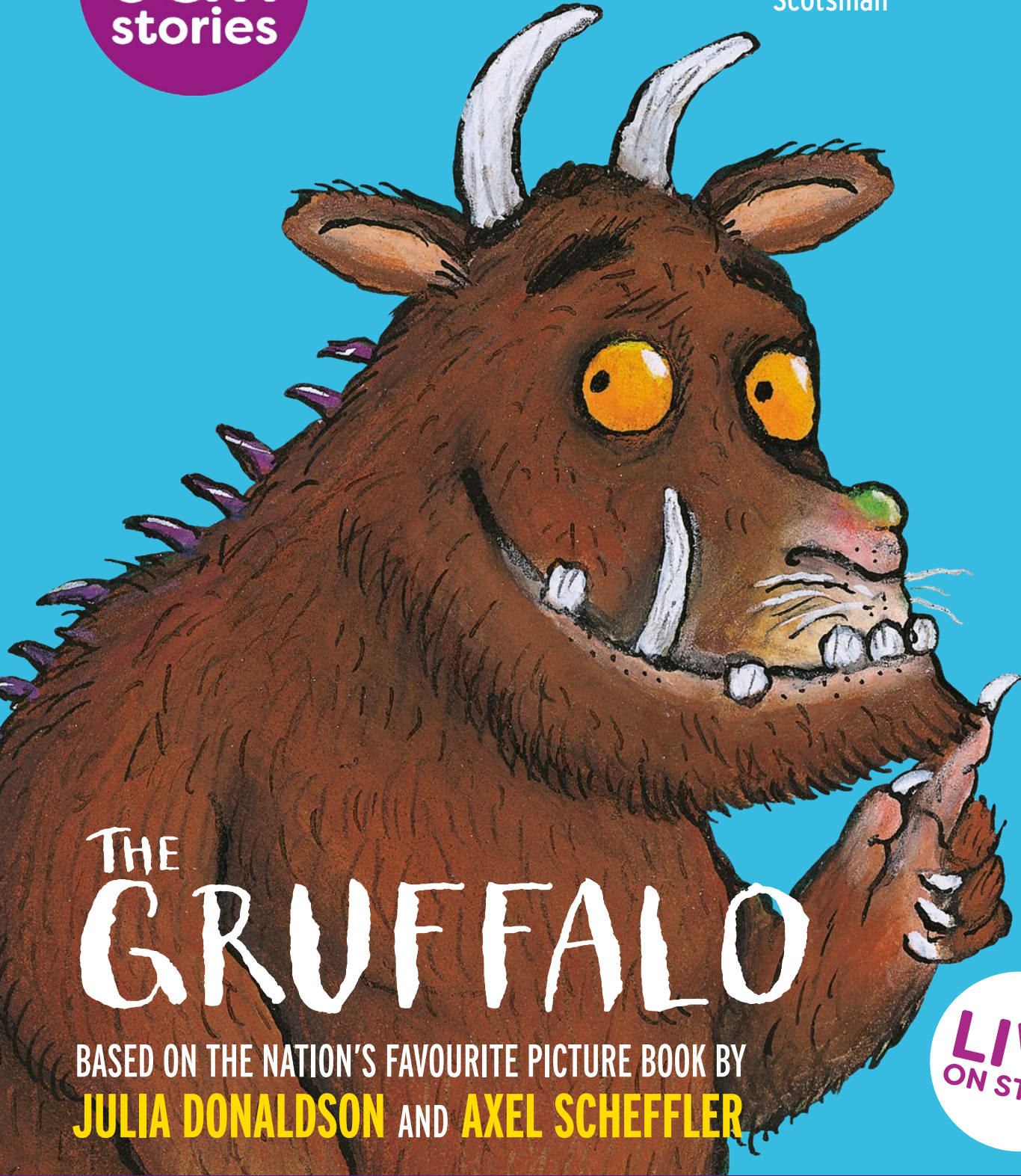


In my athletic life, my deafness doesn't count as a disability.



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Hello

I don't know about you, but I'm feeling full of Christmas spirit this year as we get ready to celebrate our first normal festive season in quite a while. I hope you and your children are enjoying whatever makes this time of year special to you.

Many deaf young people will want to work in retail either as a weekend job or more permanently. There are a number of challenges on the shop floor, particularly when interacting with customers who may not be deaf aware. In our cover story for this issue, Mollie (19) gives advice on finding the right role and adapting the job to work for you. Turn to page 20 to find out more.

A big thank you to everyone who filled in our survey in September. We're busy compiling the results and will make some of the changes you asked for from the next issue. We're also inviting you to feed back about the magazine whenever you'd like to! Scan the QR code below to take part in a two-minute pulse point survey. It'll be running at all times, so if a thought or idea pops into your head that you'd like to share then please fill it in. Alternatively, you can always email me.

Have a wonderful winter, Christmas and New Year!

Kerrina

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



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

families

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Ezekiel's story

how the family share their love of music with their deaf son



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how his family made sure his additional needs were diagnosed



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Zara's story

how she chose her GCSE subjects with help from her school



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Grace's story

how she learnt to embrace her hearing loss

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NEWS

Live in Wales? Check out our ALN animation!

We've created a short animation to outline how the new system for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN) in Wales works.

You can check out our animation, alongside other information on the new system, at ndcs.org.uk/ALN-Wales. Remember our Freephone Helpline is also here if you have any queries.

One year of educational membership

It's been a year since we launched our educational membership and we're delighted to see new schools joining all the time.

We've loved supporting our educational members over the last 12 months with information and resources to make sure the support they provide to their deaf students is always improving.

"We decided to go for educational membership because we're a school with a specialist resource base for deaf learners and we wanted to reflect our commitment to this area of our school community," says Greg Thomson, Teacher of the Deaf at King Edward VI School in Bury St Edmunds. "Accessing the excellent support the National Deaf Children's Society has to offer means that deaf awareness is at the forefront of all of our planning."

Educational membership is for mainstream and specialist early years providers, schools and further education settings. It costs from £15 per academic year. Please let your child's school know about it – they can sign up at ndcs.org.uk/educational-membership.



A festive costume marathon

We know our wonderful supporters are planning all sorts of amazing fundraisers for the festive period. One of those is Marsha, who'll be having a festive costume marathon at the Post Office she works at for the fourth year in a row!

Marsha will be challenging herself to wear a different festive costume every day in December to raise money for the National Deaf Children's Society. In previous years, she's dressed as the Grinch, a reindeer and an elf!

Like many of our supporters, Marsha was inspired to raise funds for us after her son Logan (7) was identified as severely to profoundly deaf. Last year she raised £560 and this year she's hoping to get even more.

"I've turned myself into a human advent calendar," says Marsha. "Wearing a new costume each day is challenging, but tremendous fun. I can't break tradition and not do it this year. My customers still love seeing the costumes and it's my way of saying thank you to the National Deaf Children's Society for all the support they have given my family over the years."



Our winter superstar!

Top bassoonist Alice was a member of the Under 12s National Children's Orchestra this year, taking part in week-long residential courses during the Easter and summer holidays. Alice has worn hearing aids to help with her moderate to severe deafness since she was four years old. Alice also showed great confidence in briefing the orchestra staff on how they should use her radio aid. "I had a great time," she says. "I made lots of new friends." Alice also enjoys singing lessons at school, where she's proud to be a music scholar. Well done Alice!



Sign with Fingers

In September, the National Deaf Children's Society partnered with Cadbury Fingers on an exciting new campaign called 'Sign with Fingers'. The campaign is designed to show how some deaf children and young people can miss out on social moments and to educate the public on deaf awareness and why learning British Sign Language (BSL) can help more people to feel involved.



The campaign launched with a TV advert starring Keira, a deaf BSL user, talking about why she sometimes feels left out of conversations. Keira also filmed a series of BSL tutorials which you can watch on the Cadbury Fingers website. Over on social media, famous faces like Tasha Ghouri, Luke Christian, India Morse, Hermon and Heroda Berhane and Lucie Houchin have been sharing exclusive announcements using BSL! Viewers who don't use BSL are left guessing what the announcement could be, demonstrating how some deaf people feel in conversations that aren't deaf-friendly.

Cadbury Fingers are also providing funding to help us support families who want to learn to sign through our Family Sign Language courses.

You can find out more about Sign with Fingers at ndcs.org.uk/sign-with-fingers. To watch Keira's tutorials, visit signwithfingers.cadbury.co.uk.

Eleanor takes to the skies

A deaf young person has achieved her flying dreams by piloting an aeroplane for the first time.

Eleanor (14), from North Yorkshire, was given the opportunity to take the controls of a light aircraft, flying from Doncaster to the Humber Bridge. Eleanor's flight was part of a scheme run by the Douglas Bader Foundation, an organisation which supports children and adults with disabilities.



"It was an amazing experience," Eleanor says.

"It was so exciting, and I loved looking for the landmarks from the sky."

As Eleanor uses British Sign Language (BSL), she was pleased her instructor could sign. "I was nervous but the pilot was awesome and was able to communicate with me through some BSL," Eleanor explains. "I hope I get to fly again. I know being a pilot could be challenging for me, but I hope I might be able to have some lessons and find a way to enjoy this activity."

Sign of the season Hanukkah



→ We have a video of Jewish BSL signs at ndcs.org.uk/BSL-for-judaism.

Did you know?

It's estimated that only 30 to 40% of speech sounds can be lip-read even under the best conditions.

Words: Beth Liburd and Kerrina Gray

We're here to support you

Many of us are concerned about the current cost of living crisis and the impact of rising prices. We know that being able to afford the necessities and the extra costs of raising a deaf child are making this a particularly stressful time for families of deaf children and young people.

If you or someone you know is struggling financially, it's important to get all the financial support for which you or they are eligible. I know it can be daunting to ask for help but I want to reassure you that we're here to support as much as we can. We've put together a list of resources and organisations that are providing financial information, advice and support, at ndcs.org.uk/cost-of-living.

We also have lots of information on our website about the range of disability and welfare benefits and grants you may be eligible for. Visit ndcs.org.uk/money-and-benefits for more advice. There's also information there about the other sources of financial support you may be able to get if you're a deaf full-time student, a carer or a deaf young person struggling to work. In addition, you can contact our Freephone Helpline for information, advice and support or to sign up for a virtual benefits appointment on 0808 800 8880 or at ndcs.org.uk/helpline.

On a final note, it's important in difficult times to remember to look after our mental health just as we look after our physical health. If you're struggling with money and are stressed about your financial situation, you can talk to your GP about how this is affecting you or get support from organisations like Mind, at mind.org.uk.

Susan

Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive



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Top tips...

Supporting your child with worrying

As they get older, children and young people can experience worries, big and small. Our experts suggest ways to encourage your child to share these worries and how to help tackle them.

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

- 1** I bought a book about feelings for my daughter when she was about two. We would act out different feelings, making it a guessing game. This helped her identify and talk about feelings from a young age.
Nicky, mum to Isabelle (4) and Jack (1). All are profoundly deaf.


- 2** If your child shares a worry, respond using a feeling word to show you understand how they feel. For example, if your child says, "Sarah won't play with me!" respond with a statement identifying that feeling, "You seem sad about that."
Keri Tebbit, Family Course Development Manager.


- 3** Make a worry jar together and put all their worries in it. You can then open it and talk through ideas to help.
Razia, mum to Inaaya (9) who is severely deaf.


- 4** When our daughter is worried we encourage her to look back on when she's handled similar emotions and to use that strength again.
Josie, mum to Maia (16) who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.


- 5** It's important that deaf young people have a deaf space like the Buzz website (buzz.org.uk) and Childline Deaf Zone (childline.org.uk/deaf-zone) where they can share worries about access, education and healthcare.
Kirsty (19) who is moderately deaf.


- 6** Often anxieties are about things we can't control. Don't sit thinking for hours about what's worrying you. Take part in an activity like exercise, reading or watching a film.
Martin McLean, Senior Policy Advisor.


- 7** We chat about different types of worry. For example, if it's a worry you can do something about, it's helpful to get stuck in. If you can't do anything about it, distract yourself with positive activities.
Josie, mum to Maia (16) who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.


- 8** Contact Shout (giveusashout.org), a free text service that anyone can use for confidential support, by texting DEAF to 85258. You can discuss issues that are affecting you, such as anxiety, stress, bullying or loneliness.
Gavin Songer, Assistive Technology Officer.



➔ For more advice on talking to your child about worrying, visit our emotional health and wellbeing web section at ndcs.org.uk/childmentalhealth.

Sara Says



When cochlear implants aren't working as they should



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

📌 [facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI](https://www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI)
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“
All technology can fail and our children deserve to be supported.

Charlotte was diagnosed as being profoundly deaf at 10 days old, she got her first hearing aid at 10 weeks and underwent surgery for cochlear implants at 10 months. She's now eight and until last summer, everything had been going brilliantly.

Charlotte speaks really well; she could hear very well with her implants and she also liked 'deaf' time and to use signing.

In June 2021, she received an upgraded processor (the external part of her cochlear implant). Most people should report an improvement with new technology, but we found the opposite. We noticed over the summer that she wasn't hearing as well as she usually would. She didn't answer when we spoke to her and we heard the phrase, "Look at me because I can't hear you," many times.

We reported what we'd noticed to the implant centre, her Teacher of the Deaf, school and childcare, and everyone had noted similar things. There was a definite deterioration in what she could hear.

Fast forward a year to June 2022, Charlotte had a nasty bout of tonsillitis and chose to remove her left implant for a few days. We then noticed that her hearing seemed worse again when she put it back in, so she went to get tested in August. Unfortunately, testing showed that five of the 12 electrode channels in her cochlea had high impedance, meaning they had to be switched off. Repeat testing a week or so later revealed that two were back on, but a different three needed to be

switched off. She now has six working and six failed channels.

Audiology testing was useful because the implant was reprogrammed to work better for her. But sound quality and recognition during speech and language testing was now very poor in the affected ear.

We're now waiting for the implant company to do more detailed testing and give us options. In the meantime, we're once again giving family and friends lessons in deaf awareness. We're emphasising the importance of saying Charlotte's name or using a visual or touch to gain her attention, and always maintaining eye contact when speaking to her to allow her to lip-read.

We're so glad we've always encouraged sign language in the family as it's becoming increasingly useful now, meaning we can also give Charlotte a choice about removing the failing implant and either replacing it or using only one implant going forward.

My advice to anyone worried about changes in their child's hearing is to get it checked out as soon as you can – all technology can fail and our children deserve to be supported properly, whatever their situation is.



For more information about your child's cochlear implants, go to ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants. We have deaf awareness tips to share with friends and family at ndcs.org.uk/communicationtips.

Ida's Ideas

What I'm looking for in a university



Ida (17) is our new young person's columnist. She's moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.

“
It's better to know earlier and think of any adjustments you might need to make.

The end of Year 12 meant only one thing – planning for a year from now, when Sixth Form is over and exams are done. For me, this meant starting to think about university and leaving home, something I've now realised is easier said than done!

At the moment I'm studying the International Baccalaureate in Cornwall, a very internationally minded course in an area that feels very cut off from the rest of the world sometimes! I want to study Politics and Social Science at university, so I started by looking at the best courses offered in the UK. Because I don't want to study just one subject, I looked at universities that offer dual honours or combined degrees. This narrowed my list down to location, which was where the research really kicked in!

In the summer term of Year 12, I visited a couple of the universities on my longlist. My friend and I travelled to Manchester by ourselves, the furthest we'd been alone before! We left plenty of time for travel. There are options to have fast boarding on planes or to book the quiet carriage on trains if you sort it out before travelling; think about what might work best for you. I always use the quiet carriage if there's an option to; I find I can hear the announcements much better and I'm less stressed so I can save my energy for navigating around after.

If you're visiting any universities this year, these are my top tips to get the most out of your visit. Firstly, talk to the students! They have

the best knowledge about living in student accommodation and the local area. The students I talked to at Manchester had so much advice on things like leaving home, accessing university support services, and meeting new people.

Secondly, if you get a chance, talk to the professors, teachers and support staff. I prepared some specific questions about the course, and about disability support services, and was able to get answers to all of them.

Next, try and find out how big the class sizes are and how many of your lectures would be in big lecture halls. I hear and concentrate better in small groups and find group discussion more engaging than big seminars. Radio aids or a loop system may be an option for lecture halls – it's better to know earlier and think of any adjustments you might need to make.

Finally, university sports facilities are very important for me as I use sport to unwind and socialise. Not all universities have a swimming pool on campus, but most have gyms and sports clubs, though the quality can vary a lot.

Now I've done most of my visits, the next step is to apply!



For more tips and advice on finding the right higher education option for you, visit ndcs.org.uk/highereducation.



Ezekiel is a musical maestro

By Beth Liburd

When Ezekiel was first identified as deaf, his family had lots of questions, including whether he'd be able to share their love of music. But at just 14 months old, Ezekiel is already using music to learn, bond with his family and have fun.



Ezekiel's story

Shortly after Ezekiel's birth, parents Katerina and Leon were told that their son may have some level of deafness. "He was born in a water birth," says Katerina. "They said it could just be water in his ears, but about four weeks later we went for the actual testing and they confirmed he has a hearing loss."

Ezekiel was identified as having moderate deafness in both ears and was fitted with hearing aids shortly afterwards. For Katerina and Leon, who are both hearing and have no deaf family members, finding out about their son's deafness was difficult at first.

"It was a complete shock," says Katerina, who's also mum to Iliana (2) and step-mum to Teliah (8). "You almost go into mourning because you don't ever want anything to be wrong with your child – it doesn't matter what it is."

"Everything goes through your head. It's not like we had anyone in the family who was deaf, so it was completely new. But the more we go on, the more I think, 'Why did I worry?'"

Initially, Katerina and Leon had lots of questions, ranging from how Ezekiel's deafness would affect him in school to how he would hear alarms in an emergency. They also worried that his hearing loss may be a barrier to him enjoying music – something that's very important to them as a family.

For both parents, music is a way of connecting to their families' heritages. Leon's family is from Jamaica and he loves sharing Jamaican culture with his children through music. Meanwhile, Katerina enjoys playing them the traditional songs loved by her Greek father.

"I've always loved music," Katerina says. "Growing up, there was always Greek music in the house. My dad emigrated from Greece. When he moved it was not like he had Facebook, so all he had was music to connect him back to where he came from."

Katerina and Leon also filled their home with music and it didn't take long to see that Ezekiel was a music lover too. "When he's crying, I sing a Greek song to him and he won't



When he's crying, I sing a Greek song to him and he won't look anywhere else but at me.

look anywhere else but at me," says Katerina. "He watches people's mouths moving. With music, he just focuses a lot more. He seems to love it."

Looking to encourage Ezekiel's interest in music, the family soon began going to local baby and toddler music groups. After a recommendation from Ezekiel's Teacher of the Deaf, they decided to go to BabyBeats – a free interactive music workshop designed especially for deaf children in their early years and their families.

Designed by cochlear implant manufacturer Advanced Bionics, BabyBeats aims to help parents support their deaf child with social, language and pre-reading skills through music. Advanced Bionics also offers a BabyBeats app, which allows families to try different music activities at home.

To Katerina, it was clear Ezekiel enjoyed dancing and playing games, while also learning. "The best thing was that reassurance that he can enjoy music like any other child," says Katerina.

The family also enjoyed spending quality time together, with big sister Iliana joining in and having fun. For Katerina and Leon, it's important to make sure Ezekiel's sisters get involved and understand his deafness.

"Iliana's very young to try and understand it, but she obviously does," says Katerina. "If Ezekiel takes out his hearing aids, Iliana will literally run over to tell me, or even take them off him and bring them to me! She's just been brilliant."

Teliah, Leon's daughter from a previous relationship, lives with her mum but visits often. She also loves spending time with her younger siblings and learning more about Ezekiel's deafness.

"Teliah's amazing with Ezekiel and Iliana – she's a typical older, bigger sister. She came with us to a playgroup run by Teachers of the Deaf and learned



lots. At home, we've always got music on, so she'll dance around with Ezekiel and Iliana.

"I think it's so important to involve the older children. Iliana comes along when Ezekiel gets his hearing aid moulds done. I think it's good for her to see to help her understand. As they get older, there may be some jealousy about all the time I spend at hospital appointments and things with him, so it helps for her to be involved and understand why."

But for Katerina, a huge benefit of BabyBeats was spending time with other families with deaf children and finding a sense of community. "When you first get told your child is deaf, you do feel alone and think 'Who do I ask?' and 'Who do I get advice from?' Groups like this are what keep you from worrying a lot of the time. When you don't have any deaf people in the family, they're the best people to talk to.

"I think it's important for someone coming from a family that hasn't got any experience of deafness to make sure that you speak to people who are in a similar position. That's what's helped me to understand. Otherwise, you're just sat at home in your own little world and you don't have anyone else to ask questions.

"My hope for the future is that Ezekiel just continues to do as well as he's doing. Having that support network around you is massive, so I'll just keep making sure he's getting everything he needs."



For more information about BabyBeats events, visit ndcs.org.uk/babybeats-events.

To learn more about enjoying music with your child, go to ndcs.org.uk/music.

EARLY YEARS



Your winter checklist

✔ Wearing hearing technology

When a child first gets hearing aids, cochlear implants or a bone conduction hearing device, it's important they wear them regularly to get used to them and to see how much they're helping. We have some tips from parents about how to get children to wear their hearing devices.

ndcs.org.uk/wearinghearingtech



✔ Choosing childcare

Finding and choosing childcare that works for you and your child can be challenging for any parent. But as a parent of a deaf child, there are more factors to consider. Check out our webpage for some of our tips to help you feel more confident about choosing the right childcare.

ndcs.org.uk/childcare



✔ Making Christmas deaf-friendly

Times of celebration and get-togethers with friends and family are a lot of fun but can be challenging for deaf children. We've put together some top tips to help you make your Christmas celebrations deaf-friendly so your children can feel included.

ndcs.org.uk/christmastips





Fighting for Xander's diagnoses

By Caity Dalby

Xander's neurodiversity was brushed off by doctors as a symptom of his profound deafness, but mum Kate wasn't going to stop fighting until her son had the diagnoses and support he needed.



Xander's story

Mum Kate has her hands full with her two sons, Xander (10) and Rowan (8), who both have additional needs.

"Xander is profoundly deaf and has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, generalised anxiety disorder and a sensory-related eating disorder called avoidant restrictive food intake disorder (ARFID)," Kate explains.

"Xander was identified as severely deaf when he was nine days old. Even though his dad George is a child of deaf adults (CODA), and there was always a potential that a child of ours would be deaf, I was heartbroken when I found out. But that only lasted a day or so and then I kicked into full advocacy gear."

After Xander had his first hearing aids fitted at just over a month old, Kate worked hard to make sure he got used to having them on, but then his hearing got worse. "Just before he was two, Xander's hearing suddenly dropped for no reason," Kate explains. "They couldn't fathom why. He was identified as profoundly deaf and we were offered bilateral cochlear implants for him. He

had his first cochlear implant surgery when he was four-and-a-half. He's had a total of three surgeries now because the implants have failed twice."

Once the family had the support and hearing technology in place for Xander's profound deafness, it became clear there was something else affecting his behaviour. "He was a very unusual baby from the very beginning," Kate says. "He never wanted to be cuddled, he wanted to lie in the cot by himself and be left alone. When he was playing, he wasn't imagining, he was lining things up. But absolutely everything was blamed on his hearing.

"Every time I went to the GP with questions, their response was always, 'It's because he's deaf.' He was three-and-a-half when he was diagnosed as autistic. It was very obvious to everybody by that point and, thankfully, the National Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Deaf CAMHS) were involved in his diagnosis and have been brilliant the whole time."

However, getting Xander's ADHD diagnosis took a little longer. "With



The hardest for us to cope with is the ADHD.

ADHD, they can only diagnose from age seven,” says Kate. “It was already very clear at three-and-a-half that something was going on, but we had to wait to see that he wouldn’t grow out of it. Deaf CAMHS were there for that journey too.

“At any point in the day, it can be any of his additional needs that are affecting him. You can’t extricate one from the other. It’s very difficult. On his Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan it asks for a primary and secondary need but you can’t distinguish between all of his needs. The hearing impacts the autism, the autism impacts the hearing and then the ADHD is on top of all that.

“The hardest for us to cope with is the ADHD. His autism can be quite predictable, as long as the routine is the same and he has his normal stuff, then he’s fine. The communication barriers aren’t there at home because we’ve been learning sign language and everything’s got subtitles on. But the ADHD makes him so impulsive, excitable and a bit too much.”

After starting primary school, it was hard for Xander, who still didn’t have an ADHD diagnosis. “At school he’d be desperately trying to mask it while being told off and forced to sit down,” says Kate. “He’d pick his fingers, jiggle his legs, bite his nails and try to be ‘normal’, but he was miserable and not coping. Now his teachers are aware of his ADHD, he’s allowed more sensory breaks in order to be himself.”

It’s been a long journey to get Xander to where he is now and having his autism and ADHD diagnoses has helped. “It’s not a choice that the child is making to be this hyperactive and impulsive, it’s actually a physical difference in their brain,” says Kate.

“My main piece of advice for parents of neurodiverse children is to get the diagnoses officially. I know that lots of people are worried about their child being labelled, but the fact is that without these labels they don’t get the

support that they need. Essentially, it’s not about how you feel about it, it’s about what they need. You can’t unlock that door without it.

“For us, it’s meant that Xander has access to stimulant medication, which has made a huge difference to his concentration at school and the success of his interactions with his peers.”

While the family fought to get diagnoses and support for Xander, they were also looking after and advocating for their younger son, Rowan. “Rowan requires more physical attention than Xander because he has tubulinopathy, which is extremely rare, and he’s a wheelchair user,” explains Kate. “His brain didn’t form properly when he was growing in utero which has resulted in profound learning difficulties, global delay, autism, epilepsy, cortical visual impairment (CVI), dysphasia and hypermobility. Rowan is non-verbal and vulnerable. He’s cognitively one year old.

“The two boys have such different additional needs, which means that they bump along simultaneously in the same house. They don’t really play or interact with each other.”

It can be tough for Kate, but she’s focused on doing the best job she can for her boys. “They need you and you have to be their advocate,” says Kate. “You have to have very thick skin and be there for them no matter what.”



To find out more about the support Deaf CAMHS can offer, visit ndcs.org.uk/deaf-camhs.

Read our webpage on deafness and autism at ndcs.org.uk/autism. You can also read about how Nico’s family manage his autism and ADHD alongside his deafness, go to ndcs.org.uk/nico.



PRIMARY YEARS

Your winter checklist

✓ Glue ear

Glue ear is when the middle ear becomes filled with sticky fluid. It’s usually temporary, but long-term glue ear can affect children’s hearing and speech development. Find out more about glue ear and watch our animation for kids, ‘Ninja Phoenix and DJ and The Gloopy Glop’.

ndcs.org.uk/glueear



✓ Missing school for medical appointments

Deaf children often have to miss school for audiology or other medical appointments, especially as after-school appointments aren’t always an option. Our webpage explains how your child’s absences should be recorded and what to do if your child is penalised when schools reward 100% attendance.

ndcs.org.uk/absence



✓ Making friends more deaf aware

Sometimes your child’s teachers or friends might forget that they’re deaf and that they sometimes need extra help, or they might not understand what being deaf means for them. Share our webpage on the Buzz with your child.

buzz.org.uk/articles/how-can-i-make-my-friends-deaf-aware





Zara's difficult decisions

By Kerrina Gray

Picking her GCSE subjects was hard for Zara, but with advice from her mum, teachers and mentor, she learnt the importance of choosing what you enjoy.



Zara's story

• **Zara (15) felt nervous when she found out she had to do a presentation in spoken English for her English Language GCSE.** She uses a combination of Sign Supported English (SSE) and speech to communicate and is naturally quite shy. "I worked hard on my speech with my Teacher of the Deaf, but it was scary," Zara explains. After all the hard work, the speech went well.

• "Zara loves some of the subjects she picked for her GCSEs, like Art," says mum Raqidha. "She does struggle with some though."

• Zara's younger brother was identified as deaf at his newborn hearing screening and this led to Zara being retested. "I wondered why Zara wasn't talking at two-and-a-half," explains Raqidha. "I told the doctor; the audiologist tested her and confirmed she was profoundly deaf too. It was a big shock as nobody is deaf in our family, and I have two older children who aren't deaf. The youngest two also both have Usher syndrome." Usher syndrome is a rare genetic condition which can affect hearing, vision and balance.

At the time, Zara was attending a mainstream nursery, but Raqidha didn't think she would be well supported in a mainstream primary school. "I found a school with a specialist base for deaf children where they sign," she explains.

When it came to choosing a secondary school, Raqidha and Zara had different ideas. "My first choice was to send her to a deaf school," Raqidha says. "I thought the school attached to her primary school, with a secondary base, was too big for her. After we visited the deaf school, she said, 'Mum if you're happy that's fine, I'll go to the school, but I don't think I fit in here.' She's very determined in her decisions."

"I didn't want to feel different," Zara explains. "I wanted to go to the mainstream school."

In secondary school, Zara continues to work with a communicator and a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) in the specialist base but spends most of her time in the mainstream classes. While she enjoys school, she does struggle with socialising. "Luckily, Zara's had one friend since nursery and they've stuck



It was good to talk to someone else who was deaf who had gone through his GCSEs.

together since,” says Raqidha. “They get each other through. Sadly, she hasn’t made any new friends. It does upset me, but she’s done really well and I’m proud of her.”

When Zara got to Year 9, teachers began to speak to her about deciding which GCSEs she’d do. She thought about what she most enjoyed and what she didn’t like. “My favourite subject is Art,” says Zara. “I didn’t like Geography!”

“We went to an open day and met with Zara’s teachers,” says Raqidha. “We discussed options Zara would be able to access best. Zara isn’t confident so we had to think about the best subjects for her personality. She likes drawing so she chose Art; that was an easy decision. She likes baking and cooking, so she decided to do Food Technology. We spoke to Zara’s ToD who chatted us through the other options.”

However, the lack of flexibility in choosing made the decisions a little harder. “I had to choose either History or Geography,” says Zara. “I hate Geography so it was an easy decision, but I don’t love History either.”

“Zara struggles with dense subjects like History so it’s tough for her,” adds Raqidha. “I think she should have had more flexibility not to pick one of those.”

Zara was also advised not to do certain subjects which she wishes she’d pushed harder to be allowed to do. “I wanted to do Spanish, but I spoke to my teacher and she advised me not to do it because it would be too hard for me,” says Zara. “I really enjoyed languages and I think it’s a shame I was advised against doing something I enjoyed. But instead, I’ve decided to learn it in my own time.”

“I wish Zara had been given the opportunity to try,” adds Raqidha.

“Zara would have loved to do a GCSE in British Sign Language (BSL) too. I work in a school and know signing isn’t just for deaf children, so it’d be nice for mainstream schools to offer it. Why does she need a GCSE in History or Geography? One in BSL would be much more useful.” A GCSE in BSL doesn’t currently exist, but it’s something the National Deaf Children’s Society is campaigning for.

Zara also had a mentor, through a National Deaf Children’s Society programme, who helped her to work through the decisions and shared his experience of GCSEs with her. “Having a mentor was really helpful,” says Zara. “He was older and had done his GCSEs. He gave me lots of advice and told me to choose what I’d do well in and what I’d enjoy. I asked him a lot of questions. He told me which subjects he chose and how he found those subjects. It was good to talk to someone else who was deaf who had gone through his GCSEs.”

Although she was disappointed in some of the decisions she had to make and is finding her GCSEs a challenge, Zara is still excited for the future. “I want to be an optometrist,” says Zara. “I want to show people who also have Usher syndrome what they can do. I’ll have to do Science A-levels.”

“It’s stressful because you feel you need to do really well to give you a better chance in college,” says Raqidha. “But I said to Zara, ‘As long as you try your best, Mummy doesn’t mind.’ I’m just really pleased with her; she settled in well and she’s proved lots of people wrong.”

“Don’t be scared of the decision,” Zara adds. “If you want to do Spanish, do Spanish! Choose subjects you’re going to enjoy.”



For more information about receiving support in secondary school, go to ndcs.org.uk/secondary. If you’d like support with access arrangements for exams, visit ndcs.org.uk/examfactsheet.

To find out more about our campaign for a GCSE in BSL, join our Campaigns Network at campaigns.ndcs.org.uk/join/network.



Your winter checklist

Starting a hobby

From team sports and swimming to performing arts and playing musical instruments, there are a number of hobbies and activities your deaf child may want to get involved in. Parents, young people and professionals share their advice and tips for making hobbies accessible and deaf-friendly. ndcs.org.uk/hobbies



Appealing a school placement

If your child wasn’t given a place at the secondary school of your choice, it’s not too late to appeal. The appeals process is slightly different in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Visit our website for advice about appealing a school placement where you live. ndcs.org.uk/choosingschool



Daniel’s T Levels

Is your child thinking about going to college but wants to get work experience too? T Levels might be perfect! Your child can find out more in this brilliant blog on the Buzz from Daniel, who talks about his T Level course in Laboratory Science. buzz.org.uk/articles/daniels-blog-taking-t-levels





Grace's growing confidence

By Abbi Brown

At college, Grace just wanted to be like the other young people around her, but now she's learning to embrace her hearing loss and everything that comes with it.



Grace's story

When Grace's parents found out she was deaf at the age of three, it was the least of their worries.

"At one point, they'd been told I had three weeks to live," explains Grace (23). "After everything they'd been through, finding out I had a hearing loss wasn't a big deal."

By the time she was three years old, Grace had survived two bouts of neuroblastoma, a rare type of childhood cancer. Her treatment included several rounds of high-dose chemotherapy.

"One of the chemotherapy drugs I was given is called cisplatin, which made me lose all my hair – not just on my head, but also inside my ears," explains Grace. She recovered from cancer and the hair on her head grew back, but the tiny hairs on the cochlea inside her ear had been permanently damaged, causing a moderate to severe hearing loss.

"I don't really remember anything before I got my hearing aids," says Grace. "Growing up, I didn't feel any different to other children because it was all I'd ever known." Grace went to

a mainstream school with a nursery, primary and secondary school all on the same site, so she had the same group of friends with her throughout her education.

"Staying at the same school helped because all my classmates knew about my hearing loss," adds Grace. "I didn't have to explain things, because I'd known most of my classmates since I was little."

However, when Grace moved from secondary school to college, she was no longer with the same peer group and began to feel self-conscious about her deafness. "At that age, I wasn't the sort



I've gained so much from embracing my hearing loss.

of person who wanted to stand out,” says Grace. “My perspective was, ‘I’ve got hearing aids, so I can hear.’ I felt like I had to prove that I was the same as everyone else and asking for help would have meant that I was different.

“I was insecure and refused to use my radio aid at college. But whereas in school, our teachers would write on the board and then we’d do our work, at college, we had to do our work and follow the teacher at the same time. I struggled because I can either listen or write things down; I can’t do both.

“I realise now that using my radio aid would have helped a lot, but I didn’t want to draw attention to myself. I was doing double the work, spending four or five hours in the library every couple of days to catch up on what I’d missed during my lessons.

“Trying to keep up with everyone else was exhausting. Life would have been so much easier if I’d explained I needed more support.”

When Grace was 18, she signed up for a mentoring scheme for deaf children. She mentored an eight-year-old deaf girl, but it was the experience of meeting the other deaf young people who’d signed up to be mentors that really made a difference to her.

“Meeting other deaf young people completely changed my perspective,” she remembers. “It was the first time I’d met someone who just ‘got’ me. I didn’t have to explain myself or validate how I felt about certain things. They just understood.”

Getting to know other deaf young people gave Grace the confidence to advocate for herself. She stood up to a classmate who’d previously made jokes about her deafness and began learning British Sign Language (BSL). However, Grace’s newfound confidence was knocked during the Covid-19 pandemic, when she was working at a supermarket and couldn’t communicate with customers wearing masks.

“It was hard because it felt like I couldn’t do anything for myself,” explains Grace. “But it also pushed me to become more open about my deafness and be confident asking for support.

“Even though I’m older now, I still take my parents with me into hospital appointments, because I can’t lip-read when staff are wearing masks.” Grace finds that the health professionals she sees often forget about her deafness or speak to her parents instead of to her. “It makes me feel overlooked,

like I’m a fly on the wall at my own appointments,” says Grace.

Grace has learned to be more confident, reminding hospital staff to be deaf aware. When she stays in hospital overnight, she brings a whiteboard so that staff can write things down to communicate with her.

Last year, Grace’s confidence was tested again when she began to lose her hair. Eventually, her hairdresser had to shave it off altogether.

“My hair has always been my security blanket,” explains Grace. “Having it taken away felt like the worst thing that could ever happen.

Suddenly, having my hearing aids on show didn’t seem to matter anymore. In a funny way, it gave me back the confidence I lost during the pandemic.”

Grace now works in a school and wears a wig most days. She uses social media to raise awareness about deafness and alopecia.

“Since shaving my head, I’ve realised that people care more about how they look than how you look,” says Grace. “Whether you have hair or no hair, hearing aids or cochlear implants, other people care more about their own appearance than yours.

“Don’t get me wrong, there are still days when I feel insecure. I’m learning to tell myself that it’s OK to have those days, as long as the next day, I get back out there.

“You open up so many more opportunities by accepting your hearing loss than you get from hiding it. I’ve gained so much from embracing my hearing loss.”



For tips on making medical appointments deaf-friendly and advice for improving your body image, visit the ‘Health and wellbeing’ tab on the Buzz at buzz.org.uk/explore.

If you’re a parent and need advice on supporting your child’s emotional wellbeing, including with self-esteem issues, visit ndcs.org.uk/childmentalhealth.



YOUNG PEOPLE 16+

Your winter checklist

✓ Talking about feelings

Adolescence can be a difficult time for any young person and being deaf can make things harder. That’s why it’s especially important to let your child know that they can talk to you about how they’re feeling. Read tips and advice from other parents on how to talk to your deaf teenager about their feelings.

ndcs.org.uk/talking-to-teens



✓ Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMA is a benefit paid to students aged 16 to 19 years old from low-income households, who are either studying or permanently resident in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Find out if you’re eligible to receive EMA on our webpage.

ndcs.org.uk/ema



✓ How to use 999 BSL

You might have heard about 999 BSL, the brand new way for British Sign Language (BSL) users to contact the emergency services. But how does it work? The Buzz has a quick guide in English and BSL to getting help in an emergency.

buzz.org.uk/articles/999-bsl-how-do-i-use-it



Deaf works as a sales assistant



Mollie's lush part-time job

By Jenny Collen

Working with the public isn't always easy, but thanks to a supportive work environment, Mollie is confident in her role as a sales assistant.



Mollie's story

• **When asked what she likes most about her job, Mollie's face lights up.**

• "Working with the public," she says. "I love helping people! I especially love working with little kids and seeing how excited they get when we do bath bomb workshops and parties."

• Mollie (19) works part-time at cosmetics retailer Lush and has also just started university. She's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants but doesn't find her left cochlear implant helps her.

• When Mollie, who uses a mixture of British Sign Language (BSL) and spoken English to communicate, applied at Lush, she wasn't sure whether she should mention her deafness. "I didn't like the idea of having a job because I'm deaf. I wanted to get in on my own merit," she says.

• After researching Lush's diversity policy, she felt comfortable mentioning her deafness and now she'd advise other deaf young people to do the same. "Being honest about your deafness goes a long way in retail, because you'll have a better chance

of getting what you need," she says. Initially Mollie was also unsure which role she should apply for. "There were a few different roles available," she says. "My confidence wasn't great, and I worried if I'd understand people or if my communication would be clear enough. I told Lush about my deafness and asked what they recommended. I ended up doing stock because I worried about noise levels."

Working at the back of the store as a stock assistant, Mollie got to experience what the store was like while gaining more confidence. When a permanent sales assistant role became available, she applied for it and now works in the front of the store, assisting customers and handling purchases.

"My deafness is very hidden at work unless I wear my hair up and customers can see my cochlear implants," Mollie says. "Sometimes they ask questions about my deafness, but I don't go up to every customer and say, 'I'm deaf, please be patient,' because I don't want to take away time if they need help with something. When I'm working, it's not



Being honest about your deafness goes a long way in retail.

the time or place to educate people about my deafness because it'll take too long."

Working with the public can be tiring, but even more so for Mollie because she's deaf. "I really struggle with listening during a task," she says. "If I'm stocking up, I may not hear if a customer approaches me, so I need to watch around, which means I'm doing two or three things at once."

To help with her concentration fatigue, Mollie works earlier shifts when she's more alert. "I get more tired as the day goes on, so my managers put me on an early shift. I have to get up extra early to get in, but then I'm done for the day at 3pm."

Mollie is happy with the level of support she receives at work. "It can be scary going into a job and not knowing if they can handle the support you need," she says. "My manager understands that not every deaf person is the same, so she doesn't make assumptions about what I need but asks me. For example, they've put a system in place when there's a fire alarm so I'm buddied up with a member of staff and they walk out with me and explain what's going on. I feel lucky because not everyone working in retail will have such a good support system. Telling them I was deaf was the best thing I've done because it made everything click and fall into place."

If something doesn't work for Mollie, though, she speaks up. "We have music playing in the store, but if I'm on the tills, I can't hear a single thing when it's on," she explains. "I asked a member of management, and they were happy to turn it down. They also gave me access so I could turn it down myself if needed."

Mollie's deafness has also given her an advantage when communicating with customers whose first language isn't English. "There were a couple



of times Ukrainian refugees came into the store," she says. "I relied on gestures to help us communicate. I'm lucky that I've got BSL. Because English is my second language, I can sympathise with people who struggle with English. I find it easier to approach these customers because I'm a lot more confident that I can communicate with them using gestures."

Mollie has also been proactive about making her colleagues deaf aware. "When you're deaf, you may need to be the one to start the conversation," she says. "When I first started, I put up a wee post on our work online chat tool introducing myself. I wrote, 'Hi, I'm Mollie. I'm deaf and use cochlear implants. If you want to talk to me, I may miss things you say because I can only hear in one side.' I wanted to let them know I was deaf so they didn't think I was ignoring them. I would recommend you just put down a couple of bullet points on what's important to you and leave things open for questions."

Mollie has advice for other deaf young people who choose to work part-time. "Things can go sideways sometimes. It's OK to be scared, but don't panic, and never think you're worth less to the company because you might have to work fewer hours," she says. "With deafness, you may have to work a lot harder than other people. Know your limits, and don't be nervous to say if something isn't working out. Communication is key."



If you're a deaf young person, you can find information and advice about work and careers by going to ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers.



YOUNG PEOPLE: CAREER JOURNEYS

Your winter checklist

✓ Careers advice

There's lots of information about careers out there for young people, but most of it doesn't deal with the difficulties deaf young people may face at work or the support available. Our deaf-specific careers advice covers picking a career, the support available in the workplace and more. ndcs.org.uk/careersadvice



✓ Mental health

Looking after our mental health is one of the most important things we can do to look after ourselves and those around us. We have lots of information and support for deaf young people who may be feeling down or are worried about a friend. ndcs.org.uk/mental-health



✓ Access to Work

With the right support deaf young people can do almost any job role. Some deaf people rely on communication support or assistive technology to do their job. This support can be funded by the government through the Access to Work scheme run by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). ndcs.org.uk/accesstowork



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

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Ask the expert

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

.....

What does your job involve?

I interpret calls for different organisations, such as banks or utilities, as well as 111 and 999 calls now too. I also educate call handlers on how the Video Relay System works.

What is the new 999 BSL Emergency Video Relay Service?

999 BSL is for any deaf person who uses British Sign Language (BSL) and needs to contact emergency services. You can access it by downloading the 999 BSL app (available for iOS and Android devices) or visiting 999bsl.co.uk.

Why was 999 BSL created?

It was created because there was no service for deaf people to contact 999 in their first and preferred language. While there was an SMS service, using English is not the preferred option for a large part of the deaf community.

999 BSL offers equality and is something that should have been established a long time ago. Now we have the technology to implement this service and a team of very good interpreters to facilitate it.

What happens when a deaf person uses 999 BSL?

Once they hit the button to connect on the app or the website, they'll see an interpreter on screen who will explain that the call will be put through to a BT operator who will then forward the call to the correct emergency service

(police, ambulance, fire or coastguard). The interpreter will introduce this as a '999 BSL call' so that the emergency call handler knows there's a deaf person on the line.

The call handler will then ask several questions which will be interpreted for the deaf person. The interpreter will keep the deaf person updated throughout the call and will stay on the line as long as the call handler needs to talk to them.

How can parents prepare their children to use 999 BSL in an emergency?

Show them the app or website and demonstrate how to use it. It's extremely simple to use, and in the case of a real call, interpreters will be there to walk the deaf child through it too. We know it can be frightening, but we aim to keep any caller as calm as possible.

What are the best and most challenging parts of your job?

It isn't just a job, it's a passion. I love the language and the fact that I can do something different every day and meet new people.

However, because this job is a passion, you can become invested. If you don't learn self-care or how to debrief when needed, then certain things can stay with you. We have that opportunity here, which is really helpful. It can also be challenging learning to say 'no'. We're torn between knowing there's a national shortage of qualified BSL interpreters, but also that we can burn out if we don't look after ourselves.



Emma,
Video Relay
Interpreter

“ 999 BSL offers equality and is something that should have been established a long time ago.”



If you're a deaf young person, we have more information about 999 BSL on the Buzz. You can see it at buzz.org.uk/articles/999-bsl-how-do-i-use-it.

Scribble

Tear out these pages, give them to your children and let them show their creativity

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

Colour in

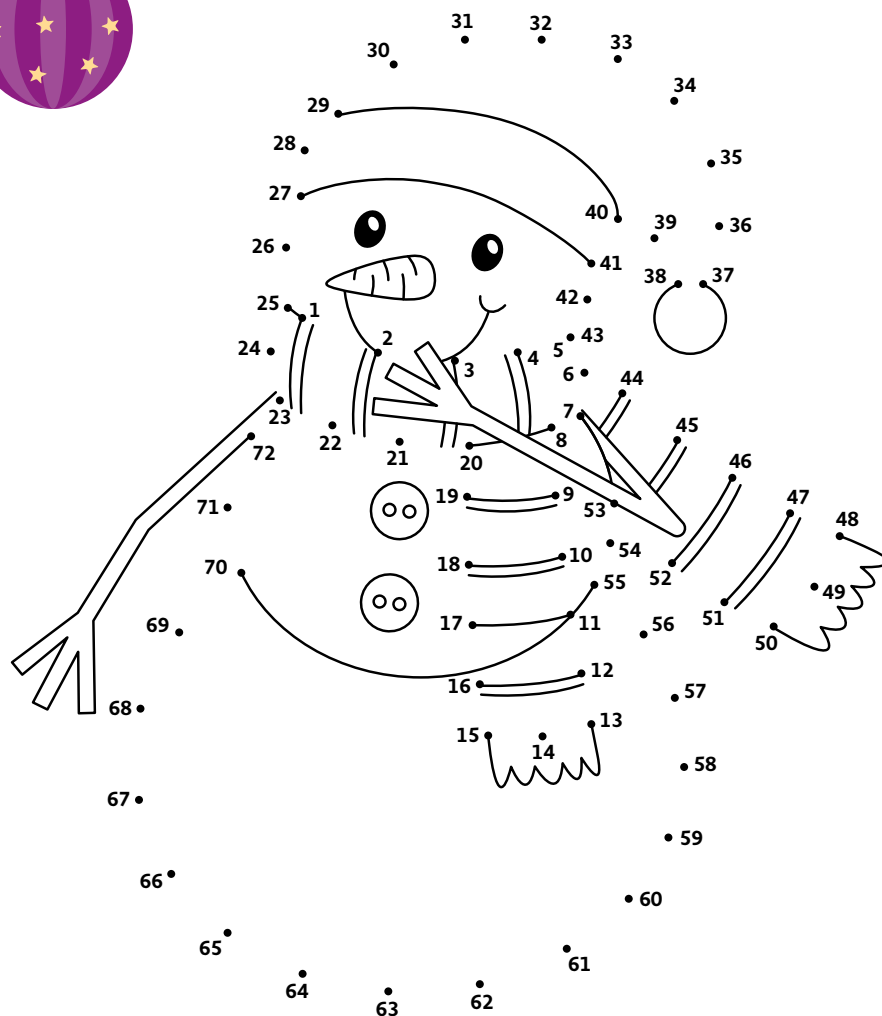


Are you planning to visit Santa this month? Father Christmas has his elf helper ready to sign to this little girl. What do you think they're going to sign?

le Club

hem to your child and let
y run wild!

Dot-to-dot



Follow the numbers and join the dots to find the picture!
Just like the snowman, removing your scarf from your
mouth makes lip-reading much easier. What other tips do
you have for friends to stay deaf-friendly this winter?



help my deaf child to feel part of the deaf community?

For many deaf children, being part of the deaf community is a valuable way of learning more about deafness and developing a positive deaf identity. Here, one deaf young person and three parents share their tips on how to get involved.



Beth and Molly

Molly (20) is profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language (BSL).

Being part of the deaf community is like having a second family. We might have different experiences of deafness, but we all enjoy spending time together, having a laugh and sharing news. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, lots of important updates were in English so some deaf people missed out. The deaf community shared the information with each other in BSL to keep everyone safe. It's also important for your mental health to feel part of a community.

When I was younger, I did lots of deaf sports like deaf football and deaf swimming. I went to a mainstream school, but I wasn't happy there. I'm

grateful to my parents for fighting for me to go to a deaf school instead. Thanks to them, I'm now at university and feel more involved in the deaf community. I've been to lots of deaf events, where I get to catch up with friends and meet new people. It's really fun!

If your child wants to be involved in the deaf community, just go! You might have to travel a long way to a deaf event, but if you're prepared to travel then enjoy the experience. As your child gets older, take your time working out what they need. Ask them if they want to wear their hearing technology; they have the right to decide. And don't let your child think they can't do something because they're deaf. Deaf people can do anything!



Beth

Beth is mum to Molly (above) and William (23) who are both profoundly deaf and use BSL.

Although integration into mainstream education is a good idea, it's not always the best option for profoundly deaf BSL users like Molly. We live in a rural area without a local deaf community. The National Deaf Children's Society and our county's sensory impairment inclusion manager told us about opportunities and events for deaf children. We took Molly and her brother to deaf football sessions at Cardiff City Football Club. They also went to a deaf camp in Northern Ireland, which provided opportunities to meet other deaf children.

When Molly moved to a deaf school, she learned about deaf history and deaf culture and was introduced to deaf role models. She started to feel part of the deaf community, which has had a positive impact on Molly's development, helping her to overcome obstacles.

When Molly's around her deaf peers, she's more relaxed, independent and engaged, and more likely to step out of her comfort zone. Around hearing peers, Molly is often introverted and less likely to participate.

For hearing parents of deaf children, taking the first steps to engage with the deaf community can be difficult but it's always worth it.



Being part of the deaf community is like having a second family.



To find a local group in your area, visit ndcs.org.uk/connecting-families. To learn more about developing your child's deaf identity, go to ndcs.org.uk/building-deaf-identity.

We're running an online event on deaf identity in January. Visit ndcs.org.uk/events to find out more and book your space.

Henry is dad to Beatrix (5) who is profoundly deaf.

We're fortunate to be part of a large Deaf family. All our children use English and BSL. We actively seek out deaf peers for Beatrix, sometimes travelling long distances to attend national deaf events. Beatrix communicates easily with her deaf peers; they laugh, challenge each other cognitively and enjoy fast-moving, two-way conversations, which is normal for children conversing. With hearing peers from school, Beatrix struggles to fit in as she misses out on incidental listening and gossip. She tends to play alongside them, rather than with them.

I believe that all deaf children should be exposed to the Deaf community. We know of deaf adults who were deprived

of this opportunity and now look back on their childhoods with regret. Often, it's because their parents weren't aware of the Deaf community or were reluctant to become involved. This impacts the deaf adult's self-esteem. Meeting other deaf children and having the same shared experiences can do wonders for a child's Deaf identity and sense of self-worth.

The Deaf world may seem a frightening place, but don't be scared! Keep an open mind and find out as much as you can. Your options will vary depending on where you live. Check out your local Deaf Children's Society, join Facebook groups and go to events designed for deaf children, such as Deaf theatre and Deaf sports. It's an opportunity to embrace new things!



Henry and Beatrix

Julie is mum to Joshua (4) who is moderately to severely deaf and has CHARGE syndrome.

When we learned Joshua was deaf, I started learning BSL at Swansea Centre for Deaf People. It was life changing. As well as learning BSL, I learned about Deaf culture and history. It's an ongoing, fascinating journey. We feel fortunate to have met many inspiring people along the way who are passionate about achieving equality for deaf people, who we'd never have met if Joshua wasn't deaf.

If you want to get involved in the Deaf community, don't be intimidated. I've found the Deaf community has a strong identity but is very welcoming.

Get involved with your local deaf club, go to deaf events and watch TV programmes like 'See Hear' to learn about Deaf culture.

If there aren't any deaf clubs in your area, ask your audiologist or Teacher of the Deaf to connect you with other families of deaf children. Try going to deaf events with another parent of a deaf child. Joshua has additional needs and isn't yet speaking or signing, so in conversations with parents of hearing children, I often feel I'm living in a different world to them. Finding a community of like-minded people who can empathise and share stories and advice is massive.



Joshua and Julie

Education & learning

Being deaf-friendly in the early years

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

Whether your child attends a private day nursery, goes to a local childminder, spends a few mornings a week at pre-school or is part of their local school's nursery class, a deaf-friendly setting can help give them the best start in education.

High-quality early education and childcare can make a big difference to a child's learning, social skills and school-readiness. But how can we make sure that settings are deaf-friendly and early years providers are deaf aware?

Choose deaf-friendly childcare

If your child hasn't yet started in a childcare setting, make sure you choose carefully. You and your child are unique, so you'll need an early years provider who can meet both your family's and your child's needs.

You may need to be creative to make it work for your deaf child. Young deaf children may get tired more quickly or struggle in noisy environments, so you don't have to stick with just one childcare option. Your child could do mornings at pre-school or in nursery class and afternoons with a childminder in a quieter environment, for example. You could divide up your child's week between a day nursery and being looked after by family or friends in their home. A registered nanny or au pair may also be an option.

Remember, you can get help towards the cost of childcare from the government. Find out more at [gov.uk/get-childcare](https://www.gov.uk/get-childcare). We also have lots more information about finding a deaf-friendly childcare option at [ndcs.org.uk/childcare](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/childcare).

A successful start

Planning for your child's start at nursery or with a childminder can make a difference. Take time to meet with your early years provider and talk about what you'd like to see in place for your child before they start. For example, check everyone knows how your child uses their hearing devices, ask about assistive listening technology like a radio aid that can help in noisy environments, and discuss how best to communicate with your child. By talking about your child's deafness and planning for their learning, you'll be helping to create an



environment in which your child can thrive and be fully included.

It might help to have all the information about your child in one place, especially if there are multiple members of staff at your child's setting. A personal passport can bring all this information together; you can find a template to fill in at [ndcs.org.uk/personalpassport](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/personalpassport).

Working together

You'll want whoever is looking after your child to be talking to the people who know about your child's deafness. Help your early years provider to understand the roles of the others who support your child and what they can do to help them. For example, your child's Teacher of the Deaf can provide information and training on childhood deafness and early development to your early years provider. Also, your child's speech and language therapist can provide ideas and activities on how to develop language and communication. Find out more at [ndcs.org.uk/people](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/people).

High aspirations

Many early years providers won't have had a deaf child in their care before and may have different ideas about what deaf children can and cannot do. Your child should be offered the same opportunities and choices as all children. You could share our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign and its videos of deaf people in the workplace with practitioners, to help them understand that deafness doesn't stop deaf children from achieving the same as any other child. Find it at ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.

Being deaf aware

Deaf aware early years teachers, key workers, childminders and staff all know how to adapt their teaching, communication and environments for deaf children. This helps to make more opportunities for your child to access everyday experiences, friendships and activities. For example, they know how to use objects and toys during story times, use simple actions and signs in songs and rhymes, and make sure classmates are deaf aware too. Share our resource 'Deaf-Friendly Early Education and Childcare' (ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-early-years) with your early years providers to help them to be deaf aware.

A rich language environment

All children need to be in an environment where there's lots of communication and interaction to learn language, whether spoken, signed or both. Early years providers may need some extra information about developing and building upon your child's communication and language skills. Our resource, available at ndcs.org.uk/successfromthestart, provides lots of information on the small steps children take on their language journey and gives ideas on how to develop these.

Developing deaf identity

Sharing books, films and toys which have positive images of deaf children in everyday situations can help deaf children and their friends see deafness in a positive light. You may want to encourage your setting to buy one of our children's books from ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books. They're a fun and engaging way of introducing deaf characters to everyone.



Supporting your child's education this winter

✓ Listening to learn

At school, good listening conditions, such as a lack of background noise and good acoustics, are essential for all children to access teaching and learning and be fully included in school life. Research has shown there's a link between attainment and good acoustics for both deaf and hearing children. ndcs.org.uk/acoustics



✓ Getting extra support

Your child might need extra support from their school or nursery if they have additional needs. This could be called special educational needs (SEN) in England and Northern Ireland, additional learning needs (ALN) in Wales or additional support needs (ASN) in Scotland. Additional support can be provided by the school itself or by outside agencies. ndcs.org.uk/additionalsupport



✓ Future planning

It's never too early to start thinking about your child's future, whether they want to stay in education, enter the world of work or do something else like travelling or volunteering. With the right support or adjustments, most education and career options will be available to your child. ndcs.org.uk/yourchildsfuture



Technology

Tech: the season to be jolly!

By Gavin Songer (Assistive Technology Officer)

The festive season is a popular time for gatherings with family and friends, but remember this can be challenging for those with a hearing loss. 'Dinner table syndrome' is the term used to describe when deaf people feel left out of conversations. Here are some technology solutions that may help your family to make sure everyone feels included.



Radio aids

This equipment is typically used in schools, but radio aids are versatile pieces of tech that can also be used at home. A radio aid system is made up of a transmitter and a receiver. The transmitter picks up the speaker's voice and sends it wirelessly to the receiver so your child can hear it clearly over background noise. The speaker doesn't have to be close by. This makes them useful for noisy celebrations.

We have a variety of Phonak radio aids available to trial for 60 days through our Borrow to Buy loan scheme. This free service requires a professional, such as a Teacher of the Deaf or audiologist, to support your application. For more details, visit ndcs.org.uk/borrow-to-buy.



If your school or local authority doesn't allow your child to take their radio aid home during the school holidays, they may wish to consider radio aid insurance. We've identified a specialist insurance policy that provides cover for accidental damage, loss and theft for any make or model of radio aid for just £125 a year. For further details, visit ndcs.org.uk/radio-aid-insurance.

Streamers

Streamers send audio and music from a phone or tablet directly to a user's hearing device via Bluetooth. Most streamers can also be used as a wireless microphone. However, unlike radio aids, they don't have in-built software to reduce environmental noises when a speaker's voice is transmitted to the child's hearing device. The streamer would also need to be used within a few metres of the hearing device, as they don't work as effectively across a long distance.



Smartphones

If your child's hearing device has Bluetooth functionality, you could use a smartphone as a pocket wireless microphone. Live Listen on iPhones turns the phone into a microphone, transmitting speech picked up by the phone directly to the paired Bluetooth hearing device. Similarly, HeardThat is an app available to download on Android and Apple phones to turn the phone into a wireless microphone. Testers have reported a transmission delay while trialling the app, so it may not be as effective as a radio aid or streamer.



We know that technology products feature in many letters to Santa. Below are some possible Christmas present ideas for your deaf child – there’s something for everyone!



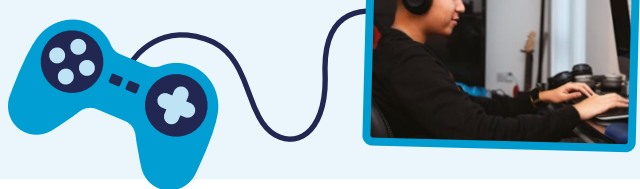
The early risers

Young deaf children can find it difficult to know when it’s time to get up in the mornings, especially during the dark winter months. The Groclock Sleep Trainer uses colours and pictures to teach little ones when it’s time to sleep and when it’s reasonable to spring out of bed!



The gamers

Gaming is very popular with many children and young people, but it can be difficult to find suitable headphones that are comfortable to wear with hearing devices. We recommend trying out headphones in stores. Make sure the ear cups are large enough to fit over hearing devices and are not too heavy to slip off.



The travellers

Whether your child enjoys sleepovers or is an avid globetrotter, it’s useful to have an alarm clock to avoid oversleeping or to make sure they catch their flight. The travelTim portable alarm clock is an ideal solution for this. It’s compact and lightweight, with a strong vibration that wakes up heavy sleepers.



The teens

As children become older, they often want to become more independent and have their own space. A flashing doorbell, such as the Honeywell DC917NG, can be placed in their bedroom to alert them to visitors at their bedroom door or to silently inform them when it’s dinner time.



The music lovers

If your child is a fan of music, their favourite tunes can be played through their hearing device using a streamer. Examples of these include the Cochlear Wireless Phone Clip, Oticon ConnectClip and Phonak ComPilot II. Compatibility will depend on the make and model of your child’s hearing device.



You can use our free Technology Test Drive loan service to trial most of the featured products for 30 days. You can find more information about the service at ndcs.org.uk/test-drive.

Reviews

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



Ryan

'Hello, Universe'

By Erin Entrada Kelly
Available from bookshops
Price: £6.99 RRP

5 to 10

11 to 14



Elodie

Barbie Fashionistas Doll 187 with Hearing Aids

Available from toy shops
Price: £13.99 RRP
Not suitable for children under three years due to small parts.

0 to 4

5 to 10



Key

This resource is most suitable for the following ages:

0 to 4

5 to 10

11 to 14

15 to 18

19 to 25

Parents



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

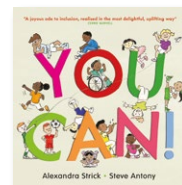


Griffin

'You Can!'

By Alexandra Strick and Steve Antony
Available from bookshops
Price: £12.99

0 to 4





This was a really interesting book, not one I'd normally pick but I definitely enjoyed it.

The main characters are around my age, so I felt I understood some of the things they went through. The bullying and how it made others feel was very realistic.

It was brilliant to read about Valencia, who is hearing impaired just like me and wears hearing aids. Not many books have these kinds of characters. It's not a big deal in the book, just a part of her normal life and I liked that.

I also liked that there wasn't any romance. I much preferred them

focusing on being friends and the relationships with the older people in their life. I liked all the stories told within the main story; it felt like listening to my Nan telling me bedtime stories.

Ryan (11) is moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids.

➔ **The Buzz has a book club especially for deaf young people. All the books include deaf characters or deafness in the story. If you'd like to take part in #BuzzBookClub, let us know by emailing cyp@ndcs.org.uk and we'll send you a book to review! Look out for #BuzzBookClub reviews on the Buzz at buzz.org.uk.**

I've called my new Barbie 'Rose' after Rose Ayling-Ellis. I get her to dance like Rose danced on 'Strictly'. I have quite a lot of Barbies but none of them came with hearing aids so I'm happy that Rose has them. I also bought the same Barbie for my friend for her birthday so that she can play with a doll that looks like me.

My mum has tried to make hearing aids for my Barbies with glitter glue, but they always peel off.

It's strange that people call the new Barbie the 'deaf Barbie' as I think lots of my other Barbies are deaf too. Some of my Barbies sign and some have forgotten to put their hearing aids in; they're still deaf though.

What I'd love more than anything is a doll where I can take the hearing aids on

and off, then I can take them off when she goes to bed or when she gets in the bath. If I could pull the hearing aids out, I could try them out on my other Barbies too. Imagine having a whole set of different coloured hearing aids that you could mix and match for your Barbies... that would be awesome!

I have a teddy with removable hearing aids from Build a Bear, but these days I prefer playing with my dolls.

This new Barbie is one of the more basic kinds of Barbie. It would be nice to have a Barbie with hearing aids that has all the things that the best Barbies have, like bendable arms and legs, and with all the different hair colours. This one is still really nice though. Last Christmas I asked for the Barbie who has a wheelchair. It's fun playing with

her too – sometimes they both whizz around on her wheels.

Elodie (8) is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.



Griffin loves books, so we were excited to review 'You Can!' It's a brilliant book with great messages to inspire youngsters.

The book follows 14 characters with various abilities and disabilities, from being toddlers up to adulthood, so it caters to a vast range of people.

Griffin loved the bright illustrations and was interested in the fact that it's laid out differently to most other books. There are only one or two lines of text on each page, and the text often flows

around the pictures instead of being in a block.

It's unlike any other book we have read featuring disabled characters before and was great to show people my son could identify with.

I'd recommend 'You Can!' to families with disabled and non-disabled children as it features so much positivity and lots of inspirational messages.

Clarissa is mum to Griffin (3) who has Down's syndrome, is severely deaf and wears hearing aids.

Resources

What's new

'How Technology Can Help'



What type of information is it?

A new set of age-specific downloadable PDF and printed guides, available at ndcs.org.uk/how-technology-can-help.

Who's it for?

Parents and carers of deaf children and young people (aged 0 to 5 and 6 to 18) and deaf young people (aged 19 to 25).

What's it about?

These guides introduce a wide range of products and technologies that are available to help deaf children and young people of all ages, with age-specific information.

You might also like:

This information is just one part of lots of information about technology for deaf children and young people, available at ndcs.org.uk/technology.

Cost of Living Crisis webpage



What type of information is it?

A webpage with information and advice about the cost of living crisis we're experiencing this winter, at ndcs.org.uk/cost-of-living.

Who's it for?

Parents and carers of deaf children who may need financial support.

What's it about?

There's information about the energy price guarantee and disability cost of living payment, as well as how to support your mental health. We also provide links to other organisations who can help.

You might also like:

Our information about applying for benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), at ndcs.org.uk/benefits.

'Deaf-Friendly Higher Education'



What type of information is it?

An updated printed and downloadable PDF guide, available at ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-higher-education.

Who's it for?

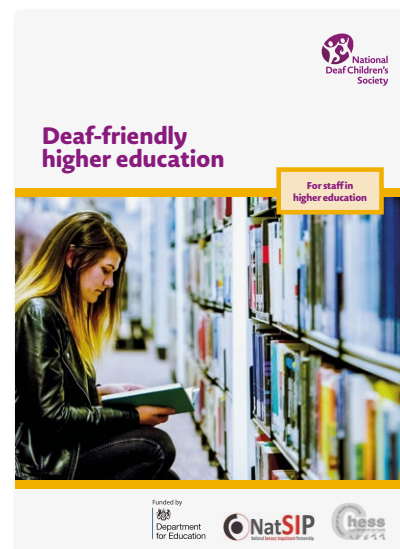
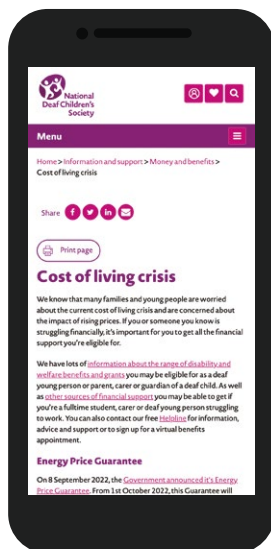
Education professionals working in higher education.

What's it about?

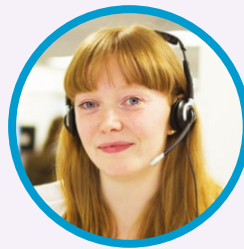
This guide helps higher education institutions adopt deaf-friendly teaching approaches and make any adjustments needed for deaf students.

You might also like:

This information is part of a suite of guides you can pass to school, college or university staff, to help them support your learning as a deaf young person or to help them support your child's learning. Find them at ndcs.org.uk/resourcesforteachers.



Helpline



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



My son has just started secondary school and is having a tough time because of his temporary deafness, caused by recurring glue ear. He's had glue ear on and off since he was little and we haven't received much help from his doctor, who just says he'll eventually grow out of it. He's really embarrassed about it; it's affecting his self-confidence and he says that he doesn't want to try hearing aids.

We know that for many children and young people, having recurring glue ear can be difficult. Glue ear is one of the most common childhood conditions and is caused by a build-up of fluid in the middle ear. Find out more about the condition at ndcs.org.uk/glueear.

Hearing loss is the main symptom of glue ear. The level of hearing loss can vary and is sometimes compared to a hearing person with their fingers in their ears. Listening with glue ear can be hard work and tiring, especially if there's a lot of background noise. This means that some children with glue ear will talk louder than they usually do and they may need the volume turned up high when watching TV or using the phone.

Glue ear usually affects children under the age of five and is often temporary, but for some children it can go on into their teenage years. Please reassure your son that he's not alone with this.

We understand his reluctance to try hearing aids and that it's affecting his confidence. He may like to chat online with other young people to find out how they feel about their hearing technology. He can do this on our young people's website, the Buzz, at buzz.org.uk. We have advice and tips about how to support your child's emotional health and wellbeing

at ndcs.org.uk/childmentalhealth.

We also have tips on making friends and explaining hearing loss at ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyteens.

Children with glue ear should have their ears and hearing regularly checked and monitored. As you don't seem to be getting a positive response from the GP, you can ask for a referral to your local audiology department where you'll be seen by an audiologist. Find out more about audiology services at ndcs.org.uk/audiology.

Long-term glue ear and temporary hearing loss can affect children's hearing and speech development, and your son may require more support at school. We suggest that you inform his teacher about his glue ear so that arrangements can be made to support him, such as allowing him to sit at the front of the class. Visit ndcs.org.uk/secondary-school for more information.

If you'd like to discuss things further, please contact our Helpline.



Campaigns

The SEND review

This year the Government in England started a review of the way children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported.

The review is planning some big changes to the SEND system – and it could be an opportunity to really improve the support deaf children get. But, for that to happen, we think the review should offer solutions for:

1. more Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) and more money for specialist education services
2. deaf awareness training for all teachers and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs)
3. involving ToDs in progress checks for two-year-olds
4. providing specialist careers advice for deaf young people (with links to employment schemes)
5. improving Government guidance on reasonable adjustments in education.

We really appreciate all of you who spoke with MPs, sent an email to the SEND review team and took the time to respond to the consultation. It was also great to see so many of you in our SEND review webinars and to have deaf young people share their thoughts on the review in our focus groups.

Teachers of the Deaf

You were just as disappointed as we were that the SEND review plans didn't mention ToDs.

“Our ToD is the only member of staff who truly understands and liaises with all of the team involved with our son. They know the specific and very individual needs of my child as they know him very well.”

Parent of a deaf child

“I have two ToDs and I've known them a long time. One of them is profoundly deaf and a British Sign Language (BSL) user. They're really supportive.”

Deaf young person

Lack of deaf awareness

You told us about the lack of deaf awareness in schools and colleges – and that all teachers and support staff should get regular training.

“It's taken five years for my school to have deaf awareness training. During the pandemic, my mum had to send in two formal complaints for disability discrimination, because my lessons weren't accessible.”

Deaf young person

“Some lessons the teachers walk around the class whilst talking, so it's quite hard to lip-read and I get very tired.”

Deaf young person

National standards and accountability

You were worried that the Government's idea of 'national standards' for SEND could reduce the support your child gets now. You were also clear that the current system relies too much on parents having to hold others to account.

“It depends what the national standards are? It could be a race to the bottom. And if standards are introduced, who will be checking these?”

Parent of a deaf child



Everything you told us helped to shape our thinking on the review – thank you! We'll let you know when we hear back from the Government.

Parents Shikha and Juliet are as concerned as we are that the SEND review plans didn't include action for more ToDs. They've written an open letter asking the Government to take urgent steps to change this. Will you join them and sign their letter at campaigns.ndcs.org.uk?

Roadshow

Meet the Roadshow team

Our Roadshow team travel throughout the year, rain, shine or snow, to visit schools, community groups and professionals and deliver workshops and training all about deafness. At this time of year, they'll be throwing in a signed Christmas song or two, too! Do you recognise any of the friendly faces below?

Steven

What's your favourite thing about being in the Roadshow team?

For me, it has to be seeing the impact we have on deaf children and young people when we finish for the day. I also love travelling to the most remote places around the UK, like the Isle of Barra, Orkney and Jersey.

Tell us something interesting about yourself...

I recently became a dad for the first time; my little boy Makai is nearly four months old and watching him grow with each day is the most amazing feeling.

What's your favourite Christmas song to sign?
'Jingle Bells' all the way!



Luke

What's your favourite thing about being in the Roadshow team?

How we can hugely impact deaf children and young people's lives. Many of the deaf children and young people we see haven't had the opportunity to meet deaf adults before so it's incredible to think we become a Deaf role model for them.

Why did you decide to become a Roadshow Officer?

I've always wanted to work with deaf children and young people and act as a role model, showing them what deaf people can achieve. I was born Deaf and am the third generation of my Deaf family. A job that's office-based, going to the same place every day, wouldn't suit me.

What's your favourite Christmas song to sign?

Music isn't something I'm keen on, but I do love watching films so I'd say 'Elf' is my favourite Christmas film.



Aaron

Why did you decide to become a Roadshow Officer?

A friend sent me a link to the role and I suddenly remembered all the times I visited the Roadshow as a child. I wanted to make sure that deaf children now get to experience the same as I did.

Tell us something interesting about yourself...

I have a hearing dog, Ellie, who joins the team on Roadshow visits!

What's your favourite Christmas song to sign?

My all-time favourite is 'Merry Xmas Everybody' by Slade. It's an iconic bop and it's quite fun to sign too.



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 or email us on roadshow@ndcs.org.uk.





St John's
Catholic Specialist School



SUCCESS comes in many forms and at St John's Catholic Specialist School each achievement is always celebrated.

The school offers residential and day placements for children aged between 4 and 18 who are hearing impaired or have complex sensory or communication challenges. Thanks to their hard work, over the last academic year, there have been plenty of reasons to cheer! Ann Bradbury, Headteacher at St John's (previously known as St John's Catholic School for the Deaf), tells us more.

“Success and achievement for the children and young people who attend St John's is very individual. It's not all about GCSEs and A-Levels, for example. For some children, the simple act of coming to school after months or years of being a reluctant learner, or even a school refuser, is a success.

“Before coming to St John's some children and their families and carers have been told they'll never achieve much or ever sit an exam because of their difficulties. That's not our approach. We see the potential in every child and we are incredibly ambitious for them. While academic achievement

is important, we believe that can take many forms – for some children yes, GCSEs and A-Levels are their goals, and goals they achieve well. For others, a more vocational route is their choice, and again, one where they excel. Destinations are as important as results.

“This year our Sixth Form students have secured positive destinations and achieved great things, both academically and vocationally, following in the footsteps of former students who have gone on to achieve their goals. Hollie, who left St John's last year, has secured a fantastic job at Cumbria Police working in IT. Alex, who left this year, has a full-time job in joinery (he also passed his driving test!) while Mqhele is following his drama dream and has begun a performing arts course at mainstream college.

“The destinations our young people choose are incredibly diverse; Macauley has gone on to study Arboriculture, Kacey is studying Hospitality, Robert has achieved distinctions in Engineering and Julian is also pursuing joinery. And this year's

Sixth Form are no different – they too, I’m sure, will achieve their goals and have just as positive destinations ahead of them.

“We’re always incredibly proud of the children’s achievements. They are a testament to their hard work to build a bright future.”

The school is also celebrating a hat-trick of “outstanding” ratings from regulator Ofsted who found the school’s residential service was, for the third time in a row, outstanding in all areas.

Praising the school’s “highly skilled staff”, inspectors found that due to the residential care provided at St John’s “children develop an invaluable sense of self-determination and confidence” and make “remarkable progress”.

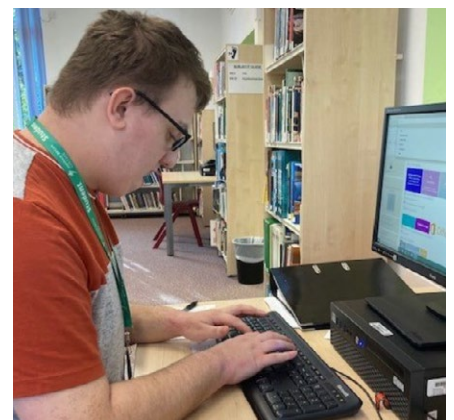
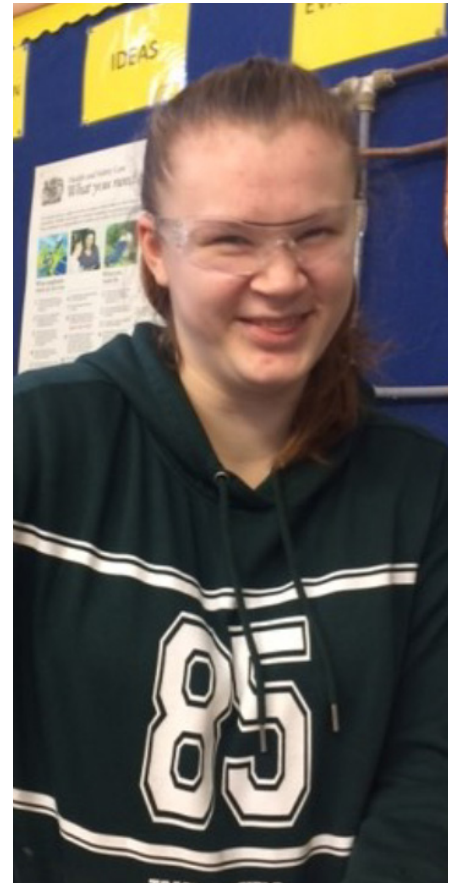
The report noted: “Children benefit enormously from the care and dedication that staff bring to their role. One parent said that ‘a light came on again’ for their child when they began staying in the residence.”

The inspectors also noted: “Children become more confident, and their social skills improve. Children who tend towards social isolation are helped to become more involved with the other children. One child said, ‘If I was not in residential, I would just play computer games all night. Being here means I mix with the others, and I know that is good for me.’

Becoming more self-assured helps children to prepare for life beyond the school.”

Additionally, inspectors found that children made “excellent progress” with their education and for some it led to “considerably increased attendance” and “markedly improved results.” Older children are supported to attend college courses, which help to prepare them for independence.

The report adds: “The progress for some children is remarkable, given their starting points.”



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Local groups

Happy birthday local groups!



Local support groups help thousands of deaf children and their families around the country. New groups are created all the time, and the four below have celebrated milestone anniversaries this year. Congratulations to them all!

.....

Rotherham Deaf Connections

“This group means so much to me. I’ve never given so much time and dedication to anything before. Witnessing the smiles on the children’s faces as they arrive and their massive grins as they depart gives me such a warm and humble feeling. When I was a child, I wished so much to see the deaf community come together. I never experienced that, and it was difficult.

For our fourth birthday, we’re having a big party! There’ll be food stalls providing hot dogs, candy floss, milkshakes, nachos and lots of tasty treats. We’ll be asking families to come in their party clothes and dance the night away!”

Sophie, Chair, is profoundly deaf.



Northamptonshire Deaf Children’s Society

“I met my co-founder and friend, Nicola, at a pre-school group for deaf children. Deafness was a totally new experience for us and our families, but our friendship really helped us through. We soon realised there was nothing much in the local area, or indeed the county, that gave peer support to deaf children and their families. With the help of the National Deaf Children’s Society, we decided to set up our own local group.

We’ve had an amazing 10 years. It really felt like a milestone that needed to be celebrated, so we had a fab party with lots of our families in attendance.”

Pam, one of the founders, is mum to Keira (16) who is deaf and Reece (11) who is hearing.

Peterborough and District Deaf Children's Society

"We'd had to cancel our original birthday plans due to Covid-19, so it was a very special celebration in the end. A chance for us all finally to get everyone together, including those who had grown up through the charity.

Even during the worst days of the pandemic, we managed to keep in contact with our families. My daughter, Poppy, helped me organise online cookery sessions, magic workshops, art, dance and science events.

On our birthday we had a great day with the usual mix of fun and information. Running a group can be a challenge, but events like our birthday party make it all worthwhile."

Amy, Chair, is mum to Jack (12) who is deaf and Poppy (24) who is hearing.



West Scotland Deaf Children's Society

"This year, we celebrate the West Scotland Deaf Children's Society's 75th birthday! The charity was established in 1947 by a group of parents. Today it's supported by parents, siblings, professionals and deaf people themselves.

We run weekly clubs and events and offer year-round support, all in an effort to improve confidence, self-esteem, mental health and wellbeing, while breaking down barriers for deaf children and young people.

We'll celebrate our birthday as much as possible! We'll be arranging some family fun days, possibly a Ceilidh and a fancy dinner where we can all get dressed up in our finest."

Iain, Family Support Officer, has a younger brother who is deaf.



To find a local group in your area, check out our map at ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup.

Events



Kate and Holi

Our events for parents, carers and families

All our events are interactive and offer information, support, and the opportunity to share experiences. Our events now take place online and in-person.

- Supporting Parents New to Hearing Loss
- Spotlight on Professionals
- Education, Health and Care Plans
- Bounce Along to Baby Sign
- Hearing Care
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Family Sign Language: For families with deaf children aged 0 to 11
- Raising a Deaf Child courses
- Expert Parent Programme
- Parents as Partners
- An Introduction to Campaigns
- Families Leading the Way
- Education – Early Learning and Early Communication
- Technology and Apps for Independence
- Happy Futures

Becoming an expert parent

Kate, mum to Holi (4), who is severely to profoundly deaf, attended our Expert Parent Programme hoping to learn as much as she could about deafness.

“I found out about the Expert Parent Programme on the National Deaf Children’s Society website. I was working my way through all the charity’s relevant sessions and, as this was a three-part event held over consecutive weeks, I thought I could learn a lot.

To be honest I wasn’t sure what I was expecting. My daughter was identified as deaf late so I felt like I had a lot to learn about deafness, education, health and deaf culture. I was hoping to get good solid information from the course facilitator (which I did), meet like-minded people, hear their journeys and share my own.

The format included being with the whole group, as well as small group discussions and activities, with a break in the middle and then back for more of the same. There were six to eight of us on the course, so it was quite intimate. We had similar aged children and experiences of deafness and there were a good few with children with cochlear implants.

The most interesting part for me was the discussions around Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans as it was something I was applying for at the time. It helped me understand the process before, during and after. The facilitator was extremely

knowledgeable and so the information she shared was really valuable. I learnt lots of tips and skills to help improve the life of a deaf young person. The information on what we were entitled to, such as benefits, and what to put in place and when, has really helped!

The facilitator had a disabled adult daughter, so her own lived experiences played a very important role in the course. It was nice to know somebody wasn’t just delivering the sessions but truly understood. I enjoyed the course leader’s warmth and empathy and she was excellent at what she did, so all activities and discussions were thought-provoking and relevant.

I’d most definitely recommend the sessions. It was enjoyable as well as a great learning opportunity.”



It was enjoyable as well as a great learning opportunity.

Bonding at the Buzz Book Club

Noah (9), who is moderately deaf, took part in our Buzz Summer Book Club, sharing his views on a graphic novel written by a deaf author.

“I signed up to the book club because I love reading and it looked like a lot of fun. I thought it would also be a good way to meet other deaf children. I hoped to make some deaf friends and have some fun during the summer holidays.

The book club was on Zoom, which was good because I could join in from home. The book we were talking about was ‘El Deafo’ by CeCe Bell. It was exciting to get the book in the post! I really enjoyed it because CeCe was a deaf child like me and she had lots of adventures.

The event was good fun, we chatted about the book and Amy (the event facilitator) also played some games with us at the start, which I enjoyed. I also liked talking about the characters with Amy and talking to the other deaf children. We recommended our favourite books to each other and I asked for one of them for my birthday!

I’d definitely tell other children to sign up to National Deaf Children’s Society events. They are lots of fun!”

Noah’s mum Becky added:

“I was hoping Noah would be able to meet other deaf children at the book club and enjoy getting to know them. There were three sessions and the

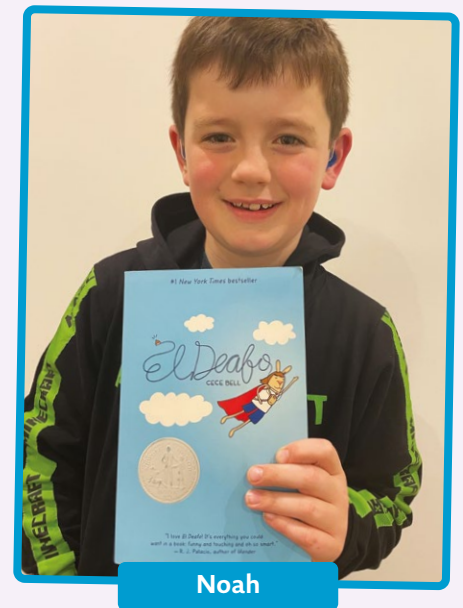
details of the Zoom meetings were sent to us before each one, along with information about what would happen in the session. We didn’t need to use the communication support but British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters and captioners were available.

Amy was really good at engaging the children. They discussed different aspects of the book at each session, and there were warm-up games so the children could find out about each other. Noah loved socialising with the other children and he also enjoyed reading a book with a deaf character.

I’d definitely sign Noah (and my daughter who’s also deaf) up for future events. It’s important they get the opportunity to meet other deaf children.”



I hoped to make some deaf friends and have some fun.



Noah

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.

- Half Term Art Workshop
- Winter Online Social and Quiz
- Get Informed: Being deaf

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



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

Fundraising

Home and away!

We've been blown away by the creativity of the fundraising challenges we've seen this year; from walking 50,000 steps every week to trekking the Accursed Mountains. There really has been something for everyone.

Home

The first day of December marks week 48 of Tess walking 50,000 steps every week this year. By the end of this month, Tess will have taken a staggering 2.6 million steps – equivalent to Land's End to John O'Groats and back again!

She was inspired to fundraise because her son Lucas was identified as deaf at eight weeks old. He had hearing aids fitted at 12 weeks and has now undergone cochlear implant surgery.

"I've benefited so much from the events and information that the National Deaf Children's Society provides and the community that I've come across, so I just wanted to give something back," Tess told us.

Tess wanted to set herself a fitness challenge that was achievable and that she could fit around Lucas's ever-changing routine. "It wasn't practical to join a class and I knew I wouldn't have the fitness level to do a marathon," she says. "So I decided to make a commitment to get out of the house every day and go for a walk.

"I found it a great way to process Lucas's hearing loss diagnosis and focus on the positives. It's also been a great opportunity to take Lucas on 'listening walks' since getting his hearing aids, and now cochlear implants, introducing him to lots of different sounds."



Having recruited eight colleagues to join her in the month of July, Tess and her friends are on track to raise £2,000 by New Year's Eve. "I've been really blown away by how much support I've been given by people who I've not heard from for years," says Tess. "Some have even shared their own hearing loss stories that they've not been open about before."

Tess's New Year challenge tips

- 1 Find something that you enjoy and that you'll look forward to doing, otherwise it just becomes a chore and you're not likely to keep it up on the difficult days.
- 2 Share your challenge with others as this will keep you committed and supported.
- 3 Try and tie it in with raising awareness, as well as raising money. I hope that more people know there are 50,000 deaf kids in the UK as a result of my challenge.

→ You can support Tess by donating to the National Deaf Children's Society at justgiving.com/teamtorj.



Away



Holding the crown as trek king of the National Deaf Children’s Society, Roger took on his 18th trek this year, conquering the Accursed Mountains of Albania. Joined by 10 other plucky adventurers, he walked for up to 10 hours a day, with overnight stays in hostels and B&Bs. On the penultimate day, they skirted Zla Kolata, the highest mountain in Montenegro, which at 2,543m is almost twice the height of Ben Nevis.

“The joy of trekking is to see the parts and people of countries that tourists will never see. Every time you achieve an objective, it makes you feel alive. You’re never conscious of your age – in fact you feel much younger,” says Roger (72). “I’ve been the oldest member on 14 of my 18 treks, but never felt it.”

Roger was first inspired to support the National Deaf Children’s Society over 20 years ago when the daughter of one of his friends and former workmates was born deaf and the family was supported by the charity.

“There was no history of deafness in either family and they felt lost,” explains Roger. “The National Deaf Children’s Society then stepped in with all sorts of advice which meant the world to them.”



Since then, Roger has thrown himself into fundraising for us, not only trekking but also completing the London Marathon, an annual golf auction, curry nights, quiz nights, a big band night and even a sponsored fast and diet. He’s raised a mind-blowing £80,000 over the years!

➔ Why not set yourself a New Year’s resolution to do something amazing in 2023 for deaf children? Get in touch with the team at community.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk to find out more and to receive an exclusive discount on overseas treks.

When I'm a grown-up

DEAF WORKS EVERYWHERE

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

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

I'm an artist, art therapist and trainer because...

I'm passionate about improving the lives of Deaf people and providing a means to recover from barriers and challenges.

As an artist I create my own art, receiving grants and commissions for bigger projects. As an art therapist, I work with adults and children, supporting them through anxieties and trauma. I use art to help individuals understand their feelings and reflect on how they might resolve issues. As a trainer, I provide workshops in schools and colleges, and provide deaf awareness and accessibility training to professionals.

I'm profoundly Deaf and, as an adult, I've had to fight for good notetakers or to have support with my written English and grammar. I now work with British Sign Language interpreters every day because of the emotional and complex nature of therapy, and because there are lots of meetings!

We can't pretend that barriers to access for Deaf people don't exist. My advice is to use the legislation there is to counter discrimination.

Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq



I'm a GCSE English teacher because...

I like making a difference. I teach 16-to-19-year-olds that are retaking English Language. Some have learning difficulties, or struggled with English, and for some it's their second language. I love to break down the barrier and prove that GCSE English isn't as scary as it may seem!

I left school at 16 and moved to Florida with my family. When I was 21, I returned to the UK. I was in a tough position as a single mum, but I put myself through college and university. I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. As a student, I was offered an interpreter and extra time for exams and coursework. I relied on a notetaker to get me through lectures.

I have profound hearing loss and wear hearing aids. As a teacher, the biggest challenge is being in a room of hearing students. Honesty and encouraging deaf awareness help them understand me and what I need.

A previous line manager asked if I thought I was being overambitious in teaching hearing students. Sadly her words stuck with me for a while, but I'm now working to become an English lead at a different college. I'm proud of what I've achieved as a deaf single mum, not just as a deaf teacher.

Natalie Jennings



I'm a coral scientist because...

I love helping to develop techniques and tools so that scientists can understand coral reefs and help to protect them. I quantify coral health using special camera technology to accurately measure colour.

I knew I wanted to study marine science from a young age and was always dragging my parents to aquariums. However, I didn't perform in my A-levels as expected and so went to university through clearing. I found myself at a place I'd never heard of, Falmouth Marine School. This started the journey to getting my PhD 10 years later.

I have moderate bilateral hearing loss. During my undergraduate studies, having dedicated notetakers and a dictaphone to record lectures, provided by Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), was crucial. One of the nice things about working underwater is the use of hand signals so I'm not reliant on hearing.

I've achieved one of every degree level available in the UK and have published my research. I've also won scholarships to conduct research in Bermuda.

Persistence is key and you can never have too many 'irons in the fire'. Go for opportunities you don't think you'll get because every single one is a chance to learn.

Jonny Teague



Be inspired by other deaf people at work in our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign video at 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.



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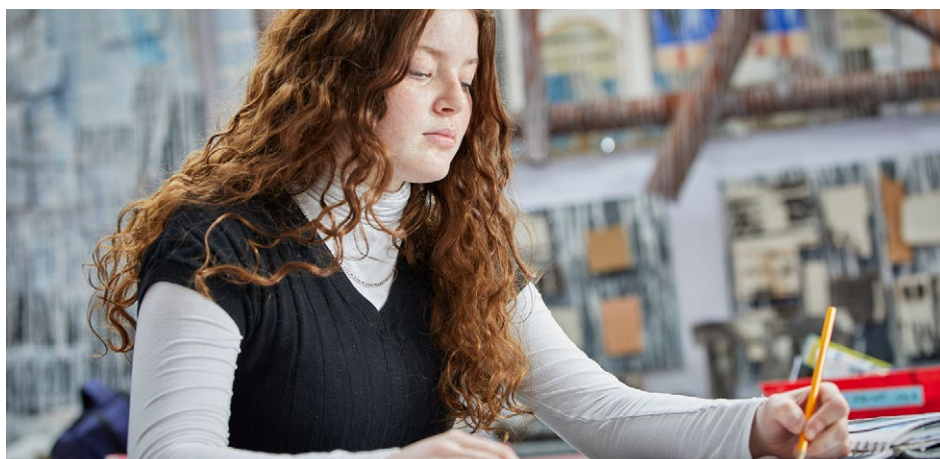
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SIXTH FORM

at Mary Hare School



We are the largest centre for deaf pupils wanting to study A Levels and BTECs in the UK.

Choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses – you may even want a mixture of the two! Whatever subjects you choose, Sixth Form life at Mary Hare will be surrounded by a big group of deaf peers and a great social life.



SCAN HERE TO FIND OUT MORE!



Securing the future of deaf children and young people

www.maryhare.org.uk | [@maryharieschool](https://www.instagram.com/maryharieschool)

