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National Deaf Children's Society

families

Don't miss our 3D technology experience on pages 28–29!

Twin successes

> "The boys showed an understanding of Italian quickly, in the same way they did with English.

Autumn 2019 Issue 54

My deafness didn't stop me…

becoming a circus artist

Ryan

RYAN (28), WHO'S SEVERELY TO PROFOUNDLY DEAF AND WEARS HEARING AIDS, DISCOVERED HIS LOVE FOR CIRCUS ARTS ACCIDENTALLY. "From a young age I liked silent screen cinema like Charlie Chaplin," he says. "But I fell into circus. My parents weren't able to pick me up from school one day and I stumbled upon an after-school circus club."

Ryan went on to study at circus schools in Bristol and London, learning all sorts of different disciplines. "I found aerial difficult – it's hard to hear the teacher when you're 10m high and hanging upside down on a rope," he jokes.

"Being on stage was the greatest feeling though; I truly felt myself there. It was all about sharing something honest and celebrating something playful."

But to be a good circus artist you don't just have to be a good performer. "To get to where I am today I've had to wear many hats," Ryan explains. "That's a bad joke because I'm specifically a hat juggler now! I've had to learn how to market and promote myself, handle bookings and write funding applications etc. Circus performers work really hard but there's a lot of reward too.

> **"I think I learned the physical theatre and clowning aspects of circus quicker because of my deafness.**

"The main challenge I face is networking. It can be exhausting meeting new people who are happy talking in bustling environments. I've learned to let people know I'm hard of hearing. I also struggle in conversations on long car journeys with other performers or when rehearsing in halls with bad acoustics. In these situations I find a radio aid useful.

"On the flip side, I think I learned the physical theatre and clowning aspects of circus quicker because of my deafness. A lot of it was facial expression, body language and listening with your entire body. Learning by watching comes naturally to me." ⓕ

For information you can share with professionals about adapting activities for your child, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/deafawarenessresources.

Get involved in research that will shape the future for deaf young people

Do you use sign language?

Perhaps you haven't told anyone about your hearing loss?

Do you use a hearing aid or cochlear implant?

READY (Recording Emerging Adulthood in Deaf Youth) is a long-term research study, following young people who have a hearing loss as they become independent adults.

If you are 15–18 and you have a hearing loss or see yourself as deaf, then we want to hear from you.

Find out more and apply:
www.manchester.ac.uk/thereadystudy
ready@manchester.ac.uk

This code will take you to more information in written English, BSL or Sign Supported Spoken English. It will tell you how to get in touch with us and what to do next.

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SORD

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families

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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 43–45 for more information on supporting our work.

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Hello

Autumn is almost upon us again and thoughts are turning to the new school year. You can check out our advice on how to prepare your child on pages 26–27.

This issue, my last as editor, focuses on careers, with the launch of our campaign to improve support and aspirations for deaf young people (see pages 40–41 to find out more). Read 24-year-old Niamh's story of how she's risen through the ranks in the Scottish Parliament with the help of some adjustments in the workplace (pages 20–21) and how work experience has helped Hannah (17) feel prepared for the world of work (pages 18–19).

The new editor, Kerrina, will bring you the next issue. I've absolutely loved working on this magazine for the last five years and it's been such a privilege to meet so many of you and hear your amazing stories. Thank you for sharing them with me and I look forward to reading more of them in the future.

Karen

Karen Harlow, Editor
magazine@ndcs.org.uk

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NEWS

Check out our 3D technology experience!

We've developed a three-dimensional, interactive experience to help children and young people explore our technology products. Download Zappar for free from the App Store, then scan this code to explore gaming headsets in 3D. Find out more on pages 28–29.

New technology videos

In our two new technology videos – one on radio aids and one on technology to listen to music – deaf children and young people explain how using these products helps them in everyday situations. The videos are useful for parents, children and professionals. Go to **www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam** and search for 'radio aids' or 'headphones'.

Celebrating five years of a special partnership!

In May we celebrated our five-year partnership with law firm Fieldfisher at a special lunch also attended by families who've received their help. Their lawyers work with us providing voluntary legal services so children can get the right support in school. Fieldfisher have also been raising money with our staff in this year's London Legal Walk so we can help more families.

"Volunteering allows me to use my legal skills to offer real support to help deaf children get the education they need and deserve. Knowing you've helped a child go to a school that can meet their needs and give them such great opportunities for the future is unparalleled and makes me passionate to keep helping more children achieve their potential." Amelia Thomson, legal volunteer.

Five years of Raising the Bar

Raising the Bar* is our annual search to find talented young deaf musicians, dancers and actors. We've chosen 30 deaf young people aged 8 to 18 from all over the UK to attend workshops led by successful deaf role models – before taking to the stage to demonstrate their skills! Taking place on 28–29 September, this is an amazing opportunity for deaf young performers to meet others with incredible talents, and show that deaf young people can excel in the performing arts.

Find out more about Raising the Bar at **www.ndcs.org.uk/raisingthebar**.

*Raising the Bar is funded by The John Thaw Foundation, The D'Oyly Cart Charitable Trust and other kind supporters.

Calling all deaf young people aged 13–16

Do you want to make a difference to other deaf children and young people? Then we'd love to hear from you! We're looking for 18 deaf young people aged 13–16 to make up our next Young People's Advisory Board (YAB). Join the board to help us learn more about what deaf young people want and need, meet other deaf young people, learn new skills and make a difference. For more information visit **www.buzz.org.uk/yab**.

Play our lottery and support deaf children

Enter the Winning Dreams Lottery, the official lottery of the National Deaf Children's Society, and you could win up to £25,000 in our weekly draw! By playing you will be helping us to transform the lives of deaf children and their families across the UK. Sign up now at **bit.ly/2YLLKxn**.

Our children's book competition has a winner!

Congratulations to Maya Wasserman (9), the talented winner of our children's book competition! Maya will now work with author Sarah Driver to turn her story into a book. Find out the latest at **www.ndcs.org.uk/bookcompetition**.

Work experience in Scottish Parliament

Lucy (16), one of our Young Campaigners and Young People's Advisory Board member who is profoundly deaf, recently did a week's work experience with the Scottish Parliament and had to commute across Edinburgh to the Victoria Quay building alone. Lucy spent two days in a team with Alex Dunne from the Disability Equality and British Sign Language Policy team, attending various meetings and training sessions. She then spent a day shadowing Maree Todd – Minister for Children and Young People. She also got the opportunity to attend the First Minister's Questions.

Is your child interested in politics? You can also read our interview with Niamh on pages 20–21 to find out about her experiences as a Private Secretary in the Scottish Parliament.

Sign language for the whole family

Our Signs for the Future project* is helping families of deaf children communicate in Northern Ireland. All members of the family and extended family are able to learn and practise sign language in many different ways, including fun social activities at sign language clubs and special parent sessions at Jordanstown School, building a whole network of support around a child.

Participants told us: "For the whole family to learn together and cover the basics, not just in signing but also about Deaf culture and to be taught by a deaf person, was amazing."

"I feel better prepared to communicate with my grandchild and have the skills to help her feel an important part of our family life."

Contact **nioffice@ndcs.org.uk** to find out more.

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*Signs for the Future is funded by the Department for Communities Northern Ireland.

Comment

Introducing a milestone new project with deaf young people aged 15–18

When we launched our new strategy two-and-a-half years ago it was clear that one of our key focus areas would be supporting deaf young people to overcome barriers to independence. Our staff campaign tirelessly and provide services to address this major barrier but there's more we need to do.

Despite all our work, there are major gaps in our understanding and knowledge about deaf young people's outcomes, including their wellbeing, as they leave school and enter further study and/or employment. This makes it harder for us to understand how we can best support them as they enter young adulthood.

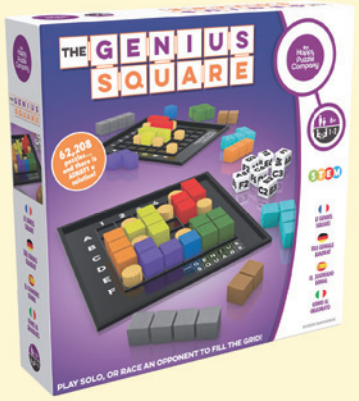
That's why we've commissioned an exciting new project called READY. READY stands for Recording Emerging Adulthood in Deaf Youth. This research will help us better understand the drivers and barriers to deaf young people achieving their potential and, ultimately, help us campaign more effectively and provide better services and support to young people.

This research will be carried out by the University of Manchester and the University of Edinburgh. It will involve recruiting hundreds of deaf young people aged 15–18 and understanding the challenges they experience over the next five years, mainly through questionnaires and some face-to-face interviews. We're incredibly excited about READY. We understand that it will be the first research project of its kind – a milestone project for deaf young people – and will make a major difference to their lives. We really hope you'll help us spread the word and if your child is aged 15–18, encourage them to take part.

To find out more, please visit **www.manchester.ac.uk/thereadystudy.**

Susan

Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive

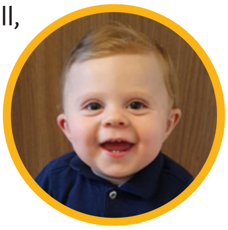

THE GENIUS SQUARE
62,208 puzzles – and there is ALWAYS a solution!
PLAY SOLO, OR RACE AN OPPONENT TO FILL THE GRID!

SUPER STARS

Every day deaf children achieve amazing things and their friends, family members and professionals go the extra mile to make sure deafness isn't a barrier to them enjoying life. Read on to find out about some of these superstars.

Brogan recently started swimming lessons and has achieved two swimming badges in his first two lessons. He has struggled with behaviour and concentration so this is an amazing achievement and milestone. The whole family are so proud!

Hannah, mum to Brogan (5) who has mild to moderate hearing loss.



Arlo talks really well, keeps his hearing aids on during waking hours, signs to us and has learnt to walk exactly a year on from his diagnosis. His new trick is taking off his 'ears' at bedtime on request. He never makes a fuss and is always confident and full of smiles. We're so proud of him.

Carla, mum to Arlo (1) who has moderate to severe hearing loss.

Is your deaf child or someone in their lives a superstar? Has your child reached a milestone or achieved something special? Or has their friend or teacher gone above and beyond to support them? Nominate someone you'd like to celebrate by emailing magazine@ndcs.org.uk.

Alice has always been shy and quiet but when she started swimming lessons her confidence began to improve. Aged 10, she was diagnosed with vestibular migraines, which left her very ill and unable to swim for over a year. Alice has started swimming again and recently won three National Championship Gold Medals. We're all very proud as Alice hasn't let anything stop her achieving success.

Giza, mum to Alice (12) who has profound hearing loss in her left ear.

Ryan recently took part in our local Scout show and it was so emotional to see him on stage singing, dancing and acting. I'd like to thank his Scout group and the local Scouting community for being so supportive and giving him this opportunity. Ryan has loved the experience and we are so proud of our superstar!

Leah, mum to Ryan (12) who is profoundly deaf.

Baye is such an intelligent, strong-willed little boy and has amazed us every day since his diagnosis. He loves to communicate and is keeping up with his hearing peers. His baby brother is also profoundly deaf and Baye is already the best role model. We are immensely proud of Baye and his determination to achieve his goals.

Carly, mum to Baye (4) who is profoundly deaf.

Buddy has experienced congestion on top of his permanent hearing loss and was recently fitted with hearing aids. Throughout this process he's been the happiest, bravest, cheekiest little boy and has never batted an eyelid with the testing and having his hearing aids put in. He's now starting to say and sign things he needs.

Charlotte, mum to Buddy (18 months) who has mild hearing loss.

When technology fails...

Raising Nancy

The ups and downs of parenting a deaf child

> **I reminded her to go back to basics and stand in front of Nancy so she could lip-read.**

Jess and her husband **Matt** are parents to **Alice (7)** and twins **Nancy** and **Connie (5)**. Nancy is profoundly deaf and was fitted with cochlear implants at 20 months.

NANCY WEARS A RADIO AID AT SCHOOL SO SHE CAN HEAR TEACHERS TALKING TO HER. It's transformed her experience at school, speeding up her ability to speak in full sentences and her understanding of what's going on in class. We never expected the technology to fail. And if it did, it would be easy to get it fixed, right?

One afternoon at school Nancy told her teacher that she couldn't hear her. The teacher changed her cochlear implant batteries; as this usually solves any problem. But that didn't work so she switched the radio aid off and on again. Still nothing. Maybe the radio aid was running out of battery? A quick charge-up still made no difference.

I picked Nancy up after school and her head was bowed. She gave me no eye contact. At the drop of a hat, her world had been thrown into chaos. She was once again the withdrawn little child who couldn't communicate properly. The teacher was lost, saying, "I don't know how to teach her if she can't hear me. She can't access the curriculum." I reminded her to go back to basics and stand in front of Nancy so she could lip-read.

Nancy then started saying that she couldn't hear at home. We didn't even use the radio aid at home! We did a few tests, standing behind her and asking questions but she didn't turn around. We thought her processors must be broken and took her to audiology. They checked the electrodes inside her head, which were working, and changed her whole set of cochlear implants; the processors, magnets and leads.

Nancy still said she couldn't hear. None of us knew British Sign Language (BSL) well enough to have a conversation and I was angry at myself for not having kept up signing regularly. I'd forgotten most of my Level 2 and I had flashbacks to the time when Nancy was a toddler and could hear nothing, nor understand any BSL. The uncertainty was killing me. Would I ever be able to communicate with her again and had everything we'd built up since her implants been lost?

Finally, the cavalry arrived! Through painstaking deliberation Nancy's Teacher of the Deaf (what would we do without her?!) worked out it was the bit of her processors that receives the radio aid signal that was broken. New parts were ordered and Nancy could once again hear in class. I realised that, in actual fact, Nancy could always hear us at home. Telling us she couldn't was just her way of explaining the struggle she was going through at school trying to communicate. We now know another way of fixing the technology if it should fail and have learnt (yet again) never to take things for granted! f

➔ To find out more about radio aids and how you can borrow one from us for free visit **www.ndcs.org.uk/radioaidsatschool.**

For more information on learning sign language go to **www.ndcs.org.uk/signlanguage.**

Why is Molly deaf?

RECENTLY I'VE BEEN CONTEMPLATING WHY MOLLY IS DEAF. What physically caused her deafness? Is there any purpose to it or was she just unlucky and drew the auditory short straw?

At the 21 week scan I had when pregnant with Molly, all present were amazed to see her clearly lift her hands over her ears. Someone once told me that ultrasound is incredibly loud to a foetus. Now I know some sleep through it and newborns can sleep through the most astonishing noises. Could it really be that to Molly, who is incredibly sensitive, the scan was uncomfortably loud?

Molly had a lovely home birth but was very jaundiced and couldn't feed properly so we ended up in the Special Care Baby Unit. She was given the antibiotic Gentamycin which can cause deafness and its levels should be carefully monitored. Days later, at Molly's newborn hearing screening, the woman became flustered and repeated the test three times. She thought background noise was interfering but was sure it was fine. We heard no more about it. Weeks later, we requested my and Molly's notes only to find the hospital had lost them both...

It wasn't until Molly was two that we realised she wasn't hearing properly. The GP looked at me like I was fussing and shouted Molly's name. She turned to look and he told me not to worry. Months later, when her speech was clearly delayed, another GP sent us immediately to audiology and the rest, as they say, is history.

Was her hearing damaged from the Gentamycin? Did the hospital have something to hide, such as inadequate monitoring of the antibiotic levels or an incompetent newborn hearing screening technician? Or maybe she's deaf for no reason other than fate.

But could there be a deeper reason? Following this challenging line of thought I've asked myself what deafness gives my dear girl. If you've read this column before you'll know it gives her a ton of challenges. But I'm focusing on the positives. If at some unfathomable level there's a deeper meaning to her deafness, then does it in any way benefit her?

Well, Molly's deafness gives her the ability to pick up on non-spoken and subtle communication. She can read people well and is very perceptive to hidden and deeper meanings. Deafness also gives her incredible visual insight, she notices tiny details and has a profound eye for the artistic and the beautiful. Being so highly sensitive, deafness also gives her a buffer; she can take out her aids and be in her own quiet world and develop a powerful imagination. Deafness gives her a sense of being different which has taught her not to be judgemental. She's also finding the many ways she's the same as everyone else, bringing empathy.

It's a tangled web of thoughts, but focus on the benefits that deafness brings your child. They may not be obvious at first but it's often our greatest challenges that are our greatest gifts...

➔ **For more information on causes of deafness go to www.ndcs.org.uk/causesofdeafness.**

Raising Molly

Navigating between the deaf and hearing worlds

> **Molly's deafness gives her the ability to pick up on non-spoken and subtle communication.**

Lara and her husband **Henry** are parents to **Conrad (15), Molly (12)** and **Faye (9)**. Molly is moderately deaf and Faye has intermittent glue ear.

Making decisions for baby Finnley

When eight-week-old Finnley was diagnosed as deaf, parents Sarah-Louise and Mark had lots of choices to make for him, including whether to apply for Disability Living Allowance and how Finnley would learn to communicate.

Finnley's story
how his parents claimed disability living allowance

SITTING WITH OTHER PARENTS OF DEAF CHILDREN IN BELFAST, Sarah-Louise and Mark couldn't believe what a relief it was to be surrounded by those who understood how they felt. They knew they had lots of decisions to make for 11-week-old son Finnley, about technology, communication and their finances, but they now felt supported and knew they could do it.

They first suspected something wasn't right when Finnley failed his newborn hearing screening. "We took him home and as the days went on I realised that something might be wrong," Sarah-Louise says. "It's quite noisy here with Finnley's older two siblings and he wasn't really reacting to sound."

At eight weeks old, Finnley's hearing was retested. The audiologist confirmed he was moderately deaf in both ears and that they'd hear from ENT in four weeks to get his hearing aids. "I was shocked," she says. "The audiologist hadn't given me any information. I stood in the hospital car park and thought, 'My eight week old can't hear me, what am I going to do now?'"

Sarah-Louise went home and told Mark what had happened. "I didn't want to believe it," he says. "I thought maybe they'd got it wrong and brushed it off."

But while Mark wanted to pretend it wasn't happening, Sarah-Louise accepted the diagnosis quickly and was prompted into action. "I'm not somebody who can sit still," she says. "I went on Google that night and found the National Deaf Children's Society's main Facebook page and the Northern Ireland one. I clicked on an advert for a Newly Diagnosed Weekend event in two weeks' time and booked on."

> **“It was so reassuring to hear another mother saying the same things I was thinking.**

Sarah-Louise and Mark explain that the event changed how they felt. "It was then I finally accepted Finnley's deafness," Mark says. "Listening to the speakers and getting to meet other families, it reassured me everything was going to be fine."

"It was so emotional," Sarah-Louise adds. "Finnley was the youngest child there. I think I had been running on adrenaline until then but when they asked me to tell my story the

> **“We didn’t know we’d be entitled to anything...**

emotions hit me like a bus and I burst into tears.

“One of the other mums was saying, ‘Did I drink too much coffee? Is it my fault?’ It was so reassuring to hear another mother saying the same things I was thinking. Then to see the three deaf adults talking at the end, one girl who’s a barrister, one who’s just completed her A-levels and a man who’s an Olympic tennis player. That was incredible.”

Since the event Sarah-Louise and Mark have felt confident in making more decisions for Finnley, including deciding to apply for Disability Living Allowance (DLA). “We didn’t know we’d be entitled to anything like that,” Sarah-Louise says. “We’re a family who have never claimed anything so it didn’t even cross my mind.

“You assume a baby’s a baby and you’re not supposed to leave them alone anyway. But it’s not until you sit down and fill in the DLA application form that you realise all the extra things you have to do. Little things like if he wakes up in the night you can’t soothe him with sound, you have to physically touch him. Then all the trips to the hospital which is a 45 minute drive away and all the diesel that uses. We used the National Deaf Children’s Society’s booklet to help us fill the form in.”

Happily the family later found out they had been awarded DLA and encourage other families with young children to apply too and not to think they have to wait until their child is older.

The family also made the decision to bring Finnley up bilingual using speech and sign language. “I knew his deafness was permanent, it wouldn’t go away and it could get worse, so we decided on the bilingual route,” Sarah-Louise explains. “I’m a healthcare assistant so I know a little about the Deaf community. I wanted Finnley to be able to thrive in both communities, to give him choice. I want him to have deaf friends and be able to communicate when he’s not wearing hearing technology.”

“I was all for it,” Mark agrees. “Anything so he can progress as he gets older.”

The family have enrolled on a British Sign Language course through a charity called Sound Friends and are teaching their other children to sign too. Sound Friends also run a peer support group which the family attend. “Everybody helps each other along in the journey and that’s priceless,” Mark says.

“Everybody who has met Sarah-Louise has been stunned at how quickly she gathered information. It’s made it so easy for the whole family, having the support we have now.

“When Finnley was first diagnosed I didn’t want to believe it. It’s so hard to accept and it’s frightening. There’s no right way to react but the quicker you accept it as a parent, the quicker you can move on and make things better for your child. Finnley’s fantastic, he hasn’t let his disability hold him back one bit. He lights up any room.”

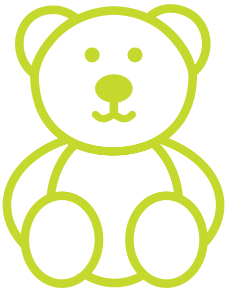
Finnley is currently undergoing further tests to see if his hearing levels have changed.

To find a newly diagnosed event near you, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

To find out more about DLA and for help applying, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/dla.

Your autumn checklist

✓ Helping your child sleep



Sleep problems are quite common in deaf children and not knowing why your child is experiencing them can be frustrating. There are many possible reasons for sleep issues in deaf children, including being frightened in the dark when they can’t see or hear or not liking having their hearing technology taken out. Find out more at **www.ndcs.org.uk/sleep**.

✓ Choosing childcare

Finding and choosing childcare that works for you and your child can be challenging for any parent. But as the parent of a deaf child, there are some other issues you’ll need to think about. Our webpage has lots of tips and a checklist to help you feel more confident about choosing the right childcare for your child, whether it’s a nursery, playgroup, childminder, nanny or family and friends. **www.ndcs.org.uk/childcare**.

✓ Acoustics at nursery and school

If your child is going to nursery or you’re starting to visit potential schools, you might be thinking more about acoustics. Deaf children find it difficult to filter sounds so any background noise may get mixed with what your child is trying to listen to and make understanding speech harder for them. We have ideas for what to look out for when visiting a nursery or a school at **www.ndcs.org.uk/acoustics**.

Communicating across countries

When twins Zack and Dylan (8) were diagnosed as severely to profoundly deaf at birth, mum Deborah didn't know that spoken English could be part of their lives, let alone Italian too.

Zack and Dylan's story
how they're growing up bilingual, speaking English and Italian

> I knew I could support them better by speaking the language of my heart.

AS HER TWO-YEAR-OLD TWINS ZACK AND DYLAN RAN AROUND HAPPILY CHATTERING IN ITALIAN with other children in a playground in Brindisi, a town in Puglia in southern Italy, mum Deborah couldn't have been prouder of them. They had all worked very hard on the boys' speech since they were diagnosed as severely to profoundly deaf at birth, but Deborah was particularly proud that day in the playground because Italian wasn't their first language.

"That was a breakthrough moment for me," says Deborah, recalling Zack and Dylan's first visit from home in Britain to her family in the south of Italy six years ago. "I knew that bringing the twins up to be bilingual was right for them when I saw how well they were speaking with children in another country."

Before the boys were born it was clear to Deborah and her husband Alessandro, from Milan, that both English and Italian would be part of their children's lives. They spoke Italian at home and their hearing daughter Keisha (now 9) was growing up to learn both languages. It would be no different for her younger brothers.

A diagnosis of deafness had never crossed their minds and they thought it would change everything for them. "When we were given the news, we didn't imagine that the boys would speak English, let alone Italian as well," says Deborah. "We knew nothing about deafness – it wasn't part of our lives. We thought it meant that Zack and Dylan would communicate through sign. We had no idea about hearing technology and that they could have communication options."

Assessing all their choices, they felt that cochlear implants may give the boys the chance to communicate in English with British friends and in Italian with family back at home. With the operations a success when the boys were six months old, Zack and Dylan quickly started responding well to spoken language – first only in English.

> **“The boys showed an understanding quickly, in the same way they did with English.**

“I was unsure at the start whether to introduce Italian when our lives in Britain would mean that Zack and Dylan’s first language would be English,” says Deborah. “But I knew that I could support them better by speaking the language of my heart. My native language is Italian and I just wouldn’t be able to support them with English in the same way.”

As the boys’ listening skills began to develop, Deborah and Alessandro took the leap and decided to establish Italian as their main language at home, just as they had with Keisha. “The boys showed an understanding quickly, in the same way they did with English,” says Deborah. “We were so happy that our native Italian might be part of their lives.”

With weekly auditory verbal therapy sessions to focus on their listening and comprehension, speech – in both languages – began to flow. The boys’ first words in English came at about 12 months and their first Italian words followed a few months later. “When they said ‘mamma’ – ‘mummy’ in Italian – and later ‘nonna’ for my mother, I had to text all my family back in Italy. It was really exciting,” says Deborah.

As their speech developed, Zack and Dylan switched easily between both languages, using English out and about, a mix at home, and turning to Italian mode with grandparents and during visits to family in Italy. “Family members would often forget that the boys were deaf!” Deborah recalls, but starting school was a stark reminder. Being the youngest in a class of 30 children, their hearing loss began to affect them once again.

Deborah remembers six difficult months when Zack and Dylan, then aged four, struggled and found school overwhelming. The introduction of an FM system (a type of radio aid), to help reduce background noise, was a turning point. “The system helped them to focus on the teacher or on their group work,” says Deborah, who also uses the system at home to help the boys watch television or to reduce the noise of the road on long car journeys.

“We’ve had to make adjustments,” she says. “But the adjustments we’ve made, like the FM system, would have been in place whether we were bringing the boys up to be bilingual or not. Speaking Italian as well as English hasn’t required additional support. Zack and Dylan have been amazing.”

Now, completely fluent in both languages, the boys are learning French at school and picking up snippets of Korean in their taekwondo classes. They even pull their parents up on Americanisms that slip into their English after many years of living in New York. “They’ll tell us off for saying ‘sneakers’ instead of ‘trainers’,” says Deborah, laughing. “They actually teach Alessandro and I British English!”

Next, the family would like to begin learning Spanish too. “We’d like to give the children as many options as possible,” says Deborah. “Maybe they would like to learn sign language as well one day. We’re so proud of what they’ve done so far and they haven’t let deafness stand in their way – it’s part of their strength.”

Looking to the future, she says Zack loves learning about space and would like to be an astronaut, while Dylan enjoys fixing things and he in particular loves learning new languages. “Whether either of them will use languages in the future we don’t know,” she says. “But learning them has definitely not held them back.”

→ To find out more about communication options see www.ndcs.org.uk/communication.

Watch more of Zack and Dylan’s story on our YouTube channel. Go to www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam and search for ‘Italian’.

Your autumn checklist

✓ Phonak Borrow to Buy scheme

We’ve partnered with Phonak for our Borrow to Buy pilot scheme, which allows parents to borrow Phonak products, such as radio aids and soundfield systems, for their child for up to 60 days. At the end of the 60 day loan period you can choose to buy the product or return it. **www.ndcs.org.uk/borrowtobuy**.

✓ Glue ear

Glue ear is one of the most common childhood conditions and is most prevalent during the autumn and winter months due to colds and viruses. It’s usually temporary but long-term glue ear can affect children’s hearing and speech development and cause them to fall behind at school. Find out more about how glue ear can be treated at **www.ndcs.org.uk/glueear**.

✓ Helping your child to achieve

Our *Supporting the Achievement of Deaf Children in Primary Schools* resource is handy to pass on to your child’s teacher. It gives useful advice to teachers and other education professionals working with your child to make sure they’re giving effective support, being deaf-friendly and helping your child to achieve their potential. **www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingachievement**.

Lily beat the bullies!

Lily (12) has worn hearing aids since she was four and faced bullying as a result. But thanks to parents Nicki and Alan, she's taking on the world with her positive outlook, bubbly personality and pink glittery hearing aids...

Lily's story
how she beat the bullies

> **It was heartbreaking seeing our little girl so sad. She completely lost her confidence.**

PARENTS NICKI AND ALAN WEREN'T EXPECTING LILY TO BE DIAGNOSED AS MODERATELY DEAF aged four, but they made a decision that would shape her future.

"It was a bit of a shock," says Nicki. "But we're a very practical family, we knew we'd be positive and not sweep it under the carpet. We encouraged Lily to get bright hearing aids, to stand out. We'd tell people, 'She's a bit deaf, can you repeat what you said.' We didn't want being deaf to be a shushed, taboo subject to be embarrassed about, so we were open about it."

Lily chose bright pink, glittery hearing aids. She soon realised the benefits of keeping them in – hearing new sounds like clocks ticking and birds singing. She'd point out her hearing aids and tell everyone, 'These help me hear'. Nicki and Alan were pleased when Lily's teacher gave a talk to her class to explain about Lily's deafness.

But one day, aged eight, Lily came home from school in tears and showed Nicki her reading book – in a childish scrawl was written: 'Ha ha, you're deaf!'

"It felt like a punch to my stomach," says Nicki. "How do you explain why someone would do that? We went to see Lily's teacher but the nasty jibes didn't stop. These children taunted her in the playground, whispering so she strained to hear and asked them to repeat it – only to realise what they were saying: 'Ha ha, you're deaf.'

"It was heartbreaking seeing our once happy little girl so sad. She completely lost her confidence. She wasn't keen to go to school anymore and she stopped going to dance classes."

The couple searched the National Deaf Children's Society website which they found full of useful information about deafness and deaf awareness. They realised bullying and feeling excluded is something deaf children can face and they can end up feeling isolated, with low self-esteem.

> **I know Lily will do amazing things when she's older.**

“It's not just children being mean that's a problem,” says Nicki. “Often people don't understand the basics about being deaf – how simple things can cause issues, like when Lily can't see someone's mouth to lip-read.”

They changed Lily's school and though she was much happier she still felt left out. Noisy playgrounds and sitting around a table at lunchtime with everyone talking at once made it hard to follow conversations and she'd feel excluded.

But Lily's lucky; she's had good friends and a supportive family who've coached her to be proud of her deafness. Her brother Elliot is a year younger but he's very protective and tries to be there for her, to make sure she's heard.

And when their sister Fearne was born three years ago, premature and profoundly deaf, Lily was thrilled to have another member of her special club! Fearne has cochlear implants and her parents hope she'll be able to develop speech.

But Nicki found people stare and whisper, like they do with Lily. “Lily is ready for them, she tells everyone: ‘We're deaf’. Her hearing aids are still very pink and glittery. She's loud and proud of being deaf!” Nicki says.

“We want people to realise that Lily and Fearne are normal children. We got them matching purple glittery t-shirts printed with #Deafkidsrock to celebrate who they are. Lily thinks it's great; she's keen to answer the questions it invites. Fearne loves wearing the same t-shirt – she idolises her big sister.

“Lily's faced the bullying that can come with being deaf. It's been tough sometimes and heartbreaking for us to watch her going through it. But with the help of the National Deaf Children's Society website and us coaching Lily to be proud of her deafness, she's learned she can beat the bullies. She's determined nothing will stand in her way.

“It's wonderful to see Lily full of confidence again. She's involved with lots of clubs and activities, including singing lessons. She loves dance and karaoke and plays keyboard and guitar. She's so bright and funny – always making us laugh, doing impressions of family members and singing her heart out!”

In her last year of primary school Lily was elected onto the school council and had to stand up in assembly to talk about how to make school better. “It's typical of her courage and a real achievement for her,” says Nicki.

Lily's now completed her first year at secondary school and Nicki and Alan have high hopes for her.

“Lily's enjoying the new challenges. She might even get elected onto the school council again. Her first year has gone well, she's made new friends and built up more confidence as well as enjoying the new classes and subjects,” says Nicki.

“To some people finding out their child is deaf is the worst thing in the world. To me and Alan it was just one of those things; it makes her the extra special person she is. Our attitude is ‘Try your best, that's all that matters.’

“She has bad days but we always have tea round the table together so we talk. Her opinion matters.

“Deaf awareness is important. We held a charity day in March and Lily helped. We want to make the world a kinder place for deaf children – that's what I want for mine, they're going to be deaf a long time!

“I know Lily will do amazing things when she's older – she'll change people's attitudes to disability. She's strong; a real force of nature!”

Most deaf children enjoy their time at school but if you're concerned about bullying have a look at our information and guides at www.ndcs.org.uk/bullyingguides.

Your autumn checklist

Communicating with school friends

Deaf children might be anxious about starting secondary school or going back to school after the summer holidays. It will be important to them that their friends understand how to communicate with them. We worked with deaf young people to produce our *Look, Smile, Chat* resources and these are ideal for young people to share with their hearing friends. **www.buzz.org.uk/looksmilechat**.

Creating a personal profile

A personal profile is a summary document of all the most important information about your son or daughter which can be shared with anyone caring for them or working with them so they can support your child in the best way possible. On our webpage we have tips on helping your child to create a personal profile and templates you can download. **www.ndcs.org.uk/profiles**.

Missing school for medical appointments

Deaf children often have to miss school for audiology or other medical appointments. Even though you may ask for your child's appointments to be out of school hours, this isn't always possible. 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. Visit **www.ndcs.org.uk/absence** for more information.

Working wonders

Work experience has helped Hannah (17), who is severely to profoundly deaf, become more independent and feel more prepared for the world of work.

Hannah's story
how work experience increased her independence

HAVING TRIED WORKING IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND HER SCHOOL CANTEEN before even starting sixth form, Hannah's done more work experience than the average teenager.

"Along with other deaf students at the school, Hannah used to have hearing support lessons and some were used to help develop independence, so we got them work experience to help improve their communication, teamwork and confidence," explains Teaching Assistant Helen who has supported Hannah throughout school, college and work experience.

Although Hannah was born deaf, initially it wasn't easy for mum Nikki to get a diagnosis. "When Hannah was born the paediatrician could see her face looked a little different and said she had Branchio-Oto-Renal syndrome, which affects the ears, neck and kidneys, and that she'd probably be deaf," says Nikki. "I got her home and knew she wasn't hearing properly because she wasn't taking any notice of sounds like rattling keys. The health visitors all said she was fine but I kept going back until about six months when she had a hearing test and was finally diagnosed. But I don't think they believed me even then." Having suspected it from the start and with other health problems to deal with, Nikki didn't feel too affected by the diagnosis. "I just thought, 'It is what it is', and that I'd do my best for her," she remembers.

It was when Hannah started primary school that Nikki knew something else wasn't right. "She'd walk round the playground by herself, talking to herself. I was told it was because she wasn't wearing her hearing aids – she often wouldn't wear them then or would only wear one – but I knew it was something else," says Nikki. She again had to

> **"Sometimes customers asked questions and I was usually able to lip-read them.**

> **“The staff at Debenhams were very supportive and I became a lot more comfortable working there.**

push for a diagnosis until they were told Hannah had mild autism.

Then at secondary school, Eggbuckland Community College, Hannah flourished. “The school has done an awful lot for her. She was so quiet and shy when she first went there but she’s come out of her shell so much now,” Nikki says. Hannah, who also has mild learning difficulties, now does a split placement between her school sixth form and the local college where she’s doing a diploma in performing arts. Supported by Helen, she’s doing brilliantly, even winning an award for top student of the spring term.

“Hannah’s performing arts course was initially timetabled for four days a week with the expectation that the students find some work experience on the fifth day,” explains Helen. “So we had a chat and Hannah was interested in retail and the library.” Hannah was lucky enough to get positive responses from both Debenhams and the local library, at the same time her college timetable dropped to three days a week, so she was able to do both.

“I was excited but also worried I wouldn’t be able to hear,” says Hannah. “I don’t mind asking people to repeat themselves but I was a bit worried I’d have to keep asking and still wouldn’t hear them. Luckily, that hasn’t happened so far.”

In the library Hannah was tasked with shelf checks and sorting books into order. “She did a really good job. They were pleased with her,” says Helen. “Sometimes customers asked questions and I was usually able to lip-read them,” says Hannah. “Being in a library it was naturally quiet but if I didn’t hear someone I’d tell them I was deaf and ask them to repeat themselves.”

At Debenhams Hannah was set to work in the women’s clothing department. “I had to put the sizing cubes on the hangers – which gave me blisters!” she says. “I also had to tidy and sort clothes into size order, check the right brands were on the right hangers and scan tickets on clearance items to see if they’d got cheaper.”

“At first Hannah’s supervisor would occasionally walk and talk with her back to Hannah, so I reminded her to turn around and then by the second week she’d got the hang of it and was remembering to face her,” remembers Helen.

After six weeks Hannah’s college timetable increased back to four days so she had to give up one placement. She decided to stay at Debenhams. “I like fashion and really enjoy sorting out clothes and putting them in size order. It was also busier than the library so I had more to do,” she says.

As time went on, Helen slowly reduced her support so Hannah could be more independent, moving gradually from staying with her the whole time until eventually Hannah was confident enough to go by herself, including getting the bus alone. “It was done in a controlled way. Debenhams said someone would walk Hannah to the bus if she wanted, they were really supportive,” says Helen.

“I’m a little bit over-protective sometimes and thought she’d struggle with the work experience,” says Nikki. “But she’s done brilliantly and loved it.”

Hannah plans to return to Debenhams in September when she begins her Level 3 diploma in performing arts and she’s even lined up some more work experience at a local theatre before that. “I definitely feel more confident working now,” she says. “The staff at Debenhams were very supportive and I became a lot more comfortable working there. The customers were generally really nice as well. They didn’t have any issues just because I’m deaf.

“I want to work in performing arts in the future but if that doesn’t work out I would do retail. I just always try to have a positive attitude.”

→ To find out more about your child’s options after leaving school visit www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool.

Your autumn checklist

Exam access arrangements

Now your child has gone back to school or college, they might be thinking ahead to taking their exams. Exam access arrangements can help deaf learners to access exams fairly. Schools, colleges, universities and awarding bodies are all subject to laws which mean that arrangements can be put in place. Visit our webpage for more information and tips on revising for exams. **www.ndcs.org.uk/exams**.

Healthcare appointments

Starting to go to healthcare appointments on their own is an important part of a young person becoming more independent and taking responsibility for their health. Our *My Life, My Health* resources can help them do just that and include a booklet for parents to help you support your child to manage their healthcare appointments. **www.ndcs.org.uk/mylifemyhealth**.

Learning to drive

There’s no reason why your deaf child can’t learn to drive. However they may need to ask their instructor to make some simple adjustments to the lessons and the theory and practical tests. On our webpage three deaf young people, who use a variety of communication methods, give their top tips for successfully learning to drive. Find out more at **www.ndcs.org.uk/driving**.

Moving up the career ladder

Niamh (24) has learnt to stand on her own two feet and feel confident asking for adjustments, and now she's the youngest ever Private Secretary in the Scottish Parliament.

Niamh's story
how she's climbed the career ladder in the Scottish Parliament

> **“ Taking the apprenticeship was the best decision I've ever made!**

ALTHOUGH SHE FELT THE INTERVIEW WENT WELL and that she'd done a good job working in the Scottish Parliament for the last seven years, Niamh was nervous waiting to find out whether she'd got the job as a Private Secretary. “I was beyond shocked that I'd got it,” she says. “It was my biggest achievement so far.”

Niamh, who's moderately deaf and wears hearing aids, enjoyed her time at mainstream school. She experienced some problems, including name-calling and concentration fatigue, but felt confident about her deafness. With extra time and a lot of hard work, she achieved her Standard Grades (GCSE equivalents in Scotland). “I did a lot of after-school classes – Maths, English and French were my big struggles,” Niamh says. She went on to achieve five Highers and one Advance Higher (AS and A-level equivalents in Scotland). “I never thought I'd get those, particularly in Maths,” she explains. “I did pretty well.”

Throughout her school years, Niamh built up her CV. “I'd done work experience at John Lewis and I really liked working with people,” she says. “Before that I collected eggs from a chicken farm then I was a waitress at a golf club. The customers were brilliant but my boss was difficult. When I said I was having problems hearing orders in the dining room, he just put me on the dishes.”

Niamh wasn't sure what she wanted to do after leaving school but knew it wasn't university. “A careers advisor ran an employability group at my school,” she explains. “I didn't want to go to university but my school very much encouraged it. This group was different; it wasn't deaf specific but it taught me how to tie a tie, how to shake hands, interview skills etc. At the end, people from the NHS and some companies came in to do mock interviews with us for practice.”

“The biggest battle is to make people aware of the struggle you go through.

When Niamh’s dad saw an advert for a Modern Apprenticeship with the Scottish Government, she decided to apply, sending in her CV and a personal statement. “I had a long-standing argument with my dad about whether I should declare being deaf on applications,” Niamh says. “I didn’t want them to form an opinion before they’d met me. Luckily they offered me an interview with just one person. I was so nervous but the next day they offered me the job. I wasn’t sure it was the right job for me at the time but taking it was the best decision I’ve ever made.”

Niamh’s apprenticeship involved working in the Scottish Parliament recording correspondence while also studying for a Business and Administration qualification. “The building wasn’t designed with deaf people in mind,” Niamh says. “It’s noisy and open plan. I couldn’t hear the phones and it took me time to work up the courage to say something because I was used to my parents dealing with it. I did speak up eventually and I got a desk assessment. They gave me a phone with big buttons, a flashing light and amplified volume.”

After the apprenticeship Niamh moved to the office of the Cabinet Secretary for Health. “I felt more confident in my new team so I suggested they do deaf awareness training,” Niamh says. “With my hearing aids, my deafness can become invisible. After the training, they made a more conscious effort not to talk to me when the printer or TV was on.”

But after moving to Adult Audiology Services, Niamh began experiencing problems. “One of my hearing aids broke and I couldn’t get an appointment for two weeks,” Niamh explains. “Without my hearing aids I couldn’t do my job.

“My manager was lovely, came to the audiology appointments with me and drafted emails to them.” Unfortunately, though, it became too difficult and Niamh decided to move to private healthcare.

With the support of her team and no longer worrying about broken hearing aids, Niamh soon decided she was ready for a new challenge and applied for a job as a Private Secretary. “I struggled with my confidence but I knew I was going to give it my best shot,” Niamh says. “This time I did tick the box to say I had a disability. My deafness was flagged to the interviewers and a couple of times I asked them to repeat the question or write it down.”

Niamh was delighted to get the job but it’s brought new challenges. “Sometimes the Minister shouts across at me from inside his room across the hall which can be challenging,” Niamh says. “I’ve had another desk assessment and they got me radio aids for big events.

“We have big division meetings with about 140 staff in a room. The last one was in a church-style building so it was an acoustic nightmare. I put a radio aid on the lectern. We also have a lot of conference calls and I struggle to concentrate on what people are saying when I can’t see them. The Minister is aware and makes a big effort to make sure someone’s there to take notes.”

Niamh has big ambitions, in the future she’d like to work for the First Minister’s Office or abroad in the US. “I’d say the biggest battle is to make people aware of the struggle you go through,” Niamh says. “I’ve learned you have to stick with what you believe you’re entitled to even when it feels like you’ve got more barriers than not.” f

To find out more about apprenticeships, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/apprenticeship.

For more information about your child’s rights in the workplace, including Access to Work – a government scheme that pays for support in the workplace, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/19-25info.

See pages 40–41 to find out more about our campaign to improve careers support and aspirations for deaf young people.

Your autumn checklist

✓ Living independently

Your deaf child might be starting to think about moving out and living independently. On our website, Emily (19) tells her story about leaving her parents’ home and moving to a brand new city. She gives tips about finding a home with an estate agent, installing technology in the house and sorting out bills. **www.ndcs.org.uk/Emily**.

✓ Role models

On our website, lots of deaf adults have told us about the jobs they do. You can browse through the different professions to read the experiences of deaf people in the world of work, including how their employers and colleagues adapt to their needs. There are a wide range of jobs from an HGV driver to a student midwife. **www.ndcs.org.uk/role-models**.

✓ Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

PIP is a disability benefit for people aged 16 or over who have a disability that means they have difficulty with daily living or getting around. It replaces Disability Living Allowance (DLA) from the age of 16. PIP isn’t affected by any other money your child may have and can be claimed whether or not they’re working or studying. To find out more visit **www.ndcs.org.uk/pip**. We also have information for young people on our Buzz website at **www.buzz.org.uk/what-is-pip**.

How do I...

encourage my child to keep their hearing aids or implants on?

Early and consistent use of hearing aids or implants means deaf children are more likely to develop similar speech and language levels to hearing children, but it can be difficult to get them to keep wearing them. We asked parents to share how they managed this.

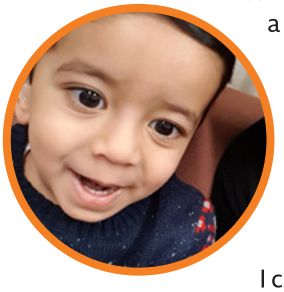
> **"Something clicked with Henry and amazingly he accepted his hearing aids from then on.**


Matilda's pilot hat

Rashda is mum to Haaris (2) who is moderately deaf and has worn hearing aids since he was six months old.
Haaris started pulling his hearing aids out when he was a year old. The audiologists warned me that it wasn't going to be an easy journey. They gave us stickers to keep the aids on but they didn't work.

One day I tried putting surgical tape over his hearing aids, being careful not to cover the speakers. The tape was much stronger and better at keeping Haaris's aids in place and he stopped fiddling with them. Haaris is two-and-a-half now and never plays with his hearing aids unless he's having a toddler tantrum!

When Haaris started nursery it really hit me that he needed to have his aids in otherwise his speech and language development would be affected. Looking back now I couldn't be prouder of Haaris and how much he's developed over the last two years.


Haaris

To find out more about hearing aids go to www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaids and for implants go to www.ndcs.org.uk/implants.

Lisa is mum to twins Matilda and Olivia (5). Matilda is profoundly deaf and has cochlear implants.

Matilda had hearing aids initially and then a bone-anchored hearing aid (BAHA) on a softband. She used to try and take her hearing aids out all the time and we ended up putting them back in constantly.

Olivia and Matilda

It was really scary because the audiologist warned us the small parts of the aid could be a choking hazard. It's stressful enough being a first time mother with twins without worrying about that too!

Audiologists knew the science behind the technology but didn't offer any advice about keeping them on. They gave us toupee tape to put behind Matilda's ear which kept the aids in place but didn't stop her pulling them out.

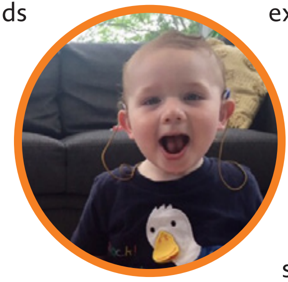
Luckily, one of our neighbours has a friend whose child is also deaf and they suggested trying 'pilot hats' from Etsy, which are kept on with a string tied under the chin. Once we started using them Matilda never tried to take the hat off.

We stopped using them when Matilda was two and didn't try to take her hearing aids out anymore. We gave the hats to families in our local deaf children's society. Other parents say how good they are and they've sent me pictures of their little ones wearing them too!

Now Matilda has cochlear implants we use elastic headbands to keep them in place. I bought them online but I've worked out how to make them myself now which saves money.

Linda-Jane is mum to Victoria (16), Alice (13) and Henry (2). Victoria and Alice have severe to profound hearing loss and Henry has moderate hearing loss.

Henry wore his hearing aids without any issues until he realised that they came out and made a good teething toy!



Henry

I tried everything to stop him pulling them out: reading books, singing and watching TV but nothing worked; he'd only tolerate them for a moment. They'd always get lost around the house and we even turned it into a game for our older kids to help find them! I've lost count of how many times I had to ring audiology for replacements. Our girls always used koala clips and had no issues but they didn't work for Henry.

Our 'lightbulb moment' came when Henry and his dad, Colin, were having breakfast and Henry took his hearing aids out for the first time that day. Colin asked me if we had a spare one and I remembered we'd kept Alice's hearing aids as spares after she had her cochlear implants.

Colin made a big deal of putting it in his own ear and looking excited about how much he could hear and how he was 'just like Henry now'! Something clicked with Henry and amazingly he accepted his hearing aids from then on. We couldn't believe such a simple idea had worked so well and wondered how we hadn't thought of it sooner.

We still have the odd off day where Henry needs encouragement but, for the most part, we've never looked back.

Hannah is mum to Elodie (4) who has a moderate hearing loss and wears hearing aids.

Elodie has had hearing aids from eight weeks old. From the moment she was able to grab them it was hard to keep track of where they were.

Elodie

First she'd knock them out accidentally, then pull them out intentionally to suck or chew on. The next stage was pulling them out and dropping them when she was in her buggy. Finally she'd pull them out repeatedly just to get attention.

We tried lots of different things to get her to keep them in. Giving her something else to chew on helped, especially when she was teething. I also had her in a rear-facing buggy so I could keep an eye on her. When Elodie was a bit older and didn't want her hearing aids in in the morning, I'd play *Peppa Pig* on the TV quietly. She'd let me put them in so she could hear it better and by the time it finished, she'd forgotten she was wearing them.

Another tip is to try and put them back in without saying anything. The more attention I gave it, good or bad, the more of a game it became for her. Sometimes I'd leave it for a while and try again later.

One day Elodie just stopped pulling them out and never really did it again. She's four now and looks after them. She likes having them in and if one falls out she'll usually tell us straight away.

JOIN OUR FAMILY PANEL

Next time in *Families* magazine: How do I... choose the right childcare for my child?

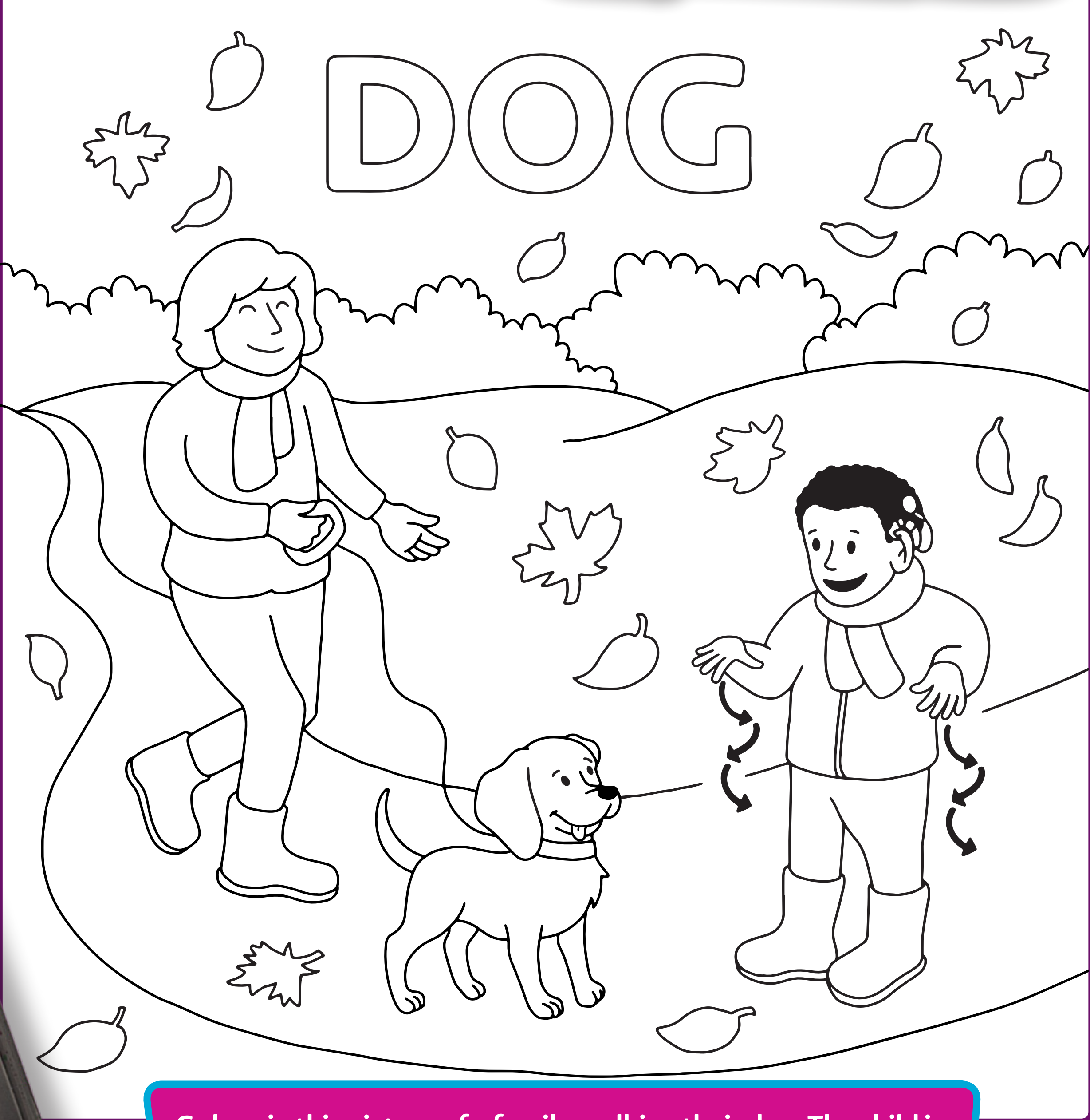
If you have any tips, advice or suggestions to share, get in touch at magazine@ndcs.org.uk.

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

Scribb

Tear out these pages, give them to you

Colour in



Colour in this picture of a family walking their dog. The child is signing autumn. What do you think the weather is like?

le club

ur child and let their **creativity** run wild!

Spot the difference

**Have a look at these two pictures.
There are five difference between them.
Can you find them all?**

Starting school

Starting school, whether it's a brand new school or a new class, can be exciting but daunting for any child. Conversation, preparation and familiarisation can all help your child to feel ready, happy and confident for the new school year.

Talking about school

Children will be experiencing lots of feelings before they start school. Some of these feelings will be positive but some may be negative. Common worries include new routines, making friends and feeling accepted and included. How your child reacts to and copes with new challenges will be affected by their personality, past experiences and how prepared they feel. Encourage your child to talk about school, what they are looking forward to, what they are worried about and any questions they have. Depending on their age, try using fun, everyday play to start the conversation or find a relaxed time when it's just you and them.

Your child may not always have the right language to describe how they feel or may not even know why they feel this way. Use pictures and examples to help them describe their feelings. Playing role-play games might be another good way for children to express their worries. Remember to reassure your child. All feelings are OK and they won't be the only ones feeling this way.

Getting ready to meet new people

Making friends and being able to communicate with a range of different people is a very important part of school life. Help your child to develop the skills and confidence to make those early friendships and relationships through:

- taking time to observe and understand when and how your child feels most comfortable in social situations and building on this – your child might find some social situations difficult, for example, trying out a new activity
- modelling positive social behaviour – role-play simple conversations and include your child in your everyday social situations
- setting up a play date with just one other child or if your child is older you might open up the house by inviting a group over and letting your child be in charge.

Preparing for school

There will be lots of new things and new people that your child won't have seen or met before. Familiarise your child with the different words that schools use such as assembly, register, whiteboard, home corner, physics and chemistry. Photo books and picture cards can help with learning names.

For younger children, discuss the activities they might do at school and encourage your child to draw pictures of them. You could also make a book with pictures of your home and the activities you do together to help your child to tell their teacher and friends about their home life. Include information about your child's deafness.

For older children, make sure they are familiar with the school layout and how the school day is organised. Ask for a school map and a copy of their timetable to get them used to daily and weekly subjects and activities. Make sure they know who's there to support them should they need help with, for example, their radio aid. After-school and lunchtime activities are a great way to make friends and practise social skills. Ask the school for a copy of their extracurricular activities and plan with your child what they might do.

Other things your child could do include:

- making prompt cards with lists of equipment they may need for different lessons
- finding out if there's a library, base or ICT suite to go to during their lunchbreak if they're feeling a bit lonely
- checking lunchtime menus as early as possible so they can decide what they are going to eat before arriving at the canteen
- trying to get to the dining hall quickly if this means they are more likely to get a seat with others they know.

Becoming independent

It doesn't matter how old your child is, they may sometimes need encouragement to communicate something difficult or ask for help. Think about situations they might come across, for example needing someone to repeat what they've said or signed, being fully included in an activity or explaining to staff and classmates about their deafness and/or their hearing technology. Practise these situations in a safe place, at home or with a familiar adult and then practise again when you are out and about.

Try to get your child involved with activities at school or in your community. Sometimes adaptations may need to be made but this will show them and others that deafness isn't a barrier to taking part. Your child may also be worried about getting to and from school. Do a trial run and if your child is using public transport, practise some questions they may need to ask.

Getting to know your school and making sure the school knows you

You're the expert when it comes to your child and helping school staff and classmates to understand your child's needs is an ongoing partnership between families and schools. Building a relationship with the school helps to keep lines of communication open. It makes it easier for you to understand your child's learning and to quickly address any concerns you have or for you to support the school to make the necessary adjustments so your child can be fully included.

For more information, tips, resources and guidance to help you support your child's education from the early years through to their teens, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/education.

Supporting your child's education this autumn

Personal passports and profiles

Making a personal passport or profile is a great way for you to pass on important information about your child. It'll help school staff to respond to your child's individual needs in the best possible way and support your child to communicate about what they need. You can find more information including templates at **www.ndcs.org.uk/passport**.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the skill of using language socially and being able to adapt it to everyday situations. It's key to being able to take part in conversations and in forming relationships. Information, resources and tips to support pragmatics are available at **www.ndcs.org.uk/pragmatics**.

Bullying

Most deaf children enjoy their time at school but if you're worried about your child being bullied, we have guides for parents, schools and young people at **www.ndcs.org.uk/bullyingguides**.

Game on! What to look for in gaming headsets

We often get asked, "What's the best gaming headset for my deaf child?" In this article Kim, our Technology Research Officer, and Oscar (11), who is profoundly deaf and has two cochlear implants, look into what to consider when buying a headset.

Oscar

Kim

To explore these headsets in 3D, download the Zapper app from the app store on your smartphone or tablet and scan the code on the right.

For information on headsets and other technology that could help your child go to **www.ndcs.org.uk/technology**. To borrow a product for free from our Technology Test Drive loan service go to **www.ndcs.org.uk/techdrive**.

Gaming can be a world your child knows the ins and outs of but a complete mystery to you! Choosing a headset can be a real challenge but make sure to ask your child what they want out of it. General points to consider are:

- **Voice chat:** Communicating with other gamers in a multi-player game such as Fortnite can't be done without voice chat.
- **Range:** Whether wired or wireless, its range should be long enough for your child not to be 'chained' to the TV.
- **Compatibility:** Not all headsets are compatible with all gaming consoles and while your child may prefer a PlayStation 4 at the moment, they might want the Xbox One next year.

When buying a headset for your deaf child, you may also want to consider:

- **Rotating earcups:** Rotating or swivelling earcups make it easier to adjust them to the exact position of a hearing aid or implant.
- **(Active) noise-cancelling:** When a headset is noise-cancelling it means that the earcups cover the ears and your child is less likely to hear environmental background sounds. Active noise-cancelling is a technology that picks up environmental sounds and actively reduces them, making it even easier to focus on the gaming sounds.
- **Separate game and chat volume:** This can make it easier for your child to communicate with other gamers by turning down the volume of the gaming sounds and turning up the chat volume.
- **Comfort:** A headset must be comfortable enough for long gaming sessions. Lightweight headsets are less likely to push down hearing devices and make them fall off. Wider headsets, or headsets with an adjustable width, are less likely to press on the hearing devices in a painful way. Soft padding also makes a headset more comfortable to wear.

Oscar's top things to consider when buying headsets

- **Sound quality:** The sound quality needs to be clear enough to hear the sound effects as they are supposed to be. The balance needs to be right and the voice chat clear.
- **Fit:** If the headset isn't large enough to fit over processors, it will be uncomfortable and may even push them off. Larger earcups are less likely to touch hearing aids or implants.

Here are a few headsets we've added to our Technology Test Drive loan service this year (prices listed below are to buy the headsets – they are all free to borrow from us).

Logitech G231 Prodigy

PS4, Xbox One,
Nintendo Switch, PC
£46

Kim: We selected this headset because of its big swivelling earcups which are wider at the top, meaning they are likely to fit better over hearing devices. Also, it's a reasonably affordable headset.

Oscar: It doesn't have separate game and chat volume but the game sound is clear and loud and the voice chat is clear. It has surround sound which makes the overall experience more immersive. It's very comfortable and has soft breathable padding. It's lightweight and not too tight. It would've been even better if it had the ability to better balance the voice chat and sound and of course be completely wireless, but definitely a great all-rounder!

TurtleBeach Stealth 700

One version for Nintendo Switch and PS4 and another for Xbox One
£110

Kim: You may like the Stealth 700 because of its active noise-cancelling, separate chat and game volume controls and Bluetooth connectivity.

Oscar: It has all the features that a gaming headset should have, such as vertical audio (so you can tell if sounds are coming from below or above), surround sound and separate voice chat. It's also easy to mute and unmute the microphone. In my opinion the sound has too much bass and I couldn't find the right balance. It was also a bit too tight and it pushed off my processors a few times.

Sades SA810

New Xbox One, PS4, PC
£21

Kim: The earcups swivel slightly and it has very soft padding; together they make this a very comfortable headset with a very reasonable price tag.

Oscar: It fits perfectly over my processors and leaves extra room which makes the sound clearer and louder. It doesn't have separate game and chat volume controls but the chat is very clear and the sound quality is great. It's a bit heavy but it's still one of the most processor-friendly headsets I've tried.

Reviews

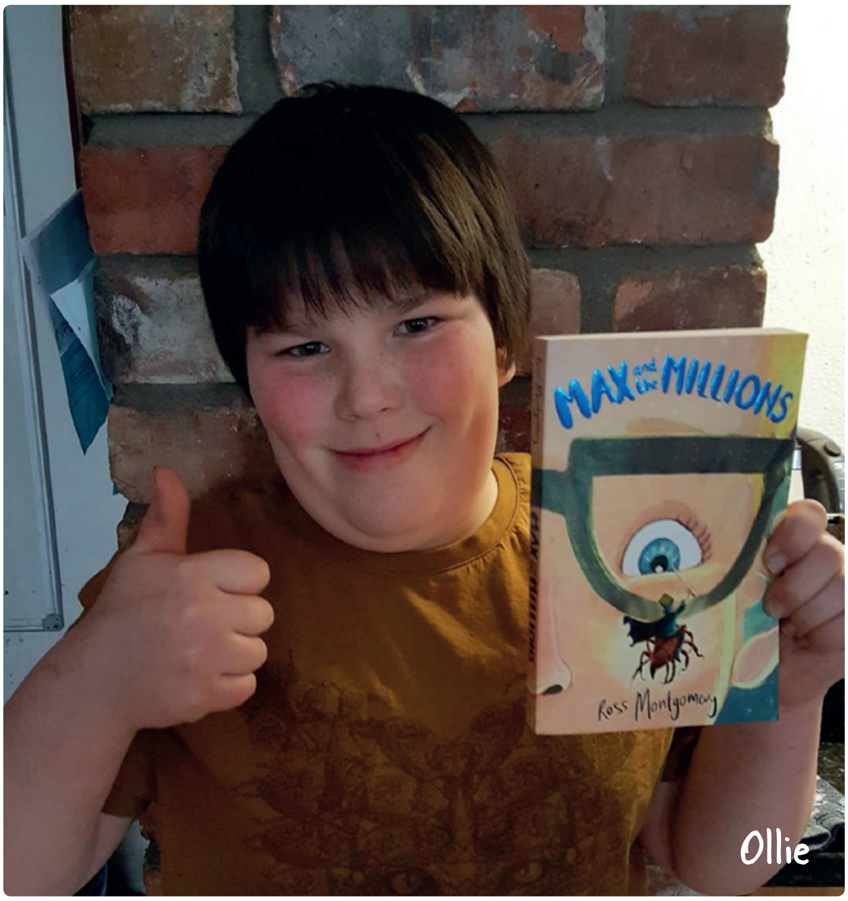
Books and products for deaf children… Tell us what you think!

Would you or your child like to write a review for *Families* magazine? Email **magazine@ndcs.org.uk**.

Key

This resource could be most suitable for the following ages:

0–4 | 5–10
11–14 | 15–18 | 19–25



Max and the Millions

Written by Ross Montgomery
Available from **Amazon**
£6.99 (paperback) / **£4.31** (kindle edition)

5–10 **11–14**

I loved this book! The story is about Max and his roommate Sasha and how they rescue millions of tiny people that the school caretaker Mr Darrow invented. But Mr Pitt, the school headmaster, thinks they're rubbish and tries to destroy Mr Darrow's creations.

My favourite part of the story was when the bin bags were swapped over! Mr Pitt thought he was stamping on the bag Max and Sasha were trying to rescue with the tiny people in it but in fact the bag he took was filled with old sour milk jar. Mr Pitt stamped all over them and ended up covered in rotten milk!

It was great to read about a character who is deaf. The issues that Max experiences with hearing aids and with other people are very accurate.

Ollie (11) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.

EasyCall II

The EasyCall II is a pad that sticks onto and works with any mobile phone with Bluetooth and sends phone calls wirelessly into Phonak Venture and Belong hearing aids.

Available to borrow for free from our Technology Test Drive (**www.ndcs.org.uk/techdrive**) or to buy from Connevans (**www.connevans.co.uk**).

£100.80

11–14 **15–18** **19–25**

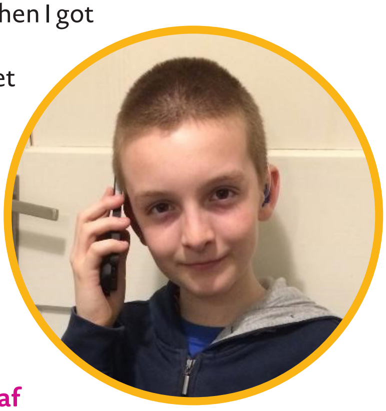
I use the Phonak EasyCall II with my iPhone 5S. It fits in a special phone case which you can get from Phonak. There's a limited choice of phones that fit the EasyCall II case. If your phone isn't compatible, you can use sticky pads to attach the EasyCall II straight to your phone or another case, but I haven't tried these options.

The benefit of the EasyCall II is that it helps me make and receive phone calls in noisy environments. The volume of the call can be changed by the volume buttons on your phone. In the box there are clear instructions – when I first used it I easily paired it with my phone using Bluetooth. The EasyCall II has a light that shows you what it's doing, for example if the phone's ringing or the battery's low.

When I get a call, my hearing aids automatically tune in when the phone is close enough to the aids. However it has limited range – four inches from the hearing aids to the EasyCall II. It only works for calling and not for headphones so you can't hear music through it.

Previously I had the original EasyCall but one disadvantage is that when I got new hearing aids I had to upgrade and get the new EasyCall II as my new aids weren't compatible with my old EasyCall. Overall though I'm very pleased with this product and would recommend it.

Lawrence (13) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.



Lawrence

BSL Halloween Signs: Colouring and Activity Word Book

By Cath Smith
Available from Amazon

£4.99

0–4 **5–10**

This book has pages to colour and also activity pages with quizzes matching signs to words. All of the pages contain signs related to Halloween. My five-year-old daughter really enjoyed it, particularly the pages where you have to fill in the missing letters. We looked at the sign for that word, found the corresponding page to see how to spell the word, then went back and filled it in. It was a great rainy day activity we could do together. My six-year-old son coloured a few pages but wasn't as interested.

We don't do much signing in our house so the children enjoyed the activities more than the signs but I can see how useful the book would be for learning vocabulary for British Sign Language and speech. The words were more complex than I imagined too, such as 'goosebumps' and 'werewolf', which was a definite bonus. The combination of sign, colouring and missing letters made this a versatile book that had something in it for both my children with very different interests. The fingerspelling at the back was a little too much for them to remember at this age but it's something we can revisit when they next want to do some colouring as every sign can be coloured.

Allison, mum to Augustus (6) who is moderately to severely deaf and Elsie (5) who is mildly to moderately deaf and who both wear hearing aids.

Resources

Helpline

> **We live in Manchester and my daughter Claire (8) has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. Her first annual review is coming up soon; how should I prepare?**

Claire's annual review will focus on reviewing her progress, considering whether the provisions outlined in her plan are still appropriate and discussing whether any changes are needed. You should be given at least two weeks' notice of the meeting.

Think about how things have been for Claire since her EHC plan was set up and what's gone well and not so well, how she's been doing academically and socially, any difficulties or anxieties, as well as the targets she's met and her achievements.

Look carefully at her EHC plan, particularly sections B and F. An EHC plan is a legal document and it's important her needs and provision are detailed and specific – vague wording can be hard to quantify and enforce. Check the descriptions of her abilities and activities are age-appropriate as the wording can quickly become out of date as she matures.

Do you have any reports or evidence you'd like to be considered? This could be from health or education professionals working with Claire or from people such as sports coaches.

What will be Claire's involvement with the review? Some children want to attend part or all of the meeting; others may find it easier to express themselves in writing or talk about things beforehand with someone they trust. The school and local authority must take both your own and Claire's wishes, views and feelings into account.

It may be helpful for someone to attend with you to take notes and help you focus on the discussion. A friend or partner could attend with you or you may prefer to ask someone from a support organisation, such as the Independent Advice and Support (IAS) services. You can find your nearest IAS service by going to **www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk** and searching for 'find your local IAS service'.

Our factsheet, *Annual Reviews of Education, Health and Care* (EHC) *plans* (*England*), gives more information about the process in England: **www.ndcs.org.uk/annualreviewEHC**.

If you have any questions about annual reviews, please contact our Freephone Helpline.

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have slightly different systems, for more information visit www.ndcs.org.uk/annualreview for Wales, www.ndcs.org.uk/annualreviewNI for Northern Ireland and www.ndcs.org.uk/aslscotland for Scotland.

What's new?

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

What type of information is it? Content on our website for deaf young people, the Buzz. Go to **www.buzz.org.uk** and search for 'PIP'.

Who's it for? Deaf young people aged 16+ who would like to learn what PIP is and how they can claim it.

What's it about? These webpages explain what PIP is and how a deaf young person can claim it, including information on supporting evidence, filling in the form and what to expect from a PIP assessment. They also cover what happens when a decision about a PIP claim is made and the appeals process.

You might also like: Our information on PIP aimed at deaf young people aged 19–25 at **www.ndcs.org.uk/PIPInfo** or for parents at **www.ndcs.org.uk/pip**.

Bone conduction hearing devices

What type of information is it?
Web content which can be found at **www.ndcs.org.uk/boneconduction**.

Who's it for? Parents of deaf children who are considering a bone conduction hearing device for their child.

What's it about? These webpages explain what bone conduction hearing devices are, how they work, the different types available, their advantages and disadvantages, how you can find out if one would be suitable for your child, what to expect at the Hearing Implant Centre and what happens during surgery.

You might also like: Information on preparing your child for surgery, including links to parent blogs with tips and storybook ideas. **www.ndcs.org.uk/surgery**

How Radio Aids Can Help: A guide for families

What type of information is it?
An updated printed booklet is available to download or order from **www.ndcs.org.uk/radioaids**.

Who's it for? Parents of deaf children and young people who would like to find out how radio aids might benefit their child, the different types available and how to look after them.

What's it about? This booklet explains what a radio aid is, who it might help, how to use it with or without hearing aids or cochlear implants, how to look after it, using a radio aid at home and school and how to get one from your local authority.

National Deaf Children's Society

How radio aids can help

For families

www.ndcs.org.uk

You might also like:
Our booklet, *How Technology Can Help*
www.ndcs.org.uk/howtechcanhelp.

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

JOIN SOUND OUT AND HELP MAKE OUR INFORMATION EVEN BETTER

Join Sound Out, our network of people affected by childhood deafness who want to improve outcomes for deaf children. There are loads of ways you can get involved and help us improve our information, services and publications.

We need reviewers, people to take part in surveys and focus groups, families to share their stories or simply tell us what else they need. Go to **www.ndcs.org.uk/soundout** for more information.

Once you've set up a new account on our website you can download or order any of our publications for free from **www.ndcs.org.uk/resources**. Or you can order through our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880** or **helpline@ndcs.org.uk**.


Alison

Ask the expert

Each issue a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Alison Kendall, a Speech and Language Therapist, shares her insights.

> **“It’s a bit like football training: you have to go out and practise if you want to achieve your goal.**

What is a speech and language therapist (SLT)?

An SLT works with children and adults who have difficulties communicating and want to improve their speech, language and communication skills. Our work can range from helping them understand and use language to developing listening and even social skills.

How and when do you work with deaf children and young people?

I work with deaf children up to the age of 25. I’m based in schools and work in both a primary unit and a post-16 college. My colleague who works with early years children is based in a clinic. I might see deaf children and young people on their own, in a group or work with them in the classroom. But I also work with those who support them such as their teaching assistant.

What support can deaf children and young people expect from their SLT?

It varies and depends on what their difficulty is and how it impacts on their everyday life. Usually the deaf children I work with can struggle with listening, language and speech so we help to improve the impact of their deafness. With the older students we might want to work on their speech and language or communication for a job interview or for an English exam.

What attracted you to working with deaf children and young people?

My grandma became hard of hearing in her older years and never wore hearing aids so I became interested and did some deaf awareness training. After that I did my Level 1 in British Sign Language and then I did a placement in a deaf school during my SLT training.

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

The most rewarding part is seeing progress in the children and young people I work with. We set a goal together and I like to see them enjoying themselves as they advance towards it. It’s also great to see change in people around the child, like their family or school staff. The biggest challenge is that often we only get to see deaf children once or twice a week. I also find motivating teenagers to practise between sessions a challenge!

How can a family prepare for a meeting with their SLT?

It’s similar to how you’d prepare for any medical appointment. It might be a good idea to jot down any questions you want to ask and any concerns you have. It’s also good to think about what you want to get out of the session.

What advice would you give to parents of deaf children or deaf young people working with a SLT?

I always say it’s a bit like football training: you have to go out and practise if you want to achieve your goal. For example, if working on speech, an adult can write down what the child is saying and check they’re saying it right. It’s always good to make any practice as visual as possible.

To find out more about the professionals you may meet visit www.ndcs.org.uk/people.

In your area

Launching a new community

Gemma is Chair of newly launched Central Lancashire Deaf Children's Society (CLDCS) and mum to Phoebe (2) who is profoundly deaf and Chloe (5). Gemma tells us why she and other parents set up the group to support families with a deaf child across the region.

Our goal was to create a platform for deaf children and their siblings to make friends. Most of the children in our group are the only deaf child in their school, and in their family, so the peer support we've created is what most of them would have missed out on. I'm incredibly proud of our team for achieving this.

In March, following months of hard work and preparation, we held our launch party in a community centre in the heart of Lancashire. The event brought together specialist services, local organisations, community groups and families all in one place – giving parents and carers the opportunity to get a wide range of help and support. It was also a chance for deaf children to meet other deaf children, have fun and socialise.

Since March we've met as a group on the first Sunday of every month, organising free, fun sessions at a local multi-sensory centre as well as special trips and events. The meet-ups provide the perfect opportunity for deaf children and their siblings to enjoy lots of activities including crafts, stories, songs and games. Parents tell us how wonderful it is to see their children playing with other deaf children.

The sessions also give families an opportunity to ask each other questions informally and hear how others have dealt with similar situations to their own. We often hear simple tips being shared with those who haven't tried them before, such as using toupee tape on hearing aids, and the following month we hear stories of how much that information has benefited families – that their child has finally worn their hearing aids all day long – a struggle that all families seem to go through!

We've also seen how siblings of deaf children have benefited from the monthly meet-ups. It shows them there are many other children out there similar to their brother or sister. They see first-hand how many different types of hearing devices are available and are able to practise any sign language they've learnt with peers their own age.

Overall CLDCS gives families a new community, an opportunity to raise their children in an inclusive environment and provides a platform for new friendships to grow, for the whole family.

➔ CLDCS is the newest addition to our network of around 100 groups affiliated to the National Deaf Children's Society. For more information about joining a local deaf children's society or setting up a new group please contact localgroups@ndcs.org.uk or visit www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups.

In your area

Making sport accessible in the local community

Did you know that, as well as educating people on deaf awareness and technology, our Roadshow team can also support on projects to help young people make positive changes in their community?

What's the Young People's Community Project Fund?

It's a fund for deaf young people who want to develop a creative way to address issues that affect them. Up to £500 is available for successful applicants aged 8–25. Find out more at **www.ndcs.org.uk/grants**.

Our Roadshow recently visited the amazing pupils from Howes Primary School in Coventry, to support them with a community project they were developing. The 12 deaf pupils, who also have other disabilities, applied to our Young People's Community Project Fund to make their local leisure centres more accessible and deaf-friendly.

The pupils visited their local leisure centres, tried out the activities there and then met with the centre managers to give them some suggestions about improving accessibility. The visits were all really positive with one manager telling us, "It's opened our eyes to some additional training that may be useful to staff here."

The pupils then started making videos to be shared with other deaf young people in their area. The videos were even showcased at an Inclusive Sport Festival taking place at their school.

They've done an amazing job with their videos. Go to **www.buzz.org.uk** and search for 'young people's community fund' to check them out.

The young people told us: "We all really like sport and take part in lots of sports tournaments and events at school. However, we don't go to any sports clubs or leisure centres in the local community because we don't know if they are deaf accessible. We wanted to find out which clubs and leisure centres are deaf accessible by visiting them, interviewing the managers and trying out the facilities to help us understand if they are deaf accessible and also accessible for children with other disabilities. We wanted to film our interviews and experiences so we can share the information with other deaf children and children with disabilities. We hope this will encourage them to become active and join more sports clubs.

"We wanted to do this project as part of our English lessons because it will help us to plan and carry out interviews and improve our communication skills.

"We hope that as a result of our project more children will know about the sports opportunities that are available in the community and will feel more confident about trying out sports after watching our films. This will mean that more deaf children will be active and sports centres will have a better understanding of how to make their facilities deaf-friendly."

If you know a young person who has an idea for a community project and would like support to develop their idea, contact us at roadshow@ndcs.org.uk for further information and an application form.

Our new Roadshow workshop My Town, My Street, My Say encourages young people to get involved in their community and make positive changes. Find out more at www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow.

In your area

Events

Interested in one of our youth events? Application deadlines are up to three months before the event. Visit our website to find out more about the applications process.

Events for 8–18 year olds

At our events young people get involved in many sporty or creative activities. Events are age-specific and targeted at a broad range of young people, with the chance to learn new skills and make new friends while having lots of fun.

Super Sports Weekend
(ages 8–13)
Largs, Scotland
18–20 October

Woodland Adventure Weekend (includes life skills)
(ages 14–18)
Essex, England
18–20 October

Journey to Independence (life skills and independent living)
(ages 14–18)
Worcestershire, England
28 October–1 November

Winter Weekend
(ages 14–18)
Near Aviemore, Scotland
7–9 February 2020

First Time Away Weekend
(ages 8–12)
Lee Valley, London
7–8 March 2020

Getting your child ready for school (2–4 years)

Information events for parents and carers with deaf children aged 2–4 years. These events will cover either education rights and responsibilities or communication and technology.

Education Rights and Responsibilities
Northern Ireland
28 September

Communication and Technology
Birmingham
28 September

Communication and Technology
Gloucester
12 October

Communication and Technology
Northern Ireland
12 October

Education Rights and Responsibilities
Wales
Check our website for details

Education Rights and Responsibilities
Doncaster
Check our website for details

Newly Diagnosed Information Days (0–2 years)

A two-day information event for families with newly diagnosed deaf children aged 0–2 years. Sessions will cover support around communication, early learning, and hearing and technology. It's also a great opportunity to meet other families.

Cardiff, Wales | 5–6 October

Stirling, Scotland | 9–10 November

Manchester, England | 9–10 November

We hold many more free events all over the UK for deaf children, young people and their families. Find one in your area at www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

Expert parents

As parents you're the expert on your child but you may not feel that way when interacting with professionals who are supporting them. Jo, mum to Fionn (7), explains how our Knowing your Child's Rights – Expert Parent Programme has helped her to navigate the parent–professional relationship and ensure the best outcomes for her son.

Fionn and family

Fionn is profoundly deaf and is doing really well in mainstream education supported by a great teaching assistant, Teacher of the Deaf and speech and language therapist. I thought this workshop would be useful in helping me further improve the parent–professional relationship.

A couple of things at the event really stood out to me. I particularly liked the warm-up exercise, where I was asked to write about who my child is and about his condition separately. As a parent going to multiple appointments with professionals it's easy to become bogged down by the condition and to lose sight of the child.

We also found out about the power of language by reading pen portraits of two young people. The portraits were written in professional and somewhat negative language and the child had essentially got lost. We learned to make sure that our own children are visible in any report written about them.

The training was very well organised, with a mixture of presentations from the trainer, feedback and group work. The first day was training for a group in the Knowing your Child's Rights – Expert Parent Programme and I also took part in an additional Train the Trainer day so I could be trained as a facilitator of the workshop. We were a small group arranged around a table and this allowed for really nice group work and sharing. There were also opportunities to have lunch and coffee together. Several of us already knew each other from local deaf children's societies (I am Chair of the listen hEAR group) and it's always great to meet up with other parents. Everyone is at different stages of a similar journey so you learn so much from other parents who just 'get it'.

I'll be looking at all professional reports to ensure that Fionn is still visible in them and isn't lost behind his condition. I'm hoping to run some training myself and will be talking to the National Deaf Children's Society about this in the next few weeks.

> **" You learn so much from other parents who just 'get it'.**

The Knowing your Rights – Expert Parent Programme workshops have been developed with parents of deaf children and are a great way to find out about your rights. This event will help you to find positive ways to get the right support from health, education and other services and get the best outcomes for your child. These events currently run in England and Northern Ireland.

To find out more and about upcoming events go to www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

Get involved

> **“Places weren’t fully knowledgeable about careers and what deaf young people can do.**

This autumn we’re launching an exciting new campaign to improve careers support and aspirations for deaf young people.

Our aims for the campaign are to:

- increase aspirations for deaf young people and the aspirations that parents, teachers and employers have for them
- improve support so deaf young people have better careers information and support and better access to work experience and volunteering opportunities.

In our recent membership survey we asked parents of deaf children and young people about future career options for their child. Almost half of parents believed only some or a few jobs would be available to their child. Only 10% of parents believed their child’s career options wouldn’t be limited. Focus groups with parents have also revealed fears about their child’s future, particularly about whether they will be fully included in the workplace or in wider society.

While some deaf people face barriers in accessing employment, this magazine has featured many examples of deaf people in fulfilling jobs over the years (see page 20 for Niamh’s story of working in the Scottish Parliament and page 46 for our ‘When I’m a grown-up’ column).

Deaf people have the right to reasonable adjustments from employers under the Equality Act 2010 (Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland). There’s also funding available from the Government’s Access to Work scheme to cover the costs of communication support in paid work.

Frustratingly, deaf young people are poorly informed and lack information about their rights and the support available to them. In our membership survey, 78% of parent respondents said they didn’t have the information they needed on rights and 84% said they lacked information about support in employment.

Research shows parents are one of the biggest influencers on a young person’s choices of education courses and careers. This influence starts at a young age with children narrowing down their aspirations even while in primary school. We’re concerned young people may be limiting their career choices without knowing what’s possible and how.

Through this long-term campaign we will:

- use engaging video content to challenge perceptions about what deaf people can do
- lobby national and local governments to improve careers support for deaf young people in schools and colleges and those moving into work
- develop partnerships to secure greater opportunities for deaf young people to gain the skills, experience and confidence to be ‘work-ready’
- publish new advice and guidance for young people, parents and professionals
- share good practice and research about what works in supporting deaf young people to make a successful journey from education to work.

This exciting campaign is about young people’s futures and our staff are working with our Young People’s Advisory Board (YAB) to make sure that deaf young people are at the heart of the campaign and their views are taken on board.

Last year YAB members took part in a Young Inspectors exercise where they interviewed staff members who led on careers support at their schools. This then led to a series of focus groups with young people of different ages across the UK. These highlighted a lack of knowledge among deaf young people about the jobs they can do and worryingly that some young people had little ownership of the choices they made about courses and support.

Molly, from our YAB, tells us about her experience of the Young Inspectors exercise.

I loved the Young Inspectors programme! All 19 members of our Young People's Advisory Board explored our schools or colleges to find out what careers support was like for deaf young people there. We learnt a lot from this; everybody's careers support was so different. My college offered me lots of advice and support but other places weren't fully knowledgeable about careers and what deaf young people can do.

This is why we're launching a careers campaign, to make sure that all deaf young people get high quality support.

I interviewed different people in my college, including my careers advisor. I also looked around my college to see what information is being shared with students about careers. I loved operating in secret; I was like a secret agent!

My careers advisor was hearing and could sign. I was lucky to have a careers advisor who could sign. I started by asking a few questions but ended up leading the whole interview! They gave me some really interesting answers to my questions but sometimes they didn't answer the questions directly so I had to be clever and change some of the questions to try and get more out of them! I really enjoyed it and finding out more about what careers support there is in my college. I'm very lucky my college offered me lots of advice.

Are you READY?

We want to make sure deaf young people get the best support possible once they leave school but we don't know enough about what happens in post-16 education and beyond. How many deaf young people make a successful transition to employment? What are their experiences in post-16 education and work? What are the factors that help make sure a young person becomes an independent adult?

So we've commissioned the Universities of Manchester and Edinburgh to carry out an ambitious new study, READY (Recording Emerging Adulthood in Deaf Youth), tracking hundreds of deaf young people aged between 15 and 18 across the UK for five years. This will be the first time a prospective research study of this size has been carried out with deaf young people anywhere in the world. Data will be collected through annual surveys and some one-to-one interviews, both of which will be accessible for all.

The research team is currently asking deaf young people to sign up to this exciting project. If you're a parent of a deaf young person aged between 15 and 18 please encourage them to get involved. To register or for more information visit **www.manchester.ac.uk/thereadystudy.**

➔ How can you get involved in the campaign?

- Watch out for our campaign video and share it widely.
- Ask your child's school or college if they follow the Government's guidance on careers support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Read our information for parents on the 'Your Child's Future' section of our website.
- Share our young people's information with deaf young people aged 13–25.

National Deaf Children's Society

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We'd like to keep in touch so that we can update you on other ways we are supporting deaf children and young people in the UK and overseas and how you may be able to get involved. We want to make sure we communicate with you in the right way, so please let us know whether you are happy to be contacted by: ☐ Email ☐ SMS

We would like to be able to contact you by post and telephone, please let us know if you DO NOT want to be contacted in this way: ☐ I do not want to be contacted by telephone ☐ I do not want to be contacted by mail
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Join #TeamNDCS for the iconic Virgin Money London Marathon!

Charity applications are now open!

Join #TeamNDCS for the Virgin Money London Marathon on Sunday 26 April 2020 and be part of something amazing.

"The staff were super supportive and accommodating the whole way through the process so a massive thanks to you guys. The crowd really help by shouting your name! This has to be up there with one of my favourite achievements!" – Jess Hunt

"Thank you for letting me run for you – you were great – the best charity I have ever run one of these things for." – Michael Davison

"Thank you all for making the London Marathon experience so enjoyable for runners and supporters alike. It was a memorable day made even better by all your hard work and support." – Jeremy Ayre

"The staff were so friendly and helpful! I wish all of you many, many thanks for your friendly support. Nothing was an issue; you even sorted out some iron-on transfers for my costume!" – Kevin Fearn

"One of my top highlights was seeing the National Deaf Children's Society group near Westminster and getting all the cheers and high fives as I ran through. Just an amazing feeling!" – Chris Jones

Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/marathon for more information or call us on 020 7014 1199.

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When I'm a grown-up

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

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

I'm a contemporary artist because...

I've always been passionate about creating art. As I got older, I knew I wanted to run my own business while working alongside other companies and creatives.

I work as a freelance artist, workshop leader and accessibility consultant, and I sell, exhibit and lease my own artwork. I'm also a British Sign Language (BSL) tour guide and create BSL videos. I enjoy meeting new people and sharing my skills and knowledge with them.

I've experienced barriers on a business and a personal level but I've learned to overcome these and to make contact with people who have been willing to invest and work with me in the long run. I use BSL/English interpreters via Access to Work so I can communicate effectively with customers and partners.

My reputation has been growing nationally and internationally and I recently won the IPSE (Association of Independent Professionals and the Self Employed) Freelance Project of the Year Award.

Olivier Jamin | www.ojart.net

I'm a poet because...

I love poetry! I enjoy composing poetry and seeing other people's poems.

I've always liked reading poetry in English but I was blown away the first time I saw a BSL poem performed at university. Soon after, I started composing my own poems. I found performing nerve-wracking at first! Now I enjoy the experience and engaging with an audience.

I'm profoundly deaf and I use BSL interpreters to access events. They become part of my performance when they voice over my poems. I give the BSL interpreter my transcript for the poem and rehearse with them before a show to make sure the timing and pacing is right. We need to be confident in each other to make sure a show will go well.

Performing BSL poetry in Brazil at a deaf folklore festival was a big highlight for me, as was performing BSL poetry as part of the Relaxed Proms at the Albert Hall.

Donna Williams

I'm an editor because...

I love the rush of a news cycle and finding out more information about something during research for articles. More than anything, though, I love writing.

I lead a team of journalists at the *Retail Gazette*. I sub edit their news reports and features, set the news agenda for the day and provide feedback and guidance on how to best approach article ideas.

I'm profoundly deaf in my left ear and have severe hearing loss in my right. I was born and raised in Australia and at school I had a support teacher and an FM microphone device. At university I had a notetaker and received a small extension on some of my assignment deadlines.

When I'm interviewing someone I always try to meet them in a quiet place. There's nothing worse than conducting an interview when there's lots of background noise or wind interfering with the mic.

I speak English, Arabic and a bit of French. I've lived in London for three years and absolutely love it.

Elias Jahshan

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 www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool.

St John's
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Why Choose St John's?

St John's has a proven track-record in supporting deaf and hearing-impaired children to achieve outcomes that support success in the real world. Our residential and day options offer flexible support for children who are deaf, have communication difficulties or are affected by multi-sensory impairment.

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