

9



Top tips for spotting mental health problems in deaf children

22



Parent ideas on improving your child's self-esteem

32



Technology for listening to music



National Deaf Children's Society

# families

Between two worlds

“ I'm not scared to be who I am now.







# New Deaf Academy opens in Devon Easter 2020

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The new Deaf Academy opens next year just 20 minutes from junction 30 of the M5 and just 10 minutes' walk from the beach in beautiful Exmouth. An exciting new chapter in the proud history of the UK's oldest deaf school.

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*"Staff at the Academy are passionate... pupils engage positively with staff and their learning."*

- Ofsted, 2019

# My deafness didn't stop me...

## becoming a Shakespearean actress

By Abbi Brown



Charlotte

### **IN 2018, CHARLOTTE ARROWSMITH (39) BECAME THE FIRST DEAF SIGNING ACTOR IN A MAINSTREAM ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY (RSC) PRODUCTION.**

Born profoundly deaf, Charlotte wears hearing aids and can speak and lip-read but prefers to use British Sign Language (BSL) in her work as an actress. As a child, Charlotte loved performing but found it difficult to get involved with theatre groups. Then she discovered the Theatre, Arts, Deaf Studies and Education course at Reading University and never looked back.

“Determination, grit, guts and passion carried me through,” says Charlotte. “There will always be barriers, but it’s about learning how to break those walls down and working with other people whose walls are still up to help them too. Deafness doesn’t need to be an issue.”

**“ Deaf creatives working side by side in the hearing arts industry can only be a beautiful thing.**


Before her first audition for the RSC for the part of Cassandra in *Troilus and Cressida*, Charlotte was nervous but excited that the director was considering a signing actor. Especially because she believes Shakespeare translates well into BSL.

“I love how Shakespeare truly sees his words visually,” she says. “He writes the characters in such a way that they are disability fluid.” During performances, Charlotte uses visual cues, a TV monitor in her dressing room and a specially designed vibrating pack

which helps her to dance in time with the music.

“That first performance, I felt immense pride if not a little pressure,” Charlotte adds. “It’s a big responsibility to carry on my shoulders, but I hope I have done it well and that people enjoy my work!”

“Things are changing dramatically, finally the industry is opening up. I hope for further change where more deaf directors, writers, producers and casting directors are hired alongside more deaf actors. Deaf creatives working side by side in the hearing arts industry can only be a beautiful thing.

“Nothing is impossible, I’m possible,” that’s what I always tell my young students when I teach!” 



For information you can share with professionals about adapting activities for your child, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/deafawarenessresources](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deafawarenessresources).





**British  
Sign  
Language**

Pupils make strong progress from their starting points (OFSTED 2018)

Having a child with medical needs and a feeding routine can be a struggle, but school are fantastic at it all (Parent)

**Small  
Classes**

My child is developing into a happy, confident and intelligent little boy (Parent)

**Speech  
and  
Language  
Therapy**

Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary (OFSTED 2018)

**Teachers  
of the  
Deaf**

**Residential  
and Day  
Places  
Available**

Pupils thrive at your school (OFSTED 2018)

**Outstanding  
Children's  
Home**



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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 44–45 for more information on supporting our work.  
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**Henry's story**  
how his parents used sign language in their wedding ceremony  
**p12**



**Charlie's story**  
how he was involved in the decision to get an implant  
**p14**



**Alice's story**  
how progressive deafness made starting secondary school a challenge  
**p16**



**Danielle's story**  
how she navigates the dating world as a deaf young person  
**p20**

# Hello



Welcome to this special issue that focuses on emotional health and wellbeing. We know deaf children are more likely to suffer from a mental health condition than their hearing friends but often this isn't being talked about as openly as we'd like. Every family interviewed in this issue has given their top tip for wellbeing, so make sure to look out for these.

We've also got parent ideas to help improve your child's self-esteem (page 22) and top tips from experts on how to spot the signs and symptoms of a mental health condition (page 9).

But it's not just children who may struggle. Learning your child is deaf and bringing up a child with additional needs can be a challenge. Mum Kayleigh explains how she came to terms with learning her son Henry was deaf (page 12). Her story of incorporating signs in her wedding ceremony is an emotional one – you've been warned! Make sure, also, to check out the last Raising Nancy column (page 10) and our local deaf children's society article (page 40); both explain why meeting other parents has been invaluable to these parents' wellbeing.

Our cover star Zain (16) shares his experience of moving out of his comfort zone to meet others like him and discovering his own identity as a young deaf British Muslim (page 18).

I'd like to send a big thanks to all the parents and young people in this issue who have been so open and honest.

*Kerrina*

**Kerrina Gray, Editor**

✉ **magazine@ndcs.org.uk**

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# NEWS



## Using technology at work

Do you know how technology products can support your child in making their first job a success? Parents and professionals working with deaf young people have told us they'd like more information on this as it's not always clear what technology could help in different situations.

We asked deaf adults how they use technology in the workplace to overcome barriers and you can read about their experiences at [www.ndcs.org.uk/workcasestudies](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/workcasestudies). Do you know a deaf adult who uses technology at work? They can send their story to [technology@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:technology@ndcs.org.uk).

## Caitlin's horse-riding success

Our Northern Ireland office sends a huge congratulations to Caitlin (9) on a year of horse-riding success! Caitlin, who has moderate hearing loss, won all three Working Hunter Pony classes at the Irish Pony Society Show and was also awarded Supreme Working Hunter Pony Champion. She then went on to win first place in the Working Hunter Pony class at the prestigious Dublin Horse Show. "When she's upset or self-conscious because of her deafness, her ponies make her forget anything else," Caitlin's mum Diane said. "Riding makes her feel free." Contact [nioffice@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:nioffice@ndcs.org.uk) for more information.



## New webinars for parents

We love having families come to our events across the UK but we realise you don't always have the time to attend. If you'd like the same information but from the comfort of your own home or workplace, our new online information sessions might be for you. Just log in on your computer at a specific time and we'll be there.

In our first information sessions, parents and carers joined us online to get valuable information about benefits. They also had a chance to ask our appeals and disputes expert questions. "It was a great webinar," one parent said. "The hardest part of our DLA (Disability Living Allowance) application was questioning if we were really entitled to it, as all of the care you give your children is second nature. It was therefore great to pinpoint the specific things we do that qualify for extra support." Find future webinars on our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/familyevents](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familyevents).



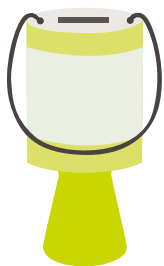
## Our spring superstar!



"Broden passed all of his Key Stage 1 SATs at school, he always works hard, is so bright and we are very proud of him. He's being brought up bilingual in English and British Sign Language. He loves reading books and is a confident swimmer. His little brother Cole is profoundly deaf and Broden is an excellent role model for him too." **Lynsey and Michael are parents to Broden (7) who is moderately deaf.**

## Qualified to save lives

Thanks to our Journey to Independence residential week, 14 deaf young people are now fully qualified first aiders after learning how to save a life. They also spent time making pizzas and spaghetti bolognese from scratch and finding out how to shop on a budget, as well as taking in the beautiful Clent Hills on a 10 mile hike! You can find out more about our events for young people at [www.ndcs.org.uk/youthevents](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/youthevents) or email us at [youthdevelopment@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:youthdevelopment@ndcs.org.uk).



## Will you make a change?

The Make a Change Fund (previously called the Young People's Community Fund) helps deaf people aged 8–25 make their local area better for others by creating exciting new projects. There are grants worth up to £500 available and we've had some amazing applications already. Here are a few of the fantastic ideas we've had so far.

- Set up a sign language club at school to integrate deaf and hearing classmates.
- Improve deaf awareness and accessibility at leisure facilities.
- Campaign for deaf awareness and training for public services such as fire, police, ambulance and bus drivers.

If you or your child has a bright idea to make a change in their local community, find out more information and how to apply at [www.ndcs.org.uk/makeachange](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/makeachange) or email us at [makeachangefund@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:makeachangefund@ndcs.org.uk).



## Did you know?

The National Deaf Children's Society was founded by a group of parents of deaf children in 1944.



## Sign of the season



Flower

## Comment

### Challenging cinemas to become more accessible

I became deaf at the age of four on a family holiday. I contracted typhoid and the only treatment that could save my life involved incredibly powerful medication. While I survived the typhoid, the side effects left me profoundly deaf.

My mum and dad were devastated, but from day one they instilled in me a powerful belief that my deafness would never hold me back. Today some of the biggest barriers in my life come from the smallest things being inaccessible.

It wasn't until I was in my late twenties that I saw a captioned film. Up until then, going to the cinema just wasn't enjoyable for me. Things have slowly improved, but the cinema industry is still painfully inaccessible to deaf people because of the sheer lack of subtitled showings.

I know what it's like to miss out on all the gossip as my friends discuss the film they saw the night before. I know how isolating it is to be the one person not to get the banter or understand the reference.

I couldn't take my children to the cinema. I had to explain to them it wasn't because I hated films or didn't want to go with them. I couldn't enjoy the summer's biggest blockbuster or the latest Christmas release with my kids. They had to go with other children's parents which really upset me.

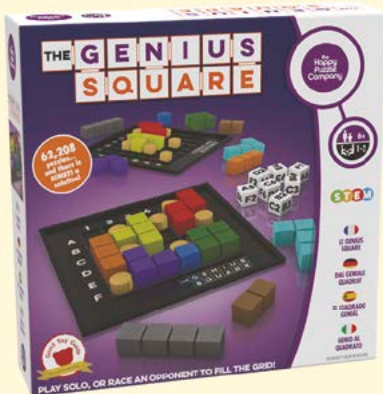
My experience isn't unique. It's replicated by every deaf child growing up across the country. That's why we're challenging cinemas to do better to make sure no deaf child loses out on those magical moments.

Not going to the cinema isn't just about missing an amazing film, it's about being excluded from society just because you're deaf. To help us change this, sign up to our campaign Lights, Camera, Captions! [www.ndcs.org.uk/campaign](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/campaign).

Susan

Susan Daniels OBE  
Chief Executive





# 'Is this the cleverest game ever invented?'

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"Outstanding. Nobody in the family can put it down. We are actually getting a second set - it's that good! Best game any of us has ever played!" ★★★★★  
*Debra Sobel, London*

Each player receives a Genius Square grid (two are included) and a set of the nine coloured shapes, plus seven 'blocker' pieces. Roll all seven of the dice together and place a 'blocker' piece into the squares matching the seven co-ordinates that appear on the dice. Now race your opponent to fill every other space on the grid using the nine shapes.

There are 62,208 possible combinations in which the dice can fall. Using a specially devised computer programme, we have confirmed that all of them have at least one possible solution. Some combinations will be easy to solve, some much harder. It's all in the luck of the roll of the dice.

As soon as somebody finishes first, roll the dice and play again! An example of how to play is shown above. You can also play alone and challenge yourself against the clock!

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# Top tips...

## Spotting mental health problems in your child

As part of our wellbeing issue, we have top tips from the Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (Deaf CAMHS) experts Dr Hannah George and Helen Phillips, on how to spot if your child is developing or has a mental health problem or low self-esteem.

1

You may notice that your child is very sad, more tearful than usual or perhaps more irritable.

2

Your child might be more socially withdrawn than usual and not want to be with their friends.



3

Stopping doing usual activities can be a sign of poor mental health or self-esteem issues, for example your child may no longer want to go to their favourite sports club.



4

Your child may experience extremely high and/or low moods, excessive fear, worry or anxiety.



5

You might see big changes in your child's sleeping habits – they may have difficulties sleeping or may sleep much longer than usual.

ZZZ

6

Your child's eating habits may change – they may lose their appetite or start eating much more.



7

Ask your child how they are, if they're feeling sad or whether they're enjoying school; feeling isolated at school can impact on your child's mental health and wellbeing. It's important to validate your child's feelings and emotions.



8

You don't have to work out if your child has a mental health issue or what sort of mental health problem your child is suffering from. It's the responsibility of healthcare professionals to do a good assessment and consider what difficulties your child may be having and why.



There is a specialist CAMHS service in England for deaf children that your child may be able to access if they have a severe to profound hearing loss, use British Sign Language (BSL) as a first language and/or have a significant language impairment related to a moderate to profound hearing loss.

If you notice any of the above signs or symptoms in your child, you should consider taking them to the GP. If your child is a BSL user, make sure the GP is aware of this when you book the appointment and they book a registered BSL

interpreter. Inform your GP about Deaf CAMHS as they may not be aware of this specialist service. Your GP will be able to refer your child to CAMHS or Deaf CAMHS if they think your child needs further assessment.

If you're concerned that your child may be self-harming or if your child has expressed thoughts of harming themselves or ending their life, you should take them to the GP or to A&E immediately.



Parents give their top tips for boosting their child's self-esteem and wellbeing on page 22.

For more information about mental health and your deaf child, visit our new emotional health and wellbeing section at [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing).

You can also find more help and information on the YoungMinds website at [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk).

# Raising Nancy

## Our journey so far

“Parents have helped me sustain my mental health, without which I couldn’t have supported Nancy.”



Jess and her husband Matt are parents to Alice (8) and twins Nancy and Connie (6). Nancy is profoundly deaf and was fitted with cochlear implants at 23 months.

➔ To join a local group, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups).

For more information about our newly diagnosed and Feeling Good events, you can go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/events](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/events) or turn to page 42.

WE’VE COME A LONG WAY WITH NANCY SINCE SHE ARRIVED IN THE WORLD. The thing that has had the greatest impact on me has been the support we’ve had from other parents because Nancy is deaf.

Several key moments in Nancy’s development stand out to me. Born at 28 weeks, she looked tiny in her incubator. She never flinched when those big heavy metal bins slammed down in the hospital ward, nor opened her eyes when we talked to her. At 40 weeks she had her newborn hearing screening and was identified as deaf. At four months, we had our first trip to deaf playgroup, and I cried in denial as I looked at all the children wearing hearing aids. At six months, she had her first experience of British Sign Language when a deaf adult came to our home and read her a story. Nancy stared at her in a way that she had never looked at me before. At a year old, Nancy’s deafness was confirmed as profound. She was fitted with cochlear implants at 23 months. I gave up work because I wanted to share this time with her, teaching her to sign and speak.

Throughout this challenging but rewarding six years, Nancy’s Teachers of the Deaf – three in total – have been amazing; showing our family and her school how to communicate with Nancy and that really she is just like any other child. Nancy is defined by her deafness and has a unique identity. The National Deaf Children’s Society has helped us a lot – I remember a deaf lady giving a talk about her childhood at a weekend event for parents of newly identified

children. When asked the question, ‘How did your parents know how to help you?’ the lady replied, ‘by loving me’. This was so simple, yet deeply moving. Her words had a big effect on me at the time and they have been so helpful, I always go back to them when I’m doubting myself.

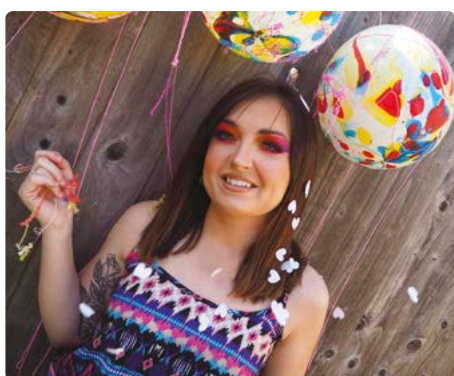
The incredible parents of other deaf children have got me through tough times. Without talking to them and sharing my concerns, I would not have known how to put in an ear mould and countless other things too! From pondering over how we might potty train our kids to how to choose a nursery, other parents have been there to help us with those exhausting decisions. Parents have helped me sustain my mental health, without which I couldn’t have supported Nancy. They have empowered me to become more confident, and made me realise that it is we – the parents – who are the real experts on our own children. Using their support, I wrote Nancy’s Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and helped establish our local group to fight against cuts to deaf children’s services in our city.

I feel optimistic about Nancy’s future because she’s happy and surrounded by friends. I am still uncertain about how she will cope in Year 3, and in secondary school, but I recognise that taking one day at a time will help. This is my last column for the magazine – I hope you have enjoyed my ramblings! I’ll leave you with a great motto from a deaf children’s organisation in America: ‘What works for your child is what makes the choice right’. 📌



# Life for Louise

## Welcome to my new column!



Louise (25) is our brand new young person's columnist. She is severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

[www.louisedeafawareness.com](http://www.louisedeafawareness.com)

[LouiseDeafAware](#)

**I was surprised I hadn't come across any deaf advocates on Twitter so I thought why not be the first?**



**HELLO! IN THIS FIRST COLUMN, I THOUGHT I WOULD TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT ME SO YOU CAN ALL GET TO KNOW WHO I AM.** I'm Louise and I have a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss of a severe to profound nature. I was diagnosed at the age of seven with no explanation as to what caused my hearing loss (quite a mystery, eh?). I went to mainstream school, which had its good and bad moments, wearing the cutest pink hearing aids with sparkly moulds.

I've recently turned 25, which is quite daunting now I come to think of it! Currently I'm working at DeafBlind UK as an Outreach Officer which I love. Excitingly, I have also applied for my very own hearing dog.

Back in 2016, I graduated from university with a 2:1 in Childhood Studies. This was one of my greatest achievements to date. Whilst I was at university, I did encounter many different barriers. For example a lack of subtitles during lectures, being embarrassed to ask for the support I was entitled to and struggling to make friends.

Therefore during the summer of 2014, I set up my very own Twitter deaf awareness account called Louise Deaf Awareness (@LouiseDeafAware). I was surprised that I hadn't come across any deaf advocates on Twitter so I thought why not be the first?

My page was originally a safe place for me to rant about the barriers I faced daily. But as I realised people were taking notice of my tweets, I began networking with deaf people



from around the world which was amazing!

I realised then, for the first time, I was not alone. It was nice to be able to compare experiences with people and talk to others in the same position as me. I finally had deaf friends.

One of the areas I've always been most passionate about is the lack of subtitled films shown in cinemas. Once I became more aware of my rights during university, I began to learn how poor the access was at different cinema chains. Since then, I've set up meetings with my local cinema chains to try and improve access for local deaf people. Campaigning is mentally tiring and frustrating at times, but I'm impressed at how much accessibility has improved. Although there is still a long way to go!

I'll be writing a column in the next few issues of *Families* magazine so if there is anything you want to hear a deaf young person like me talk about, let me know! 📞

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

To find out more about our campaign for subtitles at the cinema, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/campaigns](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/campaigns).



# Signs of love

By Elayne Nunan

When Kayleigh and Adam found out their son Henry (2) was deaf, their world fell apart. But two years on, and after discovering Family Sign Language would be the key to their communication, they even signed their wedding vows...



**Henry's story**  
how his parents used sign language in their wedding ceremony



## Kayleigh's wellbeing top tip

"The more you talk the better, but you **HAVE** to be ready to talk. That's why the newly diagnosed event was so good, talking to families who've been through it, mum-to-mum, dad-to-dad, it's more powerful than with a professional."

**THE AUDIOLOGIST'S WORDS HIT KAYLEIGH LIKE A HAMMER BLOW. "YOUR BABY IS DEAF."** Outside the hospital, Kayleigh and partner Adam stood crying in the pouring rain, cuddling three-week-old Henry.

"It was such a shock," says Kayleigh. "How could our perfect baby be deaf? No one in our family was deaf. I blamed myself, maybe it was something I'd done during pregnancy.

"It broke my heart that Henry hadn't heard my voice while he was in my tummy and would never hear me tell him I love him. I fast-forwarded 20 years – would he go to school? Would he be bullied? Would he get married? Have a job? Or would he live with us forever?"

Kayleigh couldn't bring herself to tell anyone other than family and one close friend. When they got Henry's hearing aids, Kayleigh wouldn't put them in. "People would stare – I didn't want anyone to know," she explains. "I feel awful looking back but I was in a very dark place. I struggled to bond with Henry. When he cried, I didn't know how to comfort him as he couldn't hear me soothing him."

Kayleigh's mental health suffered and now she has advice for other parents. "Be honest with your employer," she says. "Ours was fantastic, they gave Adam extra time off – you need time to look after yourself, deal with the impact. It put a strain on our relationship. We're at different ends of a spectrum, Adam is information-hungry and I'm emotional, but we got through it."

Kayleigh was determined and after a few weeks she started bonding with Henry, felt fiercely protective of him and made sure he wore his hearing aids. She called our Helpline and received information about deafness,



dealing with everyday things including communication.

“Henry’s Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) taught us basic signs like ‘milk’ so we’d have a way of communicating,” recalls Kayleigh. “We signed the words over and again, but it seemed hopeless, impossible that a baby could ever understand.”

Then they attended one of our events for parents who have found out their child is deaf, and talked with other families going through a similar experience. They found out more about Family Sign Language, saw others signing and knew they could persevere.

“At nine months, Henry signed his first word ‘light,’” says Kayleigh. “He’s fascinated with light-up toys. We were thrilled! Soon he was signing ‘milk’ and ‘dog’ – our efforts were paying off.”

Henry had cochlear implant surgery at 16 months. When the implants were switched on, Kayleigh and Adam watched Henry’s excited face as he banged a stick on the table, amazed to be hearing noise for the first time. “He looked at me one day and said ‘Mama’ – I was in tears,” says Kayleigh.

Henry continues learning sign, particularly for sleep, bathtime or swimming when he isn’t wearing his implants.

Last summer, with special funding in Wales, the family attended a 10-session Family Sign Language course provided by the National Deaf Children’s Society and delivered by Angela, who is deaf. Angela tailored lessons to the family’s requests – like ‘beach’ for their holiday and phrases for nursery such as ‘time to wash hands’.

Kayleigh and Adam were getting married in September, so they had an extra special request. “We asked Angela to teach us to sign some of our vows so Henry could be included in the ceremony – a family coming together,” says Kayleigh.

The day was magical and there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. “When Henry first saw me in my bridal dress, he covered his mouth, pointed and then signed ‘beautiful,’” Kayleigh says. “My legs were shaking – what two year old can tell his mum she’s beautiful?”

“Henry walked with my brother’s girlfriend down the aisle, with a sign saying ‘Daddy, Mummy’s coming’. He


“When Henry first saw me in my bridal dress, he pointed, and then signed ‘beautiful’.

got scared with so many people, so Adam held out his arms and Henry ran to him for a cuddle.

“Henry sat on my mum’s lap as we signed our vows, including ‘I promise to treasure our love and friendship and care for you with kindness and understanding. I look forward to our future together with hope, happiness and joy.’ He was watching, playing with his fingers like he does when someone is signing, trying to join in.

“Seeing Henry’s face beaming at us was unforgettable. There were lots of tears from people who don’t cry! In the speeches, my dad included a few signs, my brother even signed ‘welcome to our family’. It was a wonderful day!”

Henry is making great progress. His speech is now classed as in the normal range for a child his age and he knows nearly 100 signs and is starting to put them together. “We’re lucky, we have so much support,” says Kayleigh. “Henry’s nursery’s amazing. They’ve been on sign language training and at carpet time they sign to all the children, things like days of the week. Henry loves learning and is great with his implants; he doesn’t touch them, he knows they’re helping.

“We’re so proud of Henry, we’re his biggest champions. We want him to know there’s nothing embarrassing about deafness, he’s like any other child and can achieve anything he wants to.” 



For more information about Family Sign Language, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/familysignlanguage](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familysignlanguage).

To attend one of our Newly Diagnosed Information Days, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/events](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/events) and search for one near you.

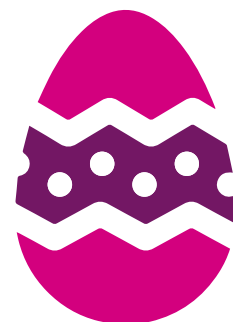


## Your spring checklist

### ✓ Deaf awareness at Easter

If you have family or friends coming to visit over Easter, remember that large gatherings can be difficult for deaf children.

Even with the best intentions, people who don’t see your child often may forget about their communication needs. Take the time to remind visitors of basic deaf awareness or share our tips at [www.ndcs.org.uk/communicationtips](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/communicationtips).



### ✓ Apply for DLA

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit for deaf and disabled children aged 16 or under. It can help to cover the extra costs of raising a deaf child. You can read more about DLA and find out how to fill in the application form at [www.ndcs.org.uk/dla](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/dla).



### ✓ Primrose’s pre-school journey

Dad Joseph tells us about his experience of daughter Primrose’s first day at the local pre-school on our family blog. Despite usually being clingy, she was confident and seemed to enjoy it straightaway. Primrose is still struggling to play with other children but the family aren’t worrying for the time being. [www.ndcs.org.uk/primrosepreschool](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/primrosepreschool)



# Respecting Charlie's choices

By Katy Blanchard

When Charlie (8) became frustrated wearing the soft band that allowed him to use his Baha, mum Tina supported his choice to have an operation so he could use the hearing aid without it.



**Charlie's story**  
how he was involved in the decision to get an implant



**THE EFFECT WAS IMMEDIATE WHEN CHARLIE, THEN FIVE, FIRST TRIED A BONE CONDUCTION HEARING AID, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS A BAH.** "I can hear in two ears!" he excitedly told mum Tina, whose eyes filled with tears. In that moment, she knew a Baha was right for her son.

"He was beaming," Tina recalls. "That was a lightbulb moment for me. We'd never been offered anything like it before, but I thought to myself, 'Why can't he have one?'"

Charlie was born with microtia – an under-developed outer ear – and a profound hearing loss on his left side. Support had been limited for the family, with professionals insisting Charlie didn't need a hearing aid as the hearing loss was only on one side. "His speech developed well and he was top of his class at school so we'd never considered getting him one," says Tina. "We only discovered it was an option at a Microtia UK charity event."

Two months after the chance discovery of a bone-conduction hearing aid, fitted on a soft band, the family secured one on a permanent basis from the audiology department at the local hospital. Charlie noticed a big difference, especially at school.

"Although he was doing well, Charlie had struggled with background noise," says Tina. "When it was loud, he would sometimes miss things and switch off." With the hearing aid in place, Charlie's teacher could use a mini microphone. It directs sound straight to Charlie's hearing aid, cutting out any noise in between so he can hear her clearly. "It's really helped him excel and he even took up additional maths shortly after getting it," says Tina.



## Tina's wellbeing top tip

"Always be open and honest with your child and let them be the driving force for the decisions made about them. This can help relieve worries about whether you're doing the right thing, as ultimately you're listening to what your child wants, which makes a happy child and a happy parent."



# I was quite petrified about having the operation but I knew it would be worth it in the end.

Despite the difference the hearing aid made, it wasn't long before Charlie became frustrated with the soft band. "It pushed his hair up and he was becoming more self-aware," says Tina.

Tina and husband Ashley had always shared as much information as possible with Charlie. They told him about an implant secured to the bone that could magnetically attach the hearing aid to his head, meaning he could wear it without a soft band. Within a few months of wearing the band, Charlie was sure he wanted to have surgery to fit the implant. "I didn't like the band," says Charlie. "I hated having it go around my head."

Just over a year after first having the hearing aid, Charlie, then six, was booked in for the operation. Although it was Charlie's choice, it was an anxious time for the family who did a lot to prepare themselves.

"It was important to me that Charlie was fully informed on what would happen," says Tina. "We had an appointment a couple of weeks before the operation and they helped explain things in a very child-friendly way. They used a teddy to show how they would send him to sleep, where they would make the cut and they explained that they'd need to shave some hair off."

Although informed, Charlie was still nervous. "I was quite petrified about having the operation but I knew it would be worth it in the end," he says.

Tina was nervous too, especially since she'd be taking Charlie to the hospital on her own with Ashley at home looking after their other three sons. Determined not to let Charlie see her nerves, Tina did as much to prepare herself as she could. "I read up a lot and also asked other parents about their experiences," she says. "Knowing what others had been through helped me put a brave face on for Charlie."

When the day of the surgery arrived, practicalities like the hospital being an hour's drive away, getting there for 7am and Charlie not being able to eat anything that morning all made things tense. Speaking to the surgeon helped put them both at ease

though. "The staff were great and always made sure we were OK, but I did have a little cry when they sent him down for surgery!" says Tina.


In just over an hour, the operation was complete. Tina found it a shock to see the stitches, along with some swelling and bruising, but keeping Ashley informed throughout the day with messages and pictures helped them both cope.

Charlie was allowed home the same day and quickly began to recover. "The bandage came off the day after the operation, the stitches dissolved quickly and he only took a few days off school," explains Tina.

When Charlie's hearing aid was reprogrammed to be compatible with the implant, Tina recalls him looking up at her and saying, 'Mummy, the wind!' "It must have sounded different to him with the hearing aid attached to his head," says Tina. "His face lit up and that's when I realised we'd made the right decision."

Charlie quickly adapted to the new hearing aid with just a few differences from the soft band to get used to. The hearing aid is now attached to Charlie's head with a soft pad to prevent his head getting sore and a safety line which clips to his clothing so the hearing aid won't fall to the floor if he knocks it.

Charlie hasn't looked back since having the implant fitted. "It makes a big difference to me not having the band," says Charlie. "I can hear better and I have more confidence."

Tina has noticed the difference, too. "Charlie is very proud of himself and his condition," she says. "He has the option of surgery to reconstruct the ear but he doesn't want it. He's just happy to be himself." 



For more information about bone conduction hearing implant surgery, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/implantsurgery](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/implantsurgery).

To find more top tips for preparing your child for surgery, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/surgery](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/surgery).



PRIMARY YEARS

## Your spring checklist

### ✓ Making informed choices

Making choices about your child's hearing technology or surgery options can be nerve-racking, especially as the different people you meet may offer conflicting advice. To help your family make an informed decision, make sure both you and your child fully understand the options available to them, including any implications for the future. Childline has some useful advice on this topic. [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### ✓ Appealing school placements

The right school can have a huge impact on a child's quality of life, but it's not always easy to secure the school place your child needs. For deaf children, access to the most appropriate education is particularly important. If you're unhappy with your child's school placement, our Appeals and Disputes team may be able to help you challenge the placement. Visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool) to find out more.

### ✓ Max Cards

Warmer weather is on the way (fingers crossed!) so the Easter holidays are a great time to get out and about with your family. The Max Card is a discount card for families of children with additional needs, helping to make days out more feasible. Check the discounts available in your area at [www.mymaxcard.co.uk](http://www.mymaxcard.co.uk).





# Alice's difficult start at secondary school

By Rosie Vare

With her progressive deafness, Alice's family knew challenging times were around the corner. And starting secondary school and having her cochlear implant fitted in the same year proved difficult for the family.



**Alice's story**  
how progressive deafness made starting secondary school a challenge



## Linda-Jane's wellbeing top tip

"The girls spend so much of their day immersed in sound, it's exhausting. So some evenings they make a point of switching everything off, including hearing aids and implants but also phones and the TV, and relaxing in their own quiet world with a favourite book or a magazine."

## GETTING THE BUS TO SECONDARY SCHOOL MADE ALICE (13) NERVOUS.

Would she be able to hear what anyone was saying to her? Luckily a group of Alice's friends hatched a plan to make sure Alice was never left out. The girls took it in turns to sit next to Alice on the bus, which gave her the chance to chat to her friends on a one-to-one basis every single day.

But it wasn't initially this easy. Alice's progressive hearing loss and new cochlear implant made starting secondary school a worrying time for her.

The fourth of seven children, Alice also has an older sister and younger brother who are deaf. Victoria (16) is moderately to severely deaf and Henry (2) is moderately deaf, both wear hearing aids.

The three siblings were each over a year old when mum Linda-Jane was told they were deaf. After Victoria's diagnosis, alarm bells about Alice rang for Linda-Jane and her husband Colin. Their suspicions were confirmed when she was referred to audiology. When she was eventually diagnosed at 15 months, the family was shocked; they'd only just come to terms with Victoria's diagnosis.

"At first, I was confused," Linda-Jane says. "My children aren't deaf. I couldn't understand it."

"We contacted the National Deaf Children's Society and they were brilliant straightaway. Barbara, our Children and Families Support Officer (CFSO), came to see us and I'll never forget her calm reassurance. We immediately knew it wasn't the end of the world and we weren't the first family to go through this."

"While we had a double-whammy with both girls being diagnosed, we realised it could be positive. This sounds awful,



## Alice starting secondary school was one of the most difficult times we've ever experienced.

but I remember thinking at the time 'It might be nice for the girls to have each other.'

While Victoria goes to a specialist deaf school, Alice attends a mainstream secondary school, but splitting them wasn't an easy decision for the family. Linda-Jane explains their choice, "Victoria uses British Sign Language but Alice's preferred method of communication is speech so we decided the oral route would be best for her. She had a tremendous amount of support at primary school where they had experience of teaching deaf children."

With a progressive loss, the family always knew her hearing would get worse. "As Alice's hearing deteriorated towards the end of primary, it became apparent that a cochlear implant might help," Linda-Jane says. "As parents, we were aware of the risks but naturally wanted to give Alice the very best life chance we could, particularly as she was using an oral method of communication. We hoped an implant might clarify speech sounds for her and maybe even improve aspects of her speech. Luckily for Alice, it paid off and she's never looked back. Although it's not a magic wand and it doesn't mean she can hear absolutely everything, it's the very best means by which she can access sound."

With a new implant that Alice was getting used to, she also had to start secondary school and unfortunately the school wasn't quite as experienced at working with deaf children as her primary school. Alice quickly became withdrawn and quiet and it began to take its toll on the family.

"Looking back, this may sound like an exaggeration but I don't think it is, it was one of the most difficult times we've ever experienced," says Linda-Jane. "Alice was finding it really hard to make friends and fit in. Thankfully our Teacher of the Deaf and our CFSO were fantastic."

Luckily the school were very understanding too and wanted to improve things for Alice. They set up a buddy system where pupils volunteered to take turns to make sure she always had company and was never left alone at lunch or break times. That, along with her friends'

morning bus rota, started to make a huge difference.

"We were overwhelmed with how helpful and compassionate other pupils were to Alice," Linda-Jane explains. "I'd like to think that this will be a legacy that Alice leaves behind for any other deaf children who go there in the future."


Starting secondary school was a big step towards independence for Alice, but it was challenging getting used to the new cochlear implant at the same time.

"I was a bit worried before the operation," Alice says. "Afterwards I couldn't hear anything from one ear. It felt very strange. After the switch-on, I could just hear beeps which was really weird! It was difficult at school because people kept forgetting I couldn't hear them."

Having the implant has made a big difference to Alice's school life though. She can hear her teacher and friends a lot better and her FM system is a big improvement. "I was amazed, I didn't expect the words to be so clear," Alice adds.

Despite the early difficulties, Alice loves school now and has big aspirations. "When I grow up I'd like to go to university and train to be a nurse like my big sister Lucinda!"

So, what advice would Linda-Jane offer other parents who might be finding the school transition difficult? "Make use of all the support you can," she says. "We were very lucky to have the National Deaf Children's Society from day one and they remain our go-to with any issues, which can be quite often with three deaf children!"

"Lastly, don't forget you're the expert on your child. You're their greatest advocate and, ultimately, their voice." 



For tips on how to choose a deaf-friendly school, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool).

For more information on cochlear implants go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants).



### Your spring checklist

#### ✓ Talking about feelings

Lots of children find it difficult to process and regulate their feelings and emotions. Deaf children can find this especially hard as they may have limited access to social cues and information which hearing children receive, such as overheard conversation. Encourage your child by talking openly about your own feelings and those of the people around you. For more advice, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/understandingemotions](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/understandingemotions).

#### ✓ Joining a club

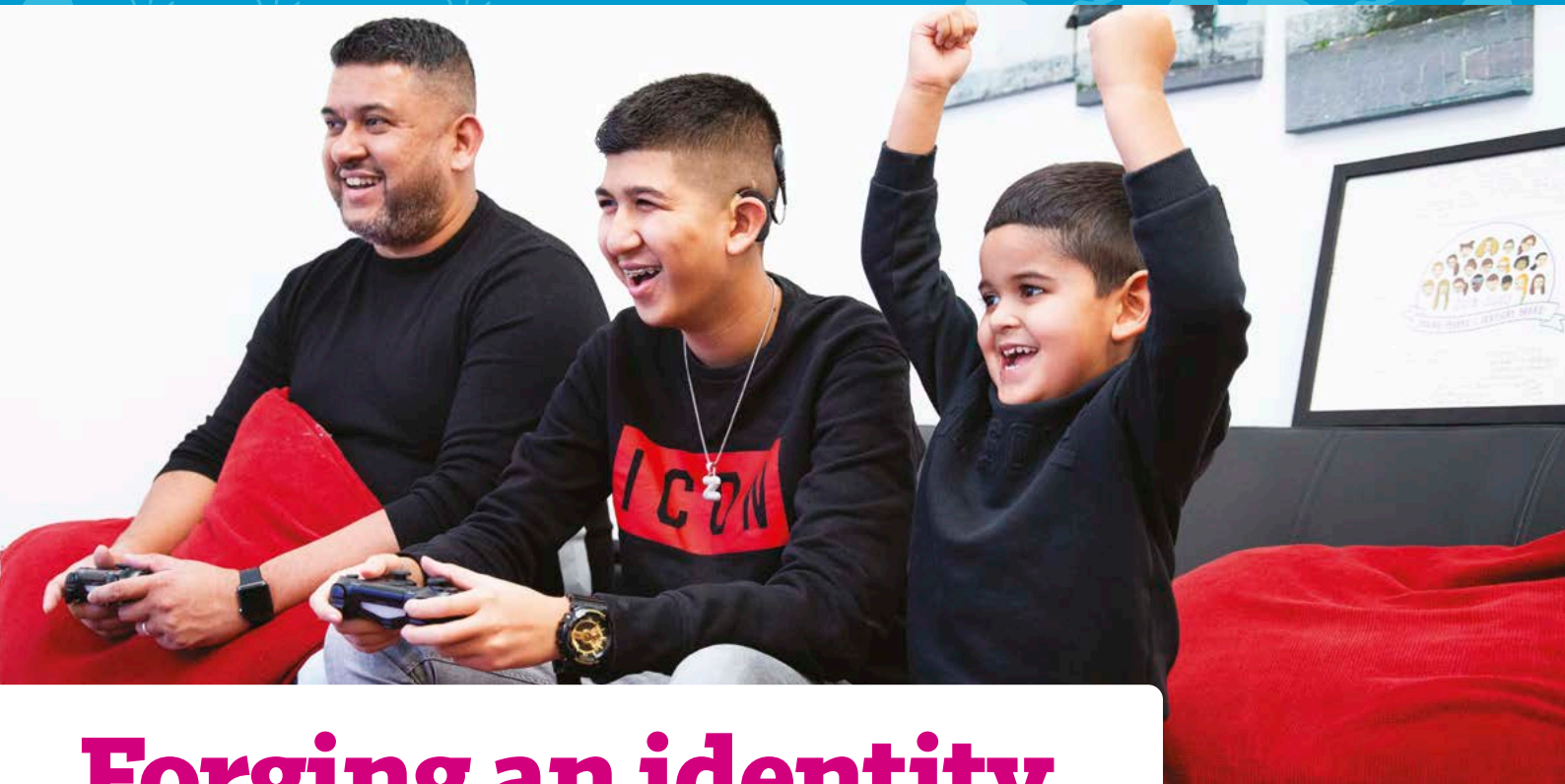
Sports clubs can be a great way to make new friends with similar interests. With the weather warming up and evenings getting lighter, now is a great time for your child to try a new club or sport. Ask your audiologist how to secure your child's hearing technology for contact sports or see tips from parents on using technology at [www.ndcs.org.uk/techforsummersports](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/techforsummersports).



#### ✓ Staying safe online

The internet can be a great tool for helping deaf young people to communicate with both deaf and hearing peers. But for parents, it can be hard to find the right balance between allowing them privacy and keeping them safe. For guidance on how to help your child understand about using the internet safely, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety).





# Forging an identity

By Kerrina Gray

Zain (16) has pushed himself out of his comfort zone to meet others like him and now feels much more confident about who he is...



**Zain's story**  
how he found his place in the world as a deaf young Muslim



**• MODERATELY DEAF AS A CHILD AND WITH EXCELLENT SUPPORT FROM HIS FAMILY, SCHOOL AND HEALTH SERVICES, ZAIN HAD NEVER REALLY STRUGGLED WITH HIS HEARING LOSS.** But that all changed when he woke up one morning, aged 10, to find his hearing aids weren't working.

A check-up revealed Zain's hearing had suddenly dropped from a moderate to profound loss. "We were told Zain had scarlet fever when he was five and this may have caused the hearing loss," Zain's dad Denis says. "But the consultant explained it was probably misdiagnosed and could actually have been meningitis. Hearing aids became redundant and they asked if we'd consider cochlear implants. It was a traumatic time as a family."

"It was upsetting," adds mum Anbar. "In that time, while they were investigating, Zain and I would spend all day cuddled up on the sofa watching the TV on mute together. He appreciated that we both couldn't hear it, I didn't want him to feel alone."

The family decided cochlear implants were the right choice for Zain and he was implanted the May before he went to secondary school. "It was challenging," says Denis. "The implant operation was life-changing in a way we hadn't felt his deafness was before, now we'd have to think more before he went through security gates or went swimming."

And for Zain it didn't end there. "At the age of 13 he was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes too," Denis adds. "That was quite a rollercoaster. You think 'Oh my God, how much can a child go through?'"

Luckily Zain has always found school accommodating and he particularly appreciates that they involve him in discussions about his deafness. "Instead of saying 'Sit here', they'll say 'Are you happy where you're sitting?'" Zain explains.

## Zain's wellbeing top tip

"Go with the flow. Don't let your deafness change you, just be yourself and don't be scared to go out and do anything. Confidence builds with time and soon enough you'll be doing it without a second thought."



# I believe he needs to own his deafness and realise it isn't a barrier.

Now Zain's in Year 12 and studying Maths, Physics and Economics for A-Level. While everything is going well for him, Denis and Anbar both worried he was missing a deaf identity. "I didn't know any deaf people," Zain says. "I applied to join the National Deaf Children's Society's Young People's Advisory Board (YAB) two years ago to see what it was like being with deaf people."

The YAB is a group of 19 deaf young people from all over the country who get together at residential weekends to learn about their deafness and create their own campaign. "At first I felt awkward and nervous," Zain says. "I worried everyone else would be communicating using sign language and I didn't know any. But I soon realised everyone just got on with it. We all learnt to interpret for each other and got on very well."

As well as making deaf friends, Zain also learnt more about his deaf identity. "The workshops were really interesting, they taught us about deafness and what we can do for ourselves. I learnt about campaigning and how to be more independent. Before I joined, whenever we went on holiday my parents would talk to security for me about my implants if ever I had to go through a scanner. But during YAB, I went through security on my own and went to Paris with my friends from school."

Learning more about his deaf identity led Zain to want to explore other parts of his identity too, particularly being a British Muslim. "Similar to not knowing many other deaf people, I didn't know many other Muslims outside my extended family," Zain explains. "My faith is very important to me. Being deaf and being Muslim all tie in as parts of my identity."

"There's this identity complex that I don't think many people that are not British Muslims or deaf or belonging to a certain community understand," Denis adds. "Being born and brought up in the UK, you're seen as a foreigner here because you're not white, but whenever you go back to Bangladesh, you're seen as a foreigner there because you weren't born

there. And being deaf too, Zain had to find his own identity."


Zain applied for charity Islamic Relief's Young Campaigners programme, called Campaign IR. The programme involves 10 workshop days and Zain will also receive an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) endorsed certificate. "In the beginning I think we protected him a bit too much and didn't let him form those identities," Denis says. "So we encouraged him with the YAB and Islamic Relief."

"I've had three sessions with Campaign IR so far," says Zain. "We get together as a group of Muslims of all ages to talk about campaigning. I'm interacting with a lot of different people who I never thought I'd be interacting with. After the YAB, I feel more confident now telling them if I need an adaptation because of my deafness."

"I have to do a presentation at the end to get my ILM certificate so I'll be learning more about public speaking. I love presenting to groups but sometimes last-minute nerves get to me so it will be good to practise those skills."

"I now want to go on to study Economics and Politics at university, combining my interest in maths with campaigning."

"I encourage Zain in all he does," Denis adds. "I believe he needs to own his deafness and realise it isn't a barrier. Meeting other people can help him both form his own identity and learn about others' differences. He can look at things from a deaf and Islamic perspective. He's more alert and aware now."

"I'm not scared to be who I am now," Zain says. "Meeting other people has helped me find out about who I am and what I like, I understand better my identity as both a deaf young person and a British Muslim." 



If you want to find out more about cochlear implants and implantation surgery, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/cochlearimplants).



YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
15-18

## Your spring checklist

### ✓ Visiting the GP

As children get older, they might want to start going to the doctors by themselves without mum or dad. Many GP surgeries now have the technology to help deaf people book and attend appointments or order prescriptions independently. They can also book interpreters for patients who speak British Sign Language or any other language. To find out more, visit [www.buzz.org.uk/mylifemyhealth](http://www.buzz.org.uk/mylifemyhealth).

### ✓ Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships can be a great way to gain structured work experience alongside studying for a qualification. If your child is considering an apprenticeship after school, support may be available to help them during the application process as well as in the workplace. You can read more information at [www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice).



### ✓ Travelling by train

If your child is beginning to travel by train independently, don't forget that deaf people are eligible for a Disabled Persons Railcard which gives a one-third discount on most train tickets for the railcard holder and one companion. You can also book assistance at most manned stations to help with things like finding the right train or making a connection. You can buy a railcard at [www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](http://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk).





# Danielle's deaf dating experiences

By Kerrina Gray

Swimming champion Danielle's love life has taught her to be confident in her deafness and to know her own self-worth.



**Danielle's story**  
how she navigates the dating world as a deaf young person

• **MEETING A MAN FOR A DATE AT THE CINEMA, DANIELLE (23) WAS NERVOUS.** Without subtitles, she knew she'd have to be Googling the plot afterwards so she could talk about what they'd just watched. But when she arrived she realised she didn't need to be worried. "He'd actually emailed Odeon asking for a subtitled viewing for me. There are good guys out there!"

• Danielle's deafness was progressive and picked up when she was five years old. It was a mild loss at first but then at 12 it became moderate and she was given hearing aids to wear.

• At 16 years old, things changed again as her hearing went completely in one ear and never came back. "That's when the frustration kicked in," Danielle says. "I've always been sporty and I started competing in swimming when I was six. When I lost my hearing, my coaches began to ignore me because I couldn't hear them. I hated being deaf but now I see it as a blessing."

• Being a deaf swimmer brought something new to Danielle's life too when she was spotted by a talent scout. "They asked if I'd heard of GB Deaf Swimming and told me the Deaflympics were next year," she says. "I went along to a training session and got into the team!"

• "I met all these new deaf people. It was overwhelming but so good. They opened my eyes to signing and now I know some sign language in American, Russian; all sorts of languages! When I first joined, I had beige hearing aids but the whole swimming team had amazing coloured ears. I went home and asked my audiologist for some in bright blue and sparkles! Why not flaunt it?"

• After school, Danielle studied Sport and Exercise Science at Stirling University where some people on her swimming

## Danielle's wellbeing top tip

"I'm having a bit of a lull mentally now I'm not swimming so much so I'm trying to surround myself with good people, exercise, get away from my phone, get out in nature and do things I enjoy. For example last week I went on a spontaneous surfing trip with my friend. Not being able to hear anything, I focused on the sensation of the water and felt so calm and alive."



**“ We were all made to be different and being deaf is one of those things that makes you unique and cool.**



team weren't very understanding of her deafness. "I've always stood up for myself," she says. "Now being deaf has made me even more determined to break down barriers and show people what I'm worth. It spurred me on to break a world record in swimming, well two actually!"

Since leaving university, Danielle has become a personal trainer. She loves her job but socialising with work friends can be difficult. "Going out is a challenge," she says. "I get so tired talking to people I don't know with background music on. If we go for family dinners, I always choose my seat first. With friends, they'll repeat back to me what the waiter says."

Because of this, Danielle initially worried about dating. "I had a first love who was with me when I went deaf," she says. "He was so supportive and even learnt sign language. Unfortunately he turned out not to be the one."


"My second boyfriend at university was great as well. When we went on our first date he asked my friend the best quiet restaurant to take me to, asked me all about my deafness and even visited me before the date so we could chat in a quiet environment. Unfortunately the bar we went to that night just happened to have the football team in and I couldn't hear a thing! We were together 18 months and I told him a year later 'You know that first date we went on? I don't have a clue what you spoke to me about!'"

Now Danielle is dating again and she says she's learnt a lot since she's been single. "Dating is hard for anyone but there are extra challenges being deaf," Danielle explains. "For example some people think if you're deaf you can't communicate. I feel like it's a bombshell I have to drop on them. Often nowadays you meet people through social media or dating apps and people will learn you're deaf before they meet you. Sometimes they ask a million questions and then disappear."

"I've noticed my hearing friends are nervous on the way to a date about meeting the guy but I'm not nervous about that, I'm nervous about coping with the situation. What if I have to say 'What?' more than twice? Am I going to hear what the waiter says?"

And unfortunately for Danielle, she had one really bad experience. "Someone stood me up because they found out I was deaf," Danielle explains. "I shared it on social media and so many people with so many different disabilities responded saying it had also happened to them. But then lots of people without disabilities also replied and told me that guy was awful, I got so many date offers! Out of the 100,000 people who responded, there was only one negative response."

"When I'm dating, most people are lovely and it makes a real difference when people don't pussyfoot around it. I asked the guy I'm dating at the moment 'Does my deafness bother you?' and he said 'No why would it?'. At the end of the day if that person is for you then nothing will matter."

"I would say to other deaf young people worried about dating, embrace your deafness. Don't dare try and push it down. Wear your hair up. If you need to say 'What?' more than once then do it! We were all made to be different and it's one of those things that makes you unique and cool. If you know sign language, you can speak with your hands – that's amazing! If the person you're dating doesn't like it, they're not the one, on to the next. There are eight billion people out there." 



**For information for teens and young people about being deaf-friendly, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyteens](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyteens).**



**YOUNG PEOPLE 19-25**

## Your spring checklist

### ✔ VoluntEars

Is your child planning a gap year? Why not see if they want to combine travelling abroad with doing some good? VoluntEars organises volunteering trips for deaf people of all ages, to locations like Nepal, Sri Lanka and Ghana. All trips are deaf-friendly and they'll even get to help local deaf communities while they're there. To find out more, visit [www.voluntears.info](http://www.voluntears.info).



### ✔ Access to Work

For deaf young people, entering the world of work may present new challenges they've not come across before. If your child is about to start a new job, encourage them to apply for Access to Work, which can assess their needs and provide any technology or resources that might make things easier. Find out more at [www.ndcs.org.uk/accesstowork](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/accesstowork).

### ✔ University exams

Exam term is an anxious time for any student but taking exams as a deaf student can be extra stressful. Like schools and colleges, universities also have a legal responsibility to provide deaf students with any access arrangements they might need, such as lip speakers, extra time or interpreters. Further information on access arrangements is available in our resource [www.ndcs.org.uk/examfactsheet](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/examfactsheet).



# How do I...

## boost my child's self-esteem?

For our emotional health and wellbeing special, we asked parents to share the ways they try to improve and maintain their child's self-confidence. Ella, a deaf young person, also gives her ideas.

**“ It's important for him to have something special about him that isn't related to his deafness. ”**



**Amy is mum to Magnus (3) who is severely deaf and wears hearing aids.**

We try to provide Magnus with role models who have a hearing loss, use hearing technology or use British Sign Language (BSL). Magnus loves *Magic Hands* on CBeebies and is fascinated that Nadeem has hearing aids like him. He signs 'same' when we watch him on TV.

We recently went to a fantastic drama production which featured BSL and signed singing. Afterwards, Magnus loved meeting the signing actors. We want

Magnus to see that he can achieve whatever he hopes to.

It's also important for Magnus to have something special about him that isn't related to his deafness. He's incredibly funny, so when he does or says something that makes people laugh, we make sure he knows it.

Finally, we encourage Magnus to engage with others. If other people ask questions about his hearing aids, we help him to communicate with them. We hope this instils self-belief and confidence in Magnus.



**Magnus and Amy**



To find out more about boosting your child's self-esteem go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing).

If you want to learn more about how to decorate your child's hearing technology go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/decorating](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/decorating).

For more information on deaf-friendly activities go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/deafawarenessresources](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deafawarenessresources).



**“ We often talk about how dull life would be if everyone was the same and how lovely and interesting it is that everyone is unique.**

**Vanessa is mum to Matilda (4) who is severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.**

Matilda's deafness wasn't picked up until she was three-and-a-half years old. Her hearing aids gave her a massive confidence boost but to further improve her self-esteem we decorated them with little stickers. We let her know how beautiful her hearing aids are. With Matilda, we celebrate every achievement no



**Matilda**

matter how big or small. Matilda's speech and language are delayed, but she recently learned to sing *Baa Baa Black Sheep* word-perfectly. This was a massive event in our house and we told her how amazing she is. We always get comments about how happy, bubbly and smiley she is and we praise her all the time for this. She's a star and teaches us so much. As a family, we look up to her and make sure to tell her this all the time.

**Sue is mum to Natalie (11) who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**

I let Natalie try as many new experiences as possible. She's joined clubs, like drama and singing, which have really helped to improve her confidence. I've also brought her along with me to days with the National Deaf Children's Society where I talk about her experience of being the only deaf child in the family. She's able to listen to how



**Natalie**

proud I am of her and also chip in if she wants.

We give Natalie praise whenever we can and encourage her independence. This includes letting her walk to school on her own and making her responsible for her own equipment.

Small steps like these as she gets older help to boost her self-esteem. Natalie's older brother is hearing and ultimately I treat her the same as him.

**Ella (15) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**

It's so important for deaf people to meet other deaf children their age. It's way easier to figure out your deafness with friends and much less isolating. Children and teenagers need to have friends who they can talk to about anything, and whilst they should be able to tell their hearing friends about deafness, it's also really good to have a few friends who can already sympathise.

I made the most amazing deaf friends on the Young People's Advisory Board residential weekends.



**Ella**

Having so many deaf children there of a similar age makes it easy.

Now every time I feel my self-esteem dropping due to a deaf thing, they'll have similar stories and solutions and know exactly how to make me laugh and feel proud of my deafness.

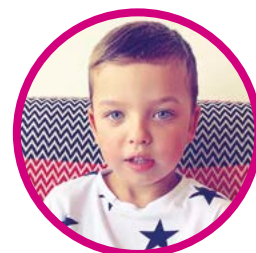
Empower your child to talk to their class or school about their hearing technology, sign language or anything they want. On days when I'm feeling rubbish, it's useful to look back at some of my achievements and realise I never would've been able to do those things if I hadn't lost my hearing.

**Elizabeth is mum to Leo (5) who is mildly to moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.**

Before Leo got his hearing aids, we spent time talking about how they would help his hearing and how amazing that would be for him. We were all very excited about his 'magic ears'.

At home, we celebrate everyone's differences, like Leo's hearing aids, my glasses or the different eye colours or heights of family and friends. We often talk about how dull life would be if everyone was the same and how lovely and interesting it is that everyone is unique.

I am also mindful of my choice of language, ensuring that it's positive and enthusiastic. As Leo once said to me early in his deaf journey, wearing his aids 'is no different to mummy wearing glasses'. He's completely right, it's a normal and everyday thing to be celebrated!



**Leo**



**Next time in *Families* magazine: How do I... make travelling abroad with my child easier?**

**If you have any tips, advice or suggestions to share, get in touch at [magazine@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:magazine@ndcs.org.uk).**

# Scribble

Tear out these pages, give them to yo

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

Colour in



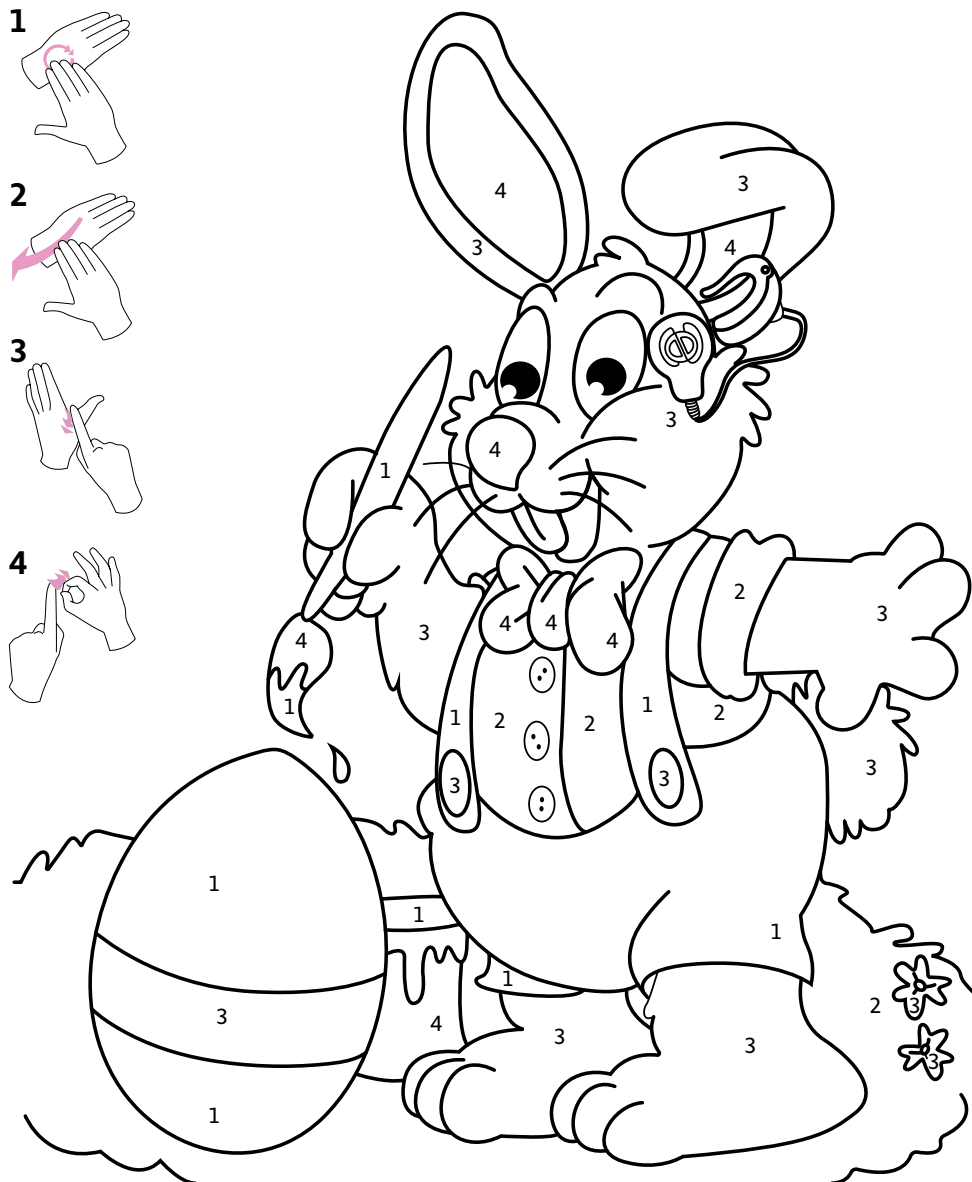
Colour in this picture of a child baking with his mum – look, he’s tasting the mixture already! What do you think they’re making?



# ole Club

our child and let their creativity run wild!

## Colour by numbers



1. Blue 2. Green 3. Yellow 4. Purple

Have a go at our colour by numbers bunny! First work out which colours the signs are describing at the top and then find the numbers in the picture. Did you spot bunny's cochlear implant? You can colour it whichever colour you like. Happy Easter!

# Happy World Book Day!

Last year we ran our children's book competition which invited deaf children aged 7-11 to enter their own stories featuring a deaf character. To mark World Book Day on 5 March, and in anticipation of the summer launch of our winning children's book, we're publishing extracts from our runner-up's story and just a few of our top 10 for you to read with your child. Look out for special comments from one of our brilliant judges Julia Donaldson CBE.



Elliot and his school friends with all the books he bought for his class with his runner-up prize of £150 in book tokens.



→ We're so excited that our children's book, written by Maya (9), will be published this summer. For updates, keep an eye on [www.ndcs.org.uk/bookcompetition](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/bookcompetition).

→ In March and April we'll be publishing our top 10 stories in full on our family blog, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs) to read them all!

## The missing hearing aid

I am a hearing aid, Freddie's hearing aid. My identical twin Eddie and I love our jobs. Every day Freddie will wake up, put us in his ears and walk to school.

One weekend Freddie was excited about going canoeing down a river for the first time. I wasn't too sure because hearing aids break in water. Despite my worries, it was quite peaceful.

Just as I was getting comfortable watching Freddie enjoy himself, we bobbed past an overhanging branch, I got

caught on it and was wrenched out of Freddie's ear! I silently plopped into the water. "No," I whistled. Freddie was frantically searching for me but it was too late. All of a sudden I could feel myself being picked up and lifted into the air.

I couldn't believe my luck, I wouldn't get broken in the rough seas! "Oh, I will get eaten by baby birds instead!" As I watched the fields beneath me zoom by, I thought of how upset Freddie must be now he could only hear with Eddie.

**Elliot (10) who is moderately to severely deaf.**



Elliot



## Julia Donaldson said:



An original story full of twists and turns. I thought the hearing aid made a great hero!



### The kid who saved animals

In the middle of Swaziland, you'll find a jungle. Humongous giant emerald trees with vines that snake through the branches are home to lots of animals. Black jaguars, slithering snakes and colourful birds that sing 'tweet tweet' songs all day long. I wake up and immediately reach to the bedside cabinet for my implants. I can now hear the birds!

I live with Lexi (the husky) and my mum in a bungalow on an animal sanctuary. My mum works at the vet surgery next door.



**Elijah**

I get up to the beautiful, peaceful morning to start my day as a special agent. I protect the animals from poachers. On rare occasions, poachers come from a local village to kill animals for their skin. They're greedy and want fur for money. Slowly I get myself ready in my camouflaged jungle gear. I proudly wear my secret weapon against these bullies, my cochlear implants! They're futuristic, not needing batteries because they charge off my body. They also turn me invisible, have super speed and let Lexi speak to me!

**Elijah (11) who is profoundly deaf.**

#### Julia Donaldson said:



The theme of animal preservation is a strong one. The jungle setting is vivid, and I liked the idea of cochlear implants that impart special powers.

### Daisy and the coolest quest... ever!

"Take her to the Lord Kondarlyn," said one of the guards. "Grrr," grumbled Daisy as they threw her into a chamber. The tall dark figure of Kondarlyn rose from a throne and commanded: "Take her to the hypnotising room. And take away those white things in her ears – they could be communication devices."

Daisy's cochlear implants had been removed but she was unfazed by this, she knew sign language. In the chamber there



**Daisy**

was some low droning hypnotic music – which of course Daisy could not hear! Daisy was chilling out in the chamber, getting stuck into her enormous copy of *The Lord of The Rings* and quietly wondering what the point of all this being locked up was. Guards entered the chamber interrupting her reading and Daisy shouted: "What the heck do you think you're doing?! I'm just at the bit where Gollum attacks Frodo and Sam!" The guards could clearly see she wasn't hypnotised and retreated.

**Daisy (10) who is profoundly deaf.**

#### Julia Donaldson said:



An action-packed story with a plucky heroine. The idea of deafness offering protection from hypnotism is a clever one.

### Ninja Phoenix and DJ and the gloopy glop

"BOOM," the ground shook and Ninja Phoenix and DJ looked alarmingly at each other. With lightning quick speed, the Deaf Ninja Team (DNT for short) grabbed their hearing aids and turned them on. "Let's investigate," shouted Ninja Phoenix. "Switched on and ready for action," they all replied. They grabbed their swords and ninja stars, jumped on their bullet bikes and followed the echoey sound of the boom. They could control their amazing motorbikes with their hearing aids and talk to each other using their Roger Radio.

They came across a humungous asteroid impact zone and at the centre there was a gigantic lump of earwax! A brave ninja called Bob went to investigate further, creeping slowly and carefully towards the yellowy brown gloop. But not carefully enough, he stepped onto the wax and was immediately stuck! The lump of earwax started to rumble, it was laughing and moving, rising up into the form of a massive waxy monster. Bob was scared but his friends knew what to do. Reaching into their ninja belt pockets, they picked out their olive oil blasters, loaded them and aimed at the hideous creature.

**Dylan (8) who is moderately deaf.**



**Dylan**

#### Julia Donaldson said:



A good adventure story. I thought the giant lump of earwax and the olive oil blasters were a stroke of genius!

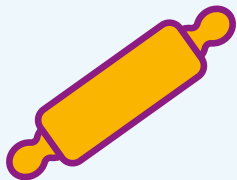


# Bake a difference!

Bake life a little sweeter for deaf children this Deaf Awareness Week (4–10 May) by taking part in our annual Big Cake Bake!

Sign up to receive your free fundraising kit full of goodies, including a cake topper, stickers and recipes; it'll be a piece of cake!

Hold your Big Cake Bake at home, school or work. Every slice, pastry and savoury roll makes a difference.



Raise over £75  
and receive a  
limited edition  
Big Cake Bake  
wooden spoon!



[www.ndcs.org.uk/  
bigcakebake](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/bigcakebake)



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REGULATOR







Cheryllous

# Ask the expert

Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Cheryllous Norris, a helpline officer here at the National Deaf Children's Society, shares her insights.

**“It's really rewarding when parents come back to us with a success story.”**

## What does a helpline officer do?

We provide guidance to families about their child's hearing loss. This could involve providing information on our services and events or directing families to one of our experts for specialist support.

## Who can use the helpline?

Anyone can contact us for information or advice. Most of our callers are either parents, or professionals working with deaf children and young people, such as Teachers of the Deaf, audiologists and speech and language therapists.

## What will happen during a call?

Typically a parent will give a bit of background about their child and then we'll discuss options and next steps. Sometimes we'll support the family directly but sometimes the caller may need signposting to another organisation.

## What are the most rewarding parts of your job?

Seeing first-hand the positive impact of arrangements you've put in place is very rewarding. I feel most satisfied when families work closely with us and develop trust and confidence that we have their child's best interests at heart.

## What does a typical day look like for you?

The helpline team is available throughout the day. Typically this involves responding to email queries, helpline calls, live chats and text messages, researching information for parents and following up on existing casework.

## What are the most common reasons that people ring the helpline?

Parents most often want to know what to expect with regard to their child's new diagnosis, how to communicate with their child and how to claim Disability Living Allowance.

## What support can you offer to parents worried about their mental health or their child's?

We explore the existing support that may be available and help them access that support. We also encourage parents to bring their child along to National Deaf Children's Society events, to boost their confidence and deaf identity.

## What advice would you give to parents of deaf children?

I'd suggest contacting the helpline initially to find out what support is available and have a chat about your concerns. Other parents of deaf children can be an invaluable source of knowledge and support. Local deaf children's societies are also great places for meeting other families and making new friends.

## How can parents access the helpline?

They can call our Freephone Helpline (Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm) on 0808 800 8880 (voice and text), SMS 0786 0022888, email [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk), or live chat with us via our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/livechat](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/livechat). We also use the InterpreterNow BSL Video Relay Service, available at [www.interpreternow.co.uk/ndcs](http://www.interpreternow.co.uk/ndcs). If parents speak another language, we can call them back with an interpreter.



To find out more about the professionals you may meet, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/people](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/people).

# Helping with homework

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

You might think it's a great idea or perhaps a terrible one, but at some point in their school life your child will have to complete homework. We have some top tips so homework works for you, your child and their school.

## What homework will my child be expected to do?

For most children, homework will start to appear when they're at primary school and it's down to schools what and how much homework is set. Homework can be a good way for you and your child to spend some time together, for you to get to know what's happening at school and to give them a helping hand. But make sure you get the balance right, you don't have to do your child's homework for them!

A good school will recognise that parents play a key role in supporting their child's learning. Teachers can do this by letting you know if there are any activities coming up which you can support with at home. For example, this could be helping your child with any new vocabulary that is likely to come up soon.

Our resources have lots of ideas and suggestions for fun activities to support your child's learning at home. Search our website for: *Helping Your Deaf Child to Read and Write: (5–7 Year Olds)* and *(8–11 Year Olds)* and *Helping Your Deaf Child to Develop Maths Skills (5–11 Year Olds)*. Search [www.ndcs.org.uk/resources](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/resources) to download a copy.

## We're struggling with homework, what can we do?

There's no harm in asking children to complete an activity within an agreed time but there's no point spending hours trying to complete a task that isn't achievable or appropriate. If this is the case, contact your child's teacher explaining why the homework hasn't been completed, and if the problem continues make an appointment with the school.

Recording and understanding homework activities can sometimes be hard for deaf children who may miss or misunderstand verbal information or instructions. This can particularly be a problem when homework is set at the end of the class while other children are already noisily packing away and scraping their chairs. Think in advance about how day-to-day information, such as homework, will be shared between you and the school. Perhaps your child's learning support assistant could write it down for them or the teacher could email it to you.



Don't forget to let the school know if there's anything going on at home that might stop your child completing homework. This might include concentration fatigue, where your child feels very tired after school and just needs to switch off.

## Secondary school

The amount of homework your child has to do will increase dramatically when they start secondary school. Homework is a major – and daily – part of secondary school life, and while your child will be expected to get it done independently, it's still important for you to know what they need to do.

Tiredness may become more of a problem for your child when they start secondary school. You may need to reduce after-school activities for a short time and make sure your child has a regular bedtime regardless of whether they've finished their homework or not. Talk to the school about opportunities for rest breaks in the school day and support on how to prioritise or simplify homework tasks.

## How much homework should my child be doing at secondary school?

Again, it's up to the school to decide. About an hour to an hour-and-a-half a night is usual in Years 7 and 8, rising to two to three hours in Years 10 and 11. A study found that British pupils do an average of 4.9 hours of homework per week.

Deaf children may have to spend more time completing tasks because of their delayed language and literacy skills. If you think your child is spending too much time on homework or doesn't have enough time for other activities, such as after-school clubs and important downtime, look at the school's homework policy or ask for a homework timetable.

If your child isn't completing homework or handing it in on time, talk to your child and their school and find out where the problem lies. It might be that your child isn't understanding what they have to do, they might need more time or help to complete the task, or the task may not be appropriate for your child.





## Our top tips for homework

- Take an active interest in your child's homework. If your child's school uses an online homework portal, check this regularly to find out what homework your child has and when the deadlines are, to help them organise their time.
- Think about downloading the My Homework app. This is a great organisational app and allows you to record all sorts of information about school work and homework.
- Support your child to set aside time each day for homework and ask them what works best for them. For example, many parents of deaf children tell us that their child needs to rest when they first get in from school because they're tired. Perhaps they'd prefer to do their homework in small chunks?
- As your child gets used to their new homework schedule, help them to become more independent. Many schools have after-school homework clubs which might help your child to finish homework straightaway and then relax when they get home. Schools may also provide lunchtime drop-in sessions for pupils to work through problems. Having that one-to-one support may help your child if they've missed things during lessons or need something communicated to them in a different way. Find out about these sessions and encourage your child to use this support. You don't need to provide all the answers.



➔ We have handy tips from other parents of deaf children about how to help with homework. [www.ndcs.org.uk/homeworktips](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/homeworktips)

Find out more about the My Homework app at [www.ndcs.org.uk/myhomework](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/myhomework).

BBC Bitesize has a range of helpful resources which offer support and information about all aspects of secondary school life for parents and children. [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)

## Supporting your child's education this spring

### ✓ Learning before starting school

As a parent, you play the most important role in helping your child to learn and succeed. There are many simple things you can do to develop your child's reading, writing and maths skills before they start school. Visit our webpage for top tips and resources.

[www.ndcs.org.uk/homelearning](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/homelearning)



### ✓ Advice to pass on to teachers

We have lots of resources for you to pass on to teachers and other school or college staff, such as lunch supervisors, teaching assistants and office staff, to help them support your child's learning and make them feel happy and included. These are available at

[www.ndcs.org.uk/resourcesforteachers](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/resourcesforteachers).

### ✓ Additional support

If your child is deaf they might need extra support from their school or nursery. Find out more about the additional support your child could be entitled to wherever you live at

[www.ndcs.org.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/additionalsupport).





# The sound of music

By Kim Hagen (Technology Research Officer)

**Ariana Grande, Katy Perry, Ed Sheeran. Inclusion, fitting in, friendships. What's the link between these artists and social wellbeing? The answer is music. Being able to listen to the same tunes as friends can be really important to deaf children.**

Music has proven success with reducing stress, helping you sleep better and improving your mood, so it can be really beneficial.

How your child can access music depends on their level of deafness and the hearing technology they use. There's a wide range of products available, ranging from deaf-specific to mainstream and from cheaper options to more advanced and costly products. Below I talk about popular deaf-specific technology products that can help your child listen to music.

## Direct input leads

Many children who use standard behind-the-ear hearing aids or cochlear implants, without integrated radio aid receivers, can use a simple piece of technology called direct input leads to listen to music.

Direct input leads are a bit like earphones; they have a standard 3.5mm plug that plugs into most phones, laptops and tablets. However, instead of the other end going into the ear, you plug it into your child's hearing technology using a little adapter piece called a shoe. Your child may already have a shoe if they use a radio aid with Roger X receivers. The shoe your child needs will depend on what hearing technology they have.

For example, I have Oticon Spirit Synergy hearing aids and need an FM9 shoe to connect a direct input lead. You can borrow direct input leads and shoes from our Technology Test Drive free of charge and we can advise you on what shoes your child will need.

Do note though that a shoe cannot be attached to your child's hearing technology if they have integrated radio aid receivers.





“ My son wanted to try these leads as it made him look like his older siblings listening to music using their phones and iPads. It provided the rest of the family with some peace and quiet too! They’re easy to use and enabled him to hear his iPad more easily in noisy environments and during car journeys.

**Julie is mum to Adam (11) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.**

“ They’re especially great if you’ve had a late diagnosis because the sound quality is very good. For me, the best thing is they just plug in as normal earphones do. If friends want to share videos or music, it’s easy and they don’t have the ‘Oh listen to this,’ \*sees hearing aids\* ‘sorry I forgot!’ thing.

**Kirsty (17) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.**

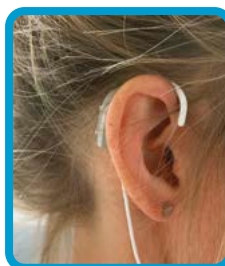


### Music-Link earhooks

Earhooks can be used with all behind-the-ear hearing aids and cochlear implants that have a processor on the ear with the T-setting activated. This setting is sometimes also referred to as the telecoil or loop setting. Most NHS hearing aids provided for children have a telecoil built into them. For younger children the setting is not always activated but you could ask your child’s audiologist to switch it on.

Earhooks have a standard 3.5mm lead that plugs into most phones, laptops and tablets. On the other end they have a little hook that sits

over the ear. It works like a hearing loop system; when you switch your child’s hearing technology to the T-setting they should be able to hear the music played on the product the lead is plugged into. You don’t need special adapter pieces or other equipment for earhooks, but on the downside I do find the hooks are a bit prone to breaking, so take care they don’t catch on things.



### Streaming products

You may not be familiar with the term ‘streamers’ but you might have heard of the Phonak ComPilot II, the Oticon Connectline, GN ReSound Multi Mic, the Advanced Bionics Naída CI Connect or the Cochlear MiniMic 2+. These are products that link to particular types of hearing technology and make using TV, mobile phones and tablets easy for deaf children. Each streamer is slightly different and in most cases a manufacturer’s streamer only works with that manufacturer’s hearing technology. For example, I can only use the Oticon Connectline streamer with my hearing aids. Streamers are multifunctional pieces of technology but are pricier than direct input leads and earhooks.



“ Heather was able to listen to her music on her iPad. This product has given her the confidence to use her phone around her pals. She now feels she’s like all the other girls.

**Keryn is mum to Heather (10) who is profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.**

“ They’re nice and simple. You plug them into a phone, computer or anything else and put the hooky bit over your ear. Then you can hear things without interrupting other people. It helps me in my day-to-day life.

**Anwyn (17) who is severely deaf and wears hearing aids.**



➔ You can also listen to music using a radio aid, over-the-ear headphones or via direct connectivity. For example if your child has the Cochlear Nucleus 7 cochlear implant they can send music straight into their cochlear implants from an iPhone.

➔ To find out more about technology that could help your child, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/technology](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/technology).  
 To borrow the products mentioned in this article from our Technology Test Drive loan service, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/techdrive](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/techdrive).  
 You can also watch our video about products to listen to music with by searching ‘headphones’ at [www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam](http://www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam).



# 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](mailto: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

Parents

## Superhero Lotto

Available from **Amazon**

£7.90

0-4

5-10



Superhero Lotto is a matching and memory game by Orchard Toys for up to four players and children aged 3-7. I was excited to try this with my daughter Ariel-Amber, who is deaf, as we're huge fans of Orchard already and it features a deaf, signing superhero.

The game gives each player a board with a superhero on; each one has their own superpower. The deaf superhero is illustrated wearing a cochlear implant, which delighted Ariel, and the superhero's special skill is signing. Ariel's brother thought this was really cool as he often signs to his little sister and it was wonderful to see signing being portrayed as a strength and something rather great!

The aim of the game is to find the matching pictures that correspond to your own board so you have to stay alert so you don't forget where they are. If this is too simple, you can turn the board over for a slightly more challenging matching game.

Superhero Lotto is a really pleasant activity that's easy to follow and keeps children focused for a good 15 minutes. My only bugbear is that I would have liked more characters so more than four people can play along. Perhaps there could also be a female deaf superhero?

I would recommend this game to any deaf children or hearing siblings to show them that deafness most definitely has its own superpowers! It would be a good game for schools to have when a deaf child joins, as the more children who see differences in their superheroes, the better.

Rebecca is mum to Ariel-Amber (4) who has a varying level of deafness and wears a hearing aid.



Rebecca and Ariel-Amber







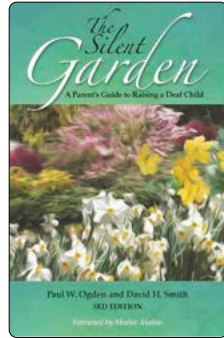
## The Silent Garden: A Parent's Guide to Raising a Deaf Child

Written by Paul Ogden and David Smith

Available from **Amazon**

£21.62 (paperback)

£20.54 (kindle edition)



### Parents

This book was longer than I expected and a bit of a slog at times to get past the Americanisms. However, I also found it reassuring in places to hear other parents have felt the same way I did on discovering both my children have permanent hearing loss. It sent the positive message that all feelings are OK. Although some of the grieving process the book talks about wasn't relevant to me, the feeling of sadness at knowing my children may have additional hurdles to overcome was poignant.

This book explores the American system so there isn't any reference to our Education, Health and Care plans. However the battle for the right support appears to be similar on both continents. The difficult decisions that parents have to make with regard to school choices, communication methods and surgery are explored, but for me I felt it offered emotional support around those subjects more than providing evidence for or against different choices. That's understandable given the system is ever-changing and technology advances quickly, but I feel like I was maybe past the point of needing that reassurance and emotional support.

Maybe this book is best suited to those at the start of their journey with their deaf child.

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



Elsie

## iLuv SmartShaker 2 alarm clock

The iLuv SmartShaker 2 is a wireless vibrating pad that links via Bluetooth to a free-of-charge app. Install the app on a smartphone and set the alarm in the app. The SmartShaker is rechargeable, so great for nights away and holidays.

Available to borrow from our Technology Test Drive ([www.ndcs.org.uk/techdrive](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/techdrive)) or buy from Sarabec ([www.sarabec.com](http://www.sarabec.com)).

Typically £30 (£36 inc VAT)

0-4

5-10

11-14

15-18

19-25

We borrowed the iLuv SmartShaker 2 alarm clock from the Technology Test Drive for our son Aidan. He's recently started primary school and we wanted to encourage his sense of independence and also save ourselves a few minutes in the morning by not having to wake him up!

I had seen other alarm clocks with attached shaker devices but was a bit worried. Small children tend to fiddle with buttons and switches so the whole house could be woken up by a very loud alarm at an ungodly hour! I liked that the iLuv SmartShaker 2 was operated by an app so I could control the timings and settings too. Also it can just shake and doesn't have to be accompanied by an audible alarm that would be no help to Aidan with his implants off at night.

You don't receive any instructions with the device but when you download the associated app, this takes you through the set-up very clearly. There are three different vibration settings and you can set multiple alarms, so it was very flexible. The only problem we encountered was that we found it hard to know if the app had updated when we made a change to the settings, so, once or twice, the alarm didn't go off as intended. We've fed this back to the developers of the app.

Aidan felt really independent using it. If he came to our bed for a cuddle, he brought it with him. At the end of the trial, he asked if we could get him one so we all thought it was a success!

**Kathryn is mum to Aidan (5) who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**



Aidan



# Resources



## Helpline



I had my five-year-old daughter Sophie's first proper parents' evening last week. She has a moderate hearing loss and goes to our local mainstream school. The teacher said, although she's doing well, she's very quiet and spends most break times on her own. I'm worried she's being left out and hasn't made any friends. Have you got any suggestions for what might help?



Starting school is a big step and it can take time for children to settle in so don't worry too much. Here are some suggestions to help Sophie adjust to school.

- Talking to Sophie about her feelings and emotions may help you understand how she's finding school and pick up on any potential problems. We've got ideas for parents about exploring emotions and feelings, which may help guide your conversation at [www.ndcs.org.uk/understandingemotions](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/understandingemotions).
- Classrooms and playgrounds are very noisy places with lots going on. It can be easy for deaf children to mishear and it can be particularly difficult for them to follow a group conversation. Sophie might be worrying about not understanding what people are saying to her or that other children might misunderstand her. You might want to pass our information on creating good listening conditions to Sophie's teachers: [www.ndcs.org.uk/acoustics](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/acoustics).
- Deaf awareness training for staff and other children in Sophie's class could make a big difference and may be something a Teacher of the Deaf or the local sensory support team could help with. This should help staff better understand Sophie's communication needs so they can facilitate conversations between her and her classmates. Our booklet *Supporting the Achievement of Deaf Children in Primary Schools*, which you can find at [www.ndcs.org.uk/resources](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/resources), has lots of information about how teachers can support deaf children's social and emotional wellbeing.
- Activities outside of school could also help to build Sophie's self-esteem and make her feel more confident around other children. We have guidance for different activity providers to ensure they include deaf children at [www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyactivities](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyactivities).
- Sophie's school may also want to arrange a visit from our Roadshow. They deliver fun and engaging deaf awareness workshops for deaf children and their hearing friends. Visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow) to book a visit.
- She might also like to go to a local deaf children's society and meet some other deaf children. You can find details of your local group at [www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup).

## What's new?

### Top tips for making discos deaf-friendly

**What type of information is it?** Web content which can be found at [www.ndcs.org.uk/discos](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/discos).

**Who's it for?** Parents of deaf children who may be going to school discos or friends' parties.

**What's it about?** This webpage explains more about how to prepare your child for a disco, adaptations you can make and lists some basic deaf awareness tips to pass on to parents and teachers.

**You might also like:** Our information and advice on how to make leisure activities, hobbies and celebrations more deaf-friendly at [www.ndcs.org.uk/hobbies](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/hobbies).







## Supporting the Achievement of Deaf Young People in Further Education

**What type of information is it?** An updated printed booklet that is available to download or order from

[www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingfurthereducation](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/supportingfurthereducation).

**Who's it for?** Staff working in further education settings.

**What's it about?** The aim of this resource is to help staff in further education make effective provisions for deaf students so they make good progress and develop the independent learning and life skills they will need in adulthood.

**You might also like:** Our downloadable PDF *Next Steps: Supporting successful transitions into post-16 education and employment for deaf young people in England* found at [www.ndcs.org.uk/nextsteps](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/nextsteps).



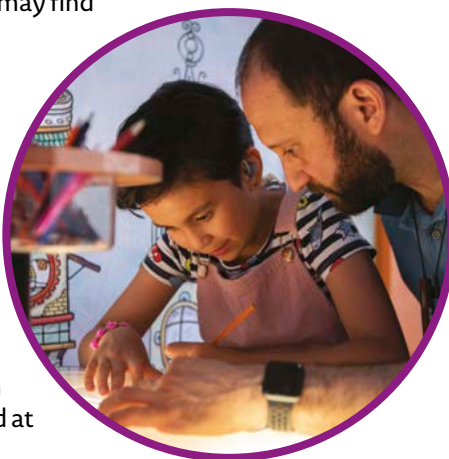
## Family blogs

**What type of information is it?** Content on our website which can be found at [www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs).

**Who's it for?** Everyone! Parents, wider family members and friends, and professionals working with deaf children, may find this content useful.

**What's it about?** We've put together a group of bloggers who are parents or family members of a deaf child or young person and they've written about their families' experiences. Our blogs cover every situation, including how to manage hospital visits, starting primary school and reading with a deaf child.

**You might also like:** Our web information on family relationships which can be found at [www.ndcs.org.uk/familyrelationships](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familyrelationships).



## 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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/soundout) for more information.

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

# Cycle to success!

Take on the UK's largest closed road cycling event, the Prudential Ride London Surrey 100, on Sunday 16 August and help us make a difference to the lives of deaf children and young people.



Jen took on 100 miles for #TeamNDCS last year.

"I took up cycling again last year purely to improve my daily commute. No one was more surprised than me when I signed up to the Prudential Ride London Surrey 100! When the day came, it was amazing – miles of beautiful Surrey countryside, plenty of encouragement and a real sense of achievement. I really can't think of a better way to get fit and raise money for a great cause."

## Half Price

registration fee  
of £15 for a  
limited time!



Find out more about Prudential Ride London Surrey 100 and all of our challenges at [www.ndcs.org.uk/challenges](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/challenges) or call 020 7014 1199.



# In your area

## A day in the life of a Roadshow officer

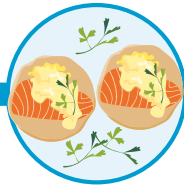
Our Roadshow officer Luke, who's profoundly deaf and uses British Sign Language (BSL), takes us with him for a busy day on the Roadshow...

**7** am

I wake up and get ready. I have English muffins with scrambled eggs and sliced salmon for breakfast, then leave the hotel.

**8** am

I arrive at the school on the Roadshow bus. We find somewhere safe to park and then prepare. Once the bus set-up is complete, we get ready to welcome the children on board.

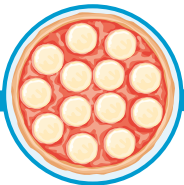


**12** pm

I have lunch in the school, some even provide delicious food like pizza or fish and chips!

**10** am

I might begin the day by delivering a workshop like Technology, Online Safety or My Future. The school can choose. I use a BSL interpreter to deliver my sessions to children who use speech. I love working on the Roadshow because I meet new people every day.



We'll deliver another workshop like Emotional Health and Wellbeing or My Town, My Street, My Say. I love talking to deaf children and young people and finding out about their experiences at home and in school. It's great to see how the workshops impact their lives.

**1** pm

**2** pm

I also deliver workshops to hearing children who go to school with deaf pupils. It's often deaf awareness sessions. One of my favourite things to do is to teach BSL and good communication tips, like using eye contact and not covering your mouth, to hearing children! It makes my day every time deaf children and young people feel more included.



**3** pm

When school finishes we'll pack up the bus, which usually takes 45 minutes or so, and get ready to move on to our next location. I love travelling to different places all over the UK.



**5** pm

After work, I like to socialise with my friends and spend time with my family. I'm a Northampton Town FC season ticket holder too, so I might attend a football match!



To arrange a visit from our Roadshow team, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow) or email [roadshow@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:roadshow@ndcs.org.uk).

# In your area

**“The support we have from one another makes the battle that little bit easier to bear.”**

Kate, who has two deaf children, tells us how she felt when her youngest son Harry (now 12) was diagnosed as deaf, and why joining her local group helped her through a very tough time...



“When we first discovered Harry had a hearing loss, I was devastated. Harry had a very difficult birth and spent his first week on a ventilator. He wasn’t expected to survive the first 48 hours initially and we were told to prepare for this. Harry then failed his newborn hearing screening and, when audiology said he was deaf, I felt that it was more bad news on top of what had so far been a very difficult start to life. As a family we didn’t know what to expect or what his future would look like. I still hadn’t recovered from the horror of almost losing a child and I wasn’t sure I was strong enough to deal with this new news being still so fragile.

As I went to a school with a hearing impaired unit, I had a friend who was deaf and he helped me see it would all be OK. He advised me to do British Sign Language Level 1 which opened up a world that my son could be a part of and he was very much welcomed into the Deaf community. In the

middle of this rollercoaster journey, my son Toby (now 14) was diagnosed with a permanent hearing loss too after having glue ear.

Our Teacher of the Deaf (QToD) invited me to join the Cornwall Deaf Children’s Society (CDCS) committee, and here I found I could be a part of something useful. The Chair decided she didn’t want to continue with the role at the end of 2018 and, worrying that otherwise CDCS would close down, two friends and I took over. The idea of taking on the responsibility was, quite frankly, daunting to us all but we believed we could make a success of it. This was the beginning of bringing deaf children and their parents together. Sharing our stories really helped me stay positive and pointed me in the right direction when I had to fight for what my child needed and deserved.

Since then we’ve enjoyed Forest School sessions, a trip to the zoo, a beach day, a trip to a theme park,

**“Sharing our stories really helped me stay positive.”**





a weekend at an outdoor pursuits centre, a signed session with Santa at the Eden Project and a neon Christmas disco. The group started with six people and now we have over 100 members!

By no means has it been easy. Keeping the group running is a lot of hard work, especially while working and having children to care for too.

Why do we do it? All of us on the committee have deaf children and have lived with the struggles they face. The support we have from one another makes the battle that little bit easier to bear. We live in a county where services are scarce and those that do exist are suffering from terrible cuts in funding. Many deaf children in Cornwall don't meet other deaf children other than through our events. There's nothing more rewarding than watching a group of deaf children together enjoying themselves and feeling a little less isolated or different. As parents, we support one another too. Recently one of our parents was chatting with us at

**“ CDCS has provided the support to help us get back up, brush ourselves off and carry on.**

an event and describing a problem. We discussed how some of us had been through the same thing and she said that she felt so much better knowing she wasn't alone. These experiences make a huge difference to a parent; they allow us to talk to people who know where we're coming from and the advice given can be invaluable.

My journey, with Harry's hearing loss in particular, has been a rollercoaster. Born with a moderate hearing loss, we gradually saw his hearing deteriorate to a profound loss. He went from using hearing aids to becoming a cochlear implant

user. We've grieved along the way; no parent wants to watch their child struggle. Just as we felt we had learnt to deal with what we had, another change would present itself. CDCS has provided the support to help us get back up, brush ourselves off and carry on. It can be easy to focus on the negatives but being proactive with CDCS has helped my mental wellbeing. It can be terrifying to join a new group but CDCS is much more than a group, we're a family.”



To find a group in your area, check out our map at [www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup). Whether you want to join a group, become a volunteer or even set up your own group, we're here to help. If you'd like to know more, get in touch with the team on [local.groups@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:local.groups@ndcs.org.uk).



# In your area

## Events

### 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.



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.

**One day event  
Scotland**  
(ages 8-18)  
April/May 2020

**Raising the Bar  
Birmingham, England**  
(ages 8-18)  
26-29 May

**Weekend Residential – Junior  
Dorset, England**  
(ages 8-13)  
25-26 April

**Weekend Residential – Senior  
Kendal, England**  
(ages 8-13)  
26-28 June



**Summer Holiday Residential  
Largs, Scotland**  
(ages 8-18)  
6-8 July

**Hertford, England**  
(ages 16-18)  
27-31 July

**Chorley, England**  
(ages 8-15)

17-21 August  
**Abergavenny, Wales**  
(ages 8-15)  
24-28 August

### 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 education rights and responsibilities. Check our website for dates.

Wales  
Derby, England  
London, England



### Newly Diagnosed Information Days (0-12 years)

An information event for families with newly diagnosed deaf children aged 0-12 years. Sessions will cover support around communication, early learning, local services, hearing and technology. It's also a great opportunity to meet other families. The event is two days long for parents of 0-2 year olds and one day only for parents of children aged 3-12. Check our website for dates.

Birmingham, England  
London, England  
Northern Ireland

### Feeling Good (0-16 years)

For parents of children aged 0-16 years, this event will recognise some of the challenges of being a parent to a deaf child and allow you to meet other parents to help you remember to look after yourself too.

Cornwall, England  
14 March  
Llanelli, Wales  
28 March



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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/events).



# It's showtime!

**Helen (13), who has a profound unilateral hearing loss, is a keen dancer and wants to be a performer in the West End. She was one of 25 deaf young people who won a place on our Raising the Bar event, a weekend of music, dance and theatre workshops.**

"I applied for Raising the Bar because I thought it would be fun and would give me the chance to dance with other deaf people, which is not something I do at my theatre school. To get a place on the weekend you had to film yourself, showcasing your particular talent in either music, drama or dance. My skill is dance so I sent in a video of me performing. I was over the moon when I heard I'd been accepted.

The event had lots of different masterclasses in music, drama and dance, all led by deaf professional performers. I had no idea what to expect. I thought we might learn one new dance but it was better than I imagined. I liked how we had fun while dancing and got to play games too. We were taught three dances with the themes of past, present and future. The future dance used British Sign Language (BSL) in it. I didn't know you could use BSL in dance. It's made me want to learn to sign so that we can sign in my theatre school show too.

Apart from a residential week run by the National Deaf Children's Society I attended the summer before last, I'd never done anything like this before. I was a little nervous because I didn't know anyone taking part but it didn't matter, it was so easy to make friends. I plan to stay in touch with the people I met there. It was a really fun



and inclusive event, with the highlight being the performance we put on at the end.

Raising the Bar gave me the confidence to audition for shows I wouldn't have tried for before. I got the part of one of the dwarves in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, a professional pantomime in Maidenhead last Christmas. I would love to be either a West End performer, a set designer or a prosthetist eventually. Thanks to Raising the Bar, I now believe I can do anything I want in the future."

**I now believe I can do anything I want in the future.**



**Raising the Bar is our annual performing arts event, run in partnership with three deaf-led organisations – Music and the Deaf, Deafinitely Theatre, and Deaf Men Dancing. This amazing weekend of workshops and rehearsals, with an emphasis on having fun, ends with an inspiring showcase performance for families and friends. If you know of, or are, a deaf young musician, dancer or actor, aged 8–18, from anywhere in the UK, email [events@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:events@ndcs.org.uk) to find out more.**

# Join our Campaigns Network

With almost 9,000 campaigners across the UK, we've made a big difference to the lives of deaf children and their families.



From a commitment to a new GCSE in British Sign Language to improving access to radio aids for young deaf children and gaining 39,439 signatures on our petition to save Teachers of the Deaf.



Join us and make a difference.

[www.ndcs.org.uk/campaignsnetwork](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/campaignsnetwork)



# Get involved

## All change: What's happening across the country?

It's been a challenging time in both Wales and Northern Ireland as government plans have been delayed. But our campaigners are working hard to turn things around and you can join them...

### Working for Wales

For over a decade, the Welsh Government has been talking about a new system for supporting learners with additional needs, including deafness. Back in 2018, they even passed the law making change possible and everyone expected the



new system to come into place in September this year.

The draft guidance on how this new system will work raised a number of questions and the Welsh Government has now delayed bringing it in until September 2021.

Over the years, the National Deaf Children's Society Cymru has lobbied on the reforms. The actions of our campaigners and members in Wales so far have helped us to speak out about the needs of deaf learners and we have seen successes. But there remain issues we need the Welsh Government to put right before the new system goes live – watch this space for more lobbying work and please do join us in our campaigning!

### What's the new system about?

- Children aged 0–16 (and 16–25 year olds in further education) with additional needs will be entitled to a support plan called an Individual Development Plan (IDP).
- Some local authorities are already offering an IDP instead of a Statement. IDPs will not be legal documents until September 2021 and you still have the right to request a Statement if you prefer.
- Check out [www.ndcs.org.uk/IDPWales](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/IDPWales) for our Q&A on the new system.

### New ideas for Northern Ireland

A long gap without an Assembly in Northern Ireland has made it harder to achieve everything we want for deaf children, young people and their families. Still, thanks to our fantastic members and some great professional supporters, we are definitely moving in the right direction.

After a long campaign, we are finally seeing the introduction of quality standards for children's audiology. Thanks to all the parents who spoke

out about what families need. There's been a long wait too for improvements to services for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). At last there's a chance to influence the new SEN Code of Practice. We've also been working with education bodies, including the CCEA, so that as soon as a British Sign Language GCSE exists, young people in Northern Ireland will have the chance to take it up.

Email [nioffice@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:nioffice@ndcs.org.uk) to find out how you can use your ideas and experiences to change children's lives for the better, right on your doorstep.

You don't have to chain yourself to the gates of Stormont, there are lots of ways to get involved. We can't do it without you!



**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 taxi driver because...**

I love exploring and I get to travel around the country. I much prefer being out in my car than being in an office.

I'm profoundly deaf but I don't see it as a barrier. When I have a new ride request, it flashes up on my phone screen. Drop-off

addresses do too. Passengers can text me messages if they want to tell me anything on the journey and I keep a

notebook in the car so they can also write things down.

I studied architecture and foundation art at college so working as a driver is a big change, but it gives me freedom and my phone makes my job easier. I don't experience communication problems at all.

My advice to deaf young people is to be confident and focus on what you can do. Employers can provide technology to make your job easier.

**Onur Kerey****I'm a statistician because...**

It combines my favourite subjects – maths, computer science and social research.

I work for the Scottish Government, producing and publishing statistics. I also project manage the National

Records of Scotland's annual publication.

I am severely to profoundly deaf, as well as dyslexic. Little support at school left me anxious about dealing with new situations and not being able to hear people in meetings or on courses. But thanks to Access to Work, I have been fully supported in the workplace and am lucky to work with an amazing team.

I can't use the phone so my colleagues answer it for me. I record most meetings and training sessions to listen to later, and my email signature notifies people of my deafness and my preferred method of communication. Everyone supports each other.

It's important to make people aware of your deafness and be prepared to educate workmates.

Don't be afraid to ask for help!

**Clare Leadbetter****I'm an entrepreneur because...**

I'd always had the desire to set up my own business, and becoming profoundly deaf in 2016 gave me the push to do it.

I have a single cochlear implant and I wanted to find solutions for me and others in my situation

because I struggled with noisy environments and using the phone. One of my businesses provides technical services to companies; the other helps people with disabilities to be more independent through the use of technology.

Even though I'm self-employed, Access to Work still provided me with a Roger Select radio aid which helps in noisy environments. They also provided me with Dragon Speech Recognition software and table mics that allow me to communicate successfully in meetings.

Going deaf motivated me to start not one but two businesses, allowing me to indulge my passions of finding solutions and helping others. My deafness has never held me back; in fact it's enabled me to make a real difference for others.

**David Butler**

Read more about David, Clare and Onur in our Technology at Work case studies at [www.ndcs.org.uk/techcasestudies](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/techcasestudies).

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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool) and Deaf Works Everywhere at [www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere).



# St John's

Catholic School for the Deaf



## 150th Anniversary Year

## Why join the St John's family?

We've been supporting deaf children and young people and those with complex communication difficulties for almost 150 years.

Our school offers:

- A friendly and welcoming learning environment, where children build relationships and thrive
- A place where aspiration for children is high, and outcomes are positive
- An autism-friendly setting
- Flexible day and weekly boarding options
- A thriving and effective sixth-form
- In-house audiology, speech and language and Teachers of the Deaf



**DOUBLE  
OUTSTANDING  
FOR CARE  
(Ofsted 2019)**

**Our care is officially  
“outstanding” - again!**

“Outstanding” Residential Care”

“They are relentless in their drive to ensure that children learn skills and gain qualifications to be able to live fulfilled lives”

“Parents say that they are amazed at the progress and the skills children acquire”

Ofsted 2019

**Get in contact:**



01937 842144



info@stjohns.org.uk



www.stjohns.org.uk



stjohns4thedeaf



stjohnsschoolforthe deaf



# #beamazed

We are committed to giving our students the education they deserve and the confidence they need, for the future they desire.

Come and visit us and be amazed! We offer:

- Subject specialists who are also qualified Teachers of the Deaf
- A broad range of GCSEs, A Levels, BTECs and vocational courses
- Small class sizes
- Technology to enable every child to hear each other and the teacher
- A fully resourced Audiology unit
- A large Speech and Language team

For more information or to arrange an individual visit, please contact  
**Debbie Jacobs:**  
[d.jacobs@maryhare.org.uk](mailto:d.jacobs@maryhare.org.uk)  
call **01635 244215**  
or visit our website [www.maryhare.org.uk](http://www.maryhare.org.uk)



*Securing the future of deaf children and young people*