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National Deaf Children's Society

families



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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...

starring in *EastEnders*

By Abbi Brown



Rose

FOR EASTENDERS FANS, ROSE AYLING-ELLIS (25) WILL BE A FAMILIAR FACE. EARLIER THIS YEAR, SHE BECAME THE FIRST PROFOUNDLY DEAF ACTOR TO JOIN THE ICONIC TV SHOW.

“My first day was nerve-racking!” says Rose. “Seeing the set was surreal but everyone was lovely. I soon relaxed.”

Rose, who wears hearing aids, discovered her passion for acting on a filming weekend run by the National Deaf Children’s Society. During the weekend, she met deaf film director Ted Evans, who later cast her in his award-winning short film *The End*, and went on to apply to Deafinitely Youth Theatre. “Deafinitely Theatre helped me hugely with knowledge and networking,” says Rose.

Ten years on, she’s thrilled to be playing Frankie on *EastEnders*. “Frankie’s sassy, blunt and says what’s on her mind. I wish I could be more like her, I’m too polite!”

“It’s so important not to be ashamed of being deaf.”

Frankie’s character was introduced to the soap to help long-standing character Ben discover his deaf identity, a storyline created by deaf writer Charlie Swinbourne. Rose thinks it’s important to involve deaf writers in writing deaf characters. “When I read a script, I can always tell if it was written by a deaf or hearing writer,” she says. “Only deaf people truly understand what we go through. The *EastEnders* writing team is brilliant, and the crew are really open to me inputting my own ideas into the scripts.”

Frankie communicates using a mixture of oral English and British Sign Language (BSL), so Rose often has

to perform in Sign Supported English (SSE). “When I use SSE, it’s like thinking of two languages at the same time while performing, so a BSL monitor checks my BSL is clear on-screen. I also have a BSL interpreter on set at all times, paid for by my Access to Work.

“My ambition is to amplify deaf voices and to stop people assuming deaf people can’t achieve. The challenges of dealing with people’s lack of understanding made me more determined and want to work harder.

“It’s so important not to be ashamed of being deaf. Both Frankie and I are proud of our deaf identities.”



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



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STARS

Our coronavirus superstars

In this end-of-year issue, we wanted to bring special attention to three superstars who have gone above and beyond during this very difficult year.

Superman Henry raised £30,000!



In July, Henry (3) took on a fundraising campaign to raise thousands of pounds for deaf children across the UK as part of our corporate partnership with the Access Group.

Henry, who's deaf and wears cochlear implants, took on a new sporting challenge every day to raise money for us. He challenged himself to an egg and spoon race, threw beanbags into a bucket, scored as many rugby tries as he could, won a sack race and drove his toy car round the garden – all while dressed as Superman!

He set out to drum up support from the Access Group employees and raise £2,000 throughout the week. However, the staff took Henry's challenge to their hearts and he raised an incredible £30,000! What a superstar!

Austin wrote to Boris!

Austin (11) wrote to Prime Minister Boris Johnson in June, asking him to introduce see-through face masks across the country. Austin, who's severely to profoundly deaf, decided to send the letter because he relies on lip-reading to understand what people are



saying. Face masks which aren't see-through make lip-reading and reading facial expressions difficult, leaving many deaf people struggling.

Austin said: "I have to lip-read to understand what anyone is saying, and so do a lot of my friends. The masks that cover up mouths are awful. I don't like them and they make me feel sad and lonely because I can't understand what anybody is saying."

Boris thanked Austin for bringing the important issue to his attention. Well done Austin!

Local love for Northern Ireland group

One local group brought some sunshine to its members with a surprise delivery during the first lockdown. Julie, chairperson for Hands and Voices Deaf Children's Society in County Derry, Northern Ireland, decided to make use of some money that had recently been donated, and put together gift bags for all of the group's children and their siblings.



Each bag was tailored to an individual child and was age-appropriate with everything from textured calming toys and colouring books, to skipping ropes and comprehension books. They also made a donation of bags to an assisted living facility in Derry for profoundly deaf adults who have other complex needs.

Julie said: "I felt that in these unprecedented times we all need and deserve to be looked after, and I just hope that this mini project of ours spread a little bit of happiness." A true hero of lockdown!

Deaf young people question Labour and Lib Dem leaders online

In June, while most students were still learning at home, one of our Young People's Advisory Board (YAB) members was busy chatting to Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer MP about her experiences of online learning as a deaf young person.

Holly explained the difficulty of lip-reading through a screen and asked what provisions the government could put in place to help students get the grades they deserve.

Sir Keir said: "We should prioritise [getting back to school] those that need it most, particularly if there's a space issue... We do need to perhaps get behind a campaign to make sure that happens."

The event was run by My Life My Say, a youth-led charity set up to empower young people to participate in democracy. The charity gives young people the chance to question and talk with leading politicians on free online webinars. The National Deaf Children's Society has supported My Life My Say to make these events accessible with live captioning and sign language interpreters.

Deaf young people have had the chance to share their experiences with, and question, Sir Keir and Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davy MP so far on a range of issues, including face masks and the institutional barriers facing deaf young people of colour.



Borrow to Buy is back!

Our loan scheme is back up and running and lets you try the latest Phonak radio aids and streamers for 60 days for free. If you find the products useful, you and your local authority have the option to buy and keep them, or return them to us if not.

We've made sure that all of the radio aids loaned through our scheme can be used safely and hygienically at home and in school. We've updated our guidance on how and when to clean your radio aid and what to clean it with. We'll also be sending cleaning wipes with every loan so that you can start using your radio aid straight away.

For more information visit www.ndcs.org.uk/technology-loans.



Did you know?

At least 24,000 people across the UK use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language.



Sign of the season



Comment

The Quest for the Cockle Implant is out now!

I believe passionately that the characters we see in stories should be as diverse as the people who read them. That's why, since 2017, we've been on a mission to write stories which include deaf characters doing amazing things.

But we don't just want deaf children to see other deaf people succeeding, we want them to succeed themselves, which was the motivation behind the children's book competition we held last year. We asked deaf children aged 7-11 to write their own story featuring a deaf character, which meant they would be not only the star of our next book, but the author too!

I was lucky enough to judge the amazing entries we received, and picking a winner was a very hard job indeed. We had stories about robots, talking animals, and even a deaf ninja team! All very different, but every single one an absolute joy to read.

Although it was a tough decision, all of the judges agreed that our winner had written something special. So we set to work turning nine-year-old Maya Wasserman's story into a real-life book. With our campaign Deaf Works Everywhere in mind, we recruited young deaf illustrator Lucy Rogers to illustrate it for us and *The Quest for the Cockle Implant* was born.

The story is about two mermaid sisters, Coral and Angel, and their friend Finn, who go on an adventure through the sea when Angel loses her cockle implant. As a deaf child, I would love to have read something like this when I was growing up. I was an avid reader, but none of the books I read contained a character who resembled me in any way. Maya's Angel is brave, caring, creative, and just so happens to be deaf too. She would definitely have been my heroine!

My favourite character is the Merkitty, he might be a little scary at first but he's definitely got a soft centre. I'd love to know who yours is. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books to buy your copy now.

Susan

Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive





LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

THE CHRISTMAS ISSUE: Settle back for a night at the movies! Films bring us a special kind of magic at Christmastime — in this issue of AQUILA we look back over 100 years of film history, investigating Stop motion, Sound effects and the Lumière brothers. Discover the story of Disneyland and the real science v. the fantasy of time travel. PLUS: do Black Holes hold a 'film copy' of our Galaxy's history?

A subscription to AQUILA magazine makes a brilliant Xmas Gift for curious 8–13-year-olds! Witty and intelligent with beautifully illustrated topics, every issue is a balanced mix of Science, Arts and General Knowledge. **BY SUBSCRIPTION ONLY: www.AQUILA.co.uk**

“...Advanced & Philosophical, Curious & Puzzling”

Richard Robinson, Brighton Science Festival

Top tips...

Helping your child catch up with their education

After months at home earlier this year, your deaf child might need some extra help now they're nearing the end of their first term back at school. We find out from our experts what you can do to support your child to get up to speed with their learning.

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

1 Dealing with new routines and getting back into learning will have been demanding for your child. Create a space at home where they're able to relax and process all the new and different information.

Emma Fraser, Teacher of the Deaf.



2 Your child may be struggling if they've been out of contact with peers for some time. Make sure they have a designated person (who can communicate with them in their preferred language) to talk to about any difficulties or worries.

Dr Hannah George, Consultant Psychologist.

3 Ask for the key vocabulary they'll be working on so you can practise it with them at home. Then, when it's used in nursery, they'll understand and feel more confident using it.

Helen Latka, Teacher of the Deaf.



4 Get your child to try using closed-caption options if interactive whiteboards are being used for video assemblies. Ask their teacher for details of their curriculum so you can offer support at home.

**Nicky, mum to Isabelle (2).
Both are profoundly deaf.**

5 Radio aids can help effective communication and help your child catch up as they will be able to hear their teacher better in noisier environments. Make use of our Borrow to Buy service to try one.

Stuart Milligan, Technology Manager.

6 If the school offers intervention or drop-in sessions, encourage your child to go to them and to arrange times to see their teachers one-to-one for a bit more direct help.

Kirsty (17) is moderately deaf.



7 Be assertive about your needs. If a fellow student is wearing a face mask, it's fine to ask that person to communicate differently, eg using a speech-to-text app. If you're falling behind, ask your tutors for extra support. You have the right to fully access your lectures.

Martin McLean, Post-14 Education Policy Lead.

8 Universities can provide confidential access to counselling services if you're struggling emotionally. Ask your personal tutor, student support or wellbeing team if you need a BSL interpreter.

Chris Mullen, Social Worker.



➔ For more information about mental health and your deaf child, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing. You can find tips from other parents of deaf children on our forum Your Community at www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community. Our website has plenty of ideas and tips for helping to support your child's education at all stages of their life, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/education for more information. To find out more about what support your child is entitled to in education, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/knowyourrights.

Sara Says



Sara is mum to Sam (13), Matthew (11), Oliver (9) and Charlotte (6). Charlotte's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

📌 www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI

🐦 [deafprincessni](https://twitter.com/deafprincessni)

“I'll be trying to maximise each moment and stop taking so much in my life for granted.”



Read our top tips for deaf awareness at www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips.

Find out more about transcription apps Otter.ai and Live Transcribe on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/livetranscribe and turn to page 33 to read one young person's review of Otter.ai.

For more tips on supporting your own wellbeing, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/parentmentalhealth. It might also be useful to connect with other parents of deaf children; go to www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community to visit our new parents' forum.

My New Year's resolutions

THIS HAS BEEN ONE TOUGH YEAR; FULL OF CANCELLATIONS, CHANGING ARRANGEMENTS AT THE LAST MINUTE AND HUGE UNCERTAINTY. Many of us will also have faced grief and separation. So, this New Year will have even more significance than before.

I've been thinking about New Year's resolutions. Sometimes I set some, sometimes I don't. 2020 has made me rethink resolutions and the focus I want them to have for myself and my family.

First, I want to make family time more important. Throughout this year, we've grown to appreciate time together more than ever, doing simple things that don't cost money, like reading, chatting and enjoying the outdoors. We've sometimes enjoyed the lack of organised events and activities, even though we've missed our friends as a result. We've decided to purposefully plan less into our schedules moving forward.

Next, taking time out. I want to take more time to relax and recharge alone or with my family and close friends. It's so important and we should be actively including it in our daily lives.

I want to learn how to make my online content more accessible. This year I learnt that each word in a hashtag needs a capital letter so that audio programmes will read it out properly to visually impaired readers, for example #AccessibleInformation. Next year I want to learn how to add captions to my videos and put two videos side-by-side for speech and signing simultaneously. Even if you don't have a professional online presence, it's good to get into the habit of doing this on your social media.

I also want to make a conscious effort to raise deaf awareness. Wearing my clear face mask in shops this year has allowed me to have conversations about why I'm wearing it and how much

it can help people who need to read lips. People who have no experience of deafness don't realise how small, simple actions can aid communication. I see it as my responsibility to share the information I have learnt with others.

And finally, I'll continue being thankful. While trying to keep our lives positive throughout these tough times, we've tried to focus on things we're thankful for, rather than problems we're having. As a family around the dinner table, we tell each other three things we're each thankful for that day. It has helped us focus on the positives, think about our days critically and also process and voice our emotions and experiences. All of which has had an additional benefit for Charlotte, who has expanded her vocabulary, improved her recall of events and gained lots of understanding about both her own and her family's feelings.

Many people I speak to have realised the importance of slowing down, making time for family and striving to fill their lives with what's most important to them. Maybe 2021's New Year's resolutions will reflect this and help us maintain a better work/school/family/home life balance – I know I'll be trying to maximise each moment and stop taking so much in my life for granted. I wonder what your resolutions will be... 📌



Life for Louise

Dating as a deaf young person



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

🌐 www.louisedeafawareness.com

🐦 LouiseDeafAware

Telling Jack about my deafness on our first date was nerve-racking... I was expecting him to end the date and leg it!



For another deaf young person's experience of dating, read Danielle's story on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/danielle.

For communication tips you can share with anyone, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips.

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I ALWAYS DREAMED OF FINDING THAT SPECIAL SOMEONE AND I NEVER THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS ANY DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE.

It wasn't until I was a bit older and a teenager that I noticed several of my close friends get into relationships. During that time, I was more self-aware of my deafness and trying to accept my Deaf identity. I felt quite left out, feeling like the only girl who didn't have a boyfriend.

"You will find someone, Louise!" everyone would say. But who would want to date a Deaf girl like me?

Well, there are actually a few people out there! My first relationship was with a hearing guy, who was five years older than me. It lasted almost three years and ended only because he was sadly not what I was looking for in a future partner.

I'm currently in a relationship with a lovely guy called Jack. Telling Jack about my deafness on our first date was nerve-racking. But he was very positive about it and carried on as normal. I was expecting him to end the date and leg it!

I decided to tell Jack about my deafness on the first date face-to-face, because I feel that some people can pre-judge me because of my deafness. That's why I raise awareness to eliminate these misconceptions.

The struggle of a deaf-hearing relationship is all about educating them about deaf awareness. I used to feel bad because I kept having to remind Jack of basic communication tips. He took it in so well, though, and now I feel I can rely on him for communication support. For me, it did take some time getting used to his voice, but we got there in the end. He always repeats sentences to me and keeps me up to date in group



conversations, which is one of the reasons why I feel so lucky to have him.

On several occasions, I've got frustrated and had a cry because I couldn't hear him after lots of repetitions in the car, which is one of my biggest struggles, and in noisy places like pubs and restaurants. Because of this, I've decided to start teaching Jack some basic signs, and he's already learnt the alphabet. This has helped me massively because he can fingerspell things to me that I can't hear. Sometimes he remembers the signs better than me! He's now doing a course to work towards his Level 1 qualification in British Sign Language, which is exciting. I think this will help to overcome any future communication struggles we might have.

My advice to other deaf young people? Never feel ashamed of your deafness. Speak positively when you tell people and don't be afraid to joke about it, it always helps to break the ice massively. 🗣️

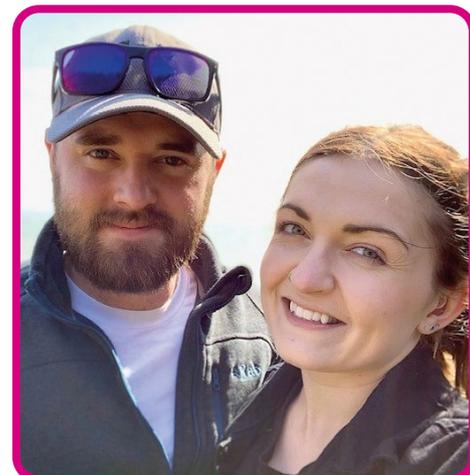


Photo credit: Abi/May/Abilou Beauty.



Alex's experience of cholesteatoma

By Abbi Brown

When Alex (4) underwent grommet surgery for glue ear, his parents hoped it would be the end of his hearing problems. Ten operations later, and armed with Spiderman hearing aids, Alex isn't letting cholesteatoma hold him back.



Alex's story
how the family handles frequent operations for cholesteatoma



There needs to be much better awareness of cholesteatoma.

WHEN ALEX'S CONSULTANT FIRST MENTIONED CHOLESTEATOMA, HIS PARENTS WERE SHOCKED. "ANYTHING WITH 'OMA' AT THE END, YOU IMMEDIATELY WORRY THAT IT'S SOME KIND OF CANCER," REMEMBERS MUM MARIA.

At 16 months old, Alex had battled constant ear infections and glue ear for most of his life. Although the GP thought the infections would go away on their own, Maria couldn't shake the feeling something was wrong. When a private consultant suggested grommets, Alex's parents were relieved.

"I had glue ear as a child," explains Maria. "I'd had grommets myself, so I understood how they worked."

The consultant warned Maria and husband Scott that he could see small white patches in Alex's ears, but they were hopeful the grommet surgery would spell the end of Alex's ear problems. So, when the consultant came back after the surgery with Alex's new diagnosis, learning that he'd need more operations was devastating.

"It was a lot to process," says Maria. "It wasn't until we got home that we realised we were in it for the long haul."

A cholesteatoma isn't anything to do with cancer. It's a benign skin growth in the middle ear. They're usually caused by recurrent ear infections, but Alex's cholesteatomas were congenital, meaning he was born with them. If they're not removed, cholesteatomas keep growing and can cause permanent deafness, brain abscesses or even meningitis.

Now four years old, Alex has had 10 operations on his ears, all under general anaesthetic. "The older he gets, the better he handles them," says Maria. "When he was younger, he didn't like cannulas, so the anaesthetist had to use gas. For his first operation, he was 16 months old but big for his age, and it took three adults to hold him down while they administered the gas. Now he's older, they do the anaesthetic by injection. It's a lot less stressful – for him and for me!"

The family has developed a routine around Alex's operations. While Alex and his parents go to hospital, big sister Emilia is looked after by her godparents. "She gets excited because her godmother takes her to school, which is a novelty!" laughs Maria. "She understands that Alex has special ears so sometimes we need to spend more time with him."

At the hospital, the children's ward has a toy car which takes Alex down to surgery. When he wakes up, he enjoys ice lollies and videos. "We're lucky to have those extra things to take his mind off it," says Maria.

Having a routine also helps Alex's parents stay calm. "Although it's really hard for the child going through operations, people forget that it's difficult for the parents as well," says Maria. "It's perfectly normal to feel bogged down or tearful.

"The first couple of times I took him down for anaesthetic I cried, but although you're always anxious and concerned, you do get used to it.

"Scott tends to worry during the operation, whereas I'm quite calm. I get more worried afterwards, once we learn what they've found or done during the surgery. We balance each other out!"

Alex's last cholesteatoma surgery was done shortly before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. When the consultant needed to remove a scab from Alex's eardrum after the operation, the country had gone into lockdown so he could only have one parent with him, and dad Scott took him alone.

"Alex was really good," says Maria. "He just lay down and let them take the scab out. The consultant was wearing full PPE, including a gown, a mask and a visor, but Alex just said he looked like an astronaut! He'd seen and heard about the pandemic and we'd explained why people wore masks, so he was prepared. But he was slightly annoyed that they'd taken all the toys away from the waiting room!"

Although Alex's cholesteatomas were caught early, he's been left with moderate hearing loss and delayed speech. "I'm glad I went with my gut instinct," says Maria. "If we'd listened to the GP and waited until Alex was five for him to get grommets, he might have totally lost his hearing. We're lucky to have private medical insurance through Scott's employer, but most people don't. Many children aren't diagnosed



for years and it can cause serious problems. It's not fair.

"There needs to be much better awareness of cholesteatoma. We recently saw a GP who'd never heard of it, so I had to explain! I think if people knew more about cholesteatoma symptoms, they might feel more confident asking their child's GP whether they've considered it."

For now, Alex is enjoying reception year at school with his friends from nursery. He wears Spiderman hearing aids, has speech therapy and uses a radio aid at school.

"I feel sorry that Alex might have to have more operations, but cholesteatoma's just part of our family life now," says Maria. "It's always a blow to learn that he's got another one, but we know what he's got to have done each time. These things come along but there's light at the end of the tunnel.

"We were recently delighted to hear that Alex's most recent operation has significantly improved his hearing in that ear. Our consultant is a miracle worker!"

As if on cue, Alex interrupts his mum. "Can you be quiet?" he asks. "I can't concentrate on my puzzle!"

Maria laughs. "He's a very sociable little boy. He fits in so well with his peers. He just needs a few reasonable adjustments and hopefully he'll thrive." 



Maria is one of our family bloggers. You can read more about her family's experiences and the journeys other families have been on at www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs.

You can find more information about cholesteatoma at www.ndcs.org.uk/cholesteatoma.



Your winter checklist

✓ Applying to primary school

Choosing and applying for a primary school place for your child can feel overwhelming. For deaf children, there are extra things to consider. If you're currently picking a primary school, check out our guidance to help you choose a deaf-friendly school. www.ndcs.org.uk/startingschool



✓ Christmas gifts for your deaf child

Looking for a relatable Christmas gift for your deaf child? After struggling to find teddy bear hearing aids for her daughter, parent blogger Joy wrote about some of her favourite representative toys to help you choose the perfect present. www.ndcs.org.uk/christmas-gift-ideas



✓ Glue ear animation

For young children, experiencing glue ear can be disorientating. To help them understand what glue ear is and how it can be treated, we've made a fun animation all about glue ear, written by 10-year-old deaf child Dylan. www.ndcs.org.uk/glueear





A chaotic Christmas

By Elayne Nunan

Like most families, Sara and her husband Lee have faced a tough year. Throughout the first lockdown, they home schooled Rhys (6), who is deaf, twin Max and brother Louie (12), while both working in the NHS – so Christmas can't come soon enough!



Rhys's story
how they're celebrating Christmas together at home



“Our work in the NHS means some Christmases we're not all together, so when we are it's extra special!”

• EVERY FAMILY CHRISTMAS IS SPECIAL, BUT FOR SARA, LEE AND THEIR FAMILY IT'S GOING TO BE EXTRA SPECIAL THIS YEAR. BOTH ARE NHS WORKERS - SARA IS A CARDIAC NURSE AND LEE A PARAMEDIC - AND THEIR SHIFTS DON'T ALWAYS COINCIDE. But this year, they're both off for Christmas and with three boisterous boys, it's set to be a riot!

• “It'll be carnage!” laughs Sara. “Our work means some Christmases we're not all together, so when we are it's extra special! Rhys and the boys are even more excitable – meaning a very loud house!”

• Rhys has moderate to severe hearing loss and glue ear so his hearing fluctuates; he's worn hearing aids since he was six weeks old. Sara learnt British Sign Language (BSL) as part of her job as a nurse, and taught Rhys to sign from the beginning. He has speech and language delay, but with regular speech and language therapy, his speech has improved and his confidence has grown. His progress at school is on a par with his peers, which is all the more impressive as Rhys attends a Welsh language school in North Cardiff.

• “We're English speakers but wanted the boys to learn Welsh,” says Sara. “Rhys's last report was brilliant, his vocabulary is great, just the fluidity a little behind. His brothers have always spoken up for him when he's struggled, now he insists on doing it himself.”

• The family is full of praise for the school, which goes to great measures to be deaf-friendly. Rhys, who has a special educational needs (SEN) statement and one-to-one support, recently gave a talk to his class about deaf awareness. Then last Christmas, the school taught the children festive songs in Welsh, along with accompanying BSL signs.

• “They performed *Walking in the Air* in Welsh and BSL, it was amazing!” says Sara. “The teachers made sure Rhys sat at the front so he could see us and his teacher as she wore the radio aid.”

Rhys's deafness brings us together as a family.

But they're very careful to not make Rhys feel singled out because of his hearing loss."

The family can't wait to shake off the stress of the last year and celebrate Christmas again!

"Early on in the pandemic, so much was unknown," says Sara. "It was worrying, both working in the NHS and Lee on the frontline, helping people who had virus symptoms. It was frightening; what were we exposing the kids to? We tried to leave it all at work, not talk about it, educate the kids about hygiene and explain they can't hug their grandparents and our jobs mean a higher risk of contracting the virus."

Sara uses the tips on our website, along with her own experience with Rhys, to make sure everyone has a good time at Christmas.

"We find taking time to explain to Rhys and the boys what's planned over this period is essential," Sara says. "Sometimes Rhys might miss what's being said to him, especially if he's engrossed in something.

"We get his full attention before we speak, making sure there's no distraction, engaging him by sitting close and having eye contact. We've explained to his brothers that being loud and speaking over Rhys can impact on him being able to interact with the family on the day.

"Normally our extended family visit and it's lovely to see how they've adapted to how Rhys responds and acts. As well as Lee and me, Rhys's grandparents, brothers and cousin have either completed a course or are continuing to learn BSL.

"We don't use radio aids at home, we've simply shared our knowledge with the family on how to be deaf aware, for example, giving Rhys time to answer questions, being specific in what they ask, not speaking with food in their mouth, not jumping from one topic to another, and to always include him in conversation to avoid him feeling left out. Rhys wants to talk about the toys he got like any child, just listen and give him time to speak and answer.

"Last Christmas, at dinner I sat him next to my niece Sophie (10) who's



quiet and attentive; she came to family sign language lessons with us. She'll tap him, say, 'We're talking about this or that,' and she makes sure to keep him in the loop."

After a successful celebration last year, Sara has tips for other families this Christmas, whether or not we can see wider family. "Try to explain what you're doing throughout the day, down to where nan and gramps are sitting at the table, what food you're cooking, and the games you're going to play – a deaf child needs repetition of words to increase their vocabulary and grow in their development.

"We don't always get it right and for some reason we all put even more pressure on ourselves at Christmas – just try to relax and don't worry if you have to repeat yourself a few times over Christmas dinner, that's what it's like to have children!

"Learn from them too. Having a deaf child is unique and every day I learn from how a child with a hearing loss finds their way in the world. All our children are individual and I feel Rhys's deafness brings us together as a family as we all have a common goal, and that's to respect and treat each other as equals." 



For our top tips on making Christmas deaf-friendly, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/christmastips.



PRIMARY YEARS

Your winter checklist

✓ Support from other parents

It's been a difficult year and you may want to connect with other parents of deaf children to talk about any worries or concerns you have, or just to get some tips on everyday activities.

Our new forum Your Community allows you to do this, just visit www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community and sign up for an account to start chatting.



✓ Audiology services

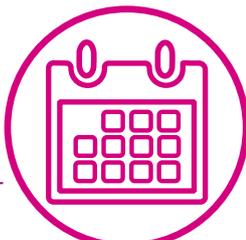
Although most audiology services have now reopened, families are still experiencing delays while services catch up. You may also find that the support your service offers has changed.

For the latest guidance on waiting times and regulations in audiology services, keep an eye on our blog at www.ndcs.org.uk/covid-blog-audiology.



✓ Emotional health and wellbeing

After so much uncertainty and change this year, many children might be struggling with their mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Don't forget that we have lots of support and advice for supporting deaf children's mental health on our website. www.ndcs.org.uk/ehwb





Hanukkah at home

By Katy Blanchard

With video calls and online learning becoming the new norm for students during the first coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown earlier this year, Maxi (12) is all set for this year's virtual Hanukkah celebrations.



Maxi's story
how online learning has prepared him for Hanukkah



“We might have lots of excited children together on one call, so other people's awareness of Maxi's needs is key.”

• **HAVING STARTED SECONDARY SCHOOL A FEW MONTHS BEFORE THIS YEAR'S PANDEMIC CHANGED EVERYTHING, 12-YEAR-OLD MAXI IS USED TO ADAPTING TO CHANGE.**

“It took a while for Maxi to settle in at secondary school,” mum Gisela explains. “Being in a different classroom for each lesson and making sure his radio aid was passed around his teachers posed challenges.”

No sooner had Maxi, who is moderately deaf, become used to the bigger school, online learning replaced face-to-face lessons.

Online schooling had its benefits for Maxi, who wears two hearing aids in his favourite colour of green. “He could replay certain parts of the lesson, allowing him to catch up on anything he may have missed due to increased background noise,” says Gisela. “He's coped with all the changes brilliantly.”

Now things are getting back to a new form of normal, the family are looking to the future, and next up is Hanukkah.

The Jewish festival of lights, which the family call by its more traditional name of Chanukah, is marked in December, and it brings a welcome chance to celebrate after a stressful year. Maxi will be drawing on everything he's learnt during home schooling to make the most of the celebrations.

“Chanukah commemorates a miracle in Jewish history and being with your friends and loved ones is important, so it will be very different this year,” says Gisela. “Maxi will find it hard not to celebrate in person with his friends.”

Usually, the family moves around on each night of the eight-day celebration, with events held at home and in the homes of friends and neighbours. “The different environments don't usually affect Maxi too much,” says Gisela. “The main thing is making sure we manage the level of the music – as with any celebration – and ensuring that Maxi is aware of what will happen so that nothing is unexpected.”

“ A silent disco is a great way for Maxi to enjoy big celebrations.

This year, these face-to-face celebrations will be replaced with video calls. “We might have lots of excited children together on one call, and this can be hard for Maxi to follow,” Gisela explains.

During his time learning at home, Maxi found many ways to make busy video calls and virtual meetings easier though. “Making sure everyone on the call is aware of Maxi’s needs helps ensure even the busiest of calls can be managed,” says Gisela. “Other people’s awareness and empathy is key.”

Maxi has found closed captioning particularly helpful on video calls. Either the host can assign the captioning to another participant on the call (for example, a remote speech-to-text reporter) or a third-party closed caption service or app can be used. Apps, such as Otter.ai and Live Transcribe are particularly helpful.

Hanukkah is usually marked with special services at the synagogue, too. “The weekly service takes place on a Saturday when the use of microphones is not allowed as it’s the Sabbath in Judaism,” says Gisela. “The absence of the microphone can make it difficult for Maxi to follow the service.” Services for special events such as Hanukkah, though, may be on different days and the use of a microphone can be very helpful for Maxi if the volume is properly managed.

Maxi always makes sure to sit near the front, facing the Rabbi, so that he can lip-read and, if the Rabbi were to use an FM system, that could help Maxi follow the service too.

The level of noise at large services and celebrations can still be overwhelming, though. “Sometimes, if there are lots of people all in a large, echoey room, the noise can feel like it’s destroying my ear drums,” says Maxi. “It can happen at prayer time in school or at the synagogue. I can stand it for a while, but sometimes I step outside if the noise becomes too much.”

While large gatherings and celebrations with friends and neighbours won’t be taking place this year, some traditions to mark Hanukkah will remain unchanged. The family will light a candle on the

Hanukkah each night, play the dreidl (a four-sided spinning top), share chocolate coins to remember the importance of giving to others, and the children will receive a present on each of the eight days.

After a year in which celebrations have been marked very differently, next year is set to be one to remember for Maxi. He turns 13 and will celebrate his bar mitzvah – the Jewish coming-of-age ceremony for boys.

Maxi learns about his Jewish identity, religion and culture as part of his school curriculum and has been taking one-to-one Zoom lessons to prepare for his bar mitzvah and learn the prayers he’ll read at the service.

“I’m excited and a bit nervous about my bar mitzvah,” says Maxi. “I’m excited about saying my prayers and giving my speech at the synagogue, but I’d like more time to prepare.”

A party is normally an important element of bar mitzvah celebrations, too. If it’s possible next year – dependent on the government restrictions in place at the time – the family plans to hold a silent disco, something Maxi has previously enjoyed.

“We don’t feel that the religious aspects of the bar mitzvah will be difficult for Maxi in terms of his hearing loss, but a silent disco will mean he can enjoy the party much more,” says Gisela. “He attended a silent disco to mark the end of primary school and loved being in control of the volume of the music. Maxi has been through so much this year and has worked so hard – we really hope that this big celebration will be possible.” 



Find out more about transcription apps Otter.ai and Live Transcribe on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/livetranscribe and turn to page 33 to read one young person’s review of Otter.ai.

For basic deaf awareness tips you can share with friends and family, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips.



SECONDARY YEARS

Your winter checklist

✓ Appealing school placements

If your child wasn’t given a place at the secondary school of your choice, it’s not too late to appeal. Visit our website for advice on appealing school placements, or contact our Helpline for specific guidance.

www.ndcs.org.uk/choosingaschool



✓ Gaming headsets

Looking to buy a gaming gift this Christmas but baffled by the choice? Our technology web section has lots of advice on the best tech options for deaf children and young people. Check out Oscar and Kim’s tips on what to look for in a gaming headset for a deaf child.

www.ndcs.org.uk/gaming-headsets



✓ Concentration fatigue

After a busy first term back at school, you might have noticed your child seems particularly tired or withdrawn. Concentration fatigue affects deaf children in different ways. Luckily, there are lots of things you can do to help your child get on top of their tiredness.

www.ndcs.org.uk/tired





A double diagnosis

By Kerrina Gray

Although she's faced and overcome many obstacles as a deaf and autistic young person, not even Kara (15) could have predicted the unique challenges 2020 would bring.



Kara's story
how she handles being deaf and autistic

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER A SIX-MONTH BREAK WAS NERVE-RACKING FOR KARA. AS A DEAF AND AUTISTIC YOUNG PERSON, CHANGES IN ROUTINE ARE SCARY, AND OF COURSE THERE WAS THE ADDED DIFFICULTY OF HER WHOLE SCHOOL WEARING FACE MASKS.

"It's been really difficult being back," says Kara. "The teachers and the pupils all wear faces masks so I can't see their lips at all. This is the hardest challenge I've faced."

Kara's deafness came as a surprise to mum Lorraine, but the family quickly took it in their stride. "Kara was born at 26 weeks," explains Lorraine. "She had a lot of health issues so we found out quite late that she was deaf, she was one and a half. They thought she'd need grommets but a later test diagnosed her as profoundly deaf and she was fitted with two cochlear implants. It was a shock."

By a stroke of good luck, the school Kara's older sister Abbie attended had an attached hearing impaired unit. "We had no idea what a cochlear implant was at the time," Lorraine says. "But Abbie knew children with implants so it was just perfect. The school was great from the very beginning."

In comparison, Kara's journey with autism hasn't been so straightforward. The condition was first suggested to Lorraine by Kara's speech therapist. "The diagnosis took a long time but it wasn't a surprise at all," says Lorraine. "She was 12 or 13 when she was finally diagnosed. Kara was very good at hiding the signs of autism; she wouldn't show her emotions at school but at home she'd let them out. Girls with autism often mimic everyone around them; they're very observant to what's going on and often just try to fit in. The school would say, 'What are you talking about? Kara's the perfect pupil!'"

"But at home she could be angry, she was very emotional and would react to situations differently. For example, when she got her cochlear implant changed,



She's confident to say, 'I'm different and I'm fine with that.'

“ Face masks are the hardest challenge I’ve faced.”

it was a massive issue for her. We weren’t allowed to touch it and she would only wear certain clothes and eat certain food.

“Kara’s not like that at all now, thanks to the diagnosis. She stands up for herself and she’s confident to say, ‘I’m different and I’m fine with that.’”

One of the problems the family faced when trying to get a diagnosis was that often professionals would put these differences down to Kara’s deafness. “A lot of things got put down to her deafness which is a shame,” says Lorraine. “I think if she wasn’t deaf it would be completely different, but people would say, ‘Oh the deafness is the reason she can’t express herself properly, that’s why she struggles with changes in routine.’”

“There’s definitely a crossover: Kara can get frustrated that she can’t get her point across or doesn’t know the correct language to say how she’s feeling, but that could be partly her deafness and partly her autism.”

Although Kara has always felt comfortable speaking up about her deafness, it was a different story when it came to autism. “I was really embarrassed about it,” says Kara.

It was a teacher at school who encouraged Kara to be more open about her autism, telling her she’d done so much to help raise deaf awareness through her YouTube channel and asking if perhaps she could do the same for autism. It was a big decision but Kara bravely decided to tell everyone about her diagnosis via a YouTube video. “I started my YouTube channel because I love to help people and so I talked about my deafness, why I’m deaf and what people can do to make life easier for me and others like me,” explains Kara.

“At first I didn’t want anyone at school to know about my autism. But I made the video explaining that I had it and my friends were really shocked but they really didn’t mind. I’m so happy I made that video. I feel much more confident now.”

Since then, Kara’s YouTube channel has gone from strength to strength.

“Loads of people have reached out to me and lots of people comment,” Kara says. “My friends, family and teachers are really proud. Now, I want to be a YouTube star!”

But while school was going well once her friends learnt about her autism, the long break due to the first coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown threw a spanner in the works. Luckily Kara’s school was very supportive. “The school knew how much stress the change would cause,” Lorraine says. “But they went out of their way to support her: they FaceTimed Kara throughout.”

Despite the support, going back to school after a six-month break was a challenge. “I’m in third year now so I get to pick my classes,” Kara says. “It’s quite different as my tutors keep changing and I’m not with my favourite teacher anymore. It made me quite upset at the beginning. But I like all of my new teachers, they’ve been amazing with me. I really like my subjects too, drama is my favourite!”

However, the compulsory use of face coverings in secondary schools in Scotland has been harder to get used to. “I don’t know what to do in school when I don’t understand a teacher,” Kara says. “Do I tell them to take off the mask? I want them to be safe so I don’t know if I should or not. Even though I have a card saying I’m exempt from wearing a mask, I usually wear one because I’m embarrassed and worry people will think I’m breaking the rules.”

So now Kara’s going back to what she does best. She’s made a YouTube video explaining the issues she’s facing with masks at school and she’s sent it straight to Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland’s First Minister. “Clear masks would work really well for me,” Kara says. “I hope they start wearing those soon instead.” 



For more information about how autism can interact with deafness, visit our website www.ndcs.org.uk/autism.

You can support our campaign for clear face masks and get tips about coping with them in education and when out and about at www.ndcs.org.uk/facemasks.



YOUNG PEOPLE 15-18

Your winter checklist

✓ Applying to higher education

Moving on to higher education is an exciting step, but there are lots of things to consider. If your child is thinking about applying to college or university, visit our webpage at www.ndcs.org.uk/highereducation for advice on applying as a deaf young person.



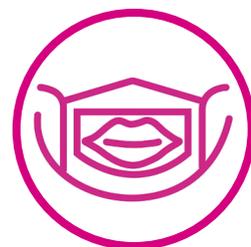
✓ Keeping in touch online

The internet can be a great way to keep in touch, especially when it’s hard to spend time together in person. While we’re all spending more time online, it’s still important to make sure your children are staying safe. Check out our cyber safety tips for advice. www.ndcs.org.uk/esafety



✓ Face masks in school

Although face masks are important to help keep everyone safe, your child’s school also has a duty to help them to communicate. If your child is struggling to cope with face masks at school or college, talk to their Teacher of the Deaf or Special Educational Needs Coordinator about what adaptations could be made. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/face-masks-and-communication for tips and turn to page 43 for more on what we’re doing to help.





A rising star

By Rosie Vare

Fashion designer Tianah (25) has made a name for herself with a number of big-name celebrity clients.



Tianah's story
how she's increasing diversity in the fashion industry



WHEN THE LIKES OF BEYONCÉ, LADY GAGA AND BILLIE EILISH HAVE WORN YOUR DESIGNS, YOU KNOW THINGS ARE GOING WELL. And that's exactly the position Tianah (25) has found herself in since launching her eyewear brand CHRISTIANAHJONES. But getting to this point hasn't been easy.

Tianah, who has a severe hearing loss and wears hearing aids, started selling her sunglasses on shopping app Depop, but the brand has taken off since those early days and she was recently listed on the *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list for Retail and Ecommerce.

"To make it such a success has been my dream since I started the business," says Tianah. "When I found out about *Forbes*, it was like I'd finally made it. But it changed nothing; there was still work to do!"

Tianah's hearing loss was discovered at two years old, after her older sister was diagnosed. "My parents weren't sad about our hearing loss," she explains. "But, because of my culture, it wasn't something they embraced or spoke about. My parents silently dealt with our disability."

Tianah attended a mainstream school with a specialist deaf unit until 14 years old, then she moved to a deaf specialist school. "I was much more sociable in the deaf unit and at my deaf school. My home and church friends and my neighbours were my closest friends growing up and I didn't really mention my deafness to them. I didn't wear hearing aids either. At deaf school, it was my time to discover my identity and understand who I really was."

After leaving school, Tianah had a great time at university, making friends and even meeting her future husband. But she wasn't yet sure what she wanted to do next.

"I wanted to be a lot of things," she explains. "Pathologist, forensic anthropologist, counsellor, then suddenly an actor, but never to work in fashion!"

"I got into thrifting and car boot sales and started reselling clothing on eBay, then I discovered Depop. I quickly became a

Deaf education is one thing that could change all our lives.

“ It actually empowers me being deaf and black.

top seller and started making money. “From there I discovered my passion for collecting and selling vintage sunglasses, which led me to design my own.”

Tianah, who recently gave birth to her first child, hasn't always worked in the fashion industry, and she's faced difficulties with accessibility in previous jobs, struggling particularly with concentration fatigue. “When I know I'm tired, I time out then check back in,” Tianah says. “I give myself two or three hours in an environment where I know I'll hit my peak before tumbling back down. But hydrating, sleeping well and eating healthily makes all the difference.

“My first job was as a recruitment consultant where I had to be on the phone eight hours a day. No adaptations were made and I once spent so long on the phone I developed an ear infection, couldn't hear anything and had to take unpaid sick leave.

“I later joined another company as a data analyst. We had five to six meetings a day and I got ill so often because I had no energy. Meetings were held in brightly lit rooms which meant people's faces were in the shadows and I couldn't lip-read.”

Working in the fashion industry and for herself is more accessible, but now Tianah faces different challenges. “Networking is a nightmare because you're having to constantly connect with important people, which is a lot of work and pressure when you're deaf.”

Tianah is now Social Lead at Depop and works on her brand in the evenings. She's even had showrooms at London and Paris Fashion Weeks. “There are so few role models with hearing losses or disabilities,” she says. “There's a lack of understanding and accessibility in the fashion industry that doesn't allow us to fit in when we should. My deafness doesn't get in the way; it actually makes me do more.”

Identity is important to all deaf young people. But Tianah explains that as a young black deaf woman this year has been an emotionally frustrating time, not just personally but for the whole community too.

“The Black Lives Matter issues that have arisen this year were already an issue so it's not new. It's what we're

always talking about; it's just that the world suddenly cares and this is all down to the internet. We've been chanting Black Lives Matter and fighting for justice since before I was even born – we're simply, and unfortunately, continuing that same fight.

“I haven't experienced racism and discrimination at the same time but separately they are mentally exhausting. Luckily, growing up, my mother made it very clear to me that I should appreciate my culture and the colour of my skin. “It actually empowers me being deaf and black.”

Tianah believes making change is all about education. “There are inaccurate perceptions of disability,” she says. “Deaf people should be present in all movements, but I believe we also need to do the teaching if we want the change.

“Deaf education is one thing that could change all our lives. If we could simply educate those around us, access and knowledge would improve. Change won't come if we wait or sit back.”

Tianah certainly isn't sitting back and waiting for others to do the work; she's started an online series called EarMeOut, which showcases and highlights the lives and journeys of deaf individuals in creative industries where hearing people are dominant. She's already made a name for herself, but she's still got big plans for the future. “I'd love a few shops of my own in different cities or to be stocked in the top shopping centres globally.

“I want to create a brand which is known worldwide, as well as developing a community of Deaf creatives consistently sharing stories and experiences.” 



For more information about deaf young people's rights in the workplace, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/rightsinwork.

Tianah is still looking to work with more deaf creatives so if you're interested, please email studio@christianahjones.com to find out how you can get involved. You can also find her on Instagram [@christianahjones](https://www.instagram.com/christianahjones) or online at www.christianahjones.com.



YOUNG PEOPLE 19-25

Your winter checklist

✔ Deaf Works Everywhere

We won *The Drum* award for Best Charity Content Marketing Campaign for our Deaf Works Everywhere video, with one judge saying “The campaign illustrated clearly and succinctly the wide array of professions a deaf person can achieve, which is almost anything based on the video we saw.” Watch the video at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.



✔ Money Advice Service

Set up by the government, the Money Advice Service offers free, impartial advice to help you and your child to keep track of spending. It's a great tool for young people who may be just starting to manage their money on their own. Advice is available over the phone, via webchat and online. www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en



✔ Getting support at university

The first term at university is a big change for any student, but for deaf students it's important to make sure their deafness isn't making university life harder. If your child is struggling, it might be worth speaking to their university's disability service to see if they can get any more support. www.ndcs.org.uk/university





How do I...

deal with criticism?

There's no right way to parent a deaf child, because every child is different. We asked two deaf young people and two parents of deaf children how they handle criticism of their choices and deaf identities and how they fight to get the support they need.

I explain that they shouldn't make assumptions about her.



Sonia is mum to Tilly (6) who is moderately to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.

When Tilly was diagnosed as deaf, the hardest thing was dealing with other people's expectations and criticism. I'm Brazilian, and the first time I took Tilly to visit my family in Brazil, we faced a lot of ignorance. People there believed that if Tilly didn't wear hearing aids, her ears would learn to hear. They'd try to take her hearing aids out. It was upsetting.

I also felt different to other parents. When we met up with my antenatal group, the other ladies would chat about their babies meeting milestones, but for a deaf child, the milestones are different. I was in quite a dark place.

Through the National Deaf Children's Society, we found out about The Elizabeth Foundation.

Tilly went to nursery there and made deaf friends.

It helped us realise she wasn't the only one.

Meeting other parents of deaf children made me feel more confident. I decided that I don't care what other

people say. Now, when we go back to Brazil and people tell me to take Tilly's hearing aids

out, I explain that her auditory nerves will never develop, and I wouldn't want Tilly to be any different because she's fun just the way she is. I explain they shouldn't make assumptions about her. She's happy, has lots of friends, works hard, and is proud of her colourful hearing aids! I try to take a step back and let Tilly take the lead.



Tilly



Lynne is mum to Jayleigh (19) who is profoundly deaf.

Jayleigh was born profoundly deaf. She had cochlear implant surgery on her third birthday, but it didn't work. She initially went to a deaf school but when she was six, I was criticised for that and told she'd do better in a mainstream school. Since then, we've moved up and down the country trying to find the right school for her. We once moved house eight times in one year.

We discovered Hamilton Lodge, a deaf specialist school, when Jayleigh was 15. The first time we visited, she cried. Everyone spoke sign language – even the kitchen staff and caretakers.

Since Jayleigh moved schools, she's flown. Because we're from a farming background, her previous school



Lynne

pushed her to work with animals.

They thought they knew what she wanted better than she did and criticised her for having other interests.

When she started at Hamilton Lodge, she asked to study art instead. She was so determined, she got her GCSE in three months! When

Jayleigh comes home from college, I'm continually asking her to slow down because I can't keep up with her signing! She's so confident now.

Some people criticised us for using sign language. Hearing technology might work for other children, but for a child like Jayleigh, who's never heard speech, I think a signing environment is essential. Parents need to be more aware of what's out there. It feels like you're running into a brick wall at times, but you just have to keep asking until you find the right support.

Jayleigh (19) is profoundly deaf.

I went to mainstream school for seven years. I was always with an interpreter, so I spent all day with adults. Although I learned well, socialising was difficult. I struggled to make friends and felt isolated. The other children would call me 'alien' or 'monster'. It was soul-destroying. Even when I went to our local deaf club, the other children there didn't sign. I'd just catch up with the interpreters.

The first time we went to my current school, I felt I was finally seeing people who communicate like me. But we had to fight with the council to let me move there. We put together a case explaining why the mainstream school wasn't working. I felt like the teachers in my mainstream school had lower



Jayleigh

expectations of me because I was deaf. I just wanted to be with other children like me.

When I moved to Hamilton Lodge, everything changed. It was a much more accessible learning environment, and I could study with deaf peers.

At the end of my first year at college, a dress I'd designed from recycled materials was chosen for display at the University of the Arts London!

Looking back, I feel torn about what happened. Those years could be viewed as negative, with all the criticism I received, but there are also good things to draw from it. I know how to work with interpreters now, and they've helped me with my English literacy skills. My English vocabulary is much broader.

I'm now halfway through my Level 3 art course. I have lots of friends and I'm really happy with my deaf identity.

Danii (20) is profoundly deaf and wears a hearing aid.

"You're not deaf... you've been speaking to me fine for the last 10 minutes!"

That's what the woman next to me said as I waited to speak about my journey as a double Deaflympic gold medallist and deaf world champion swimmer. Why do people assume deaf people can't speak?

I wasn't born deaf. My hearing loss was diagnosed when I was five and progressed until I was 16, when I became profoundly deaf. I've spoken English my whole life and rarely had any communication problems.

When I was younger, my mum taught me and my sister some basic British Sign Language (BSL), and I've picked up more signs from deaf swimming and attending deaf events. It's useful and helps me communicate with other deaf people, but speaking English orally makes my life that little bit easier.

I've heard so many stories of people being criticised for not learning to sign and being made to feel that they don't belong in the deaf community. It's absurd! Just because you don't know BSL, it doesn't make you more or less deaf. I'm thankful that I know how to speak English orally, and I'm also thankful my

mum taught me basic BSL. It's okay to be deaf and not know how to sign. As long as you're happy with how you communicate, that's all that matters.



Danii



For more information about boosting your child's deaf identity, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/building-deaf-identity.

For support with your and your child's emotional health and wellbeing, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing.

You can also find out more about The Elizabeth Foundation on their website at www.elizabeth-foundation.org.



Next time in *Families* magazine: How do I... keep my child safe online?

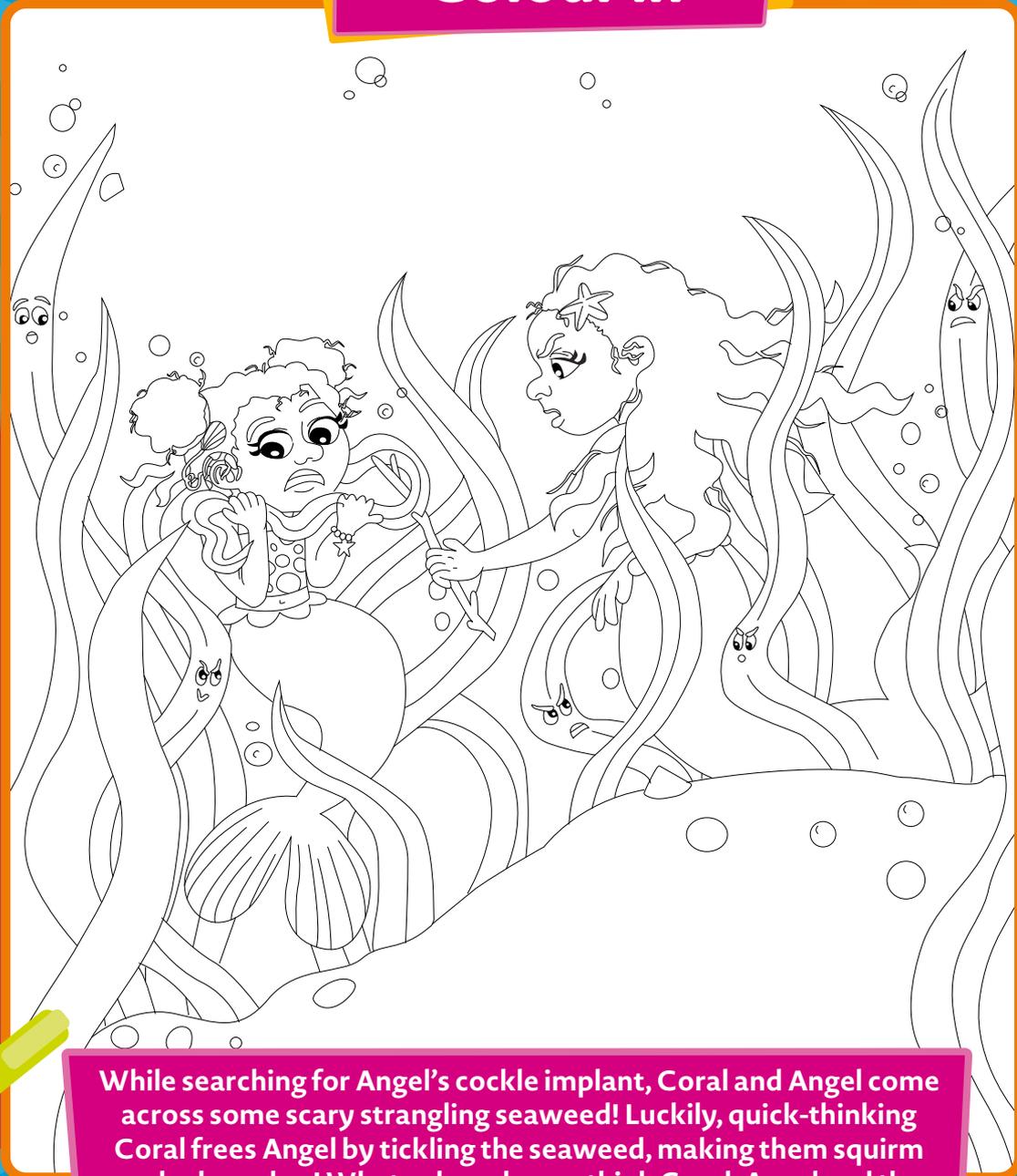
If you have any tips, advice or suggestions to share, get in touch at magazine@ndcs.org.uk.

Scribble

Tear out these pages, give them to your friends!

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

Colour in



While searching for Angel's cockle implant, Coral and Angel come across some scary strangling seaweed! Luckily, quick-thinking Coral frees Angel by tickling the seaweed, making them squirm and release her! What colour do you think Coral, Angel and the seaweed should be?

➔ Have you ordered your copy of our new book yet? It's the perfect Christmas present for deaf children and their hearing friends, and helps us to raise money to support deaf children and their families. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books to buy it now!

ole Club

our child and let their creativity run wild!

Maze



In *The Quest for the Cockle Implant*, Angel, her sister Coral and friend Finn go in search of Angel's lost implant. On the way, they meet sharks, squid and strangling seaweed! Can you avoid the obstacles, follow the right path and find Angel's cockle implant?

Create, Play & Learn

10% OFF KIDS CRAFT

Make the most of precious family time by getting creative together! Whether you're looking for complete craft kits to enjoy with your kids or arts and crafts supplies such as paper and glue, we're here to help create moments that matter.



Crayola
Craft Chests



Mister Maker
Craft Kits



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Spark their creativity with **10% off** all
kids craft at Create and Craft

Shop now at:

createandcraft.com/kids



Sue

Ask the expert

Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Sue Davis, Benefit Appeals and Disputes Adviser here at the National Deaf Children's Society, shares her insights.

Never take the word of the Department for Work and Pensions or Department for Communities that you don't qualify for DLA or PIP.

What is a Benefit Appeals and Disputes Adviser?

We represent families of children under 16 at benefit appeals if their child has been refused Disability Living Allowance (DLA), and deaf young people aged 16 to 25 if they've been refused Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

How would you support a family or deaf young person through an appeal?

Benefit appeals are decided by independent tribunals. Appealing to a tribunal is a lengthy process and we support the family or young person throughout. We discuss the needs of the child or young person, explain the complex rules and advise the family or young person on what level of benefit they should qualify for. We then begin by drafting initial letters requesting mandatory reconsideration of the decision refusing benefit.

What happens if the application is still refused?

The next stage is to appeal to an independent tribunal. We advise the family or young person on the large bundle of appeal papers prepared for the tribunal, identify any further evidence that may be needed, and support the family or young person to get this. We write a submission giving the legal arguments to the tribunal. We also prepare the family or young person for the questions they will be asked there.



How would a family or deaf young person access your support?

They can contact our Helpline or they might be referred to us by one of our Children and Family Support Officers. The Children and Family Support Officers can help with filling in PIP and DLA forms, then they will refer it on to the Appeals and Disputes team if the claim is unsuccessful.

How can a family support you to get the best outcome for their case?

They should try and approach us as soon as they get a decision they're unhappy with. There are tight deadlines on benefit decisions and our team is very busy, so don't put off contacting us! They should also keep copies of all letters about benefit decisions.

How has the pandemic affected your work?

The work we do to prepare the case has hardly changed but now we'll meet the family online rather than in their home. Tribunal hearings have changed massively. Before March, they were all face-to-face in court buildings but since then they've been mainly held remotely.

What advice would you share with parents of deaf children and deaf young people?

Never take the word of the Department for Work and Pensions or Department for Communities that your child or you as a deaf young person don't qualify for DLA or PIP. They very often get the decisions wrong and a high proportion of appeals are successful. Always get advice from us before accepting their decision.



You can find out more about applying for DLA and PIP at www.ndcs.org.uk/rights.



Going it alone

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

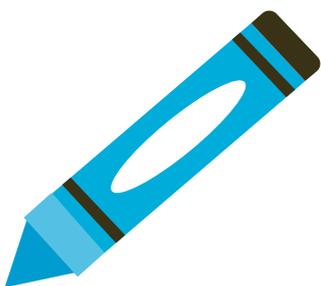
This year has been a great opportunity for you to support your child to develop the skills they need to become an independent learner. But even if they're not learning at home anymore, you still play a vital role in helping your child to become a confident, successful and self-motivated learner, and remember they're never too young to start.

What is independent learning?

The independent learning journey starts as soon as your child tells you they want to put on their own shoes or choose what they'd like to eat. Support your child to make choices and give them space and time to complete simple tasks. As they grow up, help your child to practise the skills they need to plan, organise, structure and deliver on tasks and activities, such as homework. Allow your child to take responsibility for their learning, support them to monitor their progress towards achieving their goals, and give them the confidence not to give up when things are difficult.

Does independent learning mean my child has to learn by themselves?

Independent learning means that your child takes responsibility for their learning. It doesn't mean they must learn on their own, although there will be times when they need to complete tasks by themselves. In fact, many children learn best when they talk through a problem and share learning with others. Children need to know when and how to ask for help and be able to get the resources and support they need. This is especially important for deaf children, who may need learning adapted or presented in a way that's accessible to them. Knowing how they learn best and being able to tell people what they need is a key skill for deaf children.



What skills does my child need to become an independent learner?

An important part of becoming an independent learner is self-regulation. Self-regulation is the set of skills which helps us to manage our thinking, our behaviours and feelings, and our reactions to things happening around us. Children begin to learn to self-regulate when they're babies and these skills continue to develop right into adulthood. Some studies have shown deaf children may find it more difficult to self-regulate, but studies also show you can teach your child self-regulation skills. Talking about emotions and feelings and how to react to them, playing games with rules, planning activities, and talking about goals and targets can all help your child to self-regulate.



How can I support my child to become an independent learner?

Encourage your child not to worry about mistakes but to see them as learning opportunities. We know that the brain adapts to new information, and practise helps to create new connections in the brain, so tell your child a challenge is a positive thing because it means their brains are growing! When your child tries out different solutions to a challenge, shows greater effort, and does not give up easily, they're more likely to be successful learners.

Top tips

Have high expectations. This shows your child you believe they can do it and it will have a positive impact on their own beliefs, behaviour and outcomes. Focus praise on the effort your child has made and not just on what they've achieved. This kind of feedback helps to develop children's resilience to failure as it teaches them what to do when they're challenged.

Use your child's favourite athlete, musician or teacher and talk about their journey to success. Focus on their early efforts, strong work ethic, and the mistakes and learning that led them to where they are now. Remind your child that just because someone has done well, it doesn't mean they were born that way. It might also be nice to talk about a favourite deaf role model and their path through life.

Create an enabling learning environment at home. It doesn't matter if your child is learning at home or completing homework or revision there, this is still important. It starts with simple routines. Make basic visual reminders to help your child remember and follow simple routines, for example, caring for their hearing device. Create a visual timetable to help them plan their homework or home learning, and find a quiet space in the house where they can work without distractions.

As your child gets older, spend some time helping them to find the best way to approach learning activities. Make sure they understand what they need to do to be successful, support them to plan how they will complete a task, and help them to identify the resources they'll need. Encourage them to do simple things like turning off their mobile phone when they're working.

Think about how you can make learning accessible. Your child cannot be an independent learner if they're not able to access the information they need. We have lots of information on our website for you and schools to make sure that your child is able to access learning. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/education for more information.

And finally, don't worry about not having all the knowledge to support your children with their learning. Studies show that you make a big difference to your child's attainment just by showing an interest in their work and supporting them to 'have a go'. Both your child and you will figure it out as you go through the journey of education.



You can find more information and ideas on learning at home with your child at www.ndcs.org.uk/learnathome.

For tips from other parents about how they support their child with homework, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/homeworktips.



Supporting your child's education this winter

✓ The continued effect of coronavirus

As advice around coronavirus (COVID-19) keeps changing, don't forget to keep checking our webpage for parents, families and carers to stay up to date with how it may affect your child's education and schooling. www.ndcs.org.uk/covid-19-coronavirus-support-for-deaf-children



✓ Sharing is caring

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 your child feel happy and included. These are available at www.ndcs.org.uk/resourcesforteachers.



✓ Getting additional support

Now your child has been back at school for a few months, you might feel they need extra support from their school or nursery. Find out more about the additional support your child could be entitled to wherever you live by visiting www.ndcs.org.uk/additionalsupport.





Fire safety at home

By Kim Hagen (Technology Research Officer)



It can be common for parents of deaf children and young people to worry that their child won't hear the fire or carbon monoxide alarm, particularly after they've moved out and are living independently. But there are plenty of alternative alarm options, and most of them are available for free from local service providers.



Fire alarms

What your deaf child is offered by the local Fire and Rescue Service can vary across the UK. In many areas, your child can be provided with a deaf-friendly smoke alarm for free when they start living on their own. Deaf children living with their parents are usually not eligible for a free deaf-friendly smoke alarm, though you could, of course, buy one yourself.

In most counties, deaf young people living independently will be offered a free smoke alarm linked to a vibrating pad and strobe light if they contact their local Fire and Rescue Service. In England, Northern Ireland and Wales, a deaf young person would contact their county's Fire and Rescue Service directly – either via its headquarters or district station. In Scotland, you should contact your local community fire station first.

Usually the Fire and Rescue Service will then arrange a Safe and Well visit to assess the home. In many cases this involves the deaf young person taking their hearing devices off, while the Safe and Well officer sets off a smoke alarm and checks if they'd be able to hear the alarm at night. If they can't, they're usually provided with at least one loud smoke alarm per floor and a vibrating pad and strobe light for the bedroom. All parts are wirelessly connected. The vibrating pad will alert your child to the smoke alarm when they're sleeping.

Most Fire and Rescue Services order their smoke alarms from a list of providers, which ensures only alarms of a certain standard are supplied. That's why many areas provide the same deaf-friendly alarms, such as the FireAngel Wi-Safe 2 wireless smoke alarm or FireBlitz Firehawk alarms. In a FireAngel Wi-Safe 2 system, up to 50 alarms and alerting units can



be interlinked in one property, and in Firehawk systems, 15 units can be linked. If you feel the number of smoke alarms provided is not enough for your home, you can buy additional alarms from the same system and wirelessly connect them yourself.

If a deaf young person is also unable to hear the smoke alarm during the day, they'll most likely be referred to the local Sensory Support Team or another local service. They'll then be set up with equipment that alerts them

via visual and tactile means at any time and wherever they are in the house. This is often the wireless Bellman & Symfon Visit Alerting System. This system can alert your child to a range of things around the house, including smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. When the alarm goes off, it wirelessly sends a signal to a receiver which can be a vibrating wristband, a flashing light, a vibrating pager, or a vibrating alarm clock. Multiple alarms and receivers can be used at the same time.

Carbon monoxide and heat alarms

Fire and Rescue Services normally don't provide carbon monoxide alarms, but if there are fuel-burning appliances in the home, such as a gas boiler, a detector should be fitted in each room containing those appliances.

Fire and Rescue Services also don't usually provide heat alarms for deaf people, but they may be useful in areas where smoke or fumes are likely to occur, and smoke alarms could be falsely triggered, such as kitchens and garages. Heat alarms go off when they sense high temperatures or rapidly rising temperatures. If you or your deaf child decide to buy a carbon monoxide or heat alarm, then it can be linked to the deaf-friendly system your Fire and Rescue Service provides and no additional vibrating pad and strobe light are needed.



We tried out the FireAngel Wi-Safe 2 system's smoke alarm, carbon monoxide alarm, and the combined strobe and vibrating pad unit. The smoke and carbon monoxide alarms have different loud, high-frequency signals. The combined strobe and vibrating pad unit has a bright strobe light, and a long cable that connects to a strong vibrating pad. The pad also has small lights on it to indicate which alarm is going off. It's very easy to wirelessly link the parts together.

Smoke alarms will alert you once a fire has started, but it's obviously better to prevent fires from happening in the first place and to stop them from spreading. Watch Commander Michael Duffy, from the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, shares his tips.

- Don't plug too many appliances into a socket and unplug non-essential appliances at night as they may generate heat and start a fire.
- Close all doors at night. Doors add extra protection and may help prevent a fire from growing.
- Don't smoke in bed. Put out all cigarettes and empty ashtrays into a non-combustible container before you go to bed.
- Have a fire escape plan and practise it regularly with everyone in the house, and remember you can find home fire safety advice at www.nifrs.org.



FireAngel Wi-Safe 2
smoke alarm



FireAngel
Wi-Safe 2 carbon
monoxide alarm



You can find out what Jessie (17) and Lily (16), pictured left, who are both profoundly deaf, thought about the Bellman Visit Alerting System, which also alerts to a smoke alarm, at www.ndcs.org.uk/homealertingarticle.

To find out more about technology that could help your child, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/technology.

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



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



Key

This resource could be most suitable for the following ages:

0-4

5-10

11-14

15-18

19-25

Parents

The Quest for the Cockle Implant

Written by Maya Wasserman

Illustrated by Lucy Rogers

Published by the National Deaf Children's Society

Available from ndcs-bookshop.myshopify.com

£6.99

0-4

5-10



The book is about a mermaid called Angel who loses a cochlear implant. I liked that Angel had a cochlear implant like me. She was super brave going into the cave on her own to find it. She knows how important they are. Her sister, Coral, was a very kind sister to help Angel find her device, but she needs to be more careful when playing!

My favourite part of the story was when they met the Merkitty. He's a very strange creature, and he was scary at first, until he realised Angel was just like him. The Merkitty was super fearsome but it was cool that he was deaf, too.

I like that the book was really colourful and that the cockle implant was hidden in the pages to find. My friends would like this story as well because it's got adventure and different characters in. Because the Merkitty is kind to Angel, it would help them to be kind to others, too.

Freddie (9) is profoundly deaf and wears a cochlear implant and a hearing aid.



Freddie

This book is brilliant. It's about a deaf mermaid called Angel who loses her cockle implant (like a cochlear implant) and goes on a quest with her sister Coral to find it! The quest is exciting, especially when Angel, Coral and their friend Finn work together to find the Merkitty, a big kitten with a mermaid's tail, who has the cockle implant. The Merkitty's also deaf, and Angel cleverly uses sign language to communicate with him.

This book made me feel happy because of the way the sisters look out for each other. The pictures are warm and vivid, and there's a very loving feeling between Angel and Coral. I'd recommend this book to all children, deaf and hearing. It shows that hearing children need to be careful when they're playing with deaf children, but also that deaf children can do anything if they stand up for themselves and have friends to help them.

Ivy (6) is profoundly deaf and wears a cochlear implant.



Ivy

I love this book. It's about a mermaid who loses her cochlear implant. She goes to see the Merkitty and he doesn't know that she signs like him. The mermaid and the Merkitty are both deaf! The first time the mermaid signs to the Merkitty, she signs, "Hello, how are you?" The Merkitty is shocked! He says, "What, how? Who are you? How do you speak sign language? How?" But actually, she's deaf too!

I love the idea of the writing on the wall in the book, I like the idea of singing to distract the sharks, and my favourite part is having to wear the goggles to see the invisible squid. When you take the goggles off, you can't see the squid. With the goggles, you can see and swim past them.

I love that!

I absolutely love the illustrations, too. They're beautiful!

Poppy (10) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants. Her review is also available in British Sign Language (BSL) on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/cockleimplant.



Poppy



Otter.ai

Otter.ai is a speech-to-text app which can also be run on a computer. It records and transcribes conversations in real time. Otter was designed for automatic notetaking, but can also be used to generate live captions.

Available on **iOS** and **Android** via www.otter.ai

📞 **Free**, paid versions available

11-14 **15-18** **19-25**

Otter was easy to set up as it gives step-by-step instructions. It asked me to say something to set up my voice on the app, so that it could recognise me. I found it worked better when the speech it was transcribing was playing out loud, rather than through headphones. The subtitles were very clear and accurate, but when my dog Juju decided to bark, it wasn't so good to use without headphones!

After trying it for live conversation, my mum uploaded a Facebook video on my iPad and I used the transcription part to understand the video. It was good quality and I'd use it again to transcribe videos.

We were able to sync between my iPad and iPhone, which I really liked because then it doesn't use too much storage.

Lexxi-Pearl (12) is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.



Lexxi-Pearl



Did you find the cockle implant?



Helpline

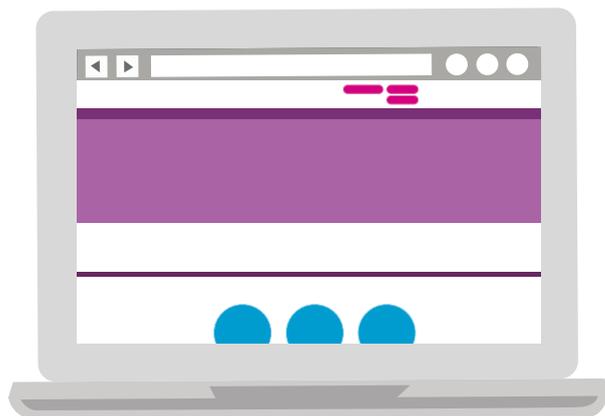


My son was really excited about starting college this year to study animal welfare. Unfortunately there have been a few problems with getting his support in place. We were told he wouldn't have a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) at college, but we don't know who to go to instead. No one at the college seems to know he's deaf unless he tells them.



Moving from school to college can be a big adjustment and it can take time to settle in, but colleges are responsible for making sure deaf students have the support they need and that they can fully access their course. At school, it's usually a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who coordinates this, whereas colleges have a student support officer or disability officer. It sounds like the officer at your son's college may not have been made aware of his deafness when he started. The first step in resolving things could be to arrange a meeting for your son with them.

We sometimes hear about ToD support ending when young people start at college, but this doesn't have to be the case. If your son still needs their support, he should talk to the support officer at college about arranging for a ToD to assess his needs and make recommendations to the college. This could be particularly useful if lots of the staff haven't supported a deaf student before. If your son doesn't currently have a ToD then a new one may still be able to help the college to arrange and organise a radio aid or communication support. Our resource *Deaf-friendly Teaching: For further education staff* could be particularly useful (see opposite for more information). Your son could share this with the college to help them better understand their responsibilities and what they can do to help him. It may also be useful for you and your son to have a look too, so you can get a clear idea of what your expectations of the college can be. You can download the resource from our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-further-education.



What's new?



Deaf-friendly Teaching: For further education staff

What type of information is it?

An updated printed booklet available to download from www.ndcs.org.uk/deaf-friendly-further-education.

Who's it for? Staff working with deaf young people in further education settings.

What's it about? The aim of this resource is to help staff successfully support deaf students so that they progress and develop independent learning and life skills.

You might also like: Web content for deaf young people about their next steps. You can find it online at www.ndcs.org.uk/info-deaf-young-people.



Success From the Start: A developmental resource for families of deaf children aged 0–3

What type of information is it? This downloadable document is an update of our previous guide called *Early Support Monitoring Protocol for Deaf Babies and Children*. You can download it from www.ndcs.org.uk/successfromthestart.

Who's it for? Families and professionals working with deaf children aged 0–3.

What's it about? This resource was created to help families of deaf children, and the professionals who support them, to observe, monitor and record the progress that children make.

You might also like: Our webpages for parents of pre-school children about their child's education, including nursery settings. www.ndcs.org.uk/early-years



Glue ear animation

What type of information is it? A colourful animation which you can watch on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/glueear.

Who's it for? This is for deaf children with glue ear who want to learn more about the condition. It was written by Dylan (10), who's also deaf.

What's it about? The animation tells the story of a boy who's diagnosed with glue ear and, with the help of the Deaf Ninja Team, visits his audiologist to find out what treatments are available. It explains the various options in a fun and easy-to-follow way.

You might also like: Our resource *Glue Ear: A guide for parents*. You can download this online at www.ndcs.org.uk/glue-ear-guide.



Join our community

We've launched a parents' forum where you can chat to other parents of deaf children about anything you like! To get started, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community and create a new account.

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

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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

Welcome to The Genius Square!

The aim of each of the 62,208 possible puzzles is to complete the square using the nine coloured shapes, once the seven 'blockers' have been positioned. There may be times when it seems impossible, but there will ALWAYS be at least one solution...and that's why it's called The Genius Square!

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!

Ages 6 to adult. For 1 or 2 players. Box size approx. 27cm x 27cm.



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Make a change (online!)

Since the first lockdown, our big purple bus has sadly been parked up. But while we wait for government guidelines to allow us to get back on the road, we've been busy meeting you all virtually in fun new ways!

When Layla (15) first found out she'd been awarded £500 from the National Deaf Children's Society's Roadshow team, to set up her own signed song academy, she felt amazing. "I thought to myself, this funding can bring so much to myself and my community," she says. "I was so happy."

Layla, who is moderately deaf, had the idea when she began posting signed songs on social media. "I knew there wasn't anywhere to learn signed songs in Scotland, so I thought maybe I should do it myself, help my community to learn sign language in a fun way."

After spotting our post on Facebook, Layla applied for funding through our Make a Change fund. Through this fund, young deaf people aged 8–25 can apply for up to £500 if they have an idea to raise awareness and/or improve accessibility in their local communities. Layla's funding allowed her to set up her signed song academy, LC Academy, at the beginning of this year.

"My classes started in February, about three weeks before lockdown," Layla explains. "We were so close to learning the whole of our first song and everyone was amazing!"

Knowing that Layla's classes had to stop and that our Roadshow bus wasn't able to visit schools after lockdown began, the team had a clever idea. They teamed up with Layla to deliver some signed song workshops digitally instead.

"The online signed song sessions were amazing," says Layla. "I loved every second of them and I'm so lucky they asked me to do it. I think sessions like this are so important to help raise awareness of British Sign Language (BSL) and they also bring a little fun to a very scary time, and help people take their mind off other things going on in the world."

"The sessions start with an icebreaker, which is good to ease people in if they're feeling anxious or aren't too sure about it," Layla explains. "Then we get into learning the songs. It was so emotional to see the young ones learning the songs in their own time and doing the signs all by themselves at the end!"

"If you've got an idea to increase deaf awareness in your local community, even if it has to be online, my advice would be to 100% apply for funding. It's a fantastic opportunity!"



Layla



If you'd like more information about applying for our Make a Change fund, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/makeachange.

You don't have to wait for your school or college to request a virtual visit from our Roadshow, we welcome requests from young people and families and we can then speak to your school to arrange a date to visit. To book a visit, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow.



Turn over the page to learn some signed Christmas songs for yourself!



Sign along at home



Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer



We Wish You a Merry Christmas



Silent Night

Jingle Bells

Santa hats and signed songs!

Every year, Brighton, Hove and West Sussex Deaf Children's Society takes to the streets to sign Christmas songs and raise some money for their local group. Here, committee member Justine, mum to Austin (11), who is severely to profoundly deaf, and Emily (21), tells us more...



Some members of Brighton, Hove and West Sussex Deaf Children's Society

Our local group's been doing signed singing events for years, during Deaf Awareness Week in May and at Christmas. It's a much-loved tradition and a great source of income. In fact, it's our most successful way of fundraising as a charity! And, as most performances are done in garden centres or supermarkets, we're often chosen as their charity of the year off the back of it too.

People love to watch the performances and are often drawn to ask questions afterwards. We sometimes end up collecting new members, people who haven't had the confidence or the time to get in touch before. When they see us face to face, having so much fun and with the kids and adults all involved, it makes it much easier.

We're accompanied by a sound system and by a lead signer, either my daughter Emily or our Chair Linda, for

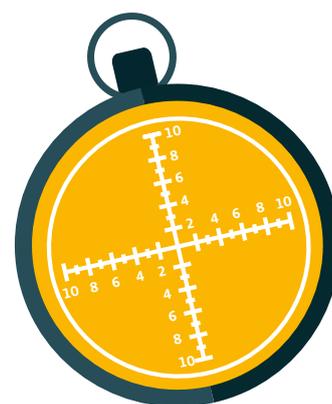
everyone to copy. We rehearse for several weeks beforehand over coffee and biscuits, it's great fun! On the day, we all wear Santa hats and lots of our members go the extra mile, dressing up as elves, princesses or snowmen.

We encourage the children to choose the songs, so we have a mix of traditional carols as well as upbeat music from the charts and tunes from movies like *Frozen* and *Trolls*. We even manage to squeeze in a few of the oldies. My personal favourite oldie is *Last Christmas*; it's simple to learn the

signs so members of the public can pick it up and join in quickly!

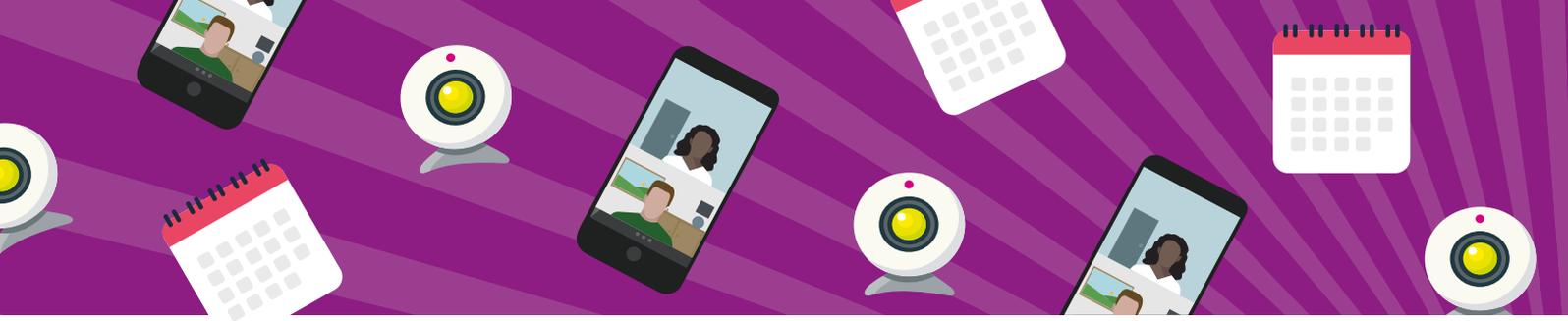
Everyone is learning something and everyone is having fun. It makes all the organising worthwhile and gives everyone a festive feeling while raising deaf awareness too!

“ Everyone is learning something and everyone is having fun. ”



Please follow current government guidelines when organising or taking part in a performance or rehearsing as a choir.

To find a group in your area, check out our map at www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup. Most groups have Facebook pages where you can connect with other families and see what's going on. 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.



Lewis

Our events for parents, carers and families

All our events are interactive and offer information, support, and the opportunity to share experiences with other parents and carers. We're currently offering the below events online.

- Navigating Benefits
- Technology
- Moving to Secondary School
- Post-16–18 options
- Online coffee mornings
- Raising a Deaf Child parenting courses
- Feeling Good: Supporting parents' emotional health and wellbeing
- Family Sign Language: For families with deaf children aged 5–11
- Expert Parent Programme: Getting the best outcomes for my child
- Parents as Partners .

For full details of all our events, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events or, if you don't have access to the internet, call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880**.



All our online events are free, with closed captioning and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. Places are limited, so booking is essential. For more information, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events.

Together virtually

Our online events have been so successful, they're sticking around.

Although we'll be re-introducing our face-to-face events as soon as we can, in line with government guidance, we're also continuing with our programme of online events too.

Catering to busy family lives, online events are an informal and convenient way to meet our team of experts and other families. They include a mix of presentations, audience participation and breakout rooms. But you can also mute your microphone, turn off your video and just watch. It's up to you how much or how little you join in!

All you need is a computer, smartphone or tablet with an internet connection. Once you've registered, we'll email you everything you need to know for joining us on the day.

"I had been to several face-to-face events before, so was looking forward to the online Self-Belief webinar," says Camilla, mum to Carina (6), who has moderate hearing loss. "We were given easy-to-follow instructions for joining the event. There was a presentation, then we were put into chat rooms – which I was dreading but they were really helpful – and then there was a summing up at the end. I put some of the tips from the webinar into practice with Carina immediately. It was great to be able to attend an event without having to go anywhere!"

"I was delighted when you offered online events during the pandemic," says Victoria, mum to Lewis (2). Lewis is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants and Victoria has moderate hearing loss and wears hearing aids. "I attended a Parents New to Hearing Loss event, an online coffee morning and an Introduction to Technology session. They were all so much fun; the staff instantly put us at ease. We started as one group and then split into smaller ones, which allowed us to be more open without feeling embarrassed. I learnt so much and met some amazing parents. They're an excellent way to stay connected."



Camilla and Carina

Imogen's positive pen pal experience

Imogen (14), who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, recently took part in our new Pen Pals Project where she not only made a friend, but also came to view her deafness in a positive new light.

"I haven't met many deaf people before, so when Mum found out about the Pen Pals Project, we thought it would be a good idea to apply. I was excited to try something new, learn about another deaf person and find out how they manage things.

When I applied, I had to say a bit about myself. I was then matched to another young person who's also deaf and a similar age. We wrote letters to each other, shared our thoughts and got to know one another.

I really looked forward to hearing from my pen pal and finding out about them. They were so kind and funny! It was exciting to think that if we met, we'd be really good friends.

My favourite thing about taking part was realising that me and my pen pal were similar and enjoyed the same things, like baking. We also hated the same things too!

Speaking to my pen pal made me feel more confident and positive about my deafness. It was cool to find out about another deaf person who is so interesting and inspiring. It felt special to be connected to someone who faces the same day-to-day issues as me.

I really enjoyed taking part and I'm looking forward to keeping in touch with my pen pal!"

Imogen's mum, Michelle, also saw the encouraging impact the project had on Imogen.

"Taking part helped Imogen embrace her deafness and feel connected. It was reassuring that the National Deaf Children's Society was checking the letters too.

It was a great experience and I'm glad she got involved. I'd encourage anyone considering it to go for it. The fact that your child gets to prepare letters is lovely. It's nice to see them write about themselves, share who they are so positively, and watch their confidence grow."



Imogen

“Speaking to my pen pal made me feel more confident and positive about my deafness.”

Our events for children and young people

Our face-to-face events for children and young people are currently on hold due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, we are running online events. For full details of these, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/events or, if you don't have access to the internet, call our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880**.

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



→ This year we launched our Pen Pals Project to help deaf young people stay connected and make new friends. The project is open to young people aged 8–18. Those who take part are matched with another person of a similar age and communication preference. As pen pals, they write letters (or record videos in sign language) and get to know one another. After the project, pen pals will have the opportunity to keep in touch independently if they want to. Find out more about our Pen Pals Project at www.ndcs.org.uk/youthevents or email penpalsproject@ndcs.org.uk.

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Mother



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Keep it clear

Face masks changed the face of the UK in 2020, quite literally. They aim to keep us safe but have created a challenging environment for deaf people of all ages. We've heard so many stories about the impact of face coverings, which is why our campaigns team have launched the #KeepItClear campaign.

A staggering 91% of you would like clear face masks and visors to be more widely used and available.

While clear face masks are better than opaque ones, we know they still create communication difficulties. This is why we've also been calling for improved deaf awareness among the public. Our communication tips, which you can find at www.ndcs.org.uk/keep-it-clear-top-tips, have been viewed thousands of times – thank you to all of you who shared them. Together we'll continue to adapt to this new normal and make a difference to deaf children's lives.



Kate Green MP

Keep on crafting

It's been fantastic to see the response we've had from politicians to the #KeepItClear campaign! MPs Kate Green, Tulip Siddiq, Bim Afolami and Vicky Foxcroft showed their support by posting pictures of themselves in clear masks, sent to them by constituents. Local deaf children's societies, such as Trafford and East Sussex, have been busy making and sending clear masks to their MPs to spread the word about deaf awareness.

What a great response from all the crafters out there!

Young campaigner Emma targets the top

Emma (13), who is moderately deaf, sent Boris Johnson a letter and clear mask – encouraging him to set an example to the country.

“Coronavirus (COVID-19) has made life very difficult for everyone, but it has made life unbearable for the deaf. At the moment we're living in a silent and un-communicating world. You know what would be really cool Mr Johnson, if you wore a clear face mask in public. That way 12 million people would know that you care and understand what our life is like,” her letter said.

Emma's excellent campaigning efforts have been covered on TV, on radio and in many newspaper articles too. Taking her fight to the top has added huge momentum to the campaign – well done to this young campaigning superstar!



Success! Clear mask approved for use in the NHS

A clear face mask was approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in England for use in some health settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. 250,000 have been bought for the NHS and are now being used. Considering these are single-use masks, they won't go far. But, this is a big step to making this kind of mask more widely recognised and available. We continue to push the government to make sure that a range of clear face masks and visors are available to use in health and social care settings, as well as by other professionals working with deaf children.

You know what would be really cool Mr Johnson, if you wore a clear face mask in public.

The countdown is on...

Christmas is just around the corner and we're getting into the festive spirit! Take on our Christmas countdown activities this advent and you'll learn sign language, spread deaf awareness, and raise money for deaf children and their families – what could be better?

1 Read about our clear face mask campaign. www.ndcs.org.uk/face masks.

2 Buy your Christmas cards from www.charitycardshop.com/ndcs.

3 Find your local Deaf Children's Society.

4 Learn how to sign Happy Christmas.

5 Sign up for a Christmas Big Cake Bake at www.ndcs.org.uk/bigcakebake.

6 Read about our international work. www.ndcs.org.uk/dcw

7 Take part in one of our Christmas fundraising ideas!

8 Write a letter to Santa.

9 Speak to your school or company about fundraising for us.

10 Hold a Christmas quiz for £1 donations.

11 Organise a game of pin the nose on Rudolph for £1 donations.

12 Teach someone how to sign Happy Christmas.

13 Organise a stocking lucky dip for £1 donations.

14 Share a video of you fingerspelling the names of Santa's reindeer!

15 Get ready for Time to Shine. Donate £5 and sparkle for deaf children!

16 Do a Santa dash!

17 Get your Christmas jumper on.

18 Share your Christmas jokes with us on Twitter! #NDCSXmasJoke

19 Read about our Young People's Advisory Board at www.ndcs.org.uk/yab.

20 Watch your favourite Christmas film with friends and family.

21 Make it your New Year's resolution to volunteer with us.

22 Join our Campaigns network at www.ndcs.org.uk/campaignsnetwork.

23 Try to remember all of the presents from 12 Days of Christmas without looking them up!

24 Donate 50p to the National Deaf Children's Society for each action you've completed this advent!

Become a workplace supporter like Claudia!

Claudia (25) uses her experiences as a deaf young person to give back to the National Deaf Children's Society, and now she's even got her place of work involved!

I was very lucky to have good support throughout nursery, primary and secondary school. I had a peripatetic Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) who saw me every few weeks to check my speech was developing in the right way. The ToD would give advice to my parents and teachers, so they knew to face me so I could get clues from lip-reading and to repeat words so I'd get the pronunciation right. I also have an amazing audiologist, Milanka, who has prescribed me hearing aids since I was three months old and still does today!

Last year, me and my best friend Lucy, who is also deaf, came along to the Young People's Advisory Board residential weekend in London. We talked to the deaf young people, who work with the National Deaf Children's Society, about our own experiences of deafness, the challenges we've overcome growing up and we gave advice on getting into university and the workplace. Deaf young people have had to work harder and think innovatively to overcome the barriers we face; employers are increasingly recognising this.

As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit the UK, I wanted to spread more awareness about the charity and raise some money too. So my team at Pulse Brands, a business management consultancy firm, took on a virtual version of our fingerspelling fundraiser called The Fingerspellathon. My team really enjoyed learning some sign language and learnt to spell

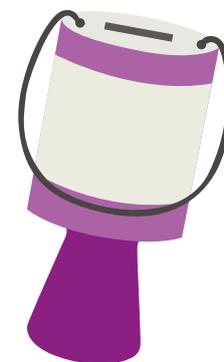
I wanted to spread more awareness about the charity and raise some money too.

out both their own names and *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* as quickly as possible. We raised an incredible £635!

I now plan to become a mentor for other deaf young people. I want to support young people to embrace their deafness and prove that they are just as capable as anyone else!



Claudia



My team really enjoyed learning some sign language



To get involved in your own fundraising activity or if you would like some support for fundraising in the workplace, please email corporate.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk or call 020 7014 1150.

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 government data manager because...

I like creating spreadsheets and stretching my mind with formulae and calculations!

I'm profoundly deaf, and while there have been a few challenges in my 28-year career at the Home Office – no telephone equipment

when joining a new team, occasional lack of deaf awareness – most of the time I've been fortunate. Colleagues have made efforts to communicate using

instant messaging or basic sign language. One even did British Sign Language (BSL) evening classes and helped me communicate at work events! I've used BSL interpreters in meetings, but now, I mainly do one-to-ones over Skype instant messaging or I video chat with people who can use BSL.

Last year, I achieved my Level 2 Certificate in Counselling. It was daunting, but with the help of my communication support worker, I did it. Believe in yourself and be positive; there's lots of support available. I hope to use my skills to help deaf young people in the future.

John Jenner



I'm a communications and marketing officer because...

The job is a fantastic fit for me, especially as everyone is deaf aware. I work at the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind people (NRCPD)

because I'm passionate about protecting d/Deaf and Deafblind people from bad practice by language service professionals. Born with severe to profound hearing loss, I understand the sector well. In other jobs, team meetings and telephone usage could be tricky, but being open about this and saying if I'd not heard made a big difference. I have a cochlear implant for my left ear and a hearing aid for my right ear. I use Microsoft Teams for team video calls as it comes with captions.

Before working at NRCPD, I lived in New Zealand. When I wasn't working, I skydived, bungee jumped, hiked and swam in hot springs. It was a life-changing experience.

I've found that the more experience you have, the easier it is to land a job. Do internships and voluntary work. The sky's the limit!

Laura Driver



I'm an employment advisor and campaigner for deaf equality because...

I'm passionate about providing support to those who are underprivileged. I became profoundly deaf following meningitis when I was 12, and didn't get much encouragement while I was at school, but the National Deaf Children's Society supported me and gave me the determination to continue my education and get a career.

I've worked in banks, I've been the team leader at a college, and I've worked in fashion. I've also written my autobiography. Now I work for the Royal Association for Deaf People, give deaf and deafblind people employment support, run my own Deaf Equality Organisation and also manage my own property portfolio.

To be able to do my jobs, I benefit from Access to Work BSL support, and use a mobile phone and a laptop. I believe you should always go for your dream job. Don't be afraid to tell employers which reasonable adjustments you think they need to make to enable you to work for them.

Aim high!

Brian Kokoruwe



Be inspired by other deaf people at work in our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign video at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.

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

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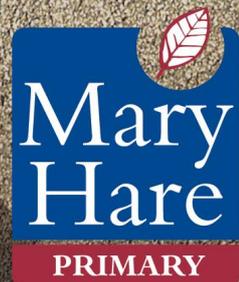
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