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Tips to help children settle back in at school



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Columnist Louise on her university experience



27

How a lipspeaker can offer support



National Deaf Children's Society

# families



**“We’re a team!”**

How one single-parent family deals with stress, social skills and sibling differences...



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# My deafness didn't stop me...

## rowing the Atlantic

By Abbi Brown



Mo

**EARLIER THIS YEAR, MO O'BRIEN MARKED HER 60TH BIRTHDAY IN A VERY UNUSUAL WAY. SHE BECAME THE FIRST DEAF PERSON TO ROW ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.**

"I love pushing myself out of my comfort zone," says Mo. "I try to live every moment to the full."

Mo, who's profoundly deaf, wasn't always this confident. Despite being born deaf, she grew up undiagnosed. "As a child I had no confidence in myself and never pushed myself forward," says Mo. "I was very isolated."

But after losing both her parents at a young age, Mo realised life was short. "My mum used to say, 'Nothing is impossible,'" remembers Mo.

It took Mo, her daughter Bird and their friend Claire, 49 days to row the 3,000 mile journey. Each rower rowed for two hours, then had two hours off

to sleep, eat and wash. As well as the physical challenges, Mo and her teammates had to work out how to communicate while in the boat.

"When I was rowing I couldn't see the other person's face," explains Mo. "The darkness made lip-reading impossible so we had simple signs for various things. I didn't use the boat's radio at all but, in an emergency, I would have had to say at the beginning I was deaf, relay the situation and then wait for assistance. I couldn't hear when a wave was coming so I was swept off my seat a lot, but I got used to that!"

Mo also had to keep her hearing aids and equipment dry while at sea. "I carried spares of everything," says Mo. "I kept them in waterproof bags and clingfilmed my hearing aid batteries to stop the damp getting in."

The team got to see amazing wildlife, including humpback whales, dolphins, turtles and sharks. "The biggest highlight was when a killer whale swam under the boat with her calf," remembers Mo. "It was close enough to touch."

**I love pushing myself out of my comfort zone.**

"I'm no longer letting my hearing loss stop me. I hope I can inspire deaf young people to be brave and live life to the full." 🗣️



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

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# families

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 The National Deaf Children's Society depends almost entirely on generous support from individuals and organisations. **The public is responsible for 95% of our income**, and without this we wouldn't be able to support families of deaf children and young people. See pages 43–45 for more information on supporting our work.  
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 adjusting to life as a deaf mum to a deaf daughter  
**p12**



**Jessica and Penny's story**  
 how having genetic testing affected them as a family  
**p14**



**Jayden's story**  
 how he thrived while studying to be a plumber  
**p18**



**Natasha's story**  
 how she started her own business as a make-up artist  
**p20**

# Hello



September and the start of the school term often bring an opportunity for new beginnings. For many, after a long extended break from school, this may be an exciting but also anxious time.

In this issue, you'll find plenty of advice to fit whatever situation your family is in. Our Teacher of the Deaf gives her tips for returning to school and having that all-important positive start to the term (page 28). With lockdown meaning many haven't been in school since March, some children may be worrying about socialising with friends and having to remind them about deaf awareness again. We've got top tips for children of all ages which will help them regain their confidence and enjoy their time with school friends (page 9).

Our cover story this issue is about Toni and Tosin (page 16). Mum Oyin tells us about her journey as a single mum to the twins, who are profoundly deaf and have a number of additional needs. She shares strategies for behaviour management and tips to improve wellbeing in deaf children, hearing siblings and parents themselves.

I also want to highlight to you our recently launched Your Community forum. I would encourage you all to go and take a look at [www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community). It's a great way to virtually meet and chat with other parents of deaf children.

Happy reading!

Kerrina Gray, Editor  
 ✉ [magazine@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:magazine@ndcs.org.uk)

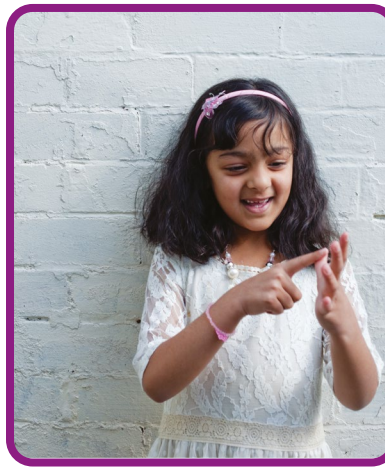
*Kerrina*

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# NEWS

Family Sign Language programmes are supported in Northern Ireland by the Department for Communities and in Scotland by CORRA.



## Family Sign Language for all

We've been busy developing new ways of working in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. One of our most popular new initiatives has been our free, online Family Sign Language (FSL) classes.

The classes were launched in May, to mark Deaf Awareness Week, and were released every Friday for 12 weeks. They were produced remotely by our teams across the UK using tutors based in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, so families can

learn signs in common use where they live. Each class covers a different topic, including vocabulary and conversation related to family life, so parents and children can learn together.

If you missed them, don't worry, you can tune in to the whole course whenever you like on our YouTube channel by searching 'family sign language' at [www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam](http://www.youtube.com/ndcswebteam).

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, we're also offering face-to-face classes for families via Zoom. These help deaf children and their families, who aren't comfortable with pre-recorded courses, to continue developing their FSL skills. It may be a different way of connecting, but there's still plenty of fun and lots of learning! If you're interested, please contact [nioffice@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:nioffice@ndcs.org.uk) if you're in Northern Ireland or [ndcsscotland@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:ndcsscotland@ndcs.org.uk) if you're in Scotland.

## Coming soon!

Our new book *The Quest for the Cockle Implant* is coming soon! We're very proud that our fourth book is both written and illustrated by deaf young people. Maya Wasserman won the children's book competition we held last year. She's profoundly deaf and just nine years old, and now she's a published author! The beautiful illustrations are by Lucy Rogers, a young deaf illustrator.

In the story, deaf mermaid Angel loses one of her cockle implants, so she and her sister Coral travel on an adventure through the sea with their new friend Finn to find it. Using sign language to communicate, they come face-to-face with a monstrous Merkitty! It's perfect for deaf children who want to see themselves represented within books, and also great for educating hearing friends too.

Julia Donaldson CBE, author of *The Gruffalo*, said of the winning story: "It's a captivating story, and I was tickled by the grumpy Merkitty character!"

The book will be ready to buy this autumn so keep your eyes peeled – we can't wait for you to read it!



## Our autumn superstars!

"My twins are deaf and autistic and throughout this pandemic they've continued to attend school as I'm a key worker and they're classed as vulnerable. Their school has been there for them every step of the way. They're greeted by happy, smiling and familiar faces despite the risk these people are facing by being in school. They've truly supported my children's learning, mental health and wellbeing and I can't thank all the staff at Langenhoe School enough!"

**Laura is mum to Amelie and Daisy (10) who are moderately to severely deaf.**



# The impact of face masks on deaf children

A lot of people have been in touch over the last few months concerned about the use of face masks and the impact this will have on their child.

We've put together some tips below for supporting communication when wearing a face mask and communicating with a deaf child or young person.

To find out more, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/facemasks](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/facemasks).

 <p>Communicate via a window or clear panel mask if available.</p>	 <p>Use different ways of communicating – you could try writing things down or sending text messages.</p>
 <p>Make sure the listening environment is as quiet as possible and make use of any other technology used by a child, such as a radio aid.</p>	 <p>Dictation or translation apps can sometimes provide a speech-to-text option when out and about – they don't always work perfectly though.</p>
 <p>Do you need to meet face-to-face? Consider whether a video call would be an effective alternative.</p>	 <p>Temporarily remove your face mask, within the current safety guidelines, to speak.</p>

## A gift from us to you

Being a parent can be hectic at the best of times, but this year it's been particularly tough. Juggling work and home schooling while wrestling with technology to keep in touch with family and friends has resulted in many unexpected challenges for families of deaf children. As well as all that worry and uncertainty, finding time for a bit of life admin has been tricky.

We'd like to offer you a little peace of mind by giving you the chance to write your will for free, either over the phone or online, through one of our will-writing partners. Having an up-to-date will ensures your family will be taken care of, whatever the future holds, even in times of crisis.

To find out more, email [giftsinwills@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:giftsinwills@ndcs.org.uk) or go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/giftsinwills](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/giftsinwills).

????

### Did you know?

There are more than 135 different sign languages around the world!

????

## Sign of the season



# Comment

## Your new community

In this strange new world, it's been fantastic to see so many of you adapting to the new normal. From joining in with our virtual coffee morning with families and sharing your lockdown stories, to supporting our face mask and deaf awareness campaign and thanking our key workers – it's amazing to see our community come together, even when we can't do so in person!

Even under normal circumstances, we know that connecting you with other parents going through similar experiences is absolutely vital. So we're delighted to share with you our new online forum, Your Community.

Your Community is a safe space for families and carers of deaf children to talk about things that matter to them. It's YOUR space, a COMMUNITY for you to talk about anything and everything. You can share experiences of audiology services, applying to schools and colleges, supporting your son or daughter with driving lessons, give tips on things that have worked for you and your child, and so much more. Whatever you want to talk about with other parents, this is a supportive place for you.

It's completely free as part of your membership and it's very easy to join and begin commenting on discussions. If you've already registered on our new website which launched last year, simply head over to [www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community) and sign in. Otherwise, you'll just need to make sure you register on our new website and follow the prompts to get your account all set up. It only takes a couple of minutes!

We've loved seeing so many of you already engaging with the forum since its launch in July. Although we don't know when things will go back to normal, it's comforting to know that Your Community is allowing you to stay connected with other families during this time.

We hope to see you virtually, if not in person, very soon!

*Susan*  
**Susan Daniels OBE**  
Chief Executive



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| Birmingham City        | Chelsea           | FC Utd Of Manchester | Leicester City    | Norwich City     | Salford City        | Watford           |
| Blackburn Rovers       | Cheltenham Town   | Fleetwood Town       | Leyton Orient     | Scunthorpe Utd   | Sheffield Utd       | West Brom         |
| Blackpool              | Chesterfield      | Forest Green Rovers  | Lincoln City      | Sheffield Weds   | Sheff Wednes        | West Ham Utd      |
| Bolton Wanderers       | Colchester Utd    | Fulham               | Liverpool         | Shrewsbury Town  | Southampton         | Wigan Athletic    |
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| Brentford              | Crawley Town      | Grimsby Town         | Macclesfield Town | St. Johnstone    | Plymouth Argyle     | Wrexham           |
| Brighton & Hove Albion | Crewe Alexandra   | Hamilton Academical  | Maidstone Utd     | Port Vale        | Portsmouth          | Wycombe Wanderers |
| Bristol City           | Crystal Palace    | Hartlepool Utd       | Manchester City   | St. Mirren       |                     | Yeovil Town       |
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# Top tips...

## Helping your child to socialise at school

After the extended time away from school, your deaf child might be excited about getting back or they might be feeling a bit nervous. Our experts share their top tips on how children can regain their confidence and embrace their deaf identity.



Key



Early years settings and primary school



Secondary school



University

1

Do a dummy run with your child to new environments to prepare them for any difficulties in communication that they may face.

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



2

Get them to rehearse a little speech about their hearing aids or any other technology they wear. They can try it out on their teddy or pet.

**Helen Latka, Teacher of the Deaf.**



3

Help your child practise positive interactions with hearing and deaf people, eg: "Say thank you to the shopkeeper." Give specific praise: "You smiled beautifully when you said 'bye!'"

**Martina Curtin, Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist.**



4

Readjusting to school noise and joining in group chats can be tiring. Help your child have quiet time and a gentle schedule at home.

**Josie, mum to Maia (14), who has Treacher Collins Syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.**



5

Tell people who you don't know about your deafness. Accessibility can slip people's minds unless it's obvious. If you're struggling to communicate, write things down, use Notes on your phone, and get them to do the same.

**Kirsty (17) is moderately deaf.**



6

Customising your hearing aids or cochlear implants can be a great way to show off your personality and that you're proud of your deafness. This can be a positive conversation starter.

**Vicki Kirwin, Audiologist.**



7

Friends might forget how to communicate in ways that help you understand and feel included. Send a polite message via social media and ask for their support when you go back to school.

**Chris Mullen, Social Worker.**



8

Don't avoid social situations – feeling nervous is normal, but you may find it's not that bad after all. Talk to someone you know and trust about how you're feeling. They can reassure you.

**Dr Hannah George, Consultant Psychologist.**



9

Make sure your technology doesn't let you down, check batteries, revisit troubleshooting steps and prepare a few lines explaining how it helps you.

**Kim Hagen, Technology Research Officer.**



10

Look out for deaf role models. Take inspiration from their achievements. Find out the strategies they use to overcome any barriers. Feel proud and celebrate!

**Helen Phillips, Deaf CAMHS North.**



For more information about mental health and your deaf child, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing). Chat to other parents of deaf children on our new forum Your Community at [www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community).

For deaf awareness tips to share with the school and friends, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips).

For tips on how to decorate hearing aids or cochlear implants, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/decorating](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/decorating).

# Sara Says



Sara is mum to Sam (13), Matthew (10), Oliver (8) and Charlotte (6). Charlotte's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

[www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI](https://www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI)

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

**As parents or carers, we're continually worrying about other people but we need to look after ourselves too.**



For more tips on supporting your own wellbeing, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/parentmentalhealth](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/parentmentalhealth).

If you're struggling with wellbeing, it might be useful to connect with other parents of deaf children. Go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community) to visit our new parents' forum.

## It's OK not to be OK

**LET'S FACE IT, 2020 HAS BEEN A STRESSFUL YEAR.** Although I'm writing this column in advance and don't know the exact situation we'll be facing this September, I can guarantee a few things: life will be different from before, school and work won't be the same for any of us, and adapting to all of this is stressful.

As parents or carers, we're continually worrying about other people – our partners, our kids, our parents, our friends – but we need to look after ourselves too so that we can continue to look after them. Let me share my top tips with you.

Try and find something every day to be thankful for. Maybe it's waking up tomorrow morning and watching the sunrise or even getting five minutes' peace for a shower. It doesn't have to be anything big.

If you're trying to establish a new routine, remember it doesn't need to be complex or set in stone. Just get up, get washed and dressed, brush your hair and teeth, make your bed and have breakfast. Starting the day by getting ready helps to put your mind into a productive mode.

Make sure you accomplish something every day. It might be getting into proper clothes, making the packed lunches or reaching a goal at work. A sense of accomplishment helps to give you a boost and makes the next challenge easier to start because you've come from a position of success.

Find out how to recharge yourself and make time for it at least once a day. Our minds are so busy these days. By giving them a chance to relax and switch off for a short while, we can help ourselves refresh and revitalise.

Learn the best way to relieve your stress. A lot of you will read this and think you have no spare time. I'm no different. Every Christmas I joke with

the kids that I've asked Santa for a few extra hours in my day! Regardless of how busy I get, many people have helped me realise how important it is to make time for myself. My favourites include having a bath, reading a book, listening to music or going for a walk. I get up first in the mornings so that I can sit in the house, in the quiet, having a coffee and working in peace.

At the same time, I need to accept that sometimes I will get stressed, frustrated, overwhelmed or fed up. This is normal – it's OK not to be OK! I need to have plans in place to deal with these feelings safely. I've heard lots of ways of doing this, like writing down your feelings and then tearing them up or burning them. You could also scream into a cushion or punch your mattress.

My ultimate stress-reliever is to take the glass to the recycling bins! I listen to the bottles smash when I throw them in and it releases my tension.

If this all sounds a bit negative, you could put a positive spin on things instead. Fill a jar with positive messages, good memories or inspirational phrases and take one out whenever you need a wee boost.

This year has been tough and we don't know what the future holds, but we can get through this!





# Life for Louise

## What's university life like?



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

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

[LouiseDeafAware](#)

**It's important you keep fighting for support and never give up.**



Our young people's website The Buzz has tips to improve deaf awareness in education, visit [www.buzz.org.uk/talking-to-your-friends](http://www.buzz.org.uk/talking-to-your-friends).

For more information and advice about university, including how to request the support you need, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/university](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/university).

To learn what a lipspeaker is, turn to page 27 for our Ask the Expert article.

**UNIVERSITY IS DAUNTING FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE. FOR ME, IT WAS A MASSIVE STEPPING STONE.** Not just from an educational perspective, but for my confidence too. This was the time I'd decided I was finally going to be open about my deafness.

I walked in on the first day with my hair up and I could already feel eyes on me and my hearing aids. I was nervous, but I introduced myself to everyone and joked about my hearing, to make people feel comfortable. I said: "I've got rubbish hearing, so if I don't hear you, I'm not being rude I promise!" Settling in and making friends was hard. But I found, as the years passed, I was more focused on my degree and achieving good marks.

During the lectures, I had notetaking support. I had to 'sack' my first notetaker because he regularly turned up late and wasted so much time setting up. By then, I'd missed 30 minutes of vital input! It was so frustrating, because I had to put in extra energy and effort to lip-read the lecturer and remember everything.

I was seated at the front, so lip-reading was easier for me. Although lecturers do have an annoying habit of walking around the room and turning and talking! I found myself constantly reminding them to stop, as it didn't help with my concentration fatigue.

I did regularly get frustrated with lecturers who would play videos without subtitles and would only supply me with a paragraph briefing of what the video was about. I read this within a minute and then just sat there through a sometimes one-hour-long video feeling so bored.

Halfway through the second year though, my support improved massively. My amazing Teacher of the Deaf, Sheila, who visited often, made



sure I was finally getting my entitled support.

I began to receive transcriptions of videos and radio clips from lecturers and detailed notes from my new amazing notetaker, Elisabeth (who would also make notes of discussions had during the lecture). I got brilliant off-course support too from Elisabeth, she would go over her notes with me to make sure I understood them. It was amazing how much I missed in the lecture. Sometimes I would even say: "It doesn't feel like I attended the same lecture as you!" Without my notetaking support, I would have been lost.

Amazingly, despite all of the hurdles, I graduated with a 2:1.

It's important you keep fighting for support and never give up! At times I did feel defeated, but then Mum would remind me that I'm paying for this education and should have equal access. It was ironic how we had lectures teaching us about inclusion; I remember sitting there with my notetaker looking at her, rolling my eyes and giggling!

One thing that I discovered after my degree was a lipspeaker. I recommend that you check out the Lipspeaker UK website, they're fantastic and I use them regularly for work now. I wish I'd known about them when I was studying, what a massive lifesaver they would have been!



# Like mother, like daughter

By Rosie Vare

Nicky didn't expect her daughter Isabelle to be deaf like her, but she's used her own experiences to raise a happy, confident two-year-old.



**Isabelle's story**  
adjusting to life as a deaf mum to a deaf daughter



**I can appreciate her hearing fatigue like no one else in the family can.**

## • WHEN NICKY'S DAUGHTER ISABELLE WAS BORN, SHE WAS SHOCKED TO FIND OUT SHE WAS DEAF.

Nicky is deaf herself, but she'd always assumed she was an anomaly due to issues with her own mum's pregnancy.

"It was a gut reaction born out of concern for the unknown – what if technology wasn't enough for Isabelle? What if she couldn't appreciate music and hear her family? Would she be limited in her career?" Nicky explains. "I've genuinely never had negative feelings about being deaf myself but when it's your child you can't help but want the easiest life possible for them. As rationality set in, I quickly turned those feelings around and I haven't looked back."

Isabelle (2) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, whereas Nicky has a severe to profound loss and wears one hearing aid. There's no history of deafness in Nicky's family and it was always assumed her own hearing loss was related to an infection during her mum's pregnancy.

Nicky explains that when she was first diagnosed at the age of one, her parents were upset but wanted to learn as much as possible. "They didn't have the internet in the 1980s so it wasn't as easy as today – a lot of research, library visits, writing and phone calls," Nicky says. "But my mum was very determined. She even ended up as the local representative for the National Deaf Children's Society for several years, helping other parents find the best technology for their children."

For Nicky, things moved much quicker. She found out Isabelle was deaf after she was referred for further testing thanks to the newborn hearing screening and was given her hearing aids at just eight weeks old. She reacted instantly, in what Nicky calls, "a real YouTube moment!"



At six months, Nicky and her husband Ross made the decision to get Isabelle implanted, but it wasn't a straightforward process. "After both an MRI and CT scan, it was revealed Isabelle's cochlea have no turns," Nicky explains. "They're essentially empty shells. Cochlear implants are designed to thread around the 'snail shell' shape of the cochlea but in Isabelle's case, each of the 22 electrodes per ear had to be manually placed, in a six-hour operation."

"The consultant was very blunt beforehand, telling us it may not work for her. The activation process happens a month after the operation but Isabelle didn't respond to sound for another six weeks. Since then she has gone from strength-to-strength. She astounds me with her speech and my heart burst with joy recently when she stopped in the garden and told me the birds were singing. That was everything."

So what challenges does Nicky face as a deaf parent of a deaf child? "During the day I wear my hearing aid but one of the biggest challenges is having a shower when my husband is at work – especially now Isabelle is an intrepid explorer. I can't see or hear her so it's triple checking for hazards, offering her plenty of exciting toys and books and dashing in and out of the shower. Often she's already unravelled a roll of toilet paper and dashed off with the toothpaste – but what toddler hasn't!

"Dealing with a two-year-old's temper tantrums is actually the biggest challenge and that's absolutely nothing to do with our hearing!"

Nicky says the most important piece of equipment she has as a deaf mum is the baby monitor which vibrates under her mattress to alert her if Isabelle is crying during the night. But, in an ideal world, she'd also create a new invention.

"I'd like an instant hair dryer! I can't put my hearing aid in until my hair is dry and every minute spent drying it, is another minute she might be throwing bath toys down the toilet!"

Nicky's own experience of deafness has helped when it comes to keeping Isabelle's hearing technology on though. "I've always been matter of fact about wearing hearing technology. Mummy wears hers, so do you, off we go. However I can also appreciate her hearing fatigue like no


**My heart burst with joy when she told me the birds were singing.**

one else in the family can."

Nicky believes having a hearing loss herself has also given her an advantage when it comes to understanding what support Isabelle needs. "We've worked really hard on her communication and she already speaks in sentences," Nicky says. "We've been going to signing classes since Isabelle was three months old and we arranged family signing classes at home with The Signing Company."

"We're very aware that Isabelle's hearing relies on technology which isn't always failsafe and we want her to have a form of communication to fall back on. That's why it was important our immediate family learnt with us, especially as she had 10 weeks with no hearing before her cochlear implants were fitted."

"As she grows up I'm going to do my utmost to try and make sure her hearing loss doesn't get in the way of anything. We'll always find a way around it."

Looking forward, Nicky has high hopes for Isabelle's future. "I hope she is happy, beyond anything. I hope she understands why we chose to put her through being implanted, which is a huge decision to undertake for somebody else, and that she appreciates her hearing. I hope she has the confidence to advocate for herself and she doesn't let a little thing like hearing loss stand in her way, just like Mummy." 



**Nicky is also 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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs).**

**You can find more information about different types of technology at [www.ndcs.org.uk/technology](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/technology).**



## Your autumn checklist

### ✓ Language tips for toddlers

For parents of newly diagnosed deaf children, teaching your child to communicate on your own might seem difficult. We worked with the University of Sheffield to develop a series of videos explaining our top tips for helping your child develop language. [www.ndcs.org.uk/developinglanguagecommunication](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/developinglanguagecommunication)



### ✓ Hearing aid care

If your child becomes reluctant to wear their hearing aids, it could be a sign that something is wrong with the hearing aid or earmould. With many audiologists running a restricted service, our in-house audiologist, Vicki, has put together her advice to help you care for your child's hearing aids at home. [www.ndcs.org.uk/hacareathome](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/hacareathome)



### ✓ 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 do this, just visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community) and sign up for an account to start chatting.





# Getting to grips with genetic testing

By Abbi Brown

For parents Sarah and Oli, genetic testing may have explained why their daughters were deaf, but it doesn't change who they are.



**Jessica and Penny's story**  
how having genetic testing affected them as a family



**Deafness isn't just a medical issue, it's a culture.**

## WHEN JESSICA (9) WAS DIAGNOSED AS PROFOUNDLY DEAF AT 10 WEEKS OLD, HER PARENTS WERE THROWN INTO A WHOLE NEW WORLD.

"It was a bit of a whirlwind," says Jessica's dad Oli. "We were bombarded with new information." Oli and his wife Sarah were told that if they wanted Jessica to be able to hear, she needed to be fitted with cochlear implants.

"I was in shock," says Oli. "We didn't know anything about deafness and a lot of the information we were given was very medicalised. Sarah's a GP, so perhaps they thought we could take it. Looking back, it felt like deafness was being articulated as a disease rather than a culture."

As the family prepared for Jessica's implantation surgery, they were told she would be genetically tested to find out why she was deaf.

"We were never asked, 'Would you like to be tested?' It was just another appointment which we got through the post. We thought it was part of the process."

Sarah, Oli and Jessica all had their blood tested, and received the results during a later appointment. "We were given the results while Jessica was waiting to be fitted with earmoulds," says Oli. "It was so rushed, nobody really explained to us what the results meant."

The test showed that Jessica's deafness was caused by a mutation of the Connexin 26 gene, which causes profound sensorineural deafness. The mutation is non-syndromic, meaning it doesn't cause any other medical problems.

"That was a relief," says Oli. "I remember thinking that Jessica could potentially have other medical problems which the test might pick up."

The results showed that the mutation was hereditary. Although Sarah and Oli are both hearing, they're carriers



# For us, genetic testing didn't change anything.

of the Connexin 26 mutation. This means that any further children the couple had might also inherit the gene, although that didn't put them off having another child. By the time Sarah became pregnant again, the couple had learned that the gene was more likely to be inherited if the child was a girl.

"When Sarah was pregnant with Penny, we were far more prepared because of the information we had from the genetic testing," says Oli. However when Penny was born one month early, she had additional medical problems unrelated to Connexin 26. "She had breathing problems which meant she was in and out of hospital, so that preoccupied our time." Penny (6) was also diagnosed with cyclical vomiting syndrome, a rare disorder which causes bouts of vomiting and nausea.

"In and amongst it, we were prepared to be told Penny was deaf," says Oli. "She was diagnosed when she was six weeks old. We saw a different audiologist, who sat us down and said, 'I'm really sorry to tell you this, but your daughter's deaf.' She seemed quite surprised that we weren't more upset!"

Like Jessica, Penny was also fitted with cochlear implants. "Our experiences with Jessica definitely helped," says Oli. "We understood the surgery and what we had to do during the recovery period. Penny recovered more quickly than Jessica, she breezed through it. She was bouncing around the next day!"

Having a big sister with the same type of deafness is helpful for Penny, too. "They bicker like most siblings," laughs Oli. "But when we're out and about they stick together, because they experience things the same way. Penny will often look at how Jessica is responding to something and then respond similarly. They're also going along similar trajectories in their speech and comprehension.

"I think they've learned from each other. They've developed differently but I think they have the same experience of deafness. For example, a few years ago Jessica asked if she'd still have to wear her implants when she grows up. It was heartbreaking.



Recently, Penny asked the same question. They seem to be processing things in the same way."

Although Jessica and Penny are doing well at mainstream school, Sarah and Oli are keen for them to be aware of deaf culture. The family is learning British Sign Language, attends deaf events and spends time with other deaf children. "I want them to have the option to integrate with the deaf community in the future," says Oli. "Although they have cochlear implants, they're still deaf and I don't want them to feel that it is a strange world to them.

"Looking back and knowing what I know now, I would have liked there to be more information about deaf culture in the initial process of diagnosis. I think it's important for parents to understand that deafness isn't just a medical issue, it's a culture."

Oli doesn't regret having Jessica genetically tested, but thinks the results should be more clearly explained. "Genetic testing won't define your child or their deafness, it's just a test to see whether they might need any more help. For example, if the test results reveal your child's deafness is part of a syndrome, there might be other things you can do to help them. It doesn't change who your child is. For us, it didn't change anything.

"Just treat it as another piece of information that you can use to make a better informed decision about what you want to do for your child and the kind of life you want them to have."



You can read more about the different causes of deafness at [www.ndcs.org.uk/causesofdeafness](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/causesofdeafness).



## Your autumn checklist

### ✓ Top tips for learning at home with your child

If your child is still doing some or all of their schoolwork from home, you might feel under pressure to recreate the school environment. Our Teacher of the Deaf, Emma, has put together some tips on how you can help your child to learn from home without losing track of your own priorities. [www.ndcs.org.uk/learningathomertips](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/learningathomertips)



### ✓ Helping your child sleep

Many children find it hard to sleep, but for deaf children, going to bed and waking up can be particularly difficult. We asked four parents about the bedtime routines and sensory techniques they use to help everyone get a good night's kip.

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



### ✓ Creating a routine

With schools across the country working to a restricted timetable, it's hard enough for parents to keep track of new routines – let alone children. Visit our website for ideas about how you can help deaf children to understand what comes next and how to handle change. [www.ndcs.org.uk/dailyroutines](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/dailyroutines)





# We're a team!

By Elayne Nunan

As a single mum to twin boys Toni and Tosin (12), both of whom are profoundly deaf and have a number of additional needs, life was initially tough for Oyin. But by making sure to prioritise her own health and wellbeing, and implementing a number of strategies, things began to get easier...



## Toni and Tosin's story

how one single-parent family deals with stress, social skills and sibling differences



**Make time for yourself – if you're tired and overwhelmed, you can't support them.**

## OYIN WATCHES HER SONS KICKING A BALL AROUND THE GARDEN - TONI AND TOSIN LOVE PLAYING FOOTBALL WITH BIG BROTHER SENI (15). SHE MARVELS AT HOW FAR THE TWINS HAVE COME.

Born struggling for life, diagnosed with a number of medical conditions, doctors then told Oyin and her husband Tunde they were profoundly deaf.

"It was a shock," says Oyin. "I felt heartbroken and powerless watching my 'happy ever after' disappear."

The twins were later diagnosed with eyesight problems, a neurological disorder and mobility issues too. Numerous medical appointments, operations and hospital stays meant a stressful, challenging start to life.

"It was draining," says Oyin. "I felt guilty about Seni, lost in the drama, his lovely home life upended. Learning to accept and adjust was challenging. I felt I was wandering around in a dark tunnel."

Oyin contacted the National Deaf Children's Society for help and did a 10-week sign language course run by a local deaf children's society. She began teaching the boys British Sign Language (BSL). Then they had cochlear implants fitted at two years old and began to learn speech too. The family relocated near a school for deaf children and the boys got the extra support they needed.

But when the twins were four, Tunde moved to another country. "We really struggled as a couple, the stress from the boys' challenges didn't help and our marriage broke down. It's been a very lonely and difficult journey since then."

Parenting became overwhelming for Oyin. As well as coping with the general challenges twins bring, she had to deal with their speech and communication delay, lack of social skills, behaviour problems, and learning delay and difficulties as well.

"Parenting Seni was instinctive," Oyin says. "I didn't have to explain, for example, what a TV was called. But with the twins, I had to teach them the names for things and explain



# “ They didn’t understand social rules, like personal space.

the meaning of everything. I had to be animated and creative.

“They didn’t understand social rules, like personal space. They’d tap Seni’s friends too hard to get their attention and get in their faces. So I’d teach them it was upsetting. With Seni’s help, we’d act it out. We did this over and again so they understood.

“Seni is a fantastic big brother, he’s so patient, but it was hard. Collecting him from school, the twins were excited to see him, bubbly and loud but unable to use words. His friends would ask, ‘What’s wrong with your brothers?’ He was embarrassed. I’d tell him he must educate his friends, see it as an opportunity to enlighten people.”

Oyin realised she’d have to make more time for Seni as he began to feel left out. She got a babysitter and spent quality time with him doing something he enjoyed each week.

She also had to make time for herself. “I’m a single parent, there’s only one of me. It’s brought so many good things to our family, we have a really close bond, but there was a real impact on my health too. I wasn’t sleeping, my hair fell out. I had to be strong for my boys. But I learnt I must prioritise self-care and slowing down – without me the overall wellbeing of the boys would be negatively impacted.”

Oyin works on the boys’ emotional wellbeing too; one strategy is a daily family circle time. “Toni wasn’t good at expressing his feelings, though Tosin and Seni find it easier. So after tea we all sit down and talk about our day, our feelings and what needs to change. It’s helped get them communicating easily and freely.

“I teach them nuances, ranges of emotions, rather than just ‘happy’ or ‘sad’. I ask open-ended questions which empower them to problem solve; I can’t always be there to help them.

“I boost their confidence, normalise deafness so their foundation is solid, then there’s little the world can do to damage it.

“I set goals for myself and try and be a positive role model. I insist all the boys spend time together, not go to their rooms, so they learn to interact, bond and learn social skills.”

The twins wanted to join a football

team but the first try-out, aged seven, was an ordeal. The twins couldn’t understand instructions and other boys called them stupid. Then a staff member at school showed them diagrams and YouTube videos, and Seni coached them at home. Now they play for deaf and hearing teams.

“They do really well, they’re resilient. We keep going, our team!” says Oyin. “They’re good boys, well-behaved. We understand each other and have settled into the dynamics after all these years together.

“Toni and Tosin look the same but are very different people. They accuse me of treating them differently and I say, ‘To treat you fairly and meet your needs, I can’t treat you the same.’ I want them to feel heard and supported, and for their individual needs to be met.

“I don’t compare the twins to other children, nor to each other. I only compare them to themselves as they progress. Their additional needs are apparent but improving.”

Oyin has advice for other single parents too. “You can do anything, but you can’t do everything,” she says. “Prioritise, choose your battles, and constantly reassess what needs doing. It doesn’t matter if non-essential things don’t get done. “You have to make time for yourself too – don’t feel it’s selfish. If you’re tired and overwhelmed, you can’t support them. You can be fantastic at everything, but not all at once.”

➔ For advice on supporting your and your child’s emotional health and wellbeing, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing).

If you’d like to talk with other parents of deaf children, join our new online forum Your Community at [www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community).

Having a deaf sibling can have ups and downs and may mean changes to family life. We have advice on how to make sure siblings feel supported and included at [www.ndcs.org.uk/siblings](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/siblings).



### Your autumn checklist

#### ✓ Speech-to-text apps

If your child is struggling to communicate with people wearing face masks, a live transcribing app could help. Transcribing apps convert speech to text so that the deaf person can read what a person is saying without needing to lip-read. We reviewed the most popular apps on our blog at [www.ndcs.org.uk/livetranscribe](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/livetranscribe).



#### ✓ Accessibility at school

Although schools are constantly adapting to new rules at the moment, they still have a responsibility to meet the needs of deaf children and young people as far as possible. For the latest information on how schools and local authorities should be supporting deaf students, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/coronavirusinfo](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/coronavirusinfo) or contact our Helpline.



#### ✓ Mental health tips for parents

This year has been particularly challenging for parents, so it’s natural to feel a bit down. Remember, looking after your mental health is just as important as looking after your physical health. For advice on mental health support for parents and carers of deaf children, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/parentmentalhealth](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/parentmentalhealth).





# The power of plumbing

By Kerrina Gray

Jayden's always wanted to defy people's expectations and, with his achievements in dance, the changes he's made as head boy, and three BTECs under his belt, he's certainly done that.



**Jayden's story**  
how he thrived while studying to be a plumber

**HE MAY ONLY BE 18 YEARS OLD, BUT JAYDEN, WHO LOVES DANCING, IS A WISE HEAD ON YOUNG SHOULDERS.** "It's weird, but I love the mistakes I've made in dance the most," Jayden says. "I once made a huge mistake while performing with my dance company. I spun round too far and did half the dance facing the back wall instead of the front! Everyone was laughing but my dance teacher loved it so we changed the routine to that."

Jayden, who's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, has just finished his final year at deaf-specialist residential school Mary Hare. It was quite a difficult end to education for Jayden as he had to leave school in April due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown. "It felt strange and disappointing," Jayden explains. "I wasn't able to say proper goodbyes and our last big event was cancelled. I haven't been able to sign as much at home as I was doing at school."

Jayden uses a mixture of speech and British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate, but is the only deaf person in his family and uses speech at home. He was diagnosed as deaf as a toddler. "My mum says she would call my name and I wouldn't respond," Jayden says. "They took me to hospital as they were a bit worried. Both my parents grew up in Jamaica and they had no knowledge of deafness."

But he's never let that hold him back, and, despite challenges, including the lockdown during his final exams, has successfully completed BTECs in plumbing, performing arts and music technology. "I've always enjoyed using my hands and building things, like Lego," Jayden says. "I hate working in offices or anything to do with writing. After my first week doing my plumbing BTEC, I was so obsessed with it that I decided I wanted to be a plumber. It's all about logic. Knowing about



**I've always been confident talking to people when I don't know them.**



## “My mum said I’ve been dancing since I came out of her womb.”

plumbing feels like a special power.”

Now Jayden is looking for an apprenticeship in plumbing and is working with an adviser from the National Apprenticeship Service, who’s helping to match him to an appropriate placement.

“Sally, from the National Apprenticeship Service, has taken my CV and we’ve had an interview over the phone where we spoke about what sort of apprenticeship I wanted,” Jayden says. “My main priority was that it was deaf-friendly, otherwise I didn’t mind. I’ve got an interview in a few weeks’ time through this scheme so fingers crossed!”

Although Jayden isn’t a big fan of writing, this wasn’t his main bugbear when he had to make a CV. “It was really difficult because I had too much to put on it!” Jayden laughs. “I’ve had a lot of experience in design technology, I do a lot of sports, I’m chairman of the school council so I’m good with time management, and I’m head boy as well. I couldn’t fit it all on one page!”

Sometimes deaf young people are put off customer-facing roles due to worries about communication, but Jayden explains why that shouldn’t be a barrier. “I’ve always been confident talking to people when I don’t know them. I’ve worked in my school’s diner as a server and a security manager before. It was hard being a server because it was so noisy but I loved being a security manager. At one point I even thought about being a bodyguard for famous people!

“Because of my confidence, I’m not worried about going into people’s houses as a plumber. I won’t mind telling them I’m deaf and that they need to turn around or turn the TV off.

“You can also get a badge or card to give to people before you enter their home or business that tells them you’re deaf. You can write on that card or badge the best way to communicate with you, for example to write things down. It just opens up the barrier to communication. It’s


something I’ve been thinking about doing when I get my apprenticeship.”

While Jayden has made a big decision about his future career, he’s also keen to keep up with his hobbies, and music has always been a huge part of his life.

“My mum said I’ve been dancing since I came out of her womb,” Jayden laughs. “I taught myself from a really young age, but my cochlear implant made a huge difference. Before, I could only feel the kicks in the music but after, I could hear it more clearly and dance to the beat. Once I got my second implant at 11, I started noticing all the other instruments too. Other people would say, ‘Oh I never heard that in the music, but you showed it to me through dance.’

“Dance is the thing that calms me down when I’m stressed or upset or angry.”

Jayden was one of the first deaf young people to win a place at his dance company and, as always, he was keen to defy expectations. “After seeing me and some of my other friends, the company were like ‘Deaf people are really good at dancing!’ So now they’ve been looking for more deaf people to join. It feels good to change people’s opinions.”

With so many hobbies and achievements already under his belt, Jayden is looking forward to a bright future. “When I was younger, people used to put me down because I was deaf,” Jayden says. “My biggest challenge was to try and get them to see that deaf people can do anything and everything. That’s my inspiration.” 



**For more information about apprenticeships, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice). You might also like to find out more about our campaign **Deaf Works Everywhere** which aims to help more deaf young people into jobs that inspire them, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere).**

**If you’d like advice to share with activity providers about making hobbies deaf-friendly, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyactivities](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyactivities).**



**YOUNG PEOPLE 15-18**

## Your autumn checklist

### ✓ Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships, traineeships and supported internships can be a great way for young people to gain work experience alongside studying for qualifications. For more information about applying for an apprenticeship as a deaf young person, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/apprentice).



### ✓ Exam access arrangements

The school year might have only just started, but if your child is due to take exams this year, it’s important to make sure their access arrangements are in place early. Contact your child’s special educational needs coordinator or Teacher of the Deaf to discuss their needs. [www.ndcs.org.uk/exams](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/exams)



### ✓ Developing self-esteem

After so much time at home, many young people might be feeling nervous about going back to school. Make sure your child knows they can talk to you about how they feel and visit our website for more advice. [www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/wellbeing)





# Turning a hobby into a career

By Katy Blanchard

Unsure what she wanted to do when she left school aged 17, **Natasha found work at a local salon. Little did she know, this would lead to a career she loves as a make-up artist.**



**Natasha's story**  
how she started her own business as a make-up artist



**Talking about my hearing aid can be an icebreaker with clients.**

**ADMIRING A FRESH PALETTE OF SHADES AND SOME NEW BRUSHES, NATASHA (19) FEELS INSPIRED AND CREATIVE.** "I absolutely love my job," she says. Being a make-up artist is the perfect career for Natasha, who is moderately to severely deaf, but one she discovered by chance.

"I was really into dancing when I was younger and did shows and competitions," she explains. "I loved wearing the costumes and getting glammed up with the make-up and big lashes. I think that's where my love of make-up started."

She didn't imagine then that she would later find herself in a job doing something she found so much fun.

At school, Natasha hadn't thought much about her future career, instead focusing on overcoming the day-to-day struggles she faced as a deaf student. Despite the difference her bone-anchored hearing aid makes, concentrating at school wasn't easy. Listening to the teacher, if there was any background noise, was difficult and group work was particularly challenging. "The only way I could concentrate on what my group was saying was if we left the room to work somewhere else," she remembers.

Natasha didn't let her deafness stand in the way of finding a job when she finished school aged 17. She started work at a local salon, but that too had its challenges. "I was helping out with cleaning and general assistant duties to support the running of the salon," she says. "It was a brilliant experience but a challenging workplace – salons are noisy!"

Natasha recalls how the background music and near-constant hum of hairdryers made it difficult to hear people talking to her. "I'd often approach a number of clients to check if they'd asked me something," she says.



**“ Each job is like a blank canvas and it’s very creative. That’s what I love most about it.**

Despite the noisy environment, Natasha thrived. “Working there was so much fun,” she says. “I enjoyed being around people wanting to do something nice for themselves to look and feel better, with everyone chatting away happily.”

Natasha earned her Level 1 Diploma in hairdressing during her time at the salon, but it was make-up – something she’d enjoyed from a young age – that really captured her imagination.

Watching the salon’s make-up artist at work became a guilty pleasure for Natasha. “I was captivated watching her and I knew that it was something I wanted to do,” she recalls. “I’d always found that putting time into my own make-up gave me more confidence as a person, and I knew I’d really enjoy a job that helped boost other people’s confidence too.”

Realising a hobby could become her career, Natasha was determined to pursue it. She wasted no time and found a local college course in Fashion Make-Up Artistry run by a private make-up school. Six months of intensive learning stood between her and the start of a career in make-up.

Although she was passionate about the course, it wasn’t easy for Natasha. Being in a learning environment once again had its difficulties. “There were only 15 of us in the class, but if several people were talking at the same time, I’d struggle,” she says. “I really wanted to do this, though, so I would always ask the tutors if I needed extra support.”

With another qualification – this time a Higher National Certificate – under her belt, Natasha was eagerly looking to the future. Though she’d learnt a lot at the salon, it wasn’t an environment she wanted to work in long term so she explored other options. She decided to set up on her own as a freelance make-up artist, and started pages on Instagram and Facebook. “It was nerve-wracking,”


she says. “But other people do it successfully so I thought, ‘Why not me?’”

Buoyed by her success on the course in a variety of make-up styles – bridal, special effects and make-up for occasions – she ordered business cards and started spreading the word in her local area. Clients soon started to come. “Word of mouth was important to me to get started,” says Natasha. “My mum told all her friends and they told theirs, that really helped.”

With the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak putting a pause on her business just a few months in, it’s been a tricky start for Natasha’s dream career. “It’s not the kind of job you can do at a distance and I’ve been really looking forward to getting into the swing of things again,” she says. “Each job is like a blank canvas and it’s very creative. That’s what I love most about it.”

Now, Natasha doesn’t find that her deafness holds her back. “When a client is talking to me, I need to concentrate on what they’re saying so it can be hard to continue doing their make-up at the same time,” she explains. “But I just stand back, chat to them, and then pick it up again when we’ve finished talking.”

In fact, Natasha uses her deafness as a strength that often helps her interact with clients. “Talking about my hearing aid can be an icebreaker,” she says. “If there’s not much to talk about, I’ll drop it into the conversation and clients are always interested. It helps get us talking and increases deaf awareness, too.

“I would tell other deaf young people: you’re unique and amazing, but your deafness doesn’t define who you are.” 



**To find out more about work and careers, including deaf young people’s rights in the workplace, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers).**

**Our campaign Deaf Works Everywhere aims to get more deaf young people into jobs that inspire them. Find out more at [www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere).**



## Your autumn checklist

### ✔ Deaf-friendly careers advice

For deaf young people who have recently left education, it might seem like a particularly challenging time to be joining the world of work. Our website contains lots of information about starting work, including tips on applying for a job and managing communication needs in the workplace.

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



### ✔ Your rights in education

Even if your child’s education is mostly online this year, their university, college or local authority still has a responsibility to meet their needs in education. To learn more about the rights of deaf young people in education, visit

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



### ✔ Staying positive during COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic has made life difficult for everyone, but for young people it may feel especially disruptive. As the situation changes, your child might find it helpful to read our advice for deaf young people on staying positive at [www.buzz.org.uk/staying-positive-during-covid-19](http://www.buzz.org.uk/staying-positive-during-covid-19).





# How do I...

## encourage my child to use technology independently?

Technology is ever important to us all, but for deaf children in particular it can aid with communication, safety and leisure. Here four families tell us how they encourage their children, from as young as two years old, up to a teenager, to be independent in caring for and using their own technology.

**He happily takes the phone away from me so he's the centre of attention!**



**Kate is mum to Evan (9) who is unilaterally deaf and wears a bone-anchored hearing aid.**

Evan was born hearing but developed acute mastoiditis when he was seven and was very poorly. We discovered he had lost all hearing in his left ear two months later.

When he got better, Evan returned to school, football and swimming. After about 10 months, he independently asked if he could try a removable Baha. He had a Baha on loan in March this year and found it very beneficial. Before wearing it, Evan held a class assembly to explain

why he was having the Baha and what it would mean for him. The children responded very positively to him explaining the technology that helps him. Evan felt empowered.

Evan now has his own removable Baha. He takes full responsibility for it; it's his job to make sure it's put in the same safe place when he's not wearing it. He replaces the battery and knows he's not to take it off in school and put it down. He's very confident using his Baha and appreciates the difference it has made to his life. We couldn't be prouder of Evan and his positive attitude.



**Evan**





**Angela is mum to Rory (3) who is severely to profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**

Despite us trying not to use too much technology with Rory, during lockdown he used my phone to look at pictures and videos we'd taken and for FaceTime with friends. When using FaceTime, he happily takes the phone away from me so he's the centre of attention, although he has also managed to cut people off when he's had enough! He knows how to change the screen so they can see what he's talking about and he likes taking photos with my phone too for sharing with friends and family.

During lockdown our Hearing and Vision Support Service has run a



**Rory**

weekly live session with one of the staff singing and signing. I let Rory watch this on my phone; he controls pausing and restarting it as and when he's distracted but will also replay previous sessions.

He's becoming a pro with the TV remote control and, with a techno-keen dad, I'm sure he'll be a gamer in no time! He's a really practical little boy and only needs to watch how to do something once before he'll pick it up.

Rory has cochlear implants and can put the Universal Headpiece (UHP) back on but not quite the processor yet, although he will have a good try! We always encourage him to give it a go. He also helps to put the implants together in the morning and take them apart at bedtime.

**Rebecca is mum to Mackenzie (2) who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**

Routine and persistence are key for getting Kenzie to wear his implants as much as possible and enjoy wearing them. He was born deaf and wore hearing aids from seven weeks old. As he was so little, it was important we encouraged him to wear his 'ears', as we call them, as much as possible. From day one we introduced a routine which included keeping his 'ears' in the same place by his bedside so he always knew where to find them by himself. When he woke up, they were put straight on, and we used a song: 'One, two, can you hear mummy, because mummy can hear you.' With this we would get a cheeky smile showing he could hear!

Since having his implants fitted in January we've kept the same routine,



**Mackenzie**

except now his response is, "Mummy yeah!" which is so lovely to hear! We use a routine at night too where I read him a story and kiss him goodnight, we say, "night night," and he passes me his 'ears' so he knows it's time to go to sleep.

Through following this routine and consistently putting his implants straight back on if they come off, Kenzie has worn his 'ears' for an average of 11 hours per day from just three months old. It's made such a difference to his speech and language development. If they come off or stop working for any reason, Kenzie is able to tell me straight away by saying "Uh oh," and pointing to his ear. We're now teaching him to put them back on himself so he can become even more independent in wearing them.

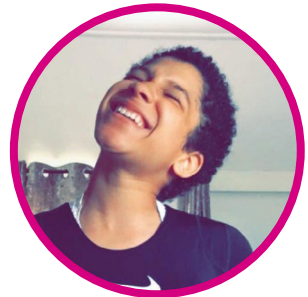
**Cathy is grandma to Maisy (13) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.**

We live on the Orkney Islands so Maisy gets the ferry by herself over to the main island to school where she boards for the week.

Maisy can find school frustrating as few people routinely use face-to-face communication, so wearing her hearing aids is essential and using lip-reading helps as well. Maisy also has a radio aid for her teachers to wear that allows their speech to be directed straight to her hearing aids.

Maisy's houseparent and deaf awareness teacher set her goals every term. Recently they were to take care of her own hearing aids and to do a deaf awareness talk by herself at school. The goals are reviewed monthly and achievements are celebrated. This has really helped Maisy to become more confident and independent, particularly with looking after her hearing aids and radio aid at school. There are still times when she's forgetful and loses them, but it's much better than it used to be. With the support in place, Maisy is positively encouraged to be independent with her technology.

Maisy recently bought Apple AirPods which gave her new enjoyment as she could enjoy quality music and spoken sound through them on her own. Maisy is a loud, confident, and very talkative teenager. She is determined to succeed, and with modern hearing aids, her radio aid and other technology, I'm sure she'll go far.



**Maisy**



For lots more information about different technology that may be useful to your deaf child, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/technology](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/technology).

You can find out more about our technology events, which are currently being offered online, at [www.ndcs.org.uk/onlineevents](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/onlineevents).



Next time in *Families* magazine: How do I... deal with criticism?

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

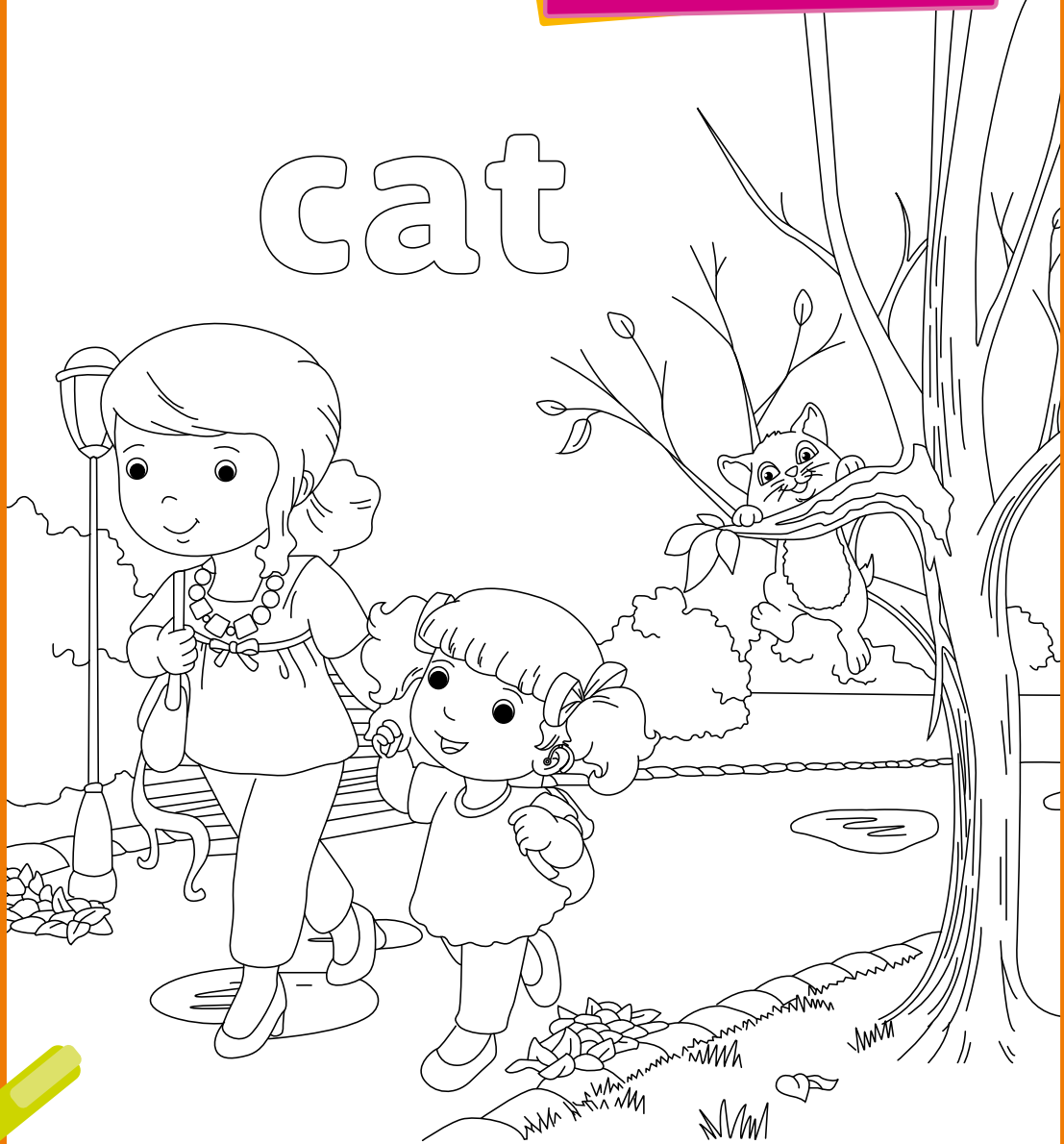
# Scribble

Tear out these pages, give them to your

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

Colour in

cat



This girl is walking to school with her mum, and they've spotted something hanging in the tree! Can you see what's there? What colour are you going to choose for the girl's hearing aid?



# ole Club

our child and let their creativity run wild!

## Dot-to-dot



Starting at number one, join the dots on this picture to see what the pumpkin has on his head. Have you spotted what the other pumpkins are wearing on their heads too? They're special pumpkin bone conduction hearing aids! Once you're done, you can colour in the picture with all your spookiest colours. Happy Halloween!

British Sign Language

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Outstanding Children's Home



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"This is the exact thing that, as parents, we wanted for a child like our son or someone who doesn't have full access to sound. It's all there!"  
Father



"Through Cued Speech, she is now reading at an age appropriate level." Mother



"We introduced the use of Cued Speech in our Deaf Education Centre 18 months ago and the progress the children have made has been huge!" Primary school Teacher of the Deaf



**Talk to us today about making your speech visible!**

We would love to see what you're saying!

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Kirsty

# Ask the expert

Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Kirsty Last, a lipspeaker, shares her insights.

**Many deaf people rely on lip-reading for communication, but not everyone is easy to lip-read.**

## What is a lipspeaker?

A lipspeaker is a hearing person who's professionally trained to be easy to lip-read. They reproduce what a speaker is saying clearly, using facial expressions, gestures and fingerspelling to aid understanding. The lipspeaker doesn't usually use their own voice when relaying the spoken words. Some lipspeakers can offer lipspeaking with sign support.

## Why might a deaf child or young person want to use a lipspeaker?

Many deaf people rely on lip-reading for communication, but not everyone is easy to lip-read. If a deaf person's first language is English rather than sign language, they might prefer to use a lipspeaker rather than another type of communication support, such as interpreters or palantypists.

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

I work in lots of different settings, including classrooms, offices and hospitals. I sit opposite the deaf person, away from visual distractions such as busy backgrounds or windows. When the meeting starts, I relay speech to the lip-reader, who looks at me rather than the person who's speaking. For long meetings or assignments, I may work with another lipspeaker so that we can take it in turns. Lipspeaking and lip-reading can be tiring, so we try to have breaks every 20 minutes.

## How can a family or young person access a lipspeaker?

People can book lipspeakers either through an agency or by contacting the lipspeaker directly. Make sure your lipspeaker is qualified and registered on the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPP) website ([www.nrcpd.org.uk](http://www.nrcpd.org.uk)). Lipspeakers can be provided through



communication support packages in education or employment, such as in an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or through Access to Work.

## What attracted you to working as a lipspeaker?

My best friend, Lesley, has been a lipspeaker for about 20 years and she introduced me to deaf friends who said I had clear lip patterns. I was a police officer for 22 years, but Lesley encouraged me to change careers and become a lipspeaker. It's the best thing I've done. I qualified last year and love it!

## What qualifications do you need to work as a lipspeaker?

All registered lipspeakers have a Level 3 qualification in lipspeaking and can fingerspell. I also have a Level 2 certificate in British Sign Language and am working towards Level 3. Not all lipspeakers can sign, so make sure your lipspeaker has the qualifications they need to support you.

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

The most rewarding is being able to give deaf people equal access to effective communication. I get to meet and support some lovely people. I'm humbled by what they achieve. The most challenging part is working with really fast speakers! People can only lip-read effectively around 110 words per minute, so if speech is faster than that, it's hard to relay everything that's said.



To learn about the professionals you may meet, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/people](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/people).



# Starting back at school

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

After many months of being at home, it may seem daunting for your child to be heading back to school. Here are a range of things you can do to help them have a successful start and a brilliant year.

## Starting a new school

If your child is starting a new school or even just going into a new class, they probably won't have had the usual opportunities to visit or spend time meeting their new teachers and the adults who will be supporting them. Don't worry, we have some ideas that will help them feel ready and prepared for the new term.

Arrange a meeting for you and your child with anyone who supports them at school. If you or your child use British Sign Language, or like to read subtitles, ask the school to make these arrangements before the meeting takes place. Our blog gives information on how to make meetings accessible: [www.ndcs.org.uk/coronavirusinfo](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/coronavirusinfo).

You could also ask to record the meeting so you can go back and check what has been arranged or share it with other members of your family. Make a list beforehand of the things you and your child want to find out about and what you want your child's new teacher or school to know.

## What should I ask about?

- **Equipment:** who's going to support your child with their hearing aids or implants and do they know how they work? You may want to check that any other hearing technology your child uses, for example a radio aid, is ready and being used by your child.
- **Communication:** it's really important that everyone in the school knows how to communicate with your child appropriately. Filling in a personal passport or profile will help everyone to know what works best. We've developed a number of templates you can use, you can download them from [www.ndcs.org.uk/passports](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/passports).



- **Seating position:** does everyone know where your child needs to sit in order to hear the teacher and see their face at all times? Remind everyone that it's difficult for your child to hear if they're seated next to an open door or window.
- **Special arrangements:** if your child needs special arrangements to learn and join in activities, check that everyone knows what they are so your child is fully included.
- **Sharing information:** sharing everyday information between school and home can be hard for deaf children who may miss or misunderstand verbal information or instructions. Think in advance how day-to-day information will be shared between you and the school. This could be done using a home-school notebook or through text messages or emails. You should also expect to receive regular information from the school about your child's progress and their development of social skills and friendships. You may want to check with the school how often and when you'll receive these updates.

Why not send the school a link to our deaf-friendly webpage? There's lots of information to help professionals support deaf children to learn at [www.ndcs.org.uk/professionals](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professionals).

## What your child may want to know

Your child will have lots of new information and experiences to take on board when they first go back to school. For example, they may have a new teacher or form tutor, a new adult supporting them with their learning or different teachers for different subjects. Ask the school to send through all the different teachers' names and the jobs that they do so you and your child can talk about them together. Sometimes this information will be available on the school website.



Even though your child may have already started school, it may take time for them to find their way around and feel confident about what lessons they have and where. Timetables and maps will help your child feel more prepared and help them learn important vocabulary, such as the names of new subjects and school areas.

Unstructured times of the day, such as lunchtimes, can be particularly challenging for deaf children. They may worry about finding their friendship group or asking for food in the canteen. Ask if you can have the daily menu in advance and find out if there's a quiet place your child can go if they're feeling anxious.

Friendships are a very important part of school life. Your child may need time to learn all the names of the children in their class or form. They may also want to meet other deaf children at the school. If possible, arrange a time for your child to meet with classmates online or after school. This may allow them to share information, re-establish friendships and talk about worries and fears that perhaps they haven't shared with you.

Homework increases as your child moves up through school, but deaf children may find it difficult to settle down to learning after a long and busy day. This is sometimes known as listening or concentration fatigue. Ask for a homework timetable so you and your child can plan how and when to do homework and find out who to talk to if homework becomes too much.

### Helping your child with independence

School provides your child with opportunities to become more independent. While they've been at home, they may have become used to you doing everyday jobs and activities that they could do themselves. They may also have lost their confidence in, for example, talking to new people or carrying out everyday activities outside the home, such as travelling on the bus or handling money. Encourage your child to complete jobs and activities independently; they could prepare a meal or organise their school bag. You could also encourage your child to have a conversation with someone they don't know, buy something from a shop or plan a simple journey.



## Supporting your child's education this autumn

### ✓ Missing school for medical appointments

Will your child need to miss school sometimes for audiology or other medical appointments? Read our advice for how this should be handled by the school at [www.ndcs.org.uk/absence](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/absence).



### ✓ Thinking about the future

If your child is turning 14 this year or starting to think about their future, read our advice on how you can support them to think about all of their options in further education and employment. You can find this online at [www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool).



### ✓ Advice about bullying

Most deaf children enjoy their time at school, but if you're worried about your child being bullied we have information on our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/bullyingadvice](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/bullyingadvice).



➔ More information about going back to school is available on our webpage at [www.ndcs.org.uk/backtoschool](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/backtoschool).

For simple deaf awareness tips that can be shared with school staff and children, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/toptips).

To find out more about concentration fatigue, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/tired](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/tired). You can also read other parents tips for homework at [www.ndcs.org.uk/homeworktips](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/homeworktips).



# Developing language skills with tech toys

By Kim Hagen (Technology Research Officer)

With such a wide range available, choosing toys for babies and toddlers can be a minefield. We explore how toys, games and apps can help your child develop early language skills.

Whether deaf children use sign language or spoken English, strong language and communication skills are important to their development. Your child needs language to be able to form their own thoughts, make themselves understood, understand you, and look after their emotional health and wellbeing.

If you're raising your child orally, they'll first need to develop their attention, listening, and social interaction skills. These have an important role in helping your child learn to take turns in conversations and to respond to what others say. Play is a great way to develop these skills, and there are various low-cost books, games and apps that can help.



## Discovery 10-Button sound books

The Discovery 10-Button sound books (approximately £9.50 a book, available on Amazon) include interesting facts on different subjects. They have 10 buttons which play different sounds that relate to what's covered in the book. For example, *Baby Farm Animals!* has 10 sound buttons that play the sounds of the animals that feature in it. You can take turns pressing the buttons, listening to the sound and pointing to the object in the book that makes that sound. It encourages your child to focus on what you're doing and to listen carefully to the sounds.



Discovery's *Honk on the Road!* book is good for environmental awareness. If your child is learning oral English, practising transport sounds is an important step between babble sounds and attempting to imitate real words.

**Pippa Smith, Speech and Language Therapist.**



## First Sounds Lotto game

First Sounds Lotto (approximately £7.99, available from Amazon) is a game that works with the free-of-charge Orchard Toys app. The game includes playing boards and cards which you place in front of you and your child. Download and launch the app, select First Sounds Lotto, and

press the picture in the app to play its sound. You can then ask your child what they think the sound was and encourage them to take the card that matches that sound for their playing board.







## Special Words app

Special Words app (£19.99, available on iOS and Android devices) has six activity categories to help your child with their development in a range of ways. The Sound to Picture activity is especially helpful for developing listening skills. Tap the question mark to play a sound and get your child to match it to one of the four pictures on the screen.

“ This app is great for helping our daughter learn and practise many different words and sounds, while still having fun matching the words to bright and colourful pictures.

**Stuart, dad to Lois (4) who is profoundly deaf.**



You can also get creative with toys you already have at home. You could try hiding a sound-making toy in the room for your child to find. They'll have to really use their listening skills to locate it. You could also engage in a Ready, Steady, Go activity with a remote control car. Your child must wait for you to say 'Ready, steady... go!' before pressing the button which makes the car move. Every time you play, increase the waiting time between the words. This can help develop your child's attention skills and ability to focus.

“ Ever wondered why children use a new toy a few times but tend to quickly forget about it? This is because many toys, whether they are no-tech, low-tech or high-tech, provide a very finite end result, for example if you push the 'Go' button on a remote control car, the outcome will always be the same. To extend your child's attention and language, you need to introduce problems and processes. Try removing the batteries from some of the tech toys and then talk to your child about why the toy isn't working. Support your child to use words or phrases to answer questions such as, 'It's broken,' or 'Fix it,' and, 'Open it.'

**Noel Kenely, Senior Auditory Verbal Therapist.**



There are also many ways you can help your child develop these fundamental skills without using technology, such as:

- **Listening walks:** go for a walk in your local area and tell your child to listen out for sounds. Stop when you hear a sound and ask what the sound was.
- **Instruments:** match drawings of musical instruments, such as a tambourine or xylophone, to the sound you make with those instruments. You could also make musical instruments, such as rice in a yoghurt pot.
- **Copying rhythms:** clap a rhythm and encourage your child to copy the same pattern.



Remember, you may have a toy library near you where you could borrow some of the toys mentioned in this article.

To find out more about technology that could help your child, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/technology](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/technology).

# App special

## Apps for deaf children... tell us what you think!



Would you or your child like to write a review for Families magazine? Email [magazine@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:magazine@ndcs.org.uk).



### Key

This resource could be most suitable for the following ages:

0-4

5-10

11-14

15-18

19-25

Parents

## Advanced Bionics BabyBeats™

The BabyBeats™ app stimulates your baby's senses through musical activities. It can be beneficial for children with a range of hearing devices. Using the app with a vibrating speaker can make it more relevant for profoundly deaf children. This reviewer uses the Damson Cisor wireless vibration speaker, which is available from [Amazon](#) for around £40.

Available on [iOS](#) and [Android](#) via

[www.advancedbionics.com/babybeats](http://www.advancedbionics.com/babybeats)

 Free

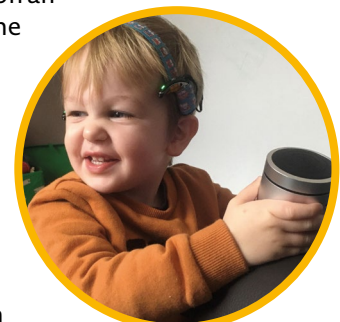
0-4

Charlie was diagnosed as profoundly deaf when he was eight weeks old. He now has cochlear implants but we wanted him to fully embrace his other senses pre-implantation.

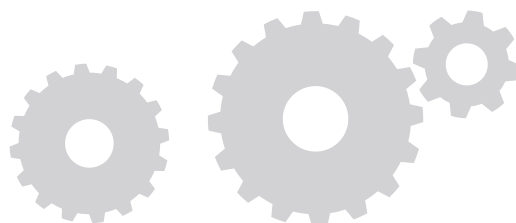
When we attended our first local group for deaf children, we had fun joining in with the sing and sign activities. Our Teacher of the Deaf ran the singing sessions and she introduced us to the BabyBeats Advanced Bionics CD. At the group, they played the CD through a vibration speaker which they made more accessible for all the children by placing it in an empty plastic bin. The vibration through the bin was so powerful and varied that our son could enjoy music for the first time.

When we got home, we invested in our own vibration speaker, the Damson Cisor. We registered online with Advanced Bionics and received the BabyBeats pack, which included flash cards, a CD and a rubber duck. The music is also available on an app which we downloaded to use with the Damson Cisor. It's powerful and our son loved feeling the vibrations whilst sat in his high chair. Along with the flash cards, Charlie got to enjoy the music and learnt to anticipate our actions from the vibrations played through the speaker by the BabyBeats app. Charlie has always been interested in facial and visual cues but the app and vibration speaker combined really awoke his sense of touch and helped us connect more as a family.

**Tom is dad to Charlie (2) who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.**



Charlie





## Signed Stories

Signed Stories is a storytelling app offering animated children's stories with British Sign Language (BSL) translation.

Available on **iOS** via

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

**Free**, charges for some books (from 99p)

0-4

5-10

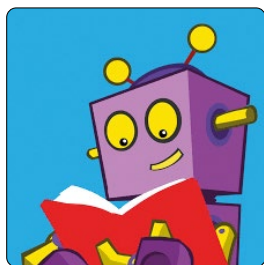
The Signed Stories app offers a surprising amount of free content, as well as a good range available to buy. We downloaded *Three Billy Goats Gruff* as our first text for free. You can choose whether the subtitles and BSL translator are on or off, and choose the subtitle font. We kept both the subtitles and signer on. Theo happily engaged with the story and was able to recall some of the signs used afterwards.

The app includes a BSL dictionary with video clips of the signs used in the story. Each time you download a new story or nursery rhyme, the signs from the new story are added to the dictionary. Having watched *Three Billy Goats Gruff* a couple of times, Theo was able to navigate the app himself, and chose a few more items to add to his virtual bookshelf. His favourite at the moment is the nursery rhyme *Alice the Camel*. Theo's siblings like to join in when he's using the app. It's a real family affair!

We've also discovered that the look of the bookshelf can be personalised further by choosing different backgrounds, and downloaded books can be sorted into various categories. It's a really user-friendly app. It'd be lovely to see some of his favourite books on here in the future too.

Theo adds: "The pictures are good. I like doing it myself. My favourite is *Alice the Camel*."

**Michelle is mum to Theo (5) who is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.**



Theo

## Shazam

Shazam is an app which can identify and find lyrics for music played remotely.

Available on **iOS** and **Android** via [www.shazam.com](http://www.shazam.com)

**Free**

11-14

15-18

19-25

When I first downloaded Shazam, I found it easy to use and quite helpful. I haven't ever used an app like this before and was very surprised when I found out all of its features.

Shazam's main feature is telling you what song you're listening to. For example, if you're listening to a song on the radio and you don't know what it's called, open up Shazam and it will tell you. The app also tells you facts about the song, including the release date, genre, and even the date and time that you 'Shazamed' it.

Usually, music has to be quite loud for me to hear it, especially when I'm out of the house. But recently I was sitting in a café and my mum was singing along to a song the café was playing on the radio. I couldn't hear the song, so I took out my phone and Shazam told me what the song was. When I got home I listened to the song and really liked it.

The lyric feature is also super helpful. Shazam listens to the part of the song you're listening to, and tells you the lyrics as they're being played out loud.

In my personal experience of the app, I wish that the features were more clearly labelled as I had to search round the app to find some of the best and most helpful additions. But now that I've got the hang of it, I will continue to use it as it's helped me loads. I definitely recommend it!

**Cam (16) is moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids.**



Cam



Our new book *The Quest for the Cockle Implant* will be coming to Signed Stories soon. Keep your eyes peeled!

# Helpline

“ My 12-year-old daughter is deaf and has her own mobile phone with access to the internet. Last year she was bullied online by some other children at school. The teachers dealt with it swiftly but I’m really worried it’s going to happen again and this time it might go unnoticed because she’s still learning from home. I feel helpless. How can I keep my daughter safe online?



Firstly, please know that it’s completely normal to be worried and feel helpless in this situation. It’s important to remember there are lots of things you can do to make sure your daughter is safe online.

Cyberbullying takes place through technology such as mobile phones, computers and tablets. Examples of cyberbullying might include nasty text messages or emails, rumours spread by email or posted on social networking sites, sharing embarrassing pictures or videos, or fake profiles.

Some children may go straight to their parents if they’re being bullied but others may be reluctant to say anything or find it difficult to talk about. You know your daughter best, so talk to her about cyberbullying and how important it is to take steps to protect her against it.

It’s important to reassure her, even if she’s learning remotely, that her teachers still have the same duty of care for her. If the bullying starts again, she can and should report it. There’s no reason why they can’t effectively stop it now using some of the strategies they put in place before. Try to make sure you keep a copy of any messages or posts as evidence.

Cyberbullying can happen on the wider internet with strangers too. You can set parental controls on any of the devices she uses, but these don’t always work or can be got around. It’s important that your daughter understands why she needs to take some responsibility for keeping herself safe. Talk to her about what she can do to keep herself safe online. Our flyer *How to Be Safe and Smart Online* may help with guiding this conversation; you can access it on our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/onlinesafety](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/onlinesafety).

If she doesn’t already know, show your daughter how to do the following:

- Adjust privacy settings and withhold personal details on social networking sites so that only people she knows and trusts can access personal information.
- Block any contacts who are sending unpleasant texts.
- Report online abuse to website administrators.

There are lots of other places where you can find advice on e-safety and information on cyberbullying. Take a look at our website for deaf children and young people, The Buzz: [www.buzz.org.uk/category/bullying](http://www.buzz.org.uk/category/bullying). You can also visit: Childline’s Deaf Zone ([www.childline.org.uk/deafzone](http://www.childline.org.uk/deafzone)), the Anti-Bullying Alliance ([www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)) and the NSPCC ([www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)).

# What’s new?

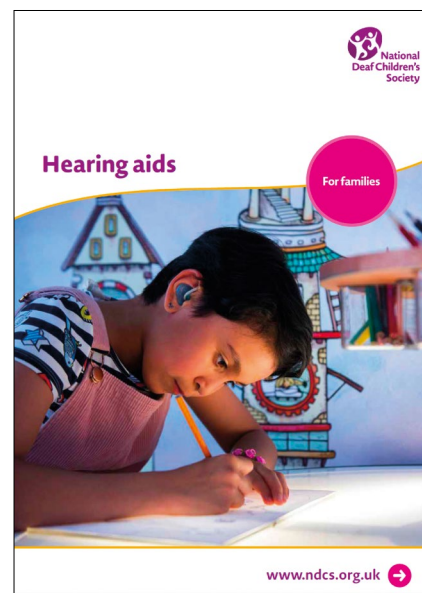
## **Hearing Aids: Information for families**

**What type of information is it?**  
An updated printed booklet available to download from [www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsguide](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsguide).

**Who’s it for?** Parents and family members of deaf children who use hearing aids or are about to be fitted with them.

**What’s it about?** This resource will tell you about different types of hearing aids, how to look after them and how your child can get the best out of them.

**You might also like:** Our webpage on frequently asked questions about hearing aids which can be found on our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsFAQs](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/hearingaidsFAQs).



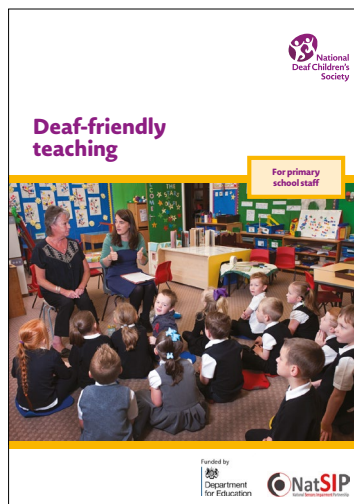


 **Deaf-Friendly Teaching: Information for primary school staff**

**What type of information is it?** A printed booklet available to download from [www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyprimary](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/deaffriendlyprimary).

**Who's it for?** This professional resource is for anyone who's working with deaf children in a primary school.

**What's it about?** It aims to help schools narrow the attainment gap that exists between deaf and hearing children on entry to school.



**You might also like:** Our personal passport template for primary years, which brings together all the most important information about your child's needs. You can download this from [www.ndcs.org.uk/primarypassport](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/primarypassport).

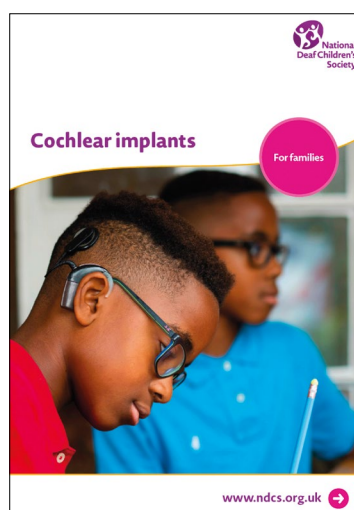
 **Cochlear Implants: Information for families**

**What type of information is it?** A printed booklet available to download from [www.ndcs.org.uk/ciguide](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/ciguide).

**Who's it for?** Parents and family members of children who use cochlear implants or are about to be fitted with them.

**What's it about?** This booklet offers clear and balanced information about cochlear implants, including details on the assessment process and using a cochlear implant.

**You might also like:** Our web content about different types of hearing implants, which can be found on our website at [www.ndcs.org.uk/implants](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/implants).



 We've launched a new 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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/your-community) and create a new account.

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

A top-down photograph showing several hands engaged in a craft project. One hand is holding a piece of pink paper, another is using scissors to cut a yellow paper, and another is holding a red and white striped paper. The background is a light pink surface with scattered red confetti and various craft supplies like markers, brushes, and a pencil sharpener.

# 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.



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**NDCS10**

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

Shop now at:

[createandcraft.com/kids](https://createandcraft.com/kids)



# Lessons from lockdown

When lockdown began, our amazing local deaf children's societies quickly adapted to make sure they were still able to support and bring together deaf children and their families. Kent Deaf Children's Society tells us what it did and continues to do in this new world...

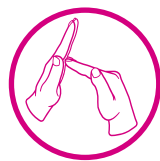
## Feeling special

It was important for our young members to feel special so we sent them all a gift. We settled on the idea of a sunflower kit, something for the children to do with their parents, to nurture and watch grow. With sunflowers being a symbol of hidden disability, it felt like the perfect present. Our members loved receiving them and have sent in many photos of their progress.



## Weekly challenges

With schoolwork and home working all going on under one roof, we decided to set up some weekly challenges so families could come together and do something fun. Signed instruction videos were sent out and members sent in photos and videos of their children and families taking part. Activities included a *Mission Impossible* themed obstacle course, funfair games and cooking.



## Using social media

We shared useful and relevant advice and information on our social media throughout lockdown which was gratefully received.



## Buddying up

When asked what children had most been struggling with during lockdown, parents told us their children were missing their deaf friends very much. With video calls being so easy, we offered to help members contact each other. We plan to do more to help our members with this moving forward, especially for those who may not always be able to meet up in person due to financial or time constraints. We also told our members about the new pen pal initiative from the National Deaf Children's Society (find out more at [www.ndcs.org.uk/youthevents](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/youthevents)).



## Online events

One of our largest annual events is our Awards for Recognition and Achievement. It's heartwarming and held in autumn. This year we're considering holding it online. Having successfully held our first online auction last year, before the lockdown, we're sure we can do the same again. Online events aren't just for lockdown, they're great for families who live somewhere remote or who don't have the time to attend events in person.



## Helping out financially

With the increased need for face masks in confined areas, we're keen to help our members get hold of transparent face masks which help with lip-reading and reading facial expressions. We spent time researching companies who are making quality transparent masks and have been able to subsidise them for our members.



To find a group in your area, check out our map at [www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup](http://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](mailto:local.groups@ndcs.org.uk).



# AQUILA®

JULY/AUGUST 2020

Big ideas for inquisitive kids



Amazon

Brilliant  
**FACTS  
& FUN**  
Every  
Month

In the fabulous Summer Double Issue, children can take an imaginative journey to the heart of the Amazon Jungle, make a herbarium and a rainforest mask; read about biobanks and the science of rubber plus try some Ant maths! PLUS: pink river dolphins and the well-travelled Bear from Darkest Peru as created by author Michael Bond!

• AQUILA MAGAZINE is ideal for home-schooling  
• lively children of 8-13 years. Brilliant topics, with  
• witty and intelligent editorial, covering Science, Arts and  
• General Knowledge. A book's worth of reading every  
• month. Coming up: Industrial Revolution and Robotics.  
• By subscription only. [www.AQUILA.co.uk](http://www.AQUILA.co.uk)

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

Richard Robinson, Brighton Science Festival



# Volunteer for us on our big purple bus!

Young volunteers bring our Roadshow workshops to life. Ellie (22), who has profound unilateral deafness, tells us what it's like to spend a day on the bus...

Before lockdown I supported the Roadshow team delivering the My Future workshop to deaf high school students across the country. My Future is for deaf young people from 13 years old. The workshop aims to raise deaf young people's knowledge of their rights to support in education, training, and employment, preparing them for their future.

I'm currently a student at Warwick University, where I study Politics, International Studies and Spanish. I was really keen to get involved with the Roadshow as I think it's so important that deaf young people are aware that their deafness is absolutely not a barrier to their education or career in any way! I've had such positive experiences with the amazingly supportive Politics department at my university and with employers on internships. I wanted to share these experiences with other deaf young people and hopefully encourage them to aim high too.

Presenting on the workshop was actually the first time I'd ever spoken publicly about my deafness, so it's fair to say I was rather nervous! To help the nerves, I spent time beforehand

thinking about what I wish I'd known about the support that was available to me during my A-levels, at university and in employment when I was younger.

I've received so much support along the way, including technology and equipment from Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) and from my tutors and lecturers. Knowing all this was available beforehand would really have eased my nerves about moving away to university.

The days on the bus always go by in such a flash! The Roadshow staff go above and beyond to make you feel welcome. Also, the events have palantypists and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters, so everyone's communication needs are met. That makes the whole experience all the more enjoyable and inclusive.

Hearing young people's hopes and aspirations for their future is always so exciting. I like being able to myth bust and open up new avenues for them. For example, if there's a career they think

they might not be able to do because they're deaf, I love it when I can tell them they will be able to do it!

I've gained and learnt so much from my time volunteering so far. My confidence in public speaking has increased immensely and I've even started learning some BSL. I'd recommend volunteering on the Roadshow, whether that's in person or virtually, to anyone and everyone. The team is fab and there's an opportunity to make a real and tangible difference to deaf young people's lives. I already can't wait for the next event!



Our Roadshow workshops are currently running digitally. If you'd like to volunteer with us, and share your experience with other deaf young people, please get in touch with our volunteer team on [volunteer@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@ndcs.org.uk).

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 book, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/roadshow).



# Help us to help you!

While our face-to-face events have been on hold, we've made some changes to the way we'll be planning our family events in the future and here's why...

We know that the availability and quality of services for deaf children and their families varies across the UK. We hope to gather information so we can plan our schedule of events to best meet the needs of families in every area. We're finding out more through:

- the views of professionals working with deaf children and their families
- families' views and feedback
- information from our in-house specialists
- data and information about services for deaf children across the UK.

## How will this affect the timetable of events on offer?

Every year we'll work out with you what events your area specifically needs from us. This means we won't be issuing the calendars we previously used to list our events but will post our most up-to-date information on our website. You can also find out about events in your area by contacting the events team on [events@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:events@ndcs.org.uk) or you can get in touch with our Freephone Helpline on **0808 800 8880** (voice and text).

## How can you help?

If you have ideas for future events in your area, we'd love to hear from you!

- You can complete an evaluation form at one of our events.
- You can email us at [events@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:events@ndcs.org.uk).
- You can get in touch via our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/NDCS.UK](https://www.facebook.com/NDCS.UK).
- Or you can talk to your local group: [www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/localgroups).

**If you have ideas for future events in your area, we'd love to hear from you!**

## Our events for parents, carers and families

Our face-to-face events are currently on hold due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However we are running online events. For full details of these and to check when our face-to-face events will be running again, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/events](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/events).

We currently run events on the following topics:

- benefits
- hearing care at home
- home learning
- information for parents of newly diagnosed children
- moving to secondary school
- next steps advice for children aged 16–18
- raising a deaf child and supporting self-esteem
- technology
- family sign language
- understanding local services.



# Dinah's journey to independence

Before lockdown, Dinah, who is moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids, attended our Journey to Independence week-long residential event to meet other young deaf people and build her confidence.

“When I was 15, I experienced a sudden hearing loss. I didn't know many deaf people and was the only person at my school with hearing loss. I applied for the Journey to Independence event because I wanted to meet people I could relate to.

On the way there I was nervous because I hadn't had hearing loss for long and didn't know anyone else going. By the first evening though, everything I was worried about became irrelevant. Everyone was really kind and it was easy to communicate because the volunteers were happy to interpret and help.

Over the week, we did loads. We had a cooking class with a Deaf chef, achieved a first aid qualification and took part in workshops about independence and jobs. We did some outdoor activities too. Hiking was one of my favourites, it meant I got to know everyone. On the last day, we went on the high ropes – I really enjoyed the zip line! During the week, we wrote nice messages to each other anonymously. At the end, we received the notes people had written about us, it was so uplifting.

I was nervous before going, but it was the best way to make new friends who are deaf too. Everyone still keeps in touch now.

It was a great opportunity to gain independence and prove I can do things out of my comfort zone. It gave me confidence in both myself and my deaf identity.”

**Dinah's mum, Laura, also noticed the difference in Dinah's confidence after the event.**

“Dinah's sudden hearing loss meant her family and friends had to adjust to a new way of communicating with her. The varied and interesting event she went to helped Dinah regain her confidence. She met lots of teenagers she instantly connected with and came home buzzing! I would encourage all parents to apply for their child to go on these special, inclusive events.”



“**Going on this event gave me confidence in both myself and my deaf identity.**”

## 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 and to check when our face-to-face events will be running again, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/events](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/events).

Events we usually offer include:

- one day events – Scotland (8–15 years)
- weekend residential: junior (8–13 years) and senior (14–18 years)
- week-long residential (8–18 years).

If you'd like to tell us your thoughts or have an idea for an event you would like us to offer, please email [youthdevelopment@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:youthdevelopment@ndcs.org.uk).

# How to become a young campaigner!

We're continuously impressed by the amazing work of all of our young campaigners, like Ryan (13). In this article, Ryan, who's profoundly deaf, shares his ideas with us for all those deaf young people who want to join a campaign or launch their own.

My mum told me about the National Deaf Children's Society's campaign Lights, Camera, Captions and how they were trying to get more subtitled screenings in cinemas. I love going to the cinema and it annoys me when there's a really good film I want to watch but it's not subtitled, so I wanted to get involved. For the campaign, I have been contacting all of my local cinemas to ask if they would show subtitled screenings. Here's my tips for how you can get started campaigning.

## Step 1: be passionate

I'm very passionate about campaigning for better accessibility and awareness, so the Lights, Camera, Captions campaign was perfect for me. To get started with your own campaigning, first check that the issue is something you're passionate about. It can be anything from better careers support for deaf young people to improving your local environment!



## Step 2: collect information

If you're starting your own campaign rather than joining one that already exists, do some research to check that what you're campaigning for is necessary and make sure it hasn't already been put into place. You can also look on the National Deaf Children's Society's website and their young people's website The Buzz for more information about how to launch a campaign.

## Step 3: gather experiences

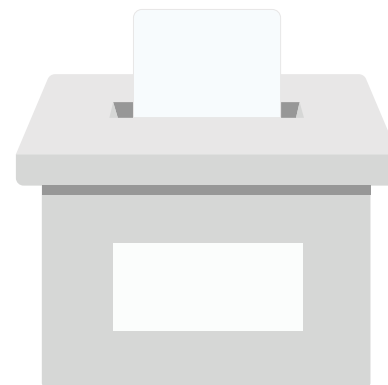
Always make sure you have a good reason behind your campaign and use your own personal experience when campaigning or the experiences of others. Always listen to other people when asking about their own experiences of something.

## Step 4: share, share, share

Always share the campaign with others. You could share it through word of mouth, telling your family and friends or school, or through social media. Social media is great for launching a campaign, and when you have enough supporters you could start a petition.

## Step 5: have fun!

Above all else, enjoy it. Campaigning is fun and makes a difference at the same time – what's not to love!



For more information and advice about becoming a young campaigner or launching your own campaign, visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/campaigningforchange](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/campaigningforchange) and please share this article with your child.

To find out more about Lights, Camera, Captions, go to [www.ndcs.org.uk/lights-camera-captions](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/lights-camera-captions).





Cut this page out and send it back to make your order!



# Get your Christmas cards now!

Spread some cheer by purchasing our festive Christmas cards. With fantastic designs starting from just £3.99, there's a card to suit all tastes and styles, and you'll be supporting a great cause too. All cards come with envelopes and are sold in packs of 10.

## Order your cards in four simple ways:

- Turn the page and fill in the order form.
- Call Impress Publishing on **01227 811658**.
- Buy online at **[www.charitycardshop.com/ndcs](http://www.charitycardshop.com/ndcs)**.
- Visit one of the 300+ Cards for Good Causes outlets.



# Order your Christmas cards

Code	Description	Greeting	Price	Quantity	Total
01	Capital Christmas	Wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy new year	£4.25		
02	Winter Wishes	May your Christmas season be filled with joy	£3.99		
03	Santa Cupcakes	Merry Christmas and a happy new year	£3.99		
04	Away in a Manger	Wishing you joy and blessings this Christmas	£4.25		
05	Tartan Trees	Wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy new year	£3.99		
06	Snowy Robins	Season's greetings and best wishes for the new year	£3.99		
07	Bargain pack	35 cards of mixed designs and greetings	£5.25		
Total cards					£
Postage and packing (see below)					£
Please note all cards are packs of 10, unless otherwise stated, and come with envelopes.					Donation £
<b>Grand total</b>					<b>£</b>

## Postage and packing for mainland UK

Please note that you will be responsible for postage and packing costs if you return part or all of your order unless faulty.

Value of cards ordered	Up to £10	£10.01-£20	£20.01-£50	£50.01+
Postage and packing costs	£3	£4.15	£5.20	£7.30

For overseas orders contact [ndcs@impresspublishing.co.uk](mailto:ndcs@impresspublishing.co.uk)

## Your details

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Billing address .....

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## Gift aid You can make your donation worth 25% more at no extra cost to you.

Please claim back the tax I have paid against all gifts I have made to the National Deaf Children's Society in the last four years, plus any future gifts I may make\*

Signature ..... Date .....

*giftaid it*

\*Please inform the National Deaf Children's Society if your address or tax status changes. If you pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all your donations in that tax year it is your responsibility to pay any difference.

## Post your order form to:

National Deaf Children's Society order, Appledown House, Barton Business Park, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3TE.

You can also order by calling 01227 811 658 (lines open 8.30am-5pm, Mon-Fri).

Impress Publishing will appear on your debit/credit card statement. Last orders accepted 11 December 2020.

Please note delivery turnaround can be up to 14 days. Refund/Faulty goods policy can be found at [www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk).

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

We would like to be able to contact you by post and telephone, please let us know if you DO NOT want to be contacted in this way:  I do not want to be contacted by telephone  I do not want to be contacted by mail

For more information, please read our Privacy Statement at [www.ndcs.org.uk/disclaimerandprivacy](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/disclaimerandprivacy).

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Card number                 Security code

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GO  
TEAM  
44!

# GoTeam44!

## Celebrate International Week of the Deaf with GoTeam44

As International Week of the Deaf (21–27 September) is just around the corner, we're celebrating our work in the UK and internationally by asking you to be a sign language superhero! This September, join our amazing team of fundraisers – Team 44 – and take on our British Sign Language (BSL) challenge for all ages and abilities.

### How can I get involved?

1. Sign up at [www.ndcs.org.uk/GoTeam44](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/GoTeam44) for your free fundraising pack, resources and BSL tutorials.
2. Set up your online giving page – we can help with this. Then ask family and friends to sponsor you.
3. Complete your sign language superhero training in September and take on our daily challenges during International Week of the Deaf.
4. Send in your donations and support deaf children in the UK and internationally.

### How does my fundraising help?

Your support helps children and young people like Dora (18) from India. Diagnosed as deaf aged five, Dora's family didn't know how to help and couldn't communicate with her. Dora couldn't read or write her name. Then, with the help of a partner organisation, our international arm Deaf Child Worldwide stepped in. Dora and her family were taught Indian Sign Language (ISL) and Dora learned to read and write, as well as how to do the maths she needed to work as a tailor.



**"I feel much more confident and relaxed," says Dora. "I know numbers up to 100, so I can measure for tailoring. I can do anything."**



Take on the fundraising challenge today and your support will help more children like Dora find their confidence and fight isolation. Visit [www.ndcs.org.uk/GoTeam44](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/GoTeam44) for more information.

## 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 screenwriter, director and journalist because...

I'm passionate about communicating deaf people's experiences and surprising audiences with things they haven't thought of before.

I'm currently writing scripts for the BBC and BSL Zone. I'm also a journalist and I edit the Limping Chicken

blog ([www.limpingchicken.com](http://www.limpingchicken.com)).

My career has been a long journey. From playing around with a camcorder at home and unpaid work experience,

to jobs on several deaf TV series (including *See Hear* and *Vee-TV*) where I met other deaf writers and directors, I've worked my way up. Highlights along the way were winning a Royal Television Society (Yorkshire) Writer award and breaking an international news story about the fake interpreter at Nelson Mandela's funeral.

I'm moderately to severely deaf and wear hearing aids. I use sign language interpreters, lipspeakers or palantypists.

To find a job you love, think about what you enjoy most. Gain as much experience as possible. Work hard and keep improving.

Nothing happens overnight!

**Charlie Swinbourne**



### I'm a sports coach because...

I love seeing children of all abilities achieve and progress. I work in a primary school, designing and delivering PE lessons to over 400 pupils.

I'm profoundly deaf and, although I don't use any special technology, I teach sign language

during lessons so I can understand the children as well as give them an extra life skill.

I've worked extremely hard and have overcome barriers such as communication issues and a lack of deaf awareness. Take every available opportunity offered and accept help when needed. Do work experience or volunteering, it'll make your CV stand out and might lead to a paid role.

Through perseverance and determination, I not only work in a job I love, but, since 2007, I've played for the England and Great Britain Deaf Women's football squads. I've won four bronze medals and have been an international captain. In July 2017, I was named Sky Sports Sportswoman of the Month.

**Claire Stancliffe**



### I'm a professional sportsman and inspirational speaker because...

I've never allowed the obstacles in my life stop me from achieving my goals.

When I was three, meningitis left me profoundly deaf, but, with the help of the National Deaf Children's

Society, my parents created an environment in which I flourished.

Football gave me confidence, but I excelled at pool, and at 21 became the youngest world pool champion. I then built up a property portfolio to support my family, and I was the first deaf person to trek to the North Pole on foot for charity.

I have a cochlear implant and I lip-read. I glean information through people's expressions, so I always try and place myself in a position where I can see them clearly.

I am now an inspirational speaker and hope my story will motivate others. It's important to aim for your dream, but remember to focus on one step at a time, be resilient, and never give up hope.

**Carl Morris**

➔ Be inspired by Claire and other deaf people at work in our Deaf Works Everywhere campaign video at [www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere](http://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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool).





# New Deaf Academy opens in Devon 2020

Imagine a brand new, world-class Academy where every deaf child will be able to learn and live in a space designed around their needs. A place of light, colour, discovery and achievement.


- Where the inspiring architecture underpins confidence and sparks ambition.
- Where light and acoustics are uniquely managed to enable visual learners to thrive.
- Where your child's development is supported by state-of-the-art facilities and equipment - whatever their additional needs.
- Where safe and homely residential flats set your child on the path to an independent life.

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

Find out more at  
[thedeafacademy.ac.uk/admissions](https://thedeafacademy.ac.uk/admissions)

A bespoke, language-rich curriculum for each child (British Sign Language and English)

Pathways from childhood through to employment and independent living



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

- Ofsted, 2019

# At Mary Hare Primary you will *love*...



Following  
lessons easily



Having friends just like you

Growing in  
confidence



Why not book a visit to come and have a chat and see  
what you will love about Mary Hare Primary School.

For more information, please contact  
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call 01635 244215 or visit our website [www.maryhare.org.uk](http://www.maryhare.org.uk)



*Securing the future of deaf children and young people*