How to support hearing siblings

“These little hearing aids are the best present because they help my sister hear.”
Supporting children and young people

Creating an environment where children can achieve both within school and into their lives beyond is St John’s Catholic Specialist School’s focus. Headteacher Ann Bradbury explains:

“Here at St John’s we often hear from former pupils and their stories are nothing short of inspiring. We hear how they have taken the foundations they built here and moved into the world, achieving their goals.

“Our aim is to prepare young people for that journey, to help students learn the skills they needed, coupled with the resilience to keep going when life is difficult.

“We are a specialist school providing education for children with sensory or communication needs. Often mainstream settings have been unable to support the young people who come to us, they have felt isolated from their peers and school was a frustrating place where they were not heard.

“We use an oral communication method and every child, no matter their difficulties, is supported to communicate. We have in-house speech and language and audiology support, small classrooms, peers within those classrooms along with specialist Teachers of the Deaf. There is also additional Deaf CAMHS support where required.

“This all combines to create an environment where every voice is heard, and every voice is celebrated.

“Pupils can come to us on a day basis or board with us weekly, travelling to us from all over the country. Ofsted rate our residential provision as “Outstanding” and said in their last inspection that children who we support residentially: “made excellent progress socially” and those who resided with us also gained confidence, increased life experience and saw their academic achievements improve.

“We believe in supporting the child entirely and holistically, which means protecting and enhancing their mental health and well-being as well as their educational, social and physical well-being.

“We’re thrilled to have been awarded the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools ‘School Mental Health Award’ – Gold Status.

“This prestigious accreditation recognises that St John’s takes a whole school approach to mental health and work towards improving emotional health and wellbeing for both our staff and pupils which is essential in helping them achieve their goals.”

We welcome visitors to St John’s; to arrange to visit or find out more, email: referrals@stjohns.org.uk, call: 01937 842144 or visit: www.stjohns.org.uk
My deafness didn’t stop me…

... trekking to the North Pole

By Abbi Brown

Standing on top of the world, Carl Morris (44) thought about the journey that had led him there.

Having become profoundly deaf at the age of three, Carl’s first taste of success came as a child actor, starring for two years in hit BBC series Love Hurts. After leaving school, he became a professional pool player and by 21 was world champion.

“The key thing in life is to persevere and not give up,” says Carl. This mentality drove him to become the first deaf person to reach the North Pole.

“I’d done lots of fundraising events for the National Deaf Children’s Society, and when they proposed a trek to the North Pole, I jumped at the chance!”

Despite training for 18 months, the expedition presented some unique challenges for Carl, who wears a cochlear implant. “As a deaf person, I use my eyesight to balance, but during Arctic snowstorms, the white snow blended into the white sky,” explains Carl. “I couldn’t see anything and kept falling over.”

His teammates helped him stay upright by tapping their walking poles on his left or right arm, depending on which way he was falling.

“More often than not, they warned me too late as they were struggling themselves,” remembers Carl.

During the trek, Carl couldn’t wear his cochlear implant due to condensation and was unable to lip-read his teammates as they wore face coverings to protect against the cold. He walked in total silence for 8 to 14 hours a day.

“Your thoughts become your constant companion,” he says. “I felt extremely isolated.”

But for Carl, reaching the North Pole – and raising £50,000 for the National Deaf Children’s Society – made it all worthwhile. “It was an incredible feeling to stand in a spot where I could jump several time zones with a single step.

“Our disability will place more obstacles in our way than for those without,” he says. “But persevere and you will succeed.”

Find out more about Carl at www.carlmorris.co.uk and www.charitypoolexhibitions.co.uk.

If you’d like to take on an exciting fundraising challenge for us, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/fundraising-events.
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Hello

Siblings have spent a lot of extra time together over the last 18 months, but after a bit of a break from each other, you might worry about how they’ll get on during the upcoming summer holidays.

Our cover story this issue is about sisters Anya and Isla. Parents Gurpreet and Delleep talk us through their strategies for making sure Isla, who is hearing, feels special, understands how to be deaf-friendly and doesn’t get too worried about her little best friend Anya. Turn to page 12 to find out more.

You might also notice we’ve introduced a new feature story about young people in the workplace. Our campaign Deaf Works Everywhere is inspiring deaf young people all over the UK to find jobs they love. Each issue, we want to talk to one of those young people to inspire your children to think about their future with optimism and excitement, and to offer practical tips for making their chosen career accessible. This time, Emily’s story of perseverance and determination to find a job in a care home will resonate with many and her amazing success will hopefully inspire deaf young people to keep going and not give up.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer, whatever you’re up to. We certainly deserve a good one!

Kerrina

Kerrina Gray, Editor
magazine@ndcs.org.uk

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

families

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Making the gaming world more inclusive

Cassidy’s stepsister, Evie-Jean (6), wears hearing aids and, ever since joining the family, Cassidy (11) has been determined to learn British Sign Language.

But when Cassidy noticed that her favourite app, Toca Life World, included assistive devices like wheelchairs but not hearing technology, she knew she needed to make a difference.

In the app, you can create different characters and explore more than 90 locations around the world. With her parent’s support, Cassidy got in touch with the founder and development team in San Francisco and asked them to add hearing technology as an option when creating the characters. They were delighted with the idea and got back to her straightaway, passing her request on to the design team in Sweden.

By the time Cassidy came home from school the next day, hearing aids were an option on the app and she could finally replicate her blended family.

A big well done to Cassidy for putting deaf children on the Toca Life World map!

Welsh success for Deaf Works Everywhere!

Our Young People’s Advisory Board told us that improving careers advice across the UK was a top priority, so we’ve been working closely with Careers Wales, the main provider of careers advice in Wales, to make sure that this happens.

They have taken on board lots of our ideas, including the need for advisors to be trained in deaf awareness. We’ve developed an e-learning course which is being rolled out to Careers Wales advisors across the country. This will help them make their sessions more accessible and will debunk myths around barriers for deaf people in the workplace.

Shirley Rogers, Director of Careers Wales, said, “We’re very pleased to be working with the National Deaf Children’s Society Cymru to enhance our commitment to providing effective careers guidance and coaching to deaf young people in Wales. We believe that this is a positive step towards equipping deaf young people in Wales with the right knowledge, awareness and confidence to succeed in their chosen career path.”

Our summer superstar!

Brady (14) broke records last year when he became the youngest pupil in the Royal School for the Deaf Derby’s 125 year history to pass his Level Three British Sign Language exam. Well done, Brady!
Creating a buzz

Amongst the challenges faced by families and deaf young people over the last year, a bright spot is that it’s shown us how powerful and important digital connections can be – especially when we’re feeling isolated.

Young people often come to us feeling like they’re the only deaf young person in the world, but technology has shown us how much smaller that world can be!

So, it’s with much excitement that we’re able to give the Buzz – our website especially for deaf young people – a new beginning.

For the last few years, we’ve been working very closely with deaf young people, aged 8 to 18, to create a space online, just for them, that’s accessible, informative and fun. Everything, from the way it looks, to how to sign up, to the content itself, has been shaped by an amazing group of deaf young people. It caters for young people using different communication approaches, covers topics they care about, and brings them together with exciting and timely stories from people just like them from all over the UK.

The website is split into two sections so that children aged 8 to 12 and young people aged 13 to 18 can access the most relevant, suitable content for them and it’s completely free. We’ve even got a small team of deaf young people giving their views and tips too!

We know that a sense of connection and community really can make a big difference in all sorts of ways, which is why we are so excited to share this new space for deaf young people with you all.

The Buzz went live in April, so, if your child is aged 8 to 18, make sure you both pop over to visit www.buzz.org.uk now. Do tell us what you think, we can’t wait to hear your feedback!

Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive

Education changes in Northern Ireland

Last year, we sat down with families in Northern Ireland and looked at the proposed changes to help for children with special educational needs (SEN). Thanks to them, we were able to tell the Department of Education exactly what needed to be changed so that their plans worked for deaf children and young people.

Key changes include new legal responsibilities for boards of governors, a learning support coordinator in every school and a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) for all children with SEN. The PLP can be shared, so parents are not starting from scratch every time their child moves school. Because of this, the ‘statementing’ process will hopefully feel shorter and simpler.

Families were very pleased to see a more consistent approach and more sharing of information. They’re hoping for more continuity, especially at key transition points, with regular deaf awareness training for all professionals. We’ll keep working to make sure this happens!

The Big Story Challenge winners!

We’re delighted to announce the winners of our Big Story Challenge, in association with ITV Signed Stories. Our competition judges were CITV’s Danny Murphy, The Quest for the Cockle Implant’s author Maya Wasserman and illustrator Lucy Rogers, and author Sarah Driver. They had a difficult job, but after much deliberation, they chose these three worthy winners:

Ages 8 to 11: Oliver Pack with The Ginger Ninja
Ages 12 to 14: Freya Essex with An Aid of a Difference
Ages 15 to 18: Irim Jameel with Wings of Sound

Each of our talented authors has had their work turned into a signed story by ITV! Check them out at: www.ndcs.org.uk/bigstorychallenge.

Write your will for free

We’d like to offer you a little peace of mind by giving you the chance to write your will for free using our partners at Guardian Angel.

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If you have a little left to spare, please consider including a gift to us to make sure deaf children and their families have access to the support they need in the future.

To find out more, contact our team by emailing giftsinwills@ndcs.org.uk or going to our website www.ndcs.org.uk/giftsinwills.

Did you know?

Beethoven is one of the most famous composers in history, and he was also profoundly deaf!

Sign of the season

Words: Rosie Vare

Comment

Beach
“I feel so cosy wearing this lovely top. So many people have admired it too.”
Jennifer, Colchester

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Helping your child embrace their deaf identity

Every child is different, and being deaf is just one aspect of their identity. Your child may be eager to recognise themselves in the world around them, or they may not wish to identify as deaf at all. Whatever their preference, our experts suggest ways for them to explore who they want to be.

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

1. Socialise with other families who have a deaf child, whether in person or online. It’s useful for your child to see others with hearing devices and not to feel singled out. Comment when you see deaf characters on TV, for example, Toy Story 4 features a child with a cochlear implant! *Nicky, mum to Isabelle (3). Both are profoundly deaf.*

2. From a very young age, it’s important that deaf children see others who are like them. Find children’s books with deaf characters, like the ones we produce ([www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books)), dolls, teddies or other toys that include hearing technology. *Vicki Kirwin, Audiologist.*

3. Developing a sense that ‘being deaf is OK’ helps deaf children’s emotional wellbeing. Finding ways to connect with other deaf people can help them find their place in the world. Google activities in your local area like sports for the deaf. *Helen Phillips, Specialist Deaf Outreach Worker, and Ruth Street, Clinical Psychologist.*

4. Being deaf may only be a small part of your child’s identity. For teens, music, fashion, hobbies and friends are very much at the fore. Advocating for themselves at school, sharing experiences and interests, and being a voice for other deaf children may help build confidence in the deaf part of their identity. *Josie, mum to Maia (15), who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.*

5. Remember, you can be deaf in your own way. Some people have a fixed idea of how deaf people should behave and what they should believe – ignore that. You are who you are and if others can’t accept that, there will be plenty who do. *Martin McLean, Post-14 Education Policy Lead.*

6. Your experiences of being deaf give you a unique perspective on the world. This is such an asset. Think about the things you can do because of your deafness, for example: signing, lip-reading, being good at facial expression and non-verbal communication. *Kirsty (18) who is moderately deaf.*

7. If you’re struggling to accept your deafness, tell someone you trust how you feel. Admit to your friends if you can’t keep up socially. Explain the situations you find challenging so they can adapt to your needs. There’s no right way to be deaf. Stay true to yourself. Connect with the deaf community when you’re ready. *Charlie Raine, Counsellor in training, who is deafened.*

8. Discover stories of deaf people’s experiences both now and in the past, written and presented by deaf people themselves. BSL Zone online and the BBC’s See Hear programme are great places to explore a huge range of deaf people’s experiences. *Chris Mullen, Social Worker.*

Words: Danielle Simpson
A guide to applying for Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

When Charlotte was diagnosed, I found it difficult to see why she would be entitled to financial support – she was a newborn baby, she was completely dependent on me. While there were extra things to do and worry about, communication, education, speech and sign language, I felt that we didn’t deserve DLA because my hearing babies were all totally dependent on me for several years too.

I also didn’t really see her as ‘disabled’, I still don’t. To me, Charlotte is my daughter and deafness is just one part of her (and a fabulous part, if I’m really honest). It made me uncomfortable saying that we needed money to be her parents, when her only ‘issue’ was deafness.

I chatted with my husband, family and friends. I discussed it all with my Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) and a National Deaf Children’s Society advice and guidance officer. They helped me realise that being mum to a deaf child was different and helped me compare it to being a mum in the early days to my hearing boys. There were the appointments, the waiting for tests and results, and the endless research. As time went on, there were decisions to be made about technology and communication, which led to surgery and having sign language lessons. On top of that, there were the constant explanations to family and friends about test results, the decisions we had made and the implications for Charlotte’s future.

Reluctant at first, we reconciled ourselves to the fact that Charlotte was eligible for this benefit and we were offered support to complete the forms.

A new tsunami of emotions began. The forms have a focus on negatives – what is your child like on their worst day: when they can’t do anything without assistance, when they won’t keep their ‘ears’ on, when you can’t leave them with others because they don’t have the knowledge of how to look after your child? To be perfectly frank – I found it traumatic. I’m a positive person, I always look on the bright side and that’s what I’d been doing since Charlotte’s diagnosis. This knocked me backwards. I developed concerns about her development and her future.

However, we got through it. We were awarded the middle rate care component. The money makes a difference to us – it pays for travel and car parking at appointments, allowed us to attend a summer residential for pre-school deaf children and helped us buy sensory toys and baby sign books.

Every time we have to renew our application, I still find those forms tough, but I would encourage you to apply. I now understand that my life as mum of a deaf child involves a lot of extra time, research and attention.
What is Dinner Table Syndrome?

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

I was diagnosed with a progressive hearing loss at the age of seven and grew up in a hearing family. I’m family-orientated and a very sociable person. I love chatting with my family and friends, which is why being deaf can be frustrating for me. Over the years, my hearing slowly deteriorated and soon it became near impossible to hear during family gatherings. I often ended up sitting and playing on my phone, in my own little world.

Dinner Table Syndrome is a social phenomenon, which is familiar to Deaf communities around the world. It’s a typical experience that deaf people face each day in a hearing world. A scene of isolation, where a deaf person is sat at a dinner table surrounded by hearing people and unable to keep track of the conversation and hear what’s being said. This is something that I’m sadly very familiar with.

When I was growing up, my hearing loss deteriorated from mild to moderate, to severe to profound. The older I got, the more I found myself feeling isolated around the dinner table. My favourite thing about growing up was the big family gatherings at my grandparents’ house. My cousins, auntie and uncle, parents, brother, great-auntie, grandparents and me; all sat around the table with a lovely spread of food my grandparents had prepared for us. I felt happy being around my family; it made me feel loved and gave me a sense of belonging. But, I had no idea what anyone was talking about!

There was so much chatter around the table with multiple conversations going on. I often sat quietly and just ate the food on my plate. Sometimes I would get included in the conversation but couldn’t hear through all the noise. I looked at my mum across the table; she always watched me struggle and patiently waited for me to look over to her for help. We had this secret way of communicating with our eyes. I would look over at her, which meant, ‘Help me, I can’t hear,’ and Mum would know and help me out! Each family meal we had, the table would roar with laughter. As I looked around at everyone laughing, I felt this painful lump in my throat and would try so hard not to cry. I didn’t hear the joke. Surrounded by people, I felt isolated and alone in my own little world.

You don’t have to feel anxious about making conversation with a deaf person. Speak at a good volume, with clarity and at an appropriate pace. If we don’t understand you the first time, rephrase what you’ve said. You can write it down or type it out on your phone. You can talk to me about anything, you don’t have to focus on questions about my deafness. I can talk about the latest gossip or something that recently popped up in the news, anything! Maybe have a go at learning some basic sign language to include your loved ones too? Some simple deaf awareness goes a long way.
When a child is diagnosed as deaf, parents find different ways to help siblings understand. Gurpreet and Delleep share their story of how they’ve helped their daughter Isla (6) to understand what it means for her little sister to be deaf...

Anya’s story

Gurpreet and Delleep found out their younger daughter Anya (3) had a hearing loss when she was two months old. She was diagnosed as mildly to moderately deaf. Isla, Anya’s sister, was only three when Anya was born. Life changed for the family, not only having a newborn in addition to a toddler, but the steep learning curve of having a child with a hearing impairment, and the emotional rollercoaster too. Even a simple thing like ensuring Anya kept her hearing aids in was a feat in itself, as she kept pulling them out.

There was lots to learn to make sure they got good support for themselves and for Anya. The family moved to an area with good provision for speech therapy. Their Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) gave them the National Deaf Children’s Society’s details and they attended an event for those who have just found out their child is deaf, where they met other parents and picked up information on deafness.

The couple also wanted to make sure Isla was nurtured and understood what hearing aids were and why her sister was wearing them. “We explained Anya’s deafness simply to Isla,” says Gurpreet. “When she asked what was on her ears, we just said the hearing aids help her hear.”

Rather than giving her specific tips to try and change the way she interacted with her sister, the couple wanted Isla to adapt to Anya’s deafness in her own way, which she quickly did. “Sometimes Isla would complain, ‘She’s not listening to me!’ and I’d remind her to make sure Anya can see her,” says Gurpreet. “She knows to pause the TV if they’re watching something and she wants to speak to Anya, and to face her.”

Last year, when Isla needed glasses, they told her Anya’s hearing aids help her hear like the glasses help Isla to see. Delleep bought Isla an encyclopaedia and they looked at how the ear works.

“A few days later, Isla asked me if Anya would have to wear her hearing aids to school,” says Gurpreet. “She’d thought they were temporary like her glasses were, that wearing them would improve Anya’s hearing like the glasses would help Isla’s eyesight.”

Anya’s many appointments and sessions have added a new dimension to life and Gurpreet and Delleep also wanted to make sure Isla didn’t feel left out or resentful about this. “Sometimes we have taken Isla to my mum’s, she loves being with her Nani,” says Gurpreet. “Other times we’d call it a dad and daughter day for Isla, while I took...
Isla’s teacher has been brilliant too. I asked if she could raise deaf awareness in Year 1.

Anya for an appointment, so Isla felt special too.”

Last July, Anya’s hearing dropped to severe to profound deafness and she was given more powerful hearing aids. Delleep started teaching the girls Makaton and the whole family is now learning British Sign Language (BSL) through an app and has signed up for a Family Sign Language course with the National Deaf Children’s Society.

“Both girls have taken to it like a duck to water,” says Gurpreet. “We want Anya to speak and sign. She’ll go to mainstream nursery and school. We don’t want her too reliant on sign language in case no one else signs, she’ll get confused and feel left out. Her ToD and speech therapist say she’s doing so well with her speech. We speak English and Punjabi at home, so BSL will be a third language, which, I tell the girls, is an advantage.”

Gurpreet and Delleep are keen to make sure people understand about deafness and deaf awareness. “Isla’s close friends have known her since Anya was born and their parents have explained her deafness,” says Gurpreet. “When Anya got her pink glittery hearing aids, which are so cool, they made a nice fuss. “Other friends have asked, ‘What has your sister got in her ears?’ Isla happily explains it’s her hearing aids, which help her to hear.”

“Isla’s teacher has been brilliant too. I asked if she could raise deaf awareness in Year 1 because Isla’s friends were asking about her sister and she did. “It was World Book Day and World Hearing Day and we asked her teacher if she could read a book with a deaf character in it. She read them Elephant and the Lost Blanket and arranged for someone to sign it in Makaton too. She’s brilliant – Anya is not her pupil but she appreciates that it’s helpful for Isla and her friends to have more understanding and awareness. It was fantastic for Isla to see.”

“Isla and Anya have a lovely bond,” Gurpreet adds. “When Isla was excited, she’d speak very fast. But she adapted herself quickly. She’d speak slower and say, ‘Anya can you get the Lego for me,’ then repeat it again, like we do.

“Isla helps look after Anya’s hearing aids. When Anya removes them at night, Isla puts them in their box and kisses them! She said to me just before her birthday, ‘I don’t want any presents, these little things are the best present because they help my sister hear.’

“They’re like magnets, Anya wants to copy everything Isla is doing. Anya responds to her sister very well and her communication has come on brilliantly because they talk all the time. As siblings, they also share stories and build tents and have the odd spat too! But they play and sign together beautifully. Delleep and I are so thankful for our girls.”

For more information about helping hearing siblings of deaf children, including activities you can do with them, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/siblings.

To buy your copy of Elephant and the Lost Blanket or one of our other books featuring a deaf character, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books.
Celebrating Eid together as a family

By Rosie Vare

While there are certain parts of Eid that his family have to adapt, they make sure Hamza (10), who is profoundly deaf, is involved in everything.

Sitting at the front of the mosque, Hamza lip-reads the man leading the prayer. “He likes going to the mosque because it’s a routine and a part of our religion,” says mum Husna. “But he did end up just sitting there because he couldn’t really pick up on what was being said all the time.” But this year, the family had a plan. They took Hamza’s radio aid along to make sure he could hear everything being said.

Attending the mosque, getting together with family and celebrating big events, like Eid, are an important part of life for Husna, her husband Nurul and their three children Aieshah (17), Zaynab (14) and Hamza (10), who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants. Because of this, they’ve continually made small adaptations to make sure Hamza can join in with it all.

“Eid celebrates the whole of Ramadan and what it means to give up certain things because you’re remembering the poor, the needy and the less fortunate. You give up things that you would normally take for granted,” Husna explains.

Ramadan took place for 30 days from April 12 this year, with observers fasting between sunrise and sunset. Eid al-Fitr in May is the first of two Eid celebrations each year. It marks the end of Ramadan and sees families coming together to break their fast, exchange gifts and celebrate. The second Eid celebration, Eid ul-Adha, is in July.

“Involve the child as much as you can in the day’s event and the build-up to the day as well.”
“In the build-up to Eid, we go out shopping and buy new clothes, and the kids always get a gift or family members give money out,” says Husna.

“On the day itself we wake up much earlier than we would normally. The men then go to the mosque. Hamza’s old enough now so he goes with his dad. They have Eid prayers there and then come home.”

Usually the men wear hats inside the mosque, but this is something Hamza isn’t able to do because it would cover his cochlear implants, making it difficult for him to hear.

This year, the family were hoping to celebrate Eid with their grandparents and other family members. “Hamza enjoys being around big groups of people and I think, because we’ve been doing that from such a young age with him, he’s used to it, it’s the norm for him,” says Husna. “He can struggle if we go out to a restaurant to celebrate. He asks for my phone because he just wants to watch something and eat. He takes himself away from everyone because he finds it’s too much processing everything that’s going on. But at home he doesn’t need that support.

“Last year for Eid we did a lot of FaceTiming to celebrate with family, because of the pandemic. Once everyone was home from the mosque and had eaten, we caught up to say what we were doing for the day and to show everyone our new outfits. I had a table and had everyone around so we could give money out,” says Husna.

Husna has recognised that big celebrations can be difficult for Hamza, who ends up not joining in with conversations. “I would say, make sure you involve the child as much as you can in the day’s event and the build-up to the day as well. Sometimes it’s a shock to the system when they experience something completely different, so it’s important to explain to them what’s going to happen,” Husna says.

With Husna’s wider family coming together often for celebrations, it was important to her that her siblings were able to communicate with Hamza, who uses a mixture of speech and British Sign Language (BSL).

“I got my brother and sisters to learn BSL,” she says. “They’re not fluent, but they’ve got basic signing skills. If there was ever an emergency and he wasn’t wearing his implants, they would still be able to communicate.

“It’s also making sure you communicate basic tips like talking to him face-to-face, not when you’re behind him. Talking to him normally, not too slowly, not too fast and using the sign for ‘again’ if you don’t understand what he’s said. They’ve been doing it for a long time now so it’s natural to them.”

However it hasn’t always been easy explaining Hamza’s deafness to other family members. “It’s difficult trying to explain Hamza’s deafness to the older generation, like my mum and dad. It took my dad much longer to come to terms with it. I think he was just very naive. They thought it was an illness that Hamza had caught and that might go away. I had to teach them, while I was still learning myself.

“When you have a deaf child, I think it’s really important that the whole family is aware of their needs and how they communicate. The more you involve everyone in the family, the better the outcomes will be in the future.”

Your summer checklist

Staying safe while swimming

The summer holidays are a great time to learn to swim. If your child uses hearing technology, it’s important to make sure they will be safe in or around the water, without their hearing aids or processors in.

Visit our pages on deaf-friendly swimming for advice on how to make swimming safe and fun for deaf children.

www.ndcs.org.uk/recreationalswimming

Deafness and learning disabilities

For deaf children with a learning disability, hearing tests can be a confusing experience. We worked with NHS England to produce a guide on how to help children with a learning disability, autism, or both, prepare for hearing tests.

www.ndcs.org.uk/mychildhearingloss

Signed stories

After a brilliant response to our Big Story Challenge last year, we worked with ITV to turn three winning stories into signed stories! You can watch the stories on the ITV Signed Storiest app, as well as our book The Quest for the Cockle Implant.

Just download the app from your app store.
As proud dad Tony took his place in the stand to watch his son play in an international football tournament at professional level, he couldn’t help feeling nervous. The local teams’ fans were banging drums, blowing trumpets and playing loud music. It was an atmosphere unlike any Harrison (13) had played football in before. How would he cope with the noise and acoustics in an indoor arena? Tony panicked, thinking Harrison, who is moderately to severely deaf, might struggle to hear and that it might affect his game.

He didn’t need to worry. Harrison not only scored from a tricky corner kick in the final, but was chosen to lift the trophy when his team were awarded the Kedainia Arena Cup they’d been competing for in Lithuania, two years ago.

“I’m used to playing outdoors, and shouting on the sidelines isn’t usually allowed. It was very different for me,” says Harrison, who wears hearing aids. “I tried not to pay much attention. I did my best to block it out and just concentrate on the game.”

This focused attitude has seen Harrison progress from amateur club player to professional academy star in Wimbledon AFC’s under 14s squad.

“I didn’t think I’d be here now when I started playing football,” he says. “I was about six and it was just something fun to do with my friends. It’s a dream to have reached this level, though, because I love the game so much.”

After stints with smaller, local teams, Harrison tried out for the under 11s at Wimbledon. Getting into this professional team meant football became a huge part of his life. He trains three evenings a week, has a match every Sunday and sometimes there’s a midweek match too. “Even on the days when I’m not playing a match or training at Wimbledon, I train by myself,” says Harrison. “I play football every single day.”

Harrison’s dedication has set him on the path towards a career in professional football and he’s determined to let nothing stand in his way, including his deafness. “My deafness is there, but I try my hardest not to let it affect me,” he says. In fact, Harrison, who is a midfielder, has been able to use his hearing loss to his advantage, to set him apart from other players on the field.

“One of Harrison’s biggest strengths is that he reads the game so well, and that’s probably a result of his hearing loss,” says Tony. “He’s always had to engage visually with what’s going on,
more than the other players, because he can’t rely on being able to hear. That’s become his real strength – he has a great instinct for what’s going to unfold and can recognise dangers in the game very quickly. It means he performs a huge number of tackles and interceptions.”

Despite his talent, reaching professional level has had its challenges for Harrison. “I wear my hearing aids to play, but my old set weren’t waterproof,” he says. “If it was raining, they would turn off and I wouldn’t hear a thing.” Undeterred, Harrison found a way to adapt. “I learnt to read the body language of the coaches and other players and I still do this now, even with my water-resistant hearing aids. It can really help if it’s windy, for example.”

“One of the FA’s deaf team coaches regularly gets in touch with us and Harrison’s coaches,” Tony adds. “He also visits regularly to speak to the coaches about how best to help Harrison and to make sure they’re fully deaf aware.”

Used to overcoming challenges to pursue his dream, not even the COVID-19 pandemic could stop Harrison improving his game. With training at Wimbledon and matches cancelled during the first lockdown and sporadic for the following year, Harrison found ways to keep up his training. “I want to play football as a career, so I had to continue training,” says Harrison. “I’d go to the fields across from where we live and practise by myself as often as I could. I really missed being at Wimbledon, but I did use the opportunity to focus on the things I needed to improve.”

The next step towards a career in football for Harrison is to earn a scholarship. “The next year will be crucial,” says Tony, who explains that a football scholarship would see Harrison leave school to continue his education alongside his football coaching at Wimbledon.

“There are 15 of us in the under 14s squad and we all want a scholarship, but only five or six of us will get a place,” says Harrison. “From there, only a few will end up with a contract in professional football. We’re friends off the pitch, but on the pitch we’re all competing for this. I have to be the best.”

This fierce competition is something Harrison is used to. Each season, the players find out who will be retained and who will be released from the club. “It would be heartbreaking to be released now, so close to my scholarship dream,” he says.

“For a long time now, I’ve wanted to be a footballer. I have to work hard and be determined, and my deafness can’t stop me doing that.”

Football has not only become a huge part of Harrison’s life but of Tony’s too. “I’ve been able to watch Harrison play at all the top clubs and I’m so proud of him,” says Tony. “He works extremely hard and I think he’s the only deaf player in the country competing at a mainstream professional level. He really deserves to achieve his dream.”
Sarah’s a star volunteer

By Abbi Brown

Growing up, Sarah didn’t know any other deaf people. Now, she’s passionate about using her experiences to help others like her, and volunteering might just help her future career too.

For most 18-year-olds, life during the COVID-19 lockdown was pretty quiet. But for young volunteer Sarah, lockdown was when life got busy!

“I live in quite a rural area so it’s difficult to join in with face-to-face events anyway,” explains Sarah, who’s moderately deaf and wears hearing aids. “When everything moved online, my volunteering work massively increased! Zoom makes it much easier to get involved.”

Although drama student Sarah has always been a confident performer, she hasn’t always been confident about her deafness. In fact, she wasn’t diagnosed as deaf until she was 11.

“My teachers used to complain that I wasn’t paying attention. My PE teacher said I just didn’t listen,” remembers Sarah. “It was like I was always in a daze.” Sarah’s mum also noticed that she wasn’t growing as fast as her siblings. After seeing lots of doctors, Sarah was diagnosed with Turner syndrome, a genetic disorder which affects her hearing, sight and growth.

“The first day I wore my hearing aids, I had my hair up and my PE teacher spotted them,” laughs Sarah. “She was really embarrassed!”

Sarah went to a rural Welsh high school and didn’t know any other deaf people until she was 15, when she joined our Young People’s Advisory Board (YAB).

“My first YAB meeting was the first time I got to meet other deaf people,” she remembers. “Hearing their stories and realising that other people were going through the same things as me was a lightbulb moment.

“It was such an amazing experience and I gained so much independence. Being part of the YAB and seeing all the other members’ bright and bubbly personalities helped me to come out of my shell and be like, yeah, deafness is cool! That’s when I really developed my deaf identity. I realised how awesome it was to be deaf.

“I honestly don’t think I’d be where I am today without the YAB.”

Volunteering opens so many doors.

Sarah’s story
While she was on the YAB and before the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarah helped to run a series of workshops with the National Deaf Children’s Society, designed to raise deaf awareness. She also joined one of our Roadshow visits to a school in Birmingham, teaching deaf children in key stage 2 about technology and online safety.

“It was a really cool day,” says Sarah. “I love working with kids. Adapting the different workshops to the different age groups who attended was really fun.”

After her time on the YAB ended, Sarah knew she wanted to continue volunteering. “Before I joined the YAB, I didn’t have much deaf awareness myself. Now, I’m a lot more confident asking for the support I need.

“I want to raise awareness so that things are more accessible for other deaf children and young people. It’s something that’s really close to my heart.”

Over the past year, Sarah has volunteered at lots of online workshops for organisations including The Prince’s Trust. She also runs online workshops for deaf children and young people and has agreed to be a mentor for the National Deaf Children’s Society’s new mentoring scheme.

“My favourite thing about volunteering is getting to meet and interact with people I wouldn’t normally meet,” she says. “I’m an extremely sociable person and I love meeting new people. For me, the hardest part of lockdown has been not being able to go into college and socialise, so being able to connect with people over the internet helps me to feel less isolated. Imagine if we didn’t have Zoom, I’d be so bored!”

To help her communicate during Zoom workshops, Sarah uses the closed caption function, although she prefers using a palantypist as she finds automatic captions less accurate. She also asks participants to type questions into the chat box so that she can read what they want to say.

“As I’ve become more confident about my deafness, I’ve become more comfortable asking for the support I need,” says Sarah. “Asking for help can feel really nerve-wracking but I’ve realised that having communication support doesn’t just make life easier for me, it also makes life easier for the person that I’m communicating with.”

Now in her last year of college, Sarah thinks the skills she’s gained through volunteering have helped her prepare to study acting at university. While it’s been challenging this last year for deaf young people to get part-time jobs and work experience, volunteering can be an alternative way to develop new skills and add to your CV.

“I was already confident on stage but volunteering has helped me to become a better presenter,” Sarah explains. “It’s taught me to speak in a more condensed and considered way.

“I’ve applied to universities in big cities, which I hope will mean I can do more face-to-face volunteering once everything opens up again. I’m really passionate about the subject. After university, I’d love to actually work for the National Deaf Children’s Society. That’s my biggest goal.

“My advice to young people who are interested in volunteering would be to just do it! You get to meet so many new people and learn about new things. Make use of the technology at your disposal and be clear about the communication support you’ll need. If you need a palantypist or an interpreter, don’t be afraid to ask.

“Volunteering opens so many doors. And it’s so much fun!”

To find out more about volunteering opportunities for deaf young people, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/volunteering or email our Youth Development team at youthdevelopment@ndcs.org.uk.

To find out more about our YAB, go to www.ndcs.org.uk/yab. You can also read more about our new mentoring scheme at www.ndcs.org.uk/mentoring.}

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**Your summer checklist**

**Duke of Edinburgh’s Award**

Taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award can be a great way to learn new skills, build confidence and make new friends. Deaf students Oliver and Harry were proud to achieve their Bronze Award in 2019. You can read our interview with Oliver, Harry and their teacher Mrs Hassall at www.ndcs.org.uk/doe.

**Work experience**

If your child is interested in exploring the world of work, an internship or work experience placement could help them to develop skills, build confidence and make decisions about what they’d like to do in the future. Visit our website for tips and ideas at www.ndcs.org.uk/workexperience.

**Travel tips**

Learning to use public transport on your own can be a big step towards independence for deaf young people. We asked three parents and one young person for their advice on how you can help your deaf child to learn to travel independently, for example checking your route beforehand and having a pen and paper to hand. www.ndcs.org.uk/independenttravel

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www.ndcs.org.uk/live-chat | Freephone Helpline 0808 800 8880 (voice and text)
Dancing along to care home residents singing their favourite songs, listening to tales of the war and doing their hair ready for video calls, Emily feels very grateful for the job she has. But it wasn’t an easy road to getting hired.

Born at 24 weeks, Emily (21) has been profoundly deaf since birth and wears hearing aids. She also has cerebral palsy and learning difficulties, but has never let her additional needs get in her way. “She’s always got through everything,” says mum Paula. “All the challenges life throws at her, she gets on with it.”

Emily found school difficult socially. “I spent a lot of time in the library,” she explains. “I didn’t have many friends and it was quite isolating.” At college, though, she found something she really enjoyed, studying health and social care. “I had a lot more time to learn,” she says. “I could spend time researching and reading. I loved health and social care, I liked the fact I could go in and be with other people and make their day a little bit better. I volunteered in a primary school too. I like working with little kids and older people, it’s the middle bit that I sort of get stuck on.”

After completing her qualifications and spending some time volunteering, the natural next step for Emily was to find a paying job. However, she began her search just after the COVID-19 pandemic hit and it was tough.

“I decided not to mention my deafness and additional needs on my applications,” Emily says. “I wanted them to see the experience and keenness I had without putting the big stamp on that says I’m deaf. But when I got to interviews I said, ‘I’m deaf and I need you to take your face mask off so I can read your lips.’ Everyone was fine with that.

“The job search was very, very stressful though. They kept saying to me – you’ve got all the qualifications you need but you don’t have any experience. I was thinking, how can I get the experience without anyone giving me a chance?”

“It was really hard for her,” Paula adds. “We’ve always had the mentality of ‘pick yourself up and move on’. But I think it did take its toll on her mental health. She did a lot of writing to process her feelings and release whatever she needed to release.

“There was even one company who said, because of her additional needs, they couldn’t accommodate her and wouldn’t even consider her. It was quite a kick in the teeth.” The family were disheartened, but realised this was
discrimination and against the Equality Act 2010. Luckily, two days later, Emily had two further interviews and finally secured a job.

“One company emailed me and said they couldn’t offer me the role because I didn’t have experience. It was a maternity cover for a more experienced role. They were really apologetic. I understood but felt disappointed,” Emily says. “Then I read the next paragraph of the email and cried! The interviewer said I came across really well and she understood the passion I have and the work I’ve put in. They wanted to offer me a different position. I couldn’t believe it. I had to get Mum to read it too and check I’d got it right!”

“I cried and showed everyone at work,” Paula adds. “When you’ve gone from one person saying that you’re effectively a lost cause, to this. It was amazing.”

Emily’s new role involved covering annual leave and sick leave. Initially she thought she might get a couple of shifts here and there so she could build up her experience, but she’s ended up with three regular shifts a week and lots of cover on top of that.

The care home also asked Emily what adaptations she would need and made sure they were in place before she began work. “They put in flashing lights next to the fire alarm,” Emily says. “Doing a morning and afternoon shift is difficult for me so they’ve adapted my rota so I work on afternoons only. They use a buzzer system which I can’t always hear too, so they’re getting me a pager.”

When the day finally came to start work, Emily couldn’t believe it. “I was nervous but I knew that this is what I wanted to do. On my first day I was dancing with the residents in the home, listening to old music, clipping nails and making them feel relaxed. I loved it! “My shifts cover tea and biscuit time, we watch a lot of films and karaoke is very big in the care home! Older people are hilarious, they have the best one-liners. I dance with them, do personal care and get them ready for bed. It’s been difficult that they couldn’t have visitors in, because of the pandemic, but I help them do their hair and nails before their family see them through the window or online. I love knowing I’m making a difference to their day.

“The biggest challenge is PPE. I wear a visor and mask but others are able to lift up their masks for me to lip-read when necessary. We have a couple of residents who are deaf and use hearing aids; my experience of deafness really helps them. I’m the queen of reminding them to change their batteries! I understand their struggle of hearing staff in masks and visors too.

“To any other deaf young people currently applying for jobs, I’d say don’t listen to anyone who says you can’t do it, because you can.”

To get deaf-specific careers advice and find out more about your rights in job-seeking and in the workplace, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers.

You can also join our campaign Deaf Works Everywhere at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.

Your summer checklist

Disability Person’s Railcard

If your child regularly travels by train, they could save money with a Disabled Person’s Railcard. The railcard gives a one-third discount on most train tickets for the railcard holder and one companion. You can also book assistance at most manned stations to help with things like finding the right train or making a connection. You can buy a railcard at www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk.

Deaf Works Everywhere

With the right support, deaf people can work anywhere they want. That’s why we run our campaign Deaf Works Everywhere, aiming to inspire young people, encourage employers and inform parents. Watch our videos to find out more at www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere.

Independent living

If your child is thinking about moving away from home, there are lots of things to consider. Check out another Emily’s story on our website to find out how she made the move to a brand new city. She gives tips about communicating with an estate agent, installing technology in a rented home and sorting out bills. www.ndcs.org.uk/Emily
How do I...

prepare my child for surgery?

Taking your child to hospital for an operation is never easy. For deaf children, communication barriers can make surgery an even more disorientating experience. Here, two parents and two deaf young people share their top tips for preparing for surgery.

Sarah is mum to Alfie (5) who’s moderately to severely deaf on one side and uses a bone conduction hearing device. Alfie was born with microtia and atresia of the left ear. He’s worn a bone conduction hearing device (BCHD) on a softband since he was 14 months old. When he was four, we decided to go for BCHD implant surgery. It was booked for 19 March 2020, but cancelled the afternoon before due to COVID-19. We were devastated!

Six months later, the hospital phoned to say Alfie could come in for his surgery. I packed his bag with button-up pyjamas (so we didn’t have to pull his top over his head), Alfie’s favourite teddy, activities and lots of snacks. We also brought chocolates for the theatre team.

Alfie was excited, which helped. I went with him into the anaesthetic room, where they put cream on his hand so he didn’t feel the cannula going in. When he came out he was drowsy, but it wasn’t long before he was eating the snacks I’d brought. The operation went well and he went home the same day!

Alfie healed quickly and the BCHD was switched on two months later. He’s getting on so well! During the first week of him wearing it, we walked past a hedge full of sparrows and he said, “Mummy, the birds are so loud!” It was definitely the right decision. We’re so proud of him!

Ida (16) is moderately deaf and wears hearing aids. In 2020 I broke my elbow and had an operation to fix it. As the operation was done during the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospital staff wore face masks, which made it difficult to hear. I explained I was deaf. The consultant spoke clearly and used the arm of a model skeleton to explain the surgery visually.

It was my first operation so I was nervous. Mum came down to theatre with me, which helped. There were several doctors talking to us wearing PPE, but as I was worried and it was busy, it was hard to hear. I gave my hearing aids to Mum to look after.

When I woke up, I felt disorientated and confused – a combination of no hearing aids and the anaesthetic! Once I realised what had happened, I felt calmer. Afterwards, I didn’t wear my hearing aids for a few days and just slept.

My advice to other deaf young people is to tell your nurse and doctor that you’re deaf and your communication needs. Even though they’ll have your medical history, it helps if you remind them.

After the operation, you may find that removing your hearing technology helps you relax. Alternatively, you may prefer to keep your technology in if you want to feel more involved. Do what feels right for you and make the most of having your family waiting on you!
Rebecca (21) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.
I’ve worn hearing aids since I was five, but as I got older, my hearing deteriorated. When I was 17, my consultant suggested getting a cochlear implant referral. It was one of the hardest decisions, but I knew I was likely to lose my remaining hearing and hearing aids would no longer help me.
I had the surgery when I was 19. Afterwards, I felt groggy, sick and my balance was affected. Waking up in a world of silence was strange, but I felt relieved the operation had gone well! Although I spent most of my hospital stay asleep, when I needed to communicate with hospital staff I used lip-reading and gestures. My family came to visit in the afternoon and helped with communication. I went home the next day.
For the next five weeks, I couldn’t hear at all. During this time I communicated by lip-reading or text. Having my implants switched on was the best moment! I was so excited to explore new sounds.
I had the operation the September after I left school and started a modern apprenticeship a few days after my implants were switched on. We learned a lot in a short time. I’m not sure I would have coped without the implants. Cochlear implants aren’t for everyone, but they’ve changed my life.

Nic is dad to Phoebe (2) who’s profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.
When Phoebe was diagnosed as deaf at one month old, we felt cochlear implants were the best option.
Unfortunately, her surgery was put on hold due to lockdown. Our family had to shield for two weeks beforehand and Phoebe was only allowed one parent with her.
With so much attention on Phoebe, we didn’t want her big sister, Evie-May, to feel left out. We explained what was happening and that she’d stay at Nanny and Granddad’s.
We knew Phoebe was in capable hands, but sending your child for a major operation is hard. I felt especially anxious because I couldn’t be there myself. But after surgery, Phoebe recovered quickly. Within a couple of hours she was running around the ward and pulled her bandages off twice!
In hindsight, I wish we’d spoken to other families in our position. Although we had support from our families and the hospital team, having appointments online meant we missed those incidental conversations you might have in person. Our anxiety about the pandemic overshadowed everything. My advice would be to actively seek out other parents. There might be questions you haven’t thought to ask.

I wish we’d spoken to other families in our position.

Words: Abbi Brown
Welcome to Scribble Club – our activity section for deaf children just like you.

Colour in

The ice cream van has arrived in the park! Can you count how many scoops this boy has gone for? Colour them in the colours of your favourite flavours!
In The Quest for the Cockle Implant, Angel, her sister Coral and friend Finn go in search of Angel’s lost implant. On the way, they meet sharks, squid and strangling seaweed! Can you avoid the obstacles, follow the right path and find Angel’s cockle implant?

Look at all these children working so hard in school! They’re using lots of different technology, including the interactive whiteboard, computers and tablets. But there are five differences between the two pictures above. Can you spot them all?

It’s summertime so we’ve hidden six words all beginning with the letter ‘s’ for ‘summer’ in this fingerspelling word search. Using the fingerspelling alphabet above, how many can you find?
Doncaster School for the Deaf
Established 1829
Leger Way, Doncaster DN2 6AY
secretary@ddt-deaf.org.uk | www.deaf-school.org.uk
01302 386733

See what Cued Speech UK is saying...

“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

“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

CUED SPEECH UK
Makes spoken language visible for deaf babies, children and adults

Talk to us today about making your speech visible!
We would love to see what you’re saying!
01803 712853
Ask the expert

Each issue, a different professional shares their expert advice and gives information to help you support your child. This time Echo, a hearing dog, shares his doggy insights.

Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

My name’s Echo and I’m a yellow Labrador hearing dog. I’m seven years old and specially trained to look after a 13-year-old boy called Zach. Zach’s deaf so I let him know when important sounds go off, like his alarm clock in the morning. I’m also his best friend!

How did you become a hearing dog?

I was trained by Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. They train dogs like me to make things easier for deaf children and adults. The training was so much fun! I was taught that if I’m a good boy and make the right decisions, I get lots of treats and cuddles from humans. Learning how to let a person know when I heard certain sounds was my favourite part. I was taught to nudge someone with my nose when I heard a noise and then take the person to where the sound was coming from.

Who do you think a hearing dog is most suitable for?

We’re most suitable for people who want to know when a sound is happening and what type of sound it is, and for people who also want the love and friendship of a dog!

What does being a hearing dog for one family involve?

It involves lots of cuddles and playtime! One of the things we learn is how to go and fetch someone when we’re asked to. We call this ‘The Call’. Someone can ask me to go and get Zach and I will let him know that someone is calling for him, because he might not be able to hear them. We also tell people when we hear certain sounds like alarm clocks, smoke alarms and even sounds like a baby crying.

Do hearing dogs have similar rights to guide dogs?

Yes! One of the most fun parts of being a hearing dog is going everywhere with our humans. We’re allowed in places like shops, banks and even hospitals.

What’s the best part and the most challenging part of your job?

The best part is all the cuddles I get from Zach! I love spending time with him and the rest of my family. The training is challenging but we see it all as a big, fun game, mostly because of all the treats and fuss we get.

If a parent thinks a hearing dog like you would be useful for their child, what should they do?

The best thing for them to do is to visit the Hearing Dogs website (hearingdogs.org.uk) to find out more. The charity is called Hearing Dogs for Deaf People but they don’t just help people with dogs – they have lots of different ways to make life easier for people who are deaf or have any kind of hearing loss.

Words: Kerrina Gray

We tell people when we hear certain sounds like alarm clocks and smoke alarms.
There are plenty of studies that tell us reading regularly and for enjoyment improves school performance and wellbeing. However, not all children naturally reach for a book and deaf children may experience greater challenges when learning to read. Here are some ideas to help your child develop the reading bug.

**Reading is a habit**

The more you read, the more you want to read. Build in regular opportunities for your child to read or share a book with you. You may need to find a quiet space or choose a time in the day when your child isn’t too tired. Your child may need to be able to see the book and your lip patterns or hands at the same time, so some families find a book in bed works well. If you share a book with your child every day, they will have read 1,825 books by the time they’re five!

**Babies love books too**

Right from the start, sharing books with your baby helps to develop closeness and early communication skills as they watch your face, hear your voice and follow your gaze. Use lots of facial expressions and signs, let your voice rise and fall as you say the words and pause to let your child respond. These early interactions help deaf children to listen and actively watch what is going on, engage with shared experiences and develop turn-taking, which is the foundation of conversation, language and literacy development.

Babies learn with all their senses, so choose books with simple bright pictures, lots of repetition, different textures or sound and light buttons. Card, waterproof, wipe-clean or cloth books are functional and robust so your baby can explore books whenever they want and wherever they are.

**‘Reading with’ is as important as ‘reading to’**

As your child gets older, book sharing is the perfect way to develop their language and communication skills, their vocabulary and their love of books. Communicating about the story is as important as reading or signing the words, so ask questions about what’s happening in the pictures, discuss how the characters think and feel, and relate the story to events and experiences in your child’s life.

Deaf children often miss out on incidental learning, which is overhearing and learning about other people’s lives or life events. Books are a great way to bring your child’s attention to new vocabulary and to find out about things they may have missed.

Use props, such as toy animals or dressing up clothes, to get your child’s attention, act out stories and bring the books to life.
Learning to read happens at home and at school

Deaf children sometimes find learning to read hard because there are so many new skills involved. The more language skills your child has, the easier they will find it to learn to read, so don’t be afraid to take things more slowly and help your child feel successful. Books with lots of repetition and rhyme help deaf children to learn about speech sounds and develop their phonic skills.

Sharing a book daily gives your child hundreds of new words, expands their knowledge and helps them to understand what they’re reading. Sharing different types of books will help your child learn to organise information and ideas. Choose books which challenge your child or which they can’t read by themselves. This will help to keep them motivated and engaged and to practise new skills such as predicting what might happen next or imagining their own ending.

Build self-esteem and teach them to read for pleasure

Books with deaf characters are a great way to help your child develop a positive self-image and understand their deafness. Visit our webpage www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books for books about deaf characters, or go to Book Trust’s website for books which help with positive self-identity (www.booktrust.org).

Books are also a safe place to explore emotions and feelings. Deaf children sometimes struggle to express how they feel or may use simple words to describe difficult emotions, such as ‘bored’ when they mean ‘frustrated’ or ‘disappointed’. Using language like, ‘I wonder if...’ or ‘What do you think they felt when...’ helps your child to think and talk about a range of feelings in lots of different ways.

As your child grows older, help them on their reading journey by joining your local library, swapping books with friends or visiting charity shops and online second-hand book sites. Showing your child you value books sends them positive messages about reading. Try reading alongside your child or even read the same book, just as you might watch a film together, and don’t forget to have a cuddle!

The summer holidays are a great time for your child to get stuck into a good book, read something new or take part in a reading challenge. Visit the below websites for lots of information, inspiration and book recommendations to get your child reading: summerreadingchallenge.org.uk www.booktrust.org www.literacytrust.org.uk

Don’t forget to check out our own books featuring deaf characters and sign language, Daisy and Ted’s Awesome Adventures, Jake and Jasmine to the Rescue, Elephant and the Lost Blanket and The Quest for the Cockle Implant. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/childrens-books to find out more and buy your copies.

Family blogger Nicky has written a great blog about how she reads with her daughter Isabelle. Both Nicky and Isabelle are profoundly deaf. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/reading-tips to see her ideas.

Supporting your child’s education this summer

Helping with home learning

You might be worrying about your child being behind after lots of time out of school this past year. Find out how you can make a big difference to your child’s learning journey at home during the summer holidays, through games, activities, routines and having fun! www.ndcs.org.uk/learnathome

Starting secondary school

Is your child starting a new school this autumn? If so, we have lots of ideas to help both them and you to feel ready and confident for the new school year. Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/preparingforsecondary for our tips.

Deaf Works Everywhere

Is your child thinking about their career choices? Why don’t you pass this link on to their careers advisor, teacher or Teacher of the Deaf to help them help your child make career decisions which are right for them. www.ndcs.org.uk/deafworkseverywhere

DEAF WORKS EVERYWHERE
Technology

Trying out speech-to-text apps

By Stuart Milligan (Technology Manager)

There are lots of speech-to-text apps available for mobile phones and tablets, and it can be confusing to find the one that’s most useful for you. We put three to the test to find out which is worth downloading.

All speech-to-text apps aim to do the same thing – convert spoken language into text that’s displayed onscreen. The App Store (for Apple devices) and the Play Store (for Android devices) have many of these apps available for download. But why are they priced differently? And what are the differences between them?

In order to answer your questions, our Technology team and some deaf young people teamed up to test three different speech-to-text apps to understand the differences between them and see how well they perform.

Have you used an app you think is good? Our Technology team would love to hear about it, email us at technology@ndcs.org.uk.
After some discussion, the team agreed that the best way to find a good app is to try a few different ones to see which works best for you. Though some apps were more accurate than others, some would be more useful in different situations. So why not use more than one and get the best of everything?

**Otter.ai**

**Available on:** iOS and Android  
**Cost:** Free for the basic version or £6 for the pro version  
**Mistakes during our test:** 0

Otter.ai is a phone app, which can also be run on a desktop or laptop, which makes it useful for Zoom calls. The free version offers 600 minutes of live transcription a month. For more minutes, you have to pay for the pro version.

The accuracy, punctuation and user-friendliness of the app are pretty good, but it’s a pity it can’t be used offline and that it doesn’t have an option to type dialogue, which would be useful for deaf children and young people who don’t use their voice.

**There are a couple of features that make this app stand out.**

- Transcripts can be saved and edited. Once you create an account, transcripts are saved in your account and can be shared with others.
- Words can be added to the vocabulary. We’ve used this to add jargon and people’s names.

**Molly (15), who is moderately deaf, says:**

"I think this app is really useful. It’s much more accurate than others I’ve used and can separate what’s been said into different speakers. I can add my school and home calendar to the app as well. It’s a shame that you only get 600 minutes usage a month though."

**Verdict:** An app with great accuracy. It is relatively low cost and the saved transcripts come in handy to refer back to at a later time.

**Live Transcribe (iOS)**

**Available on:** iOS  
**Cost:** £4.99  
**Mistakes during our test:** 1

The iOS Live Transcribe app offers the option to quickly switch between typing and speaking, which not only makes it easier for a deaf person to understand a hearing person, but also for the deaf person to make themselves understood. There’s no need to create an account.

Apart from a full stop at the end of the sentence, the punctuation isn’t great.

**However there were two features we particularly enjoyed.**

- There’s an offline mode, meaning it can be used in shops or buildings with limited signal.
- It has a flip screen button. The hearing person can see what’s been typed after they’ve spoken and check its accuracy, before flipping the screen for the deaf person stood or sat opposite them to read. The typing option doesn’t do the same.

**Rosie (16), who is profoundly deaf, says:**

"I didn’t find it that useful as the text wasn’t always correct and it didn’t pick up clearly what someone was actually saying. I find using the Notes app on my phone more useful for communicating in loud environments."

**Verdict:** The offline mode and speak and type options show its potential as an app aimed at facilitating conversations, though its user interface is a bit clunky.

**Live Transcribe (Android)**

**Available on:** Android  
**Cost:** Free  
**Mistakes during our test:** 2

The Android Live Transcribe app is not created by the same developer as the iOS Live Transcribe app, but like the iOS version it offers the option to type text as well, and no account is needed to use it.

It starts recording as soon as it hears a voice and seems pretty good at prioritising the speaker closest to the phone over people further away. There’s not much punctuation, though, apart from the full stop at the end of the sentence.

**There were some additional features that we liked using.**

- The app indicates when music is playing or other sound effects, such as laughter, are happening in the background.
- It has the option to hide swear words by replacing them with asterisks, which is useful when using the app with younger children.

**Kirsty (18), who is moderately deaf, says:**

"I like it because it’s free and really simple to use. I usually use this app at school where subtitles can’t be provided or when my teachers recommend podcasts. The only drawback is, it has to be quite close to the audio source to pick up the sound."

**Verdict:** A useful app to facilitate conversations. It’s a pity it doesn’t work offline.

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**Final decision**

After some discussion, the team agreed that the best way to find a good app is to try a few different ones to see which works best for you. Though some apps were more accurate than others, some would be more useful in different situations. So why not use more than one and get the best of everything?
Reviews

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

ListenLid
The ListenLid is a swimming cap designed to hold a waterproof cochlear implant or hearing aid. Available from www.listenlid.co.uk. Price: £25

Can Bears Ski?
Written by Raymond Antrobus
Illustrated by Polly Dunbar
Available from uk.bookshop.org/shop/talesonmoonlane and other bookshops. Price: £12.99

Song for a Whale
Written by Lynne Kelly
Available from bookshops
Price: £6.99

Key
This resource is most suitable for the following ages:

0–4  5–10  11–14  15–18  19–25

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

Oliver
Ania and Llion

Parents

Poppy
I got bilateral cochlear implants when I was two years old. I use the Advanced Bionics Naida system to hear, which also has a waterproof attachment called the AquaCase.

I’ve been swimming since I was four years old. I used to go to a swim club and I’ve even achieved my lifeguarding award. Before we discovered the ListenLid swim hat, I was having a hard time understanding the swim teacher’s instructions in my swimming classes with the AquaCase on. My magnet used to come off in the water and the wires would get in the way while I swam.

My parents found ListenLid via the website. It’s made a huge difference because I’m able to understand and hear everything the swim teacher is saying.

The ListenLid is a swim hat with a pocket in the back to put my device, and all the wires that come with it, in, meaning they’re contained and not loose. The magnet stays in place and I can hear through the mesh material. I don’t feel so self-conscious with it on either.

I would definitely recommend this product because it’s easy to use and keeps everything in place while I have fun in the water. I don’t think there are any other products out there that do what the ListenLid does, so I’m lucky to have one and I would definitely recommend it to anyone wearing a waterproof cochlear implant.

Oliver (14) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

Can Bears Ski? is a beautiful, heartwarming children’s book about a little bear and his dad and the journey they go on to find out if Little Bear needs hearing aids. This book is brilliant and captured the imagination of the whole family. It helped us understand what it’s like to find out you can’t hear well.

This book is easy to read. Ania was immediately drawn to the colourful illustrations in the book and instantly connected with the hearing aids Little Bear is wearing, which look like hers. The clever use of small to really large text helped Ania understand when something was meant to be quiet or loud. Because of this, the book illustrates how Little Bear experiences the world.

Ania’s big brother Llion was hooked by the skiing references, but the story of Little Bear has helped him to understand what his sister goes through at her audiology appointments. It’s encouraged us all to talk about how not being able to hear might feel for Ania and Little Bear. Our favourite part is when Little Bear gets his hearing aids and we find out if bears really can ski!

I would highly recommend this book for the whole family, especially for anyone supporting their child the same way as Dad Bear. We absolutely adore this book and it has fast become a bedtime favourite in our house.

Sian is mum to Llion (5) and Ania (2). Ania is moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids.

I got this book a while ago. I put it to one side as it looked boring, but my mum persuaded me to read it. ‘OK,’ I said. I looked at the front cover, read the back cover, then opened the book. I read the first two pages and I was hooked! I wanted to read more but it was time for bed. The next morning my mum reminded me about the book and I started reading again. I read and read. I’d nearly finished it by bedtime!

The book is really interesting. It’s a beautiful story about a deaf girl Iris who finds out about a whale called Blue 55. The whale sings at a different frequency to other whales. He thinks he’s the only whale in the world! The girl signs to her grandma and her grandma says they should encourage the whale. They record a CD of music, play the CD and hope that Blue 55 can hear it. Iris is really happy when he does, she strokes the whale and the whale goes back to the sea.

Song for a Whale is a fantastic story. I would recommend all deaf children and adults read the book! It would be good in British Sign Language (BSL) but I use BSL and it was easy for me to understand.

Poppy (10) is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.
What’s new

How Technology Can Help: For families of deaf children 6–18

What type of information is it?

Who’s it for?
This information guide is for families of deaf children between the ages of 6 and 18.

What’s it about?
This guide introduces a wide range of products and technologies that might be helpful to your child at home, school or when out and about.

You might also like:
This guide is part of a series of technology booklets covering different age groups. The other guides in this series cover technology for children between the ages of 0 to 5 and 19 to 25. You can download these on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/resources.

Assessments for deaf children and young people

What type of information is it?
A digital update of the information previously found in the printed guide Assessments of Deaf Children and Young People: For Teachers of the Deaf. You can find it on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/assessments.

Who’s it for?
These web pages are for all professionals working with deaf children in the following areas: early communication skills, language, listening, literacy, mathematics, cognitive development and social and emotional development.

What’s it about?
It provides information on a range of different specialist assessments for deaf children and young people.

You might also like:
Our wide range of information for professionals who work with deaf children and young people. Find this online at www.ndcs.org.uk/professionals.

Genetic counselling: Our family’s experience

What type of information is it?
A question and answer video that you can find by searching ‘genetic counselling’ on our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/user/ndcswebteam.

Who’s it for?
This video is for all parents of deaf children and young people who might be considering going through genetic counselling to find a possible cause for their child’s deafness.

What’s it about?
Julie talks through her family’s experience of the genetic counselling process, which ultimately led to their son Joshua (3) being diagnosed with CHARGE syndrome.

You might also like:
Our web pages about genetic counselling which cover everything you need to know about the process. You can find them on our website at www.ndcs.org.uk/geneticcounselling.
I’m really worried about my son’s speech. He’s three years old, has moderate hearing loss in both ears and uses hearing aids. After he started nursery and got his hearing aids, he started using speech and was coming along really well but then we went into lockdown. Now he uses lots of gestures so we understand him OK, but he rarely uses his voice. What can I do to encourage him to use speech again?

Children have missed out on a lot in the last 18 months, with less time at nursery and a lot less contact with other children and different adults. For deaf children, who face additional barriers, it’s essential that they have the right support in place to help them catch up.

It’s worth speaking to your son’s Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) about the options available. They can make sure the staff at nursery are aware and know what they can do to help. We also have tips and advice for things you can try at home.

- You mentioned he uses gesture already so you may want to use our videos and resources to introduce some Family Sign Language. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/familysignlanguage to find out more.
- Make sure your child can see people’s faces when talking to them. This will make lip-reading and interpreting facial expressions easier.
- Support, praise and respond to your child’s communication attempts. Don’t be tempted to speak or communicate for them as this could undermine their confidence. Encourage family and friends to do the same.
- Try to avoid competing background noises at home – this can make listening more difficult. Turn off the TV or radio when you’re speaking, playing or reading together.

Visit www.ndcs.org.uk/learningresources for more ideas. Speech and language therapy may also help him catch up. Your son’s ToD or nursery may be able to help refer him for an assessment. Alternatively you could speak to his GP or contact the local speech and language therapy service directly. For information about speech and language therapy for deaf children, and the role a speech and language therapist can play, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/slt.

I CAN, the children’s communication charity, also has a wide range of resources you may find useful, and you can speak with a trained speech and language therapist on their enquiry line at ican.org.uk/enquiry-line.

We have lots more information on our website about language and communication that might be helpful. Go to www.ndcs.org.uk/communicating to find out more.

Good luck!
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Local groups

Meet the deaf young people helping to run their local group

Rachel, Rebecca and Erin have been members of the West Scotland Deaf Children’s Society for many years. Now they’re young trustees, helping to shape the charity for deaf children and their families.

Rachel (19) is moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids. "Me and my sister Rebecca found out about the charity when we were in high school and have been part of it ever since. It helped me make deaf friends, when previously I only had hearing friends, and gave me the opportunity to try new activities. I joined the board of trustees in 2019; it’s one of the achievements I’m most proud of. I didn’t know what to expect so I was a bit anxious at first, but I’ve had lots of support. During meetings, there are interpreters and live captions, and they make sure no one misses out. Being involved with the group has helped me become who I am today. I’ve gained confidence, made new friends and learned so much.”

Rachel’s sister Rebecca (21) is profoundly deaf and has worn cochlear implants since leaving school. "I joined my local deaf children’s society as a member of their youth club back when I was 13. The youth club was a great experience for me; I made new friends and gained confidence, and enjoyed fun activities like movie nights, quizzes, pizza nights and trips out. I think lots more organisations should involve young people. Being young means you bring a fresh perspective to all aspects of the work – decision-making, running the youth club, and choosing events and activities. I have first-hand experience of some of the situations discussed. The committee made me feel so welcome, we’re like one big family!”

Erin (19) is profoundly deaf, she has a cochlear implant but now chooses not to wear it. “As well as studying full-time at college, I’m a young campaigner for the National Deaf Children’s Society and a Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament. I’m really fond of politics. I love being a young trustee. I was interested in the role because I care about getting young deaf people’s voices heard. I think it’s so important to have children and young people involved in decision-making, especially if the decisions affect them. Only 2% of charities have young people on their board; I feel lucky to be part of that 2%. I feel very included, both as a young person and as one of the board members.”

To find a group in your area, check out our map at www.ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup. Many groups are currently running online activities and keeping in touch via Facebook.

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 connecting.families@ndcs.org.uk.
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Emma Edwards is Teacher of the Deaf at Lister Community School. We asked her how a recent digital Roadshow session went for her and her students.

“The students really benefited from the online sessions. It’s certainly been a different way of working, but the digital sessions were very easy to set up. Steven from the Roadshow joined the school’s Google Meet [the video calling software the school uses], along with an interpreter. I found it was useful to make sure that both were in the video meeting before inviting the students, so we were all ready for the session.

A variety of useful and informative topics were covered, including mental health and using social media, which were especially important given the lockdown restrictions at the time. The final session on deaf identity was also an important one and students explored the challenges they face, but also the benefits they can enjoy. Having a confident and self-assured deaf adult leading was empowering for the students.

Conducting sessions digitally enabled students to access spoken language, signing and live captioning. They were able to express their thoughts and opinions through their chosen method of communication, and Steven valued all students’ contributions. Some students were quite animated in sharing their thoughts in the safe space.”

While things are still getting back to normal, we’re continuing to grow our digital workshops, offering fun, interactive and engaging sessions for deaf children and young people, and their hearing friends.

Here are some top tips for a great digital session.

• Plan ahead: We can be really flexible with dates and times for the digital workshops, but we do need at least two weeks’ notice to make sure everything is in place.

• Pick your workshops: Our offer is growing all the time – get in touch with the team and chat through the workshops that would best suit your group.

• Digital platform: We deliver workshops on the platform that best suits you. Just make sure there’s time ahead of the session for us to join a quick call with you over that platform to make sure there are no issues.

• Technology: Sessions work best if everyone can see and hear us and we can see and hear the group too. Check that cameras and mics are working and let everyone know it’s a ‘camera on’ workshop!

• Timings: Make sure everyone knows the timings and is ready to join the session – we keep the workshops to a maximum of 45 minutes (or less for younger children) so any delays mean that we can’t cover everything we need to.

• Ask questions: Let us know if there’s anything you’re not sure of and want to know more about. We want the digital workshops to be just what your young people need!
During the pandemic, JJ (9) who has a moderate to severe hearing loss, became quite isolated. So when Laura saw our Family Sign Language (FSL) course advertised, it seemed the perfect opportunity for her family.

“Communication was difficult at times during the pandemic. JJ wears a bone-anchored hearing aid on a soft band and his processors kept breaking, so I thought it would be brilliant for him to learn FSL.

The prospect of doing an online course was initially daunting as JJ doesn’t like Zoom due to the video delays and sound quality. But, as we’d be learning FSL and there wasn’t an expectation to have to listen to speech, he was extremely excited to give it a go.

We wanted to learn a few everyday signs to help us communicate better when JJ’s hearing is compromised – when we’re out shopping or at the swimming pool. Having a bank of signs would help him feel less stressed in these situations.

The course took place over six Saturday afternoons. It was well structured and we knew beforehand what each session would cover. There was also the opportunity to ask about signs we wanted to learn which weren’t covered in the content outline.

We learnt colours, animals, food – which was helpful because it means that JJ can sign what he would like in noisy supermarkets. We also learnt emotions, which is really useful as it allows JJ to communicate his feelings through sign. The course was really tailored for our family.

Having struggled with his deaf identity – especially as a bone-anchored hearing aid wearer – learning FSL has helped JJ embrace his deaf identity and had a great impact on his self-esteem. He found our FSL tutor kind and very patient. She took her time and would always go back if we misunderstood. JJ thought she was a great teacher and role model. After the final session he said he wouldn’t mind becoming a British Sign Language interpreter when he’s older!

Having this opportunity allowed us to educate ourselves a bit more on deaf culture and JJ found it so empowering. We’d encourage other families to try it. Our tutor was simply the best and it was a truly unforgettable experience!”
Alexis (9), who is moderately to severely deaf and has bone conduction hearing implants, attended our online Drama Workshop where she had fun meeting other deaf young people and being creative!

“I applied to go on the Positive Vibes Drama Workshop because I wanted to meet other deaf children and get involved in something new. I didn’t know what to expect, but I was excited before the workshop started.

There were eight of us taking part and I found it easy to follow online as there were subtitles for me to read. The event was two hours long and we had a five minute break in the middle. At the beginning, we got to introduce ourselves to each other.

We did lots of hand exercises, then we made different shapes with our hands and turned that into a story which we acted out. There was no right or wrong answer. We had to use our imagination and I loved being creative. My favourite part was making up our own shapes with our fingers.

The teachers made us feel very confident and relaxed. There was a teacher we could text if we missed any of the instructions or didn’t understand, which made me feel happy.

Normally I don’t enjoy drama. My favourite subjects at school are science, technology, engineering and maths, and cooking. I enjoy playing on my trampoline when it’s warm and with my teddies inside when it’s cold, and I like to write to my pen pal.

But the workshop was brilliant, I really enjoyed it.

It was nice for me being in a group with people like me. I would love to do more events like this and make more deaf friends. I plan to do more drama now too.”

Alexis’s mum, Sam, also saw the benefits of Alexis attending the online event.

“Taking part helped Alexis meet and socialise with other deaf children. We could see how comfortable she felt acting in front of everyone. It was a great experience and I’m glad she got involved. The online event was very good and well organised.

If you’re considering getting involved, please do as it really does benefit the children and their confidence.”

Our events for children and young people

We have a range of fun events and activities for deaf children and young people to get involved with. They’re a great way to meet other deaf children and young people, make friends, learn new skills and grow in confidence. The events we offer change throughout the year. Check our website for the latest offering and to book onto an event.

The types of event we offer include:

• online socials
• Get Informed: covering various topics including starting secondary school, technology and emotional health and wellbeing
• online activities such as acting, writing and cooking.

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

Words: Danielle Simpson and Siobhan Kewley

It was nice for me being in a group with people like me.
Sometimes in life, things go wrong. But what if the thing that goes wrong affects your child’s education? It could be that the local authority has delayed assessing your child’s special educational needs or the support that’s been agreed isn’t put in place. Complaining is never nice, and can be emotionally draining, but it is important. Here, we explain how to get the support you need to make an effective complaint.

First, the local authority must be given a chance to put things right through its own complaints process. You should be able to find instructions on how to make a complaint on their website. If this fails, you may be able to make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO), if you live in England. If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, see the box on the page opposite. Although making a complaint to the LGO can be daunting, you don’t have to do this by yourself. We can help.

What can the LGO investigate?

The LGO can investigate failures, delays and injustices in the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan process but can’t look at local authority decisions that can be appealed elsewhere.

For example, you can’t ask the LGO to question a decision not to assess your child for an EHC plan, but they can investigate if the support agreed hasn’t been put in place.

How to make a complaint:

✔️ Get in touch with our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880. They may be able to pass your case onto one of our Advice and Guidance Officers who will help you get started and explain the process to you. They can also help you to make the complaint to your local authority really effective – if the issue is resolved early you may not need to contact the LGO.

✔️ Make a complaint to your local authority in writing – they will have a two-stage process that you need to follow. They need the chance to put things right, but they should also respond to you promptly. This is usually within 20 working days, but check this on their website.

✔️ If the problem hasn’t been put right or you’ve not had a response within a reasonable time, you can complain to the LGO. You (or your child) need to have been personally affected by the problem and you must normally take your complaint to the LGO within 12 months of becoming aware of the issue. We can often support you.

✔️ The LGO will then decide whether they can and should investigate the problem. They will probably need more information from you at this point and will contact your local authority to investigate.

✔️ If the LGO does investigate your complaint, they will publish the final decision on their website but they don’t use real names. You can see examples of complaints made in your local area at www.lgo.org.uk/decisions.
What’s making a complaint really like?

Angela is mum to Riley (10), who is profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants. She successfully complained about the council because they didn’t provide the support listed in Riley’s EHC plan, they didn’t tell her about an amendment to the plan and they took too long to issue a new plan. She explains more:

“I was very close to pulling him out of school and home schooling him. I’m a typical mama bear; I’ll fight for what’s right for the children. I knew for a long time that it wasn’t right and that was the hardest thing to watch.

After I complained to the LGO, they were lovely. They just understood. They looked at the EHC plan and could see Riley’s needs weren’t being met at school. I felt supported and reassured that I was doing the right thing and that it needed to get to this stage. Also, I received compensation, a monthly amount for all the months that Riley didn’t have his needs met. I was very surprised; I had no idea this was an option.

I took it as far as I did because I felt like it was the right thing to do, and hopefully it will make the school and the local authority realise how serious it was. I had a wonderful lady called Heather, from the National Deaf Children’s Society, who supported me through every step of that horrible journey.

We got a really good result and hopefully it’s made a difference to other families who are going through similar difficulties. Now Riley’s at a fantastic school where his EHC plan is being met fully, and he’s happy and supported. I’d very much recommend it to anybody. The National Deaf Children’s Society and the LGO were amazing and it’s got us to where we are now.”

Romish (19) is profoundly deaf, wears hearing aids and uses British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate. His brother, Munir, successfully complained about the council taking too long to agree an EHC plan and not finding a suitable education placement for Romish for more than a year. Munir had support from Heather at the National Deaf Children’s Society to complain to the LGO and was also supported through an education tribunal at the same time. He says:

“Romish missed quite a lot of school. He was at home for two years without access to any education – he was bored. It was important to make a complaint because of Romish’s future. Every day Romish was asking me what was happening and I didn’t have any answers for him. It was difficult for me because I didn’t have much experience, but with Heather’s help I got through the complaint. Without this help it would have been stressful – I didn’t know where to start.

I wanted the council to change some things, get more staff and look after deaf children better. The thing that surprised me was the payment to Romish we got in the end – I didn’t expect that much money!”

Making a complaint if you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

- Wherever you live, there’s a system for complaining if your child’s support has fallen short – you can see details of how to do this at www.ombudsman.org.uk/making-complaint/if-we-cant-help/local-councils.

- Don’t forget our Helpline supports parents across the UK – contact them on Freephone 0808 800 8880 if you want to make a complaint.

For more information and to find out how we can support you in your complaint, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/adviceandguidanceofficers.
Are you ready for the challenge of a lifetime?

Now the weather is getting warmer, it’s the perfect time to sign up for a new challenge, get training and break down barriers for deaf children with every step or pedal!

BMRide
12 September 2021

Suitable for all abilities, this one-of-a-kind cycling event follows 50km of closed roads along the coast, through the heart of Brighton and finishes on the famous Hove Lawns. With a carnival atmosphere, this quirky ride is not to be missed!

The Virgin Money London Marathon
3 October 2021

Tick the London Marathon off your bucket list by taking part in the Virtual Virgin Money London Marathon – it’s all in your local area so you won’t even need to travel! Walk or run your 26.2 miles with a record-breaking 100,000 people across the globe – and become part of the exclusive London Marathon finisher club!

Royal Parks Half Marathon
10 October 2021

Widely considered the UK’s most stunning running event, the Royal Parks Half route winds its way through four of London’s beautiful Royal Parks. Hugely oversubscribed every year – finishers of the 13.1-mile route are part of a very exclusive family!

Spaces in these events are limited so visit www.ndcs.org.uk/challenges today to reserve your place.

Join the incredible #TeamNDCS and raise money to support deaf children across the UK.
I’ve fundraised for the National Deaf Children’s Society for years and have learnt a lot about the work they do. They provide such incredible opportunities for so many children who wouldn’t have the childhood they deserve otherwise. I’m a big believer in pushing your own limits, so when the opportunity came up to do a skydive for them, I jumped at the chance! What a great way to support such an incredible cause and have a ton of fun at the same time. I would highly recommend taking the leap yourself!"  
Amy Bushell, a business owner who took on the skydiving challenge with her team.

"What a great way to support such an incredible cause and have a ton of fun at the same time.

If you’re interested in taking on a skydive to help break down barriers for deaf children, either solo or with a group of friends or colleagues, visit www.ndcs.org.uk/skydive or get in touch with us by emailing community.fundraising@ndcs.org.uk.

A number of thrill-seeking fundraisers at PFS, the professional fundraising agency, gave the National Deaf Children’s Society an incredible funding boost by taking on a 10,000ft skydive and raising £4,371.
When I’m a 
grown-up

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

I’m a nurse because...

I love being involved with the care of patients to make it a good experience for them.

I’ve worked in many different wards, I’ve been a Sister and one of my proudest moments was being awarded the Florence Nightingale Award.

Born with severe to profound hearing loss, when I started my career it was difficult to get accepted onto training, but I kept applying until I was. My friends and colleagues have supported me throughout.

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19), I was redeployed from the Same Day Admissions Unit to the Vaccination Hub. At first I struggled with the noise and people wearing masks, so I made changes to allow me to carry out my job safely. I ask the patient closed-ended questions so they can shake or nod their head and the administrator who works with me, who wears a visor, will repeat anything so I can lip-read them.

At my hospital I’ve taught deaf awareness to hospital staff, I’ve introduced Sign Translate to allow deaf people access to an interpreter via a webcam and, most recently, I introduced ear stickers for the vaccination programme to alert others to the patient’s hearing loss.

I love being an advocate for deaf people; it’s important to be positive and keep trying!

Samantha Penney

I’m an engineer because...

I really love learning and maths, and engineering gives you lots of challenges to resolve. I’m currently an Operational Technology Trainee Engineer.

I found it difficult at school because I had mild hearing loss which increased over the years. I believed I was stupid.

Then, when I was 18, I started learning British Sign Language (BSL). My world opened up and my life changed. In 2019, after winning an Institution of Engineering and Technology Horizons Bursary, I started a degree in Engineering.

At the end of my first year, I was recommended as a candidate for a trainee role, had an interview and was offered the job. I now study part-time alongside full-time work as a trainee. I’m also a qualified rowing coach and am a proud mum of three.

Now profoundly deaf, I use hearing aids and at work I use a Phonak Roger Select Pen and Table Mics, the subtitles on Microsoft Teams, and an interpreter for large meetings.

Never believe you aren’t good enough. The journey might be difficult sometimes but push through, use your strengths and don’t give up!

Kailey Firmin

I’m a finance officer because...

I like organising finance for adult social care and I’m passionate about discussing ideas with colleagues.

With a BTEC in Business and Finance, my first job was as a finance clerk at Coventry City Council. I was the only deaf colleague. I could lip-read, but it was after my team were given deaf awareness training that I felt equal to them; it really boosted my self-confidence. I’m still with Coventry City Council in a lovely, supportive team.

My job involves checking emails, meetings and working online. I’m profoundly deaf. Being able to lip-read helps when people are speaking to me, but I prefer to use BSL as my main method of communication. Through the Access to Work scheme, I can get support with communication. I have an online interpreter who attends meetings with me and who also helps translate BSL into written English.

It’s important to be assertive and remember your worth. I’ve presented twice on the BBC’s See Hear and was selected for the BT award for best communications. Don’t let other people dictate what your future will be. Be proud to be deaf!

Rita Bagga

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

What does your child want to be when they grow up? For more information on careers, check our section about life after leaving school at www.ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool.
Phonak Sky Marvel. Combining world's first technological innovations to bring love at first sound to children with hearing loss.

Connects to smartphones, TVs, Roger and more
Sky Marvel is the world's first paediatric hearing aid that connects directly to most smartphone and Bluetooth™ enabled devices. In a world where modern devices can be a central part of a child's life, Sky Marvel enables intuitive access and quality streaming for speech, apps, music, e-books and much more!

Full day of hearing
With a 3-hour charge time, Sky M-PR provides a full day of hearing including 10 hours of Roger or streaming media. Parents and children can enjoy peace of mind knowing the hearing aids will stay powered on from morning to bedtime.

24% better speech understanding in noise
Phonak Sky Marvel features Autosense Sky OS, designed to adapt throughout a child's day giving children clear, rich sound even in the noisiest of situations.

Sky Marvel and Roger
The Phonak Sky Marvel seamlessly connects to Roger devices without the need to attach external receivers. Your child can now wear 42% smaller and 32% lighter hearing aids, making for a more comfortable experience at home and in school.

To find out more please email sales@phonak.co.uk or visit www.phonak.co.uk
Dreams start young. With the right start every deaf child can turn a dream into a reality.

Mary Hare is the UK’s largest school for deaf children and offers the ideal environment for your child to thrive.

Arrange your visit now.
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