

12

Danny's
advice for
dads



28

Prepare
your child for
primary school



32

Technology
to take
on holiday



National
Deaf Children's
Society

Families

Ashna's big ambitions



Some careers might be harder because of your disability, but don't let that limit you.





BSL ZONE
.co.uk

Did you know that you can watch award winning BSL Zone programmes on Film4 and Together TV every Monday?

Prefer watching TV online? You can easily watch at any time on www.bslzone.co.uk, or on our app, which is available as a free download!

Our programmes all have English subtitles. They're packed full of deaf role models, with fun educational stuff, comedy, short films and even a dedicated children's section...what are you waiting for?



@bsl_zone



@bsl_zone



@bslzone



@bslzone



Google Play



App Store

kindle fire

My deafness didn't stop me...

...becoming an Olympic Weightlifter

By Abbi Brown



Jacob

There aren't many people, hearing or deaf, who can safely lift 230kg. For Jacob Finnigan (20), it's all in a day's work!

"Representing Great Britain in international competitions feels pretty amazing," says Jacob, who has Pendred syndrome and is profoundly deaf. "Being part of Team GB makes me proud."

However, Jacob hasn't always felt so confident. "I'm grateful for my cochlear implants, but at school I didn't always feel like I fitted in," he explains. "It took me years to feel comfortable in my disability, and I'm still on that journey."

Having tried football, judo and CrossFit, it wasn't until Jacob was 14 that he discovered Olympic Weightlifting. "I seemed to have a natural talent for the sport," he remembers. "I never looked back!" Jacob finds Olympic Weightlifting naturally deaf-friendly. "I don't need any adaptations," he explains. "My implants sometimes fall out during training and competitions, but that's just something I accept and work with."

"To be a good weightlifter you need strength, passion, determination and composure. I think my deafness gives me an advantage. Growing up with a disability gave me additional obstacles to overcome, ultimately pushing me to be a stronger individual. As an athlete,

you need to be as strong mentally as you are physically.

"My advice to other deaf young people would be to never let anyone else determine your goals or make you feel like someone you're not. You may be presented with challenges that others don't have, but this will give you strength, resilience and determination.

"If you're interested in trying Olympic Weightlifting, head to a weightlifting or CrossFit gym and try a weightlifting session for yourself. If you're nervous, you could use email or social media to contact the coach beforehand and explain your communication needs. Starting a new gym can be scary for anyone. Remember, everyone was a beginner once!"

In the future, Jacob hopes to compete in the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics. "Olympic Weightlifting is challenging, but that's what makes the successes so exciting!"



As an athlete, you need to be as strong mentally as you are physically.



For more information and advice about making sport accessible, visit ndcs.org.uk/team-sports.



Why choose St John's Catholic Specialist School?



Residential and day places for ages 4-19

Specialist Teachers of the Deaf

In house audiology

We offer

In house speech and language therapy

A highly successful Sixth Form

An autism-friendly environment



We're supportive...

We're welcoming and inclusive...

We're ambitious for our children...

We're a place where every voice is heard.....

St John's has been helping children realise and achieve their full potential for more than 150 years. Our specialist learning spaces support children who are hearing impaired, on the autistic spectrum or have complex sensory or communication challenges.

Ofsted rate our residential support as 'outstanding'. Come along and visit us, we'd love to meet you.



National Autistic Society

Autism Specialist Award 2022



FIND OUT MORE:



info@stjohns.org.uk



01937 842144



www.stjohns.org.uk



Hello

After 67 years, 276 issues and thousands of amazing families sharing their stories, this will be our final magazine. We're so grateful to you for reading, writing in and telling us about your experiences. I've been inspired by each and every child, young person, family member and professional I've spoken to, and it's been a privilege to share your stories.

But while saying goodbye can be hard, we're excited about our future plans. We've just launched our new five-year strategy, which Susan will tell you more about on page 7. As part of this, we're going to be doing things differently to reach more deaf children and young people than we ever have before. This will include the launch of our exciting new app later this year. In the meantime, you can find many more stories at ndcs.org.uk/magazine and read the weekly family blogs on ndcs.org.uk/familyblogs.

I hope you enjoy this last issue. Don't miss our cover story on page 18, where Ashna shows us the amazing things deaf young people can achieve as she trains to be a doctor at the University of Cambridge. And, if you fancy a trip down memory lane, turn to page 22 to see how the magazine has changed over the years.

All that's left to say is a big thank you from me and the magazine team – it's been an honour to play a small part in your story.

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 page 44 to 45 for more information on supporting our work.

families

✉ Get in touch

Families magazine, Ground Floor South, Castle House, 37–45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS

Telephone: **020 7490 8656** (v&t)

Fax: **020 7251 5020**

Email: magazine@ndcs.org.uk

Website: ndcs.org.uk

Freephone Helpline: **0808 800 8880** (v&t)

Twitter

@NDCS_UK

@NDCS_Cymru

@NDCS_Scotland

@NDCS_NIreland

Facebook

NDCS.UK

NDCSScotland

NDCSNIreland

Instagram

@NDCS_UK

Contents

Summer 2023 • Issue 69

- 3 **My deafness didn't stop me...**
Becoming an Olympic Weightlifter
- 5 **Contents and note from the editor**
- 6 **News**
- 7 **Comment**
- 9 **Top tips...**
Supporting children through transition points

Your stories

- 10 **Sara Says**
- 11 **Ida's Ideas**
- 12 **Early years**
Danny's advice for dads
- 14 **Primary years**
Our sons and their new signing class
- 16 **Secondary years**
The sky's the limit
- 18 **Young people 16+**
Making it in medicine
- 20 **Young people: Career journeys**
Oliver's a triple threat

Information, tips and advice

- 22 **Here's to Families magazine**
- 24 **Super scribblers**
- 25 **The Buzz bulletin**
- 27 **Ask the expert**
Careers advisor
- 28 **How do I...**
Prepare my child for primary school?
- 30 **Education & learning**
- 32 **Technology**
- 34 **Reviews**
- 36 **Resources**
- 38 **Local groups**
- 40 **Events**
- 42 **Campaigns**
- 44 **Fundraising**

Role models

- 46 **When I'm a grown-up**



p12

Zack's story

dad Danny explains how he and his wife make decisions for the future



p14

Rafael and Nat's story

how their mums fought for British Sign Language support at school



p16

Amani's story

how joining the RAF cadets helped to build her confidence



p20

Oliver's story

how he balances working as an outdoor activity coach and barista

Editor Kerrina Gray
Designer Rachael Ollive
Distribution Maria Piazza

Advertising sales: Mark Toland at Bourne Media

Telephone: 01202 757646 | Mobile: 07771 881251

Email: mark@bourne-media.co.uk

Printing: Printed in the UK by The Magazine Printing Company
magprint.co.uk

Families is published by the National Deaf Children's Society. The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity in England and Wales no. 1016532 and in Scotland no. SC040779. Opinions in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of the National Deaf Children's Society. We support families to make informed choices and no one option will work for all families. This magazine highlights some of these options. For further information, see our website or call our Freephone Helpline.

Advertisements do not necessarily imply endorsement by the National Deaf Children's Society. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction in part or whole is prohibited without written permission. Photographs and artwork are accepted on the basis that the National Deaf Children's Society and our agents do not accept liability for loss or damage to them.

NEWS

New driving test prompt cards for deaf young people

The DVLA has released new prompt cards which deaf young people can use during their driving tests. These cards have short written instructions and diagrams so you know what you need to do.

The examiner can use the cards to ask you questions at the start or end of the test, such as, "Tell me how you'd check that the brakes are working before starting a journey." The examiner will also use the cards during the test to ask you to follow the sat nav or to drive in a certain direction, but only when you're stopped and safely parked. You can also agree hand signals with your examiner before starting the test, such as for stopping and pulling over, turning left or right or exiting roundabouts.

Make sure to tell your driving instructor about the cards, so they can use them in your lessons too. For more information, visit gov.uk/government/publications/driving-tests-prompt-cards-to-support-learner-drivers-who-are-deaf.

Cohen's sign marathon

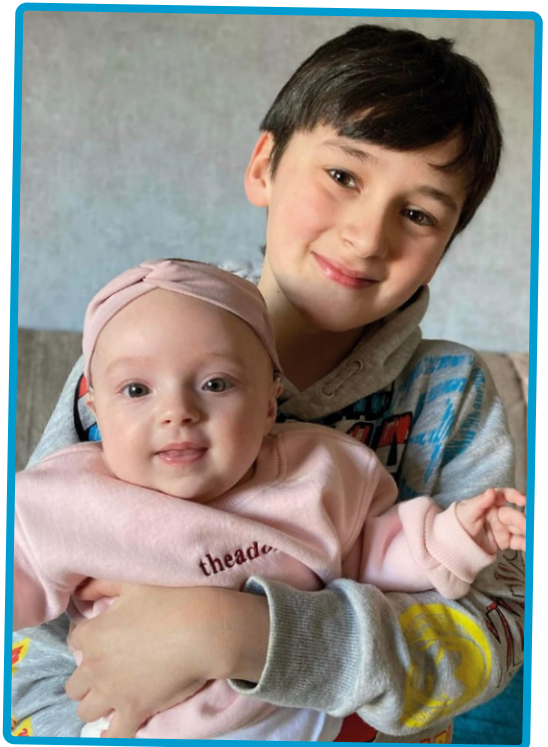
We're so impressed with Cohen (11), who's now 21 weeks and 105 signs into his British Sign Language (BSL) challenge. Back in January, he decided to learn five BSL signs a week for a whole year to raise money and awareness, after his niece Thea (6 months) was identified as deaf.

Thea's mum and dad, Charley and Aaron, are learning BSL because they want to be able to fully communicate with their daughter. Not wanting to be left out, Cohen came up with his own challenge so he'll be able to communicate with Thea too. So far, he's raised over £500.

"I'm so excited to be an uncle and I think it's cool that my niece has a superpower that makes her different," says Cohen. "I want to become her favourite uncle (don't tell my brothers!) and she'll only think this if I can play and communicate with her as she grows up. How will she know she's beautiful and clever if we can't tell her?"

"I'm so surprised I have raised over £500 already and every time I get a message of support it makes me smile. I know I'm making my family proud and that makes my heart happy."

To sponsor Cohen on his amazing journey, visit justgiving.com/fundraising/cohentakesonbslforthea.



Our summer superstar!

Alina (15), who's profoundly deaf and wears a cochlear implant, has passed her British Sign Language (BSL) Level 1 and is starting Level 2 in September, once she's completed her GCSEs. She's planning to go on to become a Teacher of the Deaf. "I'm very pleased with myself," says Alina. "I don't think we should be afraid to use sign language in a mainstream school. I think it's unique; let's celebrate how we're different!" Well done Alina, and good luck with your GCSEs.

Deaf Mosaic

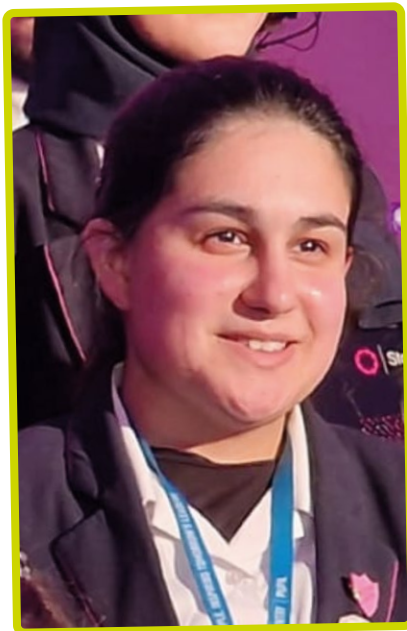
We were delighted to have the opportunity to partner with Deaf Mosaic, a photographic exhibition by deaf photographer Stephen Illiffe. Through a series of intimate portraits and stories, Stephen showcased the diversity and talents of the deaf community at the OXO gallery in London. The week-long exhibition drew in crowds from both the hearing and deaf communities, including tourists, families with deaf children and a visit from a local deaf school.

We also held a private viewing for a group of our members and supporters, introducing them to some of the amazing deaf people featured in the portraits, including a nurse, architect, model and artist.

“Through these portraits, I wanted to show that not only is the deaf community full of amazing and talented individuals, but that deaf children really can achieve anything given the right support and the right opportunities,” explains Stephen.

“I loved it so much because there are only two people in my school who are deaf and I don’t know anyone else,” says Henry (7) who attended the event. “When I went to the exhibition I felt really nice because I was seeing more people who are deaf like me. It made me feel like I can do anything in the world. My favourite photo was the rugby player because I play rugby.”

If you’d like to find out more about Deaf Mosaic, you can visit the gallery online at deaf-mosaic.com.



Azkah’s award

Azkah (15), who’s profoundly deaf, won a STAR award for being the Inspirational Learner of the Year. She won the award after receiving funding from the National Deaf Children’s Society to organise her Accessibility Awareness project.

The prize was awarded to Azkah for showing great service, teamwork, ambition and respect. “I was happy when I found out I won an award,” says Azkah. “Thirty schools came to the award ceremony and I felt confident talking to the different students from other schools.

“My advice for other deaf children is to be confident like me with my award. Take part in any leadership role you can and be proud of yourself if you’ve achieved something.”

Comment

Every moment counts

As I mentioned in the last issue, we’ve launched our exciting new strategy putting a spotlight on deaf children in their early years. Every moment counts at such a young age, where a child’s brain is developing faster than at any other point. It’s therefore vital that deafness is identified as soon as possible, and that deaf children have the right support from the start.

That’s why our five-year plan is called Every Moment Counts. It’s about making sure every deaf child gets the best start in life. We’ll work with professionals and policy-makers so deaf children have everything they need from the very beginning – and are thriving by the time they reach school.

We’ll provide first-class support to you in new ways, so you feel equipped to navigate the journey through childhood deafness and champion your child. We want to reach all the families who need us, so that all deaf children and young people can benefit from our support.

We’ve got lots of big plans; we want to give you access to personalised, tailored, timely information and advice in the way that works for you, including a new website and mobile app. We want to build a strong, vibrant community of support, no matter where you live, making your lives easier from the start and throughout the journey, connecting families together.

Families magazine has played an important role in how we have supported families over many years and this final issue is not only a celebration of what we’ve achieved in this time, but it marks our exciting and game-changing next chapter. Our five-year plan is ambitious and I promise you that we won’t stop until we’ve broken down every barrier.

Susan

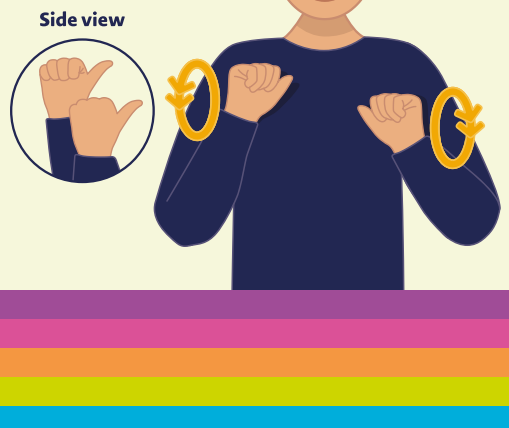
Susan Daniels OBE
Chief Executive



Did you know?

Deaf teenagers and adults tend to react quicker to objects in their peripheral (outermost) vision than their hearing peers.

Sign of the season Pride





HAMILTON LODGE SCHOOL & COLLEGE

EDUCATION & CARE FOR DEAF STUDENTS FROM PRIMARY TO F.E.

BRIGHTON

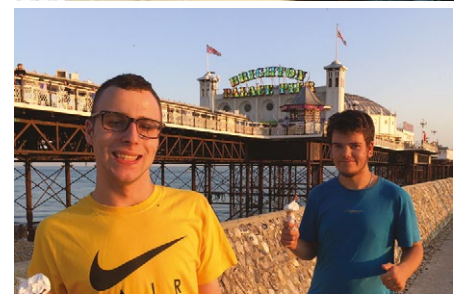
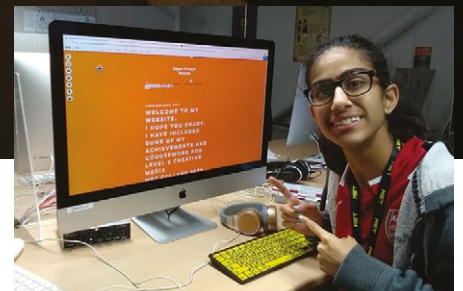
Situated in the heart of Brighton, our school has educated and cared for Deaf children for over 75 years.

Hamilton Lodge is a special residential school for learners from 5 to 19 years of age with significant expertise in meeting an identified primary need of Deafness (Mild, Moderate, Severe or Profound).

Our Specialist Team includes:

- Qualified Teachers of the Deaf and subject specialists
- Qualified Residential Care staff
- Health Care Assistant
- Audiologist
- Speech and Language Therapist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Emotional and Mental Health support (supervised by National Deaf CAMHS)
- Play Therapist

Please contact us for further information, to discuss a placement or to arrange a visit: admin@hamiltonlsc.co.uk
01273 682362



HAMILTON LODGE, WALPOLE ROAD, BRIGHTON, EAST SUSSEX BN2 0LS

Telephone: 01273 682362 Email: admin@hamiltonlsc.co.uk

www.hamiltonlsc.co.uk [@hamiltonlodge](https://twitter.com/hamiltonlodge) [f HamiltonLodgeSC](https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonLodgeSC) [hamiltonbrighton](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Registered charity in England: Hamilton Lodge (Brighton) no. 307066. Registered in England company no. 544254.


Top tips...


Supporting children through transition points


Whether they're starting a new school or leaving home for the first time, all deaf children and young people will face change. Our experts share their top tips for embracing new experiences.


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


- 1** Before starting early years settings, make sure workers have a one-page profile on your child's needs and how to support them.
Gail Collins, Advice and Guidance Officer.



- 2** Arrange a termly meeting with a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and a class teacher to talk through your child's progress and set new targets.
Dina Marden, Advice and Guidance Officer.



- 3** I talked staff through my daughter's equipment before she started nursery and let them be hands-on so they weren't afraid to break it! I also provide a cheat sheet of her communication needs at the start of each academic year.
Nicky, mum to Isabelle (5) and Jack (1). All are profoundly deaf.



- 4** An extra transition visit to the new school at the end of the summer holidays can help to reduce nerves. Arrange for a key adult like your child's form tutor to be there and do a 'walk-through' to highlight where important things are like their form room and locker.
Katie, mum to twins George and Ella (12) who are both profoundly deaf.


- 5** Have several trial runs of the journey to school, building up their level of independence gradually. If they'll be travelling by bus, get them used to making the journey by themselves.
Jo Maxwell-Heron, Advice and Guidance Manager.


- 6** Encouraging our daughter to do her own research before a new transition point helps her to emotionally invest in her next steps and to focus on all the good possibilities.
Josie, mum to Maia (17) who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.


- 7** See new settings as an opportunity to shape people's understanding of deafness. When I moved in with my flatmates, I worried about explaining my deafness to them but found they were really receptive.
Kirsty (20) who's moderately deaf.


- 8** We encourage our daughter to liaise independently with her teachers wherever possible so she can develop self-advocacy and problem-solving skills ready for university.
Josie, mum to Maia (17) who has Treacher Collins syndrome and moderate to severe hearing loss.



➔ We have information about different transition points in our education section, including resources you can pass on to professionals. Visit ndcs.org.uk/education to find out more.

Sara Says



All the different ways Charlotte enjoys music



Sara is mum to Sam (16), Matthew (13), Oliver (11) and Charlotte (9). Charlotte's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

📌 [facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI](https://www.facebook.com/DeafPrincessNI)
🐦 [@deafprincessni](https://twitter.com/deafprincessni)

“
We have beautiful videos of her sitting on the amp to feel the vibration of the music from the keyboard.”

We're a household that loves to play music in the house and the car. We attend musical events and we love to play 'name that tune'! So naturally, we wanted to make sure that all of us could take part and have fun together. One of our big concerns when Charlotte was diagnosed was if she'd be able to enjoy music as she grew up. I'm happy to report that we shouldn't have worried.

As a small baby, Charlotte wore very powerful hearing aids, but they didn't work for her. However, even without hearing, she started to enjoy music via vibration. She enjoyed deep bass and drums, loud music that she could feel through the floor, or singing when she was in someone's arms. We attended group music therapy, provided by a local group, and we have beautiful videos of her sitting on the amp to feel the vibration of the music from the keyboard.

At this stage, she was also already starting to enjoy the vibration of her own voice and our voices. She often repeated the sound "mmmm, mmmm" and held our jaws when we did it.

After receiving her cochlear implants and starting to hear sound, she continued to enjoy vibration but also developed a love of listening to music. She got a guitar for Christmas and, although at the moment is just playing with it, she's hoping to start lessons for beginners over the summer. She picked the guitar because she wants to become a singer-songwriter and feels the guitar is a sociable instrument, so she can talk or sing with her friends while she plays.

We've been lucky to access a few cycles of music therapy via our social worker too, which Charlotte really enjoyed. The exploration of different types of noise, volumes and rhythms helped her to understand what she could hear and whether or not she enjoyed the sounds.

Her favourite musical activity today is singing, however, she prefers to be deaf when she does this and takes her implants out. She's enjoying feeling the changing vibrations when she changes the pitch of her singing. When passing her bedroom door, we can frequently hear her singing a narration of her day when playing with her toys, always without her cochlear implants on.

I don't yet know if Charlotte will be successful when she begins learning to play an instrument or if she will ever be able to tune her own voice, but as a family, we continue to enjoy music together throughout our week and are so happy that Charlotte is part of that.



For more information about how your child can enjoy music, go to [ndcs.org.uk/music](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/music).



Ida's Ideas

Being in a relationship with a hearing person



Ida (17) is our young person's columnist. She's moderately deaf and wears hearing aids.

“Feeling able to talk to my boyfriend about all the little things has been really positive for me.”

Last year I started dating my boyfriend after we met in college.

I've been to mainstream school my whole life and met very few other deaf people through school and college. Neither my friends nor my boyfriend are deaf like me.

Since the start of our relationship, both of us have talked openly about my deafness and the little things in everyday life that I find challenging or upsetting – most often a lack of deaf awareness! I think it's really helpful to explicitly tell people how you feel about your hearing. It's a good confidence booster because when you're used to talking about your deafness with people you trust, you then feel more able to talk about it with people you might not know so well.

Now in my relationship, having the subtitles on when we're watching TV is a default and something that I don't need to request. I've noticed that often when I ask for subtitles on a film or video, he finds it helpful too! Because I've spoken so openly about my deafness, my boyfriend is now aware of things that he wasn't before, such as how exhausting conversations with background noise or busy situations can be for me. With my family, if the dinner table is chaotic or too loud, my parents will often subtly repeat things to me or discreetly ask questions to clarify for me. This is something my boyfriend does now too, and it makes new social situations much less stressful, particularly over Christmas when so much is happening. This is especially

reassuring for me, as we've booked to go backpacking in France and Spain this summer. Between us, we speak both French and Spanish, so luckily the stress is simply organising everything rather than feeling anxious about how my hearing and foreign languages might negatively affect my experience.

My hearing is better in my left ear, so I struggle more to hear people talking on my right-hand side. Since I mentioned this, my boyfriend will always walk on my left or make sure that I'm sitting with his family on my left when we all eat together. Feeling able to talk to him about all the little things like this has been really positive for me. Often it seems like hearing people don't notice or can't understand how exhausting all the constant little barriers can be for deaf people in daily life. It's refreshing when someone does.

I often feel more self-conscious talking about my deafness with my friends and classmates than I do with my lecturers or with older adults. I focus too much on wanting to fit in and not be different. Slowly, I've realised this isn't right – I don't have anything to prove to anyone and talking about my deafness is important in order to talk about myself and my experiences. I don't want to hide anymore.



If you're a parent and want to understand the concerns your child might have about dating, visit ndcs.org.uk/dating.



Danny's advice for dads

By Kerrina Gray

As we approach Father's Day on 18 June, Danny tells us about his experience of being a new dad to a deaf child.



Zack's story

Zack may only be two years old, but his personality is certainly shining through. "He's a real cheeky chappy already," dad Danny says fondly. "We've definitely seen his personality blossom over the last six months."

Born just after the peak of the pandemic, Danny and his wife Jodie had to navigate Covid restrictions for the birth. "I had to leave the hospital, so I missed the newborn hearing screening and Jodie was relaying to me afterwards that he hadn't passed," explains Danny.

"They told us to come back when he was three days old, but I'd just started a new job so had no parental leave and I couldn't go. Jodie messaged me from the appointment saying, 'You need to come in.' That was when we were told he was severely deaf in his left ear and profoundly deaf in his right. It was difficult not being able to be there. From then on, I had to be there for every appointment.

"With work, it's been a constant balance. I think it's important to be honest with your employer about what's happening. As soon as I was, it

was amazing. I found out my boss has a twin brother who's deaf in one ear and suddenly there was this connection."

Jodie and Danny worked as a team and threw themselves into online research. "Some of it was helpful, some of it wasn't," says Danny. "We were just desperate for some hope at that point."

"After Zack's hearing aids were fitted at three weeks old, we felt we could either feel sorry for ourselves or we could immerse ourselves and fully embrace it. Don't get me wrong, there were tears and ups and downs, and at times there still are, but we threw ourselves into the journey and soon found many reasons to be positive."

"We spoke to our Teacher of the Deaf very early on and she told us stories of children she had worked with from birth through to 18 years old. She said lots of the children she worked with were now flying at university. It meant so much to us when we were feeling so fragile."

Since then, the new parents have been keen to try everything and Danny's found that, like with his employer, the most important thing is



The best advice I can give other dads of deaf children is to make sure you talk.

to be honest about where you're at and how you're feeling. "We've attended many National Deaf Children's Society events and I've found, particularly as a guy, you have to be open to get as much out of it as you can. You can't put a brave face on it all of the time.

"We started learning British Sign Language (BSL) Level 1 at adult college in the evenings too, which has been challenging but amazing!"

One of Danny's main focuses has been making sure Zack has a strong deaf identity. "My biggest fear is that he won't be comfortable with who he is," explains Danny. "Jodie and I aren't deaf so we've thrown ourselves into the deaf community to learn as much as possible. But we know we'll never have the same experience as him, so we want to allow him to make his own decisions when he's older. We want him to have speech and BSL so he can choose one or both when he's older.

"We've bought books with deaf characters and various toys with hearing aids. At Christmas we even had a naughty elf with hearing aids! Zack always points the hearing aids out now, so we know it's paid off. He's very young but we can already see that awareness is there and we hope it develops into self-confidence."

One thing Danny has found hard is when people stare at Zack's hearing aids. "I always forget and wonder, 'Why are you looking at my son and whispering?' You feel defensive," says Danny. "It just goes back to awareness; I need to be comfortable with approaching them and talking to them about Zack's hearing aids so that he feels comfortable doing it when he's older too."

Zack is now going through the cochlear implant assessment process, which is a new learning curve. "We recently found out that his deafness is progressive so the hospital



recommended we went for a cochlear implant assessment," says Danny. "It did feel like we took a couple of steps back because we felt shock and denial again.

"But we've worked through it. It's helped that we've met children with cochlear implants and we've done lots of research. It's a constant journey, some days you wake up super positive and some days you don't, but ultimately your child is going to be in a better position if you don't bury your head in the sand. The more information you take on board, the better the decision you can make.

"I think as a guy, and I've seen it with my NCT group, you often just deal with stuff in your head on your own. The best advice I can give other dads of deaf children is to make sure you talk, communicate and be open.

"I don't open up with my friends as much as I could. Men aren't always going to ask, so you have to actually bring it up and be open about it. The first conversation might not be the greatest but it'll bring some awareness to what's going on in your life.

"Sometimes, when going out to work, you don't feel like you're pulling your weight on the appointments side, but you can't help it if you can't make every appointment or every group. Don't beat yourself up about it, but ask the questions after. Be more engaged because you weren't there.

"Remember, your deaf child is still just a child. Zack and I play football in the garden, we play cars, we ride his scooter and we do all the things I thought I would do with my son. Zack just rocks his hearing aids when we do them!"



For more information about the newly identified journey, go to ndcs.org.uk/firstdiagnosis.

EARLY YEARS

Your summer checklist

✔ Helping your child learn at home

Your child is learning from the minute they're born – they learn with you and through you. Use our information and tips on how you can help your child to learn at home, through communication, interactions, conversations and play.

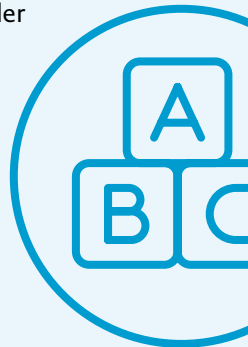
ndcs.org.uk/learn-at-home



✔ From toddler groups to nursery

When choosing toddler groups and a nursery for Millie (4), who's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, helping her to be confident when she finds herself in new and noisy environments was a top priority for dad Matt.

ndcs.org.uk/millie



✔ Preparing for primary school

Starting primary school will be a big change for your child, so it's important to make sure they feel prepared. There are lots of things you can do with your child to help them get ready for starting school that will also help them feel happy and confident. You can turn to pages 28 to 31 for more tips too.

ndcs.org.uk/primary-school





Our sons and their new signing class

By Caity Dalby

After years of pushing for one-to-one British Sign Language (BSL) support, Leigh and Hetty share how their local authority listened and put in place a successful trial of a one-of-a-kind deaf class.



Rafael and Nat's story

• **Mum Leigh has been asking for adequate support for her son, Rafael (12) since he was identified as deaf at his newborn hearing screening.** "He was born with a severe hearing loss and was initially aided at four weeks old, but progressively lost more hearing," says Leigh.

• "At four, he had bilateral cochlear implants fitted but he refuses to wear them. We've had all the equipment taken off us and now he's profoundly deaf with no hearing or technology. He has a very rare genetic condition, epilepsy, autism and a learning disability. He's deaf, tube fed, requires full-time care and is non-verbal like his friend Nat."

• Nat's mum Hetty had also been working to get her son (10) into the right school setting and met Leigh through their shared Teacher of the Deaf (ToD). "Nat's got a moderate to severe hearing loss, he's autistic, has special needs, learning disabilities and is pretty non-verbal," says Hetty. "He was identified at his newborn hearing screening as well and wears hearing aids and uses a radio aid at school."

The boys' additional needs mean that they attend a special school that historically hasn't had any deaf provision. "The boys' special needs school runs from primary right through to secondary, with children with a mixture of needs," explains Leigh.

"When Rafael started at the school, they had support in place for those with visual impairment but no deaf provision. My biggest worry was that they would just keep on offering Rafael Signalong [a sign system] instead of BSL. We spent the first three years battling with the school that Signalong wasn't adequate because it's not a language. Deaf children need BSL."



The children's development is incredible.

Hetty found herself in a similar position, with Nat being offered Makaton when they lived in England and Signalong when they moved to Scotland. "When Nat was first diagnosed, we were told not to sign with him because he was going to talk and would be in mainstream school," Hetty remembers.

"But he wasn't catching up with speech. When he was diagnosed with autism by Deaf Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), they said to use speech and BSL with him.

"It's been a huge fight to get him access to BSL, but as a family, we decided to pursue it because he's responsive to signs. It's the only language that he's ever said three words in. We're determined that he deserves a language and BSL is his language because he's deaf."

Leigh remembers having similarly difficult conversations with professionals, who insisted that Rafael would use speech. "We were told the same when Rafael was moving from hearing aids to cochlear implants," says Leigh. "They said we should wait and soon he'd be speaking."

Leigh and her family ignored the advice. "Now Rafael communicates fully with BSL and he's a great signer, but I wish we'd started learning it even earlier," explains Leigh. "It wasn't until he got into primary school that we started to insist that he needed somebody with him that can sign.

"I'm a social worker which has helped us in terms of knowing our rights. As soon as I could, I requested a coordinated support plan (CSP) and argued for one-to-one support for Rafael with a fluent BSL user as part of that plan. We had to get a lawyer involved because there was a lot of opposition from the local authority who argued that he didn't need BSL.

"It was at that point that I told Hetty that she needed to do the same. We got both the boys CSPs with agreed one-to-one BSL support at all times to support their ability to access school and the curriculum. The CSPs mean that we can take the local authority to Tribunal if they don't give the boys the agreed support."

Once Nat joined Rafael at the same school, their parents asked for them to be placed in the same class because of their CSPs. But Hetty and Leigh weren't the only ones in a similar position. "We got Rafael and Nat in the same class together and found out from the

ToD that there are actually 12 deaf children at the school," says Leigh. "Eventually the local authority and the school management team decided to trial putting all the deaf children in one class with full deaf provision and BSL support."

"It's isolating not being able to speak to anyone around you," explains Hetty. "Even when Nat was just with Rafael, he had someone to look up to and who he could see signing too. It was amazing. You realise you're not the only one."

With the local authority, school, new deaf staff and parents all working together, the class has been a success. "The nicest thing about it is that there are now three members of staff that are also deaf with their first language being BSL. Our boys have gone from being on their own to full immersion into BSL and that has made such a difference," says Leigh. "The children's development is incredible. Rafael's always been a good signer but since being in the class he's improved immensely. He's learning to read, he's starting to pick up pens and pencils for writing, he's counting and he's doing basic curriculum stuff that he's never had access to before.

"The fact that my 12-year-old son is accessing the curriculum for the first time is engaging and brilliant at the same time. He's also started eating for the first time in eight years. The improvement in him has blown my mind."

Hetty has also noticed a big difference in Nat. "Within two weeks of the BSL class starting I noticed a difference in Nat," she says. "He was calmer, he was signing more and was more receptive, and his behaviour was better. We get told that he's making friends in class or interacting with other children, which he's never done before. That, to us, is amazing."



BSL is a visual language that uses hand shapes, facial expression, gestures and body language. Find out more at ndcs.org.uk/bsl. For advice on choosing the right communication approach for your child, go to ndcs.org.uk/choosing.

If your deaf child has additional needs, we have information about how you can support them at ndcs.org.uk/additional-needs.

PRIMARY YEARS

Your summer checklist

✔ Communication with additional needs

Deciding which communication approach to use with a deaf child can be difficult, but it can be an even more complex process if your child has additional needs. Alongside speech and British Sign Language (BSL), there are a range of communication techniques available.

ndcs.org.uk/acn



✔ Total Communication with Olive

Olive's profound deafness and cerebral palsy mean that her family have decided on a Total Communication approach. She understands spoken language, is semi-verbal and uses speech, British Sign Language (BSL), a lot of facial expressions and a communication aid.

ndcs.org.uk/olives-choice



✔ Enjoying leisure time

Leisure activities can be fun and rewarding for deaf children and can help to boost their confidence. Watch our video where Pam and her daughter Jasmine, who's profoundly deaf, explain some of their favourite day trips.

ndcs.org.uk/leisure-time





The sky's the limit

By Beth Liburd

From joining the RAF cadets to training with pilots, Amani's passion for flying has helped her confidence take off.



Amani's story

• **Thrill seeker Amani (14) has always had a taste for adventure.** She laughs as her mum Hibba talks about their recent trip to a theme park. "They've got some really scary rides. And you know what? Amani got on every single one of them. It was too much for me!"

• "My favourite was called Velocity," grins Amani. "It went really high up."

• Amani, who's profoundly deaf and uses cochlear implants, enjoys challenging herself and going out of her comfort zone. But just like many teenagers, finding this fearlessness has been a journey.

• With a supportive mum and three older siblings, two of whom are also deaf, having strong family role models has been a big part of Amani's growing confidence. Older sister Memunah (32) has found success as a professional photographer, and brother Saifullah (27) is a qualified computer engineer. Meanwhile, hearing sister Liya (17) has been a great example at school.

• "I've never wrapped my children in cotton wool," says Hibba. "Go on and do it! Prove it to the world. If they can do it, so can you."

• But Amani initially struggled with her confidence. Looking for an activity to give her a boost, she decided to try

the RAF cadet group at her school and loved the way the cadets helped her meet friends and learn new skills.

"When I first started, I did it to help my confidence," explains Amani. "We do marching drills and activities in the field like shooting. I think my favourite thing we do is drills – it feels really professional."

"Her confidence is sky high since she joined," adds Hibba. "You go there, it's all new faces and you have to speak up. When she's in her uniform, she's a different Amani. I'm so glad she picked it because it's helped her a lot."

Amani soon got the opportunity to attend an RAF cadets' residential camp and tried lots of other exciting activities. "There was this really tall pole that they had to climb, and there's a level where they jump off," says Hibba, as Amani laughs.

"I was like, how can you not be scared of that, Amani? She's definitely not scared of heights!"

Amani's newfound confidence with heights proved very useful later in the camp when she got the chance to pilot a plane for the first time. Although she was nervous at first, Amani quickly found a real passion for flying.

"It was really fun," says Amani. "I loved it when I took the controls



I loved it when I took the controls because I was really in control of a plane. I couldn't believe it!



because I was really in control of a plane. I couldn't believe it!"

The experience inspired Amani to look into pursuing a career as an RAF pilot. Sadly, she discovered this wasn't possible, as she would need to pass a hearing test to take on an active military role.

Disappointed but undeterred, Amani began looking for a different way to take to the skies again. Together with her mum, they found the charity Aerobility, which offers free and subsidised flying lessons to people with a variety of conditions and disabilities.

When Hibba got in touch with the charity and told them about Amani's interest in flying, they offered her a free lesson with an instructor. "Before the lesson, I felt really nervous," says Amani, "But I didn't feel like that at all in the plane. The next day, I was so shocked – I actually flew a plane!"

While the loud noise of the engine was challenging, her instructor showed good deaf awareness and they were able to work out ways to communicate during the flight. "Amani had a headset on, but even then it can get really noisy for her," says Hibba. "The instructor asked beforehand what she wanted him to do. We asked him to speak loudly and he said, 'No problem.'

"We might look into arranging a radio aid for the instructor, so she can hear him more clearly in the future."

Amani is now determined to continue her lessons with Aerobility. Although she loves shopping, she's happily said she'll give it up, along with presents on her birthday and Eid, for flying lessons.

In the future, Amani hopes her flying will also help her pursue her interest in travel. She dreams of exploring the world and is enjoying learning Spanish at school.

"It's very nice to learn a different language," says Amani. "The sounds are nice to say and it's very useful, especially when you're travelling."

"I was initially worried about her learning a language for GCSE," adds Hibba. "But that didn't stop Amani, she knew what she wanted and I went along with that. The school warned us that she may struggle but we fought to get them to allow her to do it.

"We work together around the challenges; Amani sits at the front of the class in her language lessons, she uses the radio aid in class and uses language apps to support her learning. One thing she particularly struggles with is pronouncing words but we're working on that with her teacher."

While Amani isn't flying internationally just yet, she's got big dreams for the future. Along with continuing her lessons, she hopes to study engineering at college, so she can understand more about how aeroplanes work.

"Flying is something I really enjoy doing," she says. "And just because you've got something with your hearing, it can't stop you from doing what you want to do."



For more information about attending an after-school group, like Scout and Guide groups, go to ndcs.org.uk/scouts. You can find more information about Aerobility at aerobility.com.

Your summer checklist

✓ Alex aces his GCSEs

Everyone has the right to take the subjects they're interested in at school and to have reasonable adjustments put in place for them to succeed. Thanks to a combination of hard work, the right support and exam access arrangements, Alex (16), who's profoundly deaf, aced his GCSEs.

ndcs.org.uk/alexs-gcses



✓ Learning a language

When it was time to choose his GCSEs, Daniel (15) was determined to study French – and mum Kerry was behind him all the way. He spoke to Families magazine about the support he received at school and how exam adjustments allowed him to succeed.

ndcs.org.uk/Daniel



✓ Going to the doctor

Going to the doctor can be stressful whatever age you are. But if your child has got questions about going to the doctor's, we've got them covered. Check out our articles about booking an appointment, useful health terms and using hearing technology at the doctor's.

buzz.org.uk/articles/my-life-my-health





Making it in medicine

By Abbi Brown

Although life as a deaf medical student can be frustrating, Ashna is overcoming the obstacles and is passionate about raising awareness of deafness.



Ashna's story

When Ashna (22) found out that 46% of people don't think deaf people can be doctors, she was shocked.

"I went to a grammar school which encouraged me to be ambitious," she remembers. "They didn't try to discourage me from anything – it was the opposite! I think they were quite naïve about how hard it would be for me to study medicine."

Originally from India, doctors there first said Ashna's hearing was fine. It wasn't until the family moved to the UK, when Ashna was six, that hearing tests revealed she had a moderate to severe hearing loss. She was referred to her local sensory support service and assigned a Teacher of the Deaf (ToD), who supported the family, even during Ashna's first hospital appointment.

"Mum was nervous about the appointment," explains Ashna. "She'd just moved to a new country, and now she had to get to grips with my deafness. My ToD came with us on the train and was lovely and supportive. Mum still talks about that train journey and what a difference she made."



I had to advocate for myself at university much more than I did at school.

"I had four different ToDs while I was at school. Looking back, they were so helpful. They gave deaf awareness lessons to my class and reminded my teachers to use my radio aid."

"If I had a problem, they liaised with my school to change things, so the pressure wasn't on me. Now I'm at university and have to advocate for myself, I appreciate that more."

Ashna did well at school but wasn't sure what to do next. "As a 17-year-old, it's really difficult to know what

you want to do with the rest of your life,” she says. With encouragement from her ToDs, parents and school, Ashna applied to study medicine at the University of Cambridge.

“My parents were really supportive,” says Ashna. “They never made me feel like there was anything I couldn’t do. They didn’t put pressure on me; it was more like, why not give it a go, and if you don’t get in, you don’t get in.” Ashna’s application was successful, and her ToDs helped her to apply for Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) and put her in touch with Cambridge’s Disability Resource Centre (DRC). However, Ashna initially found the move difficult.

“I didn’t think I’d find my first term as hard as I did,” she remembers. “It was a huge shock to be away from my family. I had to advocate for myself much more than I did at school, which was frustrating.”

Ashna’s DSA paid for notetakers, but they didn’t always help. “There was a lot of admin work,” she explains. “I had to approve every lecture they came to. Sometimes they’d be late, so I’d miss the first few minutes of a lecture, or their notes weren’t comprehensive. It wasn’t their fault, but it added to the feeling that I was missing out.” Eventually, Ashna stopped using notetakers. With support from the DRC, she asked her teachers and lecturers to email their slides and used speech-to-text technology and radio aids to access lectures.

“It sounds pessimistic, but realistically, I will miss out on things. I try my best to access everything but if I can’t, that’s OK. It’s OK if I don’t hear everything. I might not have got the same marks if I wasn’t deaf, but deafness has given me lots of other opportunities, like understanding how it feels to be a patient.”

Ashna also signed up to become Disability Officer for her college’s student union. “That role probably helped me more than I helped other people!” Ashna laughs. “It was useful to learn how the system works.”

“I recently made friends with another deaf student. Her experience of growing up deaf was different to mine, but there are still similarities. I have a great support system – my parents, cousins and friends are always there for me – but it’s nice to have a deaf friend who understands exactly how I feel.”

When Ashna started her clinical years, she had to advocate for herself again, telling other medical staff about her deafness, handing out clear face

masks and researching stethoscopes that would work with her hearing aids. She wears a badge on her lanyard to remind colleagues of her deafness.

“Often when I explain that I’m deaf, they’re suddenly apologetic and sometimes surprised that I’m doing medicine at all,” says Ashna. “It’s like they don’t expect me to be in this space. It makes me wonder, is it also because I’m a woman? Or because I’m brown? There are layers to my identity.”

“There’s a lot of background work to being a disabled medical student. I’m not just trying to process speech while I’m working, I’m also processing how other people perceive me. The mental load can be really tiring.”



“For example, it’s only a small thing, but a quintessential part of medical school is wearing your stethoscope around your neck. Mine doesn’t look like that, which makes me feel like less of a medic.”

To help manage her emotions, Ashna started a blog. “Initially it was somewhere for me to vent about how I was feeling, but recently it’s become more about raising awareness and helping other people think they could also do medicine.”

“Some careers might be harder because of your disability, but don’t let that limit you. If it doesn’t work out, at least you’ve tried. If you feel you can’t do something, then it’s the system that needs to change, not you.”



To find out more about your career options, visit ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers.

To read Ashna’s blog, visit ashnabiju.com.

Your summer checklist



Dinah’s medical degree

Dinah (19) has a moderate to severe hearing loss and is also studying medicine at university. Read Dinah’s blog about her first term at medical school, her top tips for deaf students and the support she’s getting at university, including her Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA).

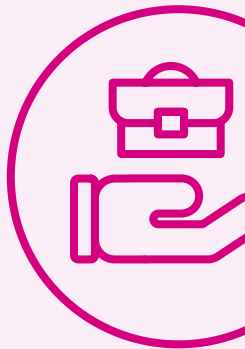
buzz.org.uk/articles/dinah’s-blog-my-first-term-studying-medicine



Plan for the future

Deafness shouldn’t be a barrier to your child doing what they want to do. There are a small number of jobs that deaf people aren’t allowed to do, but with the right support or adjustments, most education and career options will be available to your child.

ndcs.org.uk/plan



Learning to drive

There are lots of ways to make learning to drive and driving tests deaf-friendly. Three young people, who use a variety of communication methods, gave us their top tips for learning to drive.

ndcs.org.uk/driving



Deaf works multiple jobs



Oliver's a triple threat

By Jenny Collen

Not one for sitting still, Oliver is thriving as an outdoor activity coach and barista, all while training hard to fulfil his dream of becoming a professional triathlete.



Oliver's story

From sun up to sun down, Oliver's on the move. "On a typical day, I wake up at 5.30am and swim for two hours. Then I go to work till 4.30pm, followed by a run and strength conditioning till 7pm. I've only got about an hour and a half to get myself dinner and then go to bed," he says. "If I'm not working, I'm training. If I'm not training, I'm working."

Oliver, who's profoundly deaf and wears a cochlear implant on his right side, first discovered his love of running when he was in primary school. "I went to a mainstream school, but the teachers didn't know how to communicate with me. They would send me to detention as an easy way to get rid of me. The sports department was the only one that understood me and took care of me."

When he went to university, Oliver discovered his natural aptitude for triathlon and was later invited to train with a British Triathlon Satellite Centre. "Everyone in the centre knows I'm deaf," he says. "They've introduced hand signals since I've come on board,

like 'slow down' or 'turn around'. My coach went on a deaf awareness course before I joined too."

Because a triathlon starts with swimming, Oliver doesn't wear his cochlear implant when he races. "I race without hearing a single thing," he says. "It's very nerve-wracking because, at the start of the swim, everyone's listening for the gun, but I can't hear it, so I have to react to everyone else."

"When we move on to cycling, I don't waste any time by putting on my hearing device. Cycling is a dangerous sport – you have to always be alert so you don't accidentally clip someone's wheel. Since I can't rely on sound, I have to use my visuals to try and figure out where everyone is."

Oliver thinks it's important to make sure everyone at a triathlon race is aware he's deaf. "I always tell the organisers so they know I won't be able to hear the marshal." Making sure his competitors are also aware, Oliver wears a triathlon suit with 'DEAF' written in bold on it during races.



I race without hearing a single thing. It's very nerve-wracking.



To support himself while training as a triathlete, Oliver works two alternating seasonal jobs. During the summer, he works as an outdoor activity centre instructor.

As with his triathlon races, Oliver makes sure everyone at the activity centre is aware he's deaf. "For the climbing wall, I'll tell the kids, 'If you need to come down, make sure someone on the ropes tells me, because I can't hear the climber, and make sure I have eye contact.' I'll also give a demonstration to help them understand," says Oliver.

One perk of the job is the good relationship Oliver has with his colleagues. "The team knows I'm deaf and we have our own secret made-up sign language," he says. "If we need something, we can all sign it and everyone knows what's happening. The team is a lot of fun."

For safety reasons, Oliver has chosen not to instruct in water-based activities such as windsurfing or kayaking. "I'd rather not put myself in a situation where I can't hear the group on the water because the chance of a serious accident is higher," he explains.

When summer's over, Oliver works at a National Trust café. "There are no carpets or curtains, so it's quite a noisy environment. I don't mind working the tills, but if it's busy or the customer talks quietly, I'll struggle to understand them," he says. "I like working as a barista better because I can just read the customer's order on the receipt and make it."

Oliver has avoided getting orders wrong by being clear and open with his communication. "Before I finish processing an order, I'll always repeat back what I think the customer has said to make sure I got it right. If not, I'll keep checking with them until they tell me I've got the order correct," he says. "When I'm tidying up around the café and someone asks me a question, I'll try to work out what the sentence could be and then repeat back what I think they've asked, such as, 'Oh, do you want to know where the toilets are?'"

"I'll sometimes tell customers I'm deaf if I'm really struggling, and it helps that my name badge has 'deaf' in brackets next to my name. One time a customer was becoming a bit agitated after I'd gone back and forth with him trying to figure out his order. But when I said, 'Sorry, I'm deaf,' he became very apologetic!"

Oliver's co-workers have also made small adjustments to support him at the café. "My co-workers know I can only hear from one side, so they move around so I can hear them," he says. "Some of them have learned the signs for words like 'latte', 'regular' and 'take away'."

With two different jobs and a strict training regimen, Oliver can sometimes feel exhausted. "Being at work all day, I'm so switched on trying to lip-read, trying to focus on everything. I'm always on the alert," he says. "There are times I just want to sit down, have a nice cup of tea and not speak to anyone. Luckily, going for a run usually helps me get rid of stress. I can just relax, enjoy the environment and listen to music."



We have lots of advice on making swimming, cycling and team sports deaf-friendly at ndcs.org.uk/hobbies. UK Deaf Sport supports deaf athletes, find out more at ukdeafsport.org.uk.

For more career stories, go to ndcs.org.uk/your-careers.

YOUNG PEOPLE: CAREER JOURNEYS

Your summer checklist

✔ Mollie's lush job

Mollie (19) works part-time at cosmetics retailer Lush and has also just started university. Working with the public isn't always easy, but thanks to a supportive work environment, Mollie is confident in her role as a sales assistant.

ndcs.org.uk/mollie



✔ Taking a gap year

As a deaf young person, taking a gap year to travel, work or volunteer is a great way to increase confidence, make new friends and learn more about the world. It can also bring specific challenges. Read our tips for deciding what to do with a gap year.

ndcs.org.uk/gap-year



✔ Legal rights at work

Deaf young people have the right to be treated fairly and to be given the same chances as someone who isn't deaf, whether they're applying for a job, working or looking to get promoted. Find out about their rights on our webpage.

ndcs.org.uk/rights-in-work



Here's to Families magazine!

As we get ready to bring you exciting new services and products, we sadly say goodbye to Families magazine. Here, we celebrate 67 years of inspirational stories, tips, information and advice.

Our first ever issue!



1956



1975



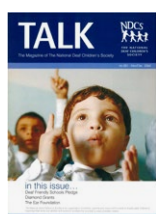
1981



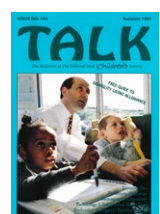
1983



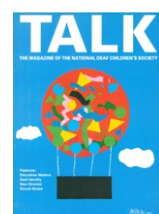
2006



2004



1997



1992



2015



2017



2018



2023

2008:

The year we launched our online magazine.

276:

The number of magazine issues we've published.

20,680:

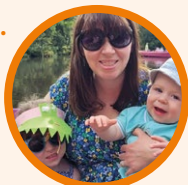
The number of copies we send out to families every issue.

Oyin, mum to twins Toni and Tosin (15), who are profoundly deaf and were our autumn 2020 cover stars.



"We really appreciate the opportunity we had to share our story in Families magazine; the boys and I see it as a privilege. We believe there is usually something to take from other people's stories that can give hope and keep others going."

Nicky, mum to Isabelle (5) and Jack (1). All are profoundly deaf. The family have featured in Families magazine multiple times over the years.



"It's been a privilege to be able to use Families magazine as an outlet to share parts of our journey. I hope in doing so it has helped other families feel less alone; we've found so much to relate ourselves to when reading other people's stories."

Matt, dad to Millie (6), who is profoundly deaf and featured in our winter 2021 magazine.



"Going back through our journey reminded us of how far Millie has come and it made Millie realise what a superstar she is. The magazine has helped us access a kind and helpful community. We love all the insight we get from being able to look through the keyhole of other families' experiences and it's given us a lot of confidence in the decisions we make for Millie."

Families' famous first editor



Name: Elfrieden 'Freddy' Bloom

Journalist and author who campaigned for the rights of deaf children.

Born in New York, Freddy spent three-and-a-half years in a Japanese prisoner of war camp during World War II, where she started and wrote a camp newsletter called Pow Wow to improve morale amongst the prisoners. After the war, Freddy had a daughter, Ginny, who was born profoundly deaf, and became the first chairman of a small charity called the Deaf Children's Society.

In 1956, Freddy launched TALK, a magazine "devoted completely to problems of the child who cannot hear." She edited the magazine until 1983.

"It is important to remember that it will be many years before the deaf child himself is aware that there is anything the matter with him. He just knows he is himself and he will accept himself exactly as he is accepted."



We will be continuing to share your experiences and stories in new and exciting ways. Please get in touch if you have any ideas for our future...

Super scribblers

FOR
5 TO 11
YEAR
OLDS

Try our fingerspelling wordsearch

Do you know how to fingerspell? Use the box below to learn and then see if you can spot the words in the wordsearch. Happy summer holidays!

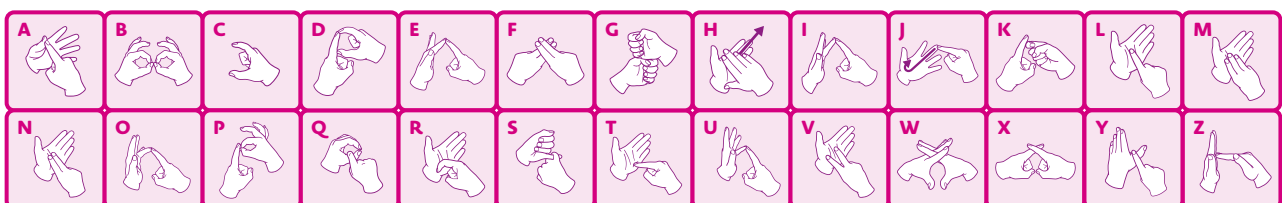
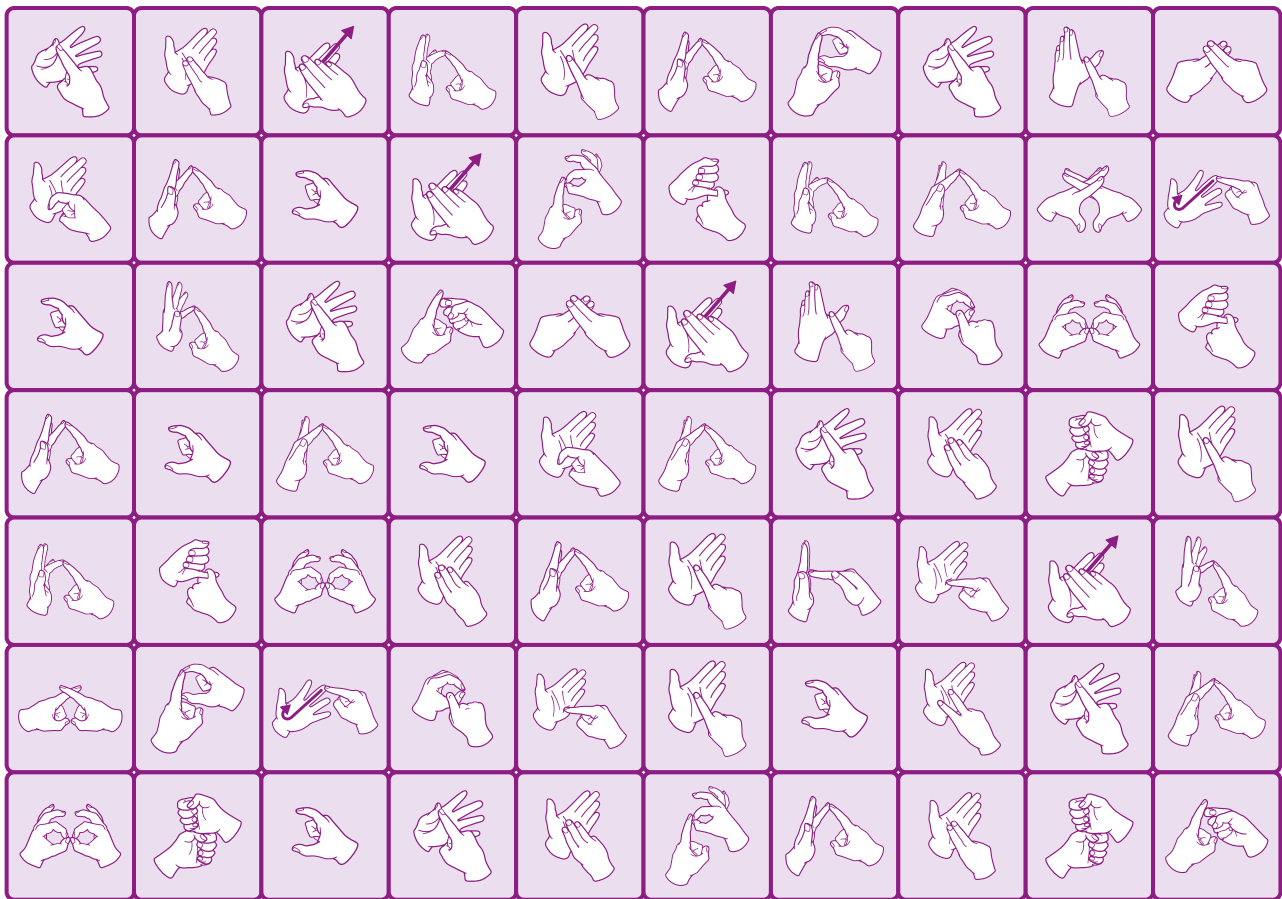
Ice cream

Shell

Beach

Camping

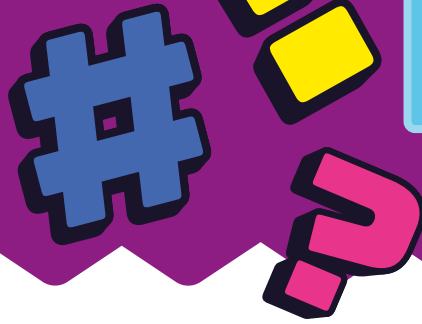
Holiday



THE BUZZ

BULLETIN

FOR
11 TO 15
YEAR
OLDS



WHAT I'D TELL MY YOUNGER SELF

AS DEAF YOUNG PEOPLE, THE ADVICE WE GET FROM OLDER DEAF PEOPLE CAN BE SO HELPFUL! IT CAN INSPIRE, ENCOURAGE AND HELP US DEVELOP OUR DEAF IDENTITY.

Hi! My name is Dinah, I'm 19 years old and I'm studying medicine at university. I had sudden hearing loss aged 15 and I wear hearing aids in both ears. Here are the top pieces of advice I would give my younger self.

▪ **WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT, YOU CAN DO WHATEVER YOU WANT!**

After my hearing loss, I thought my future options would be limited, but deaf people can be artists, athletes, teachers, scientists, healthcare workers... You get the idea!

▪ **YOU MAY NEED TO FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS.**

Getting adjustments in place at school and university was challenging and time-consuming. With persistence, I was able to access classroom notetaking support and I would have really struggled without it.

▪ **GET EXPERIENCE AND FIND A MENTOR.**

When I was choosing my uni course, I spoke to doctors with hearing loss and completed work experience in a hospital. This was really helpful for me to decide what I'd like to do and what support I may need.

▪ **FIND A BALANCE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU.**

Growing up hearing and then becoming deaf, I never felt like I truly belonged in either 'world'. I went to a mainstream school but having a group of deaf friends outside of this, getting involved with the National Deaf Children's Society and learning British Sign Language has really helped me gain a deaf identity.

▪ **BE OPEN WITH OTHERS.**

It can be awkward and daunting to tell people you've just met about your hearing loss. But pretty much everyone I've met at uni has been really understanding and more than happy to repeat things if I've missed what they've said.



WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF? WRITE YOUR TOP TIPS IN THE SPACE BELOW.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



Doncaster School for the Deaf

Doncaster School for the Deaf has been providing specialist education for Deaf children for almost 200 years.



We are a small nurturing school where pupils make exceptional progress. We know that happy, healthy, and safe children get the most out of school.

As a School for the Deaf, our aim is for pupils to be proud of and understand their Deaf identity and culture. Communication approaches are tailored to individual needs with signing and speech used in whatever combination works best for each child at that time.

At Doncaster School for the Deaf, we offer a curriculum and experiences as ambitious as the National Curriculum with high expectations. Within the curriculum, we respond to and understand pupils' needs and ambitions. To do that, we have a curriculum that is personalised, flexible and promotes a love of learning.

We prepare our pupils to be in the wider world and to facilitate their next steps in learning, employment, and independence.

Jane Goodman, headteacher at Doncaster School for the Deaf, said: "We are extremely proud of our school and the education we provide to young Deaf people.

"Don't just take our word for it, come along and see for yourselves. We welcome visits from families and specialists who are keen to find out more. We're happy to give you a tour and to give you the opportunity to learn about Doncaster School for the Deaf from people who work and learn here."

Some of our parents explain why they love Doncaster School for the Deaf.

"Doncaster School for the Deaf is amazing! They go above and beyond for my son. He has come on so much with his learning and signing. My son's behaviour has also changed and improved, all due to the help and the dedication of the staff."

"I think Doncaster School for the Deaf is amazing. My little boy has changed so much since starting, all the staff I have had contact with have been amazing and gone above and beyond. This could be email, phone call or in-person. My son loves going to school and I know he's happy being there so I'm so happy I changed his school. I tell everyone who asks about my son that he's at the best school and all staff are lovely, thank you for everything you all do for my son."

"Doncaster School for the Deaf is simply amazing! My daughter has only been with you a short time however her confidence has blossomed and it's wonderful to see. She comes home daily telling me all the exciting things she has participated in whilst being at school. She is developing meaningful relationships with her peers through the beauty of BSL."

"Doncaster School for the Deaf is not just a school, it's a community, an extension of the family. The staff care and offer support, best decision ever sending my child there."

"I'm so glad and so happy in myself that I made the right choice for my daughter to come to your school. It was hard for me, but wow, my girl has come on so much! I couldn't be prouder, we see big changes in her all the time, so thank you."



To find out more about Doncaster School for the Deaf, visit deaf-trust.co.uk.

Ask the expert

Each issue, we ask a different professional to share their expertise around issues that may affect your child. This month, Kate, a careers advisor, answers your questions.

.....

What does your job involve?

I'm an independent careers advisor, working at a school for deaf learners, as well as other schools and colleges in my area. I provide careers information, advice and guidance to young people through one-to-one meetings and group sessions.

I help to raise their awareness of future options and work closely with parents, teachers and other professionals to support young people with their career journey. I also support schools with their careers programmes.

How did you become a careers advisor?

I knew I wanted to work with young people but wasn't sure in what role. I spoke to a careers advisor who recommended that I get some experience of working with young people in different settings to help me decide.

After a few different roles, I worked towards my Level 6 in Careers Guidance and also completed British Sign Language (BSL) at Level 2, which has been really important for my work with deaf young people.

What's your favourite thing about your job?

One of my favourite things is students getting in touch once they've left school to let us know what they're now doing. I love hearing about their successes in supported internships, apprenticeships, university courses and employment. It's great inspiration for our current students too.

How can deaf young people prepare for the world of work?

Take any opportunities that are offered to you; try work experience or voluntary work, attend job fairs, and visit employers, colleges, universities and apprenticeship providers to find out what they offer. Make the most of any career activities that are offered through school, college or your local authority. There are so many different options out there and it's about finding the pathway that's best for you.

What kind of support can deaf young people get in their job?

Employers have a duty to provide 'reasonable adjustments' – adaptations to make sure that deaf young people are not at a disadvantage in the workplace. There's also Access to Work, which is a government scheme to cover additional costs in the workplace, such as technology or support including BSL interpreters, notetakers and deaf awareness training for other staff. It can also be used to cover the cost of communication support for interviews.

“
Take any opportunities that are offered to you.



Kate
careers advisor

What can parents do to support their children with starting work?

Support your child with exploring the options that are available to them. They could go straight into work in the future or choose another option, such as an apprenticeship or supported internship. Find out more about the practical support available to your child by speaking to their careers advisor, teachers or your local authority. They may be able to help with job searching, applications, CVs and interview preparation. They can also offer advice on the support your child may be able to access when they're in work too.



For more careers advice, including information on reasonable adjustments and Access to Work, go to ndcs.org.uk/workandcareers.

How do I...

prepare my child for primary school?

Starting primary school is an exciting time but can also be daunting for deaf children and their parents. We asked four mums how they've been preparing their children to start school this autumn.



James

Victoria is mum to James (4), who's severely deaf and wears a bone-anchored hearing aid (commonly called a BAHA).

James will be starting at a specialist primary school for deaf children in September. We visited the school and met some of his new teachers. As he attended nursery onsite, he's already familiar with the school layout, so it doesn't feel too daunting for him.

James is non-verbal due to medical reasons, and he's currently awaiting an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device that will help him communicate. We've been learning some new signs, focusing on ones to help James express his emotions so he can tell us how he feels. We need to know if he's worried or scared about anything before he starts school.

The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) will help James transition into primary school and organise training for his teachers. James also has a great Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) who works really closely with us as a family and answers any questions we have so we can talk to James about the big changes coming.

We're in the process of getting his Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan finalised. This has been a long process, but his ToD and SENCO have been really helpful and supportive.

James has a very confident personality and says he's excited to meet new friends. I plan to take him shopping for his new school uniform and let him choose his school bag and pencil case. I know he'll be excited to show these off!



Louie and Melanie

Melanie is mum to Louie (4), who's moderately deaf and uses hearing aids.

To prepare for starting school this September, we've been using Louie's radio aid more regularly at home and on the way to nursery so he gets used to using it more when he starts school.

Every week, we get an email from his nursery teacher with the next week's topic and book. This is helpful to go over with Louie at home in an environment with no background noise. We make sure he understands and gets access to all the speech sounds in the book which he might miss in a noisy classroom environment. We plan to continue

this with Louie's new teacher when he starts school.

We have a wonderful support network including Louie's ToD, audiologist and speech and language therapist (SLT). His ToD will visit Louie's classroom during his first week to show his teacher how to use his radio aid correctly and help maintain his hearing aids. She'll also advise the teacher on what speech sounds we're currently working on and let them know about positioning Louie at the front of the class at group time. With this support network, we feel confident Louie will have access to all of the same information as his hearing peers.



School visits are a must.



For more advice on getting your child ready for school, including resources you can pass on to their teacher, visit ndcs.org.uk/primary-school. Also turn over for tips from our in-house Teacher of the Deaf.

Emma is mum to Robin (4), who's moderately to severely deaf and wears hearing aids, and Eve, who's hearing.

Robin was born with Pendred syndrome, so I began thinking about primary school much earlier than my friends with children of the same age. Doing your research is key to making sure your child will enjoy a supportive space in a good listening environment, so school visits are a must.

Our focus for preparing Robin to start primary school this September is on communication. We've been helping her to understand some of the important things she can do at school: making sure to ask for help, sitting at the front at group time, asking to have some time in the quiet space, and letting her teachers know

if her hearing aids or radio aid aren't working effectively. It's been great to see her build her confidence to communicate those things. When we ask her what she can do at school, she reels off the list of ideas with great enthusiasm!

Settling-in sessions have helped Robin get a feel for the classroom and her peers. Kids are great at being upfront, and at the settling-in sessions, they all asked about her hearing aids. Once they got the information, that was it – Robin is now just the same as the rest of the children, which means she won't be a talking point on the first day. That was a big moment to witness and gives us confidence that she'll really enjoy primary school when September rolls around.



Robin, Emma and Eve

Cara is mum to Phoebe (3), who's profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants.

Phoebe will be starting reception in September at the infant school next door to her nursery. She's an August baby, so will be the youngest in her class. But since starting at nursery, doing 30 hours a week, she's thriving and has built some lovely friendships with her peers and teachers.

Her new reception teacher has already visited her at nursery, and in a few weeks' time, Phoebe's key worker will be taking her to visit the new school too.

A few months ago, her ToD arranged for a radio aid to be fitted, which has really benefited Phoebe, especially at group activity time. The nursery made an information sheet with a step-by-step guide on how to set it up and take it off at the end of each school day. This will go with her when she starts reception to help her new teacher.

Phoebe's big sister is currently in Year 2 at the infant school. At home, we always talk about how Phoebe will be going to 'big school' soon with her sister. I think having an older sibling and also being in the nursery school environment will really help.



Phoebe

Education & learning

Starting a new school

By Emma Fraser (Teacher of the Deaf)

As we come to the end of this school year, you may already be thinking about the beginning of the new one, especially if your child is starting a new school or starting school for the very first time.

Language levels

It can make a big difference to your child's learning and socialising at school if teachers know what your child can do with language, whether it's spoken, signed or both. Your Teacher of the Deaf (ToD) can carry out specialist assessments and provide information and advice to your child's new school on how to develop and support your child's language, literacy and social communication skills. This should happen as early as possible, so check with your child's school that they have all the information they need.

You can also pass on information about your child using a personal passport. Handing over the document allows teachers, staff and classmates to know how best to communicate with your child. Find a template at ndcs.org.uk/personalpassport.

Deaf aware teachers

Deaf young people tell us that deaf aware teachers can make a big difference to their everyday learning experience. These teachers may often just make simple adaptations and adjustments to their teaching, such as making sure your child can always see their face, stopping to check your child has understood or repeating key information.

Creating a deaf-friendly environment at school also means that classmates know how to include your child in their conversations, by speaking one at a time, getting their attention before they start to speak or using your child's radio aid in group learning. You, your child and their ToD can provide training and information to everyone at school on their deafness. You could ask staff at your child's school to take a look at our online course at ndcs.org.uk/deaf-awareness-elearning or simply share our top tips at ndcs.org.uk/communication-top-tips.

Training in technology

Your child's personal hearing technology is an important part of their school life. ToDs can upskill school staff so they can help your child with technology checks and troubleshooting. There's also lots of information on the manufacturer's website which can help. Find out more at ndcs.org.uk/technology-suppliers.

Your child may also benefit from other types of technology they haven't used before to help them access school life. For example, radio aids, streaming devices, smart technology and visual indicators of noise such as babble guards can be useful in noisy school environments. We have lots of information on our website at ndcs.org.uk/technology.

Make learning accessible

Every child has a unique set of learning needs, but teachers may not be familiar or used to thinking about how to make learning accessible for deaf children.

For example, they could try making teaching visual, breaking down complicated language or text into manageable chunks, or teaching new vocabulary when they introduce it. Our videos for primary and secondary school teachers provide information and ideas. You can find them at ndcs.org.uk/heretolearn – why not send them to your child's new teacher?



Assess the acoustics

Noisy environments can make it even harder for deaf children to access information, and schools can be really loud places. ToDs can check the acoustics of a classroom or school hall and make recommendations before your child starts. Schools can also do simple things, like putting a rug down on a hard floor or closing a classroom door to stop the noise as children go past outside. Share our checklist at ndcs.org.uk/goodlisteningconditions with your child's new school.

Positive mental health

Supporting schools to talk about deafness using positive language and positive deaf role models can make a big difference to how everyone in the class thinks, feels and talks about deafness. Your ToD can help schools to develop a positive view of deafness, but you can also share our stories of all the amazing jobs deaf young people do. Go to ndcs.org.uk/role-models to find out more.

Teachers of the Deaf

Throughout all our tips, you'll notice that your child's ToD is going to be the key to making sure they have a smooth start in their new school. They're uniquely placed to provide the bridge between home and school or from one setting to the next.

You can find out more about what a ToD does at ndcs.org.uk/education-services. If you want to know more, we interviewed ToD Anne-Marie in a recent issue of Families. You can read this at ndcs.org.uk/ask-the-expert-tod.

Not all deaf children will get support from a ToD though. If your child has a mild, temporary or unilateral hearing loss then sharing our resources can help teachers to understand how some simple adjustments can make a big impact on their learning. You can find them at ndcs.org.uk/mildhearingloss and ndcs.org.uk/senprofessionals.



Supporting your child's education this summer

✓ Learn how to learn

The summer holidays are a great time for your child to develop and practise the skills that they'll need to make them better learners at school, like problem-solving and independence. Take a look at our webpage for some ideas about how to help your child develop these life skills. ndcs.org.uk/learn-to-learn



✓ Develop working memory

Working memory helps children to keep in mind anything they need to remember whilst they're doing something. It plays a key role in concentration, following instructions and learning many different subjects, including reading and maths. ndcs.org.uk/working-memory



✓ Begin a love of reading

Reading and book sharing are one of the most powerful learning tools. If you can read a book with a deaf character in it, you're also showing your child a brilliant deaf role model. We have lots of reviews of books with deaf characters for all ages. ndcs.org.uk/bookreviews



Technology

Sun, sea and technology

By Gavin Songer (Advice and Guidance Officer)

The summer is an exciting time for many children, especially if a holiday is planned. However, it can be difficult to know what to pack to make sure your child has everything they need with them when staying away from home.

Batteries

- It's important to pack extra batteries, especially when going abroad. Contact your audiologist or battery dispenser if you need additional batteries for your child's hearing device.
- Some modern hearing devices use rechargeable batteries. Make sure all batteries are fully charged and that you take the charger with you, along with the correct travel adaptor for countries overseas.

Hearing devices

- If your child is implanted with a cochlear implant or bone conduction hearing implant, and you'll be going through security at the airport, take a medical identification card with you. Alternatively, contact the hospital for a letter to explain the hearing device to airport security staff. Be sure to have a translation of the letter in the correct language for wherever you're visiting to make sure there's clear communication on return.
- Contact your child's cochlear implant centre or manufacturer well in advance of your holiday to request a loan kit. These provide spare processors in case they're lost or damaged whilst you're away. Please note that a fee may apply to get a holiday loan kit.
 - **Advanced Bionics (AB):** 01223 847888 or info.uk@advancedbionics.com
 - **Cochlear:** 01932 263640 or uktravel@cochlear.com
 - **MED-EL:** 03301 235601 or customerservice@medel.co.uk
- Make sure your child's hearing devices, including any loan kits, are covered by your travel insurance, as hearing devices can be very costly to replace or repair.

Travelling with technology

- Take a portable alarm clock with you – these are usually battery-powered and take up little room in your luggage. The vibrations are typically stronger than a phone alarm, so your child won't have to worry about missing booked flights or planned excursions.
- Headphones and streamers can be used by your child to privately listen to music or watch movies on long journeys, without disturbing other holidaymakers. Most modern hearing devices have Bluetooth connectivity, so you might not need headphones or a streamer.
- In-flight entertainment doesn't always have subtitles, so you may wish to download your child's favourite movies and programmes onto a tablet before the holiday to help pass the time during the journey.





Swimming

- If your child loves swimming, make sure you take some waterproof covers for their cochlear implants. These are available for Advanced Bionics (AB), Cochlear and MED-EL models. For more details, go to ndcs.org.uk/tech-around-water.
- Take a drying box for your hearing device to collect any excess moisture while playing in or near a swimming pool or the sea. This can be a simple container with a drying tablet or an electronic drying box. Remember to take the appropriate adaptor plug to be able to use them abroad.
- If your child removes their hearing devices to avoid losing them or getting them wet, it's useful to agree on some basic signs to help with communication, such as 'Are you OK?', 'Do you want a drink?' or 'Are you too hot?'



Don't forget to add the following to your usual holiday packing list!

- Extra batteries
- Battery charger
- Travel plug adaptor
- Medical identification card/letter from the hospital and translation
- Cochlear implant holiday loan kit
- Vibrating alarm clock
- Headphones/streamers
- Tablet with downloaded films and TV programmes with subtitles
- Waterproof covers for cochlear implants
- Drying box

Becky's travelling tips

Becky, mum to Kenzie (5) who's profoundly deaf, has shared her tips for going on holiday with a deaf child.

- Declare your child's hearing loss when booking flights. This can give you special assistance, which may include assisted boarding and access to quieter areas of the airport.
- If your child is a cochlear implant user, they don't have to go through the body scanner in security. Instead, they can be taken to one side and have a traditional security pat-down.
- The airline should allow free extra hand luggage on the plane for medical equipment, such as any cochlear implant holiday loan kits that you may have organised for peace of mind.
- Sometimes, the excess noise on a plane can be overwhelming for a deaf child. Allow them to remove their hearing devices if they're feeling uncomfortable or upset.
- Most cochlear implants have waterproof covers so that your child can continue wearing them in water. However, it's useful to take a drying box with you to be on the safe side.
- If you're going to an amusement park, such as Disneyland, arrange to get a Priority Card. This can help to bypass the long and noisy queues and allow quick access to the rides.



Reviews

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



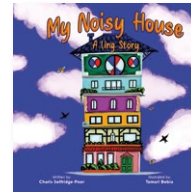
Francis and Sybil

‘My Noisy House: A Ling Story’

By Charis Selfridge-Poor
Available from Amazon
Price: £9.99

0 to 4

5 to 10



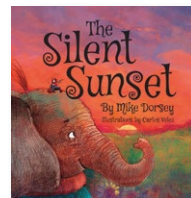
Olive

‘The Silent Sunset’

By Mike Dorsey
Available from Blackwell’s bookshops
(blackwells.co.uk)
Price: £19.95

0 to 4

5 to 10



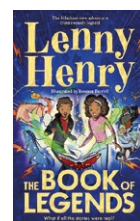
Katie

‘The Book of Legends’

By Lenny Henry
Available from bookshops
Price: £6.99

5 to 10

11 to 14



Key

This resource is most suitable for the following ages:

0 to 4

5 to 10

11 to 14

15 to 18

19 to 25

Parents



‘My Noisy House: A Ling Story’ is a beautifully illustrated rhyming story about a family living in a house with six floors. Each floor represents a different Ling sound – ahh, eee, ooo, shh, sss and mmm. When a child is first given cochlear implants, these sounds feature heavily during speech therapy. If a child can detect all of these sounds, then they should be able to hear speech sounds across all frequencies.

Sybil, Francis and I read the book together at bedtime. The children loved the bright and interesting pictures. There’s loads to talk about on each page, and at the back of

the book is a list of illustrations and their corresponding ‘Learning to Listen’ sounds.

I would have found this book particularly helpful when Sybil was first learning to listen and undergoing auditory verbal therapy (AVT) as a toddler. I’ve not seen anything else like it, and the list of ‘Learning to Listen’ sounds is extremely helpful. After we’d read it, we talked about how hard deaf children have to work to listen, as well as how amazing the technology is that allows them to access sound. I’d certainly recommend it to anyone with a young child

undergoing AVT, but I’d have loved to have seen a character in the book who Sybil could have identified with more.

Sybil said: “I like the book because it has good pictures and rhymes. My brother Francis likes it too. My mum likes it because it has a snake who is a girl. It could be better if it had someone in it who has cochlear implants or hearing aids.”

Holly is mum to Sybil (7) who’s profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, and Francis (4) who has glue ear.

This is a lovely illustrated book, probably suitable for children between the ages of five and seven, depending on ability. Olive liked the pictures and was excited that there was a deaf character, then very excited that the ant had cerebral palsy.

I needed to read the book to Olive, but her older sister read some parts too. Some of the concepts in the book needed simplifying for Olive’s level of understanding, but she especially liked that there was a sunset party.

We have several books with deaf characters in them but don’t have

any books with characters with cerebral palsy and it prompted a conversation about it. Olive said, “He’s little like me, but when I’m bigger I can walk.” It made me realise that while we talk about her deafness a lot, we don’t always talk about her physical needs or what might happen in the future. It’s prompted us to bring that topic into everyday conversations in a positive way.

Olive also learned what a sunset is and was excited the next time we saw one so she could tell me!

It was a lovely, calm bedtime book and I’d recommend it to anyone with children with or without additional needs.

After we read the book, Olive said she likes seeing deaf people. I think she feels this about her wheelchair too, although the character in the book wasn’t in a chair.

Jennie is mum to Olive (5) who’s profoundly deaf and wears cochlear implants, and Connie (6) who’s hearing. Olive also has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair.

The book is about adventure. I feel deaf children can relate to how Bran is feeling, although it’s strange as obviously you can’t see the signing, so they have to say they are signing all the time. Me and my mum read the story together.

I really enjoyed this book. It was really easy to read, and I was excited to read the next part each time. It’s about twins, a brother and sister called Bran and Fran. Bran is deaf and uses sign language to communicate. They go on a magical adventure to find their

missing family members through a story book their mum had written. At the beginning, it had a bit of a sad start, but I enjoyed how the story was full of mini stories and followed their journey to find who had gone missing (no spoilers!).

It was nice to have the British Sign Language (BSL) fingerspelling alphabet at the back of the book. I know how to fingerspell already, but it might be good for people who don’t. I think the book is aimed at children my age. I enjoyed the pretend world and all the different

people and creatures Bran and Fran meet along the way.

Katie (11) is severely to profoundly deaf and wears hearing aids.



Resources

What's new?

Additional needs



What type of information is it?

A new section about deafness and additional needs on our website at ndcs.org.uk/additionalneeds.

Who's it for?

Parents and carers of deaf children and young people who also have other disabilities or conditions.

What's it about?

This information covers a range of additional needs that commonly occur alongside, or can cause, deafness and how deafness interacts with them.

You might also like:

We have more related information about the causes of deafness and genetic counselling at ndcs.org.uk/causes.

'What are you feeling?'



What type of information is it?

An updated resource to help deaf children identify and understand their emotions at ndcs.org.uk/feeling.

Who's it for?

Education professionals working with deaf children aged 3 to 8 years old.

What's it about?

This is a flexible resource which provides teachers and other education professionals with games and exercises to do with deaf children to help them identify and understand their emotions.

You might also like:

This information is part of our offer for education professionals working with deaf children in primary school. You can share these resources with the teachers at your child's school and can find them at ndcs.org.uk/primary-education.

Sign language



What type of information is it?

An updated section about sign language on our website at ndcs.org.uk/signlanguage.

Who's it for?

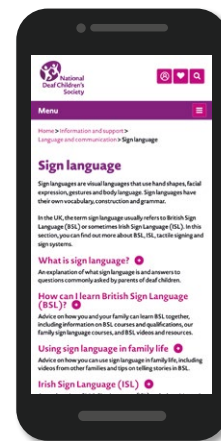
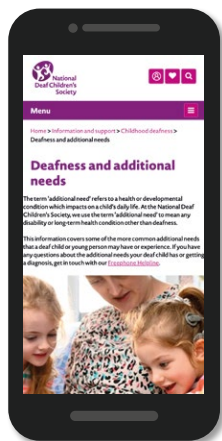
Parents and carers of deaf children and young people who are interested in sign language or learning British Sign Language (BSL).

What's it about?

This information explains what sign language, BSL, Irish Sign Language (ISL), tactile signing and sign systems are.

You might also like:

We have more information about how to choose the right communication approach for your deaf child at ndcs.org.uk/choosing.



We have lots more information booklets and factsheets available to download on our website. Go to ndcs.org.uk/resources to find out more.

Helpline



📞 Freephone 0808 800 8880
✉ helpline@ndcs.org.uk
💬 ndcs.org.uk/helpline



My daughter's severely deaf and has bilateral cochlear implants. She's recently started college and is now at an age where she wants to travel more independently, both around where we live and with her friends on her gap year. As her parents we're quite worried about her safety when she's out and about and she's quite anxious about it herself too. How do I help her to build her confidence for travelling independently and is there anything she can use to make it safer and easier for her?

We know that starting college can be a time of change for deaf young people and building their confidence in their ability to travel independently is important.

One way to build up your daughter's confidence is to start small and try doing some dry runs with her of short journeys that she may need to do regularly. Trialling journeys and pointing out the things she can be aware of, including information points in train, bus and coach stations and airports, can be helpful for building her confidence. If your daughter has a friend making the same journey, they could practise together to make the experience more fun.

However much we plan though, life can be unpredictable. Discussing a few alternative routes before she sets off will help your daughter to feel more able to adapt if something changes on one of her regular journeys.

Travel apps can be really useful when travelling independently, so finding some that are user-friendly can be handy. She's much more likely to use something that she likes and is reliable and fun to engage with. It's worth doing some research and practising with apps before she needs to travel somewhere on her own. You could make an app comparison sheet with your daughter, including which has the

clearest street maps, the best graphics, the most reliable timetables or the most accurate arrival time. For summaries of our top-five travel apps, visit buzz.org.uk/articles/our-five-fave-travel-apps-secondary. Having a fully charged phone and a charger will also help your daughter to feel more prepared and less anxious.

There are lots of other ways you can help your daughter to feel ready to travel independently. It's important for your daughter to have essential contact numbers stored on her phone, so she knows who to contact in an emergency. If your daughter uses a radio aid, this can also be useful when

travelling as it can be quite difficult to differentiate where noises are coming from in noisy environments. Visit ndcs.org.uk/isaac-day-out to read one parent's experience of using a radio aid on a day out and read our guidance for families on using radio aids at ndcs.org.uk/radioaids. You can also share with your daughter our article on the Buzz about using a radio aid at buzz.org.uk/articles/using-a-radio-aid-secondary.

We have some more information about travelling independently at ndcs.org.uk/independent-travel and information about travelling during a gap year at ndcs.org.uk/travel.



Local groups

The journey of a local deaf children's society

How it all started

The idea for Kent Deaf Children's Society was born around a kitchen table when a group of parents – frustrated by a lack of local support – decided to take matters into their own hands.

Word spread and the group they founded began to grow, attracting new families from across the county. Twenty years on, the faces may have changed but the ethos remains the same: to focus on the needs of deaf children and pay strong attention to the role of the family.



Louise

A friendly welcome

"We all remember how it felt to be new," says Louise, Chair of Kent Deaf Children's Society. "I have a strong impression of my first time, when everyone else seemed to know each other and I didn't. We don't want anyone to feel like that, so our volunteers are told beforehand if a new family's coming. They welcome them and keep an eye out to make sure they have a great time.

"Once families are through the door, they stay with us until their kids are 'too cool for school!'"

From toddler groups to their popular signing Rock Choir, there's something for kids of all ages – and for parents, carers, grandparents and extended family too.

It's not just down to Louise's team of friendly, close-knit volunteers; families help each other too. "There's so much knowledge and experience among them," Louise says. "If someone has a question on Facebook about hearing aids, or if they just feel a bit overwhelmed or lonely, our members are there with help and advice. People say, 'I thought I was the only one...' but they're not. It's a whole community, and that's very powerful."



Adapting as they grow

When Covid-19 came along, the group responded with new ways to keep in touch. They planned their Happy and Positive campaign, focusing on a year of wellbeing with a different theme each month.

“We started our year with a focus on communication in the home,” says Vicky, the group’s office administrator. “We sent all our families a pack of conversation cards from The Happy Confident Company designed to prompt new and interesting conversations, helping families enjoy time together and understand each other a little more.”

“There’s something lovely about keeping in touch with people by post, and the cards were a hit, triggering some interesting conversations,” adds Louise. “Sometimes a child’s deafness can get lost in our everyday lives. These helped people check back in and remember the importance of deaf awareness.”

Another big hit was the month they focused on healthy sleep. “We sent our members some relaxing pillow spray that smelled of lavender. The feedback from both kids and parents was really positive,” says Vicky.

Vicky joined the group during the pandemic so her first event was an awards ceremony, where they recognised the achievements of their members. “It was an incredible day where we celebrated the things people had done,” she says. “Just seeing everyone together circulating and catching up, it was like one big family, and the joy on the children’s faces was unforgettable.”



You can get a 20% discount from The Happy Confident Company, by using code NDCS20 at happyconfident.com.



Growing up in my local group

Jayne (20) has mild to moderate hearing loss which was identified when she was four. She was a member of Kent Deaf Children’s Society for over 10 years.

“Although my mum is profoundly deaf, we both grew up in the hearing world. I went to mainstream schools, so I was always surrounded by hearing people. I always felt on the outside.

When I joined Kent Deaf Children’s Society, I made loads of new friends with deafness in common. And I actually made one of my best friends through the group! We’re completely different and without this we would never have become friends. Our deafness is what brought us together.

Finding people who understood helped me have more confidence in the hearing world too – to ask someone to repeat a question, to explain to someone that I’m deaf, to say to the teacher I didn’t hear what they said.”



Jayne



Would you like to join a local group? Use our map to find out if there’s one in your area or learn more about setting up a group yourself at ndcs.org.uk/findlocalgroup.

Events

Joining the world of hearing loss

Lizzi, mum to Colin (5 months), tells us how attending our Supporting Parents New to Hearing Loss event helped reinforce that her son's deafness doesn't need to define him.



Colin and his big brother, Fred

“Colin was referred for further tests as his newborn screening didn't show a clear response. He was then referred for an Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) test, where small sensors are placed on the baby's head while they're asleep.

After multiple rounds of ABR testing, we found out that Colin has moderate hearing loss in his left ear, caused by glue ear, and severe to profound loss in his right ear, caused by a mix of glue ear and sensorineural loss. It was a shock to find out that our child had a hearing loss.

The audiology department gave me lots of useful materials from the National Deaf Children's Society which led me to visit their website. I found reading stories from other families reassuring and signed up for the New to Hearing Loss event as it felt like the next logical step.

As we introduced ourselves at the start, it made me emotional to hear the other parents speak. We were all bonded by our intense desire to do the best for our children. This community has been welcoming and supportive and I'm not sad to join it.

The event was in-person and included talks from an audiologist, parents of deaf children and deaf

individuals. I was struck by the number of people willing to give up their Saturdays to be there!

There were also some thoughtful things to take away from the event, for example, puppets to accompany nursery rhymes and cards to show you how to sign along to the songs.

I'd recommend the event to other parents as it was extremely useful, particularly if only one parent attends many of the appointments. It provided a well-rounded insight into hearing loss and ways to adapt family life to maximise your child's opportunity to learn. I knew already, but the information reinforced that Colin's deafness doesn't need to define him.”



The community has been welcoming and supportive.





Signing for all the family

Bev, who's grandma to Pippa (5 months), explains why she and the whole family decided to join our online Family Sign Language course.

“We had no previous knowledge of deafness and it was a complete shock to find out Pippa was severely deaf at four weeks old. My mind raced ahead to what the future would hold and how we might communicate. To begin with I felt inadequate as a grandparent and wondered how I could help her. Now I'm more focused on the here and now and have started to feel easier about things.

My daughter Hannah told me about the six-week Family Sign Language course and we all signed up, including both sets of Pippa's grandparents. We wanted to feel reassured that we could communicate with Pippa at a good level.

My husband Paul and I were apprehensive as we'd never used Zoom before. Hannah set it up for us and by the second week we started to relax. It was nice to be able to take part in the comfort of our own home.

Each session started with an introduction, a recap of the previous week and a summary of what we'd cover in the lesson. Then there would be breakout rooms set up for each UK nation so we could learn signs specific to our region. The hour went by so quickly. The tutors were so encouraging and enthusiastic and they made us laugh. I was really grateful that they'd given their time on a Tuesday evening.

We learned different signs for colours, nursery rhymes and members of the family, as well as signs related to play and going to the park. We learned the fingerspelling alphabet and some signs that are particularly useful for young children, such as 'milk' and 'nappy'. We were also given tips for communicating with Pippa, such as making sure the light is on our face and not behind us, speaking clearly and one at a time and tapping her on the shoulder or waving to attract her attention.

At the moment I find the nursery rhymes really useful when interacting with Pippa but we'll be able to pull out different things as she gets older. We've continued practising and watching the videos that were shared during the course. My husband and I found the course so valuable and feel that we achieved and gained a lot.”

“We've continued practising and watching the videos.”



Bev and Pippa

All our events are interactive and offer information, support and the opportunity to share experiences. Our events now take place online and in-person.

- Happy Futures – Transforming deaf children's mental health
- New to Hearing Loss
- My Child's Mild Hearing Loss
- My Child Has Unilateral Hearing Loss
- Hearing Care at Home
- Sleep Issues



All of our events are free, with closed captioning online and British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. We can also organise other language interpreters if necessary. Places are limited, so booking is essential. For full details of our events and to book your place, visit ndcs.org.uk/events or call our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880.

Campaigns

Listen up!

All deaf children should be seen by qualified audiology staff and have access to the appointments and equipment they need, without facing long waits. But our latest research into children's audiology services in England shows some trends that we're worried about.

Listen Up report: April 2023



1. The number of audiology staff is going down.

There are now 20% fewer children's audiology staff than in 2019.



2. Many deaf children are not seen often enough by their audiology service.

8 in 10 services told us they struggle to review children with hearing aids on time.



3. Many children with glue ear face a long wait for treatment.

More than half of services told us the children they referred to Ear, Nose and Throat services missed their waiting time targets for grommet surgery.



What needs to change?

We want all children's audiology services to be held to the same standard. That's why we're asking NHS England to:

- ensure that all children's audiology services meet quality standards
- recruit a new National Specialist Advisor to oversee the quality of services
- make sure data about children's audiology services is published regularly, so we can monitor what's happening across the country.

These changes will help make sure that every deaf child has access to a high-quality service and the best support from the start.

Kirstie and Tommie's story

Kirstie, mum to Tommie (7) who's profoundly deaf, shares her family's experience with their local children's audiology service.

"When Tommie didn't pass his newborn hearing screening, we were told this was probably due to him being born prematurely and to try not to worry about it.

We went back to audiology when Tommie was 10 months old, and they said everything was fine and they'd review him again in a few months. At the next test, we were told the same thing again. When I asked why his speech hadn't developed, I was told it was because he was born prematurely and because 'boys are lazy'.

I was really worried about Tommie's speech delay and mentioned it to health visitors and other professionals, but I kept being told that he'd catch up eventually.

Tommie was non-verbal, except for saying 'brum brum' or 'mam mam'. He was so clearly behind, and we didn't get any support from professionals. It still upsets me when I think back to this time.

The day before Tommie's third birthday, we were at a paediatric appointment, and I had to beg for him to be sent for a hearing test. We were convinced there was something wrong with his hearing. I could mute the television or the doorbell would ring, and he wouldn't flinch.

We had to wait several more months for a hearing test but finally it was confirmed that Tommie had a severe to profound hearing loss on both sides.

That was Tommie's eighth hearing test and he was three-and-a-half years old. I was relieved, to be honest, as it had been a battle to get answers to the questions we'd been asking for so long.

The years leading up to the diagnosis were tough for all of us as a family. Tommie became increasingly frustrated. He'd lash out at me, bang his head on cupboard doors and claw at his legs in fits of tears. It's been one of the hardest things to deal with for me, not understanding why my child was so upset and feeling useless when I tried to comfort him.

Tommie was given hearing aids initially. By pure chance, we were seen by a different speech and language



therapist one day. She asked me why Tommie had been given hearing aids rather than cochlear implants. I told her that our local audiology service had told us that Tommie didn't fit the criteria for cochlear implants.

We then got a second opinion from a private audiologist who got the ball rolling for Tommie to be fitted with implants.

It was a scary decision to make but the operation went well, and the cochlear implants have been life-changing. Tommie is making progress all the time. His speech and language are really improving, and his perseverance is inspiring. We're so proud of him.

Tommie is seven now and is such a happy, kind and caring little boy. He's in a mainstream school with one-to-one support and is doing very well.

I'm so glad that we kept pushing for further tests and a second opinion – but parents shouldn't have to do this."



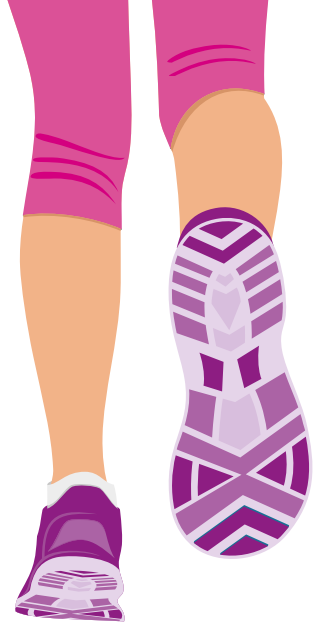
Read more about what's happening with children's audiology services in England at ndcs.org.uk/listen-up.

If you've had a similar experience or there's anything you'd like to discuss about your audiology service, please contact our Freephone Helpline on 0808 800 8880 or visit ndcs.org.uk/helpline.

Fundraising

Put your best foot forward for deaf children

We have places in some of the most sought-after running events. Set yourself a challenge and make a difference for deaf children!



Great North Run – 10 September 2023

Starting in Newcastle, the Great North Run is the UK's biggest and best half marathon. Take part in this televised event that attracts world-class athletes like Mo Farah and Haile Gebrselassie. With 57,000 runners taking part, the atmosphere is guaranteed to be electric!



Royal Parks Half Marathon – 8 October 2023

Known as Britain's most beautiful half marathon, the race takes a scenic route winding through four of London's Royal Parks and passing iconic landmarks including the London Eye, Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament. Run this flat course on closed roads and enjoy the amazing central London location!



TCS London Marathon – April 2024

Fancy an even bigger challenge? This world-famous marathon takes you right through the capital. With 50,000 runners and thousands more spectators lining the streets to cheer you on, the atmosphere at the London Marathon is like no other!

*Please note, registration fees and minimum sponsorship applies.



Zubeda took part in the Great North Run last year and raised over £900.

"I lost my hearing for a year as a child; it was a scary and traumatic time. But, after a successful operation, I was able to hear again. So, when I was asked if I'd run the Great North Run in aid of the National Deaf Children's Society, I jumped at the chance! I got goosebumps because it brought back all of the memories of losing my hearing as a child. I believed this was my opportunity to try and help young people with hearing difficulties.

I've been a regular runner since I started running in 2012. At the time, I was a full-time carer and running gave me that space to reconnect with myself. Since then, I've run multiple races for charity and raised thousands of pounds. I believe if I can run and fundraise, then I should!

The best bit about running the Great North Run is the people there and the volunteers on the day. The love that I felt from everyone, and the spirit of Newcastle, was the best feeling! I didn't have my family with me on the day, so the volunteers made me feel like I wasn't on my own. It was a great achievement getting my medal at the end and a lovely lady took a video of me so I could send it to my husband.

If someone is thinking of running and making a difference, I'd say go for it."



To find out more, go to ndcs.org.uk/runwithus. You can also get in touch with the team at ndcschallenges@ndcs.org.uk.

When I'm a grown-up

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

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

I'm a community manager and marketing executive because...

Helping people to change their lifestyle and behaviour is so special. My job involves working on the Feel Good Hub, a wellbeing community whose purpose is to help members live healthier, happier and hopefully longer lives. I help plan our content, post on social media, review analytics and produce graphics.

I'd never thought about a job in marketing but when I read the job description I thought it would be an incredible opportunity. I'm so happy in my current job – my work colleagues are very accommodating. On calls they have cameras switched on to allow me to lip-read and they repeat anything I don't catch.

I have a severe bilateral hearing loss. It's hereditary and has gradually deteriorated. At the moment, I'm waiting for an audiology appointment to change to Bluetooth hearing aids so I can connect them to my work laptop for calls.

My advice is not to give up and to keep trying to find a job that suits you. Above all, your happiness is important and you should never settle for less. If your needs in a job aren't being met, please speak up.

Sarah Morrison



I'm an HR business partner because...

I love helping others and I get to meet many amazing and diverse people. I project manage the roll-out of new HR systems, I'm involved in data and reporting, and I help to run payroll.

After university, I struggled to find a job, like many other graduates. My family and friends kept me going. After six months, I found a job as an HR data administrator and have progressed rapidly in the field.

I have a high-pitched frequency loss and wear hearing aids. I've always been open about how my team should communicate with me. The key is finding workplaces that take the time to understand my abilities and what they can do to help.

I have a Google Pixel 7 Pro mobile with closed captioning for phone calls. I also use software called Otter.ai, which is great for picking up speech and saving transcripts to refer back to later.

If you're looking for a job, speak to recruiters, have a LinkedIn page, and make sure your CV is clear and concise. But the most important thing is to be yourself.

Milan Taylor



I'm an election agent and campaign manager because...

Working in politics is never dull and no two days are the same! I get to meet people from all walks of life and help them to resolve issues.

As election agent, I'm in charge of coordinating and running local government elections. This often means being the first point of contact for lots of people around election time. I'm also campaign manager for an MP, which involves creating literature and graphics, planning leaflet delivery and organising volunteers.

I got to where I am by volunteering in politics. It led to me attending a political event, where I was recommended for a job vacancy and then got the job of election agent.

I'm moderately to severely deaf and use a captioning app called Otter.ai, which is paid for through Access To Work. I also use a deaf-friendly phone with adjustable volume control.

If you have a passion, networking is key – whether that's through volunteering, social events, job fairs and conferences. As a deaf person, this can be difficult, but networking through social media sites like LinkedIn can also be effective.

Hannah Fisher

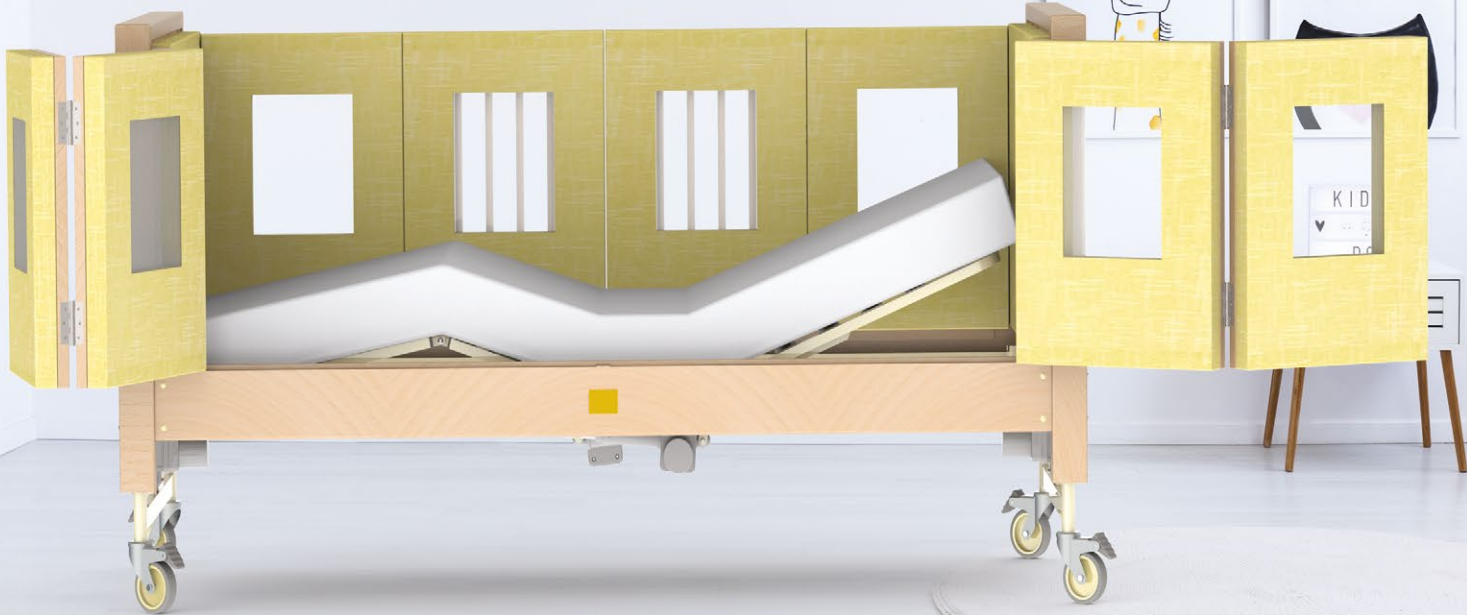


➔ What does your child want to be when they grow up? For more information on careers, check our section about life after leaving school at ndcs.org.uk/leavingschool.



We continue to support healthcare professionals and clients by offering online assessment or home visits. Call us now on **01978 820714**

Designed to provide safety, comfort and style our unique cots and beds can be made to any size your room will accommodate.



www.kinderkey.co.uk

Designed to provide safety, comfort and style



YEAR 7 ASSESSMENTS

at Mary Hare School



IT IS NEVER TOO EARLY TO START THE PROCESS OF YOUR CHILD'S TRANSITION INTO SECONDARY SCHOOL

Applications are now open for families with deaf children looking for a Year 7 place at Mary Hare School for September 2024.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO BOOK AN ASSESSMENT ONLINE
OR USE THE LINK BELOW:**

www.maryhare.org.uk/booking-form-visit-or-entrance-assessment-booking

OR CALL US: 01635 244 200



Securing the future of deaf children and young people

www.maryhare.org.uk | [@MaryHareSchool](https://www.instagram.com/MaryHareSchool)   