

ANNUAL REPORT

Deaflink North East

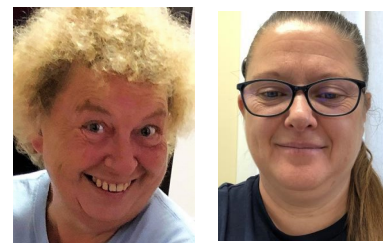
2019/2021

Chairs Comments - Maureen McGarrity

What an interesting last two years this has been!

You may have noticed that we didn't have an AGM last year because we were too busy trying to keep safe and deliver our services so I will try and summarise the main events for 2019-21.

In terms of the Deaflink Board we have had to say goodbye to 2 Chairs. The first, Jo Nicolls, had been our chair since 2012 and she stepped down in February 2020. She was replaced by Jo Fortune and she served for just over a year before resigning – she became a staff member at Deaflink. We are grateful to both of them for their dedication and support—THANK YOU BOTH. I became the Deaflink Chair in February 2021.



In May 2019 we started the D/deaf Rights work (funded by the lottery). This made big changes to our work and we have been able to support BSL users in lots of new ways. This was especially important in the COVID lockdown in March 2020.

The D/deaf Communities have had to learn to use technologies they never knew about –“what's a Zoom?” We have had to be flexible and creative in working together to continue to deliver services to the D/deaf communities who, overnight, were denied access to many services who shut their doors. The staff continued to provide help and support D/deaf people when no other service could.



In March 2020 we were in the process of moving offices and, when we went into the first lockdown, everything went into storage – apart from the computers. We were finally able to move into the new offices in October.

I am proud of the work of the staff, the board, the volunteers and let's not forget the communication support professionals who have all pulled together to enable Deaflink to continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people.



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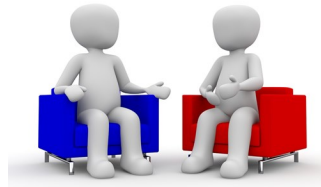
Board meetings on Zoom

2019-21 D/deaf support

One to one work

2019/20

We provided information, advice and support to **208** D/deaf people. This work included 436 meetings with them and it involved over 823 hours staff time.



2020/21

We provided information, advice and support to **161** D/deaf people. This work included 825 meetings/contacts with them and it involved over 1420 hours staff time.

Group work

2019/20

We delivered **106** groups and forums with **163** people attending. On average each person attended 7 times a year.



One of the highlights was a wood carving course and this brought together a group of Deaf people who learnt new skills together.

2020/21

We delivered **155** groups and forums with **78** people attending. On average each person attended 9 times a year. All of these meetings were online.

In 2019/20 went to **79** meetings and events to raise awareness of the issues and barriers affecting D/deaf people. 2020/21 we went to 39 video meetings

Wednesday Bingo meeting



In 2019/20 we were working hard to build our Deaf Rights work and had a steady increase in D/deaf people accessing our service. We were building relationships with agencies within Newcastle and raising awareness of the issues affecting D/deaf people. At the end of this year we went into a national lockdown. Deaflink did not stop delivering our service but we did have to change how we delivered it.

We faced a number of challenges:

- BSL users with no access to computers
- GP's, Hospitals, Banks and Council departments closed their doors and were accessible only by telephone and emails.
- Government information briefings were not signed.
- Some clients could only communicate by letter

Several of our clients had no way of communicating with anyone or any agency. None of them were identified as vulnerable by anyone, some were shielding.

We worked to identify the individuals who did not have computer access or knew how to do video calls and we helped them build their skills. We did this with IT equipment provided by a lottery grant, safe home visits and online coaching.

We created new, online ways to connect with people. We delivered a weekly bingo/quiz group and created Facebook pages. We produced weekly newsletters and for these we created BSL video's to provide accessible information on Covid and developments.

Covid has had a significant impact on people's access to services—for the D/deaf community it has created impossible barriers and for many those barriers are still there.

We sent out fortnightly ebulletins to **332** people.





Hard of Hearing project

Louise McGlen took over the post of Hard of Hearing Involvement Worker in December 2019 and had three months before we were hit by Covid-19. Adaptability, quick learning and trial and error enabled us to continue to provide a service, using video messaging, social media, phone and text. Both SHHH and Tinnitus Groups ran virtually using Google Meet (which offered good subtitles) backed up by private Facebook groups and a Hard of Hearing Facebook Page.

Many of the new online services were not set up for people who cannot hear over the phone. Our work has included helping people to access hearing aid repairs, solve issues with or access hearing equipment. We frequently reminded organisation that providing just a phone number as means of contact was a problem for many.

We found a range of solutions to help everyday life with face masks, which make conversation even harder to follow. Solutions included using the sunflower lanyard, "I lip read" badges and Nexus Bridge cards (these alert staff to the communication needs of an individual). One new development has been live transcribe an app free on android phones that provides speech to text support for conversations. We have supported several people to download and use on their phones and have had very positive feedback about the positive impact it has had.



Finances

Thanks to our Funders and contributors - Newcastle Fund and National Lottery Community Fund. Also a big **THANK YOU** for the wonderful donations from members of the public. It all helps keep Deaflink ticking over.



We Spent

Our Income

	2019/20	2020/21
We Spent	84,990	86,412
Our Income	92,357	100,746

For a full copy of our 2019/20 and our 2020/21 accounts please contact Heidi Jobling on 0191 281 2314 or email: heidi@deaflink.org.uk or look online at Charity Commission website.

DEAFLINK PEOPLE

The last 18 months have been some of the most difficult people have faced but it has also reminded us of what is most important.

We are lucky to have a such a wonderful team of people.



We have to say thank you and best wishes in your retirement to both Bob Weiner and Jenny Wright. Long standing Board members who brought wisdom, passion and commitment (and pretty good chocolate brownies). Many thanks also to the staff and volunteers. And to those who have moved on to new things— you will always be a part of the Deaflink family.



THE WINNERS. In December 2019 we had our first Helen Howie Golf competition. Congratulations—Mairhi, Emma, Dolly and Maggie.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Bingo & Kahoot! was helpful to feel less isolated and have a chat with people to make my day x

Thank you 😊

Although I don't participate in your online meetings, I really do appreciate these emails you send out and the information you circulate.

Ok I am enjoyed with kahoot like bingo then kahoot like questions really useful and seen them nice people there also can talks them too so it really fun so good for us

I learnt how to Zoom which opened me up to chats with friends

Thanks for this afternoon. It is so satisfying and interesting to have a chat and make contact with the outside world!

I look forward to the face-to-face meetings when they eventually happen. In the meantime it is good to share experiences with like-minded people.

The subtitles were very helpful... I missed some bits, but caught most of it.

Just wanted to let you know how happy you made me

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