

ANNUAL REPORT

Deaflink North East

2021/2022



Chairs Comments Maureen McGarrity



Welcome to this year's annual report. This report covers the work we did in the last financial year (01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022).

I have enjoyed watching Deaflink, and the D/deaf communities begin to meet and socialise again. Covid has not gone but we all need to learn to live with it and to be aware of the need to be safe and to support each other.

The Covid lockdown highlighted difficulties and access for the Deaf and hard of hearing communities. It was a bit worrying that lots of services have continued to provide their services through telephone and email. This is not accessible for many people and we will continue to raise concerns.

This was our final year of lottery funding for Deaf Rights - providing support and advocacy for BSL users. This was a very successful project and highlighted the lack of understanding of accessible services for D/deaf people. I am proud to say it was a lifeline for many people during lockdown and has provided evidence of the gaps and we continue to find ways to deliver support to the Deaf communities. I am positive about the work of the Health Navigators that starts in April 2022 - supporting BSL users to access hospital treatment is so important.

I would like to thank the staff and volunteers at Deaflink, they continue to work to high standards for all of the D/deaf communities in Newcastle and the North East. Also to the committee - we learnt new technical skills, adapted the video meetings for BSL users and all done in a supportive and patient way.

And finally a very big thank you to the D/deaf communities who continue to support us in our work.



The walking group

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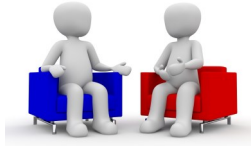
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2021-22 D/deaf support

One to one work

In this year we provided information, advice and support to **222** D/deaf people.

This work included **1689** meetings or contacts with our clients.



This involved over **2375** hours staff time.

There were **100** Home Visits



478 video meetings

And **68** office visits



“ This year has not been easy. We have lots of vulnerable D/ deaf people from across the north east contacting us for help. The staff try their best but we do not have the resources to meet everyone’s needs. The commitment and passion of the staff to the D/deaf communities has helped but we cannot rely on this forever.”

Maureen McGarrity, Chair

- As part of our work it is essential that we find ways to improve other services and understanding and we continued to meet with organisations raising awareness of the barriers affecting D/deaf people.
- We have also been able to deliver D/deaf Awareness training to 3 organisations. We ran events during D/deaf awareness Week and BSL awareness Week.
- We sent out newsletters to **335** people 30 times last year. Sharing information in an accessible format.
- We met with Newcastle City Council staff to discuss how the messages around Covid and vaccinations has failed to reach the BSL community.
- We were able launch the Health Navigator programme that officially starts on the 1st April and have great hopes that we can work together with the Hospital Trusts to improve Deaf access to health services. As part of the preparation we completed the NHS data security toolkit which involved a full review of systems and procedures within Dealink to make sure we maintain full confidentiality and privacy of our clients.

BSL Groups and Events

We began this year continuing with our online meetings, these were very important for the people attending but many of our D/deaf clients could not access these meetings. In July we were able to start meeting up again - always making sure we were avoiding risks and staying safe. We started up our Saturday Forum every 3 months and the 'Drop in and Chat' and the Dog Walking were monthly meetings. Gradually more people came and it's been great to see the communities enjoying meeting up again. So much so that clients are asking for extra events and opportunities to meet up and socialise and we will be delivering these in the next year.

In total Deaflink delivered 91 groups in 2021/22 and had 95 different people attending. On average each person attended an event 6 times this year.

During lockdown we were able to help some D/deaf people to start using computers and tablets, thanks to a grant from the National Lottery we were able to supply some equipment. We were asked by our clients to continue with the training and have been helping people with emails and video meetings. Well done to all those people who learnt new skills.

Information Technology



Thank you to Utilita Arena in Newcastle for the tickets to see Strictly Come Dancing when it came to town. Our clients and volunteers attended and loved being able to see a BSL accessible show.

2021-22 Hard of Hearing

Hearing Loss Support Group.

From meeting virtually through Google Meet to actual face to face meetings beginning in July numbers gradually started to pick up and we worked on options for alternative city centre meeting spaces (many previous options are no longer available) and settled on upstairs in Shearers which we plan to use next year.

Tinnitus Support Group.

We continued to be in contact with members via email and phone. By the end of the year we had a lot more new tinnitus referrals coming though who needed additional support before being ready to attend meetings. We experimented with evening online as well actual afternoon meetings. The BTA reported lower take up of support groups both online and face to face across the country. We will monitor what happens with this group next year but people do engage with emails.

Deaf Awareness

Working with our colleagues at Deaflink who are BSL users we have been able to deliver training and run information stalls.

It is essential that we continue to increase the public understanding of D/deafness and the impact on people who have hearing loss.

One to one Support.

We resolved issues including support to access PIP for clients, enabling access to healthcare, sensory support, troubleshooting problems with hearing aids/ hearing equipment or issues relating to tinnitus.

As we move on from the pandemic many services have revised how they deliver. For many people with hearing loss contacting people on the telephone is very difficult. A shift towards new technology such as Bluetooth has left some confused and struggle to find support.

Services and organisations must try and remember there are some people who have communication issues and face to face support is essential.

Louise, Jo and Barney at the Haymarket Metro in Deaf Awareness Week





Finances

Thanks to our Funders and contributors - Newcastle Fund, Sir James Knott Trust and National Lottery Community Fund.

Also a big **THANK YOU** for the wonderful donations from members of the public this included Matthew Harkin and Paul Spybey. After attending the Strictly Come Dancing event Maureen McGarrity, Rachael and Malcolm Bell very kindly made donations to Deaflink.

All of the money donated goes towards the costs of delivering the Deaflink service in the North East.

	2021/22
We Spent	90,705
Our Income	94,285

For a full copy of our 2021/22 accounts please contact Heidi Jobling by email: heidi@deaflink.org.uk or look online at Charity Commission website.

DEAFLINK PEOPLE



One of the Board of Trustees online meetings. Thanks to Maureen for the photography skills

We are a team at Deaflink - the volunteers; the Board members and the staff. We all are committed and passionate about what Deaflink does - we bring together people, support each other and fight for the rights of people who have all levels of hearing loss.

We do our work with humour, respect and compassion.

THANK YOU TEAM

Fun Fact - Emma Ashie-Neequaye is our longest serving volunteer and has supported Deaflink for many years. Not many people know that she ran the Great North Run twice - in 2010 and 2011. Raising money for Deaflink at the same time - thanks Emma - you are a star .



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