

# ANNUAL REPORT



Deaflink North East

2022/2023

## Chair Comments by Maureen McGarrity

Welcome to this year's annual report. I am pleased to report that Deaflink has enjoyed a great year supporting the D/deaf communities. It is so important that D/deaf people have the opportunity to meet and share experiences and it's lovely to catch up with you all. We even managed, working with Northumbria Deaf Church, to arrange a signed Christmas Carol service where we could all join the fun.



The Health Navigator service has been very busy, making sure that BSL users can access hospital treatment, that they have accessible information about their treatments and an interpreter is present at all of their appointments. We have been able to work with the hospital staff and encouraged them to understand more about the barriers to healthcare. We will continue to work together to try to remove the barriers.

This Report is for April 2022 to March 2023.

It includes:

- Chairs comments
- Services
- Finances
- People
- Statistics

The long awaited BSL Act became law in 2022 and we are hopeful that the Government will promote and include the use of BSL in all aspects of society. Soon, they will be teaching children BSL as a language option in schools and I understand that there are record numbers of people signing up to learn British Sign Language. Hopefully, this will lead to a more D/deaf friendly place to live.

There have been challenges, the cost of living crisis has impacted everyone and in many cases, Deaf people have been relying on Deaflink to provide information about grants and payments that can help.

In February, we were told that we needed to move from our offices because the landlord needed the space - we were able to move in May 2023 and the new address is on the back page.

I would like to thank the volunteers, the committee and the staff at Deaflink for their hard work over the last 12 months.



Carol Service, December 2022

## BSL Groups and Events

### Mosaic Workshop (New)

BSL users went to the Mosaic workshop for 6 sessions to create mosaic pieces of art with Tyne Housing at Byker. We all enjoyed the experience of learning something new and found it very therapeutic and relaxing. It was interesting to create butterflies and others from just an idea in our heads to the finished piece of art. We had not had anything like this before and found it very interesting and astonishing the amount of work that goes into the Mosaics.



### Deaf Forum

We have run several Deaf Forums on Saturday mornings for Deaf BSL users, 4 times a year, we covered topics about Health Navigators, the Macmillan Deaf Cancer project, Health access to hospitals and Electoral Commission to provide an opportunity for D/deaf people to learn more about the subjects and ask questions. The forums can be a vital way of providing information to the D/deaf community in an accessible format.

### Drop in Chat

We run a drop-in and chat group once a month on Tuesday afternoons, the numbers have increased, and the group provides an opportunity for individuals to chat with their friends as well as the BSL Information Officer providing information on current affairs affecting the Deaf community. For example, we had a guest speaker from Newcastle Council talk about Newcastle Clear Air Zone.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> May Deaf Awareness Week

We displayed information and leaflets on our services including the types of support we provide, our various groups, the Health Navigator project etc. at the Monument Metro Station and Newcastle University for Deaf awareness week.

### Ghost Walk (New)

We had eighteen BSL users come along to the Ghost Walk tour in Newcastle. We all enjoyed learning about the history of the city as well as the ghost sightings and the stories behind them. Some of us were surprised at what we learnt as we had no idea of the ghosts and the history around us. Thanks to Emma Watson for interpreting for us. It was a great tour.



In total Deaflink delivered **87 groups in 2022/23** and had **139 different people attending**. On average each person attended an event 5 times this year.



### Wood Carving - 6 weeks sessions (New)

Six BSL users went to the wood carving for 6 sessions. At first, people were unsure about the wood carving but they loved it, creating their own animals like hedgehogs, rabbits, foxes, owls, red robins, and ducks. We were very impressed at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> session to see the outcome of our hard work. A number of our clients found the sessions very therapeutic, taking their frustrations and stress out on the wood while creating an end product to be proud of.

### Newcastle/Gateshead Top Bus

BSL users went on bus tour in Newcastle and Gateshead for an hour. They enjoyed learning more about the city they live in

watching the BSL interpreter explaining all the history around Newcastle / Gateshead. It was a nice ride out; the weather was lovely and dry for the afternoon day out.



### Ten Pin Bowling

The group went to Eldon Square to have a game of ten-pin bowling for fun and catch up with friends. The event proved very competitive, with each team trying to win but in a fun and relaxed atmosphere. Everyone enjoyed the event stating they would like to do this again.

### Taster Music Sessions (New)

Eight BSL users went to a Taster Music session with Tyne Housing. At first, they thought it was impossible because they can't hear the music. But it was not about listening to music, it was about the vibration of the musical instruments, tongue drum, xylophone, bongos, tambourine, D shape & sound therapy. We all took turns, playing different rhythms 1,2,3,4, 1,2,3,4 and we practiced. Some of the BSL users can hear with hearing aids or Cochlear implants. Some can feel the vibrations with their body feeling the different rhythms. They loved this new experience and want to do this again.



### Christmas Carols (New)

This is the first time we held a Christmas carol service with Northumbria Deaf Church at St Andrews Church on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2022.



Twenty-four people attended. They were brave to come along because it was snowing. Several people came in Christmas jumpers or Christmas hats to get into the Christmas spirit. We sang Christmas carols in BSL then refreshments were provided at the end of the Christmas carols.

### Walking Group

This group meet every month to go for walks, some bring their dogs, and everyone is welcome. If the weather is bad then we meet up for a chat.

# Hard of Hearing work

Louise McGlen

## Hearing Loss Support Group

We have become established in Shearers Bar upstairs. Group members are very happy with the location. Speakers have included Audiology, Phonak, Carers Centre and the Hatton Gallery. We arranged a visit to the Hatton to see one of the exhibitions mentioned during the session. Members commented that viewing art is an activity they can enjoy on an equal footing to others – there is no stress about missing anything as the exhibition information available throughout and is easy to read at the Hatton. One member commented that they may not have thought to go to an art gallery before but now felt it was an activity they could do.



## Tinnitus Support Group.

Attendance has remained lower than prior to lockdown although 20 members requested to stay on the email circulation list, some in case they needed to attend others to stay connected to a source of support.



Hard of Hearing Group at Shearers Bar

## Working with other agencies

It's important to work with other organisations to share information and gain better understanding. We work with the audiology team at NuTH. They have given us tips to share with our clients:

- Give them as much information as possible when requesting an appointment can help speed things up
- They cannot help with straightforward connectivity issues.

Many hard of hearing people have difficulties understanding the technology and they require support to use their new hearing aids.

RJs hearing had deteriorated a lot and she was quite distressed – we met up to see if we could work out some of her phone issues. We worked out that the text relay app needs better Wi-Fi connection than she has available at her house. She liked the look of live transcribe and we put it onto her phone. She started attending hearing Loss Support Group and has become a regular attendee – she likes that we have a Palantypist so she can read what she can't hear.

“I feel relaxed at the meetings because everyone is in the same situation.”



## Statistics 2022 – 23

In this year we provided information, advice and support to **238** D/deaf people.

This work included **2989** meetings or contacts with our clients.



This involved over **1678** hours staff time.



There were **57** Home Visits



**621** video meetings



And **64** office visits

## Finances

Thanks to our Funders and contributors - Newcastle Fund, the People's Postcode Lottery, the Barbour Foundation and the Hadrian Trust. We very much appreciate the funding we have received from CNTW, Newcastle Hospital Charity and Northumbria Healthcare Bright Charity to help us to deliver the Health Navigator programme.

Also a big **THANK YOU** for the wonderful donations from members of the public. We would especially like to thank our former Chair, Jo Nicolls for her very generous donation.

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

Budget	2022/23
We Spent	£102,683
Our Income	£105,073

We are a team at Deaflink and we are proud, committed and passionate about what we do - we bring together people, support each other and fight for the rights of people who have all levels of hearing loss. **THANK YOU TEAM**

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