



Deaflink North East ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15



Deaflink

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**Lord John Shipley,
Patron**



Diverse Deafness
Energy
Advocacy
Friendship
Language
Individuality
Networking
Resources

Deaflink is an open, inclusive and supportive organisation working to empower and improve the quality of life of deaf people.

We are the only organisation within Newcastle that works with D/deaf (with a capital 'D' referring to British Sign Language users), hard-of-hearing and deafblind people.

The aim of Deaflink is to:

Improve access for all D/deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people in Newcastle and the North East

To raise awareness of the needs of the D/deaf communities.

We do this through:



AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

Equality and Diversity Statement

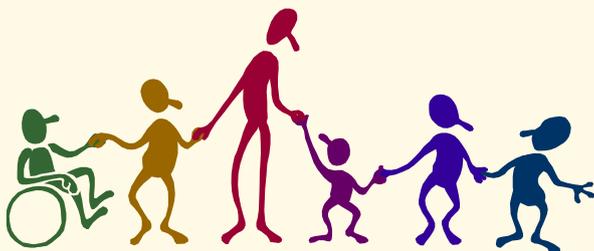
Board of Trustees

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

Deaflink is committed to a positive policy of equal opportunity in the delivery of its services and employment.

Deaflink will actively oppose all forms of discrimination carried out on the grounds of gender, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, social background, age, marital status, those with HIV status, and discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

Deaflink is determined that the principles of equality of opportunity and embracing diversity will underpin all service provision. Services will aim to be accessible to those who need or want them. Within the framework of collective provision there will be recognition of difference and individual choice.



In all aspects of employment, Deaflink will operate a positive equality and diversity framework from recruitment and selection through training and development, employment procedures, consultation and participation and appraisal.

Direct and indirect discrimination will be eliminated and positive measures will be introduced to redress imbalances, including the use of positive action provisions within the law.

Applications for jobs are considered on merit and equal opportunities will exist for all facing disadvantage and possible discrimination.



Deaflink will ensure that all staff concerned with the provision and delivery of services does so in accordance with Deaflink's equality and diversity policies and the law. To achieve our aims we will:

- Promote equal opportunities and ensure that it is integrated throughout the organisation
- Design our services to meet the needs of our community
- Combat discrimination wherever it occurs and, in particular, discrimination against the groups in the scope of this statement
- Provide training and guidance to all staffs to ensure Deaflink commitment to equal opportunities is known and understood
- Review all systems and procedures in the provision of service to ensure equality of opportunity, responsiveness, sensitivity and accessibility
- Give active support to the community to enable participation in service development and decision making
- Performance will be constantly monitored and evaluated against equal opportunities objectives
- Challenge acts of harassment

Jo Nicolls

It was a year of ending and new beginnings with the departure of Rhona and the arrival of Simon in March. A new direction is inevitable with a new focus in the team. However, let's look back at the past year first.

The BSL week was a great achievement in hosting two events. A show of gloves signing around the Monument to highlight BSL and the other was the Civic Centre Political debate 'Question Time'.

In this report you will see opinion about the Equality Act where reasonable adjustments are supposed to make lives easier and fairer when in fact the adjustments are actually unreasonable towards Deaf people. Some of the benefits don't consider deafness as too severe an issue to be a disability to award benefit and yet, on the other side of the coin, it's costing the government too much money to keep us in employment effectively! Pick one!

For our Hard of Hearing Newcastle residents, 'Let's loop Newcastle' took place with a dedicated group of volunteers auditing loop systems in a variety of situations around Newcastle, such as banks and coffee shops for example. The findings were pretty damning and more work is planned to continue this in the very near future.

One of the biggest piece of work Deaflink has undertaken, is finding out and sharing with the deaf community the issues around Hospitals and booking interpreters systems. A real quagmire which changes probably every so often with new tenders and bids. Many deaf people were finding themselves in hospital whether admission or out patient appointment and no interpreter is present. It's been a careful

investigation into where the problem is and we're still looking?!

Whatever it is, the main reason given to the deaf person can very much be guaranteed the same answer...."The interpreter's car has broken down" (even when we know that interpreter can't drive, but shh let that be our little secret for now!)

Surveys of all kinds, commissioned by the health authority has shown a need for more BSL accessible information required of ailments, illnesses and treatments. With so much technology available, there are still huge gaps in ensuring the BSL community are given the opportunity to make informed choices about their own health.

The sudden departure of Rhona from Deaflink, who had planned for years to retire, was probably one of the worse ways to leave an organisation she was passionate about for so many years. Nothing could have prepared us for the covering of her work. We were thankful to be in a position where Simon was able to start working with us sooner and so was able to take over with the events taking place in his first week! Nothing like being dropped in the deep end! We will ensure Rhona gets her farewell party when given the nod to go ahead.

It's been a pleasure to chair another year with the great support of our Trustees to give guidance to our staff team. Thank you to all.

Jo Nicolls



TRUSTEES REPORT

What did Deaflink do in the last year

Deaflink North East support to individuals 2014/2015

This was Rhona's last year in post and we knew that we would need to review the current staff team, the needs of the funders and the gaps in our skills. Replacing Rhona was not an option - there is only one Rhona!

The last quarter of this year we were short staffed and planning two large events. This was also the time of the recruitment of the new staff member which went well and we had a lot of interest in the job.

For the 2nd year no health professional - GP, nurse etc. referred a deaf person to Deaflink

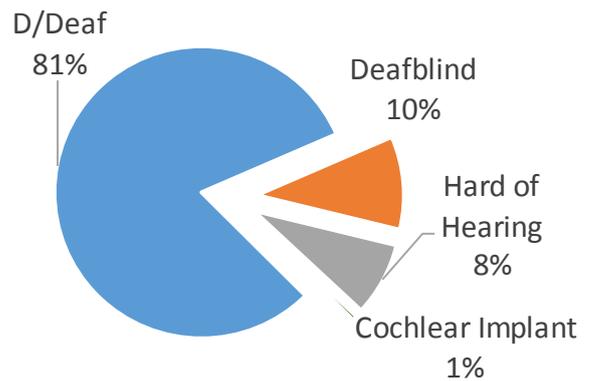
All of this combined may be the reason why we have been unable to meet the individual needs of the community at the same level as the previous year. This has been noted this and we are looking to increase our resources to address this.

TRUSTEES REPORT

HOW WERE PEOPLE REFERRED TO US?

87% of the new cases already knew about Deaflink and referred themselves. Of the remaining clients - 2% were referred by family and friends, 3% were from St John's, 1% had seen our information and 7% were referred from statutory organisations.

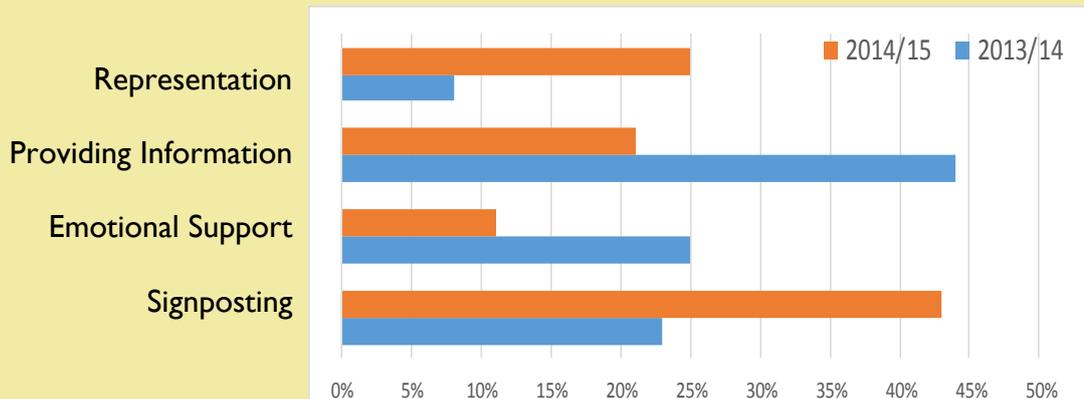
OUR CLIENTS WERE:



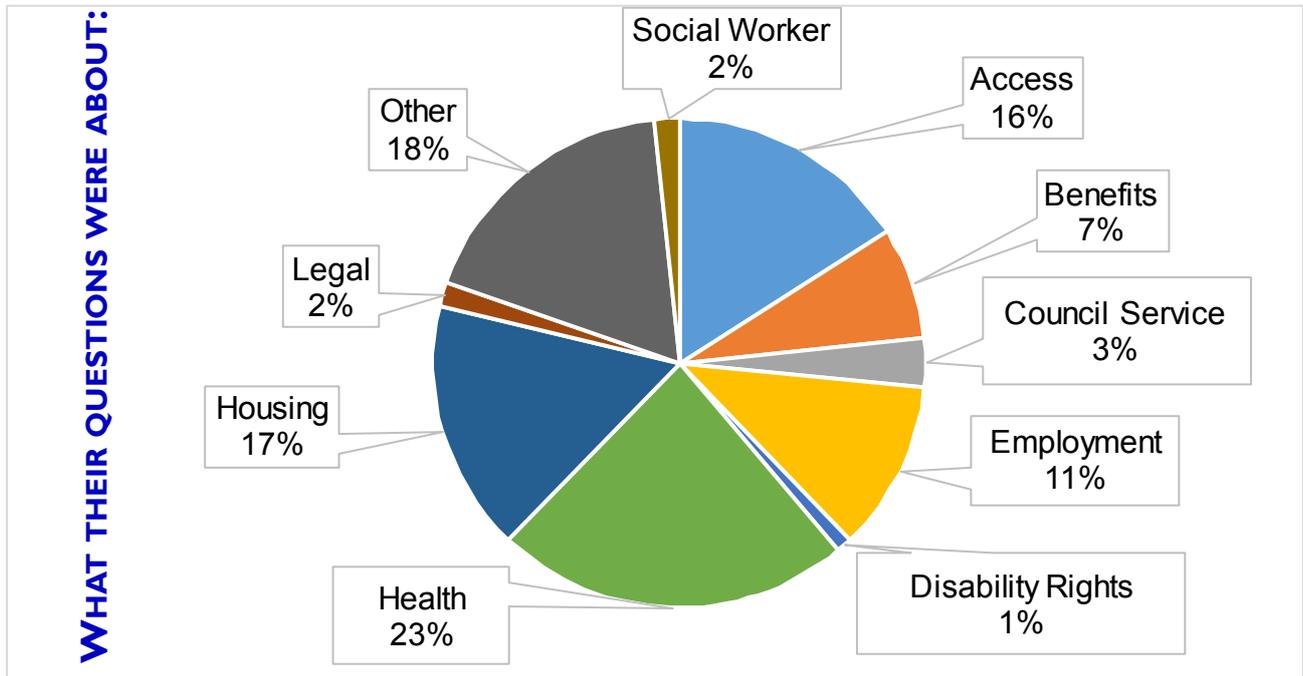
SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS

Between April 2014 and March 2015 Deaflink provided support to 329 'new cases' - people coming to us with new issues or problems.

The chart below shows what level of service or support that we gave to our clients as a percentage. The statistics show that this year we provided significantly more representation or advocacy work. However it also shows a higher percentage of signposting and this reflects the need to refer people to other organisations as we cannot meet the demand.



What did Deaflink do in the last year



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ACCESS

Many times this year we have been asked to help people access services that they should, by law, be able to access.

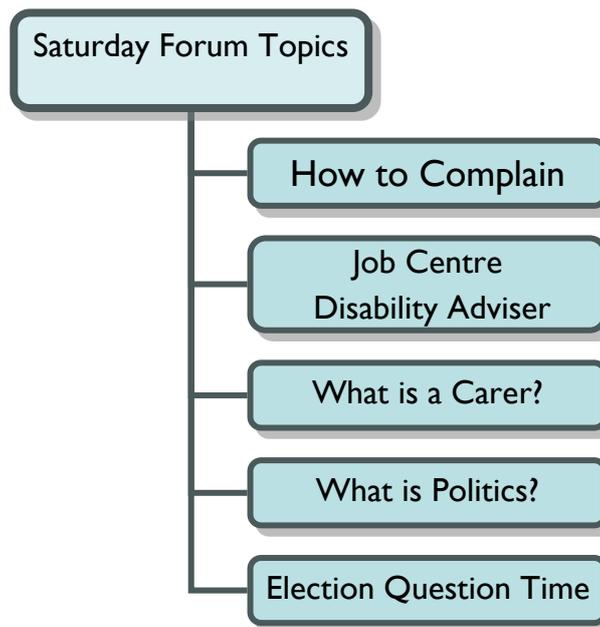
BSL users are relying on friends and family members to communicate on their behalf to Landlords, Councils, Dentists, Banks and even Doctors. Simon's article on Page 9 points out that services are supposed to be accessible.

As organisations feel the need to cut their services and make savings it is all too easy for them to not replace the broken loop system or run an event without interpreters and then blame the lack of resources.

They're not too worried about the punishments and the BSL can't access the complaints procedure anyway.

SATURDAY FORUMS

In this year we had 5 forums and consistently had an average of 55– 60 people attending. Over 90 people attended What is politics.



TRUSTEES REPORT

Summary of Accounts April 2014– March 2015

	2014-15	2013-14
Total Income	£85,611	£87,471
Total Expenditure	£86,754	£76,697
Total Funds carried forward	(£1,143)	£10,774

Balance sheet as at 31st March 2014

Fixed Assets:	-	-
Current Assets:		
Debtors:	£2,874	£106
Cash at Bank and in hand:	£61,223	£64,914
Total Current Assets	£64,096	£65,020
Creditors: falling due within one year:	(£2,573)	(£2,354)
Total Assets		
Unrestricted Funds:	£20,691	£20,298
Designated Funds:	£7,412	£5,128
Restricted Funds:	£33,421	£37,240
Total Charity Funds	£61,523	£62,666

For a full copy of our 2014-15 accounts please contact Heidi Jobling on 0191 281 2314 or email: heidi@deaflink.org.uk or look online at Charity Commission website.

Thanks to our Funders and contributors: Newcastle Clinical Commissioning Groups; Newcastle Fund and many others who have contributed ‘in kind’.

In particular many thanks to the staff and students at Newcastle College for their very generous support of Deaflink.

Simon Herdman

In 2010 an Equality Act was introduced in the UK, it pulled together all of the different laws about discrimination into one all-powerful Act and we all hoped it would make discrimination against certain groups harder. The primary aspect for disabled people from the Equality Act 2010 is that the Act offers protection from discrimination.

So what was that supposed to mean:

- ◆ Employers could not ask questions about your health or disability before they offer you a job.
- ◆ Employers and other services must make 'reasonable adjustments' – to buildings, equipment, providing information or the way they work (like flexi time) to be accessible.
- ◆ Restaurant's, Cinema's etc. had to make themselves accessible and not put the disabled customer at the back next to the toilets.
- ◆ There were more things you could do if people harassed you or were offensive to you, or people you were with.

I believe that a lot of organisations are failing the Equality Act 2010. How? by unfairly screening out D/deaf people in job applications but how can this be proved?

At interviews employers must make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities so they have to ask if you have a disability!

Here's some food for thought, do the local authorities advertise jobs in British Sign Language? Does anyone? How do we complain? Has anyone seen a complaints procedure that doesn't include writing to the manager or phoning up a hotline?

Deafness is not a barrier to working - on July 17th 2003 the United States of America, the President of the United States, Barack Obama appointed a Deaf lawyer, Claudia Gordon, as the Associate Director in the White House Office of Public Engagement.

When David Cameron was appointed as the Prime Minister, I had high hopes as I discovered that David had personal experience of disability with a family member. Initially, it was hoped that David Cameron would be able to empathise with the disabled community as he promised in his election campaign in 2015 that "the most disabled should always be protected", yet the Independent Living Fund was scrapped just months after his appointment. The bedroom tax has affected people with Disabilities most. Universal credit has been introduced and people who were given lifetime awards of disability benefits now have to reapply. Access to Work – the very thing we need to be able to continue working has been cut and is getting worse. People with disabilities are being hit the hardest.

I urge the British government (excluding Scotland) to work closely with disabled organisations, not just one specific element of a disability, but to work with every features of a disability, such as non-sign language users and sign language users. Lastly, I urge you, Mr Cameron as the Prime Minister to set a standard for everyone to follow by including the option, 'Sign Language translation available upon request' in future job descriptions as issued by the Equality Act 2010 before Mr. Cameron can truly start to coin themselves as 'one nation government'.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

Katie Dewar

Deaflink provides the opportunity for people to meet, learn and share their experiences. This reduces isolation and helps build communities.

This year we had a range of external speakers to provide information on topics to our groups SHHH and Deaf Men's Health Forum. We also had monthly healthy eating cookery classes with the introduction of a new teacher.

The administration to support these groups totalled

853
sent



1296
sent



Deaflink provided Information Stalls at:

- Deaflink at Hearing Link rehab
- Newcastle College Deaf Awareness week and several others
- Men's Health Event
- Sunderland Deaf Society Info Day
- World Mental Health Day with Launchpad
- SignIt Hear BSL
- healthwatch conference

OUR GROUPS



It looks like Spanish week at the Healthy Eating Cookery Class

Deaf Men's Health Forum, Discovery Museum, 2014

We're not too sure about Steve McLaren's new strikers!!



Learning new skills at the Shh Group

Loop Checkers doing their training



OUR GROUPS

GRASPING POLITICS

2015 brought a general election so Deaflink focussed on bringing information to our Forums.

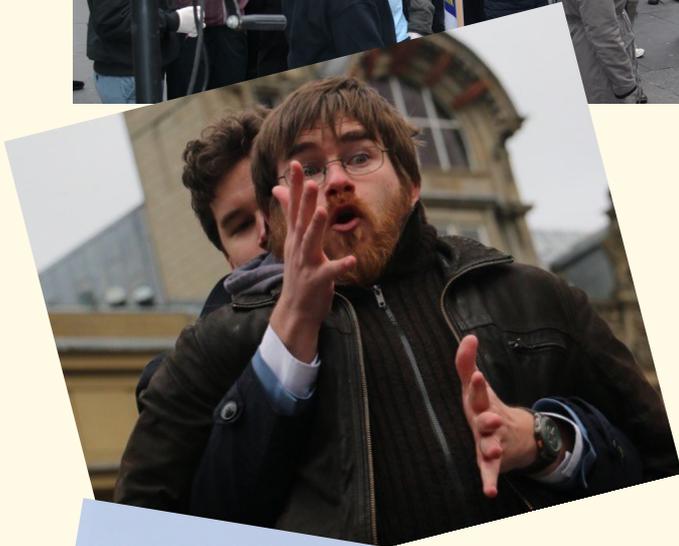
The first one we asked the Councillors to explain what their role was in running the city and making decisions. This was followed by a presentation by Chi Onwurah to talk about her role as a Member of Parliament.



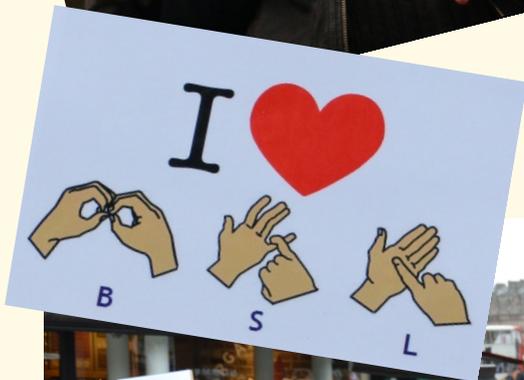
Then we tried a 'Question Time' forum - like the one on the TV. Lots of people turned up to get the opinions of the panel and we are grateful to our local MP Catherine McKinnell ; Cllr Wendy Taylor; Simeon Hart and John Smith for their openness and honesty in answering questions.

Thank you to Mal and Jo for the fantastic photographs

BSL WEEK March 2015



We were happy to see lots of you at the Monument celebrating BSL week—it didn't rain but it was cold!



HIGHS AND LOWS

Politics Forums

Well attended and people want to do more

Rhona's Leaving

Not as we planned but a good send off in the end

Health Research

You helped us provide clear evidence that BSL users are not getting enough information and access to services.

BSL Week

Lots of public support and Interest improves understanding

New Staff

Simon started working for Deaflink

BSL Access to services

Slow but definite improvements—keep complaining!

Hospitals and Doctors are paying attention

After years of discussions and raising concerns they are starting to make changes for the better.

'supporters'

You helped us by volunteering, attending our events, providing information and telling us what needs doing

Loop Checkers

Did some really good work checking out Loop Systems in Newcastle. It showed a massive need and we will focus on bringing in more resources for Hard of Hearing work.

Sad losses

Good friends passing away

Social Media

Using Twitter, facebook, facetime, website and glide to have better and quicker contact with community

Press Interest!?

What do we have to do to get the media interested in the issues?

Hospital Interpreter Access

Potential trials in the next 12 months—lets see if they bring improvements



Staff

- ◆ Katie Dewar (Development Worker)
- ◆ Simon Herdman (Involvement Officer)
- ◆ Heidi Jobling (Manager)
- ◆ Rhona Stanbury (Strategic Development Coordinator. Left March 2014)

Community Action Group (CAG)

- ◆ Mark Patterson
- ◆ Fahmi Syeda
- ◆ Dolly Francis
- ◆ Maggie Taylor
- ◆ Emma Ashie-Neequaye
- ◆ Kristel Jobling
- ◆ Charlotte Venus (left Oct 2014)
- ◆ David Lennard
- ◆ Xirong He
- ◆ Karen Bell
- ◆ Jean Kyle



Board of Trustees

- ◆ Jo Nicolls (Chair)
- ◆ Bob Weiner
- ◆ Joyce Pennington
- ◆ Tracey Sharp (Left July 2014)
- ◆ Dr Philip Matthews
- ◆ Joanne Fortune
- ◆ Jenny Wright
- ◆ Rachel Ross



PERSONNEL

HOW TO CONTACT US

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Website: www.deaflink.org.uk
Twitter: [Deaflink_NE](#)

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11 Tankerville Place, Jesmond,
Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 3AT**

**(Over the road from Northern Counties School and
5/10 minutes walk from Jesmond / West Jesmond
Metro Station)**

This report is available in large print and on our website please contact us at the above address for a paper copy.