

Our impact

2020/21



Welcome

As we approach the end of 2021, we reflect on a year with many challenges, but we take pride in how our wonderful teams have risen to those challenges and continued to deliver our vital and effective services to more people than ever. Deaf Action has been on a journey of modernisation and improvement since 2017, and 2021 has been a year when we have really started to see the fruits of our hard work.

A growing family

The most exciting development is the growth of the Deaf Action family, which now incorporates [sonus], the trading name for the Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Channel Islands Association for Deaf People. Our charities merged in September. Together, we share almost 330 years of experience and we have really enjoyed the first few months of working together. We were motivated to join forces because we recognised that we had similar values, offered very similar services, and had a shared desire to protect the specialist services which are essential for deaf people, at a time when many deaf organisations are closing their doors.

Both organisations approached our merger from a position of strength. [sonus] are unique in offering the UK's only residential care home for older BSL users, and we are delighted to have the opportunity to learn from our new colleagues as we look to expand our support for older people. In return, we look forward to extending our core services to new audiences in South England, including our Youth Club, which continues to positively impact on the lives of young people.

A digital transformation

We had embarked on a digital transformation strategy prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, which fortunately meant we were in a position to quickly pivot to remote working. We also adapted many of our services for online delivery, so that we were able to continue to support people throughout lockdown. We learned a lot from this process, and we have identified further areas of improvement. For example, it became very clear that there is a significant digital divide for deaf people. In response, we are pleased to have created a new digital inclusion service. We are also continuing to invest in further developing our CRM system, which is supporting our plans to become a data-driven organisation.

A clear vision

At the end of 2020, we took some time to take stock of all that we do, and to reflect on what we want to achieve as a newly expanded organisation. Over the next few pages, you will see the results of that process, in the form of a refreshed roadmap, setting out our vision, mission and values. We have also created five new social aims which will steer our work in the years ahead. We have enjoyed measuring the impact of our work against each of those aims and we are excited to share the results of that work in our 2021 Impact Report.



Philip Gerrard
CEO



Liz Jones
Deputy CEO

Our roadmap

Towards a positive future



We have refreshed our vision, mission, values and social aims. Watch in BSL here.

Our vision, mission & values

We have refreshed our mission, vision, values and aims to more closely reflect the work that we are doing as a newly merged organisation, and to better respond to the needs we have identified. As part of our review process, we took some time to reflect on our founding aims from 1835 since we wanted to maintain continuity of purpose, whilst adapting to an ever-changing modern world. We are happy that we have struck the right balance between modernisation, and staying true to our original mission.

Vision

Inclusive communities free from barriers, where deaf people can fulfil their potential and thrive.

Mission

To empower deaf people to achieve their potential and participate in society, with equality of rights, access and opportunity.

Values

LEARNING

We share our learning and seek to learn from others in order to drive improvements.

SUPPORT

We reach out and offer personalised support, recognising that every deaf person has unique needs and preferences.

COLLABORATION

We form meaningful partnerships to meet local needs, addressing the gaps between services.

EXPERIENCE

We value leadership informed by lived experience and believe that the needs and preferences of deaf people should be at the heart of all we do.

CELEBRATION

We value people from all backgrounds, focus on their potential and strengths. We celebrate a positive deaf identity.

Our social aims

We support deaf people at every stage of their lives, and in a way that recognises that they are a hugely diverse group with varying needs, including deaf users of British Sign Language (BSL), and those who are deafened, deafblind or hard of hearing. Our new social aims are the building blocks to achieving our equality mission.

Access

INFORMATION | SERVICES | ADVICE

We strive for equality of access to information, advice and services.

Inclusion

FAMILY | COMMUNITY | SOCIETY

We improve social inclusion, supporting people to become active citizens.

Wellbeing

HEALTH | INDEPENDENCE | CARE

We promote good health, empowering people to live independently, and caring for them when they no longer can.

Achievement

EDUCATION | SKILLS | TRAINING

We empower people to achieve through meaningful learning and the development of essential skills.

Identity

CULTURE | LANGUAGE | HERITAGE

We celebrate deaf culture, heritage and language, offering nurturing community spaces and a sense of belonging.



Our impact

**Celebrating and supporting
deaf people**

Our impact

Access

We strive for equality of access to information, advice and services.

Indicators of success

- Barriers to essential services are removed
- Information is available to people in their preferred language
- People know where to find advice when they need it



7,500+
hours of interpreting support



500
homes fitted with deaf-friendly equipment

Supporting this aim

Interpreting services

In the last year we provided over 7,500 hours of interpreting support and secured new contracts with the Scottish Police Authority, Scottish Court Service and Scottish Parliament. We also hosted 15 student interpreters on placement from Heriot Watt University, underlining our commitment to supporting the growth of the profession.

Translation & video production

The need for accessible public health information during the pandemic resulted in a 55% increase in demand for BSL video translations, and we are proud that our team met this demand, producing an average of 10 video translations every week, ensuring our community had access to vital information.

Equipment services

We deliver specialist equipment services on behalf of 5 local authorities, supplying and installing equipment in homes across Scotland. Covid-19 restrictions impacted on our ability to make home visits, but we are proud that our team still managed to support over 500 households, and have been working very hard since lockdown restrictions lifted to respond to everyone on our waiting list.

Advice Line

In partnership with DeafPlus, we provide an online advice service to clients in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Our specially trained advisor who is a deaf BSL and ISL user supported over 120 people with video calls, helping clients to resolve difficulties in a range of areas including money problems, family disputes and access to employment.

Bright Deal

With funding from the Energy Redress Scheme, our Bright Deal service is designed to empower deaf people to understand their energy usage, save money, and live more comfortably with less anxiety around energy bills. Demand for this service has significantly increased since Ofgem lifted the energy price cap. Our trained energy advisors have worked hard to support hundreds of clients to make savings.

Safe & Sound

In partnership with SafeDeposits Scotland Charitable Trust, we developed our Safe & Sound project, supporting landlords to ensure that their private rental properties are safe for deaf tenants, and to raise deaf awareness across the sector. We have provided expert advice and created a toolkit for landlords, ensuring the needs of deaf people are protected.

Our impact

Access

The difference we made

Meet Shaurna

Shaurna has been a registered BSL/English interpreter for over 20 years. She tells us about her role, and how it makes life more accessible to deaf people.



“Accessibility is crucial so that deaf people can fully participate in their own lives and within society.”

What's next?

In the year ahead, we will continue to invest in growing the services which improve access for deaf people. In particular, we will aim to expand our interpreting service, and contribute to addressing the shortage of interpreters in the UK.



Our impact

Inclusion

We improve social inclusion, supporting people to become active citizens.

Indicators of success

- **People have positive family relationships**
- **People participate fully in their communities**
- **People have control over their lives**

88%

of lipreading class participants had improved wellbeing



400

people trained in deaf awareness

Supporting this aim

Deaf awareness training

This year, we trained over 400 delegates from more than 100 organisations to become deaf aware. Since the employability gap for deaf people is large and enduring, we focussed on making the positive case for recruiting deaf people. After the training, 85% of employers told us they felt more motivated to recruit deaf candidates in future.

Lipreading courses

Covid-19 impacted on our ability to deliver in-person lipreading classes, but where possible, we supported people to continue their lessons online. We were pleased to note that 88% of people who attended our classes felt that their wellbeing had benefited, notwithstanding the isolating effects of the pandemic.

BSL family lessons

We believe that inclusion begins in the family home. Our BSL Family Lessons place a particular emphasis on communication skills to support young people's confidence and resilience, and to help them develop a positive deaf identity. This year, we supported 30 families (more than 85 individuals) with classes which improved communication, strengthened family bonds and improved access to peer support.

Everyone enjoyed the deaf awareness course, thank you. The detail that had gone into the content to ensure it was tailored to Mimi's and a café environment really was great!

Mimi's Bakehouse,
Edinburgh

Our impact

Inclusion

The difference we made

#ClearMasksForAll

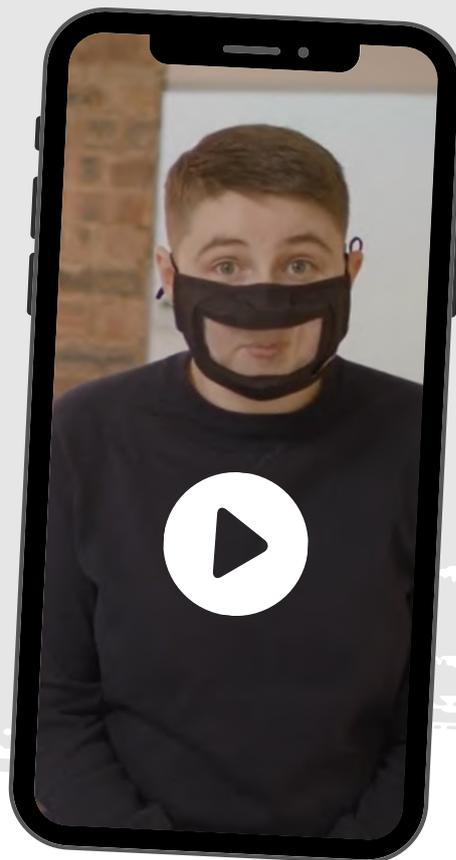
We campaigned tirelessly during the pandemic to encourage people to wear clear face masks, preventing unnecessary barriers and improving communication for deaf and hard of hearing people. We appealed to the general public, raising awareness of the need for clear masks and encouraging people to wear them to aid communication.

What started as a social media campaign soon took off, generating interest outside the deaf community. The campaign generated media interest across the UK, and our CEO appeared on BBC Breakfast to discuss the issue. We created a clear masks resource hub on our website which to this day is one of our most visited pages on our website.

We produced a campaign video to highlight the importance of clear communication, and was seen by over 12,000 people online. The video was aimed at hearing people - not Deaf Action's usual audience. This campaign was special, not only to us, but to deaf communities across the UK as it increased deaf awareness within the hearing world, bringing together both deaf and hearing people.

We lobbied The Scottish Government to invest in clear face masks for educational and medical settings, so that lipreading and communication is made easier for deaf people. We are pleased that after a review, The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland have allowed for the provision of clear masks in medical and educational settings.

We generated interest in a topic that should have been discussed before now – how deaf people are regarded in medical and care settings. Now that this discussion is on the table, we hope that deaf people will continue to be part of the conversation.



What's next?

We're delighted to be partnering with St James Quarter in Edinburgh over the next 12 months. Through the partnership Deaf Action will work with St James Quarter to become the world's first cultural and lifestyle hub which is fully inclusive and accessible to deaf visitors. With over 1 million deaf people living in Scotland, and 13,000 deaf BSL users, we plan to equip staff at St James Quarter with the skills they need to offer a truly welcoming and inclusive experience for all.

Our impact

Wellbeing

We promote good health, empowering people to live independently, and caring for them when they no longer can.

Indicators of success

- **People have good physical, mental and emotional wellbeing**
- **People have the tools they need to live independently**
- **Specialised residential care or respite is available to those who need it**



850+

social work support sessions



100%

improved wellbeing after BSL counselling

Supporting this aim

Social work

Our in-house specialist Social Work team work with local authorities to support clients with a wide range of issues including welfare, benefits, housing, health care and education. The team also offer a BSL Duty Service, offering on-demand support. This year, the team delivered more than 850 support sessions, with a 48% growth in the number of people supported.

Community care

We provide support services for vulnerable deaf people who may need additional support to live independently. This service can be via self-directed care, outreach support or care at home. Our outreach service provided more than 25,000 hours of support this year to people across five local authorities, as well as providing care at home services to 14 people at the Slateford Green development in Edinburgh.

Residential care

Our merger with [sonus] has supported our strategy to expand our services for older deaf people, and we are delighted that the Easthill Home for older BSL users is now part of our offering. The [sonus] team join us with over 60 years' experience in managing Easthill, the only residential home in the UK which is culturally and linguistically appropriate for elderly BSL users.

Wellbeing service

Our Wellbeing service offers activities to maintain and promote good health, including BSL Counselling, delivered by an experienced deaf therapist. This year, we provided 145 hours of BSL counselling support, with 100% of clients having improved wellbeing scores. We were also pleased to see a 28% increase in befriending hours, helping us to address the significant effects of loneliness on isolated deaf people.

Our impact

Wellbeing

The difference we made

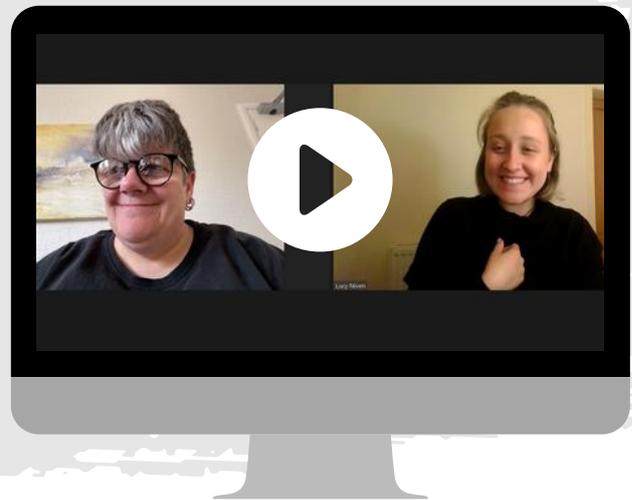
Befriending

Our befriending service matches deaf and hard of hearing people with volunteer befrienders, combatting isolation by bringing some fun, friendship and social contact into their lives.

Frances and Lucy met through Deaf Action's befriending service. Frances is one of our many clients who found the experience of lockdown very isolating and worrying. Lucy is a trainee interpreter who was looking to gain more experience of using her BSL skills.

Lucy and Frances are both delighted with their match, and we can't wait to see them progress.

The best part is having the chance to find so many similarities between myself and Frances, despite our totally different lives and upbringings.



What's next?

We will continue to look for opportunities to grow our services to support the wellbeing of deaf and hard of hearing people. We are developing a range of new projects and partnerships to help promote good health, both mental and physical. We have already trained some of our team to be Mental Health First Aiders and we will continue to invest in this.

We are also keen to find ways to improve deaf people's access to healthcare, since our clients tell us that this is an area in need of particular attention. We have already submitted some of our findings to the Scottish Government Public Inquiry into Covid-19, and we will continue gathering our clients' stories and campaigning for improvements.

Our impact

Achievement

We empower people to achieve through meaningful learning and the development of essential skills.

Indicators of success

- **People are supported to engage in learning**
- **People have skills for work**
- **People have essential digital skills**



devices distributed to isolated deaf people



26

deaf young people went to Youth Camp



100+

deaf students supported

Supporting this aim

Digital inclusion

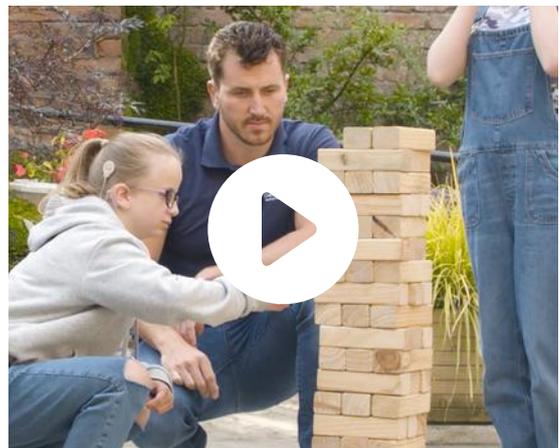
The pandemic highlighted the digital divide for deaf people, so we increased our efforts to support people to get online. We distributed more than 125 devices and data bundles to people at greatest risk of digital exclusion, and our Digital Champions provided ongoing support so that our clients could continue to access essential services.

Student support

With funding from the Scottish Government, this year we have continued to support Scotland's colleges and universities to implement their BSL Plans. Our team have also supported more than 100 deaf students to access further and higher education. Whilst the funding for this work has now ended, we are currently exploring ways to meet the ongoing demand for support from colleges, universities and students.

Youth Club

Our Youth Club supports deaf young people to build self-confidence, gain life skills, and share experiences with peers. This year, membership of our youth club has grown, with each young person having the opportunity to have new experiences and learn new skills. As young people try new things and have fun while doing it, they also learn more about themselves, and strengthen their identity as part of the deaf community.



Our impact

Achievement

The difference we made

Youth Camp

In October this year, 27 young people joined us at Dounans Centre in Aberfoyle for a 4-day residential camp. We are incredibly proud of every one of the camp participants. There was not a single young person who did not overcome a challenge, come out with improved confidence and resilience and make 26 new friends who not only understand their struggles, but can support them through this peer network moving forward in their lives. The peer network is one of the most important things to tackle isolation and loneliness for young people with any degree of deafness, especially after not having face to face contact with other deaf people for so long. We are delighted that some previously isolated young people now have a way to connect and blossom with other deaf friends after this camp.

→ 13

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→ 14

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FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE

FILM NEGATIVE



What's next?

In the year ahead, we will look to expand our services to support deaf people of all ages to achieve. We have made plans to expand our digital inclusion service, and we have recently appointed a Digital Inclusion Officer who is hard at work consulting our community so that we can ensure our service is designed to meet the needs and preferences of deaf people. With funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund, we will also be appointing an Employability Coach to meet the demand for support for deaf people who are unemployed, or looking to progress within employment. These new services will fully launch very soon.

Our impact

Identity

We celebrate deaf culture, language and heritage, offering nurturing community spaces

Indicators of success

- **BSL is celebrated and promoted**
- **A positive deaf identity is celebrated**
- **We preserve our heritage**



2

deaf-friendly performances



90

people gained qualifications in BSL



9

new deaf tutors trained to teach BSL

Supporting this aim

BSL tuition

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have continued to deliver BSL Tuition, both online, and once restrictions permitted, in-person. With reduced class-sizes to accommodate adapted teaching methods, this year we ran 14 courses at different levels, supporting over 90 people to acquire certified qualifications in BSL. We also supported 9 members of the deaf community to qualify as BSL tutors, helping to address the acute shortage of people trained to teach BSL. Since October we have been delighted to see a surge in demand for BSL lessons, thanks to Rose Ayling-Ellis's appearance on Strictly Come Dancing. We are offering additional courses to meet this demand.

Being Human festival

In partnership with Heriot Watt University, in November last year we took part in the Being Human Festival. Together we explored how barriers to engagement in the arts can be overcome for deaf and hard of hearing people of all ages. We enjoyed performances by Gavin Lilley who entertained us with his unique style of stand-up comedy, and Handprint Theatre, who treated us to a performance of a Tale of Two Houses. This experience has certainly helped shape our vision for our own festival, which we originally hoped to deliver in 2020 but will now launch in 2022.

Social club

After long periods of lockdown, we were pleased to reopen our Social Club and Garden at an event in September, and we now warmly welcome the local deaf community in Edinburgh to join us in the Social Club every Thursday. We are also grateful to everyone who has taken part in our consultation and we are currently reviewing responses to determine the demand for extended opening hours and activities, which we hope to offer very soon. After a difficult Christmas for everyone in 2020, we are also delighted to be hosting a Community Lunch this Christmas Eve.

Our impact

Identity

The difference we made

Our deaf centre in Edinburgh

Albany Street has been our home since 1889. The building is more than a place of business. It is Scotland's last remaining deaf centre and is of rich historical significance to the deaf community. Many of the people we support have a lifelong relationship with our building, starting in childhood. A number of our staff share this bond and feel they have 'grown up' in the deaf centre. One of our colleagues was even married in the Albany Church which forms part of our centre, and although not currently used for religious services, the church was one of the first in the world specifically for deaf congregations and remains an important community space.

Over the past year, we have been working with conservation architects Simpson & Brown to develop a plan to bring the centre back to its best, and to create a more deaf-friendly space. As part of this work, we have identified a range of external repair issues including window frames, roof repairs and stonework repairs. This December, work will begin to carry out these repairs, ensuring the building remains wind and watertight, with a well maintained and inviting façade. The repairs will also improve the energy efficiency of the building and support our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint. The work will take around 4 months to complete and will be concluded by March 2022.

Our centre makes a real difference to the lives of deaf people. Improving the condition and facilities available will help ensure we remain here for many years to come.



What's next?

As the oldest deaf organisation in the UK, and custodians of the last remaining deaf centre in Scotland, we feel a special responsibility to preserve and celebrate deaf culture, language and heritage. We have appointed a Heritage Officer to lead on activities that support this aim, including a Deaf Heritage Trail and Deaf Festival, to be launched in August 2022 as part of the Edinburgh Fringe programme. We are really excited to see what 2022 brings, with a newly refurbished deaf centre giving us the perfect springboard to do what we do best – celebrate and support deaf people.



Thank you!

Every donation received ensures we can deliver our services to deaf people, and we are hugely grateful.

Thank you to each of our funders who help us sustain and develop our services for deaf people. You can view the full list of funders on our website.



www.deafaction.org

*deaf includes people who are Deaf BSL users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing.

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