

# **GUIDE FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE**



## **NORTH WALES DEAF ASSOCIATION**



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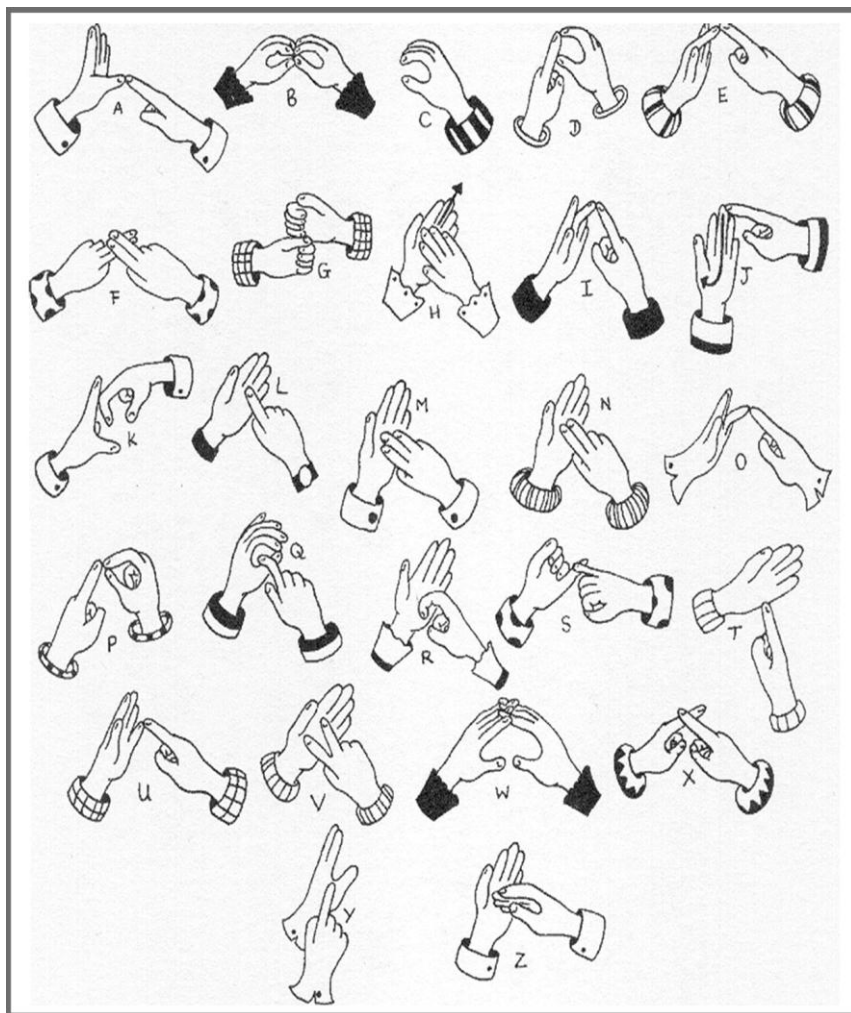
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Fingerspelling is one element of British Sign language (BSL). BSL also uses hand-shapes, facial expressions and body language to convey a message. BSL is a language in its own right with its own grammar and structure



## **INTRODUCTION**

Hearing loss is one of the most common problems for people in the U.K. today.

This booklet from the North Wales Deaf Association aims to provide information about how hearing loss occurs, how it can be detected and treated, as well as the range of help available to you.

Contained inside, are practical solutions to problems which may occur day to day. It also explains basic information on terminology, hearing aids and equipment available. The booklet outlines the range of support services provided by North Wales Deaf Association as well as information about courses and clubs. In addition it contains details of schemes operated by the police and fire service and a guide to effective communication with people with a hearing loss.

THIS BOOKLET IS PUBLISHED BY:

NORTH WALES DEAF ASSOCIATION

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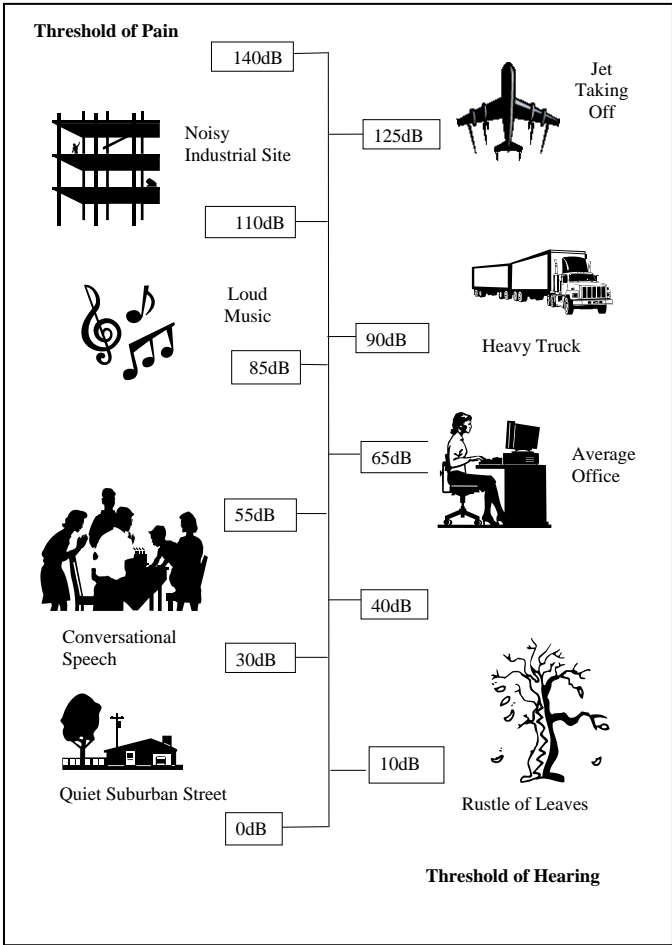
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# FACTS AND FIGURES

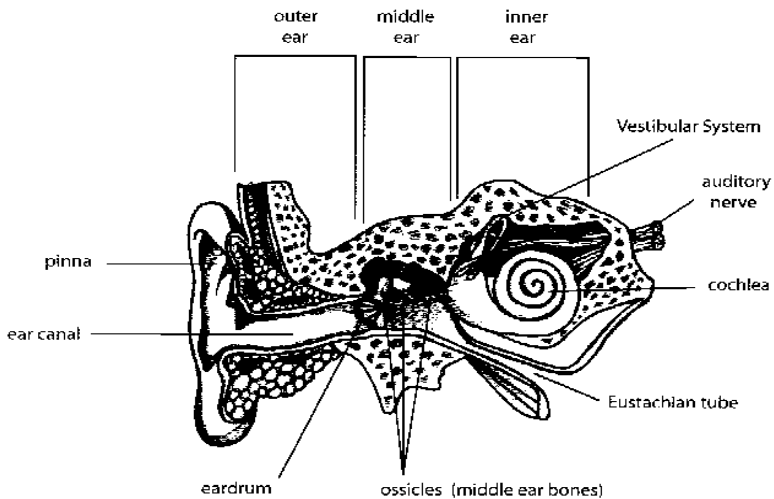
It is estimated that approximately 110,500 people across North Wales suffer from a hearing loss. This figure represents about one in seven of the population. 75% of this figure is made up of people above the age of 65.

Nationally it is estimated that over 9 million people in the U.K. out of a population of approximately 61 million, have a hearing loss. This equates to more than the population of Greater London.

Roughly 2.5 million people in the U.K. wear hearing aids, while professionals within the N.H.S. estimate that as many as 4 million people could benefit from them.



## HOW THE EAR WORKS



The human ear consists of three parts: the outer ear, the middle ear and the inner ear.

Sound travels from the outer ear, down the ear canal to the eardrum. The sound waves cause a vibration on the eardrum which is picked up in the middle ear by three small bones called the Ossicles. These bones amplify and conduct the vibrations into the inner ear.

The inner ear contains the Cochlea, which is a fluid filled receptor. The cochlea contains tiny hair cells. The sound transmitted through the ossicles causes the fluid in the cochlear to vibrate. This vibration stimulates hair cells to move, which in turn, sends electrical signals which travel to the brain via the Auditory nerve. There are many different types of hair cell present in the cochlea which pick up different frequencies of vibration and the brain interprets them into the different pitches of sound we hear.

## **TYPES AND CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS**

Hearing loss is generally divided into two types Conductive and Sensorineural.

### **Conductive Hearing Loss**

This is caused by anything that interrupts the sounds progress from the outer ear to the inner ear.

Common causes of conductive hearing loss are; wax build up, fluid or infection in the middle ear, damage to middle ear bones or ruptured eardrum.

Many cases of conductive hearing loss are treatable. Wax and fluid build-up are easily removed, an infection may be treated with antibiotics, a ruptured eardrum may be patched and damaged middle ear bones may be replaced. Generally speaking a Conductive Hearing loss results in a loss of volume which in many cases can be solved with a suitable hearing aid.

### **Sensorineural hearing loss**

A sensorineural hearing loss affects the nerves in the inner ear. The greater the damage to the nerves the greater the hearing loss will be. This type of loss may cause not only a reduction to the received volume but also it can also affect the clarity of hearing - meaning that you may be able to hear someone's voice but have difficulty in deciphering what has been said.

Most people will suffer some level of sensorineural hearing loss as they get older. Other common causes are, prolonged exposure to loud noise, exposure to traumatic or explosive noise, inherited, genetic conditions, diseases such as Mumps, Measles, Meningitis or Chlamydia or taking certain medications.



## **DEGREES OF HEARING LOSS AND TERMINOLOGY.**

### **HEARING LOSS**

A general term to describe any loss from normal hearing. This term can be used to describe anything from a slight hearing loss to profound deafness.

### **DEAF PEOPLE**

Used to describe someone with a profound hearing loss whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL). A Deaf person is someone who is unable to use their hearing as their main method of understanding speech. Some Deaf people find hearing aids useful but many do not.

### **HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE**

Used for a person who communicates using speech and lip reading. A hard of hearing person may be able to communicate well in the right situation but will struggle to hear well in a noisy environment. Many hard of hearing people benefit greatly from using a hearing aid. These people account for the largest number of deaf people and in many cases hearing has just deteriorated with age.

### **DEAFENED PEOPLE**

People who have lost their hearing after acquiring speech and language skills, usually in adulthood are described as deafened. The condition may occur as a result of a virus, meningitis or a wide range of other causes. Communication skills depend greatly on written information and lip reading but a few deafened people may learn some sign language.

### **DEAFBLIND PEOPLE**

This is a small group of people, approximately 23,000 in the UK who have both a considerable hearing impairment and sight loss. Communication methods vary greatly depending on the severity of sight and hearing loss, age of onset and favoured

communication method.

Training sessions in communication with the deafblind person's family and friends may be beneficial.

In addition to this group there are approximately 250,000 people in the UK who have a dual sensory loss of varying degrees.

## TINNITUS

A common condition which causes the sensation of noises to be heard inside the head without any external sound. The actual sound can vary with the individual in the form of ringing, whistling, hissing, buzzing or roaring which is often difficult to describe. It is not a disease or illness but can accompany deafness or balance problems. The precise nature of Tinnitus and its causes is still not fully understood but it can start as a result of exposure to loud noise, illness, ear or head injury or a side effect of certain drugs. Tinnitus can cause considerable distress to the sufferer and can be aggravated by stress.

Tinnitus Helpline for hearing Tinnitus sufferers - a telephone service which is manned by volunteers, many having tinnitus themselves, who are trained to offer advice, information and support. Their number is (0345) 090210.

The British Tinnitus Association campaigns for people with Tinnitus. It produces a quarterly newsletter and information pack. The British Tinnitus Association can be contacted 14-18 West Bar Green, Sheffield S1 2DA. Telephone (0114) 2706600

## MENIERES DISEASE

A distressing condition which is caused by pressure changes of the fluid in the inner ear. It can cause a periodic fluctuating hearing loss which can be accompanied by other symptoms such as vertigo, nausea and tinnitus.

In extreme cases the hearing loss is permanent and the other symptoms debilitating. Treatment is available for Meniere's

## **SIGNS OF POSSIBLE HEARING LOSS**

Quite often the process of hearing loss is so gradual it is often other people who may notice your hearing has deteriorated. Complaints about the volume of the television or lack of response when they are speaking to you are common pointers that something may have changed in your hearing. You, yourself may notice that, if you are amongst friends in a pub or an environment with background noise, you may experience difficulty in following the conversation. Also if you are travelling in a car, train or plane, the engine noise may interfere with your perception of the conversation.

Any or all of these signs should be investigated by a General Practitioner. The cause may well be something easily treatable such as a build up of wax or an ear infection. However if, after investigation, you are still experiencing difficulties, you may have to ask for a referral to the Audiology department of your local hospital for a hearing test.

The test will determine which areas of your hearing have deteriorated and how much hearing has been lost. You may, depending on the results, be assessed for suitability for a National Health Service hearing aid.

## **CLUBS, ASSOCIATIONS AND SELF HELP GROUPS**

There are a large number of clubs, associations and self help groups throughout the region. For up to date information on these groups please refer to our newsletter or contact North Wales Deaf Association for more information

## **HEARING AIDS.**

A hearing aid is just what it says, an aid. Hearing aids are too often believed to be a cure for deafness but nothing could be further from the truth. They cannot restore lost hearing, but with patience and persistence can greatly improve the quality of life for people who have started to lose their hearing. Across North Wales digital hearing aids are issued by all the audiology departments and these are individually programmed to meet the needs of your individual hearing loss.

Hearing aids unfortunately also amplify the sounds you may not want to hear like background noise, passing cars and background music.

Hearing aids tend to be most beneficial in a one to one situation in a quiet setting.

It is important to remember that if you are fitted with a hearing aid or aids it may take some time to get used to using them. You may need to return to the dispensing hospital or outlet for further adjustments. A degree of patience is required both by the wearer and his or her family and friends.



## **HOW TO GET A HEARING AID**

The first port of call should be your G.P. He or she could rule out any treatable factors such as wax build up or infection. The G.P. will then refer you to an E.N.T. specialist or the Audiology department at your local hospital for a hearing test. This test will establish the degree and nature of your hearing loss. After a waiting period you may be fitted with an N.H.S. hearing aid or aid

## **N.H.S. Hearing Aids**

National Health Hearing aids are provided free of charge, on a long term loan basis, to people diagnosed with a hearing loss. Not only is the aid or aids free, but the batteries, moulds, tubing and maintenance are too.

The N.H.S. provides up to date digital, behind the ear type of hearing aid. These aids may include extra facilities such as a “T” or loop setting or a directional microphone facility. The directional microphone setting can assist hearing in a noisy environment.

Some hospitals provide a follow up service where you can address any issues you may have with your aid or aids.

It is often possible for a patient to be seen at a hospital nearer their home, if Audiology provides an outreach service there.

Some N.H.S. Trusts also provide a volunteer based maintenance service for people who may find it difficult to get to hospital.

## **Private Hearing Aids**

You may decide to go to one of the many private sector hearing centres for an assessment and fitting with private hearing aids. This option is undoubtedly quicker and may provide a greater range and choice of hearing aids. However, it can be prohibitively expensive as you not only have to buy the aid or aids, but also have to pay for insurance and batteries. Also if your hearing deteriorates over time, you may have to buy another hearing aid.

It is important to remember though that even if you have a private hearing aid it will not exclude you from receiving an N.H.S. one in the future.

In most cases a hearing aid will be sufficient to treat the vast majority of people with a hearing loss; however in the rarer cases, with more complicated and severe hearing loss other alternatives may be needed.

## **BAHA (BONE ANCHORED HEARING AIDS)**

A BAHA hearing aid is possibly suitable for a person who, for one reason or another, finds they cannot wear a conventional aid. For example, someone who is subject to repeated ear infections or may have been born without part or parts of the inner ear.

The BAHA system consists of 3 parts:

The titanium implant which is a tiny screw

The Abutment, which is the socket that is attached to the implant and sits on the surface of the scalp behind the ear.

The detachable Sound Processor (BAHA).

A BAHA converts sound waves into vibrations which are then carried via the implant directly to the cochlea, where they are converted into nerve stimuli and carried by the auditory nerve to the brain.

## **COCHLEAR IMPLANTS.**

A profoundly deaf person with a sensory neural hearing loss, for whom hearing aids are not suitable, may be suitable for a Cochlear Implant.

This is a hearing device which is surgically implanted with an internal and external component. The internal part stimulates the nerve in the shell shaped inner part of the ear called the Cochlea. This enables the person to communicate by listening and lip-reading more effectively. With support, time and practice many recipients cope well in a range of environments.

## **EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT**

Thankfully, there is a wide range of support for people who suffer from a hearing loss. It may be an item of specialist equipment, communication services or clubs and self help groups which can help combat feelings of isolation and frustration.

### **Equipment.**

There are a huge number of useful gadgets available which can greatly help people in their day to day lives. Technology is ever improving and a number of companies are striving to develop more and more modern, easy to use devices.

Equipment falls into three main categories, Listening equipment, Alerting equipment and Telecommunication equipment.

### **Listening Equipment**



This type of equipment helps people who are hard of hearing to listen to the television, music or the radio more effectively, at a level which suits them. This type of equipment is likely to be a personal listener with headphones which either connects to or are placed close to the sound source e.g. television speaker.

For hearing aid users, it may be a room loop where a wire is fitted around the room and conducts the sound via an amplifier. This sound can be picked up via the “T” setting on most hearing aids, thus cutting out background noise and allowing the listener to choose the level of volume they would like, without having to have the sound source volume up at a high level. Many public buildings such as cinemas, booking offices, town halls, theatres or conference rooms are fitted with a loop system.

An alternative form of home loop system is available, in the form of a cushion connected through a lead to the television scart socket. When working efficiently, these loop systems can be a great help.

## **Alerting Equipment**

People with a hearing loss often miss the doorbell or phone ringing and are unaware until it is pointed out to them. There are many simple solutions available on the high street, such as portable visual doorbells or extra loud telephone bells. Smoke detectors that wake people at night time with a flashing light and/or a vibrating pad are available from the Fire Service, free of charge.

Pager units that combine a number of triggers are helpful for profoundly Deaf people and can be loaned from Social Services Departments.



## **Communication Equipment.**

There are quite a large number of telephones for people with a hearing loss. The B.T. Big Button 100 phone is especially useful as it is reasonably priced and has good amplification, coupled with large easily visible dialling buttons for those with sight difficulties. It is also hearing aid compatible, in that by switching to the "T" setting on the hearing aid, the user can hear the conversation only and not any background noise.

For people who cannot use a conventional phone, there are text and screen phones that have been developed to use with a relay service. These phones enable the user to read the message rather than listen and although they are expensive they can be loaned from Social Services free of charge.

Mobile Phones have, in recent years been a great help to the deaf and hard of hearing, through the texting facility.

This has been a huge advancement for deaf people who can now access communication in the same way as hearing people.



## **HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKS**

North Wales Fire Service along with North Wales Deaf Association, offer a free home safety check.

If a person cannot hear a fire alarm when not wearing their hearing aids, such as at night time, they may benefit from the new vibrating/flashing fire alerting system. If you anyone you know would like this service then either contact your local Fire Service or N.W.D.A. for more details.

## **POLICE EMERGENCY S.M.S. SERVICE**

The 999 emergency services are now available via a text messaging service. The service is only available to people who are Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired and they have to register for this service.

**To register using SMS text messages you must:**

1. Send the word 'register' in an SMS message to 999
2. You will then receive the Terms and Conditions in two SMS messages
3. When you have read the Terms and Conditions send 'accept' in an SMS message to 999
4. You will receive a SMS message telling you that your mobile phone is registered or if there is a problem with your registration

## **JOB CENTRE PLUS**

Deaf people in employment may be entitled to Access to Work. This enables deaf people to work on a more equal basis with other employees. Access to work may pay towards equipment you need at work, adapting premises to meet your need or a communication support worker. For further information contact:

Operational Support Unit, Harrow Jobcentre Plus  
Mail Handling Site A, Wolverhampton, WV98 1JE  
Tel: 0345 268 8489

Minicom: 0345 608 8753

E-mail: [atwosu.london@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:atwosu.london@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk)

# **HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH A PERSON WITH HEARING LOSS**

## **DEAF AWARENESS.**

People who become deaf or hard of hearing often learn to communicate in different ways but quite frequently people will develop a degree of lip reading skill, without necessarily being overly conscious of the process.

Lip reading is a difficult skill and takes a lot of concentration. It can be very tiring, as the mind is constantly trying to process the information relayed via the eyes. It is therefore, very important on the part of the speaker to be patient and to follow simple guidelines to ensure effective communication with the deaf person.

### **Some tips for communication**

Attract the person's attention; say their name or a small wave, if necessary by a light touch on the upper arm.

Face the person, very important.

Stand in a well lit environment with the light on your face, not behind you.

Minimise background noise.

Don't cover your mouth when speaking.

Speak clearly but don't over emphasise words.

Try to keep still when talking.

Use facial expressions and gesture - its fun and it helps!

Above all be patient, lip reading is not an easy skill, and impatience may cause frustration to both people.

Learning to fingerspell is great fun and can be a real benefit for everyone – young and old.



## **NORTH WALES DEAF ASSOCIATION**

North Wales Deaf Association is a regional organisation that supports all Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and deafblind people as well as their family, friends, carers and colleagues. You can contact us Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm by telephone, textphone, sms text messaging, fax, e mail or by calling in person at the office. Visitors to our offices are always welcome although appointments would be greatly appreciated. Our Mobile Information Unit visits various venues throughout North Wales.

It was formed in 1993 as a council funded steering group. The deaf people and volunteers got together to represent needs of Deaf and hard of hearing people in a changing environment.

The organisation quickly grew and became a company in 1994 located at Plas Tre Marl in Llandudno Junction. Continued growth resulted in the organisation moving to firstly Mochdre and Llandudno Junction and then to our current offices in Colwyn Bay and the organisation now employs both full and part time workers.

The main sources of income for N.W.D.A. come from council grants, Trusts, donations, bequests, our own monthly drawn “200 club” lottery and other fundraising activities.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Association works throughout North Wales to promote the rights, wishes and needs of Deaf, Deafened, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing people by raising awareness of relevant issues and promote the development and provision of appropriate facilities, services and resources so as to improve their quality of life and equal opportunities.

## **SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM** **NORTH WALES DEAF ASSOCIATION**

### **Advice and Information**

Advice and information is always available through North Wales Deaf Association on any aspect of hearing loss. NWDA endeavours to keep up to date with the latest developments in hearing technology and can offer impartial and independent advice. You can hire our Mobile Information to come to your venue anywhere in North Wales. Our Information Officer will be on board, he can help clients with hearing related problems, and refer for more specialist help through NWDA or other agencies. He can also demonstrate a range of specialist which may help people in their day to day activities such as telephone use, television Viewing, alerting, etc.

Our Information Officer is also available to give talks/presentations with an equipment demonstration to groups and organisations across north Wales. For more details, please contact N.W.D.A. Information is also available on our website [www.deafassociation.co.uk](http://www.deafassociation.co.uk)

### **Membership and Newsletter**

#### **NWDA Quarterly**

The NWDA Quarterly newsletter is automatically posted out to our Members. Becoming a Member is just one way in which you can help North Wales Deaf Association and for just a small annual fee of £10, you can join today and receive the benefits of Membership.

## **Community Support Service**

Some of the things this service can help with are:

Information about a wide range of benefits and allowances.

Help with the completion of forms.

Translate letters and help write replies.

Make telephone calls on your behalf.

Accompany you to appointments with official bodies for example the housing department or social services.

## **Equipment Advice and Provision**

Many people with even a small hearing loss experience difficulties using every-day equipment, such as a telephone or doorbell. Our Technical Officer is able to advise you on the most suitable equipment.

Many items of equipment can be bought inexpensively by anyone with a hearing loss from DIY supermarkets or catalogue shops. The cost of many items is often no more expensive than regular items. For more expensive items Social Service Departments are often able to provide this equipment on a long-term loan service. This may include items such as a pager unit, television loop system, and visual and vibrating smoke detectors.

## **Deaf Children's Support Officer**

The Deaf Children's Support Officer is able to mentor and support Deaf children and young people in the education system. The service includes working with Deaf and hard of hearing children in school as a role model, providing support in the classroom, deaf awareness training to teachers and pupils and also basic signing if required.

The Officer also supports children and families living in Gwynedd and Ynys Mon and help includes benefit checks, support through the education statementing process, special equipment demonstrations and recommendations to Social Services/Health for provision.

## **Conwy & Cyswllt Family Support Groups**

The Conwy & Cyswllt Family Support Groups meet once a month for activities and events. They are aimed at families with Deaf and hard of hearing children or for Deaf and hard of hearing parents to come together for mutual support.

### **Communication Support**

North Wales Deaf association is able to provide a full range of communication support including BSL and SSE interpreters, Lipspeakers, Notetakers, Palentype and Deafblind communicators. Many of these services will be free of charge such as all health appointments, meetings with the County Council Departments and C.A.B. Please contact the office for further information.



### **Lip Reading**

North Wales Deaf Association offer free lip reading courses in many towns across the region. Courses are fun, informal and aim to increase confidence in the individual. If you would like to know more about these courses and when and where they take place please contact us.

We have two lip-reading groups now which take place at Colwyn Bay and Abergele from 2 pm to 4 pm.



The group is supported by a volunteer who talks about topical subjects, invites guest speakers and includes some lip-reading practice. Members of the group support each other to help them overcome some of the difficulties caused by hearing loss. Everyone is welcome.

## **Training Courses**

North Wales Deaf Association offers a range of training courses. These include:

- Half Day, Full Day and Full Day accredited Deaf Awareness Training.
- 3 hour British Sign Language Awareness, 3 hour introduction to British Sign Language and Agored accredited British Sign Language for the work place.
- BSL courses for individuals – various venues across North Wales
- Half Day Total Communication Training.

For further information on our training courses please ask for our Course Information leaflet.

## **Employment Officer**

We have a part time Employment Officer who can support individuals who are looking for work or wish to improve their skills. The Employment officer's role includes:

Teaching Employability courses through Coleg Harlech

Helping clients with applications for access to work

Advocacy for CV writing, application forms and cover letters

Advocacy for job searches, training and volunteering research

Interview skills and presentation

Confidence building

## **Fundraising**

To pay for the services we provide we look for funding from a wide variety of sources.

We receive funding from Local Health Boards and Social Services for some of the services we provide and we also market our Interpreting Service and Training Courses.

We also apply to charitable trusts fund for specific projects and have successfully received grants from many Trusts for our Education Project, previous Befriending Service and our Family Support group. In the last few years we have received grants from the National Lottery for funding for our Mobile Information Service and our Outreach and Rehabilitation Service.

We also raise funds from donations from the public. There are a number of ways people can support NWDA. These range from making one off or regular donations to buying and selling on eBay!

Please see the following pages for how you can help our organisation and for membership application form.

### **Regular Donations**

Donating by direct debit reduces our administration cost, which means that more of your money goes directly to supporting people with a hearing loss.

You can complete a regular donation form on the next two pages of this leaflet and post it to us.

### **Single Donations**

If you would like to support North Wales Deaf Association with a single donation please send a cheque to:

North Wales Deaf Association, 77 Conway Road,  
Colwyn Bay, Conwy, LL29 7LN



You can also donate online by visiting our fundraising web site at **[www.support-nwda.co.uk](http://www.support-nwda.co.uk)**



## **200 Club**

This is an opportunity for everyone to get involved and support North Wales Deaf Association on a regular basis, whilst at the same time having the chance to win prizes.

It may not be millions like the lottery, but you will have far better odds of being a winner!

### **This is how it works:**

Each member contributes £2 a month to the 200 Club by standing order.

£1 out of every £2 goes to North Wales Deaf Association funds. The other £1 goes towards prizes.

### **Spend and Raise eStore**

Do you frequently shop online for groceries, gifts, books, clothes, toys, holidays, hotels, mobile phone contracts, insurance, or just order a Pizza or rent a movie on a Friday night?

If so, you can now raise a commission for us when you shop online with 1000 retailers from the convenience of your own home at no extra cost to you.

### **How does it work?**

In order to earn a commission for our cause with your online shopping, simply click through to a retailer's website via an image/text link on our eStore. This will show a short interval page which tells you that you're now leaving Spend and Raise and entering the retailer's website where you browse and shop as usual.

If a purchase is made, a commission is generated and given back to our eStore. To find out how much commission you can earn for each retailer, visit the 'Retailer A-Z' on the site.

**To visit our eStore go to:-**

**[www.spendandraise.com/nwda](http://www.spendandraise.com/nwda)**

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  
NORTH WALES DEAF ASSOCIATION**

**INDIVIDUAL MEMBER’S AGREEMENT AND GUARANTEE**

**NORTH WALES DEAF ASSOCIATION**

Registered office: @  
77 Conway Road, Colwyn Bay, Conwy, LL29 7LN  
Company Limited by Guarantee No. 2959589  
Registered Charity No. 1048017

I agree to become a member of the North Wales Deaf Association.  
Should the company be wound up, I promise to pay the sum of £1 towards its debts if asked to do so. I confirm that I am in sympathy with the company’s aims and objectives.

Member’s Name .....

Member’s Address .....

.....

.....

Signed Date

Membership confirmed number.....  
For North Wales Deaf Association

Annual Membership fee £10.00

## **How to contact us**

**North Wales Deaf Association**

**77 Conway Road**

**Colwyn Bay, Conwy, LL29 7LN**

**Telephone: 01492 530013**

**Fax: 01492 532615**

**Minicom: 01492 524983**

**sms: 07719 410355**

**Website: [www.deafassociation.co.uk](http://www.deafassociation.co.uk)**

**E mail: [info@deafassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@deafassociation.co.uk)**

**Registered Charity No. 1048017**

**Company Limited by Guarantee No. 2959589**

**This information can also be downloaded  
from our website [www.deafassociation.co.uk](http://www.deafassociation.co.uk)**