

Inform



Summer 2007 Newsletter of Deaf Action – Making the difference



WELCOME

"Deaf Action is constantly aware of the difficulties faced by deaf people in obtaining equal access to services, and works to try to overcome some of these problems. However, there have been some interesting legislative and policy developments in recent months, which should go some of the way to supporting those who are deaf to participate equally in every day life.

At an international level, the UK government stated its intention to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is a positive step towards equal participation and prohibiting forms of discrimination, whilst at a Scotland wide level, the Scottish Executive have issued formal policy and practice guidance to local authorities and NHS boards, designed to not only improve services, but to involve deaf people in the planning of such services.

At Deaf Action, we are very much aware of the need to listen to the views of people who are deaf. We recognise that for many, Deaf Action's offices in Edinburgh, Livingston, and Inverness are seen as a place where people can come and feel comfortable about communication. This is well evidenced by the growing numbers of people who are participating in the varied activities offered by our new Learning Centre. We are also extremely pleased to say that a new partnership with Lothian NHS will mean that an Occupational Therapist and a Community Psychiatric Nurse will be based with us in our social care team, which will undoubtedly improve the kind of support we can offer.

Deaf Action intends to make a difference to the lives of deaf people – so tell us what YOU wish to see!"



CARE ACCOLADE AWARDS

The Oscars of the Social Service Sector were held recently at the Balmoral Hotel, Edinburgh to recognise best practice throughout the sector. Nearly 200 guests gathered for the ceremony, and were treated to stories of ground-breaking research, heart-warming efforts and innovative professional practice. Among them was Deaf Action, who, in partnership with the Deaf Communication Project in Highland, had been chosen as finalists for their inventive training programme in Highland.

By co-ordinating Deaf tutors to teach BSL, both organisations provide much-needed support to those who are training to become BSL/English interpreters. These qualified interpreters will eventually be supported and/or employed by Deaf Action to provide Communication Support in Highland. This partnership has been vital to promoting equality between deaf and hearing people throughout the area.

Sadly, the award went to another project. However, to be one of the 12 finalists chosen from over 120 applications is a great achievement.

Morag Alexander, Convener of the SSSC said, ***"We have all been very impressed by the quality, innovation and outstanding practice that has been demonstrated to us today. I warmly congratulate the winners and finalists; their hard work and dedication makes a real difference to the lives of people all over Scotland."***

Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, added ***"It is often the little things that can make a big difference to people's lives – and the value of that contribution should never be underestimated. Finalists deserve the highest praise for their professionalism, and dedication to caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. That's why it's a privilege to be here today to congratulate the finalists and winners."***



SASLI



Congratulations to the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters who this year will celebrate 25 years of supporting interpreting professionals. To commemorate this milestone, an exciting conference, 'Interpreting – 25 years of evolution', will take place 5-6 October with a variety of speakers and workshops. For more information contact SASLI on 0141 202 0791 (tel), 0141 202 0790 (text) 07795597342 (sms) or email mail@sasli.org.uk

OUT OF AFRICA

Liz Scott Gibson and Frankie McLean both travelled to Swaziland and Malawi in March and April respectively as part of Deaf Action's project to train sign language interpreters in both countries to enable Deaf people to access services and minimise disadvantages.

The project, funded by the Scottish Executive, will have several phases; the first phase was to gather and share information on the situation in both countries to help with future planning. It also served another purpose in trying to raise awareness of the need for sign language interpreters to have sustainable employment, otherwise they might become more likely to abandon the profession and take up employment in different fields, which has been a problem with previous interpreter training projects.

Frankie McLean said, ***"It was a very useful exercise and one in which I gained a lot of fascinating insight into how life is for Deaf people in Swaziland and Malawi. Clearly, they face struggles daily in life because of their deafness yet they provided such a warm welcome, and they are clearly looking forward to working with us to try and improve their situation and building mutually beneficial relationships. I have already been asked to give a few presentations about my time there and would welcome any further requests."***

Liz and Frankie met with the Deaf communities and associations, interpreters, government officials, the police/court services, universities and schools, and several other relevant organisations/bodies. This meant an almost non-stop itinerary of meetings for the two one-week visits but it was extremely productive with a great deal of lively and useful discussions.

There is still a great deal of work to be done over the forthcoming phases but watch this space for more news!

Pictured here are Liz and Frankie with members of the Malawi National Association of the Deaf National Executive Council (all Deaf).

We look forward to forging close links between Scotland, Swaziland and Malawi over the duration of the project, and perhaps beyond.

A WARM WELCOME....



We welcomed a new member of the team earlier this year when Nic Goodwin was appointed Head of Services. Nic is

based at the Head office in Albany Street with responsibility for Social Care, Support Services, Specialist Equipment and Community Development.

Originally from England, Nic worked with the RNID in London as Residential Services Advisor before moving with his family to Bonnie Scotland 10 years ago. Previously Service Manager with Borders Council, Nic joined Deaf Action in early March.

Nic said, ***"I've arrived at an exciting time for the organisation and am already very involved in the development of new services which are being planned. I'm really happy to be working at Deaf Action; there is such a great bunch of staff here, and together we are committed to working with deaf people to ensure that the services we provide are the very best."***

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Deaf Action's AGM will be held at the Head Office, 49 Albany Street, Edinburgh on Thursday 20 September at 7pm.



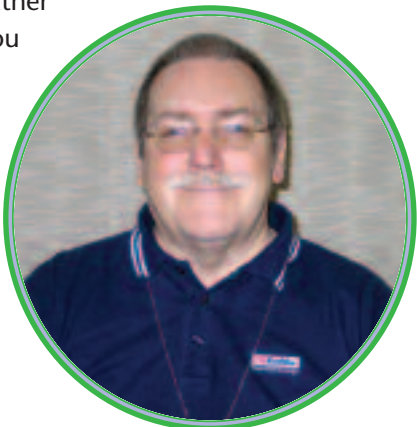
A SAD FAREWELL....

This summer we bid farewell to a long-standing member of staff at Deaf Action. Alex Preston, a well-known and well-respected interpreter, has been a fixture at Albany Street for 23 years, and has decided it's time to take a well-earned rest and retire.

Following a stay in England, Alex and his family settled in Edinburgh, where in 1984 he was offered a social work assistant post at Deaf Action by the Minister at that time, Rev George Smith. Alex's parents were Deaf and he knew the organisation and membership well. He decided to take the job and joined the small staff group in March 1984. Alex went on to study at Moray House College in Edinburgh as an Interpreter and has never looked back.

Alex has witnessed the many changes the organisation has gone through over the years and has been an essential member of the Communication Support Team, offering his support and guidance to colleagues, and indeed the deaf community. He will be greatly missed.

We are sure though that Alex will pop in from time to time to see staff and members, so we won't say goodbye, but rather see you soon!



REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

LINK is a national organisation working with people who have sustained a severe or profound hearing loss after the age of 16. One of LINK's key services is a specialist psychosocial rehabilitation programme designed to support deafened men and women and their partners. The programme is delivered in a residential format attended by a group of 6 – 8 deafened people and their families. The aim is to assist adjustment to deafness, improve general mental health and overall, to enhance the quality of life.

Supported by the Big Lottery Fund, the programme focuses on providing people with information and skills necessary to manage the psychological, emotional, and social consequences of deafness – self-management and coping skills, confidence building, communication strategies, managing health conditions, ensuring access to local and national services.

The programme has been developed by a multi-disciplinary team comprising doctors, therapists in hearing, communication, balance, speech & language, and psychology. It is complementary to provision within the person's area of residence (e.g. audiological services and hearing therapy) and other interventions (e.g. cochlear implants). There is robust evidence of the programme's effectiveness in achieving enhanced emotional adjustment and improved quality of life.

LINK also provides a range of other services and activities designed for deafened adults, so if the intensive programme is not what you need you may still find it useful to contact us for social support, general information and community networking.

Email scotland@linkdp.org or write to Link Scotland, Eric Liddell Centre, 15 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 4DP. Tel 0131 447 9420 (voice/text)



ACCESSIBLE THEATRE

With the International and Fringe Festivals due to arrive in Edinburgh soon, there will be no shortage of shows on offer that will have you running to your nearest theatre. Captioned shows and BSL interpreted performances are available, as well as subtitled films at several venues around the city. Visit www.eif.co.uk and www.edfringe.com for further details.

Later in the autumn the Lyceum, Kings and Festival Theatres are offering many more performances for your enjoyment. For more information visit www.eft.co.uk and www.lyceum.org.uk

COME AND BE INFORMED

Deaf Action and RNID Typetalk will hold a joint information day for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people on 15 November from 10am – 3pm at Deaf Action's Learning Centre, Albany Street, Edinburgh. Staff from both organisations will be on hand to provide information on services, as well as representatives from lipreading and hard of hearing groups, community learning, Link, ABC Hearing, the Tinnitus Association and many more.

Communication support and refreshments available. Come on in and see how we can help.

WWW.DIRECTENQUIRIES.COM

The Direct Enquiries website was launched a few years ago to provide a Nationwide Disabled Access Register. The site receives over 1 million hits every month from people looking for accessible organisations. Lothian & Borders Police have recently subscribed to this site to allow disabled people to check their nearest facilities and services prior to attending at police stations. Contact information and maps are available for each station, as well as an indication of the facilities available, eg. loop fitted, wheelchair access, sign language etc.

DEAF AWARENESS WEEK 7TH TO 13TH MAY

Deaf Action staff visited various venues in Edinburgh and Lothian to raise public awareness of the different types of deafness during this very important week. Staff provided information on key services available from the organisation, and highlighted the many different methods of communication used by deaf, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people, such as British Sign Language and lipreading. Programmes advertising learning opportunities were circulated, including how to become 'deaf aware', and visitors had the chance to view a few items of specialist equipment available to deaf people.



Staff set up their exhibitions at Almondvale Centre, Livingston; Gyle Centre, Edinburgh; Tesco Superstore, Dalkeith, and at the Maitlandfield Hotel, Haddington throughout the week, and were very pleased with the response. Look out for the team at a location near you during Learn to Sign Week 1st – 6th October 2007.

POSITIVE ABOUT DISABILITY

Deaf Action has been awarded the Disability Symbol as recognition for commitment to employing and retaining people with disabilities.

The award, presented by Jobcentre Plus, acknowledges the organisation's agreement to meet five commitments regarding the recruitment, employment, retention, career development, and presenting a positive approach towards diversity and ongoing support for employees.

Keith Hyland, Deaf Action Chair, said, ***"We recognise the contribution that all employees make regardless of any special circumstances or needs. We are keen to demonstrate that with thought and commitment we can attract and retain quality people to the organisation, including those with a disability. We hope that by working around the issues associated with disability, we can break down barriers to employment."***



THE BOOK FESTIVAL

The Edinburgh International Book Festival takes place from 11 – 27 August at Charlotte Square Gardens in the city with BSL interpreted talks daily at 11.30am. For more information about who is appearing and to book tickets visit www.edbookfest.co.uk or email admin@edbookfest.co.uk, tel 0131 718 5666 or fax 0131 226 5335

GET OUT THIS SUMMER!

During the summer months, Deaf Action will be working with a group of young deaf people to help them "Get Out!" during the holidays and enjoy a variety of activities.

The group will decide themselves which activities they want to take part in, eg, snowboarding and rock climbing, bowling, website design and graffiti art are just some of the favourites! A few of the young deaf people often bring a friend, brother or sister to join in too, and group leaders, some who are deaf themselves, are on hand to offer support and understanding. It looks like it will be a great summer!

For more information or to take part contact Lisa Roy at Deaf Action's Head Office.



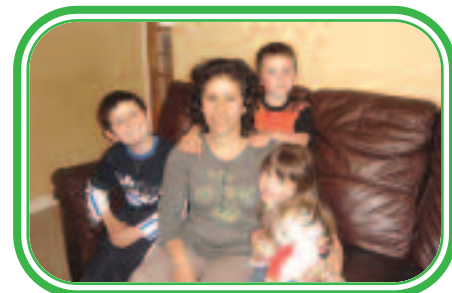
IPTV FOR DEAF PEOPLE

A new web-based television service, or IPTV, for BSL users has recently launched in the UK. VeeSee TV airs news and other programmes in BSL and is available 24 hours a day. The channel can be viewed on a computer or via a set-top box and is part of ViewTV – a portal of 900 streaming channels. Check out www.veesee.tv

DEAFBLIND AWARENESS WEEK 25TH JUNE – 1ST JULY 2007

Most people take for granted the information that sight and hearing give us. You see someone smile so you smile back – you play your favourite music, hear a passing car – ordinary things. People who are deafblind miss out on these ordinary, everyday experiences. For them, there is often great difficulty overcoming the challenges of day-to-day living. If provided with the right kind of support however many deafblind people do manage to rise to these challenges. The key to providing that support is communication.

From our Inverness office, Deaf Action provides a communication support service throughout Highland, including deafblind communicators, sign language interpreters and lipspeakers.



A regular user of the service is Yousra Martin from Inverness. Yousra, 42, has Usher, a genetic condition which means she was born deaf and gradually began to lose her sight. Originally from Jordan, she was around four years old before her parents realised she was deaf, and age 12 before the problem with her sight was discovered.

Yousra worked hard at school, and with continued support from her father who was a teacher, became a teacher of the deaf. At 28, following years of saving money by her family, she travelled to London for specialist eye care. Discussing that time Yousra said, ***"I was very upset. I had no idea what the future would be like for me. Would I have a future? Would I get married?"***

Yousra did get married. After being encouraged to study in the UK, she met John from Inverness at Doncaster College in 1995. Two years later she was back home teaching deaf children again and providing sign language training to the hearing staff at school. John followed her to Jordan and they were married in 1998.

In 2003, already with two young sons, Connor, now 8, and Jalal, 6, the family moved to Inverness where it was hoped there would be good work prospects. John secured a job with Blindcraft but Yousra found it difficult. John said ***"My wife is very talented. She has qualifications in childcare but unfortunately these are not recognised in Scotland. You'll be surprised, but even though she has Usher, she is a great seamstress. I know if she could get a job she would feel a lot more settled."***

Yousra's Usher has not deteriorated a great deal over the past few years but she now finds it difficult to leave the house at night when it is dark. Without a much-wanted job and limited social opportunities, she is finding it tough, and feels increasingly isolated. Now also mum to Jasmine, 3, Yousra hopes to get involved in volunteering, maybe even help teach sign language.

She said ***"Deaf Action's Communication Support Service is a great help to me. I now attend a weekly international women's group in Inverness, and hope to attend the local deaf club soon. It would be nice if there were more opportunities to meet friends but there is no possibility of my family returning to Jordan. Inverness is our home, we love it, so we are here to stay."***

For more information on Deaf Action's Communication Support Service contact the Highland Office, 1a Millburn Road, Inverness Tel/Text: 01463 250204.

HUB OF LEARNING FOR DEAF PEOPLE

Deaf Action's Learning Centre is a regular hub of activity welcoming deaf people taking part in the organisation's 2007 learning programme. The programme boasts an exciting range of free courses, both informal and accredited, for deaf and hard of hearing adults who want to improve their skills or learn new ones.

Learning Centre Co-ordinator, Sophie Driver, said ***"Since many deaf people have difficulty accessing mainstream opportunities, it was important to offer some key learning skills in our programme. We decided that numeracy and literacy courses and computer skills were necessary activities to include, and also felt that some less formal classes should be offered, such as painting & drawing and patchwork. We are delighted with the response to this first term of classes and look forward to a busy year ahead."***

A team of tutors, some deaf themselves, provide the courses based at the deaf-friendly centre. Hard of hearing student, Catherine Steyn, who joins the weekly art class in the Centre, said, ***"Having already***

enjoyed Deaf Action's British Sign Language course, I decided Art was next on my agenda after reading about the community learning opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing adults. The class is so well set up, and it feels a lot less isolating to be with people who are also hard of hearing and can communicate clearly with me. The tutor is great and I am loving learning again."



If you would like information on our community learning programme contact Sophie at Deaf Action's Learning Centre, 49 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QY

WEST LOTHIAN SENSORY RESOURCE CENTRE

Staff at the West Lothian Sensory Resource Centre would like to thank all who attended their Open Day at St John's Hospital. Over 60 people attended, and since it was such a great success, staff have decided to do it all over again. The event will be held on Thursday 18 October at the Ability Centre, Carmondean Livingston from 10am – 4pm. For more information contact Steven Laidlaw, West Lothian Sensory Resource Centre Tel: 01506 774497 or email Steven.Laidlaw@westlothian.gov.uk

SLATEFORD WELCOMES SARAH

Slateford Green welcomed an old friend in the spring, when Sarah Boyack, the then Junior Minister for Environment, visited the complex. Sarah was one of the guests who officially opened Slateford back in 2000 and was keen to see how it had progressed during its first 7 years.

Sarah met with Vice Chair, Ljubica Erickson and staff on duty and was interested to learn if the innovative technology installed in the flats in 2000 had been successful, which of course it had been. Gordon Veitch, Senior Support Worker explained how staff are alerted by tenants who are need of support before taking Sarah on a tour of the complex to meet a few of them.

Sarah said, ***"The complex has progressed well and the flats still look so new and fresh – I'm really pleased. It's clear that tenants take great pride in their homes and wonderful that they have the responsibility themselves for choosing furniture etc. Staff are doing a terrific job."***



LEARN@DEAFACTION.ORG

September sees the start of our new season of BSL courses at Albany Street. From the 3rd September we will be running a number of SQA accredited "Introduction to British Sign Language", and "BSL 2" courses – see table below for full details.

Course	Day	Time
Introduction to BSL	Wednesday	10.30am to 12.30pm 6.30pm to 8.30pm
	Thursday	6.30pm to 8.30pm
	Saturday	1.00pm to 3.30pm
BSL 2	Tuesday	6.30pm to 8.30pm
	Wednesday	10.30am to 12.30pm
	Saturday	9.30am to 12.00pm
Intensive Introduction to BSL	Monday - Sunday	9:30 am to 4:30 pm

Also new for this year is a one-week intensive SQA accredited "Introduction to BSL" course. This will run from Monday 23rd to Sunday 29th July, 9.30am to 4.30pm daily.

The Introduction to BSL course is open to all and is designed for people who have no previous experience of BSL. To join the BSL2 course you must have first attained BSL1, or demonstrate that you have the necessary skills. We can help you if you are not sure.



For more information on these or any of the other courses we run, or to discuss courses tailored to meet your organisation's needs, please contact Colin MacLeod at the Head Office in Edinburgh or email learn@deafaction.org

DEAFACTION.ORG

Deaf Action's new bilingual website is complete and ready to launch! With an up-to-date design and an improved structure, the fully accessible site will feature information in British Sign Language, subtitles, text and voice, and will provide a comprehensive resource for deaf people, their families and professionals.

Over recent weeks staff who received presenting skills training last year have been busy filming the BSL clips for the site. Debra Dalton, one of the presenters, said, ***"We had a really fun time filming but there were also many serious discussions about which signs should be used on the site. It was a great experience and I'm looking forward to getting involved in more presenting opportunities."***



Representatives of community groups, stakeholders and staff will be invited to attend a formal launch at the organisation's Head office, where they will be treated to a display of the new site. Gill Wood, Organisational Development Officer said, ***"As well as giving the website a more modern design, we wanted to make sure it was more user-friendly, which meant revamping the structure. Popular sections such as communication support, specialist equipment and learning have been given greater prominence and the site is fully accessible to everyone."***

NEXT NEWSLETTER...

If you have any news or views you would like us to include in our next edition, please send them to Gill Wood at: Deaf Action Head Office, 49 Albany Street Edinburgh EH1 3QY **Tel:** 0131 556 3128 (voice) **Text:** 0131 557 0419 **Fax:** 0131 557 8283 **Email:** admin@deafaction.org