

# Inform



Winter 2004

Newsletter of Deaf Action – Making the difference



# Welcome

## Director's message

Visitors to Deaf Action's Head Office at Albany Street, Edinburgh are often amazed to realise that services for deaf people have been provided from the very same building since 1890 and that when we were formally constituted in 1835, we were the very first Deaf organisation in the UK to be so. We still retain many of the old records from the early 19th century, and they make fascinating reading.

However, occupying such a historic building has its problems. We are currently facing the New Year with major building works scheduled to take place. Repairs are to be done to the old stonework, and windows and the fire escape must be replaced. As well as this, we are currently negotiating appropriate wheelchair access to replace our old wheelchair lift which constantly breaks down.

We will also see the start of work on the conversion of the old church building at Albany Street into a state of the art Learning Centre, which we hope will benefit many Deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people. Although this will be a major upheaval for us all, we are looking forward very much to seeing the finished product, and were most grateful to receive a bequest from the late Mrs Georgina Anderson's estate which has given our fundraising efforts a tremendous boost.

All of us at Deaf Action wish you Season's greetings, and a bright New Year.



## Christmas card competition

Christmas came early to Deaf Action when a competition was launched in September to find a new Christmas card design for the organisation. Information on the competition was sent to schools and community groups throughout the geographical areas covered by Deaf Action and we were thrilled when designs started flooding in.

A panel of staff and Executive Council members judged the competition entries and after some discussion eventually decided on a winner.

Christopher Howie, aged 13 years, from Donaldsons College in Edinburgh painted the winning design, pictured on the front cover, and won a selection of art supplies for himself and his school.

The winning design was reproduced as the official Deaf Action Christmas card and is now on sale at the Head Office in Edinburgh costing £3.50 per pack. Proceeds from the sale of cards go directly towards funding the work of Deaf Action providing services across Scotland. Why not pop down to the reception office at 49 Albany Street or contact us if you would like cards posted to you (p&p charges will apply).

Deaf Action would like to thank all the children and schools who took part in the competition.

## Counselling Training Project



The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) and other organisations, including Deaf Action, have campaigned for many years to raise the profile of mental health issues among deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people. Recently, the Scottish Executive and Community Fund have given their support by funding a counselling training project for three years.

The Project will facilitate the training of deaf/deafblind people in Counselling Skills and it is hoped that students will continue with their studies, complete a Diploma, and enter the profession. The Project also

involves raising the awareness, knowledge and appropriate communication skills of mainstream counsellors to equip them for communication with deaf clients.

Following a successful taster weekend, the first of three Counselling Skills programmes has begun at the University of Strathclyde with 13 Deaf students undertaking the two year programme of training, which will give them an excellent basis in counselling. Another taster course will be held 5th & 6th February 2005 for those interested in becoming a counsellor.

**For further information contact Lorna Weatherstone or Trudi Collier, Project Co-ordinators, SCoD, Central Chambers, 1st Floor, Suite 62, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow, G2 6LD or email [lorna@scod.org.uk](mailto:lorna@scod.org.uk) or**

## Scottish Executive show support

Deaf people will lead the way to increasing the number of Sign Language Interpreters thanks to a £500,000 funding boost announced by Communities Minister Malcolm Chisholm.

A partnership between the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters, Heriot-Watt University, the University of Edinburgh, the Scottish Council on Deafness and the Forum of Providers of Social Work Services to Deaf People, represented by Deaf Action's Director, Liz Scott Gibson, will receive part of the funding to deliver a programme of training to ensure there are enough qualified Deaf tutors to teach Sign Language Interpreters and other professionals such as social workers and teachers.

Malcolm Chisholm, who was addressing the STUC Disabled Workers conference, said: "We know around 750,000 Scots have some form of hearing loss and around 50,000 have severe or profound deafness.

*"I recognise the need to do more for Deaf people in Scotland and address the shortage of Sign Language Interpreters available. Without support for those who are Deaf, employment opportunities and access to services for the Deaf community can be hampered by the inability of others to communicate with them.*

*This money represents a significant investment in the needs of Deaf people and will build the foundations of our commitment to double the number of interpreters in Scotland.*

*We want to ensure that everybody, regardless of personal circumstances, is able to access the best possible opportunity to live their lives independently and contribute to society."*

## Holidays for people with a hearing loss

For the sixth successive year, Hearing Concern is pleased to announce a programme of holidays designed specially for people with a hearing loss and their relatives and friends. All holidays offered have been organised in association with well-established, bonded travel companies and they provide opportunities to relax with people who understand hearing difficulties. In addition, a lipspeaker is normally appointed to provide support for those who need it. Holidays on offer in the first half of 2005:  
Winter warmer in Madeira – 24 to 31 January

Deaf people graduating from the programme may also play an important part in the second phase of this initiative. Additional funding of £150,000 will also be made available to accredited further and higher education institutions to provide further opportunities for people to study BSL.

Lilian Lawson, Director of the Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) and a sign language user, said:  
*"I'm delighted that the Executive has shown its firm commitment to increase the number of Sign Language Interpreters, which will further enhance Deaf people's social inclusion.*

*This Commitment is also viewed by SCoD as a support for Sign Language as a linguistic minority language and a fantastic opportunity for Deaf Sign Language users to be at the forefront of developments taking the training of Sign Language interpreters forward.*

*Additional funding for further and higher education institutions is a welcome boost to SCoD and its members organisations' campaign for more Sign Language classes which will, in the long term, improve communication skills of professionals working with deaf people of all ages, as well as creating employment opportunities for deaf people to teach Sign Language or train interpreters."*

Doreen Mair, of the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) said:

*"SASLI is delighted that this funding has been awarded. We and our partners have been highlighting the need for such a training programme, and this award acknowledges that deaf people must be given the opportunity to be at the forefront of developments in training interpreters.*

*This is a real recognition of British Sign Language. This initiative will be the foundation for building the future development of training and increasing the number of interpreters for the longer term."*

Scottish Highlands and Gardens Cruise – 13 to 17 April  
Mid-Wales break – 23 to 27 May  
Lake Garda in Italy – 16 to 23 June

**If you would like further information contact Philip Barron, Hearing Concern, 4 Anselm Close, Croydon CR0 5LY, tel 020 8680 2229, fax 020 8680 2815 or email: philbarron@waitrose.com**



## Positive about Parliament



Deaf people in Scotland at last have the opportunity to get involved in Scottish politics thanks to the radical approach from MSPs and staff at the Scottish Parliament. Deaf Action has been working closely with the Parliament to ensure Deaf people are included in the political process and welcomes the positive steps taken by Parliament to improve inclusion and equality.

Parliament has produced signed versions of video information, including "Let's do democracy" – aimed at Deaf Young People, and has continued to request deaf representation from Deaf Action at various equality meetings and forums. To further increase their commitment to Deaf people, Parliament staff and MSPs received training in British Sign Language and Deaf Awareness from Deaf Action's Training department based at Head Office in Edinburgh.

Deaf Action commends the Scottish Parliament for the work that has been done to improve accessibility in its new home and sent a group of members and staff to test facilities in committee rooms in the building, including a full scale dress rehearsal in the Parliament debating chamber to ensure everything ran smoothly before the official opening.

The Scottish Parliament gives Scotland's 758,000 deaf people hope for the future, that no longer will they be denied opportunity to participate in the issues affecting the future of Scotland.

## Lipspeaking Course

For many years Deaf Action has been renowned for delivering high quality Sign Language tuition. This year the organisation decided to take it one step further and offered a training course in lipspeaking for the very first time.

Students who attended the course came from Highland, Fife, West Lothian and Central Region, and were taught over five weekends. They had to complete projects, written examinations and in-house tasks before undertaking a practical assessment before a panel of examiners.

A lipspeaker is a person who will repeat a speaker's message using clear, lipreadable lip shapes without using their voice. They are also trained to support the message by using facial expression, fingerspelling and gesture if requested. This means for events such as public meetings, G.P appointments, job interviews, and in fact anywhere there is an exchange of information, a lipreader can concentrate on the lipspeaker to ensure they receive the full information.

Deaf Action is delighted to offer congratulations to its students, Gail Cecil, Jackie McDonald, Louise Barry and Deirdre Aitken, who have been awarded the CACDP Level 2 Certificate in Lipspeaking.

**If you have never used a lipspeaker and would like more information, or if you want to learn more about lipspeaking courses please contact Mary McDevitt, a member of Deaf Action's Communication Support Unit on 0131 652 3208.**

## Is University for you?



Available on VHS, DVD or CD ROM, a new guide for deaf students aims to encourage prospective students who are deaf or hard of hearing to think about going to university.

It contains information on how to apply to university, student loans, support services, special exam arrangements and student accommodation.

**To order your FREE copy contact the RNID information line on 0808 808 0123 (tel), 0808 808 9000 (text) or 020 7296 8199 (fax).**

## Police Officer in the right place at the right time



Maureen Docherty, a Police Officer with Lothian & Borders Police, and a member of Deaf Action's Services Sub Committee, was involved in the recent official opening of Holyrood – the new home of Scottish politics.

Maureen studied British Sign Language at Deaf Action and her skills certainly came in handy on the day. Maureen tells us her story:

*"On Saturday 9th October 2004 I was fortunate enough to be involved in the celebrations for the opening of the new Scottish Parliament. As a plain-clothes police officer I am not in a position to explain my duties, but it is fair to say that I had a prime view of all dignitaries and invited guests to this memorable event.*

*With the guests safely inside the new Holyrood building, a colleague and I walked to Canongate where a large crowd had assembled. I noted two smartly dressed ladies walking towards me; one stopped and asked 'what happens now? I was immediately aware she was deaf and happily used my Sign Language skills to tell her, unfortunately, that I didn't know! She was delighted I could sign and we went on to have a lengthy conversation about where I studied Sign Language.*

*In the excitement, I'm not sure I told her I was a plain clothes police officer, but I do know she appeared grateful to have stopped someone who could communicate with her, and I was so delighted to be able to use my skills.*

*I was honoured to be part of the historic opening ceremony of Holyrood but also very honoured that I'd been in the right place at the right time when the lady needed assistance. I don't know her name, but would like to thank her for approaching me that day and hope in the future we'll see many more police officers using Sign Language.*

## Staffing news

Deaf Action welcomed new staff recently with the arrival of social workers Tricia McCulloch and Elin Cowan, trainee interpreter Nicolle Murdoch and accounts assistant Eileen Booker .

We said goodbye to Lisa Stapleton, a member of the communication support unit, who left to work freelance. Deaf Action wishes her well.

Deaf Action has also been awarded funding for two part-time Information & Advice Workers – 1 based in Highland and 1 in Edinburgh – to work with hard of hearing people. The posts will be advertised in the near future.

Earlier this year, Deaf Action's Director, Liz Scott Gibson, was invited to give a presentation on the development of Sign Language interpreting services to the World Congress of Rehabilitation International, held in Oslo, Norway.



## Discrimination Drive in Inverness



Deaf Action's Highland Communication Support Service, based in Inverness, recently provided BSL/English Interpreters at various events and workshops tackling discrimination. The city played host to an eye-catching yellow and blue information truck as part of the European Commission's "For Diversity - Against Discrimination" campaign. The truck tour visited 19 cities in 10 EU countries to raise awareness of anti-discrimination issues and make people more aware of their rights and obligations regarding discrimination in the workplace.

Recent research has shown that many people think that a person's gender, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation could be a disadvantage when job searching. The truck tour helped to portray diversity as a positive alternative to discrimination.

Depute Provost Councillor Kathleen Matheson, Vice-Chairman of The Highland Council's City of Inverness and Area Committee, welcomed the truck to the city's Falcon Square, and opened the day's activities organised by the Highlands and Islands Equality Forum.

A Scottish welcome of traditional music was followed by a variety of interactive games, theatre, music and dance, with activities continuing until 6 pm. The truck was very impressive and boasted the latest technologies so that everyone could benefit. It was fitted with a stair crawler for use by people with disabilities and a Braille guide connected to a special terminal for visually impaired people.

### Guidance for General Practitioners

GPs across the UK have received a new publication containing advice on how to make their surgeries more accessible to deaf and hard of hearing patients.

The publication comes with a simple poster with communication tips for frontline health staff and any GP or nurse will be able to use it as a quick reference whenever they meet a deaf or hard of hearing patient or visitor to the surgery.

Detailed information about deaf and hard of hearing people's rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is also included, and states clearly that at least one frontline member of staff should be trained in deaf awareness in order to communicate effectively when required.

If you don't see the poster at your local GP why not contact the RNID Information Line for a copy and take it with you next time you go! Tel: 0808 808 0123 Text: 0808 808 9000

### idcs.info

www.idcs.info is a major online, global forum dedicated to childhood deafness. It is an important part of the international wing of the National Deaf Children's Society, which aims to improve the life chances of deaf children everywhere. Check it out!

### The Deaf Children's Society of East Scotland (DCS)

The DCS Christmas Party for Deaf/hearing impaired children age 0 - 7 years and their families was held on Sunday 12 December at the Edinburgh Marriot Hotel, Edinburgh with lots of activities for the children. The DCS have also organised a visit to a Christmas Pantomime for deaf/hearing impaired children and young people age 8 - 19 years. There are 130 front stall seats available for the BSL interpreted matinee performance of Aladdin at the King's Theatre in Edinburgh. For further information on DCS please contact Isabel MacNeill, DCS Chair, Flat 6 52 Polwarth Gardens, Edinburgh, EH11 1LL or tel: 0131 229 2903.

### DeafWorld.com

A new world directory for the deaf and hard of hearing community has been launched. DeafWorld.com will contain listings of businesses and services who register with the site, and best of all, it's FREE.

### Pillow talk!

Two Chilean inventors have designed a pillow for waking up deaf people. The Good Awakening pillow gently shakes the owner's head by gently inflating and deflating. Engineering students unveiled their invention at a business fair in Santiago, Chile.

## The Loch Ness Marathon, October 3rd 2004



**Earlier this year, Deaf Action was thrilled when James Maybee from Inverness agreed to run in the Loch Ness Marathon and raise vital funds for the organisation. James tells us his story below.**

"Crossing the finishing line, madly punching the air in a mixture of sheer relief and exhilaration, was a moment to savour. The six months of slogging round the lanes, the endless and enduring niggling injuries, and the struggle to push away the nagging doubts was forgotten in an instant. It no longer mattered; I had done it.

I decided to run the Loch Ness Marathon back in April and didn't tell anyone, not even my wife, until late June.

But I didn't want to simply run for me; it somehow didn't seem enough. I needed something more to motivate me through the gruelling training that lay ahead. So I e-mailed the local Deaf Action office in Inverness and Colin MacLeod quickly signed me up. Damn it, I thought, I really am going to have to do this now.

Why Deaf Action? It's simple really. I work for criminal justice social work services in Highland and until two years ago knew very little about the services available for deaf people here. Or rather I knew very little about the lack of services. Over the last two years I have often sat in meetings attended by John Gill, the team manager of Deaf Services for social work services, and come to understand just

how limited resources are for deaf people; and how committed John and other members of social work are to delivering and developing the best services they can against all the odds across such an enormous area. It doesn't seem right when so much money is sloshing around for other more high profile services (and I won't even mention the parliament building...). This was my way of making my own very small contribution.

I knew I had to set targets - you can tell I work for local government - and so the number 4 became a bit of a talisman; I set a target of £400 and I hoped to run under 4 hours. In the end I managed both - just. I made up the training as I went along; 12 miles by end June (a particularly painful run in the heat but this was a real milestone and morale booster), 16 by end July, 20 with 6 weeks to go. And then the big day. A miracle: the forecasters were wrong and it was calm, sunny and there was a gentle westerly wind.

Everything was going fine at the 16 mile mark. At the 20 mile mark I'm beginning to dream of glory. But things seemed to be going too well.

Four miles to go and I know I am slowing up and then suddenly things are not

going quite so well; but the finishing line is just too far away to be of much comfort. On the 20 mile training run I was fixated in the closing stages on chocolate ice cream which took my mind off things (fortunately there was some in the freezer). Now, all I can think of is what if...What if I can't close this out? The desolation of having got so near and yet so far; and how can I collect the sponsorship money if I don't finish?

All these runners are starting to pour past me looking fresh and relaxed. My brain is curdling as much as my legs and it takes me a couple of miles to realise it's the 10km runners. Oh the relief, what relief. It keeps me going. There is some guy just up ahead who keeps stopping, walking for a while and then running on; and I just can't catch him! It's not fair!! Finally, I turn across the bridge and the agony and torture of the last mile as the route goes all round the stadium before finally I emerge onto the tartan track and make it.

Yes, it was worth it. And for no better reason than handing the cheque over to Colin and knowing this will help others in a small way; and knowing that I had achieved something that is very special to me."

## Profile of an Olympic athlete



In this edition of Inform we meet Lauren, a local woman and championship athlete.

From a very young age Lauren, who is hard of hearing, has been enjoying athletics and now at 16 years old is the youngest member of the Great British (GB) team competing at the Deaflympics in Melbourne Australia in January 2005.

Until recently Lauren was a pupil at Dunbar Grammar School in East Lothian where she competed in many events and won the Scottish Schools Track & Cross Country Championship, and held the fastest Scottish time for under 15s at 800 and 1500 metres. She now attends Telford College's SVQ Sports Leadership course and is considering a career in teaching, although her greatest wish would be to become a professional athlete.

A member of Dunbar Running Club, Lauren distinguished herself at European senior level, taking part in the European Deaf Indoor Athletics in Bulgaria earlier this year, where she finished 1st in the 800 metres and 4th in the 1500 metres. Lauren also competed in the outdoor Europeans in Estonia during the summer and returned with two medals and two records in junior deaf athletes, again in 800 and 1500 metres.

After competing in several GB trials, Lauren eventually heard the news that she had been chosen to represent Great Britain and would be travelling to Australia for the Deaflympics.

To help her communicate with the many Deaf sportsmen and women she will meet in Oz, Lauren decided to learn British Sign Language and contacted Deaf Action for information on courses available. She now attends Deaf Action's SQA accredited "Introduction to BSL" course in Haddington, East Lothian.

"The BSL course has been great, and I'm sure I'll learn lots more while in Melbourne", said Lauren.

So how do you follow in Laurens running shoes? "Join a club and be prepared for hard work. You must be committed to the training if you want to succeed. I also have great support from my mum, dad and brother, who are travelling with me to Australia."

Deaf Action would like to wish Lauren and the GB team great success in Melbourne.

## Deaf Action tutors' success

Congratulations to our two new BSL/Deaf Awareness tutors, Carri Neilson and Sophia Cummings.

The two of them successfully completed the Telford College City & Guilds training course for Further Education teachers. The students were supported by the college, which booked BSL interpreters and a notetaker for all the classes. "I really enjoyed the challenge, and it was worth it in the end when I got my certificate. I'm looking forward to doing more teaching at Deaf Action," said Sophia.

A major part of the training course was for the students to take turns giving teaching presentations in class, in whatever field they were experts. For Sophia and Carri, this meant teaching their fellow students (and the lecturer) some BSL. "It was hard work, but I enjoyed seeing the other students' presentations in class. They all had fun learning a bit of Sign Language, too!" said Carri.

Carri and Sophia, together with Ian Dalton, Deaf Action's BSL/Deaf Awareness Co-ordinator, have also recently completed a series of workshops on "Becoming a Deaf Awareness Trainer" from Deafworks, in London.

The demand for BSL and Deaf Awareness classes has grown dramatically. The number of students in our introductory classes has doubled since last year, which means that we will be putting our new tutors to good use. Deaf Action is interested in hearing from other BSL users who have teaching qualifications, or who would like to undergo training to become BSL tutors. Contact: Ian Dalton [idalton@deafaction.org](mailto:idalton@deafaction.org)

## Deafness & Dementia Project

Deaf Action would like to thank the Queensberry House Trust for funding the next phase of our work on the Deafness and Dementia project. This aims to take forward some of the recommendations arising from the report which we have compiled following our work last year, and will seek to pilot a training programme for carers of people who are deaf and are living with dementia. Contact Frankie McLean at Deaf Action's Head Office for more information.

## Conference for Health Service Providers

The Disability Discrimination Act came into full force in October this year. But do service providers know how to match their duties under the Act to people with a sensory loss? That's the question that Deaf Action, RNIB and Deafblind Scotland aim to address in our up-coming joint conference "A Sense of Direction – The DDA and Beyond".

Aimed at Health Service Providers, the conference will help participants to

learn more about what they can do to match the needs of deaf and visually impaired people. Activities will include information on available services as well as practical workshops aimed at promoting best practice.

The conference will take place on 23 February 2005 in Edinburgh. For more details, contact Kerry McMillan, Administrative Support Worker at Deaf Action on 0131 652 3207 or [kmcmillan@deafaction.org](mailto:kmcmillan@deafaction.org)

## Notetaking Course

Deaf Action is currently offering an accredited Notetaking course from our Albany Street base. Note takers are communication support workers who take notes of a meeting or lecture to enable a deaf participant to have a written record of the proceedings. (If the deaf person is watching an interpreter or lipspeaker they have no opportunity to take notes).

There are very few Notetaking tutors in Scotland, so we tackled the problem by training two experienced individuals, Claire Mackay and Margaret Bradshaw, as qualified Notetaking tutors. Clare and Margaret have gone on to recruit a keen group of students and we look forward to hearing more about their progress through the course.



## Medical Students become Deaf Aware

As part of our Edinburgh and Lothian Deaf Health Project, Deaf Action staff are currently training a group of 24 medical students from the Royal Medical Society, part of the University of Edinburgh, in BSL and Deaf Awareness. One of the project's aims is to train health service providers to meet the needs of deaf service users, and we are delighted to be able to have an impact on the learning of these future doctors.

Debra Dalton, who co-ordinates the project, is also being "shadowed" by two medical students as part of the University's "Not Only Doctors: Working in Teams" programme. This new initiative aims to provide medical students with experience of a wide range of agencies, including voluntary organisations, working in the field of health.

Ruth Benson, a third year medical student at the university who is shadowing Debra said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for me to learn more about the needs of the Deaf Community in terms of access to health services. I have already met Debra and gained an insight into Deaf Action's Health Project. I'm looking forward to the rest of my placement and finding out about the other services that Deaf Action provides".

### 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:

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