

# Inform



Winter 2005    Newsletter of Deaf Action – Making the difference



## WELCOME

As 2005 draws to a close, we look back on another busy year at Deaf Action. The building work which has been going on for many months is almost at an end; the old fire escape at Head Office has been replaced, and we hope to have a new wheelchair lift installed by the end of the year.

The renovation of the old church building into our new Learning Centre, and development of a new office/meeting room in the roof space is now complete, and we are looking forward to the formal opening in 2006. We are very grateful to all those who took part in the Great Scottish Walk in June who raised money to enable us to furnish the Learning Centre. Now all we have to do is try to find some extra money to buy computers so we can begin our computer training courses for deaf people!

A number of exciting initiatives began in 2005. Our new Information & Advice Service aimed at older hard of hearing people got off to a great start, and we saw the publication of our booklet 'Dementia & Deafness'. Deaf parents who attended our course on parenting skills rated it a great success.

I have no doubt that 2006 will be another busy and productive year for Deaf Action!

Season's greetings to you all.

**Liz Scott Gibson**



**Director**

## DEAF ACTION DIRECTOR ELECTED FIRST PRESIDENT

Liz Scott Gibson, Deaf Action's Director was elected as the very first President of the newly established World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) at a conference held in South Africa in November.

Over 250 sign language interpreters from 40 different countries participated in the conference, and Scotland was proud to sponsor the attendance of the delegates from Palestine, Zambia & Zimbabwe.

The opening key-note presentations were by Wilma Newhoudt-Druhen, a Deaf MP in the South African parliament, who welcomed the conference participants, and Carol-Lee Aquiline, former General Secretary of the World Federation of the Deaf.

WASLI will work to support sign language interpreter associations throughout the world, and in particular will support developing countries to establish sign language interpreter training and services – building on some of the work already done by Deaf Action in this area.



## LEARNING CENTRE TO OPEN

Deaf Action's new Learning Centre will officially open for business in the New Year following the major refurbishment of Albany Deaf Church.

The organisation wanted very much to retain the historical significance of the building, attached to the Head Office in Edinburgh, and ensured that certain characteristics remained intact; the stained-glass window donated to the Church in memory of Robert C Williamson, a Church Elder, the stone archways once leading to the vestry and the ornate timber vaulted ceiling.

Now complete, the Centre will be home to Deaf Action's renowned British Sign Language and Deaf Awareness courses as well as other specialist training. In the future, courses in computing, literacy and numeracy, and information on health and parenting, employment and job-seeking skills, will be offered to enable deaf people to be more independent and have greater control over their lives.



## IAG SERVICE - Mr & Mrs Birkley

Since May of this year, Deaf Action's Information, Advice & Guidance service has been very successful in helping clients who are hard of hearing to apply, and in many cases, receive additional benefit. IAG worker, Jackie Black, has been kept busy over recent months visiting clients' homes and giving presentations throughout Edinburgh & Lothian to various community groups.

One success story is Mr and Mrs Birkley from Bathgate. A miner for over 40 years, Tom Birkley began losing his hearing several years ago, while wife Margaret, a tailoress for many years, has a more severe hearing loss and was fitted with her first hearing aid in 1981. Over the years the couple visited the Audiology Department at St Johns Hospital Livingston on many occasions and were so grateful with the service they received that they decided to "give something back" and became volunteers twice a month with the hearing aid battery postal service.

While at the hospital one day Tom noticed a poster advertising the IAG service and decided to contact Jackie to find out more. Jackie visited the couple at home to discuss the service and helped them complete the necessary forms to apply for additional benefit. Shortly thereafter, Tom and Margaret received the welcome news that they had been successful with their application.

Tom said *"We are much more comfortable now since we were awarded our additional benefit. We really can't thank Deaf Action enough, and in particular Jackie, who helped us. We are now looking forward to a great Christmas!"*

Only recently when Tom turned 80 years young did the couple decide to put their feet up and retire! Until then they enjoyed several cruises and travelled to America and Canada an amazing 17 times to visit their son and his family, including two grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They now keep themselves busy visiting friends and family and Tom is known to belt out a few songs on his karaoke machine while enjoying a wee glass of Southern Comfort!



## OPEN DAY FOR HARD OF HEARING AND DEAFENED PEOPLE

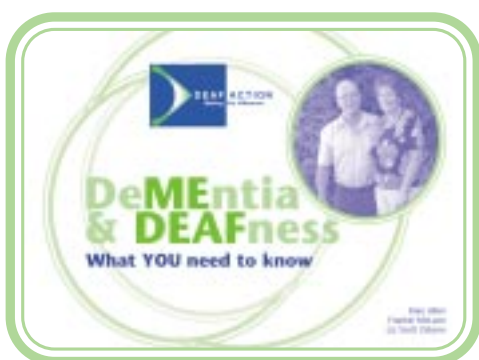
Christmas shopping was put on hold recently when Deaf Action held an Open Day to offer some expert advice to those who are hard of hearing and deafened. Staff were on hand to provide information on specialist services provided by the organisation, including equipment on free loan, benefits advice, lipspeaking and outreach visiting services. Representatives from other leading organisations and community groups (eg Department for Work & Pensions, Lipreading Tutors and Hard of Hearing Clubs) were also available to discuss their services and how they can help. Jackie Black, Information, Advice & Guidance Worker who organised the event, said *"The day went very well with over 80 people dropping in to talk to the representatives and gain some very worthwhile information and advice. I'd like to thank everyone who joined us to make the day a success and give special thanks to the businesses who very kindly donated raffle prizes, cakes and mince pies!"*



## DEMENTIA & DEAFNESS

Deaf Action, in partnership with the Dementia Services Development Centre (DSDC) at the University of Stirling, has completed a Scotland-wide research and development project. The aim of the project was to explore the issues faced by people who are both deaf/hard of hearing and have dementia (a group of conditions that includes Alzheimer's Disease). The work involved both people who had longstanding deafness and then later developed dementia, and also people who developed both hearing loss and dementia in later life.

The overlap of deafness and dementia affects large numbers of people, and up until now very little work has been done to find ways to support them and their families, and enable them to continue to live as full a life as possible.



Now complete, a report on the initial exploratory findings of the research is available, as well as an additional booklet reporting on the project.

**Contact the Head Office in Edinburgh for your copy.**

## ADULT AUDIOLOGY

by Lynn Jackson, Assistant Directorate Manager for ENT/Audiology services in Lothian

*"There has been lots happening in Audiology over the past few years and this has been difficult and yet exciting for everyone involved in Audiology services.*

*As you will all know the waiting times continue to be unacceptably high and this has been a result of 2 main issues: 1. the huge increase in demand on the service since the announcement of digital hearing aids being available in Lothian, and 2. the shortage of hearing aids, which is a major issue of audiologists in Lothian.*

*We have tried to address this by introducing the use of assistant audiologists who have been trained to undertake repairs and also group instruction work which has been very successful. We have also employed private practitioners in East and West Lothian who have been trained to the same level as the NHS staff, and who also work to our standards to fit hearing aids in these areas.*

*We have been looking at how we can improve the environment of Audiology, as well as improving the efficiency and effectiveness, and I am delighted to say we now have four new test rooms under construction - audiology booths - on the Lauriston Building site. This will give us additional capacity from the New Year and if we can recruit staff for them then we will make good headway into these waiting times. There has also been a new room built at Roodlands Hospital in Haddington and the people of East Lothian are benefiting from that already.*

*The new Audiology degree course is also underway at Queen Margaret University College in Edinburgh and we are very much looking forward to reaping the benefits of that!*

*I would be happy to answer any queries or comments from Deaf Action readers at any time or to arrange a visit to see the new facilities.*



## COUNCIL STAFF DEAF AWARE

Revenues Unit staff from West Lothian Council have reason to smile after completing British Sign Language and Deaf Awareness training. Like many public services, the Revenues Unit was not equipped with the correct communication tools to deal with deaf and hard of hearing people. Staff became increasingly frustrated when they were unable to deal with enquiries from service users about benefits and council tax and approached Deaf Action to help.

Deaf Action provided training in BSL and Deaf Awareness for six West Lothian staff who recently received their certificates from the Scottish Qualifications Authority. To help staff celebrate their achievements a lunch was held at the Revenues base in St David House Livingston with invited Councillors and Council staff, as well as staff from Deaf Action.

The team are now keen to start using their new skills and hope that deaf and hard of hearing people in West Lothian will benefit from the improved, more accessible service.

**If you have any questions for the Revenues Unit contact them on 01506 776 898 (fax) 01506 776 827 (text) 01506 776 800 (voice) [sarah.baxter@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.baxter@westlothian.gov.uk) (email)**



## TRAINEE INTERPRETERS GRADUATION

Congratulations to Deaf Action trainee interpreters, Nigel Ashbrook and Nicolle Murdoch, who recently graduated from Heriot Watt University with a Certificate in Interpreting Studies and Skills. They were presented with their certificates at a graduation ceremony at the University and hope to apply for registration to the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters in the New Year. **Well done!**



## COUNSELLING TRAINING PROJECT

13 deaf and hard of hearing students have recently completed a Certificate Course in Counselling Skills for deaf people at Strathclyde University. The successful course was organised by the Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) who secured funding for the training project from the Big Lottery Fund as well as from the Scottish Executive. To ensure full access to communication throughout the course, all the students had access to Sign Language Interpreters and electronic notetaking services.

SCoD's two part-time project coordinators, Trudi Collier, who is one of only two Deaf trained and qualified counsellors in Scotland, and Lorna Weatherstone, are now planning the third and final certificate course due to commence in April 2006 with a 'taster' weekend' in February 2006.



For further information on the course write to SCoD, Central Chambers, Suite 62 1st Floor, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD or contact 0141 248 1854 (text) 0141 248 2479 (fax) [trudi@scod.org.uk](mailto:trudi@scod.org.uk) (email).

## ALICE THOMLINE



Members and friends of Deaf Action were saddened recently by the death of long-time member Alice Thomline. Alice reached the grand old age of 99, just short of receiving her card from the Queen, when she passed away peacefully after a short spell in hospital.

Alice regularly attended the Golden Amber Club at Deaf Action's Head Office to meet with friends, have a cuppa and enjoy a game of bingo.

Alice was a great lady, a great friend and will be sadly missed.

## WANT TO LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE?

Deaf Action is planning an 'Introduction to BSL' course beginning in February 2006. The course is accredited by SQA.

For further information contact Colin MacLeod at the Head Office in Edinburgh on **0131 550 0994** (voice & text) or email: [cmacleod@deafaction.org](mailto:cmacleod@deafaction.org)

## PARENTING CLASSES

Earlier in the year, Deaf Action was approached by a number of parents who were keen to learn more about the skills needed to bring up their children well, and to share their experiences with other parents.

Although Parenting Courses are available throughout the area and can be accessed using BSL /English interpreters, Deaf parents can feel quite isolated within a hearing group who don't share the unique challenges faced by Deaf parents.

As part of our Deaf Health Project, we were able to respond to this need by setting up a weekly Parenting Skills course over the autumn. Frances Byatt-Smith, a Health Visitor working for NHS Lothian, delivered the course to a group of twelve mums, who all use BSL and came to the course from all over Lothian.

Frances worked with the group to address topics including Encouraging Your Child, Discipline, Behaviour You Don't Like and Quality Time. Throughout the course there was plenty of opportunity for mums to share experiences and challenges with one another as well as to chat over tea and biscuits. Deaf Action provided a creche which meant that the mums could take a break from the children and focus on their own learning.

Lynn McNulty, a local mum of two children, said *"The Parenting Skills course gave us lots of advice - some of us mums tried out the techniques at home and saw our kids' behaviour improve. I enjoyed it very much and have learnt quite a lot, and I hope there will be more courses like this in the future."*



# ACCESS TO WORK

## What is Access to Work?

'Access to Work' is a government scheme which makes support available to help 'overcome the problems resulting from disability' at work. This could be practical advice or help, and is tailored to the individual person and their job. Each person is assessed for their needs. This help does not replace responsibilities of employer with respect to Health & Safety or replace responsibilities required by Disability Discrimination Act.

## What type of help is available?

'Access to Work' can provide help to match an individuals needs, but examples of help are

- Communicator support at interview
- Support worker - including communicating via Sign Language
- Special aids or equipment
- Adaptation to premises or existing equipment
- Additional travel costs for people unable to use public transport

All enquires regarding 'Access to Work' should be made to the Disability Advisor at your local job centre.

## Recent developments

Demand for support from 'Access to Work' has risen dramatically over the past 10 years and this has meant that budgets have been stretched. 'Access to Work' Business Centres have a responsibility to make appropriate use of public money, to make the support they offer cost effective in order to help as many people as possible.

## Communication Support

Demand for communication support for Deaf employees has seen the most significant increase in demand. 'Access to Work' has recognised that there is a shortage of BSL/English Interpreters in Scotland, but at the same time has put many restrictions on the costs they will pay for communication support. One of the main restrictions has been a low mileage rate of 25p per mile. The Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) recommends a rate of 38p per mile, and the Inland Revenue recommend 40p per mile. This has meant in recent months many freelance BSL/English Interpreters have not been accepting 'Access to Work' assignments.

Deaf Action has honoured assignments until the end of December 2005 at the 38p rate, although 'Access to Work' will only pay 25p.

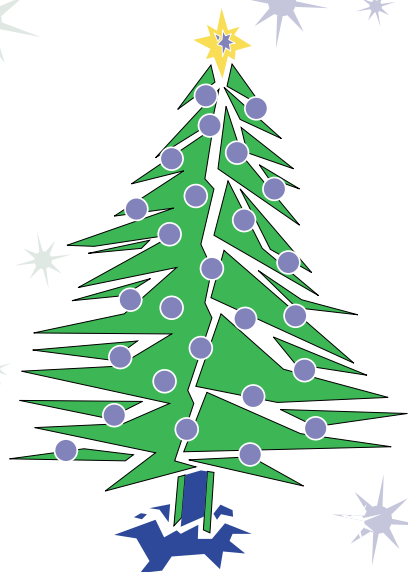
'Access to Work' has recently tendered a contract for the provision of communication support in all postcodes beginning 'G', 'EH', 'PA' and 'ML'. The contract provider has not yet been announced (at time of writing) but the contract is due to start in December 2005.

Deaf Action is currently involved in national (UK and Scotland) discussion groups concerning 'Access to Work' support and provision, and would welcome any views.

Please contact Kevin Geddes, Service Provision Manager on 0131 550 0993 (voice/text) or [kevin.geddes@deafaction.org](mailto:kevin.geddes@deafaction.org)



## FESTIVE GREETINGS



The Executive Council and staff of Deaf Action wish all our members and readers a very merry festive season.

## 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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Tel: 0131 556 3128 (voice)  
Text: 0131 557 0419  
Fax: 0131 557 8283  
Email: [admin@deafaction.org](mailto:admin@deafaction.org)

## EQUIPMENT CORNER

Are you hard of hearing? Do you have trouble hearing the television or conversations with friends and family? If so then a personal listener could be the answer.

### What is a listener?

It is a small battery operated amplifier with a built-in microphone that picks up the sound. The sound is amplified and heard through either headphones or a neck loop, whichever is more comfortable for you to use.



When listening with the headphones you will need to remove your hearing aids. If you require a more powerful sound you can also use steto clip headphones. If you prefer to use the neck loop, you simply turn your hearing aid to the T position. Using this method is useful if you have a more severe hearing loss as it utilises your own hearing aid.

When either headphones or a neck loop is plugged into the listener, adjust the volume until you can hear comfortably. Most listeners have a tone control which is very useful to adjust the tone to suit your hearing loss.

A personal listener costs approximately £60 and is ideal for one to one conversations and listening to the television or radio. It is also ideal because of its size to take on holiday or when visiting friends or family. For more information please contact Deaf Action Specialist Equipment department.

## ANNUAL REPORT

Deaf Action's Annual Report 2004/2005 is now available. The Report doubles as a useful 2006 diary so if you would like a copy please contact the Head Office in Edinburgh.

