



**THE DEAF HEALTH
CHARITY**
SIGNHEALTH

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Welcome

2015/16 has been an exciting and eventful period for SignHealth. It's been an enormously rewarding time in which we've been recognised for our achievements while our reputation has grown as the foremost organisation for issues around deaf health and wellbeing.

We have also enjoyed celebrating thirty years of SignHealth. The charity was set up in 1986 as the Anastasia Trust in response to a lack of services for profoundly deaf people with mental health problems. Over three decades, we've grown to provide a range of services that improve the lives of deaf people.

Our Therapy the Deaf Way campaign called on the government to provide a nationally commissioned psychological therapy service in British Sign Language (BSL) for deaf people.

Meanwhile, in the run up to the Accessible Information Standard becoming law, our Healthier Together campaign ensured deaf people understood their rights and health providers knew their obligations.

Our work to improve access for deaf people was given a boost when NHS England's Contact Centre and 111 Non-Emergency line became available via SignHealth's InterpreterNow service. In addition, via InterpreterNow, deaf people can now contact the Police 101 line in Leicestershire, and in Scotland use the contactSCOTLAND service to connect with a huge range of government organisations.

We were delighted to be highly commended in the Royal Association for the Deaf awards in the following categories: Best Deaf Role Model (Dr Sarah Powell), Best Contribution to Deaf Studies (The Sick Of It Report) and Best Deaf Employer. Since then, we've gone on to receive other accolades, holding our own among much larger charities – something of which we're very proud.

2016/2017 promises to be an exciting time as we welcome James Watson-O'Neill as our Chief Executive. He has a wealth of experience in the voluntary sector with Scope, the NSPCC, SurvivorsUK and deafPLUS. The staff and trustees are looking forward to working with James to put deaf health and wellbeing centre-stage, building on the important work we've done over the last thirty years.

Introducing our new Chief Executive...



"I'm really excited about joining SignHealth. I want to take time to listen and learn from deaf people, to gain a real understanding of the right priorities for the organisation."

James Watson-O'Neill, Chief Executive from October 2016

Celebrating 30 years...



From our beginnings in 1986 as the Anastasia Trust, we have grown to deliver a range of services that improve the health, wellbeing and life-chances of deaf people.

In the last three decades we have set up a number of care homes, provided advocacy and outreach services, supported deaf women at risk of domestic abuse, delivered therapy in British Sign Language, helped set up SignHealth Uganda, carried out important research and made vital information more accessible for

deaf people. The world has changed significantly since SignHealth began, not least the huge technological leaps and the changing health and social care landscape. In 1986, the only way for a deaf person to make a phone call was via text relay, typing a message to be read by a third-party to the hearing person.

Today, using InterpreterNow, deaf people can make that call in BSL. A remote interpreter translates their signs for the hearing person. There are significant challenges but also huge opportunities.

We're looking forward to the next thirty years.

A white rectangular sign is mounted on a red brick wall using four silver-colored screws. The sign features the text 'THE DEAF HEALTH CHARITY' in a bold, pink, sans-serif font, and 'SIGNHEALTH' in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font below it.

**THE DEAF HEALTH
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Reach out your hand...

On a sunny autumn day deaf and hearing children from St Albans joined forces to make the video for sign2sing 2016. Directed by award winning deaf film maker Bim Ajadi, the video was a key resource for schools, businesses and groups taking part in sign2sing 2016.



The song 'Reach Out Your Hand' carried a strong anti-bullying message, encouraging listeners to recognise that, despite outward differences, *'inside we're all the same'*. Deaf and hearing children excitedly performed the signs for the cameras and acted out moving scene with Fletch, a Deaf Pop Star.

The themes of the song resonate throughout the work of SignHealth.

Off camera, things were no different with hearing children excitedly learning signs from their deaf friends. It was no surprise that the resulting film was both emotional and uplifting.

The themes of the song resonate throughout the work of SignHealth. Deaf children want to have fun, to be happy and to be safe. Yet, sadly, deaf children are more likely to experience abuse and neglect than their hearing peers. Bullying, harassment and social exclusion are not uncommon.

Our Young DeafHope service works with deaf young people to help them recognise the difference between good and bad relationships and how to get help if they're experiencing abuse.

Early intervention of this kind can help young people avoid the negative relationships experienced by the women supported by DeafHope.

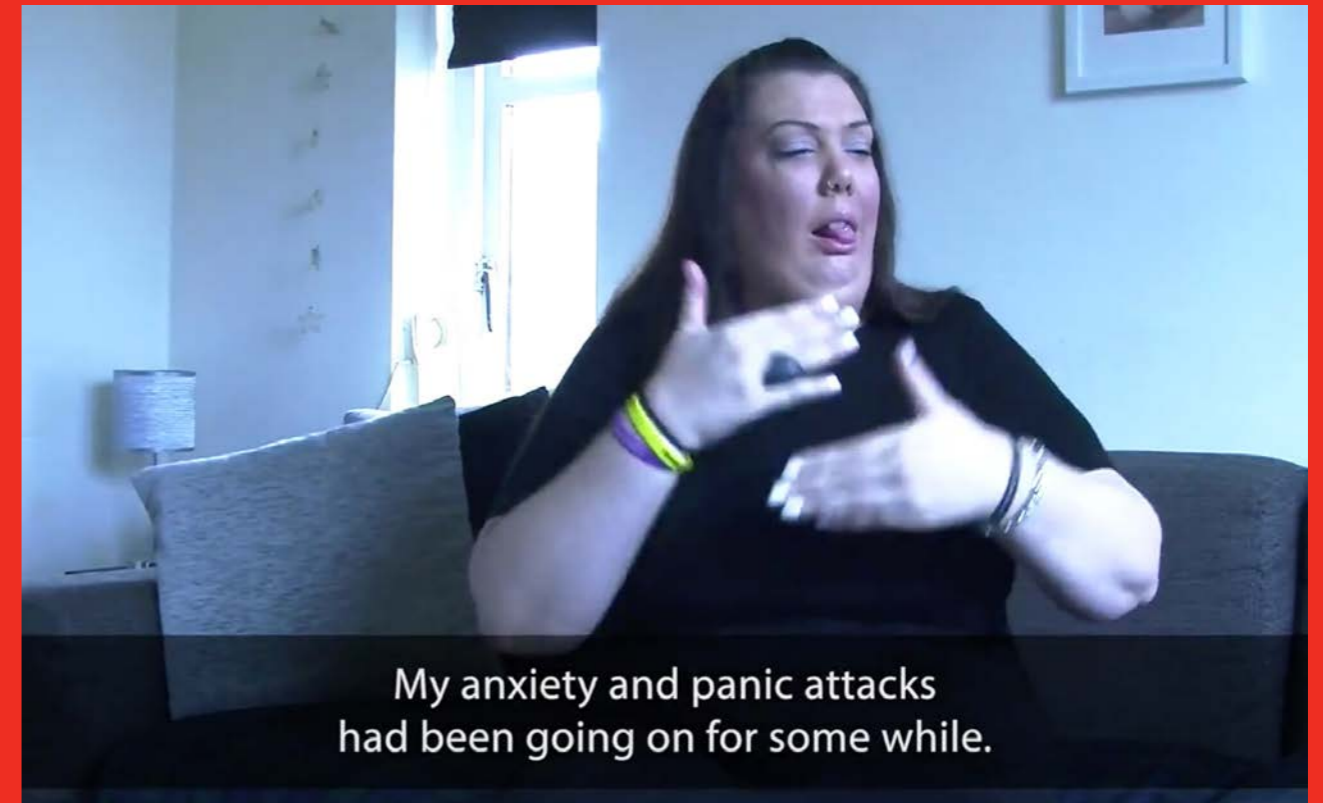
DeafHope provides a BSL service which help deaf survivors of abuse rebuild their lives and move on. Increasingly, their work is also about informing and educating. This service is provided by deaf staff in BSL.

Deaf women often miss out on vital messages in the media about staying safe and what is acceptable behaviour in relationships. DeafHope is helping to rectify this situation by making the information available to deaf women by, for instance, providing a BSL interpretation of a Home Office video on honour-based violence.

With the help of the people that fundraise through activities like sign2sing and with the generosity of trusts, we can work to make sure deaf people get the help and support they need.

The light at the end of the tunnel...

Imagine having to tell someone about your mental health problems who doesn't know your language. Imagine if you had no communication support and that the therapist had no understanding of your culture. Imagine having to discuss your personal problems via an interpreter. This is what therapy was like for Bexi before she discovered BSL Healthy Minds.



Bexi had problems coping with life and things became much worse following the death of her best friend. She had regular panic attacks and isolated herself, refusing to go out with friends.

"I was having really dark thoughts"

Bexi had some counselling with a hearing therapist but it didn't work for her. They didn't understand the barriers and difficulties she faced as a deaf woman and Bexi felt patronised and let down. Things changed when her mother found out about SignHealth's BSL Healthy Minds and suggested Bexi make contact.

Bexi couldn't believe the difference: "My conversations with the therapist were fluent and smooth. They picked up on my problems very quickly, especially the ones linked to deaf issues."

Bexi had a course of cognitive behavioural therapy and started to see results.

"CBT helped me such a lot. I feel like I'm back to the old bubbly Bexi. On the last day of my therapy, I felt quite emotional. I told my therapist I need sunglasses because the light at the end of the tunnel was so bright."

Yet sadly, many deaf people miss out on therapy in BSL because there isn't a national funding programme.

SignHealth's Therapy the Deaf Way campaign called on the government to provide a nationally commissioned psychological therapy service for Deaf people in BSL.

We also launched a petition which attracted hundreds of signatures from deaf and hearing people.

BSL Healthy Minds therapy has a success rate of 75% compared to 44% for therapy for hearing people.

Bexi's story shows the difference therapy in BSL makes to deaf people. We want to make the light at the end of the tunnel a right, not a privilege.

When you have fun, you can do amazing things...

Balham isn't the first place you'd expect to find ghosts and ghouls, well not unless you've been there at Halloween. Staff and residents at our care home in London are always up for doing something different, from maypole dancing to Easter Egg hunts. So when someone suggested they recreate Michael Jackson's famous Thriller video for Halloween, everyone was keen to take part.



Suddenly mild-mannered staff and residents were transformed into rampaging zombies, complete with ghastly skin, bloodied limbs and reddened eyes. The group put together a chilling story of an invasion of the normally quiet Longley Road garden, followed by a faithful rendition of the famous Thriller dance.

SignHealth's Communications Team was on hand to direct a film of what became known as The Longley Road Thriller. Over four thousand people viewed the video on social media and it was widely shared. Comments ranged from 'brilliant job Longley Road' to 'super awesome'.

Fun is an important part of daily life for our residents.

Activities like this are part of what makes life different at our care homes. Fun is an important part of daily life for our residents, whether it's going out to dinner as a group, growing their own vegetables, having a party or going on holiday together.

Over 50% of our staff are deaf.

Generous donors allow us to take tenants on holidays, for many the first time they've travelled anywhere significant. Some are, understandably, apprehensive but really benefit from being more independent and having fun. Like the group from SignHealth's home in Leeds who travelled together to Turkey.

Despite initial nerves, the group had a great time, swimming in the sea, relaxing by the pool and even belly-dancing! In fact they enjoyed the holiday so much that they all want to go again.

The main language used in our care home is BSL.

Residents get enormous benefit from doing something different. A trip or activity that many of us take for granted can be a life-changing experience, building confidence and expanding horizons.

Someone to turn to...

As she sat in a meeting, Louise felt her life was falling apart. She tried hard to understand what was going on but, even with an interpreter, it was impossible. At least it was better than previously when she'd been interviewed by text.

As English is not her first language, Louise had struggled to keep up with all the legal jargon made it even worse. Now she was being told she must leave her family home and that her children would be cared for by their father. Desperate and confused, Louise felt she had no one to turn to.

When a SignHealth Advocate became involved things started to change. He translated the CAFCASS report into British Sign Language for Louise; she was shocked to find how much was untrue. She discussed her options with the Advocate and decided to contact CAFCASS, the report was inaccurate due to the interview method. They accepted they had failed and promised to make changes.

At her next meeting, Louise was supported by SignHealth. Our advocate ensured Louise understood what was happening and when she returned to court, the case was closed. Sadly, the trauma of nearly losing her children took its toll on Louise's mental health and she needed counselling to help her put her life back together.

Louise is back with her children but things could have been very different.

Cases like this are not uncommon. Many deaf people in crisis unable to access vital, life-altering information in their own language.

Having an interpreter help but it's not the whole solution. Many deaf people need further support to fully understand what is being said and the implications.



Giving deaf people the support to make important decisions about their own lives is central to SignHealth's Advocacy and Outreach services.

Many of our Outreach clients struggle with daily life and feel isolated because they find it hard to access services due to communication difficulties and mental health issues. With help from Outreach they can start to build their confidence and live fulfilled, independent lives.

Hannah used to live in one of our supported living homes and found the prospect of living alone frightening. Outreach helped her make the move by working alongside her at every stage. They visited her regularly, helping her understand how to manage her money and organise her social life. Today she lives happily in her own flat and is enjoying creating a home where she can entertain friends and family.

Our Outreach and Advocacy services really do change lives. The first step is someone to turn to...

During this year...

...**89** clients have been given Advocacy support with **1,204** advocacy sessions being delivered. Our Outreach service has supported **93** people. BSL Healthy Minds has continued to achieve a recovery rate of **77%**. Over **6,000** calls were made using InterpreterNow. Staff in our care homes have supported **35** deaf people with mental health problems. Income from sign2sing has increased by **50%**. SignHealth employs **171** people, **50%** of whom are deaf. We supported **299** women and children through our domestic abuse service DeafHope. **100%** of people supported by DeafHope said they felt more able to make safe choices.

InterpreterNow, making direct communication possible...



...freedom to communicate

InterpreterNow provides an instant online service for deaf and hearing people to communicate via a smart phone, tablet or PC/Mac.

Using InterpreterNow you can:

- Make free phone calls to registered organisations
- Take calls from registered organisations
- Make free video-to-video calls to friends and family
- Access services in BSL such as NHS111, Contact Scotland, NHS Customer Contact Centre and Leicestershire Police 101

INTERPRETERNOW.co.uk 

Your support changes lives... Thank you.

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