



DeafblindUK

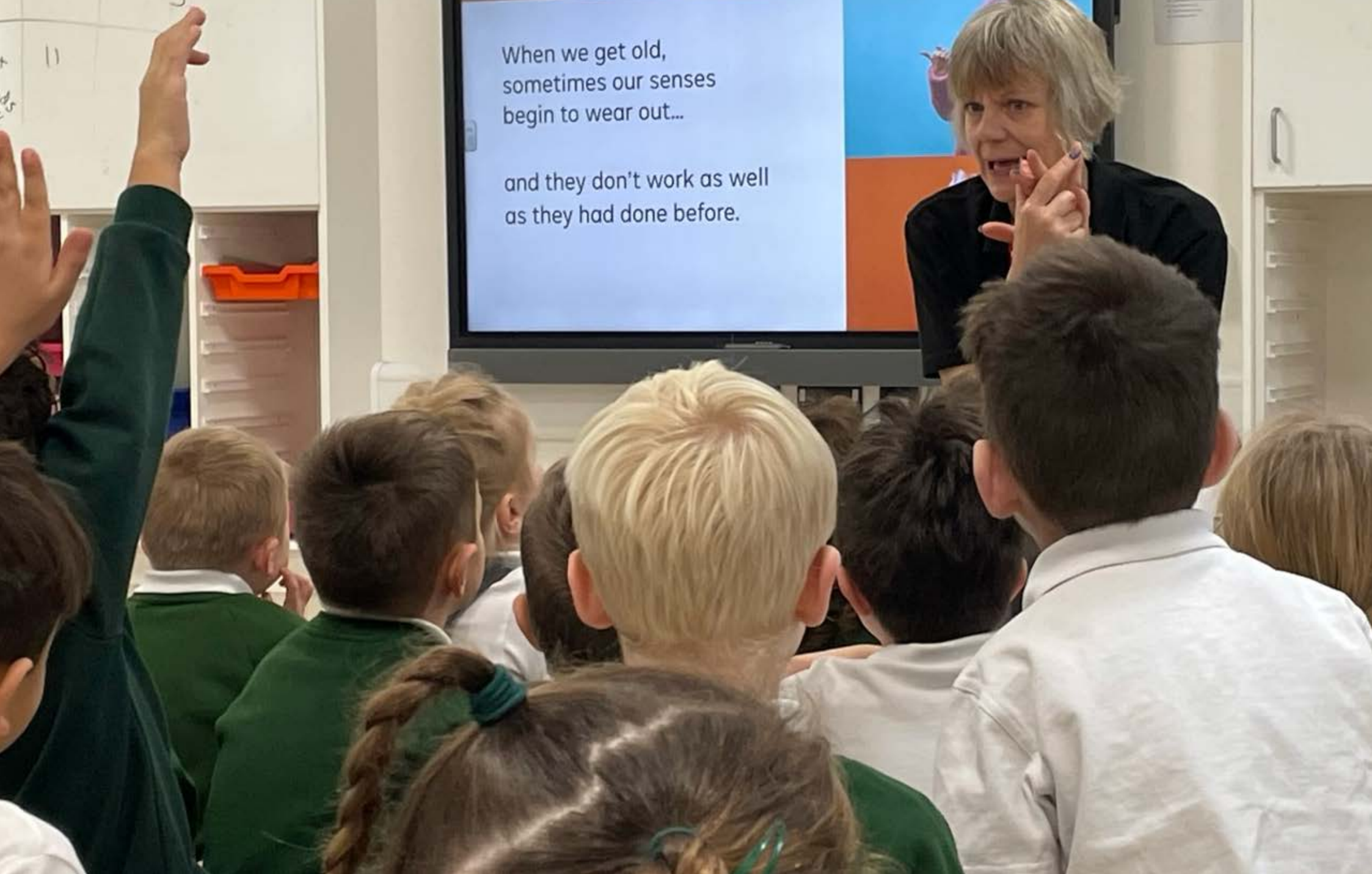
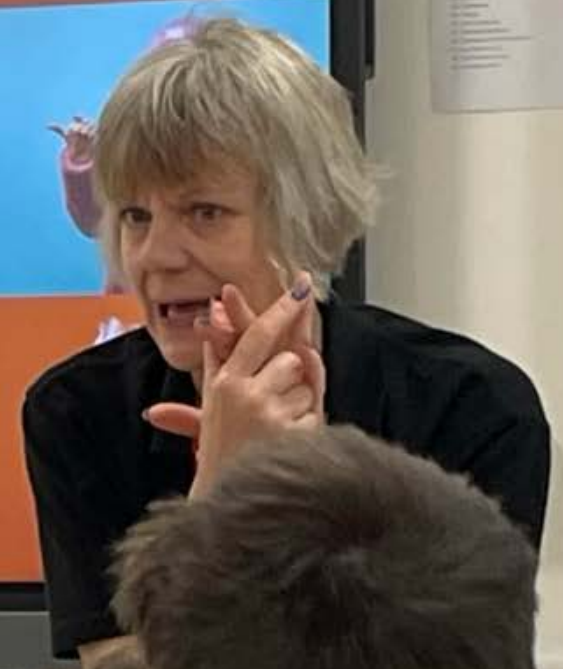
Growing Together

Impact report 2023-24

173	3
113	5
11	

When we get old,
sometimes our senses
begin to wear out...

and they don't work as well
as they had done before.



1.

Welcome

We're astonished when we look back over this past year and reflect on just how much we've achieved. Deafblindness is affecting more and more people, so this year we have focussed on creating a sustainable support structure, which allows us to grow and adapt, reaching more people who need us.

We want to be here for anyone affected by deafblindness, at whatever point in their life they need us. Our growth plans focus on increasing the breadth and depth of our services so that we can truly support people from cradle to grave. We have developed a range of specialised services through which we provide customised support in areas such as mental health, employment and technology.

Some of our personal highlights from the past year have been watching the transformation of a former office



■ Nikki Morris, CEO

building into new bungalows at Rainbow Court, which will provide homes to people who are deafblind with additional needs. We were also proud to be involved in the Charity Supermarket pop up event at Bluewater and to be one of the Peterborough Mayor's Charities of the year.

Central to this success is a strong focus on staff wellbeing for our dedicated staff team who work tirelessly to provide our services. This is reflected in our move to full time remote working in response to staff preference, and allows us to recruit the very best team members from across the UK.

Thank you too, to those who donate to us their time, skills and money. We couldn't achieve as much as we do without you. These are challenging times for all charities in the UK



■ Robert Nolan, Chair

with increasing need and financial challenges. Having such a strong and growing supporter base has been so important to us this year and has shown what a difference collectively we can make together.

We are extremely proud to lead Deafblind UK and to play our part in the positive impact that Deafblind UK makes to so many people. We look forward to lots more years of growing and achieving together.

Nikki Morris *R. Nolan*



2.

Our purpose

We are here for the growing number of people whose lives are affected by deafblindness. We support people at every stage of their journey and help them to continue their life beyond sight and hearing loss.

Over 450,000 people are affected by deafblindness in the UK, and this number is rising every day. So, we are growing too, to make sure that we can meet the needs of even more people in the future. Our support is available whenever they need it and in the way they need it.

A life with deafblindness can be challenging, one with constant adaptation and learning – the mental load can be exhausting. Our specialist teams help people to cope with the emotional and physical challenges of living with deafblindness. Thanks to our supporters, we help people to:

- Access information they need, when they need it, in a way that suits them
- Manage their mental health and get emotional support during difficult times
- Connect with others using the latest accessible technology
- Meet new people, socialise and have meaningful conversations
- Continue being as independent as they want, with our team of support workers and communicator guides as well as our supported living accommodation
- Reap the benefits of a short break away from home
- Confidently access employment or education.

This year, we have:

- Directly supported **4,207** members
- Supported **9,285** helpline interventions
- Provided emotional support to **3,880** people

We the only charity, local or national, that specialises in supporting people who are deafblind in the UK and we've been doing it for nearly 100 years!

“Thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me to sort my head out and put my bad past behind me.” Maureen, Deafblind UK member.



3.

Our vision and strategy



Our vision is to create a world where people living with deafblindness thrive, empowered by knowledge, support and equity.

Deafblindness is a growing condition, affecting more and more people every year. In order to support these people to thrive, and not just survive, we need to evolve and grow to be able to offer adequate and relevant support for all ages. We need to constantly develop our understanding of deafblindness and help others to understand its impact. Our five areas of impact provide a basis on which we can develop and evolve. They are:

1. Improving support and information for people who are impacted by deafblindness and for professionals who work with people who are deafblind.
2. Educating others including those who are impacted by deafblindness and the wider local, national and international communities.
3. Researching deafblindness to better understand the condition and identify interventions that will improve the lives of those affected by deafblindness.
4. Influencing the decision makers for the benefit of those impacted by deafblindness and their communities.
5. Supporting the use of technology for people who are deafblind and for those who work with people who are deafblind.

Improving support and information for people who are deafblind

Our support comes in many different formats, from easy to access online information to specialist one to one communication and guiding support.

Our supported living complex, Rainbow Court, provides safe and welcoming homes to people who are deafblind. This year we embarked on a redevelopment project to turn a former office building on the site into two specially designed accessible bungalows. The new homes were opened by the Mayor of Peterborough and will provide homes to people who are deafblind with other, more complex needs.

In the second half of the year, work began on developing an easy to use app to help our members access information they need quickly and conveniently. The app will be launched in the next financial year and will give members another method of accessing support whenever they want it.

We are proud to have launched an Advisory Group of Deafblind UK members from whom we can gather feedback about our services and how we support people. This work also includes supporting third parties in their development of services and products to ensure those living with deafblindness can access them. This activity, along with other feedback

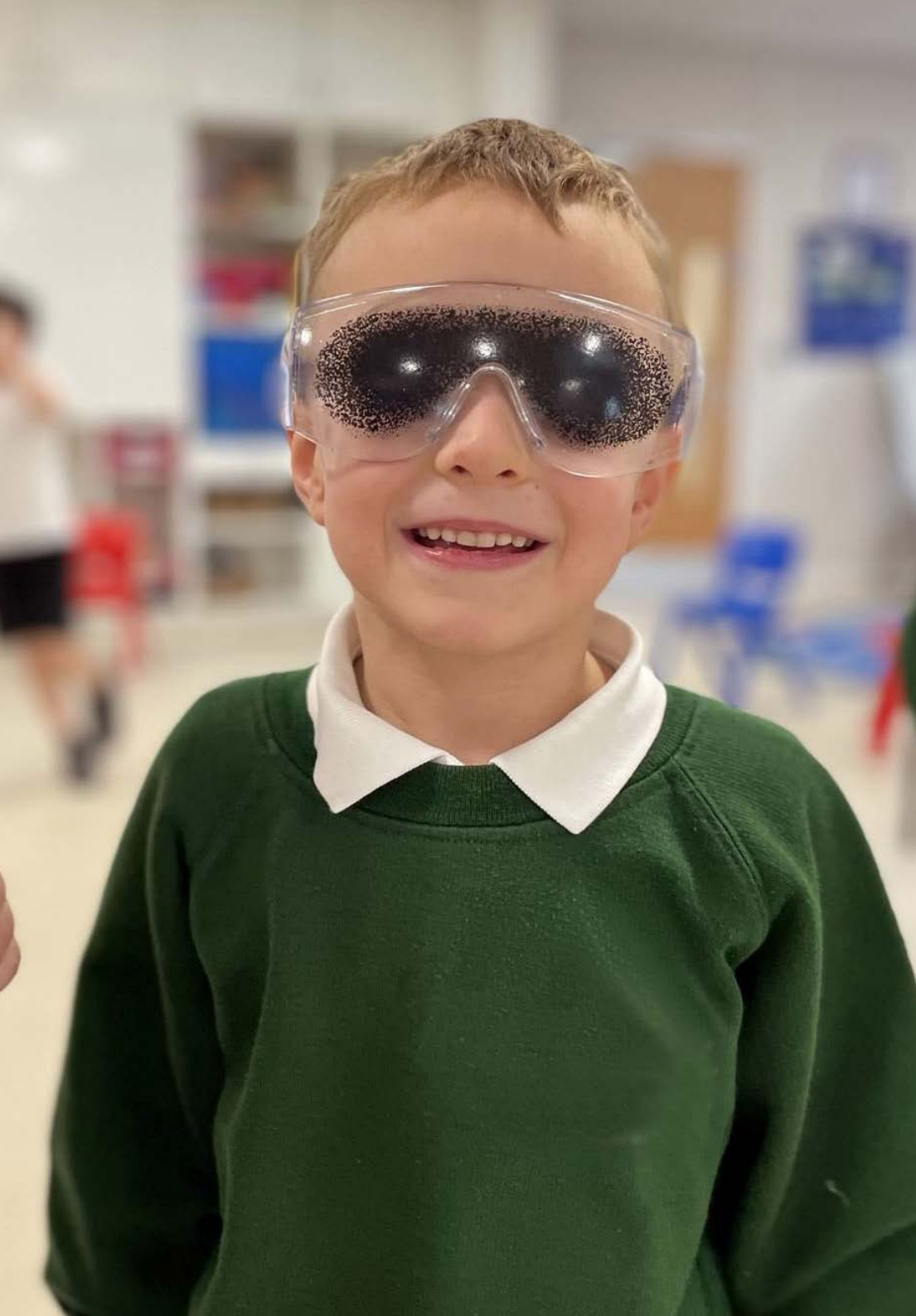
events, has been instrumental in setting up our new support services structure; an outcomes-led model, where each member has a bespoke package of support services which are based on an initial assessment of need.

We are passionate about keeping our support services relevant and accessible. This year saw us refresh our brand, making some small enhancements to our logo, colour palette and visual assets to maximise our potential and relevance. This ensures the brand works well for the charity both now and in the future. The brand refresh has been complemented by an increase in communications to supporters and stakeholders, specifically a move to a monthly email newsletter.

Accessibility will always be at our heart. We currently support a staff member to undertake a three-year PhD course researching accessible design. This will result in the development of a specialist design toolkit which we will use to lead industry design standards.

“The staff here are very nice and friendly. They are happy to support me out in the community as I like going shopping and like the extra clubs and activities they put on at Rainbow Court. I would like to try Tenpin Bowling so my staff are looking into this for me. Since moving to Rainbow Court, I feel more confident and it has helped with my independence. I feel well supported here.” Dermot, Rainbow Court tenant.





Educating others about deafblindness

Deafblindness is a condition that is increasing in occurrence and therefore, the amount of people who need us is growing. In order to increase our reach and support a greater proportion of the deafblind population, it is vital that we help other people understand deafblindness and its impact.

A large part of this is our award-winning schools project which has continued to flourish over the past year, with key stage two and three resource packs in 1,671 schools. The focus for this year has been to continue building relationships with these schools whilst developing and piloting new resources for Early Years and Key Stage One. Our schools project is part of a wider development of our 'Children and young people' service, for which research is currently being undertaken.

To complement this, 816 people have learned about deafblindness from one of our deafblind awareness talks and we have delivered 11 one and two day learning sessions to organisations, giving 132 people a deeper understanding of deafblindness.

Our employability project gave people the skills and resources to find work or to access further education. Alongside this we support employers to be able to make the adjustments needed to welcome people who are deafblind to their workforce.

These projects are supported by a marketing and communications activity to raise awareness and understanding of deafblindness.

"This has been a fabulous day and the children have really engaged with all of your resources. We feel that we have a much better understanding of the challenges facing people who are deafblind."
Jake Perrin HT, Lutton St Nicholas Primary Academy.

"A perfect hour, explaining how deafblind people experience the world and how we as supporting workers and volunteers can be more helpful to them. Inclusive, well paced and relaxed and very well received by all who attended."
Deafblind awareness session attendee.

Researching deafblindness to better understand the condition

We need to constantly develop our understanding of deafblindness so that we can provide the very best, specialised support to those affected. During the year we have developed a research strategy which enables us to support national and global research as well as to solidify our position as sector experts.

We have developed relationships with key universities and are committed to further developing these.

We continue to support research within our own teams and are supporting PhD's into accessible design and the prevalence of deafblindness amongst mainstream school pupils. Each of these projects will result in Deafblind UK developing and owning unique and specialised resources.

We are proud to be actively involved with Deafblind International. Our CEO, Nikki Morris joined the board earlier this year and our marketing team becoming communications ambassadors.

“Philippa’s research is an enquiry with a sense of relevant urgency underpinning it, and we look forward to the insights she reaches and the potential benefits that her research will bring.” Dr Catherine Dixon, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London.

“Deafblind International is the point of connection in deafblindness worldwide, in close collaboration with the World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB). We connect to maximise positive impact with and for all those concerned and involved. To have Deafblind UK in our worldwide network and Nikki Morris on our Board is indeed a wonderful next step forward on our journey. Together we can achieve so much more.” Mirko Baur, President of Deafblind International.





Influencing to ensure that deafblindness is on the International agenda

This year, we have built solid relationships with key decision makers to ensure that everyone who is deafblind is appropriately supported.

We have worked with local and national decision makers such as MP's, Councillors, Commissioners, Parliament, All-Party Parliamentary Groups and the Cabinet Office to ensure that the statutory obligations outlined in The Care Act (2014) are recognised and carried out at every level. We have welcomed providers and political influencers to our ongoing focus groups and it has been heartening to witness the level of commitment and optimism for positive change that has been evident.

We continue to work closely with partner organisations and other charities, with whom we can increase the impact of our message. Once again, we worked with Usher Kids UK to support the 'USHthis Summer Camp' for young people with Usher Syndrome, which was attended by 20 young people who had the chance to develop new friendships and work with mentors to develop new skills.

The Deafblind UK Conference took place in October, where over 900 people from across the world joined us to discuss the topic of 'Connected Lives'. Speakers included Christopher Patnoe, Head of Accessibility at Google, and the UK's first deafblind person training to be a doctor, Alexandra Adams.

"This conference was 100% the best and most fluid virtual conference I have ever attended, excellent work!" Deafblind UK Conference attendee.

"Absolutely incredible, met some amazing people and made some amazing memories." USHthis camp attendee.

"I now feel more confident and comfortable being around people with Usher Syndrome." USHthis camp attendee.

"Firstly, can I just say thank you. It was interesting to see the lives of deafblind people from all perspectives. I particularly found people's personal experiences useful, making me even more determined to continue with my degree, so I can hopefully make a positive impact on deafblind peoples' lives." Deafblind UK Conference attendee.

Supporting the development and use of technology

Technology is crucial in helping people who are deafblind maintain independence and continue to do the things that are important to them. Our role in this area is to both support our members to use technology and to influence new technological developments, ensuring accessibility is at the forefront.

Throughout the year we have worked closely with large technology developers, like Google, to help them understand more about how people who are deafblind use technology and the difference it can make to their lives. We're proud to be able to impact new cutting edge developments and reassured to see considerations towards sensory loss become more commonplace. Our new technology focus groups have been instrumental in providing feedback to these developers.

We have also started to develop an app for Deafblind UK members. This is designed to give members quick access to support and information as well as to help them communicate their support needs to others.

Our digital inclusion team carried out 884 interventions this year. We supported people who are starting their journey into accessible technology, and those who want to develop their skills. We also offer regular webinars where members can hear from third party technology providers about their products or services.

“My jaw dropped. No one had ever taken the time to write such clear instructions for me in the format I need. I can't believe you have managed to teach a deafblind person how to do these things on an iPad, just through one phone call!” Sabine, Deafblind UK member.





4.

What next?

Throughout the next year we will continue on our journey of growth and development to make sure we reach as many people as we possibly can. We will continue to develop all five areas of impact; support and information, education, research, influence and technology. We recognise the importance of maintaining an engaged and motivated staff team in order to achieve this.

We will continue to develop our service provision to meet the evolving needs of our members. There will be a strong focus on areas of specialism, such as mental health, technology and access to employment, where we will invest even further in staff development and expertise to ensure we can provide the best possible specialist advice and support.

We are excited to develop our fundraising and retail income streams to provide greater financial sustainability. This will also provide opportunities to further engage with those people impacted by deafblindness and the communities they live within. It will also increase our platform to support the growing need for our services and engage with a wider audience.

We will continue to develop our brand, ensuring that our tone of voice and use of imagery is relevant and representative of our audience. In setting activities and objectives each year, the Directors refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit. The Directors always ensure that the activities, services or programmes undertaken are in line with the charitable objects and aims of the organisation.

“You have given me the confidence to get back out there and be visible, invigorated me to make a difference for Visually Impaired people.” Patrick, Deafblind UK member.





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