



intouch

Spring 2011

Deafblind UK News

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Welcome to our Spring edition of In Touch.

I am sure you will agree it has been a busy year for many of us so far but good to see the Spring weather and feel the holiday season almost upon us.

Deafblind UK has continued to push forward in a challenging economic climate where we are very much aware of change. There have been public spending cuts and a review of the welfare system by the Government with proposed cuts to Disability Living Allowance. Following the comprehensive spending review we also see local authorities having their support grant reduced, with some authorities now only providing care and support to people they define as 'critical'. There is no doubt that proposed changes will affect many of us in different ways and at this time we are especially mindful of the effect on deafblind people.

The positive side to these changes has been the bringing together of interested parties to campaign and challenge. The Disability Movement organised a March and Lobby of Parliament on the 11th May to protest at the changes to Disability Living Allowance and the changes in the Welfare Reform Bill. Deafblind UK was proud to represent deafblind people at this event and to join in partnership with many charities, professionals and disabled people to provide a collective voice, illustrate the impact of proposed changes and make that voice heard.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support. I hope you enjoy reading about some of the work we have been doing and I look forward to updating you later this year.

Best wishes

Jeff Skipp
Chief Executive of Deafblind UK



Jeff Skipp, Chief Executive of Deafblind UK



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10th Anniversary of the Section 7 Guidance

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the publication of the Local Authority Circular entitled 'Social care for deafblind children and adults' – commonly known as 'Section 7 Guidance' which was issued by the Department of Health.

Christine Hardy, Deafblind UK's Policy, Information and Advice Manager, explains the significance of this document:

'Section 7 is the defining document for Deafblind UK, in that it underpins all of our work to ensure that deafblind people receive the support to which they are entitled. It is vital that individual deafblind people are empowered to access relevant services. Section 7 gives them the legal leverage to achieve this.

Significantly, the latest version of Section 7 defines Deafblindness as follows:

Persons are regarded as deafblind 'if their combined sight and hearing impairment cause difficulties with communication, access to information and mobility'. This includes people with a progressive sight and hearing loss.

This means that considerably more people with a combined sight and hearing loss are now entitled to an assessment as outlined in Section 7.'

'The Information and Advice Line is available

for anyone to call, if they have any questions about Section 7. Even if they just feel like a friendly chat with someone who understands the challenges they face on a daily basis, we're only a phone call away!'

Deafblind UK's free Information and Advice Line offers a valuable source of information and support to deafblind people, their family members, health professionals and carers.

Charlie's experience

Charlie, one of Deafblind UK's members from the Midlands, reached the point of utter despair after his Local Authority repeatedly refused to provide him with an appropriate assessment as outlined in Section 7 Guidance.

The services Charlie was offered were wholly inappropriate for someone with a combined sight and hearing loss, but no-one in Charlie's area had the expertise needed to identify appropriate services and support.

Charlie wasn't aware of Deafblind UK until he telephoned the Operator and asked for the



Deafblind guidance – celebrating 10 years (©iStockphoto.com/Viorika Prikhodko)

Feature

www.deafblind.org.uk

Feature

www.deafblind.org.uk



number of any organisation which looked after people who are both deaf and blind.

Fortunately, the Operator put Charlie through to Deafblind UK's Information and Advice Line, which is when he spoke to Christine Hardy for the first time.

Here, Charlie explains how this telephone call changed his life:

'Being put in contact with Deafblind UK was the best thing that could have happened to me. It was like seeing a beacon of light in the wilderness. Talking to Christine on the Information and Advice Line gave me the confidence and inspiration to take a very difficult situation and turn it around to be a really positive situation.'

'Before I spoke to Deafblind UK, my wife and I had been trying to make the best of things and 'papering over the cracks' as it were – but in truth, we were really struggling to cope.'

'Like many people who have worked hard all

their lives, I didn't want to feel like a burden or that I was causing trouble.'

'Christine explained that the Section 7 Guidelines mean that my Local Authority has a legal requirement to carry out an assessment and to provide services and support which are appropriate to my combined sight and hearing loss.'

'If anyone is experiencing the kind of problems I faced before speaking to Christine, I would wholeheartedly recommend them to contact the Information and Advice Line. They will get valuable advice about what you can do to turn your situation around.'

'I know I still have a mountain to climb in terms of getting all the services which I need, but I feel empowered by the knowledge that Deafblind UK is only a phone call away – and they have the expertise to support me.'

'I have started having rehabilitation training and my self-esteem and confidence are increasing every day.'



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Daniel behind the wheel



Daniel before setting off on his drive

Regional Spotlight from the North East

Daniel's new challenge!

Daniel, is 23, profoundly Deaf, and has had a Communicator Guide provided by Deafblind UK for over 3 years.

He decided to take on a brand new challenge (supported by a local charity), he drove a car around a test track! Daniel registered to drive around the test track at the Nissan Car Plant in Sunderland. He was very excited about this as he loves cars, and has no fear (apart from spiders!), as he showed when he did a zip slide off the Tyne Bridge for Deafblind UK in 2009.

Daniel sat in a specially adapted car with the passenger seat having a brake pedal installed. The speed and steering was controlled by Daniel via a control on the steering wheel. Daniel had a British School Of Motoring Instructor

in the passenger seat alongside him whilst his communicator guide, provided by Deafblind UK, sat directly behind him.

Daniel was very excited as he started the car and moved slowly out of the pit area. The pit area was full of other cars driving around so Daniel had to be very careful to avoid them as he joined the main track. When on the main track, a huge loop about 2 miles long in total, he sped up before turning into the first bend. As he became more accustomed to driving for the very first time, he became more confident and drove faster, eventually getting up to 86mph! After doing 2 laps, it was time to pull in to the area and stop the car. It had gone so quickly! Daniel said: "I really enjoyed driving very fast and want to try it again next year".



Information about the Switchover Help Scheme

The Switchover Help Scheme has been set up to help people switch one of their TV sets to digital.

Your family member or friend may be eligible to receive help from this scheme if they are:

- aged 75 or over
- get or could get Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Constant Attendance Allowance or mobility supplement
- have lived in a care home for six months or more
- are registered blind or partially sighted

A representative will visit and clearly explain digital TV then they can install what they need in their home and make sure they are happy with how it all works.

The standard offer includes:

- easy to use digital equipment
- home delivery and installation if wished
- an aerial check and replacement if needed and where possible
- a helpline and returning advice
- a 12 month digital TV aftercare service



If you are not sure if your family member or friend is eligible for help, call free on: **0800 408 5900** or email: **info@helpscheme.co.uk**

Information

www.deafblind.org.uk

Recycle for Deafblind UK

Printer Cartridge Recycling – collecting empty printer cartridges is a very simple and convenient way of supporting Deafblind UK.

Simply contact us on: **supportus@deafblind.org.uk** or Tel: **01733 358100** and request either a supply of pre-paid envelopes to return individual cartridges or one of our collection point boxes for you, a friend or family member to have at their workplace.



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Once the collection point boxes are full please call our recycling partner Reclaim-IT on: **01635 876900** and they will collect and replace the box free of charge.

Buy at - Online Shopping Portal

Support Deafblind UK whilst shopping online - it's SO easy!

Deafblind UK has established a web shop at www.buy.at/deafblinduk where you can shop online whilst raising money for us at the same time!

Simply click on the link below to access your favourite stores and a percentage of your purchases will be donated to Deafblind UK - it's as simple as that!

Participating retailers include M&S, Play.com, Littlewoods, Thornton's, O2 and many more.



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www.buy.at/deafblinduk

Fundraising

www.deafblind.org.uk



Who we are...

Deafblind UK is a national charity offering specialist services and human support to deafblind people and those who have progressive sight and hearing loss acquired throughout their lives.

Our aim is to enable people living with this unique disability to maintain their independence, quality of life, and reduce the isolation that Deafblindness creates.

What we do...

We achieve this through campaigning, education and the provision of practical and emotional support via independent living teams, personal communicator guiding and interpreting services, rehabilitation support, advice on adaptive equipment to assist with daily living, a volunteer befriending service and a free Information and Advice line providing information, advocacy and guidance.

Contact us

Deafblind UK

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Registered Charity No: 802976



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Keep up to date with news and events happening at Deafblind UK

Find us on Facebook by searching for Deafblind UK Charity



Find us on Twitter by searching for Deafblind UK



There are many exciting events you can get involved in over the coming months to support Deafblind UK, here are just a few of them:

June	Deafblind Awareness Week
September	Family Fun Day
October	Shark Dive
April 2012	London Marathon

Contact our fundraising team on: **01733 358100**,
email: supportus@deafblind.org.uk
or log onto: www.deafblind.org.uk to find out more.