



Hearing Dogs
for Deaf People

Favour

Issue 64
AUTUMN
2021
£1.75 when sold

The magazine from Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

Helping more deaf people

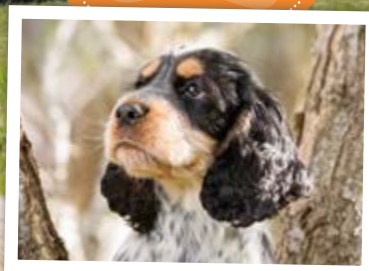
Growing our
digital services

Happy faces

How we make sure
our hearing dogs feel
happy anywhere and
everywhere

Puppy sponsorship

Watch sponsor pup
Otis grow up!



“I’m here, don’t
worry, you’re safe”

How hearing dog Harris helps
Ryan overcome his anxiety

Specsavers proudly supports The Great British Dog Walk

Book a free hearing test today at
[specsavers.co.uk/hearing](https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing)

Specsavers

Supporting your needs

The Hearing Link Shop, run by Hearing Dogs, offers a range of carefully designed products that support hearing and communication.

From deaf awareness tools, to assistive technology and hearing aid maintenance items, there is something for every need.

Find out more:
shop.hearinglink.org



Terms apply. Postage and Packing is charged extra. Visit shop.hearinglink.org for further details.

Contents



Autumn 2021



Oscar nominated actor Paul Raci on his role in *Sound of Metal* p26

Regulars

04 Newshound

The Hearing Dogs Weekly Lottery, appeal updates, Verity swims the Channel and more

10 Training

Helping our dogs feel happy wherever they go, from bustling pavements to quiet cafés

14 Puppy sponsorship

Puppy Otis's journey, from cuteness and cuddles to changing his deaf partner's life

16 Fundraising friends

How our corporate partners have continued to support us, and support deaf people

20 Volunteering

How our fabulous volunteers have helped us through thick and thin

22 Ask the experts

Solicitor Peter Jeffreys on the benefits of writing a Will – to you and your loved ones

26 Paws for coffee

Actor Paul Raci on his latest film *Sound of Metal*, hearing loss and Hollywood

Features

08 Appeal

Thanks to hearing dog Eddison, Chalky knows everything will be OK

12 How we work

How our digital services have proven invaluable over the past 18 months

18 Awareness

How hearing dog Harris has changed the life of sixteen-year-old Ryan

24 Our services

From our helpdesk to hearing dogs, we can help people in the way that is right for them

Favour

magazine is named after Hearing Dogs' very first dog, Favour.

Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
The Grange, Wycombe Road,
Saunderton, Princes Risborough,
HP27 9NS
T 01844 348100
Text relay 18001 01844 348100
(for deaf and hard of hearing)
E info@hearingdogs.org.uk
hearingdogs.org.uk
Cover photo Harris by Paul
Wilkinson

Royal Patron
HRH The Princess Royal
Registered charity in England
and Wales no. 293358 and
Scotland no. SC040486

Member of UK Council on
Deafness, Assistance Dogs (UK),
Assistance Dogs Europe and
Assistance Dogs International



Useful contact details
Fundraising: 01844 348109
Volunteering: 01844 348122
Media enquiries: 01844 348137

Articles and features printed in *Favour* are not necessarily the views of the Charity but are the views expressed by the writers. We welcome your comments.

Advertisements: Hearing Dogs for Deaf People cannot be liable to any person for loss or damage incurred or suffered as a result of his/her accepting or offering to accept goods or services contained in any advertisement reproduced in *Favour*. Readers should make appropriate enquiries before incurring any expense or contractual obligation.

Produced by: Jo Evernden Graphic Design joeevernden.com

NEXT ISSUE
Look out for the
next issue in
Spring 2022

Newshound

Updates from our latest appeals and news about our favourite dogs – we sniff out the stories that matter to you



SUPPORT

The Hearing Dogs Weekly Lottery

Hearing Dogs has launched a new Weekly Lottery to help change the lives of more deaf people

For just £1 a week, players can win up to £10,000 and all money raised from the Weekly Lottery helps to provide amazing hearing dogs and other personalised services to help deaf people and those with hearing loss. Over 700 kind people have already signed up to play and are helping deaf people to leave loneliness behind.

The lottery is a great way for people to help us train more

life-changing hearing dogs and help more people with hearing loss through our wide range of personalised services, while having fun and having the chance to win some fantastic prizes.

To find out more or to play, visit lottery.hearingdogs.org.uk



APPEAL UPDATES



Philip and Clay

THANK YOU for supporting our appeal in the Spring 2021 issue of *Favour*, in which we shared the story of Philip and his hearing dog Clay. Philip felt 'shattered' and lonely because of his deafness until Clay came along and, in Philip's own words, "put [him] back together again". By donating to this appeal, you have helped to raise nearly £30,000 towards the training and partnering of more hearing dogs.



Pip and Gino

OUR SUMMER APPEAL this year told the story of a remarkable young deaf woman, Pip, and her hearing dog Gino. Pip's life has been completely transformed by Gino, and she's now a confident, independent person (and a fantastic artist!). Donations are still coming in for this appeal, which has so far raised a fantastic £15,000. Thank you to everyone who has kindly donated.



FUNDRAISING

Verity is the first deaf British woman to swim the English Channel

One of our very own hearing dog partners, Verity Green, has become the first deaf British woman to swim the English Channel and all in aid of Hearing Dogs.

In August, Verity made the 21-mile trip across the Channel in an impressive 12 hours and 9 minutes.

Swimming the Channel has been a childhood dream for Verity, who swam for Great Britain in the Senior Deaf Team from the age of 12, and at 16 was ranked world number three in her best event.

However, treatment for Ménière's disease left her with triple sensory impairment. Not only was Verity deaf, but her balance and vision were also affected, and this forced her to end her promising swimming career early, having been told she would probably never swim again.

Never one to give up, Verity spent years rehabilitating and then decided to take on this epic 21-mile challenge to raise money to help train more hearing dogs.

Speaking about her rehabilitation journey and training for the swim, she says: "Fast-forward 24 years, I have found a way to rehabilitate my brain. I found that swimming outdoors was easier, removing all the confusing visual input in indoor pools.

"I thought that just maybe, a childhood dream of swimming the English Channel could be possible. I tried a relay, and my balance coped.

"The pandemic and a very cold winter affected training a lot, but just like rehabilitation with long-term conditions and disability, I had to aim to train smart, rather than hard.

"Rather like crossing the Channel, recovery isn't in a straight line, many times you can feel like you are going way off course. The important part is to keep going day by day, step by step, stroke by stroke."

"I AIMED TO TRAIN SMART, RATHER THAN HARD"

Verity has been a big part of the Hearing Dogs family since she was partnered with Benjy back in 2009. Benjy retired earlier this year and he now shares his home with Verity's new hearing dog – a very clever and handsome black Labrador named Bow.

She adds: "Hearing Dogs have been amazing with me. I am not just deaf. I have a balance disability and long-term conditions, and they carefully assessed me and looked to match me with the right dog.

"Having a hearing dog does not just alert me to sounds, but also breaks down barriers between me and others, especially when my balance affects my vision and I need people

to make that effort to meet me halfway. It's hard because my disability isn't visible.

"If you saw me, you wouldn't see any issues. With Bow, people will approach me and realise I am deaf, so he really helps.

"Both Benjy and Bow have also helped me feel safer being home on my own, especially when I am asleep."

At the time of writing, Verity's Channel Swim challenge has raised over £7,500 for Hearing Dogs. Thank you to everyone who donated, and thank you to Verity for completing such an amazing challenge in aid of Hearing Dogs.

Verity with Bow (left) and Benjy



OUR DOGS

Confidence and Companion dogs

If you, or anyone you know, has any level of hearing loss and think you may benefit from the companionship of a well-trained dog, you might be suited to being partnered with one of our Confidence and Companion dogs.

These wonderful, well-trained and loving dogs are partnered with people who have difficulties with their hearing but don't need to rely on a dog to alert them to sounds. They provide companionship and emotional support, helping their partners to feel more confident and independent and, in many cases, less isolated and lonely.

Anyone who feels they may benefit from a Confidence and Companion dog can get in touch with our friendly team at applications@hearingdogs.org.uk



SOCIAL MEDIA

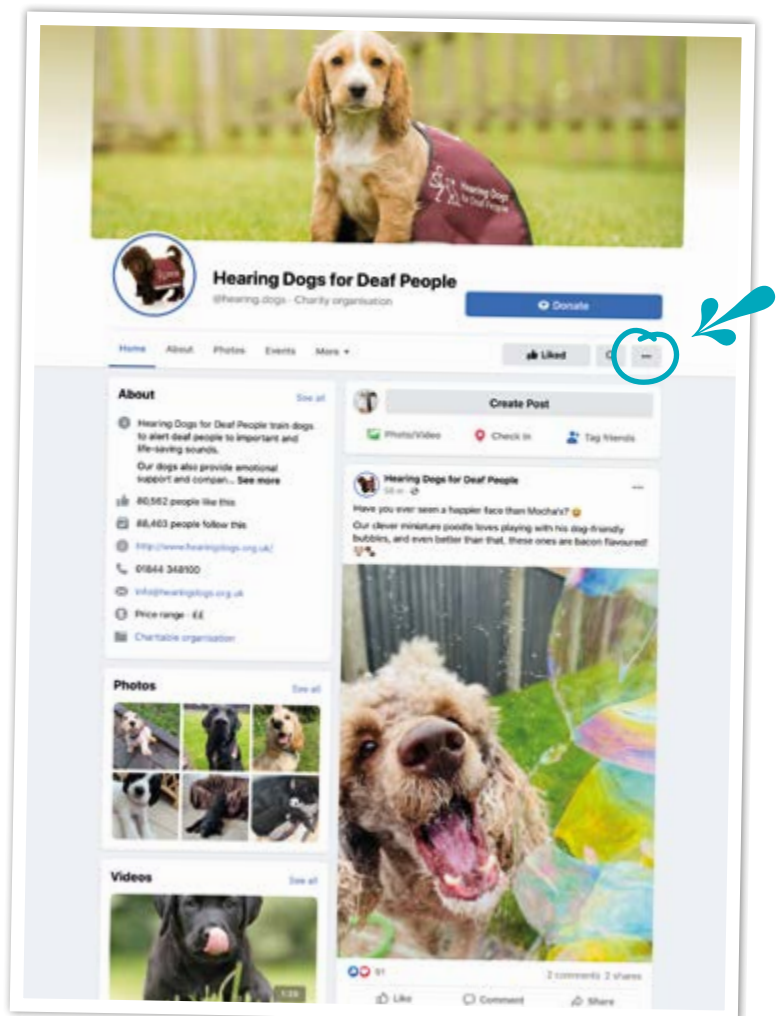
See more of our posts on Facebook

If you're a Facebook user and want to make sure you see all of the cute photos and videos of our dogs, and stories of the deaf people they help, you can 'favourite' us and never miss our adorable posts. Facebook offers you a way to choose a page as a favourite, and it's very simple to do:

On mobile: simply 'Like' our page, tap on the three dots beneath the blue thumbs up icon and select 'Following' from the next menu, then press the button next to 'News Feed' and select 'Favourites'.

On desktop: 'Like' our page, tap the three dots to the right of the magnifying glass, click 'Follow Settings' and then under the 'News Feed' section, choose 'Favourites' and click update.

The more people who see and engage with our posts, the more favourably Facebook sees the posts, meaning that they are then shown to more users. More importantly, you will get a daily dose of cuteness when you log into Facebook – it's win-win!





VOLUNTEERING

Dog lovers wanted

We are looking for volunteers, around the UK, to help train and care for our young dogs who will go on to help deaf people leave loneliness behind.

Volunteering for Hearing Dogs is a fun and rewarding experience that makes a genuine difference to deaf people's lives. In fact, many of our amazing volunteers have told us it is the best thing they have ever done.

Not only will you get to spend time with cute pups and dogs, but you'll be directly helping deaf people to reconnect with life. You'll also meet like-minded people, make new friends



and receive lots of support from Hearing Dogs every step of the way.

We currently have both short-term and longer-term volunteering roles in different locations around the country.

Find out more by visiting hearingdogs.org.uk/volunteering



THE GRANGE

Our Saunderton restaurant, The Grange Restaurant & Gift Shop, is fully open again and is proving as popular as ever.

We're serving all the tasty favourites, from delicious, colourful salads, home-made cakes with speciality teas and coffees, and hearty Sunday lunches, right through to elegant afternoon teas for a real treat.

Since re-opening, the rave reviews have also been coming through again, particularly regarding our safety provisions: "Wonderful setting, very friendly staff, great menu with options for vegan and gluten free... A very large outdoor seating area which provides a socially distanced experience," reads one. Another compliments us with "I loved my visit here. It was reassuring to see the staff showing and using Covid secure precautions, which makes me keen to recommend the restaurant and come back again."

If you would like to buy a meal for a loved one, you can buy e-gift cards online at thegrangesaunderton.org.uk, where you can also book a table.

ENTERTAINMENT

HEARING DOG FEATURES IN NEW MURDER MYSTERY NOVEL

A thrilling, newly published, murder mystery features a profoundly deaf main character who has a hearing dog.

The Island has a gripping atmospheric plot involving fictional hearing dog Lola, a Cocker Spaniel. Lola is the partner of one of the book's main characters, 28-year-old Mira, and provides Mira with constant companionship and emotional

support, similar to Hearing Dogs' real-life Confidence and Companion dogs.

The author, Mary Grand, was a teacher of deaf children for many years and has a friend who had a hearing dog, so has seen first-hand how these dogs can change people's lives.

The Island is published by Boldwood Books and is available in paperback, Kindle and audio.



“WITH HEARING DOG EDDISON, THE ANXIETY JUST LIFTS”

Chalky constantly worried about the future and that of her daughter. Hearing dog Eddison ‘completely lifted’ her anxiety and has broken down barriers that deafness can bring



HELP TRAIN MORE DOGS

🐾 Please consider donating to Hearing Dogs to help us train a hearing dog for another deaf person like Chalky. Thank you.

How to donate

- 🐾 If this magazine has been mailed to you, please use the donation form enclosed
- 🐾 Write a cheque to Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and post to: **Freepost RSGX-LSRG-UCGH, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, The Grange, Wycombe Road, Saunderton, Princes Risborough, HP27 9NS**
- 🐾 Donate online at hearingdogs.org.uk/chalky

I was diagnosed profoundly deaf aged three. My parents did everything they could to help me. I was fitted with hearing aids, and went to a primary school with one-to-one teaching support, where I learned to lip-read.

Then, when I went to a specialist boarding school aged 11, I started to learn BSL. I really loved it! I remember thinking 'Oh yes, I really like this.' BSL is still my preferred way of communicating – and it's how, today, I teach other deaf children.

Removing barriers

I'm a teacher because I want to help remove the barriers to education that deaf children can experience. I want them to have complete access to education, and build the confidence to engage with the world.

This is because of my experiences. Despite having a fulfilling career, I have sometimes found barriers insurmountable. We can all feel isolated and worried sometimes. However, for me, my deafness and anxiety for the future started to make life very difficult.

When myself and my young daughter lived alone, I had many sleepless nights, worrying about the fire alarm going off or a burglar getting into the house. I was also concerned about my daughter's wellbeing, I wanted her to experience childhood, and not feel she had to look after me. I wanted to be a 'real mum' and look after her instead.

I also felt frustrated when I just couldn't communicate with people. Every time I asked someone to repeat themselves, and they said 'Oh, it doesn't matter', my confidence took a knock. There's only so many knocks you can take before you're down.

I was constantly worrying about 'what

if this' and 'what if that' and, as it became more difficult to communicate with people, I found it easier just not to try. So, I started to feel very isolated too.

My wonderful Eddison

When my hearing dog Eddison came into my life, everything changed.

Now, I know that Eddison will tell me about burglar alarms or smoke alarms. I also don't worry about my daughter having to look after me. With Eddison, I know we are safe, and that my daughter won't grow up with me relying on her.

"WITH EDDISON, I KNOW WE ARE SAFE"

Eddison also helped during lockdown. There were even more barriers, because people wore face coverings, so I couldn't lip-read. I also had to home-school my daughter, while teaching deaf children remotely. I started to worry about everything again, especially about the future for myself and my daughter.

As everything else was changing, Eddison's support remained the same.

He helped me to calm down. There's just something about him.

The future will be fine

Today, as government restrictions are easing, I'm getting out and about more. Eddison's burgundy coat tells people I'm deaf, so they voluntarily lower their face coverings now, which is a real help and eases my anxieties.

My work involves visits to schools, nurseries and colleges. Eddison is with me wherever I go. During lessons he just chills out, happy in his world, but before and after, he gets a lot of fuss from the children! I've taught children right through from first day at school to college. It can be very emotional when you see the difference you've made to a child.

I get very emotional too, when I think about the difference Eddison has made to my life and to my daughter's life. He's always there for me, always with me. He's always giving me that eye contact, letting me know he's still there and that everything is OK. 🐾



HAPPY FACES IN PUBLIC PLACES!

After a period of not being able to train our pups in public places during the pandemic, we have started to gently reintroduce them to a range of public places and environments. But why is this so important? We take a look

We want our hearing dogs to be happy. Why? Because we love them! Also, because happy dogs make for happy people. This is why we train our hearing dogs to be confident and comfortable in every aspect of their deaf partners' lives – and why, when the pandemic meant we had to stop training in public places, our volunteers once again rallied round.

A day could involve so much. From waking up, to breakfast, to walking, maybe getting a train or a bus, then pavements, then a shop, then a break for coffee, and off again... it's demanding enough for us humans, as well as our furry friends, with all the strange sights, smells and sounds involved. But this is the full, rewarding life their deaf partners might want to lead, so we must prepare our dogs so they feel comfortable in all these situations.

This is why it's as important for our dogs to be as content walking nicely on their

leads as they are settling in a café, going on public transport, or just watching life go by (and getting tasty treats while doing so). It's better for the dog, who thinks life's a lovely game! It's better for their deaf partner, who can visit places confident that their well-behaved companion will be no bother to anyone. It's the basis on which our deaf partners reconnect with the world around them.

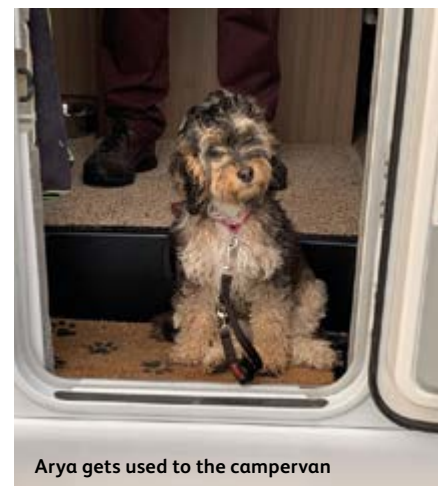
Nothing is impossible

Lockdowns and social distancing rules made this kind of training, quite simply, impossible. But our fabulous volunteers had other ideas! Once more, they worked closely with our trainers and came to the rescue with lots of innovations.

Some volunteers created 'restaurants' in their homes. No more TV dinners: a proper sit-down meal at the dining table, with the stereo playing a soundtrack of ambient conversation, and you have a perfect substitute to encourage your

hearing dog trainee to settle.

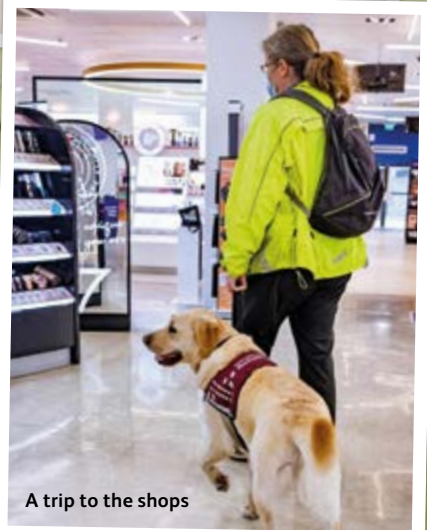
Or, how about using a campervan to simulate public transport? Again, our volunteers realised that a campervan or motorhome can be like a bus or train – hop on, sit down, settle, off we go, oh look we've arrived, hop off again.



Arya gets used to the campervan



Winnie demonstrates a perfect settle at the café



A trip to the shops

Out and about again

As restrictions eased, we gently reintroduced our dogs-in-training to public places. When we say 'gently', again, this is so vital. We approach any new experience for a puppy with lots of care, they could be nervous of new things if introduced too quickly. This is why, in every aspect of their training, we make sure that everything is done in short, positive sessions. Eventually, they learn that new experiences, in public places such as shops and public transport, are completely normal and safe.

It's all just one part, but a very important part, of making sure that our pups grow up to be happy, well-adjusted dogs who will transform the lives of deaf people. Thanks to the commitment and creativity of our trainers and volunteers, we continued to help our puppies through this vital stage in their training ensuring that they will love going everywhere with their deaf partners when they are living with them.



Biscuit and Buddy quietly waiting for a train



A fun day out



Photo: Lesley Thornton

STAGECOACH LENDS A PAW

When we were unable to take our dogs on public transport, Stagecoach very kindly stepped in and offered us the free use of a bus so that we could teach some of our pups how to feel comfortable and calm in this type of environment. Thank you Stagecoach!

Helping more people through digital services

We made a number of changes to how we help deaf people over the past 18 months as we adapted to the challenges of the pandemic. Moving forward, some of these new ways of working will continue so that we can help even more deaf people

Photos: Humonia

They say the only constant in life is change. While this may be true, change on the scale we've all experienced over the past 18 months meant that we had to quickly and calmly come up with different ways of helping deaf people.

From the start of the pandemic, we knew we had to find alternative ways to continue supporting people. From partnering our dogs with their new deaf partners, supporting the deaf people we were already helping, and helping thousands of people with hearing loss through our Hearing Link online shop and dedicated Helpdesk, we

made sure we were still there for the people who needed us.

Many of the ways we help deaf people involve face-to-face support and one-on-one or group support work in communities. Where possible we began offering these services in different ways, such as online, so that all those needing help had it when face-to-face support was impossible.

As we continue to follow our very own 'roadmap' out of the pandemic, we have plans to support even more deaf people through our varied range of personalised services including, of course, our clever dogs. One of the ways we will achieve this is by looking at how people can receive our help at a time when so many people prefer to access support online.

Helping people digitally

Even before the pandemic, as a forward-thinking charity, we had already started to consider how we could use the 'virtual world' to help more deaf people and make sure that it was as easy as possible for people to engage with us online.

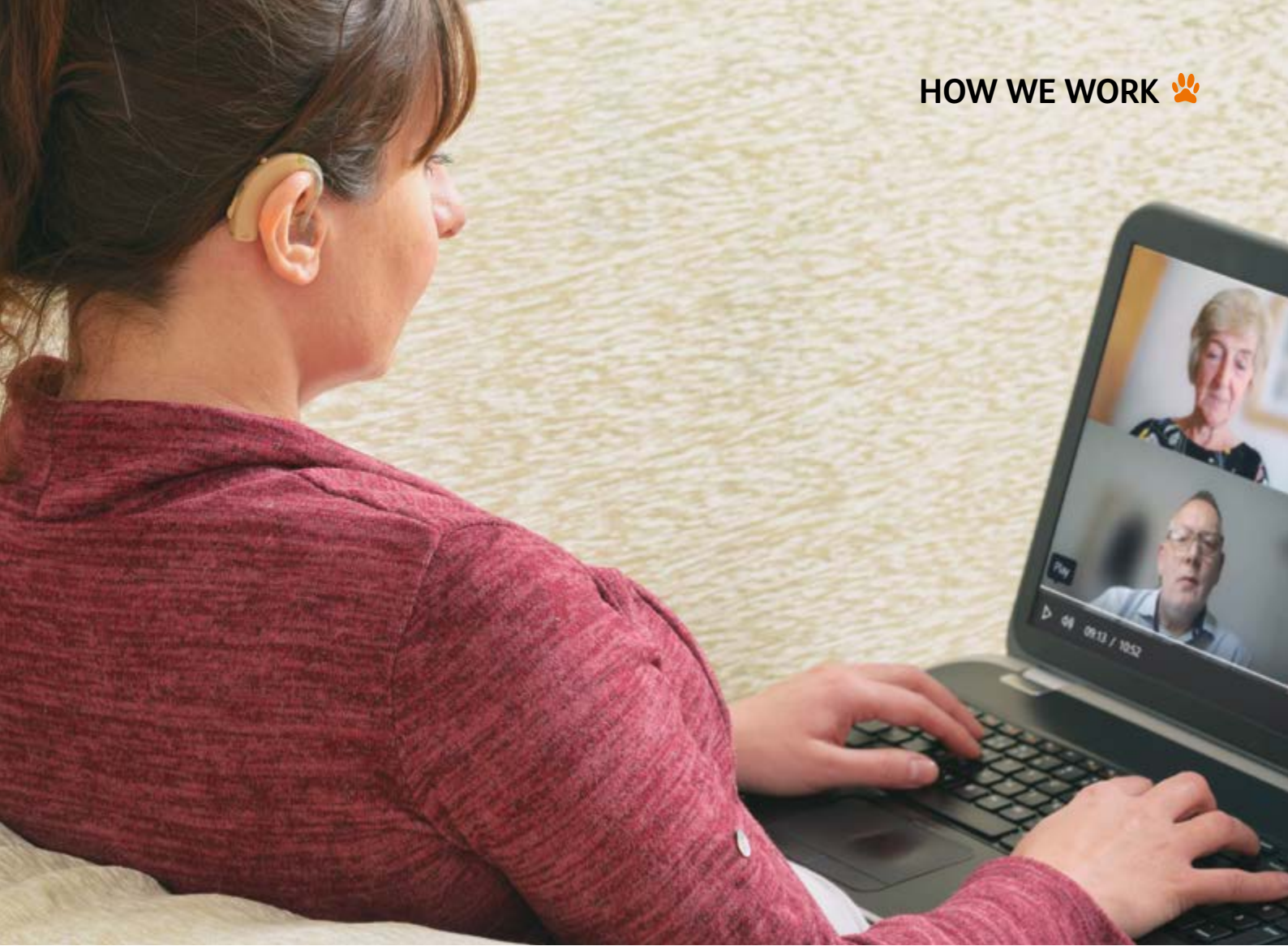
One of the ways we did this was by introducing LinkUp Online – a new

online service which follows the format of our 'in person' LinkUps. This is where we facilitate monthly group sessions that explore the challenges of living with hearing loss, share solutions to problems caused by hearing loss, and help people learn more about the strategies and equipment that can help make life easier for them. By taking the service online, we have been able to continue helping people, just in a new way.

LinkUp Online joined our existing online services, such as our Helpdesk and Hearing Link website, and will form an important part of the services we offer moving forward to anyone who is deaf or who has a hearing loss. Growing our digital services

“WE CAN HELP EVEN MORE DEAF PEOPLE WHO FEEL ISOLATED AND LONELY”



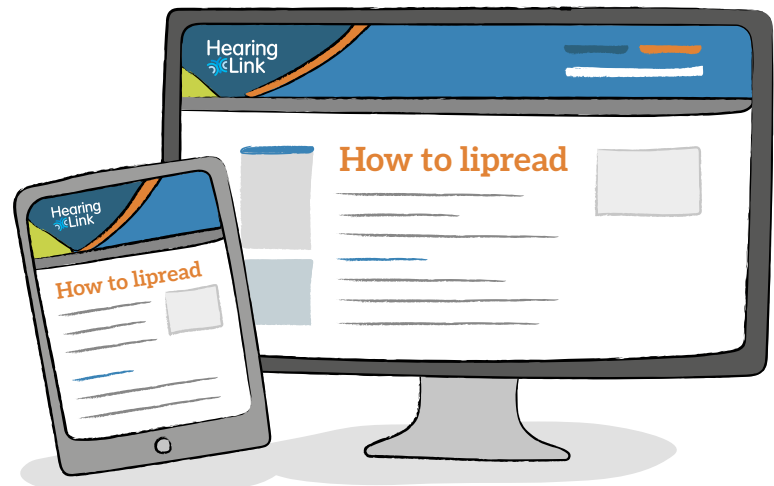


means we will be able to help as many people as possible across the country, whatever their needs are. Some people may need occasional help, and some may need long-term help, and by providing new ways to access this help we can ensure that people can get it quickly and easily.

Andrew James, our head of services, says: “While the past eighteen months have been tricky, the pandemic has allowed us to really look at the different ways we help people and consider new ways to offer this support, so that we can reach as many people as possible. Growing our digital services is just one of the ways we will do this.

“From introducing a Live Chat function on our Hearing Link website, to investing in digital resources – such as videos and self-help guides – we have lots of exciting plans to enable people to access our support.

“Accessing online services can be daunting for some, so we have a team of kind volunteers who are happy to spend time with people getting them online so they can make the most of what we have to offer. While some feel cautious giving it a go, everyone comes away feel



empowered and able to make the most of what we have to offer. A great (and relatively new) feature, which we have been using, is using Live Captions during video calls. This is where text appears on screen almost instantly, showing what is being said. It’s been great for communication and helping everyone take part.

“Our approach to the way we help people is to always stay focused on what is really

important – providing helpful services, that can be easily accessed, to make life easier for anyone affected by hearing loss. This approach means we can help more deaf people who feel isolated and lonely, or who are struggling in many other ways.”

Visit hearingdogs.org.uk/helpingyou to read more about the different ways we can help anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss. 🐾



A hearing dog's journey: From cute puppy to superstar hearing dog

They say it takes a village to raise a child, so find out how it took dedication from our volunteers and staff, and immense kindness from our supporters, to raise sponsor puppy Otis

When Otis was a cute, cuddly puppy, we could tell he would solve any problem and overcome any challenge. It was all there, in his face, especially those eyebrows!

We were right. Today, thanks to the dedication of our volunteers and trainers, and the kindness of Otis's sponsors, he's helping his deaf partner Gail to reconnect with the world around her.



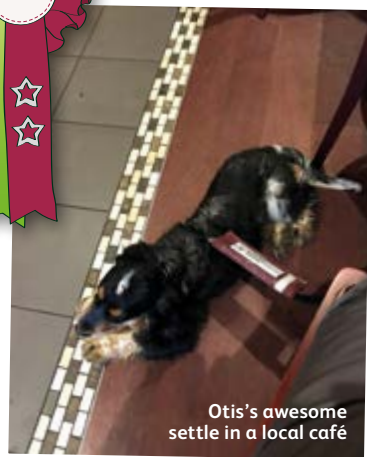
To get there however, he had to overcome these fun challenges...

Puppy One Star: The first steps

The first big hurdle for our little Otis was the One Star. To pass this, he learned his basic cues such as sit, down and wait. He was also encouraged to be confident in exploring his senses. Through gentle care and attention, he started to understand that the world was interesting and fun.

Otis's Volunteer Puppy Trainer was called Rachel, and she had no doubt about why he was so great at the Puppy One Star. "Food," she tells us. "He loved to learn, because he loved treats!"



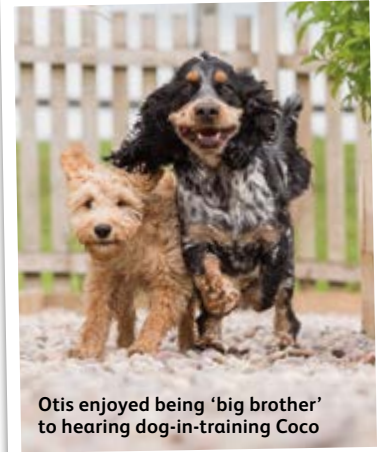


Otis's awesome settle in a local café

Puppy Two Star: **Exciting times (and more treats)**

To pass his Two Star, Otis learned exciting new skills such as settling. Settling is when our dogs are happy just to sit in public places calmly, knowing they're doing the 'right' thing and will get a bit of a fuss and a treat for doing so. It means that their deaf partners can go wherever they want with a happy dog by their side.

Back to Rachel: "Otis was a superstar at settling, which can be difficult for an excitable young Spaniel with legs everywhere!" How did Rachel manage this? "He would still do anything for a nice treat!"



Otis enjoyed being 'big brother' to hearing dog-in-training Coco

Hearing Dogs Assessment

Otis had to overcome many other challenges during his training, and he passed them all with flying colours to become Gail's hearing dog.

Gail says: "Otis has given me my life back, in ways I cannot put into words. I'm finally independent, happy and content. Thank you to everyone who's given me my little life-saver."

Thank you to volunteers Rachel, Jenny and Grace, who looked after and trained Otis so wonderfully, and sent us wonderful photos for his Puppy Pen updates, exclusive to his sponsors. Also, a huge thank you to all his sponsors, without whom none of this would have been possible.



Puppy Three Star: **Focus, focus, focus**

There are many temptations for a young hearing dog-in-training, such as other dogs, the smells of the high street and the sounds of cars or trains. We wanted to make sure that Otis wasn't bothered by any of them, so Rachel took him out as often as possible within government guidelines.

Otis also proved that he was great around children. Rachel explains: "Otis was around for my daughter's 15th birthday and she had a gathering in the garden with some friends. He was very good and enjoyed all the attention."



Puppy Four Star: **Soundwork superstar**

Living with new volunteers Jenny and her daughter Grace, Otis learnt that amazing skill: alerting deaf people to sounds. He learned that when he heard an important sound, such as the doorbell or baby monitor, he should nudge the person with his nose. They would say 'What is it?' with their hands out, and he would lead them to it. If it was a fire or smoke alarm he would lay down in front of them (as pictured) signalling to them that there was danger nearby, but he wasn't going to lead them to it.



Sandie



Bella



Toby




SPONSOR A PUPPY TODAY

Otis grew up into an incredible hearing dog thanks to the kindness of his sponsors who supported his training. From just £3 a month, you could help another deaf person to leave loneliness behind by sponsoring cute Cocker Spaniel Sandie, cuddly Cockapoo Bella or lovely Labrador Toby, either for yourself, or as a gift for someone special. You'll receive a fabulous welcome pack, plus regular updates on your puppy's progress and exclusive access to the online Puppy Pen. Just visit hearingdogs.org.uk/sponsor

Fundraising friends

WAYS TO HELP

-  make us your Charity of the Year
-  name one of our puppies
-  payroll giving

A huge thank you goes out to our corporate supporters who have helped us to continue training our amazing dogs and changing the lives of deaf people, especially over the past eighteen months

The organisations who fundraise to help us change the lives of deaf people, and those who support our work in other ways, are simply invaluable. We couldn't help as many deaf people as we do if it wasn't for these organisations and their genuine kindness and passion in helping deaf people to leave loneliness behind.

MORE THAN

With masks being worn in so many public places during the pandemic, deaf people have faced additional barriers. However, More Than have donated mask extenders to help our beneficiaries. Claims to More Than Home Insurance for lost hearing aids rocketed by 53% last year, after face masks were made mandatory. This is likely to be because hearing aids can be knocked off by the straps on face masks. The extenders are designed to connect to the straps of a face mask, so you can secure it behind your head, rather behind your ears, to stop the straps from interfering with hearing aids.

MORE TH>N®
WE DO MORE

PAPERCHASE

We're delighted that Paperchase are supporting us once again this year with a new design for their charity Christmas card. Last year, the charity card raised just over £6,000 for Hearing Dogs, which has helped us train more clever pups. If you are an Instagram



user, keep an eye out on Paperchase's Instagram stories in due course and you may well spot some familiar faces!

Paperchase

SPECSAVERS

Our Great British Dog Walks, very kindly supported by Specsavers, are well underway and are running until late October. We cannot thank the team at Specsavers enough for their continued support after our community fundraising events had to be postponed during the pandemic.



TAKE 1

Throughout the month of May, colleagues at Take 1 took on a steps challenge to raise money for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. They raised over £1,000 and did a total of over 5,000,000 steps! We're so grateful for everyone's huge efforts – thank you!



HIDDEN HEARING

As their chosen Charity of the Year, we are so excited to be working with everyone at Hidden Hearing. They have lots of fundraising events planned throughout the year, the first of which was running a fun competition to name a hearing dog puppy... and the winning name was Luna!



THANK YOU ALSO TO...

-  Amazon Smile
-  Pets at Home
-  iLECSYS Ltd
-  Window Film Company
-  RWE
-  International Open Academy
-  Ivy & Duke
-  CLPM

Think you can help?

If you know an organisation that may be able to help us, please get in touch by emailing jo.wengler@hearingdogs.org.uk or call **01844 340740** to start a discussion.

Put your best paw forward

Pressing 'paws' on our popular Great British Dog Walks last year due to the pandemic was disappointing, but they are back this year and are running at 15 beautiful locations across the UK during September and October – and we couldn't be more delighted.

The Great British Dog Walk, kindly supported by Specsavers, is a fun-filled sponsored walk that transforms the lives of deaf people. It is a great way to safely explore a stunning location with your friends and family (with or without a dog!) and help deaf people to leave loneliness behind. Hundreds of walkers of all ages, and dogs of all shapes and sizes, will be taking part.

This year, we also have a 'virtual walk' option, which you can do anywhere you like. Just sign up, pop on your walking shoes, and enjoy the great outdoors.

Each Great British Dog Walk has two walk options – a shorter route and a longer one, making it ideal for dog owners, families, single walkers, walking groups and



those who simply want to see lots of dogs and get a bit of exercise for a good cause.

There is a free limited-edition Great British Dog Walk dog bandana with each adult ticket purchased for the walk, and walkers will receive a free activity pack, filled with lots of fun things to do during the walk. Tickets for the event are £10 per adult, and children under 16 years go free. There are no on-the-day registrations so advanced online booking is essential. Simply choose your half-hour starting slot and book!

Every walker who takes part will help Hearing Dogs to change more lives and

those who choose to raise sponsorship can make an even bigger difference. Anyone raising £25 or more will receive a free gift as a thank you.

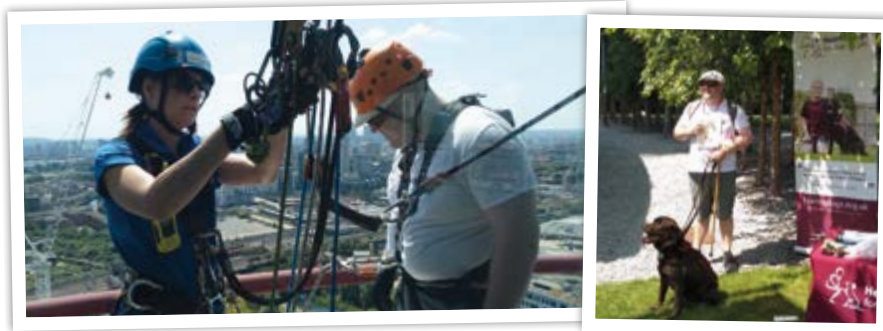
Carina Hummel, General Manager at Specsavers Audiology, which supports the Great British Dog Walk, says: "The Great British Dog Walk is an excellent way for people to have fun, get some exercise and perhaps most importantly, see lots of cute dogs while supporting a good cause."

"If every person who walked the Great British Dog Walk raised just £10 above the cost of their event ticket by getting sponsored the Charity could fully train another dog that would completely transform a deaf person's life."

To find your nearest walk and to book tickets, visit greatbritishdogwalk.org

FIND YOUR NEAREST WALK

Visit greatbritishdogwalk.org



The height of kindness

Recently, 18 brave people took part in the ArcelorMittal Orbit Abseil, the UK's highest freefall abseil from the UK's tallest sculpture, to raise money for Hearing Dogs.

One of those daring people was Cole, a 33-year-old who is the deaf partner of hearing dog Crunchie, a Labrador.

Cole has faced a number of challenges in his life. Not only does he have hearing loss, but he is also epileptic, autistic, suffers from Fibromyalgia and has a genetic disorder that means he can collapse at

any time, and he also has a back problem. Rachel Clarke, one of our community fundraising managers, who attended the abseil, says "Despite the many challenges Cole faces, he kindly chose to raise money to help other people get a hearing dog. He's a great guy and, despite being nervous on the day, completed his abseil with a big smile on his face. A huge thank you to Cole and all the other amazing people who took on the challenge – you are directly helping to change the lives of deaf people."



THE BIG SUMMER OF FUNDRAISING

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Big Summer of Fundraising. We loved seeing the different things you did to raise money to help deaf people – from garden parties to bake sales. Gill Yeates, our head of community fundraising, says: "We are always so touched when people choose to fundraise for us, so a huge thank you to everyone who set up a fundraiser or donated – you are helping deaf people to leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life".

“My hearing dog Harris knows when I need him and sits really close”



For sixteen-year-old Ryan, the emotional support of a hearing dog has made life so much easier, especially in times of stress and anxiety

Sitting in the exam room about to take his GCSEs, profoundly deaf Ryan can feel the anxiety rising. In the past this kind of situation would completely overwhelm him. But today it's different, because lying next to him is hearing dog Harris, a gentle giant of a Golden Retriever, who is so tuned in to the needs of his human partner that he sits up and rests his head reassuringly on Ryan's arm as if to say: I'm here, don't worry, you're safe, everything's OK.

Anxiety is something 16-year-old Ryan has battled with his whole life since testing positive for Cytomegalovirus. This virus can cause profound hearing loss, complex communication difficulties and other health challenges, some of which delayed Ryan's surgery for a cochlear implant until he was two-and-a-half.

Amy, Ryan's mum, says: "The implant

made a big difference to Ryan's hearing, but he still needed a lot of support due to his difficulties with processing language and communication. He had a lot of good support both from the NHS and from his school, especially leading up to GCSEs, but he has always struggled to control his anxiety in stressful situations."

Safe and sound

Then, five years ago, aged 11, Ryan was partnered with hearing dog Harris and something amazing happened. Amy explains: "Part of the reason we applied for a hearing dog was because Ryan was really struggling at school. His anxieties were particularly bad at night. Without his cochlear implants in Ryan was scared to close his eyes because then he couldn't see or hear. This caused him to struggle at school, he was just so exhausted during the day. Now with Harris right beside him

Ryan feels safe and can sleep. If Ryan is at all anxious about something at night then Harris rests his big soft head on Ryan's arm until he falls asleep and then he nudges him awake when the alarm clock goes off in the morning."

Over the past year, Ryan's teachers have observed a positive change in him since being able to study at home with his best buddy Harris by his side. With Covid-19 rules and strict social distancing in place it became possible for the school to consider allowing Ryan to take his exams accompanied by Harris. This put Ryan at ease and allowed him to focus on his exams instead of any anxiety he was feeling.

Of course, for hearing dog Harris it's all just another day doing his thing, listening out for important alarm sounds and helping Ryan stay in control of his anxieties. Amy, Ryan's mum, says it's been life-changing and they haven't looked back.

Always there

It was this comforting presence that also made the world of difference to Ryan when he needed to go for surgery in the summer. Amy explains: "Ryan has a long-standing fear of cannulas and needles and so his anxiety can be overwhelming prior to receiving an anaesthetic. Harris helps Ryan to stay in control of his anxieties during hospital appointments but the thought of having an anaesthetic without Harris by his



“HARRIS HELPS RYAN TO STAY IN CONTROL OF HIS ANXIETIES DURING HOSPITAL APPOINTMENTS”

Quick facts

CONGENITAL CMV

Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a very common virus. Although it is typically harmless, congenital CMV, which occurs when an infant is infected with CMV before birth, can have serious consequences. It affects around 1 in every 150 births. Although most babies won't have any symptoms, one in 10 will be symptomatic. These infants can experience problems with the lungs, liver or spleen; hearing loss; vision loss; intellectual disability; seizures; microcephaly; or co-ordination difficulties.

Congenital CMV is the most common non-genetic cause of sensorineural hearing loss and is responsible for 10–20% of cases of permanent deafness in children in the UK. Hearing loss can be unilateral, bilateral, fluctuating, or progressive. Of the 90% of infants with congenital CMV who are asymptomatic at birth, some will still experience hearing loss at a later stage. The condition can also affect the balance organs in the inner ear, and more rarely the ability to interpret sound – auditory processing disorder.

🐾 DIAGNOSIS

Around 50% of children with deafness caused by congenital CMV have detectable hearing loss at birth; the other half develop deafness later in childhood. It is important that children with congenital CMV have regular hearing tests so that support can be offered at an early stage. Hearing tests should take place when the problem is detected and then again every 3-6 months in the first year, every 6-9 months until the child is 3 years old, then yearly until they are at least 6 years old.

🐾 TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

There are some antiviral treatments – currently under investigation – that have the potential to improve hearing or prevent deafness from progressing when commenced within the first 4 weeks of life. Hearing aids and cochlear implants might help some individuals, while learning sign language and other forms of communication and emotional support can be of great benefit.



Ryan with his mum Amy

side was terrifying him.”

Ryan says: “Since Harris has been allowed to stay next to me for blood tests, I’ve coped much better. He knows when I need him and sits really close. His calmness makes me feel safe.

“Everything about an anaesthetic – the needles, the people – makes me scared. I can’t understand what people are saying, and I don’t like closing my eyes without feeling Harris next to me. When the staff at the hospital saw how much Harris helps me, they asked if I wanted him with me when I had the anaesthetic. They asked lots of questions, and they understood how upset I get, and how much Harris helps me. It was so different having him there because I felt safe. Everyone said it was

better for them too. They were amazed to see Harris rest his head on my arm.”

So impressed was the hospital team that they now want to offer this support to other people with assistance dogs. They have even written an open letter to their medical journal about it, as each hospital decides on an individual basis what procedures assistance dogs can be present for.

Harris makes things so much easier for Ryan and, thanks to Harris being able to join Ryan during his exams, he will be sharing the credit for his results with his four-legged best friend. 🐾

➔ More real-life stories

Read more inspirational stories at hearingdogs.org.uk/stories



To our volunteer family... thank you

Our volunteers constantly astonish us with their professionalism, commitment and creativity. Over the past 18 months, this has been even more incredible, from those who adapted to new ways of working, to those who selflessly stepped back, and are still waiting patiently to resume their volunteering roles.

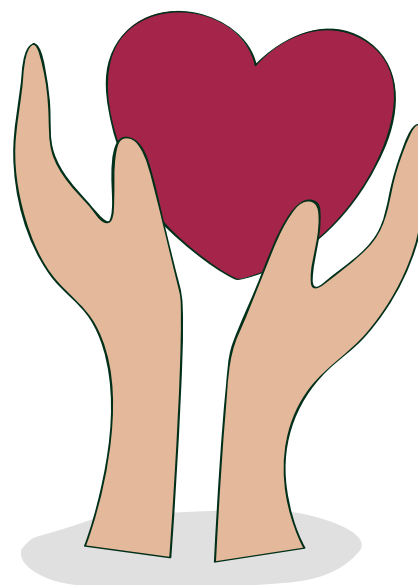
To all of them, no matter what they do for us, we want to say an extra special “thank you”.

We currently have over 3,000 amazing volunteers, from dog trainers and our other wonderful dog care volunteers, to those who help us deliver our range of personalised Hearing Link services. They are our big ‘volunteer family’, a dedicated,

warm, supportive group of people who help us, and help each other.

They’ve supported us through thick and thin over the years, but when the pandemic began, we very quickly had to change the way we worked. We had to figure out how to safely, and effectively, continue to help people with all levels of hearing loss. Our volunteers were a huge part of this.

Some activities simply had to stop. So, those volunteers stepped back from their duties in the most understanding and patient of ways. Other activities had to change. So, those volunteers put their thinking caps on and figured out entirely new ways to support the Charity, as we navigated the impact of the pandemic. Here are some prime examples...



Volunteer puppy trainers: going virtual

When we couldn't hold group puppy classes or face-to-face training sessions, volunteers who were training hearing dogs adapted quickly and calmly to volunteering 'virtually' – learning how to use video calling, for example, while becoming acquainted with the Pawtal, our online resource centre for Hearing Dogs' volunteers. This enabled our dog trainers to continue supporting volunteers, and the volunteers were able to update them on how the pups were doing. It was a tremendous success.

Online puppy training classes presented an additional challenge. Volunteers needed to teach the pups to feel calm and happy when settling next to a laptop or computer. This was no mean feat when looking after energetic, curious puppies!

Digital champions: online support

Volunteers were brilliant at supporting the charity digitally when everyone had to stay at home. They were our 'Digital Champions', who shared and commented positively on our social media content, used AmazonSmile when online shopping so that Hearing Dogs received donations from Amazon, and took part in our virtual fundraising events, and everything in between.



While we couldn't be together, our volunteers did everything they could to help us feel connected. The support we received digitally over the past 18 months showed us how big the Hearing Dogs family really is – and how big-hearted our volunteers are.

Virtual speakers: spreading the word

In 'normal' times, our volunteer speakers work across the country, talking to groups, clubs, workplaces and schools about the Charity and how our dogs change the lives of deaf people. So, when they weren't able to do this, we came up with an alternative – 'virtual talks'! These involved volunteer speakers joining different groups via video, to spread the word about the charity online.



This was a new way of doing things and not necessarily easy, particularly for those who do their talks with a hearing dog or hearing dog-in-training by their side! Still, our speakers stepped up to the plate to make sure that we could continue to offer our talks and encourage support from new people.

LinkUp online: helping groups

When our LinkUp service moved online, so that we could continue providing help and support to people with hearing loss in a group setting, our LinkUp volunteers were absolute stars.

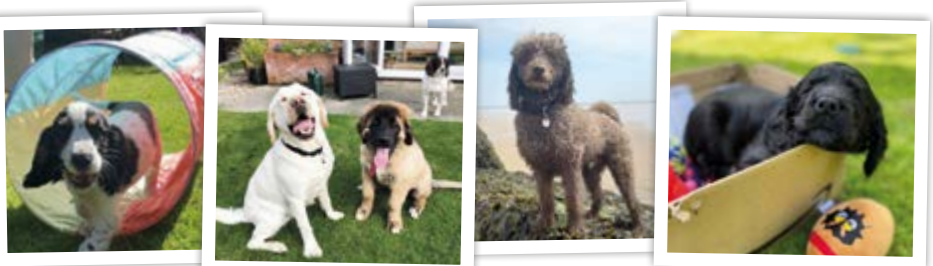
Not only were the sessions as well received as the face-to-face ones but they also helped attendees learn how to get online and use Microsoft Teams. This meant that, for those people attending the sessions, things were made so much easier. This was professionalism and flexibility personified, with extremely positive feedback after the sessions.

Photos and videos: worth a thousand words

We love to show our supporters what our dogs have been up to, and social media is perfect for this. We often reach out to volunteers to ask them if they would mind taking some photos or video footage for us, and we have been astonished over the past 18 months at how committed many have been in doing this.

We've had so many lovely photos and videos sent to us by volunteers, showing what our pups have been up to. This has made such a huge difference, and meant that we have continued giving people more puppy-shaped reasons to smile every day.

Victoria Leedham, our head of volunteering, says: "Volunteers across the globe have demonstrated an exceptional display of can-do professionalism and commitment to their communities, and the causes they care about, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our own volunteer family should feel immensely proud to be a part of this positive legacy."



"TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS – THANK YOU"

We simply cannot thank our volunteers enough for their professionalism, kindness, flexibility and understanding. They have played a huge role in helping us to navigate the past 18 months, whether that was by helping us to train our dogs, patiently stepping back from their roles, or helping us to continue supporting deaf people. We are so lucky to have them.

Ask the experts



Meet the expert



→ PETER JEFFREYS

is a Partner in Wilsons Solicitors LLP. He is a member of STEP (the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners) and has specialised in Wills and Probate for 30 years.

Peter Jeffreys explains the importance of making a Will and provides some useful information on an important topic – inheritance tax.

Why is it important to make a Will?

Put simply, a Will gives you control over what happens to your assets when you die. It gives you certainty and peace of mind.

What happens if you don't make a Will?

'Intestacy' is the technical term for someone dying without a Will. If you don't make a Will, the Intestacy Rules determine who receives your estate on your death. This can cause problems. For example, if you have a partner but are unmarried and you pass away, they won't receive anything. And your children will inherit at the age of 18, which many parents think is too young. People tend to put off writing a Will because they are worried about the cost or frightened of people using legal jargon that they don't understand – but the process is easier than you might think.

Can you provide an example of not having a genuine, legal Will?

I recently came across a sad case of someone attempting to make their own Will and getting it wrong. An elderly lady found out her daughter had been stealing her money. She made a new (homemade) Will, cutting out the daughter and leaving everything to her favourite charity. Unfortunately, she didn't follow the technical legal rules for signing and witnessing – her two witnesses weren't together at the same time. This meant the Will was invalid, and everything passed to her daughter under the Intestacy Rules.

Charities depend on gifts in Wills to carry on their vital work



And all this could have been avoided?

Yes – in that scenario, the mistake was to try and make her own Will, without any expert guidance.

How easy is it to make a Will?

Much easier than many people think. The first step is to work out what your estate is worth – add up everything you own, not forgetting hidden benefits like life cover. Also make a note of any liabilities, like the mortgage or credit card debts.

The second step is to decide who you want to leave it to. A Will-writing professional can help with some of the decisions, such as how old your children should be when they inherit, and who you should

appoint as executors (who will sort out your estate after your death) and guardians to look after your children if you have children who are under 18. Don't worry about using technical terms. When you are deciding on your wishes, use simple wording. It is the job of whoever is preparing the Will to use the right language.

DID YOU KNOW?

Over half of all hearing dogs are funded thanks to gifts in Wills

Can I write a Will online?

Yes, you can. There are expert services available that help you to write your Will quickly and securely in the comfort of your own home, then have it checked by a specialist to make sure all your wishes are clear. An example of this is Hearing Dogs' online free Will service.

We know inheritance tax (IHT) is a big topic, but can you set out a few key points?

- 🐾 Anything passing from one spouse or civil partner to another is totally free from IHT
- 🐾 Every individual has an exempt amount that they can leave on death without any IHT being payable (sometimes known as the nil rate band). This is currently £325,000, but can rise to £500,000 if you own your own home and are leaving your property to your descendants
- 🐾 Gifts to charity are free from IHT, and there is no upper limit on this
- 🐾 If you leave 10% or more of your estate to charity, the rate of IHT is reduced from its usual 40% to 36%. If you already plan to leave a gift to charity which falls under 10% of your Estate, increasing the gift to 10% means that both the charity and your taxable beneficiaries would receive more
- 🐾 Gifts to charity can take any form – cash, investments, or property.

How important are gifts in Wills to charities?

Very important. Gifts in Wills often account for the largest part of a charity's income. For example, more than half of all hearing dogs are funded by people leaving kind gifts in their Wills. These gifts can enable charities to continue their work long into the future and mean that you are supporting a cause you care about, and

one that reflects your values, even after you are gone.

Leaving a gift to charity in your Will not only helps to ensure that you can make a genuine difference to people's lives after you die, but it also has other benefits, such as the tax benefits already mentioned – helping to further look after your loved ones after your death.

While you are not obliged to tell a charity that you plan to leave a gift to them in your Will, it can be helpful to let them know your intentions if you feel comfortable doing so. This not only helps the charity with their planning for the future but can also offer you a further sense of having everything in order. This could be as simple as a quick phone call or email, stating your intentions. As I say however, there is no obligation to do this – some people prefer to and others don't.

If I already have a Will, how do I update it?

The first thing to do is read through your existing Will and see if it is fit for purpose. If it still does everything that you want, there is no need to change it. If only minor changes are needed, these can be achieved by signing a codicil – a supplement to the Will. If major changes are needed, it is usually best to start afresh and make a new Will. Do remember that marriage or civil partnership automatically revokes (i.e. cancels) a Will, so in that scenario it is important to make a new Will. Other than that, it is wise to review your Will if there are any major changes in your life, such as having children, having grandchildren, divorce, or receiving an inheritance. 🐾

Your gift to deaf people

As you read through this issue of Favour, you'll see how, every day, hearing dogs help deaf people to embrace life, instead of feeling lonely and afraid. With one in six people experiencing hearing loss, the chances are that, even if you don't yourself, you know someone who does.

This personal connection is just one of the many reasons people choose to remember us in their Wills. It is an incredibly personal decision, and a hugely important one too, which is why we are so very touched when we are remembered in this way. Gifts in Wills are straightforward to organise if you follow three essential steps:

1. Make a list of everything you own, including property and investments, and decide who to name as executors. These are the people who will make sure your wishes are carried out.
2. Decide who you'd like to include. Naturally, loved ones will come first, but you may then like to think about leaving a gift to a charity. This can be a percentage of your estate, a fixed sum, or what's left after other gifts have been made to those named in your Will.
3. Use a solicitor to write your Will so that the legalities are properly covered.

If you already have a Will, you can add Hearing Dogs as a beneficiary by talking to your solicitor about updating the original, or completing a codicil and storing it with your Will.

➔ How to leave a gift in your Will

If you would like more information, please get in touch: visit hearingdogs.org.uk/legacies, call Zoe Cox on 01844 348130, email legacies@hearingdogs.org.uk or write to us.



Why Sylvia and Alan are remembering Hearing Dogs in their Will

"Deafness is an invisible disability. It can be very lonely. It was the realisation of how profoundly hearing dogs help deaf people, and my experience of hearing loss in my family, that led us to leave a gift in our Wills. We were astonished when we found out that over half of hearing dogs are paid for by legacies. For us, it seemed a natural thing to do."

How we can help you

We always aim to help people in the way that is right for them, whether that is by providing one-off help or much longer-term support. We take a look at some of the ways we do this, whatever their level of hearing



No one experiences deafness or hearing loss in the same way, which is why we offer a range of personalised services that are bespoke to the individual.

When someone comes to us for help, we will talk to them about their needs and lifestyle and together decide what kind of support would be best for them. It is this tailored approach that means we can equip people with the means of living the life they want to live, no matter what their level of hearing.

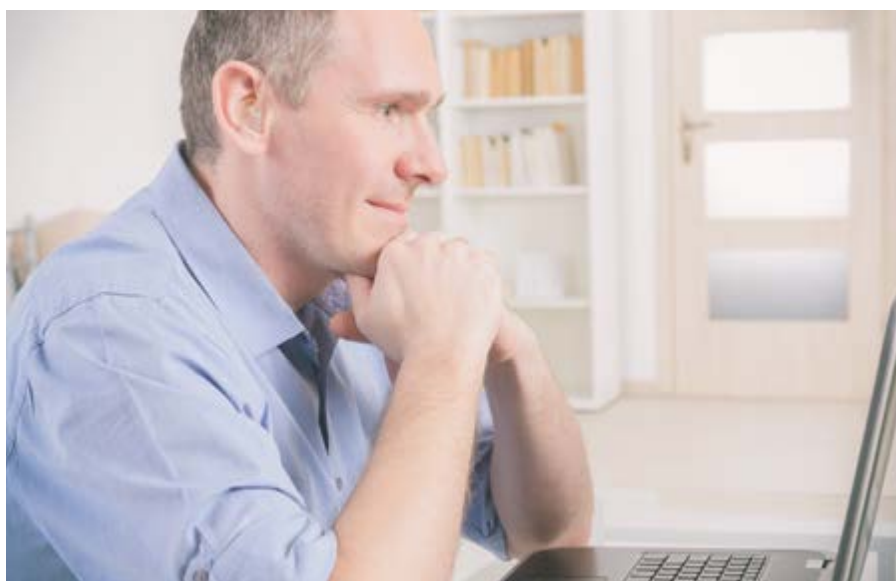
Some people simply need some advice or guidance about living with hearing loss, whereas others may need daily support on a longer-term basis. The services we provide can help people with a wide range of different support needs.

The support we give comes in many forms. This could be connecting someone with a kind and knowledgeable person who has experience of hearing loss to chat in a one-to-one setting, or it could be hosting group support sessions or helping people to access our online services. It could be the training and matching of our clever hearing

dogs, or it could be offering a kind and friendly face to talk to. It is this flexibility in the way we support people that means we can help thousands of people every year.

Andrew James, our head of services, says: "There is never a one-size-fits-all

solution to hearing loss or deafness. We understand the many challenges that hearing loss can bring and how it's often not just the person facing difficulties with their hearing who needs support, but their friends and families too."



Here are some of the services we offer that help make life easier for anyone experiencing difficulties with their hearing:



Helpdesk

For someone with hearing loss, or for their family and friends, it can be reassuring to have somewhere to go to ask questions or to get impartial advice. Our Helpdesk offers this and in recent months has helped over 1,200 people. It is a great source of information for anyone looking for practical tips or advice on managing their hearing, or for those who are having problems with their hearing and just need someone to talk to. All our Helpdesk responders have personal or professional experience of hearing loss.

Confidence and Companion dogs

These are dogs that are best suited to being non-working companions to anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss and would benefit from the love and emotional support of a highly trained dog. They help people who don't need to be alerted to sounds but who would benefit from having a constant companion who loves them and gives them increased confidence and independence.



Hearing dogs

Our clever dogs provide practical and emotional support to anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss. From alerting deaf people to sounds, to offering unwavering love and emotional support, our dogs are the heart of how we help people.

We train dogs for three 'roles', for people with different needs – fully accredited hearing dogs who wear the smart burgundy jackets, Sound Support dogs who alert their partners to important sounds in the home, and Confidence and Companion dogs who alleviate isolation and anxiety for those with hearing loss.

LinkUps and LinkUp online

Our LinkUp sessions bring together small groups of up to 15 people, in a friendly and supportive environment, to explore the challenges of living with hearing loss, share solutions and advice, and chat about the different strategies and equipment that can help make life easier. We deliver our LinkUps in person (when Covid-19 restrictions allow) and remotely via a secure online platform.

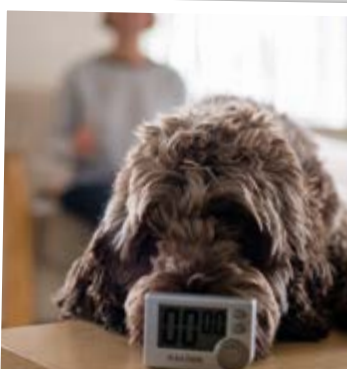
hearinglink.org/services/linkups



Online shop

Our Hearing Link online shop is a great place to find the right products to support your hearing day to day. We sell a range of assistive listening and alerting devices, hearing aid care products, clear face masks, and much more. With a variety of options to support individual needs, the shop has helped thousands of people and become a go-to place for good quality, useful products for anyone with hearing loss or those who want to protect their hearing.

shop.hearinglink.org



Sound Support dogs

These dogs are trained and matched with deaf people who need to be alerted to important sounds in their homes. Sound Support dogs are skilled sound-workers, but may be less assertive outside their home, favouring the company of their deaf partner in familiar surroundings.

To discuss whether a hearing dog could be the right solution for you, contact our friendly team at applications@hearingdogs.org.uk

Hearing Link website

Our Hearing Link website is a useful and impartial place to go for reliable information on any aspect of your hearing. From guidance on what to do about hearing loss and how to adjust to it, to tips and advice on how to protect your hearing, you'll find lots of helpful, practical information that can make life easier for anyone looking for advice for themselves, or for their family and friends.

hearinglink.org

Paws for coffee...



Rock music, deafness and the Vietnam war, American actor **Paul Raci** found many parallels to his own life in his latest movie, *Sound of Metal*, a film which explores the effects of hearing loss

Sound of Metal is an Oscar-winning American film which follows heavy metal musician Ruben (played by Riz Ahmed) whose world is turned upside down by sudden hearing loss. When Ruben meets Vietnam War veteran Joe (played by Paul Raci), who also lost his hearing as an adult, Joe encourages Ruben to join his small deaf community. We sat down with Paul, to ask him about the film and his own experiences with hearing loss.

Do you prefer tea or coffee?

I have my moods where I love tea, but I'm an espresso guy – two shots!

What inspired you to become an actor?

In 1956 I was nine. My mother took me to see an Elvis Presley movie, *Love me Tender* and I ended up interpreting all the characters in the movie for her! I realised this is kind of cool! I made the decision to be an actor and I just love it. I'm so grateful I got the opportunity to do *Sound of Metal* and have such a great role, because that's every actor's dream.

What made you fight for the role of 'Joe' in *Sound of Metal*?

When I first read the script, I was very moved. It just struck me as being very sensitive to the journey of someone who loses their hearing, and at the end I was just in tears. I thought of my father because he was totally deaf from the age of six months. And my mother because she lost her hearing at the age of five. She'd already acquired speech and loved music. As she got older it did affect her mental health, she missed music so much.

Did your own life experience influence how the characters of Joe and Ruben developed?

Well, I thought it was just a beautiful story; the way recovering addict Ruben (played by Riz Ahmed) runs into this sober house where this guy Joe, who's running it, has had the same experience – a late deafened individual. Riz had worked with a deaf tutor for about nine months before I got on set, so he was already communicating with the deaf actors. He was just brilliant. I didn't have to teach him anything. We had a relationship of mentor and mentee on a different level – in the stillness part of it. So that was where our relationship really fed the two characters.

Your character Joe had a hearing dog.

We only saw him briefly, why? I just wished there was so much more they could have shown with the dog, he was great, but they unfortunately had to edit and cut it. The movie could only be so long.

Do you know anyone who has a hearing dog?

I know many people who have hearing dogs now. When I was growing up in the 50s, there were no hearing dogs, no devices you could communicate on, there was no captioning in the movies, none of that.

How can we get more deaf representation in the film industry?

Deaf people do not want to see hearing people playing them on screen. Hollywood has to wake up. I still see it today. A hearing man writes a script – wouldn't it be fascinating to make this guy deaf. Then they start auditioning hearing people who must learn the language. There are deaf men and women who are brilliant actors. We have to start using them. Deaf writers

need to start writing their stories and throwing it out there.


How do you and your band protect your hearing?

When I was singing in the 70s and 80s there was no such thing as protection for your ears, so I have tinnitus. But now we have in-ear monitors – so you can protect your ears and monitor the amount of sound that gets in. Obviously, Ruben in the movie does not because he's hardcore! I tell people now, you may be hardcore and young but you're not indestructible, you need to protect what you have right now, or you'll lose your hearing.

What's your proudest achievement?

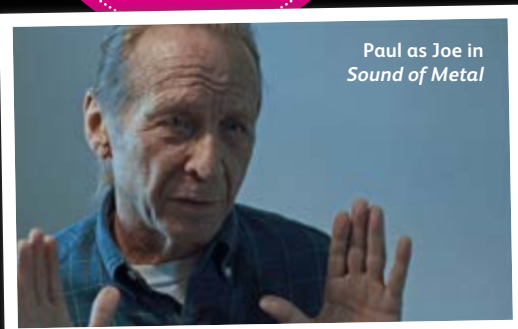
My proudest achievement is just to accept myself. I've had addictions and struggles and problems since coming back from Vietnam, and with my identity in the Deaf community – I'm not Deaf, but I'm not hearing, so who am I? I love what I've achieved with my band more than anything. I do the whole thing in American sign language (ASL) while I'm singing, so it's accessible to Deaf and hearing people. When I see 40 Deaf people in a hard rock club having access to Black Sabbath, I'm very, very, happy. But that's because I've accepted who I am, I love who I am, I love what I do, but it's taken me a long time to get to this point.

Do you have a dog? I do, her name's Sheila. She's a good girl. I'm a big believer in getting rescue dogs whenever we can. Every time we lose a dog I go and rescue another one.

Sound of Metal is available on DVD, Amazon Prime Video and iTunes 

DID YOU KNOW?

Paul has been nominated for a BAFTA and an Oscar



Paul as Joe in *Sound of Metal*

Close-up with...

→ PAUL RACI

An Oscar nominated actor, Paul is best known for his role as Joe in *Sound of Metal* (2019) directed by Darius Marder, starring opposite Riz Ahmed and Olivia Cooke. He can also be seen in many TV shows, including *Parks and Recreation*. Born and raised in Chicago by Deaf parents, Paul is fluent in American Sign Language, and is a Legally Certified Sign Language Interpreter for the Los Angeles Superior Court System. A Vietnam veteran, Paul is also a musician and singer with the band Hands of Doom, an ASL rock, Black Sabbath tribute band.



Hearing Dogs
for Deaf People



The GREAT BRITISH Dog Walk™



Enjoy a fun-filled sponsored walk, in a beautiful location, with your furry friend and help deaf people reconnect with life

Admission by pre-booked ticket only. Range of start times available online when booking. For list of dates and locations please visit our website.

Kindly supported by

Specsavers

hearingdogs.org.uk/greatbritishdogwalk