



Hearing Dogs
for Deaf People

Favour

Issue 62
AUTUMN
2020
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The magazine from Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

FEEL GOOD ISSUE

Good news, inspiring
stories and lots of cute
pups to make you smile

PAWS FOR
COFFEE
WITH TV'S
DR RANJ

Harley is my soulmate

How hearing dog
Harley's love helped
Mary escape her
'silent bubble'

Rising to the challenge of lockdown

PLUS

We celebrate our key
worker superheroes!

Our amazing volunteers get creative
while training our pups from home



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SUPERHERO VOLUNTEERS

Read about the amazing key workers who rallied to help on page 20.

Welcome!



I sincerely hope that you, and all those close to you, have remained safe and well during these very strange times. The Coronavirus crisis meant that we had to change the way we work so we could continue to help deaf people. This was quite a challenge, and we could not have managed without your help. You can read about this amazing collective effort throughout this issue, as well as all the fun and games our adorable dogs have been up to. Make sure to

read on page 6 how the Richard Herrington appeal went (hint: brilliantly!), and see how Jill Hipson managed during lockdown with the help of hearing dog Kit, on page 18. We also have a fantastic 'Paws for Coffee' interview with Dr Ranj Singh. I hope this issue gives you many reasons to smile. Fondest wishes,
Michele Jennings Chief Executive of Hearing Dogs

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Favour

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

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NEXT ISSUE
Look out for the
next issue in
Spring 2021

Newshound

The pawfect place to find all the latest good news and appeal updates. We sniff out the stories that matter to you...



Sandy and sponsor puppy Gwen during a virtual training session



THE HELPDESK IS HERE FOR YOU

During lockdown, when people most needed our help, we were sadly not able to continue providing all of our services, such as our local and national one-on-one and group support programmes. This was quite simply because of lockdown and then social distancing.

However, we want you to know that our online helpdesk remains very much open and ready to support you, no matter what else is going on in the world.

It is staffed by volunteer responders, most of whom have personal experience of hearing loss. They genuinely understand your challenges and can offer information, guidance and support. If you have questions for yourself, or want to help someone else with hearing loss – or just need someone to talk to – the helpdesk is your next step. Just visit hearinglink.org/helpdesk for more information.

How we adapted to continue helping deaf people

Against a backdrop of lockdown and social distancing, we have completely transformed the way we work.

First and foremost, we have continued to help our deaf partners, many of whom are feeling even more vulnerable or isolated than ever. For example, we have made calls or sent emails on their behalf, provided guidance and advice on ways to keep their hearing dogs mentally and physically stimulated, and researched

organisations that can help with delivering food or essentials.

New placements had to halt temporarily, as the process requires trainers and partners to spend a lot of time together, often in the partner's home. However, as restrictions have eased, we have slowly been able to start this again and help even more deaf people start a new life with their hearing dogs.

Meanwhile, training has continued apace. With 550

puppies at vital stages in their journey, trainers and volunteers have worked together brilliantly, as a seamless team. They have embraced innovations such as one-to-one video calls, virtual puppy classes, fun and informative Dog Club Live training sessions and our online support hub called – of course – the Pawtal. Our volunteers have also come up with innovative (and often quirky!) solutions, which you can read more about on page 10.



SUPPORT

Nearly 3,000 people helped by deaf awareness offer

With so many people wearing face coverings and masks in public during social distancing, deaf people who rely on lipreading have been facing more communication barriers than ever. This has particularly been so when visiting or working in essential places such as hospitals, supermarkets and banks.

In response to this, we ran an offer on our social media pages, in which we gave away a deaf awareness communication card, pin badge or wristband. This was completely free of charge to anyone who needed one. As a result, almost 3,000 people received a free product and are now benefiting from them.

Each product featured a printed message, such as 'I have a hearing

loss' or 'I'm a lipreader, please face me'. This let people know the wearer has communication needs, simply and effectively and without having to try and explain, which can often be difficult.

Gillian Cornell, from Norfolk, is one of many who benefited from the offer. Gillian told us, "When I applied for my free communication aid, little did I know how immediately I was going to need it. The day after it arrived, I was taken to A&E and the communication card proved immensely useful in getting staff to properly speak up so I could hear."

Gillian's experience is just one example of how these products helped people navigate a time of increased communication barriers. Angie Platten, Director of Hearing Loss

Services for Hearing Dogs, explains further: "Wearing face masks has been a very sensible precaution to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. However, this precaution had the unintended consequence of increasing communication barriers for anyone who relies on lipreading, making things much harder for them."

"We recognised that people were struggling with this and knew we could help by giving away as many of our deaf awareness products as we could, to make things easier for people."

The offer has now ended, but our deaf awareness products are available to buy in the Hearing Link online shop at shop.hearinglink.org

Joanna Jones appeal update

At the time of writing, Joanna's appeal has raised nearly £30,000, from over 700 generous Favour readers. This will help us train more life-changing – or, in Joanna's case, even life-saving – hearing dogs.

Joanna had suffered increasing deafness and tinnitus, along with declining mental health, for many years. She felt cut off from the world. At her lowest point she even considered ending her own life.

Now, Marshall helps Joanna by alerting her to important sounds and providing love and emotional support. This was especially important during the Coronavirus crisis, because treatment for an autoimmune

disorder placed Joanna in the 'vulnerable' group so she had to self-isolate.

While Joanna said lockdown triggered frustrations and worry, Marshall gave her a reason to smile. She told us: "Before the lockdown, I did wonder why a dog can get so excited by anyone walking past the front window. Then I found out – it was exciting to see signs of life! Marshall accepted the new normal and made the best of it, which was very inspiring."

Joanna continued, "I just love him to bits. He has helped me realise that we are all loveable just for who we are, and he gives me that message very clear, every day." To all those who donated... thank you.



Joanna and life-changer Marshall

STAY IN TOUCH:  twitter.com/hearingdogs  facebook.com/hearingdogs  hearingdogs.org.uk



PARTNERSHIP

Richard Herrington and Rodney

We're thrilled to tell you that Richard Herrington, the subject of our appeal in Favour 60, has been partnered with a new hearing dog, called Rodney

This was made possible through the kindness of Favour readers. Over 900 people donated, raising nearly £30,000. Thank you to all those who donated.

Richard has had his share of heartbreak. His beloved wife of 31 years suddenly died in 2008, leaving him isolated and spiralling into depression. Hearing dog Dillon helped him recover and reconnect with the world around him, but when Dillon died he found himself slipping back into despair.

As Richard said, "What really hit me after losing Dillon was how isolated I became. People no longer spoke to me. When I had Dillon alongside me people would stop and talk to me, even strangers. That all went. It made me feel invisible. It was like I'd lost my identity and that made me feel very cut off."

At Hearing Dogs we place huge importance on what we call 'successor dogs' – those who continue the work of previous dogs that have retired or sadly died. So, we ran an appeal in Favour to help us train more hearing dogs for Richard and others like him.

Rodney was the result! We're so pleased to be able to report that Richard and Rodney have been doing

so well, especially important during the Coronavirus lockdown.

As Richard says, "I was so overwhelmed by this beautiful tan-and-white Cocker Spaniel and so hopeful that it would all work out. I needn't have worried, he is a brilliant dog."

"Rodney couldn't have come at a better time, as we had only been together a matter of weeks before lockdown started and I don't think I would have coped being on my own. He is now working to every sound without fail. I feel that we have bonded exceptionally well and it's as if he has always been with me."

Richard also notes that Dillon arrived on the fourth anniversary of his wife passing away, and Rodney arrived on the first anniversary of hearing dog Dillon passing away. He says, "I think this means that both were meant to be, and that someone is looking down on me and keeping me safe."







Richard concludes, "I now look forward to the future, with new experiences and new stories in the making."

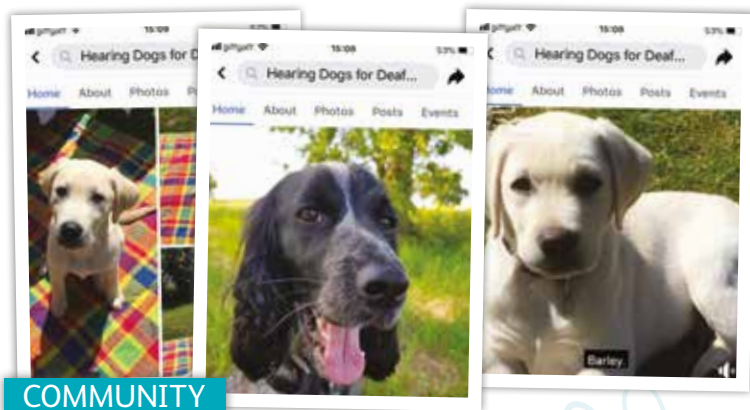
This is such a fantastic result. From Richard and everyone at Hearing Dogs, once again, a huge thank you to everyone who donated to Richard's appeal.

Shake paws with...



RODNEY

-  **Favourite food?** I will do anything for a gravy bone
-  **Loves?** I live to work, work, work (and the treats I get!). Oh, and the occasional walk
-  **Hates?** Being groomed. I don't like the brush and comb, but it has to be done I suppose
-  **Favourite walk?** I love the foreshore and diving in the smelly mud (but don't like the hosepipe shower afterwards)
-  **Likes to sleep?** As close as I can to my dad (Richard)
-  **Favourite toy or game?** Nicking slippers



Social media that makes you smile

Social media is a great way to stay in touch, especially during social distancing. This is why we tried to bring a smile to people's faces, by providing some light on our social media pages during these unusual times.

If you like puppies you'd have loved our Friday 'Cute clips of the week' video montages! They were our most popular feature (they still are).

We have also shown how our puppies continued their training from home, with plenty of fascinating (and funny!) stories from our volunteers. You can read more about this on page 10.

If figures are anything to go by, we seem to have been successful. From

January to June 2020, we reached a staggering 13,800,000 people. This is over four million more than the total for 2019. Video views have been 4,200,000, which is over twice that for last year. That's a lot of smiles raised by a lot of puppy posts!

We are so lucky to have such great support. Our social media pages have a real community feeling. Thousands of people comment, talk to each other, share photos of their own dogs, share stories about their deafness or hearing loss and give other people words of encouragement.

If you want to get involved, just visit our Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages. See you there – and smile!

JOIN TEAM HEARING DOGS FOR THE GREAT NORTH RUN!

Would you like to join us in the world's largest half marathon on Sunday 13 September 2021?

Participants run between Newcastle Upon Tyne and South Shields in North East England, across the iconic Tyne Bridge and out to the coast with an atmosphere that is simply electric!

The ballot is held in January 2021, but if you're not lucky enough to get a place, we have some guaranteed charity places available. Find out more at hearingdogs.org.uk/greatnorthrun



Enjoy al fresco dining at 'Little Grange'

We are taking the opportunity to complete some gentle renovations to The Grange Restaurant & Gift Shop, making the kitchens and serving areas slightly bigger to improve customer experience when we open again in mid-September.

Meanwhile, we are delighted with the success of our new outdoor kitchen, called 'Little Grange', which you can read about online at thegrangesaunderton.org.uk/littlegrange

Based at our Southern Training Centre in Saunderton, in the heart of the picturesque Chiltern Hills, Little Grange brings some of our delicious food and drink outside.

Enjoy hot and cold drinks, beer, wine or a glass of Prosecco, snacks including

freshly-made paninis and boxed salads, or one of chef's delicious home-made traybakes. Or, how about our Classic or Sparkling Afternoon Tea hamper, available to purchase online in advance of your visit, or even our weekend BBQ selection?

Open from Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 4pm throughout summer, we have well-spaced outdoor seating, but feel free to bring your own picnic blanket or folding chairs. As always, dogs on leads are welcome, with the opportunity to take a stroll around our pet dog field and enjoy the beautiful views.

Every visit helps us to continue training life-changing hearing dogs, so we hope to welcome you to Little Grange very soon.



STAY IN TOUCH: twitter.com/hearingdogs facebook.com/hearingdogs hearingdogs.org.uk



**“BEFORE HARLEY, I FELT
SO TERRIBLY ISOLATED,
COCOONED IN SILENCE”**

When Mary Gosling suddenly lost her hearing, she couldn't see a future. Depression followed, but with hearing dog Harley's help, she gained the strength to co-found the British Cockapoo Society and help publish a book

I lost my hearing twelve years ago. Nobody knows why. One night I was watching TV; the next morning almost all my hearing had gone. Today, I'm profoundly deaf, with tinnitus.

It was devastating. I loved music, from rock to punk to classical. When I was young, I went to see the Boomtown Rats in my pyjamas, because that was the pianist's gimmick. I'd shaved my head too (my dad wasn't happy about that!). I've seen Madonna, Stevie Wonder, even Meatloaf in concert. Suddenly this essential part of my life had gone.

I tried hearing aids but they stopped working as my hearing deteriorated. I tried to socialise, but although I can lip read, I couldn't follow conversations, so I would have to give up. I tried to work, but other health problems kept me off sick.

I felt terribly isolated, cocooned in silence, except for relentless tinnitus which causes strange sensations and sounds. I couldn't put on music for relief. I couldn't pick up the phone and chat to friends, or do simple things like pay bills or arrange appointments.

I lived in constant fear and anxiety. What if there was a break-in? Or a fire? These things hadn't bothered me when I could hear. They all become horribly real when you lose your hearing.

I had bad experiences. The worst was in a coffee shop: the barista mumbled something with his head down. I told him I was deaf and asked him to repeat it, so he shouted the question at me. Everyone looked. I was so embarrassed. I paid, and stumbled out, swallowing my tears.

After a while, I didn't go out. In the end, I couldn't go out. When I reached the bottom of a very deep hole, I'm ashamed to say that I tried to end it all.

However, I've always loved dogs, having grown up on a farm, and when I found out about Hearing Dogs, I started fundraising for the Charity. I lodged people's pet dogs while they went on holiday, and donated the earnings. It was through this contact with Hearing Dogs that I realised I would benefit



“QUITE SIMPLY, WITHOUT HARLEY, I WOULDN'T BE HERE TODAY”

from having one myself. And that's how I came to have Harley, my own hearing dog.

Quite simply, without Harley, I wouldn't be here today.

Life with Harley

Harley takes away the loneliness and fear, and makes life easier in a million practical ways. I feel safe knowing he'll tell me if the fire alarm goes. He also tells me about other sounds such as the doorbell and alarm clock.

However, he has really helped me escape my silent bubble. At first, I had no choice: I couldn't shut myself away or stay in bed because I had to take him out for exercise. But then I started to feel better about life. I would bump into people while walking Harley and chat with them.

Thanks to Harley, I've climbed out of my depression. I co-founded the British Cockapoo Society, which has over 12,000 members. I've also helped publish a book, 'Cockapoo World', written by Diana Hoskins and available through Amazon. We've raised thousands of pounds for Hearing Dogs, which I'm extremely proud of. I'm even thinking of writing a series of children's books with Harley as the star!

I do still get down sometimes. Harley senses it. He'll want a cuddle or drop a ball in front of me, so we'll have a play together. He's a loving, playful friend, and when he has his burgundy Hearing Dogs coat on, it's all 'focus, focus, focus, look at mum and make sure she's OK'.

During lockdown, unable just to meet people, I was reminded of my old life. I realised that, before Harley, I lived in permanent, personal lockdown. The Hearing Dogs community has helped me too. I've met some fantastic people. The difference is huge.

How would I describe Harley? He's loyal, focused, cheeky... there are so many words I could use. I think I'll settle with: 'He's a very special dog – my soulmate'. 🐾

HELP TRAIN MORE DOGS



Please consider donating to Hearing Dogs to help us train a hearing dog for another deaf person like Mary. 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/mary



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF LOCKDOWN

When lockdown began we very quickly had to change how we train our puppies. Step forward video calls, the Pawtal and our amazing volunteers

Lockdown didn't stop us – because it simply could not. In March we had around 550 puppies at vital stages in their training. Miss a step, or delay a stage and it could be too late, as behaviours learned while puppies grow are very hard to change when they become adults. So, to ensure these puppies will transform the lives of 550 deaf people (as well as their families, friends and communities) we needed to adapt and adapt quickly.

The great news is... we did! The ingenuity and sheer will of our trainers and volunteers shone through. Our Volunteer Puppy Trainers worked with the next generation of hearing dogs in their own homes and

gardens, supported by their trainers through one-to-one video calls, videos sharing, virtual puppy classes, Dog Club Live, our 'Pawtal' online support hub for volunteers... we honestly believe that if smoke signals and carrier pigeons would do the trick, they'd have done that too!

Our volunteers came up with many fun, innovative (and often quirky!) ways of training our dogs and keeping them mentally and physically stimulated. They also made us smile...

Bananas in pyjamas?

It's important that our pups are happy around people in different types of clothing. We don't want them to be



Reyes with Peppa



Just an everyday stroll for volunteer Reyes and hearing dog in training Peppa

startled by, say, a traffic warden or road worker in a bright yellow jacket. So, we encourage our Volunteer Puppy Trainers to wear lots of different types of outfits, to help the dogs get used to unusual clothing. Normally these would be things like big hats, really 'floaty' dresses and so on – whatever our volunteers have in their wardrobes that might be unusually bright or potentially striking. However, hearing dog in training Peppa's volunteer Reyes 'thought big'. She had a banana costume from an event she'd held for the Parent Teacher Association at her children's school, so it was the obvious choice for 'different'! When she shared her photos with us, we knew we just had to feature Reyes on this issue's cover.



A warm welcome from hearing dog trainee Herbie



Single Decker

We want our puppies to be confident around new sights, sounds and smells. This is why we encourage them from very early on to explore their senses and learn that new experiences are to be taken in their confident little puppy stride. Decker took new experiences to heart by having fun exploring plant pots!

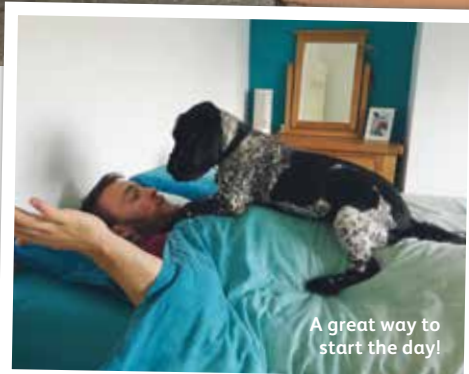
Daily deliveries

Why do dogs bark at postal delivery workers? Because every time they do, the intruder seems to go away. So, it must be working, so let's keep doing it...

Obviously we can't have this. Deaf recipients need to know their dogs will be well behaved, and apart from anything, barking might simply have no effect for a deaf person. So, Herbie's volunteers, Olivia and Christian (not Justin Timberlake, honest), dressed as the postman to familiarise Herbie with deliveries.

Wakey wakey, rise and shine

Olivia and Christian also helped Herbie with his soundwork. This is a vital part of what our amazing dogs do, alerting deaf people to life-saving sounds like the smoke alarm and intruder alarm,



A great way to start the day!

and other important sounds such as the oven timer and baby monitor.

The alarm clock is also important. A lot of deaf people simply cannot hear their alarms. So, Herbie practised waking people up when the alarm clock went off, by bouncing on the bed. Christian responded by asking 'What is it?', with hands apart, palms up.

A lot of our deaf partners tell us it's the best way to start the day, being jumped on by a happy dog! ➡



Virtually there

The Pawtal (see what we did there?) is our shiny new online hub for our dog care volunteers. It provides help, advice and resources to support our amazing volunteers who help raise, train and care for our hero hearing dogs.

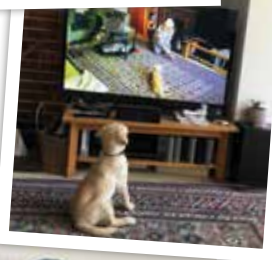
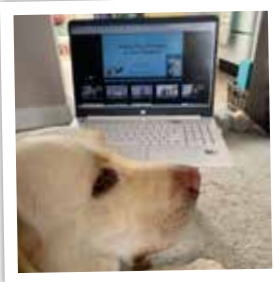
This had been in progress for a while, but when lockdown happened it was all hands on deck. We wanted to ensure that our volunteer dog trainers had access to all the resources they needed to keep training the future generation of hearing dogs. As a result, it took mere weeks to do what would normally take months.

One great thing to come out of lockdown was the success of online



training. Our training team rallied to the cause and organised live puppy training sessions via video so that our puppies could keep progressing along their journeys. They also launched 'Dog Club Live', a series of fun interactive virtual events, which provided lots of tips on how to keep pups mentally and physically stimulated during lockdown. It just goes to show, sometimes you can emerge from challenging times having learned new ways of doing things that we can even continue doing in future.

We thought you might like to see more of our pups working from home...



Left a bit, right a bit...

If you live near to our training centres, you might see a hearing dog in training, looking very smart in an 'I'm learning to be a hearing dog' burgundy coat, walking nicely and calmly. This is because we train our dogs to manoeuvre obstacles on busy streets, so they can happily accompany their deaf partners wherever they want to go.

Carla's volunteer trainers, Jeff and Jenna, set up an obstacle course in the garden to teach her how to do this! Past an orange cone, past a yellow one, and stop on the big dog mat. Done!



... and relax!

Jeff and Jenna also came up with the brilliant idea of setting up a mini café in their garden, playing restaurant noises on YouTube in the background, so that Carla could get used to the sights and sounds of a café and learn to settle nicely around them. This will be very important when she's accompanying her future deaf partner to different places. It also offered everyone a bit of downtime in the sun!

Meet three of our latest recruits



You've seen how our amazing volunteers have used ingenuity and sheer will to get around the challenges of lockdown. Now meet our three latest sponsor pups who are about to start their puppy training journeys

Winnie, the comical cutie

Why is Winnie cute? Because of that ridge along her nose! So, what makes Winnie comical? She steals slippers and makes her escape through the stairgate, but her bottom is too big, so she gets stuck halfway through and has to be rescued. So funny. Yet one day, this comical cutie will complete her training journey, become an amazing hearing dog and change a deaf person's life.



Feather, the cheeky charmer

As soon as we saw those delicate markings on her face, we knew we had to call her Feather! She's so full of charm – and cheek. She'll stick her tongue out when you're taking photos. She'll give you little sideways glances before running off for puppy chases. And what happens when you catch her? Lots of cuddles, of course!



Elton, the affectionate sleepy-head

Elton knows what he wants. He adores sleeping. When we asked David and Sally, his Volunteer Puppy Trainers, they told us: "Elton loves sleeping on our other dog's bed!" He also loves sleeping on an old cushion and, oddly enough, in his puppy tunnel. When he's awake, he's so full of love. When he's asleep he's so cute!

All three of these adorable puppies will go on to change deaf people's lives, through the generosity of people like you. It's a kind of magic, and on the next page you can see how this magic worked with Clare and sponsor hearing dog Molly. ➡





Clare and Molly,
their first week together



Clare and
Molly now

“Molly helped me find my ‘deaf identity’”

Molly was once a cute little sponsor puppy. Now she’s helping Clare every day, at work, at home and at play

Three years ago, over 1,000 of you were so kind to sponsor little Molly, a playful, independent and extremely cute Cocker Spaniel. Now, she’s

Clare Newbegin’s ‘little cuddly bundle of joy’, helping her find confidence to face the future. Here’s Clare’s story...

“I was born with profound hearing loss in my left ear and partial hearing loss in my right ear. In 2013, while finishing my degree, my hearing further deteriorated. Nobody knows why this happened. Today I wear hearing aids.

“When my deafness got worse, I worried about not hearing the alarm clock and particularly the smoke alarm. My biggest fear was fire. I just could not sleep on my own in the house.

“When my deafness got worse... my biggest fear was fire. I just could not sleep on my own in the house.”

“This was a real problem if my partner had to go anywhere overnight. I used to go back to my parents. As much as I love seeing them, it felt like I couldn’t truly be independent.

“Also, I lacked confidence in speaking to people I didn’t know. I would make my partner talk for me, at supermarkets or in shops.

“I was partnered with the wonderful sponsor dog Molly in 2017. She is now my smoke alarm and alarm clock. I no longer have to worry – I can sleep easily, knowing Molly is there. She really seems to love her soundwork, especially alerting to the alarm clock as she loves eating breakfast!”

“My partner can now work away from home more. Until I had Molly, I had never stayed in the house on my own overnight.

“I am also definitely much more confident at speaking to people who don’t know that I’m deaf. When it was announced that face coverings were advisable in certain situations I felt



quite anxious, because it would make understanding people so much harder.

"However, when people saw Molly's burgundy Hearing Dogs coat, they understood the situation, and they adapted. So, we managed, together.

"I've also realised that Hearing Dogs opens up a world of possibilities. Being deaf in a hearing world can be very isolating, and so I love meeting other Hearing Dogs partners. We talk about our beautiful and clever dogs, and we can share stories about situations we find ourselves in due to our deafness.

"The whole experience has 'validated' me. I realise I'm not alone in the things I struggled with. I feel I am part of a

community that has opened its arms to me. It also means I have written lots of wedding invitations to dogs!

"Nowadays, Molly is a local celebrity. We always chat to someone everywhere we go. I used to avoid talking to people I didn't know – now I love talking to people about Molly.

"At work we have nicknamed her the 'Employee Therapy Dog'. I work in a children's hospice where there are official therapy dogs, but in their absence Molly is always happy to step in. What is amazing is that she will go from the excitement of tricks to laying quietly with a poorly child – her instincts are amazing.

"I feel like I have found my 'deaf identity.' Having Molly has been more than 'just' having an assistance dog to keep me safe and be my constant companion. She has opened the door to meeting other deaf people. She has enriched and improved my life immeasurably.

"I cannot thank Molly's sponsors enough for their help in enabling Molly to change my life.

"To give something back, I'm now sponsoring Rusty. The updates are beautiful and really illustrate the journey a puppy goes through to become a life-changer." 🐾



Shake paws with...



MOLLY

🐾 **Favourite food?** Fishy treats, but definitely not fussy!

🐾 **Loves?** Food, games that involve food and cuddles

🐾 **Dislikes?** The rain, mud and low-flying aeroplanes

🐾 **Favourite walk?** Galloping through the woods and splashing in the stream to cool off

🐾 **Likes to sleep?** Under a blanket

🐾 **Favourite toy or game?** Snuffle mat and tennis balls

🐾 **Is best friends with?** Eric the Pets As Therapy dog at work. He's a miniature dachshund. When they play Molly literally rolls around on her belly at his height!

Sponsor a puppy today... and change a deaf person's life

As you saw on page 13, we have three gorgeous pups starting their journey towards helping deaf people embrace life – just like Molly helps Clare today.

From just £3 a month you could sponsor comical Winnie, charming Feather or affectionate Elton for yourself, or as a unique, thoughtful gift for someone special.

You'll receive a fabulous welcome pack and regular updates on their progress including adorable photos plus access to our 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
-  sponsor an event
-  payroll giving

We'd like to say a huge 'thank you' to our corporate supporters, who have stood by us through challenging times and continued making a difference to deaf people's lives

Corporate support is so important to us. For many years, local and national companies have worked very closely with us to help provide amazing hearing dogs, and this continues today. The benefits for companies are many and varied, as are the opportunities, from naming a dog and sponsoring its training, or making us your Charity of the Year. Find out more about how to get involved below.

ERCOL

Local furniture manufacturer Ercol has extremely generously supplied a range of its fabulous furniture to support our Hearing Hub. Located at our southern training centre, the Hearing Hub is a friendly environment in which visitors can share their experiences and challenges with hearing loss. Ercol kindly supplied a selection of furniture to help transform the hub into a warm, homely space. Chairman Edward Tadros said: "At Ercol we are celebrating in 2020 our Centenary Year. Our founder created our company in 1920 and we are privileged to be still making fine furniture one hundred years on. Our factory is in Princes Risborough located close to Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. We have enjoyed supporting the Charity for many years and are now delighted to be providing furniture for the Hearing Hub. We wish the new venture every success with its wonderful work."



PAPERCHASE

Christmas is never far away it would seem, and Paperchase is supporting us for the 9th year running. To date, the company has raised an amazing £181,246 for Hearing Dogs. Paperchase's charity card is available to buy online at paperchase.com now!



SPECSAVERS

Our Great British Dog Walks have sadly been postponed until the Autumn, but we're delighted that Specsavers continues to stand by us and sponsor them throughout the UK. You can find out more about the Great British Dog Walks at greatbritishdogwalk.org

Specsavers

AMAZONSMILE

While Amazon has seen record figures throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, AmazonSmile has also performed amazingly well for us. To date, we've received £3,110.51! If you'd like to experience 'feel good' online shopping

by supporting us, then just go to smile.amazon.co.uk and follow the prompts. Tell a friend, tell the family!

amazonsmile

PETS AT HOME

We're delighted to announce that we are now included as one of Pets at Home's VIP Charity Lifelines! If you or anyone you know has a VIP membership with Pets at Home, be sure to select High Wycombe as your home store and pick us as your chosen charity from the local charity list! This will equate to points which our welfare team can use in store to help care for our dogs.



A HUGE THANK YOU ALSO TO...

-  Royal Canin
-  Agria Pet Insurance
-  Lintbells
-  The Window Film Company
-  iLECSYS
-  Rayovac
-  Michael Graham

Partner with us

Increase employee engagement, brand awareness and customer loyalty by helping deaf people to reconnect with life. Just email jo.wengler@hearingdogs.org.uk or call **01844 340740** to start a discussion about your opportunities today.

Meet the 2.6 challengers



The cancelled London Marathon should have been on 26 April, so we asked people to do challenges related to the number 26 or 2.6. Here are some highlights, and to all those who participated and donated... thank you!

Gill Yeates practised 26 yoga poses in 26 minutes

I did the challenge under my apple tree, and of course I included The Tree and Downward and Upward Dog. I raised £369.90. It was great fun. If you fancy fundraising, then give it a go and choose something you enjoy doing.



Sarah Bond and hearing dog Albert did 26 exercises

Hearing dog Albert changed my life. He loves being involved, so we did weaves, lunges, mini agility, push-ups, sit-ups, squats, and then ran around the garden, all on 26th April. We had such a laugh and raised £1,032.14 plus £153.75 Gift Aid.

Lauren Carpenter drew 26 personalised pet portraits

I drew from supplied photos of donors' pets, including dogs, cats, guinea pigs and a tortoise! I raised £390 – much more than I expected. Fundraising helps you to feel part of a community, and you may even discover a new skill or hobby.



Carol Norley created 26 NHS laundry bags

I was already making laundry bags when I found out about the 2.6 challenge. My husband sponsored me to make 26, then other family and friends got involved. I raised £620. It was such great fun, combining my two great passions – sewing and dummies!

VIRTUALLY BRILLIANT COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

When the Coronavirus crisis hit, we very sadly had to cancel or postpone all of our community events. The great news is that our community fundraisers and volunteers have come up with some great ideas for virtual fundraising, which you can enjoy whether we're in lockdown or not.

DOWNLOADABLE PACKS

Our packs have downloaded like hot cakes! They feature some of our fundraising ideas, but with a 'virtual makeover'. So we have the virtual Paws for Coffee event (cuppa and a chat online), a quiz, Let's Hear It resources to raise deaf awareness, and the Virtual Great British Dog Walk. One innovation that's come to light with the dog walks is to use the MapMyWalk app to draw an outline of a dog! Intrigued? Then visit hearingdogs.org.uk/packs and sign up!



VIRTUAL TALKS

If there's one thing we're great at, it's talking. We can do it virtually too! Any community groups – adult or youth – plus schools and organisations can request an online talk on video conferencing platform Zoom. One of our volunteer speakers then joins the group and gives a talk. Simple!

The talks last around 20-30 minutes and may include one of our dogs from the Hearing Dogs family (although they don't talk – they're clever but not able to talk, yet...). Just visit hearingdogs.org.uk/talk to find out more.



FIONA'S MAGIC MONEY PLANTS

Superstar volunteer Fiona Daniels has been holding plant and cake sales outside her home, all while observing social distancing. She explains: "We tried putting a table outside. It worked! The first sale made £221, then the second made £142."

"The third was on VE Day. We could drive further by then, so we added plants grown by Peter Shepperd. Myself and Wendy Baldwin also baked cakes.

"We made £903. So we grew more plants and raised £934. Then a very kind deaf partner who is also a volunteer upped this to £1,000.



"Thank you to the many generous people who gave over the cost of the plants to support our wonderful charity." And thank you Fiona for your support!



A LITTLE HELP GOES A LONG WAY

Even before lockdown, many deaf people felt isolated. During the Coronavirus crisis, loneliness became even more of a challenge. BSL teacher Jill Hipson describes how she stayed connected to the world, with help from hearing dog Kit

I was born hearing but had Meningitis when I was five and became completely deaf. My parents moved to nearby Hull so that I could attend a school for deaf children. I did well, passed the 11-plus exams and went to the only grammar school for deaf children, in Newbury. I had a wonderful education and went on to read English Literature at Durham University and then work for the Civil Service in London.

The next four years flew by. I changed jobs to be a computer programmer with British Telecom, got married, had two children, got divorced, and re-married to Chris, my husband for 23 years. We moved to Berkhamsted in 1997. I have since re-trained as a Further Education teacher, eventually teaching British Sign Language



Jill and Kit love life together

(BSL), including at Hearing Dogs.

It's fair to say I have managed with my deafness throughout my life. However, like most deaf people who have had an oral education, I have always felt that I am between two worlds – the hearing world and the Deaf BSL world – and not fully accepted in either. I have found it especially difficult that people cannot 'see' this 'invisible disability'.

It was while teaching BSL at Hearing Dogs that I learned about what the dogs do. I particularly liked how safe they make deaf people feel. I've always hated being unaware of dangers around me, or even thinking that people might be trying to get my attention. I know there have been occasions when people have thought I'm very rude because I didn't respond. It's just not a nice feeling at all.



Jill and Kit, their first week together

Kit: 'Always into everything'

Today, I have my beloved Kit, a beautiful pale yellow Labrador with golden ears, whom I describe as 'always into everything' because she loves accompanying me and being part of whatever I'm doing. She's wonderful. I don't worry about missing the doorbell, or my alarm clock, or even Chris calling me from another room. Kit alerts me to all of these things.

She's also a fabulous companion. I can walk anywhere at any time of the day and feel secure. Her burgundy Hearing Dogs coat makes my deafness visible. It's such a relief that people know about my deafness, because they can 'see' my deafness. It makes them so much more understanding and accommodating.

There is also a warm, welcoming community of hearing dog partners. It's like you've joined a brand new club!

"I felt completely bereft – anxious and unable to communicate with people"

Life during lockdown

Up until lockdown I was meeting local hearing dog partners and taking part in collections at our local Tesco. We were due another one the very week lockdown started. Then, everything stopped.

Unexpectedly, a positive side to lockdown was that I had more mental energy. I read books, tended the garden, and found space to live inside my head more. It really brought home how draining it is trying to communicate with people.

But face coverings were more than draining – they gave me very severe anxiety. If I couldn't see people's faces, I didn't even know if they were talking to me, let alone

lipread. I vividly remember the trauma of having to lipread when I was young, and I'm still not very good at it now.

So, it was extremely hard when I had to go to the supermarket. At first we were unable to get our home delivery slot so I had to go myself (my husband has diabetes and did not want to remotely run the chance of contracting Coronavirus).

It was a nightmare. So many staff were wearing face masks. I felt completely bereft – anxious and unable to communicate with people. After that, I bought almost everything online and avoided shops.



From problem to solution

Before lockdown I would meet up with some of my hearing friends and have the most marvellous pen-and-paper conversations, which I really missed. However, we are so lucky to have all these electronic forms of communication now. A lot of deaf BSL people use Zoom, and I also communicate with hearing friends via email, Messenger and WhatsApp.

I also had superb support from Hearing Dogs. They sent out advice telling deaf

Quick facts

HOW WE ADAPTED TO HELP DEAF PEOPLE LIKE JILL:

- 🐾 We gave guidance on all aspects of caring for hearing dogs during lockdown, including exercise, food, grooming and veterinary care.
- 🐾 We advised on keeping hearing dogs mentally and physically stimulated, including training and games.
- 🐾 We helped with information on social distancing, such as updates on Government advice, what can continue, and what should be stopped.
- 🐾 We provided personalised support through our regional Partnership Instructors, via video calls, emails, texts or phone calls – even if just to check in on them if they needed someone to talk to.
- 🐾 We increased our level of communication and personalised support to vulnerable and elderly recipients, for example arranging exercise for their hearing dog, making phone calls or sending emails on their behalf, and researching local organisations that deliver food and other essentials.

partners what to do about vet visits, medication, exercise, food... everything was so well covered. They even helped with advice on keeping dogs mentally stimulated and entertained, which I daresay was also fun for their partners too!

The Client Services Team was great at staying in touch via email. They also advised me on how to introduce a cat to the home, as my son is having to move back in due to the economic impact of Coronavirus, and has a cat. The Pawtal has also been an extremely useful resource. It's a new online hub full of ideas, advice and support which Hearing Dogs developed in extra-quick time when Coronavirus hit.

Despite the challenges, life continued to be much, much better with Kit. We are definitely closer now because we've been together 24/7 for such a long time. I do things because of her, and with her. She's amazing. 🐾





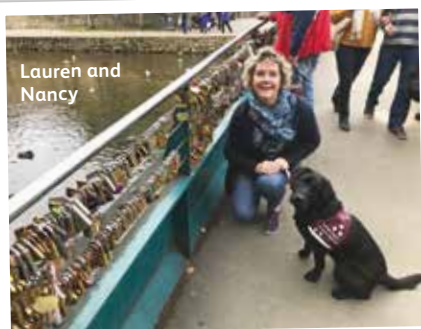
Thank you to our Hearing Dogs superheroes

Without volunteers, there would be no Hearing Dogs. Without key workers, the pandemic would have been immeasurably harder for us all. Here, we salute our volunteers who continued as key workers during incredibly difficult times

Volunteers are our lifeblood. Without them, quite simply, we could not function. This was, is, and always will be true.

During lockdown however, we also truly realised, just like everyone else, how amazing our key workers are. While we were in lockdown, afraid of this strange, dangerous new virus, they were the ones who kept us all going.

So it's astonishing to think that we have some volunteers who are also key workers – who selflessly continued helping not just the Charity during these hard times, but wider society too. Here are just four stories about our Hearing Dogs superheroes...



Lauren and Nancy

LAUREN AND NANCY

"I am a part-time Intensive Care Nurse but when the virus hit I went to full-time. Words like gruelling, exhausting, uncomfortable (so uncomfortable wearing full PPE) and heart-breaking come to mind. It's been a very distressing time.

"As a first-time puppy trainer I looked after Nancy, a lovely black Labrador, until she went into training at the Beatrice Wright Centre in Yorkshire in June 2019. We had an amazing training journey together, especially for me who had grown up frightened of dogs! Since Nancy, I have done quite a lot of short-term cover, and I've discovered that I'm truly a Lab girl at heart.

"In the midst of this challenging time, to help keep my spirits up, I made a photo album of my journey with Nancy, one for her deaf partner and one for myself. It was a lovely and helpful distraction. Going through all the photos brought back such happy memories.

"I hope to visit Nancy when restrictions are lifted. I am very thankful for the privilege of being a Volunteer Puppy Trainer and part of the Hearing Dogs community."



Lauren at work in full PPE

JOHN AND SPENCER

"I work part-time in a local Tesco store. During the crisis, I also helped people who are shopping for others. As a family, we are Volunteer Puppy Trainers for Spaniel pup Spencer. It's been great to see him grow and develop. He is a wonderful distraction and I also get a lovely greeting from him when I get home from work.

"Throughout the crisis, I missed being



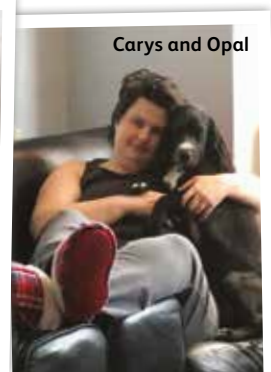
able to raise money and awareness of Hearing Dogs through talks, fashion shows, supermarket collections and the like. I also missed the social aspects of our role, meeting up with our fellow volunteers, going to a coffee shop and having refreshments while our hearing dog puppies practise their settling skills.

“Throughout the crisis, I missed being able to raise money and awareness”

“We adapted during the crisis, for example using Microsoft Teams to access virtual puppy classes and one-to-ones with our Dog Training Instructor. We’d never done this before but we were given very clear advice. There’s also been plenty of online guidance and ideas to help with keeping Spencer entertained and happy. It’s all important, so that he can be a life-changing hearing dog who will help his deaf partner reconnect with the world.”



Carys and Yvonne



Carys and Opal

YVONNE, HER DAUGHTER CARYS, AND OPAL

“My daughter Carys works full time at Morrisons. When I got my letter to ‘shield’ for 12 weeks, she stepped up to help. We discussed moving our lovely puppy Opal to another volunteer’s home, but Carys said she would do her walks every day so I could continue to care for her.

“My trainer said Opal could go out every other day, but we all know how much exercise Working Cocker Spaniels need! So, Carys committed to walking him every day.

“Carys works early and late shifts, getting up at 5am or returning home at 10pm.

However, she always made sure Opal had a walk, and on her day off Opal had two.

“This was a great distraction for Carys. She got to know some of the other local dog walkers, always while maintaining social distancing of course, so Opal was able to see other dogs, which was good for him too.

“Carys also did the shopping for friends and family when they were having trouble getting some necessary items. Now, Carys is even helping me with Opal’s soundwork. I don’t know what I’d have done without her.”



Karen Hoop, her family, and Gus

KAREN, HER FAMILY, AND GUS

“I am an Occupational Therapist. Myself, my husband Eden and our daughters Emma and Jade have been bed and breakfast volunteers for over four years and were looking after the adorable Gus – until I contracted Coronavirus in March and had to be admitted to hospital with breathing difficulties.

“Eden, Emma and Jade were all brilliant. They played ball with Gus in the garden and set up activities or taught him new tricks to keep him entertained. They even taught him to negotiate our stairs while I was away! The girls also ensured he had his regular flea and

worming treatment and even treated him for an ear infection with support from the brilliant staff at Hearing Dogs.

“After a week in hospital I returned home. Gus greeted me excitedly with a huge wag of his tail. I was still very weak, but having Gus was a huge incentive to increase my exercise tolerance – going that little further every day with him plodding by my side.

“I have since returned to work, and Gus and I have resumed our walks and now practise his soundwork at home. I’m almost back to normal.”



➡ **We hope you find these stories as inspiring as we do.**

When we really needed help, our volunteers came to our aid, and when Coronavirus hit, so did our key workers. From all of us at Hearing Dogs for Deaf People – staff, partners, beneficiaries alike – it’s a massive, sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU.

“I was astonished when I found out that over half of all hearing dogs are paid for by legacies”

LEAVING A LEGACY FELT LIKE THE NATURAL THING TO DO

Sylvia Sturges and her husband Alan have volunteered for the Charity since 1994. Sylvia's family history of deafness, love of dogs and the lives she's seen transformed over the years, all contributed to their decision to leave a gift in their Wills

“My family has a history of hearing loss. During the Second World War, my father was stationed in the Home Guard instead of the armed forces because of his deafness. Nobody knows whether he was born deaf or if it occurred later. In those days it often wasn’t picked up.

My mother was also deaf, initially because of a perforated eardrum but later she became completely deaf. It could be a battle sometimes. During hospital appointments, I would ask people to speak towards her hearing aid but they would still mumble with their heads down.

We travelled everywhere on public transport, so I would have to enquire about information like bus numbers, train times and costs. In later years, my mother often struggled to keep up with what was being said, whereas my father would just shut down.

It made me realise that deafness is an invisible disability, which is why I think people are less patient or respectful. It can be very lonely.

So, given that my husband Alan and I also love dogs, volunteering for Hearing Dogs came quite naturally, and we’ve been helping the Charity since 1994. I still remember our first puppy, a loveable little fluffy Collie Spaniel Cross called Popeye. Very sadly his deaf partner called Paul has since passed away, but we’re still in contact with his wife.

I’ve come across so many stories over the years. I remember a man who worked away a lot and stayed in hotels. He was always afraid there would be a fire alarm in the night and had terrible difficulty sleeping, but he could sleep soundly knowing his hearing dog was by his side.

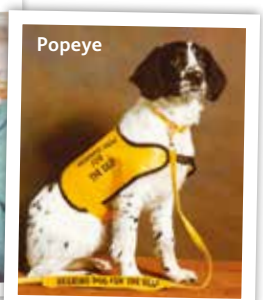
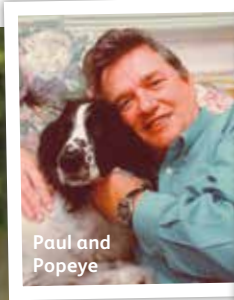
Just last year, we received correspondence from the young woman who has the last



dog we looked after, telling us how much her life has changed. Sometimes she wouldn’t speak to anyone all day, but now they are out twice a day and very well known in their village. They are a perfect match and adore each other.

Every story is different of course, but one thing is constant: all the deaf partners say that, as well as the dogs alerting them to everyday sounds, they really value their companionship, as well as the burgundy Hearing Dogs coat telling other people they are deaf.

It’s this 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. I was astonished when I found out that over half of hearing dogs are paid for by legacies. For us, it seemed a natural thing to do. When my mother died, we also donated to the Charity. She really enjoyed the puppies we looked after. I will always treasure those memories.” 🐾



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.



Clare’s gift

We recounted Clare Clapham’s story in issue 60 of Favour. Her dog, Ted (short for ‘Teddington’, naturally) was paid for through the kindness of a single incredible legacy. Clare tells us: “When I learned that my hearing dog had been funded by a gift in a Will I was completely stunned and very, very grateful. Ted helps the whole family feel safe – my husband is also deaf and we have an eight-year-old son, Max.”

➔ How to leave a gift in your Will

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



Ask the experts

Meet the expert



→ ANGIE PLATTEN

is Director of Hearing Loss Services. She is responsible for all the support available to deaf people who approach our organisation. She has worked for the charity for nearly 20 years and spent most of that time working with people with hearing loss and developing an understanding of the challenges that they face.

While the Coronavirus crisis has proven difficult for everyone, it has created some specific communication challenges for people with hearing loss



Here, our very own **Angie Platten** offers some suggestions that might make life easier, not just during difficult times but in the 'new normal' times ahead too.

I rely very much on lipreading. With so many people wearing face masks in shops and supermarkets, I really struggle to understand what people are saying when I am making essential trips to buy food. How can I overcome this?

This is unfortunately something that many deaf people who rely on lipreading can experience at any time. Common examples include people turning away while talking, standing with bright lights behind them or covering their mouths with their hands.

This was heightened during lockdown, particularly when accessing essential services like hospitals, supermarkets and banks, with so many people wearing face masks and other face coverings.

It's down to lack of awareness rather than nastiness. People generally assume everyone can hear and don't understand that people with hearing loss might have different communication needs.

Some people feel comfortable verbally explaining to people, but for others it can even cause more confusion. This is why many find it useful to have some kind of visual aid. For example, wearing a badge saying 'I am a lipreader' that they can point to, might completely change the situation. Others prefer to write a note on a piece of paper to let people know.

There are useful products available to help with this. The Hearing Link shop offers inexpensive communication aids, such as wallet-sized communication cards, pin badges or wristbands that feature messages like 'I am a lipreader, please face me' or 'I am deaf, please speak clearly'. These can quickly and easily make someone aware and make life easier on a daily basis. Visit shop.hearinglink.org to find out more.



I found the Coronavirus lockdown to be a very lonely experience. I live on my own and because I have hearing loss, I can't easily use the phone to talk to people. I really missed being able to see friends for a weekly coffee like I used to. How could I mitigate this if anything like this happens again in the future?

At Hearing Dogs we understand isolation only too well. Feeling isolated or lonely is a common experience for many deaf people. In fact, three quarters of the people we help have told us that they've felt lonely or isolated because of their deafness or hearing loss. Humans are naturally sociable creatures and it can deeply impact people's mental wellbeing if they are prevented from seeing, speaking to or otherwise communicating with others.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to fixing this. Sometimes it's the small things that mean so much, like checking in with friends or family members via a quick text or email. This works both ways, whether you yourself have hearing loss and are checking in with a loved one or, if you know someone who is deaf, by checking in with them. It tells them they're in your thoughts.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 person in 6 is affected by hearing loss

- Action on Hearing Loss, 2018

“SOME VIDEO CALLING SERVICES, SUCH AS SKYPE, ALSO OFFER FEATURES WHERE VOICE IS TRANSLATED INTO TEXT IN REAL TIME”



Skype's live captions and subtitles feature. Photograph provided by Microsoft.

If you lipread, then video calling apps are helpful because they ensure that you can see people's faces properly. Also, video calling is much more interactive and 'richer' as an experience than a text could ever be. Apps such as WhatsApp, FaceTime and Skype ensure that, while you may not be in the same room, you can still share quality time together.

Some video calling services, such as Skype, also offer features where voice is translated into text in real time, so that a person's speech is displayed on screen in the form of subtitles. This is science fiction become fact, and if you're already using a video service then it might be worth looking into whether it offers this feature.

➔ Did you know?

Our Helpdesk is a source of impartial help and advice for anyone struggling with any aspect of hearing loss. A sympathetic soul who really does understand what you're going through can make a huge difference. Visit hearinglink.org/helpdesk to find out more.

I have a pet dog that has always had three walks a day. When we went into lockdown and I was only able to walk him for one hour, he seemed to get bored for the rest of the day. How can I keep him entertained during times when we can't give him as many walks as normal?

Going for more than one walk a day is a great way to keep a dog mentally and physically stimulated. Walking has many of the same benefits for a dog as it does for a human – it keeps them fit and healthy, helps them burn energy and can also help with their mental health.

It's especially great for hearing dogs partners because that's all part of engaging with the community. A lot of our partners tell us that the burgundy Hearing Dogs jacket can be the start of a conversation, which in turn can be the beginnings of a new friendship.

This is why it's especially challenging when circumstances like Coronavirus curtail this activity. There are also other times when dog owners can't take their dogs out as much as they'd like, for example during sickness or temporary mobility problems.

It is always worth speaking to friends and family to see if they would be happy to help out by walking the dog, if it is safe to do so, but this is not always an option for everyone.

If you find yourself in any of these situations, here are three simple ways to help keep a dog mentally stimulated, as well as enjoying time together:

- 🐾 **Have fun with food.** Use a food dispensing toy such as a Kong to encourage a dog to put its mind to use. Your dog will need to roll the toy around to get the treats to fall out. This can be incredibly fun and satisfying for dogs, while keeping them mentally stimulated.



- 🐾 **Play a simple game of fetch in the garden with a safe dog toy.** Not only will your dog have fun, but playing fetch is a great form of both mental and physical exercise and helps strengthen the bond between you.



- 🐾 **Teach your dog a new skill.** Even the simplest training sessions can provide lots of benefits to a dog, helping to exercise their mind.



There is a wealth of information available online for new tricks and skills for dogs to learn. Just be sure that it is perfectly safe and from a reputable source before you try it out!

Paws for coffee...



We caught up with TV's **Dr Ranj** to chat about deafness, dogs and superhero frontline workers

Do you prefer tea or coffee?
I'm definitely a tea drinker –
I'm Indian after all!

Hearing dogs are trained to alert deaf children and adults to important sounds they would otherwise miss, such as the smoke alarm, alarm clocks and even baby monitors. Do you have any first-hand experience with deafness or hearing loss? For example, do you know anyone who is deaf or has hearing loss, or have you come across many deaf children in your work? I don't have any experience myself, but I do look after the occasional patient who has hearing impairment. For a child growing up, being hard of hearing can impact on so many aspects of their lives (for example the development of speech) so it's important that we identify and deal with any issues as soon as possible.

When you were a contestant on *Strictly Come Dancing*, you used some sign language to promote inclusivity, which was lovely. What inspired you to do this and how important do you think it is that deaf people have the same access to entertainment that hearing people have? I loved my experience on *Strictly*, and I wanted everyone at home to experience some of that joy, regardless of their ability.

I was actually inspired by some people on Twitter (@signinschool and @makatonyou) who taught me some of the signs we used! Anything that we can do to make people feel included, especially those who have additional needs, is really important – and small signs can mean so much. The reaction we got from the community was wonderful!

Many of the deaf people we help have experienced isolation due to the barriers they often face. As a doctor, what do you think the negative impacts of isolation can be on people? Isolation affects both your mental and physical health. Having contact with others, especially social contact, is obviously good in terms of maintaining our mental wellbeing. A simple smile and hello can go a long way! However, many don't realise that loneliness and isolation can put you at risk of medical problems too (for example heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure). I think we all have a huge challenge as a society to address this – especially during the pandemic when many people have had reduced contact with others.

You've done some work in promoting the positive benefits of dogs when it comes to mental health. What are your favourite things about dogs? Dogs love you no matter what. They are wonderful

companions and a lifeline for many people, whether they have additional needs or not. They have a hugely positive effect on people's mental health, and taking them out for walks is great for physical health too.

Do you have a favourite breed or type of dog? I love little dogs! I'm a huge fan of French bulldogs!

Have you ever had any problems with your hearing? I've been very lucky not to have any real issues. I did struggle with my hearing in one ear after a particularly bad cold once and couldn't hear properly for days. It was really hard to get used to.

How important do you think it is for people to look after their hearing? It's massively important. We take it for granted, but having good hearing makes life so much easier and means you're automatically included. Also as more of us use personal headphones than ever before, we need to be mindful of excessive sound levels on our ears.

We have heard that during the Coronavirus crisis, you supported the NHS in your role as a paediatric emergency medicine specialist. How did you find this experience? Fortunately, Coronavirus had a much lower impact on children than expected. However, it had a devastating effect on older populations, especially those with long-term medical problems, so many of us had to change the way we worked. Many NHS staff were redeployed to other areas, where the pressure was higher, to help out. It was amazing to see how everyone came together in such a difficult time.

“Dogs love you no matter what. They are wonderful companions and a lifeline for many people, whether they have additional needs or not.”

Close-up with...

→ DR RANJ SINGH

Dr Ranj Singh is a NHS paediatrician and one of the resident doctors on ITV's This Morning. He also co-created the BAFTA-award-winning CBeebies series Get Well Soon and co-presents ITV's prime-time shows Dr Ranj: On Call and Save Money Lose Weight.

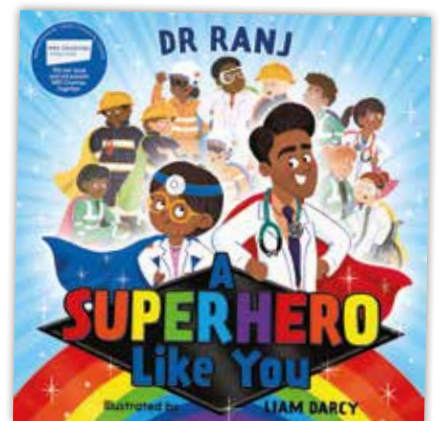
Ranj was a hugely popular contestant on 2018's Strictly Come Dancing. Off-air, his work can be found in numerous magazines and on websites where he gives expert opinion and advice on a range of physical and mental health matters. His latest children's book – A Superhero Like You – is a celebration of keyworkers and publishes in November 2020.

What has your experience of the Coronavirus lockdown been like? It's been good and bad I suppose. I've enjoyed things slowing down and being able to do things that I've not had time to do before. It's helped me connect with people and check in on them in new ways. However, I do miss the social aspects – and the hugs!

Do you have any tips for looking after yourself (both physically and mentally) during particularly anxious and difficult times like this? Take each day as it comes and don't be too hard on yourself if every day isn't great. We've never been in a situation like this before and we're all

learning. Make sure you have an everyday routine. Try to get a bit of physical activity in, connect with others in a safe way, look after your sleeping habits, and be careful how much you look at social media.

Tell us about what you're up to at the moment. I work part-time in the NHS, and in the media the rest of the time. I've also written a children's book called A Superhero Like You which celebrates all of the key and front line workers who keep us safe and try to make the world a better place. It was inspired by everything that has been happening during the pandemic and how amazing people can be. 🐾



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