

# Favour

Issue 63  
SPRING  
2021  
£1.75 when sold

The magazine from Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

## Laptops and face masks

The unexpected  
lessons we're teaching  
our pups

## PLUS

Catch up with clever  
sponsor dog Juno

Living with a language  
processing disorder

How mobile apps can  
help with communication



### Volunteering

"It's literally the  
best thing I've  
ever done"

“A huge  
thank you”

How you have helped us continue  
changing deaf people's lives

# The UK's No.1 high street provider of **hearing aids**

Ask about a free hearing test

For more information or to book a free hearing check  
call 0808 143 1143 or visit [specsavers.co.uk/hearing](https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing)



Based on number of stores. Ask in store for details. ©2018 Specsavers. All rights reserved.

## 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](https://shop.hearinglink.org)**



Terms apply. Postage and Packing is charged extra. Visit [shop.hearinglink.org](https://shop.hearinglink.org) for further details.



# Contents



Spring 2021



## LASTING LEGACY

How a gift in your Will can change a life, page 22

## Welcome!



We hope this issue will add a little sunshine to your day. It comes with our thanks for the wonderful support you continue to give us. On page 22 Sam describes how much she values her hearing dog Oscar, "an amazing gift made by someone in their Will". Read more about how we've overcome the challenges of the pandemic to continue our dog training and helping deaf people on page 10. Elsewhere, discover how hearing dog Clay has helped

Philip Downs rebuild his shattered life, and how you can sponsor a pup to help create more vital partnerships on page 15. Finally, 'paws' for a cuppa with Pam on page 26. Enjoy the issue.

Gill Lacey Editor

## Regulars

### 04 Newshound

Our thanks, appeal updates, hearing loss services, sound bites and more

### 08 Overcoming loneliness

Philip's moving story and how hearing dog Clay has helped him rebuild his shattered life

### 10 Training our dogs

How we're adapting to lockdown rules and giving our dogs transferrable skills

### 16 Fundraising

Learn how our corporate partners and fundraisers are helping Hearing Dogs

### 24 Ask the experts

Our expert answers your communication and dog-related questions

### 26 Paws for coffee

Actress Pam St Clement on dogs, lockdowns and her fantasy dog walk companion

## Features

### 12 Lockdown partnerships

Meet three people whose lives have been transformed by their new hearing dogs

### 14 Puppy sponsorship

Lee Walker tells us why he's all smiles thanks to sponsor pup graduate Juno

### 18 Awareness

Living with a language processing disorder (LPD) and how hearing dog Alvin makes Trinity's life easier

### 20 Volunteering spotlight

Zoe Simmons on what inspires her and makes being a volunteer dog trainer so worthwhile

### 22 Lasting legacy

The special bond between Sam Pugh and Oscar, who was funded by a gift in a Will

## 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 Sam and Oscar 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 joevernden.com

**NEXT ISSUE**  
Look out for the  
next issue in  
Autumn 2021

# Newshound

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



SUPPORT

## Thank you for helping deaf people

Against a backdrop of lockdowns and social distancing, 2020 highlighted more than ever before just how important our hearing dogs and other personalised services are, as well as how valuable this support is to deaf people

**T**he coronavirus crisis prompted a record number of enquiries for hearing dogs, as deaf people looked for help to reconnect with the world around them. We also saw a spike in demand for our other services. It was unparalleled in our 39-year history. We remain committed to helping as many of these people as we can for as long as they need. We can only do this with your kind support.

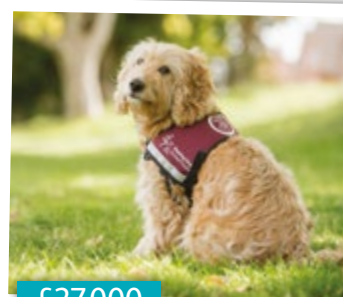
The pandemic and all that goes with it has meant many changes to the way we work, both for our volunteers looking after and training our pups, and for our hearing dog partnerships new and old.

You've been with us every step of the way. We've seen some truly heroic efforts from supporters like: Harro Dorsch from Cheshire – already a volunteer puppy trainer, Harro took on the virtual London Marathon to raise over £2,000 for Hearing Dogs as well as becoming a virtual speaker, giving talks to clubs and groups meeting online. Gemma Bean and her son Ethan, who walked a mile every day of February and posted us a cheque for over £1,200. Gemma Higgins and her son Alex, who raised over £480 undertaking a different challenge every day of February, from baking cupcakes and making

pancakes, to a 28-minute silence and 28-minute dance off. Or Maxine Clare and Joanne Price-Moxom, who posted a series of 'squares' games on Facebook to raise £680.

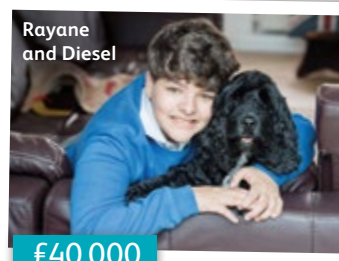
Whether you donate to Hearing Dogs, give your time as a volunteer, sponsor a hearing dog puppy, have pledged to leave a gift in your Will, are one of our corporate partners or major donors, or follow us on social media, your support means we can continue transforming the lives of deaf people now, and long into the future. So, a huge thank you to you all from all of us at Hearing Dogs.

### APPEAL UPDATES



£27,000

**THANK YOU** for supporting our appeal in the autumn 2020 issue of *Favour*. Today our hearing dogs are needed more than ever. By donating to this appeal you've helped to raise £27,000 towards the training and partnership of more hearing dogs, to help deaf people escape isolation and leave loneliness behind.



£40,000

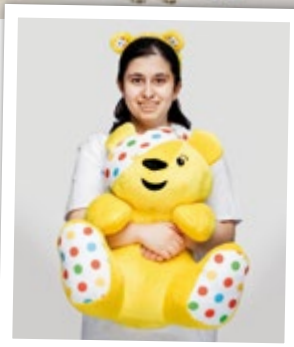
**OUR CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2020** was very special and told the story of Rayane, a young deaf boy who wrote a letter to Santa asking him to give another deaf child a hearing dog – so their life could be changed just as Rayane's was when he got Diesel.





## CHALLENGE

# Hearing Dogs features on BBC Children in Need



If you tuned in to BBC One during October or November last year, there's a good chance you'll have seen Hearing Dogs as part of the BBC's *Children in Need* coverage.

In the latter part of 2020, the BBC told the stories of some of Hearing Dogs' child partnerships as part of its BBC *Children in Need* programming, to show the difference that Children in Need funding makes.

This included the story of 16-year-old Sarah Kazendeh and Waffle, her hearing dog of nine years, who took part in *The One Show*'s popular Rickshaw Challenge. And, in a special episode of BBC *Countryfile*, the story of 12-year-old Rayane and his hearing dog Diesel.

Hearing Dogs also featured in a special animation that was created by the BBC for Children in Need. This was played regularly in between programmes in the weeks leading up to the main appeal programme, bringing further attention to the Charity.

Talking about her experience, Sarah credits hearing dog Waffle for giving her the confidence to take on this mammoth challenge. She

explains: "I found life very difficult before I met Waffle. I felt isolated and lonely, but Waffle completely changed my life and I feel so lucky to have her."

"Taking on something like the Rickshaw Challenge is something I would have never dreamed of doing before I met Waffle, but now I know that I can do this. I hope that my story helps to inspire other young people like me."

The Rickshaw Challenge very nearly didn't happen. Thanks to Matt Baker and the incredible Team Rickshaw, the event was relocated to Goodwood Racecourse. Then, when the coronavirus pandemic threatened to call a halt to the challenge completely, they adapted yet again by providing everyone taking part with an exercise bike so they could complete the challenge from home.

The Children in Need Appeal 2020 raised a record amount and continues to provide important funding for charities like Hearing Dogs that make a difference to children's lives. Thank you to everyone who helped make the event a success and allowed our children to shine.

## WHY SHOP VIA AMAZONSMILE?

In a recent three-month period we received £1,063.25 from AmazonSmile all at no additional cost to the shopper. So thank you to everyone who shopped via AmazonSmile and selected Hearing Dogs as your preferred charity. Next time you shop on Amazon, if you log in through AmazonSmile ([smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk)) instead of the main Amazon site, you can instruct Amazon to make a donation to Hearing Dogs every time you buy. There's also an AmazonSmile app available on both iOS and Android devices. It's as easy as one, two, three:

1. Sign up to AmazonSmile via your web browser
2. Open the latest version of the Amazon shopping app
3. Go to the main menu, find 'Settings', and tap 'AmazonSmile'.

[smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk)

## PM'S POINTS OF LIGHT AWARD

INSPIRED BY CAPTAIN SIR TOM MOORE, 97-year-old Grace 'Pip' Know, from Wrexham, completed a sponsored walk of over 10 miles with her hearing dog Amy, raising thousands of pounds for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.

In a personal letter to Pip, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: "Congratulations on completing your fundraising walk with your hearing dog Amy!"

"As you have drawn comfort and companionship from Amy during this pandemic, your fundraising will allow others to have the gift of a hearing dog. You have covered a considerable distance, all while raising thousands of pounds for a brilliant cause in Hearing Dogs for Deaf People."

Pip says: "I cannot believe it's happened to me. My hearing dog, Amy, is an important and essential part of my life. I'm truly honoured to accept this award and the recognition it brings to Hearing Dogs for Deaf People."

Read more about Pip on page 17.

STAY IN TOUCH: [twitter.com/hearingdogs](https://twitter.com/hearingdogs) [facebook.com/hearingdogs](https://facebook.com/hearingdogs) [hearingdogs.org.uk](https://hearingdogs.org.uk)



SERVICES

# Helping people who lipread prepare for vaccination appointments

**Our Hearing Link Services team at Hearing Dogs has been helping people who rely on lipreading to prepare for their vaccination appointments, providing them with free deaf awareness products and guidance**

Since the wearing of masks became mandatory and the vaccination programme began, we have given away more than 700 badges printed with messages to alert nurses and volunteers at vaccination centres that the wearer has specific communication needs. Many find that wearing one of these badges can help make the experience of facing someone wearing a mask slightly less worrying. We also released online guidance to help people who are deaf or who have hearing loss to prepare for vaccination appointments in other ways.

While face coverings are an important precaution to help reduce the spread of coronavirus, they have the unintended consequence of making communication incredibly difficult for people who lipread. Vaccination appointments can make anyone feel anxious, and people who lipread have to face the additional concern that they may not understand what someone's saying. People with hearing loss also say their level of anxiety increases when in an unknown environment.

This latest deaf awareness giveaway and guidance adds to the help we've been able to give thousands of people

with hearing loss through our previous product giveaways when face coverings first became mandatory, as well as the 1,000 people we've supported via our online Hearing Link shop that's now open again, following a pause in trading caused by the pandemic.

Angie Platten, our director of hearing loss services, says: "Communication for those who rely on lipreading can be difficult at the best of times, but during the pandemic we've witnessed an increase in communication barriers due to mandatory face masks and face coverings, but we're working hard to help make things easier for people."

"Our Hearing Link shop has become one of the go-to places for products that alert others to the fact someone is deaf or has a hearing loss. We're delighted to have offered additional free support to so many people with our giveaways, guidance and other hearing loss services."

For all our awareness products please go to: [shop.hearinglink.org](https://shop.hearinglink.org). Turn to page 24 for other solutions such as Chatable, one of the latest apps designed to support communication via your mobile device.

## SOUND BITES



### Tinnitus could be new symptom of long Covid

PEOPLE suffering from the effects of long Covid can have hearing loss for months, a new study has found. Researchers from Anglia Ruskin University looked at the hearing problems affecting Covid-19 patients in the short and longer term.

A total of 3,103 people with tinnitus, from 48 countries, were examined as part of the study. They found Covid-19 symptoms exacerbated tinnitus in 40 per cent of respondents, made no change in 54 per cent and improved the condition in 4 per cent.

Although the study focused on people with pre-existing tinnitus, a small number of participants reported their condition was triggered when they developed coronavirus symptoms. Tinnitus could therefore be a long Covid symptom for some patients. Stress factors such as fear of catching Covid-19, financial concerns, loneliness and trouble sleeping also made tinnitus more bothersome in 32 per cent.

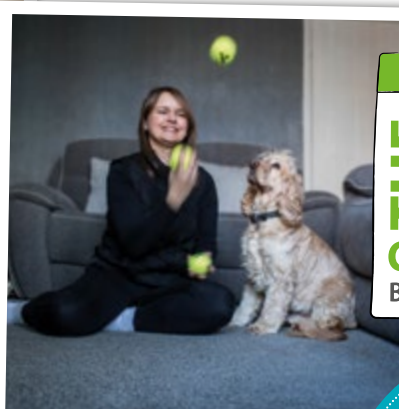
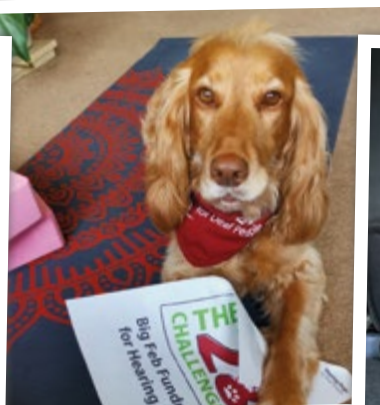
### Can Covid-19 affect your auditory health?

We're keeping a close eye on reports of a potential link between Covid-19 and hearing loss – some of which have been based on a small sample size or are complicated by patients simultaneously presenting with other conditions. In theory, Covid-19 could cause problems with parts of the auditory system – just as other viral conditions are known to affect the hearing and/or balance system – but a definitive conclusion isn't currently available. We're in touch with academic institutions looking into this and when the results become clear and their outcomes are published, we'll try to share them.

For those who have hearing loss or tinnitus we're here to help as always. Visit [hearinglink.org/helpdesk](https://hearinglink.org/helpdesk) for free advice and support.



FUNDRAISING



For more ways to help go to: [hearingdogs.org.uk/support](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/support)

## The 28 Challenge raises over £50,000

Our February fundraiser has exceeded all expectations, with people of all ages taking part

To offer people a fun focus during a long period of lockdown, we asked supporters to set up a challenge at any point during February that involved the number 28. This could be baking and selling 28 cakes, running 28 miles, holding a 28-hour sponsored silence or even getting 28 paw shakes from your dog – people could be as creative as they liked.

Over 650 people signed up to undertake

their personal 28 Challenge, and nearly 3,000 kind people donated in response.

Gill Yeates, our head of community fundraising, says: “We’ve been blown away by the enthusiasm for The 28 Challenge. Each and every person who took part or donated is directly helping to change the lives of deaf people. Our supporters are a fabulous, creative group and we couldn’t be more grateful – thank

you. We couldn’t believe how inventive people were. We had one person challenge themselves not to sit down for 28 days, a young man who wrote 28 letters to friends and family during February, people who taught their dogs 28 tricks, as well as so many other brilliant challenges, and every one raising money to change the lives of deaf people.”

[hearingdogs.org.uk/support](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/support)

### VOLUNTEERING

## Volunteering milestone – a reason to celebrate in 2020

Shining the spotlight on one of our exceptional volunteers every month helps us highlight the incredible contribution made by more than 3,000 people that make up our volunteering family. Head of volunteering, Victoria Leedham, explains: “Our Volunteer of the Month accolade is awarded for exemplary long service, an outstanding achievement or consistently going the extra mile to support Hearing Dogs, special people who live and breathe the Charity’s values.

“Last year was without question a challenge for all of us. But 2020 was also a year when those small acts of kindness, that so often fly under the radar, were celebrated alongside the courage and heroism of individuals such as Captain Sir Tom Moore. Perfect timing therefore to be celebrating a wonderful volunteering

milestone for Hearing Dogs. So it was our absolute privilege to name Mary Wiles our 100th Volunteer of the Month last year.

“Mary has quietly and consistently gone above and beyond to support the charity she loves for more than 10 years. She has trained nearly 20 puppies to become qualified hearing dogs, and the Milton Keynes Fundraising Group, where Mary has been secretary since 2010, has raised an outstanding £200,000 to support our cause.

Chief executive Michele Jennings adds: “The Charity’s values are kindness, professionalism and courage, and we hold these values in our heads and our hearts. Mary is the manifestation of these values. Above all, she is incredibly kind. She cares for our dogs with professionalism and love, knowing they will have an important role for the people we exist to help. And



her courage in taking on so much for the Charity when she’s had so many challenges has been breathtaking. I’ve admired Mary immensely for many years and feel so grateful she chose to volunteer for us.

“It’s important to us that every one of our volunteers feels valued. We appreciate every second of your kindness. So, thank you.”

STAY IN TOUCH: [twitter.com/hearingdogs](https://twitter.com/hearingdogs) [facebook.com/hearingdogs](https://facebook.com/hearingdogs) [hearingdogs.org.uk](https://hearingdogs.org.uk)



# “CLAY’S THE ONE WHO PUT ME BACK TOGETHER”

When Philip Downs’ 20-year marriage ended it shattered his world. Fragile and lonely, he realised for the first time just how much he relied on the support of someone else

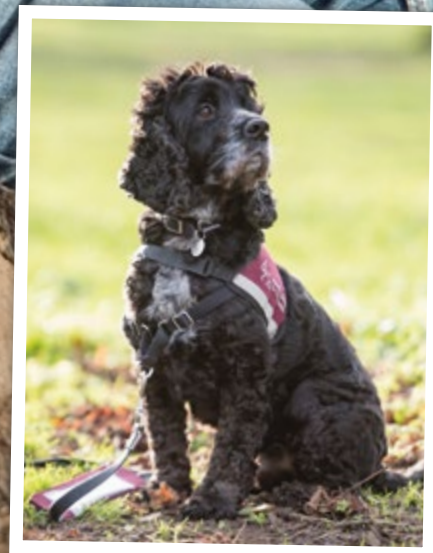


Photo: Paul Wilkinson





**T**here were so many things I just took for granted during my marriage. My wife had been my ears, she'd help with communication, those little things day to day that you don't appreciate until they're gone. When you're deaf and there's no one beside you to help you overcome the everyday challenges of hearing loss, you feel invisible. I was 48 years old when my marriage ended. I felt broken. I didn't know how I would cope.

"I've been deaf since I was six. I had mumps and it affected my nerves. I went from hearing to deaf almost overnight. It was a tremendous shock. I struggled to cope with it.

"I became a terrible teenager. My mum did her best but I left school with no qualifications to get a decent job. I bumped along at the bottom until I discovered horticulture and went to college. The college was brilliant. I loved it. They believed in me, and that made all the difference. I worked hard and became Student of the Year. I'm so grateful for that.

"Despite getting a qualification in horticulture, hearing loss continued to hold me back. It restricted everything I did, every course, every application, every interview, every job. Often they'd cite health and safety reasons as I couldn't hear warning bleeps, and once I lost my job because I'd failed to hear the burglar alarm. When my marriage fell apart, I felt broken. Shattered.

"But then my hearing dog Clay came into my life, and he put me back together again. Where deafness pulled me down, Clay pulled me right back up.

"From the moment I met Clay I knew straight away he was meant for me. I love dogs. We had one when I was a child,

around the time I lost my hearing, and he was the greatest comfort to me – especially when my father died. I feel like he has come back to me in a different life through Clay.

"Having Clay has made a huge difference to people's awareness of my deafness and I can't put into words the value of that to me. Yes, Clay alerts me to important sounds like the smoke alarm and does all the things that hearing dogs are trained to do, but there's so much more. The biggest thing, the most reassuring thing I find, is the awareness he offers.

## "I FELT ALONE, INSIDE A SILENT BUBBLE"

"Having Clay beside me with his official Hearing Dogs coat on is a constant reminder to people that I'm deaf. I was in hospital outpatients recently, waiting for my turn, and realised I don't feel on edge anymore wondering if I have missed them calling my name. Clay makes my deafness visible but in the most reassuring way.

"People know me now because of my hearing dog. They see him and are more considerate. He makes it easier for me to do everything and I really value him for this.

"Clay also makes life more enjoyable. I was in quite a dark place before. You are when you have depression. I'd walk around with a smile on my face, but people didn't realise the emotions going on behind my smile. I felt very fragile. I'd have panic attacks, lack of sleep. I felt on the edge. I was also very lonely.

"I didn't want to go out because it always ended up being awkward and

with people thinking I was strange. I just wanted to hide myself away and it was affecting my whole life. It's a dark and lonely world on your own with only 20 per cent hearing. You're alone inside this silent bubble. A hearing dog breaks that bubble and changes people. Clay changed me. I'm a different person, a better person for Clay.

"Clay has been with me for five years now and, despite the pandemic, he makes the whole world seem more rosy. Lockdowns would have been horrendous without Clay. I would have found it very, very stressful and I'm not sure I'd have got through it without him. Clay makes everything in life more enjoyable and more bearable.

"A lot of us are under stress at the moment. As a deaf person that feeling of isolation is familiar, but mask wearing makes it harder than ever to connect with people. I rely on lipreading and because of that I'm used to looking at the bottom part of the face. When someone's nose and mouth are covered by a mask it means you can't lipread, but also I just don't recognise them anymore. It makes the isolation worse.

"Clay transforms my world and my ability to cope with life. I'd be like a hermit without him. He allows me to live more than a normal life and that's magic. Before Clay I felt fragile. My life was shattered, and it was hard to hold the pieces together. Clay has helped me function again, to feel strong. Life without a hearing dog by my side? Well, I don't know how I'd cope to be honest. Clay's the one who put me back together and I can't imagine life without him." 🐾

## HELP TRAIN MORE DOGS

🐾 Please consider donating to Hearing Dogs to help us train a hearing dog for another deaf person like Philip. 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/philip](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/philip)

# WHY WE'RE TEACHING OUR DOGS ABOUT MASKS AND LAPTOPS



How we've adapted to navigate the challenges of lockdowns and tier systems, to enable the training of our hearing dogs to continue smoothly. Dog training instructor Ruth Turner explains

**O**ur hearing dog pups begin learning about life and the world around them from the very moment they're born, first from mum and their siblings, then from the people in their lives along with the experiences they have. This continues throughout a dog's life and is carefully monitored by our skilled team of dog trainers.

Since the pandemic the world has changed. Human interaction commonly takes place on virtual platforms, and our new normal involves mask wearing, hand washing and space. Even the way we greet people has changed; it feels unnatural because we're tactile, sociable beings – but so are our dogs. Consider then how strange and unsettling these new behaviours may seem to a dog. Just as people with hearing loss rely on reading lips and facial expressions, dogs also rely on our facial expressions to understand how we feel, as well as listening to our words and tone of voice.

## Dogs and masks

With masks still mandatory in many places, seeing people wearing them can be an everyday occurrence for a hearing dog and his deaf partner. That's why getting our pups used to this early on is so important. Getting used to something early in your life makes it feel completely normal.

It's really important that our dogs feel totally comfortable around whatever they experience, and with masks now commonplace, we had to adapt our training to include them. We already do a lot of work to familiarise our pups to the sights and sounds of people wearing unusual clothing and accessories; colourful high vis coats, floaty fabrics, big hats, sunglasses, walking sticks, umbrellas etc. Getting them used to the sight of people wearing different kinds of masks and PPE is effectively an extension of this training.

## Dogs and laptops

Everyday life has changed so much over

the past year and our staff, volunteers and partnerships are now doing much of their training and learning virtually – including puppy training classes. With so much of our





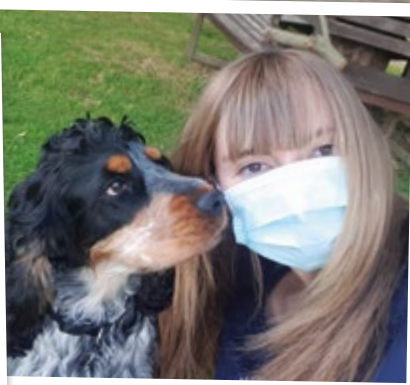
## HOW WE FAMILIARISE PUPS WITH FACE MASKS

While transparent masks can allow deaf people to lipread, our pups and dogs need to learn about all the different types of masks. Here's how they do it.

🐾 The trainer starts slowly and gently, allowing the dog to investigate the new object (mask) in their own time. A puppy will instinctively use all their senses to explore something new.

🐾 Curiosity draws them towards it and they're rewarded with a treat for looking at it, sniffing it or touching it. They feel reassured and their confidence grows.

🐾 The next step involves the trainer picking up the mask and holding it up to their face and then putting it on. Observing the dog allows them to reward positive behaviours or soften any negative reactions by going back a step, adapting to the situation and then moving on more slowly. Rewarding the dog when they are quietly curious or ignoring the mask will help them start to feel good about it.



work and social lives taking place online, it has become essential for every dog to feel relaxed, and happy to settle while their human is paying attention to a screen.

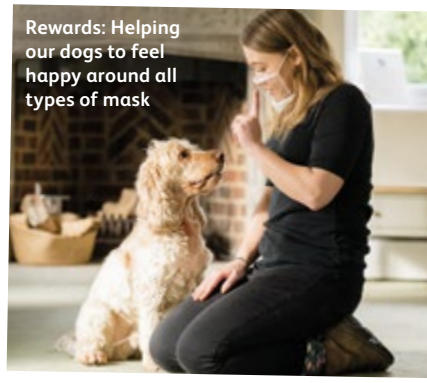
Training a dog to settle was already an important part of training a hearing dog pup – a working hearing dog would often

need to settle while their deaf partner's attention is focussed elsewhere – sitting at a café table or travelling on public transport, for example. However, learning to settle while their human is focussed on a screen is now our primary focus when teaching our pups to settle. This is a direct response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Using a gentle step by step process, we're able to teach even very young pups that waiting nicely next to a laptop is the right decision to make, because they can get lots of fuss and treats for doing a good job. As well as being useful when someone is working on a laptop, settling is a skill these pups will carry forward into many everyday situations, such as queuing in the supermarket or stopping to talk to a friend. Essentially it's all about giving our pups transferrable skills. 🐾



Rewards: Helping our dogs to feel happy around all types of mask



# Creating partnerships in a pandemic



When the coronavirus pandemic changed the way we work, we had to find another way to bring new hearing dog partnerships together. But how would we do this successfully from a distance?

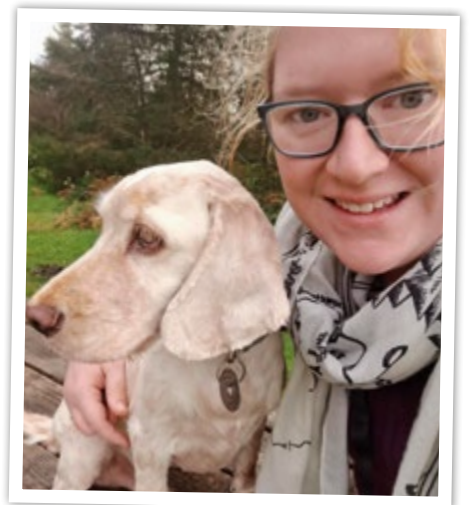
**W**hen lockdowns and social distancing called a halt to our planned partnership programme, those waiting for their hearing dogs were already feeling isolated because of their deafness. We were concerned that for some, the added isolation of lockdown without a dog could be overwhelming. Now more than ever we wanted to give them the companionship, security and support of their hearing dog.

To comply with government rules we established a new way of doing things. Called the companion starter plan (CSP), it involves handing over our fully-trained hearing dogs contact-free to their new deaf partners and allowing the dogs time to settle into their new homes simply as companions, with no expectation to work. This offers them that all-important 'getting to know you' period that would normally have taken place in residence at one of our training centres.

With face-to-face training and support in the home currently not possible we now offer support by way of regular video calls, text and email from the dog's trainer and a dedicated partnership instructor. When the partnership is ready, training and soundwork practice begins, so that the dog continues being highly skilled at alerting to important sounds.

Our experience of working with partnerships in this new way has been very positive. Allowing them this gentle introduction as companions, without any other pressure, allows the relationship to grow naturally. Creating partnerships in a pandemic is not easy but the companion starter plan has been incredibly important in allowing us a way forward. We've continued to successfully bring together hearing dogs and deaf people at one of the most isolating and challenging periods in our history, and we're super proud of everyone involved. Here are just a few of these happy partnerships.

**“ AT A TIME WHEN MASKS MADE THE WORLD EVEN LESS ACCESSIBLE, LINCOLN HAS GIVEN ME CONFIDENCE ”**



## ELLA AND LINCOLN

Ella Waude Ryan (30) and her new hearing dog Lincoln were able to begin their partnership in June 2020 thanks to our new companion starter plan. Their bond grew quickly and they were soon ready to venture out together, with Lincoln proudly wearing his hearing dog uniform. Ella says: “At a time when masks made the world even less accessible, Lincoln has given me confidence. He’s a constant companion to me and my son, the three of us love exploring our area together. We’ve so much to look forward to now – all of us together as a family.”



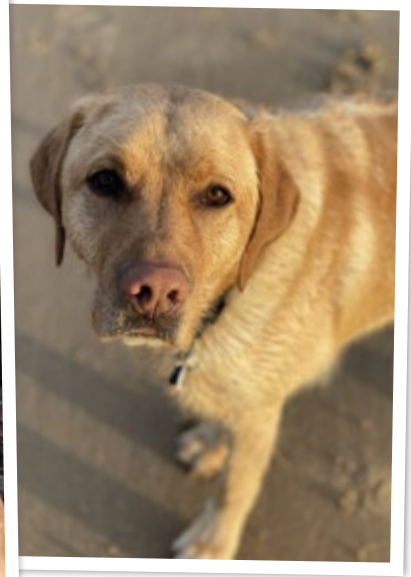
### MATTHEW AND OAKLEY

**Matthew James and hearing dog Oakley were one of the first partnerships brought together under our companion starter plan.**

Matthew lost his hearing after contracting meningitis at the age of five. Now 54, Matthew works for the NHS in North Shields, Tyne & Wear, as Regional Head of Equality and Inclusion. He says: "I'd been waiting a very long time for a new dog after losing Merry, who had been my hearing dog for eight years and came everywhere with me. When Merry passed away at the age of 10, I missed him greatly but I didn't feel ready for another dog straight away. That was four years ago. So when I was offered Oakley, I was more than ready for my new partner."

"I had my overnight meet with Oakley the weekend before lockdown and was looking forward to my week at the training centre when I heard it had all been cancelled. I was really upset. Due to the pandemic I began working from home and found it quite isolating. Then Oakley's trainer, Hollie, got in touch to ask if I was available in June, so our partnership could go ahead using a combination of remote support and distance training online. Despite life, work, indeed the whole world being very different, I was excited to be given this opportunity."

"Training with Oakley has been a very different experience to training with Merry, and although that was 12 years ago that



knowledge gave me confidence. I think this helped Oakley settle in with me after his trainer handed him over at my home.

"I really liked having Oakley with me for a few weeks before we started induction training with our partnership instructor Emma. It gave us a chance to really get to know each other. Everything was less pressured, so I felt more relaxed."

"The Hearing Dogs staff were brilliant in guiding me through using their video platform. I communicated daily with Oakley's trainer Hollie for the first week, and then several times a week throughout

the plan, using a combination of email, text and video calls."

"I've had Oakley for nine months now and couldn't be without him. Working for the NHS on the Covid programme I have an almost impossible number of back-to-back planning meetings. Oakley is a wonderful, constant companion to get me through these long days. He tells me when it's time to take a break and helps me unwind at the end of the day. There's nothing more enjoyable than taking Oakley for a long walk after work and watching the sunset with my best friend."



### FAYE AND PUZZLE

"I can't believe I've had Puzzle for nine months! Being without a hearing dog for such a while I noticed the impact it had on my life and how much I'd relied on my previous hearing dog without realising. Puzzle has been the perfect match not only for myself but for my whole family and we all appreciate and love her so much. Sounds in the house had become so difficult for me, with the pandemic I was always missing deliveries, and it was very frustrating. My 11-year-old son Josh often told me if the doorbell rang or the fire-alarm had gone off, but this caused him a lot of anxiety, worrying that if he was out of the house, I wouldn't hear them. Getting matched with Puzzle was incredible and took a lot of weight off everyone's shoulders."

"I can't imagine being without Puzzle. She's just the best dog ever. The other day my fire alarm kept going off as the

batteries had run out. Puzzle was fantastic and kept alerting me until I managed to get it to stop."

"She is very tuned into the whole family. My daughter Enya (5) sings to Puzzle, and she loves it, she will lie and have her belly rubbed listening to Enya sing songs to her. They are very close."

Puzzle is really tuned in to my son Josh too, he is currently awaiting screening for autism. When he becomes very anxious, Puzzle lies across him and this seems to calm him down. He adores her. Not only does she work for me with her sounds she also seems to have an instinct to go to Josh when he is stressed and worried to give him cuddles. After lots of hard days with Josh and the changes of life with a pandemic, for me to just sit down and snuggle with Puzzle is the best, it's so therapeutic and always makes me feel better." 🐾



# “Every day Juno makes me smile”

**TO ALL  
OUR PUPPY  
SPONSORS –  
THANK YOU!**

**Remember sponsor puppy Juno?  
Now all grown up she's the hearing dog of Lee  
Walker. Find out how they helped each other  
through the difficulties of 2020 and how you  
can sponsor another of our cute pups**

**H**ow has Juno changed my life? Honestly beyond all my expectations. It's more of a feeling than something I can put easily into words.

Wherever I go, whatever I do, Juno is always by my side. Even though she can't speak, I have a sense of 'hearing' everything she tells me. This makes me feel safe, reassured and calm.

I was just 10 when I lost my hearing after contracting meningitis. It happened so suddenly that I found it hard to adjust. It caused me a lot of frustration and anger. I was moved to a school for the deaf. It was horrific. My mum fought to get me back into mainstream education and there I thrived. At college I felt included and accepted for the first time.

I decided to apply for a hearing dog after starting work in London. I had moved offices several times and not one had been fitted with a visual fire alarm, so I never felt safe. Sharing my life with Juno has changed that completely; I no longer have that kind of anxiety, because now I know she'll alert me and keep me safe if any alarms go off.

Juno is a typical Cockapoo, lively, loving and full of character, a best friend who alerts me to the doorbell and fire alarms

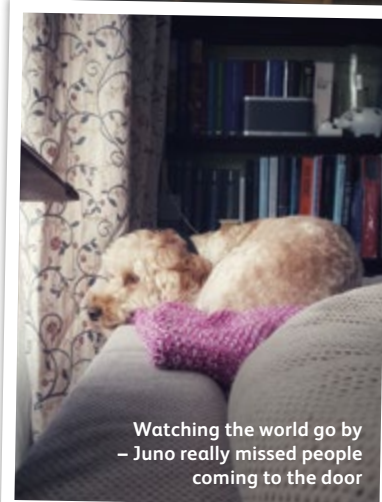
and will happily come and fetch me if my partner Phil asks her to. It's always rewarding working with her and every day Juno makes me smile.

We now live in Leicestershire and throughout 2020 our area was almost constantly under one form of lockdown or another. To be honest I rather enjoyed not going out. It meant I didn't have to deal with the stress of trying to understand people. Growing up with hearing loss I'd got used to spending a lot of time by myself. The isolation of lockdown at home felt much the same. Being out walking, however, felt very different. Juno, usually calm and attentive, sensed my anxiety whenever we left the house. Some days our public parks were so busy I just didn't feel safe, so we'd turn around and go home. We kept Juno exercised in the garden by throwing tennis balls for her. She didn't mind, she loves a game of fetch as much as a walk – if not more!

Juno got used to seeing people in masks because Phil and I had started wearing them before it became compulsory. Communication by lipreading is no longer possible, but if someone speaks to me, I find the 'Live Transcribe' app on my phone works a treat. Also having Juno there in her burgundy Hearing Dogs coat makes my



Working from home



Watching the world go by  
– Juno really missed people  
coming to the door



## Shake paws with...



### JUNO

- 🐾 **Favourite treat?** Cheese
- 🐾 **Loves?** Tennis balls and belly rubs
- 🐾 **Hates?** Anything that rattles or clatters. And car journeys – unless one of my dads sits in the back with me
- 🐾 **Favourite walk?** Tarn Hows in the Lake District
- 🐾 **Likes to sleep?** Close to my dad at the bottom of the bed with my teddy
- 🐾 **Favourite game?** Any game that involves a tennis ball
- 🐾 **Is best friends with?** Hearing dog Arlo
- 🐾 **Something cheeky about me?** I once stole two bread buns from the kitchen worktop!

Photo: Paul Wilkinson

deafness visible, so people are pre-warned and are more inclined to be understanding.

Juno loves alerting me to the doorbell. During lockdown, with no one coming to the door, Juno missed it. To give her some practice and cheer her up, Phil would try sneaking out the back door and tiptoeing round to ring the front doorbell, but it just

wasn't the same. Happily, when lockdowns ease she bounces right back. Although I'm not sure whether it's the thrill of having visitors again, or the tasty chicken rewards she gets when the doorbell rings!

Working from home means Juno happily settles in her bed next to my desk and chews on her toys or falls asleep. When she

decides I've done enough, she'll give me a gentle nudge to ask if she can sit on my lap. She stares at me with that adorable face and I melt.

Juno is adorable and makes everything feel OK, even during the hardest of times. 🐾

**Follow Juno's story on Instagram**  
@junothehearingdog

➔ **Find out more** Find more information about sponsoring our puppies at [hearingdogs.org.uk/sponsor](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/sponsor)



## SPONSOR A PUPPY TODAY

Juno has transformed Lee's life, and this was made possible because of the kindness of sponsors who supported Juno's training. From just £3 a month, you could help another deaf person to leave loneliness behind by sponsoring cute Cocker Spaniel Josie, cuddly Cockapoo Charlie or lovely Lab Luna – 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. [hearingdogs.org.uk/sponsor](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/sponsor)

# Fundraising friends

We'd like to say a huge thank you to our supporters, who have stood by us through the challenges of the past year and continue to make a difference to deaf people's lives

**W**e're indebted to the organisations who fundraise and support our work as well as our wonderful volunteers who help us secure new funding for Hearing Dogs from the organisations they have a personal connection with. We simply couldn't do our work without such dedication to our cause.

## WORKPLACE COMMUNITY FUND

Jenny Jones, who is partnered with hearing dog Xander, informed us about a scheme that her employer was running. She was able to make a community bid for funds towards a charity of her choice – and she chose us! Jenny's bid was successful, and the £4,540 funding she secured meant that we were able to purchase portable grooming kits.



## THE SUN READER FUND

One of our dedicated volunteers, Stephen Beal, nominated Hearing Dogs for *The Sun Reader Fund*. We were delighted to be contacted about applying and were

even more delighted when we received a very kind donation of £15,000 towards our work. This donation will enable us to continue training highly skilled hearing dogs, helping deaf people leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life.

## BBC CHILDREN IN NEED




We're very grateful to BBC *Children In Need* (CIN) for their continued support of our work with deaf children. The difference our hearing dogs make to deaf people's lives is tremendous, and this is especially true with our child partnerships. We were thrilled when 16-year-old hearing dog recipient, Sarah Kazendeh, was invited to take part in the CIN Rickshaw Challenge 2020. The impact of our work meant that Sarah had the confidence to accept this extraordinary challenge and open her heart to share what having Waffle means to her. Another young recipient, 12-year-old Rayane, and hearing dog Diesel were featured on the BBC *Countryfile Ramble* for CIN. Rayane says Diesel, who was sponsored by UK Railtours, gives him confidence so he no longer feels shy or lonely.



## JOHN LAING

The John Laing Charitable Trust operates a Make a Difference scheme for retired


## WAYS TO HELP

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

employees, who are encouraged to nominate the charities they volunteer for to receive a grant. We were lucky enough to be nominated by two of our volunteers, resulting in numerous donations totalling over £3,000. We're so appreciative of our volunteers, who not only give their precious time and dedication, but also support us in securing vital funds for our work.



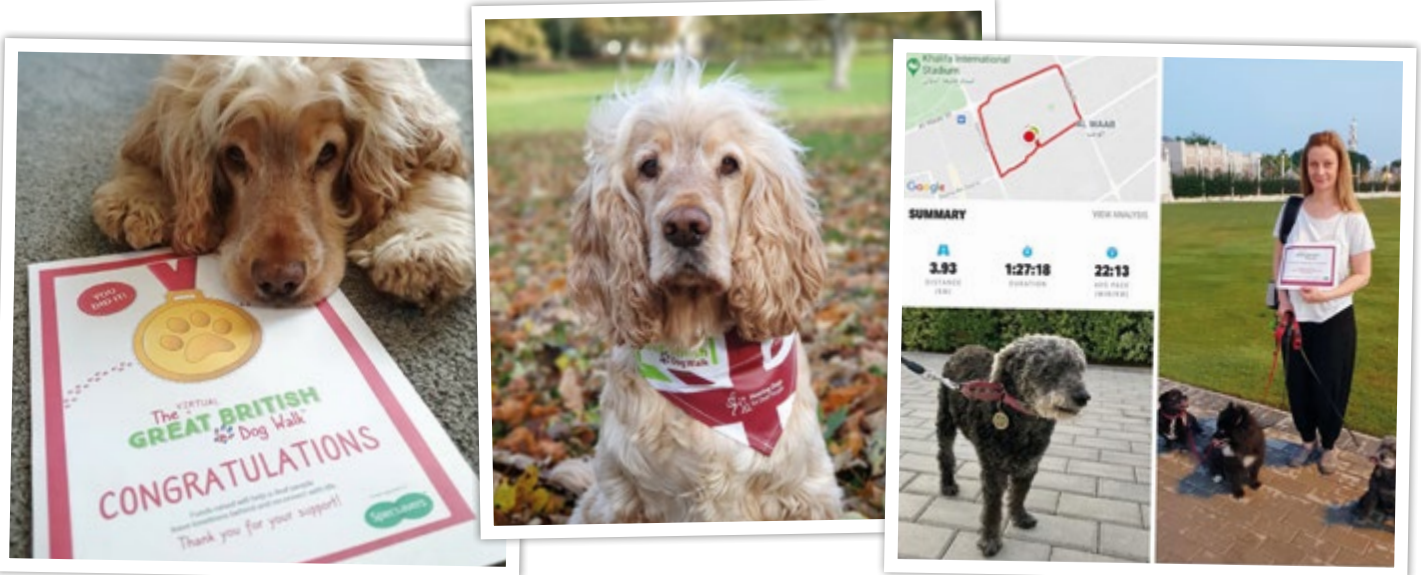
## THANK YOU ALSO TO...

-  Amazon Smile
-  iLECSYS Ltd
-  Mulberry
-  Paperchase
-  Pets at Home
-  Rayovac
-  Specsavers

## Think you can help?

If you know of an organisation that may be able to help us, please do get in touch by emailing [jo.wengler@hearingdogs.org.uk](mailto:jo.wengler@hearingdogs.org.uk) or call Jo on 01844 340740.





Virtual challenge: people and dogs from Buckinghamshire to Qatar took part

## Virtual dog walks go global!

Having to press 'paws' on our popular Great British Dog Walks last year due to the global pandemic was a disappointing time for everyone involved. But such times can also bring out the best in us, as community fundraising manager Rachel Clarke explains:

"With so many people already signed up to support our Great British Dog Walk (GBDW) events, we were determined to find a safe way for this important fundraiser to take place somehow. Putting our heads together we came up with a virtual version of our GBDW, with a dedicated Facebook page for sharing experiences and social interaction. Our Virtual GBDW supported by Specsavers enabled our wonderful supporters to join in from anywhere in the world.

"Over 600 people registered to take part along with their furry friends. To help generate the same community feel and

fun that our live walks are known for, walkers received one of our unique GBDW bandanas for their dog to wear, a link to download an activity pack suggesting fun things to do on their walk and a certificate to award themselves at the finish.

"Walkers chose where, how far and when they would walk. It was a tremendous effort. Together these wonderful people and dogs raised over £23,000, an impressive achievement in these difficult times and we're so grateful for everyone's support.

"Our virtual dog walk gave people an opportunity to connect with others – something that has been hard to achieve for many of us during the pandemic. Little did we know how much this event would mean to those taking part or that walkers would be joining in from as far afield as the Middle East.

"Registering from their home in Qatar, Justine Ormandy and Nadeem Shameem along with their three dogs Alfie, Millie and Cassie completed their 8km walk in their local neighbourhood. Commenting in the Virtual Great British Dog Walk Facebook group, Justine writes: 'We're delighted to join from over here, and all for a great cause. We have enjoyed seeing everyone else's posts and photos. Such a lovely and friendly community on here. We're glad it was virtual, so we were able to join in with everyone. Let's hope we can all do it again sometime.'

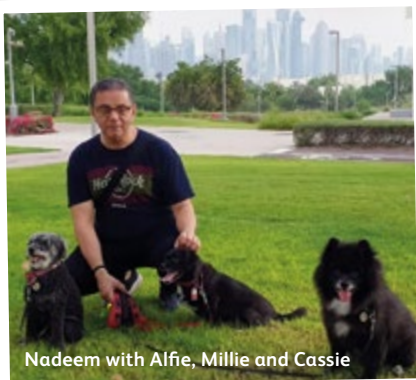
"We hope so too! Do keep a check on our website for announcements of all challenges and events in 2021."

### SPRING INTO ACTION

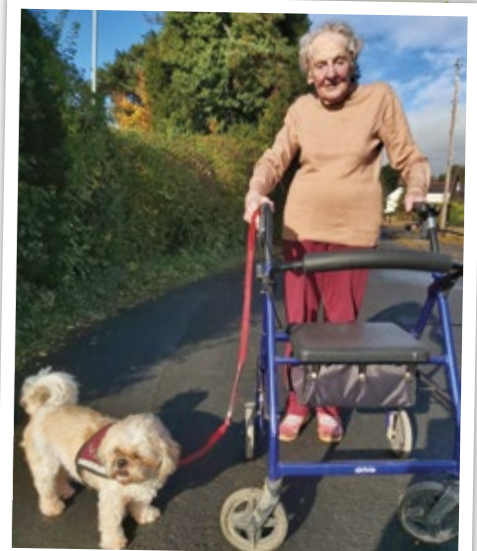
Challenge yourself in 2021 [hearingdogs.org.uk/challenge](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/challenge)  
contact Rachel Clarke on 07769 901291

### YOU'RE AMAZING GRACE

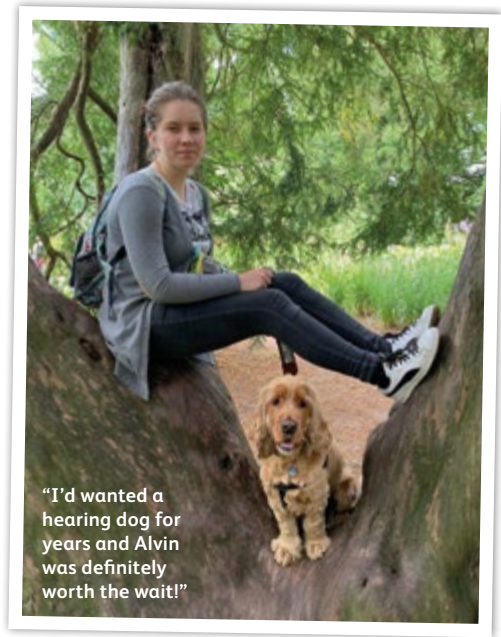
When 97-year-old Grace 'Pip' Know from Wrexham sets her mind to something, there's no stopping her. Pip, who is profoundly deaf and has to use mobility aids, says it was entirely her own idea to join in the virtual Great British Dog Walk with her hearing dog, Amy: "Everyone said I was crazy. But I wanted to do it, to raise money for Hearing Dogs. I rely on Amy every day. I wanted to help others in my position to have a hearing dog. People have been so generous in sponsoring me that we've now raised over £2,400. I'm so pleased. Amy is a life changer. I couldn't be without her. If you ask me, 'What does Amy mean to you?' – I would tell you that she is my LIFE!"



Nadeem with Alfie, Millie and Cassie



# “When I feel frustrated or confused, Alvin calms me down”



What’s it like growing up with a language processing disorder as well as hearing loss? For Trinity Rogers it’s been an enduring struggle, but hearing dog Alvin helps make everything easier

“**A**lvin is my best friend. I know everyone says that but it’s true. He’s my hearing dog, my shadow and my guardian. I feel safe when he is near me. If I feel down, I just need to look at Alvin or stroke him and I instantly feel better.”

No one knows for sure what caused Trinity Rogers’ hearing loss, but it was most likely present from birth. Suffering mild to moderate loss at first, Trinity, now 20, was fitted with hearing aids around the age of two. However, it wasn’t until she was seven that an independent educational assessment revealed that she also has a language processing disorder (LPD).

Trinity explains: “My mum noticed that there was something wrong when I started primary school. Because of my hearing loss I had already been given a Statement of Special Educational Need that listed the support I was entitled to, but I wasn’t making progress and mum instinctively felt there was still something not quite right. She decided to get me a professional assessment with an expert. That’s when

“I WAS BEING BULLIED RELENTLESSLY”

we discovered I had a language processing disorder. My school was not supportive. In fact they refused to recognise it and even questioned the severity of my deafness. This would have a really significant impact on my ability to access education.

“If I’d been given the right support at my primary school my education would not have suffered the way it did. My teachers would regularly refuse to use my support equipment because they were advocates of peer support learning. They kept telling me I should ask my friends to explain if there was anything I didn’t understand. But I didn’t have any friends. In fact, I was being bullied relentlessly. This went on for the whole of my primary school, unfortunately. I was very isolated at that school. My secondary school was completely different. They treated me with respect and really took my deafness and the language processing disorder very seriously. That was a real game-changer.








“Having a language processing disorder basically slows down your understanding of instructions. In education for example I find it harder to take in what I’m being taught. I need extra time, especially in exams, because when I’m under pressure or anxious it makes me work slower. I also misunderstand things really easily because of the choice of words people use, or the way they’ve worded a sentence. That



## Shake paws with...



### ALVIN

-  **Favourite treat?** Puppucunno dog-friendly squirty cream
-  **Loves?** Cuddles
-  **Hates?** Getting wet from the hosepipe
-  **Favourite walk?** National Trust parks like Dunham Massey where there are so many sniffs to enjoy
-  **Likes to sleep?** First thing in the morning on Trinity’s bed – cheeky!
-  **Favourite toy or game?** Anything that involves interaction with ‘hoomans’, and getting fussed
-  **Is best friends with?** Trinity’s dad, aka ‘Daddy Dog’!



makes it harder to process speech and understand the meaning of what I hear.

"Since the Covid-19 restrictions I've been finding online working really tough. Processing language, particularly when you're deaf as well, is mentally exhausting. Even though there are subtitles available through video meeting platforms, it doesn't work as it should. They are not accurate and so they just don't make sense. It's been incredibly stressful. I actually had a big cry recently because I just felt: 'I'm done.'"

"I've had bilateral cochlear implants since I was 13. These were really successful and made an enormous difference to me. But as a deaf person with LPD, I get tired much quicker because I'm always trying to listen and process what's been said or work out what's going on around me. I think that's why getting Alvin was really helpful. Now

he's here I don't have to stress about my safety. I can mentally switch off background noise and focus better on speech because I know Alvin would tell me if there's anything important going on. He also reminds people that I have a hearing loss. People are more patient and understanding when they see Alvin with me. People who thought I was ignoring them before, now know that actually I'm deaf.

"How my LPD affects me depends on a lot of things; the situation, how I'm feeling, whether I'm already tired, also the environment, who I'm with, and what I'm doing.

"I used to get stressed and angry, and it would completely ruin my day. Now when I start feeling frustrated and confused about something, I just stroke Alvin and he calms me right down. Just knowing he's there beside me really does help. Sometimes Alvin will notice I'm starting to feel anxious because I fidget with my nails, so he'll nudge my hands as if to say: 'It's OK, I'm here,' and, as if by magic, this gentle gesture gives me the reassurance I need to feel grounded and safe." 🐾

### ➔ *More real-life stories*

Read more inspirational stories at [hearingdogs.org.uk/stories](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/stories)



Trinity  
with Alvin

### Quick facts

## LANGUAGE PROCESSING DISORDER

Language processing disorders (LPDs) can be expressive: individuals can comprehend language but not use it efficiently when speaking. Or receptive: individuals have difficulty understanding spoken or written language. Individuals with LPDs typically have normal hearing. LPDs differ from auditory processing disorders, in which hearing and interpreting language are affected. The exact cause of LPDs is often unknown and anyone can be affected. Causes could be genetic, developmental or due to various neurological conditions.

### 🐾 SYMPTOMS

Symptoms include difficulties understanding complex instructions (reading, spelling and writing) and participating in conversations. Complications with comprehension and converting thoughts into sentences often lead to a hesitant speaking style. Those with receptive language disorder might appear not to hear others.

### 🐾 DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis is challenging and some individuals with milder symptoms might just be considered shy or quiet. If LPD is suspected they are often referred to a speech therapist. Hearing and vision tests can rule out other conditions, and the individual's interactions might be observed. Language comprehension might also be assessed.

### 🐾 TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

LPDs often respond well to cognitive skills training and 70% of people benefit from speech therapy – with even greater success in children. Counselling can help with the frustration and isolation caused by the condition. We can all help individuals with LPDs by speaking clearly and directly, reducing background noise, and using images and visual clues.

➔ *Find out more*  
[speechdisorder.co.uk](https://speechdisorder.co.uk)

# “I’ve found a passion and a cause I really believe in”

Volunteer Zoe Simmons says parting with her first pup River wasn’t easy, but seeing the difference he’s making to his young partner’s life inspires her to carry on



**H**ow did you get involved? An advert from Hearing Dogs, looking for volunteers, popped up on my Facebook feed. I clicked the link and my fate was sealed! When my first hearing dog puppy, an eight-week-old Cocker Spaniel named River, duly arrived I was smitten. We’ve always had dogs in the family, but I’d never trained one to this extent. I learned so much; how to read a dog’s body language and how much a dog is willing to do for that tasty bit of chicken in your hand!

**What do people ask you most often?** “How do you give them up at the end?” Saying goodbye is without doubt the hardest part of being a volunteer. We knew from the beginning that we were just looking after River until he was ready to go and be a little life-changer. On the day he left it was tough. I got through it with a lot of love and support from our family and friends and from the Hearing Dogs team.

**What makes it worthwhile?** Even with the heartbreak of River leaving us, every moment was worthwhile. Every new stage he passed I was filled with awe and pride at how amazing dogs really are. And my journey with River hasn’t ended. I’m incredibly fortunate to have contact with the family of Phoebe – the child with whom River is partnered. I’ve seen the difference River has made to her life. She needs him far more than I do.

**River became quite a hit on social media. How did that happen?** As soon as I posted my first photo of River he captured

people’s hearts. As his training progressed and I shared more about his quirky ways and sweet personality, his followers literally lapped him up. Dogs enjoy life far more than we do and it becomes contagious. I loved how people waited for his weekly updates. I think I found a way to express maybe a more fun side of myself with it.

**How did having a pup help you through lockdown?** We were lucky to have River a little longer than usual due to lockdown, and what a blessing he was during those tough and confusing times. When we went into the first lockdown, everybody was confused, worried and a bit lost. Through my Instagram I strived hard to keep spirits high and smiles on people’s faces by showing River enjoying life to the full. He made me smile every day and I wanted to share that with everyone.

**What’s your new pup Kes like?** Although Kes and River are both Cocker Spaniels, they feel very different to train. River, although energetic, was very cuddly, very clever and excelled in his sound work. Kes is also clever and quick to learn, but he has a different energy. He’s incredibly enthusiastic and more playful than cuddly. It’s this fun side you’ll see on his Instagram page @kesyrascal

**Have lockdowns affected puppy training?** It has been a bit of a challenge! Everything we knew and were comfortable with has changed; our wonderful puppy classes, training trips into town and visits from our Hearing Dogs trainer. But we’ve successfully adapted with the help of

technology, video calls for support, virtual puppy classes, email and outdoor puppy classes.

**Any advice to someone thinking about volunteering?** I’d say just do it! It’s literally the best thing I’ve ever done. I’ve found something that’s rewarding, fun, challenging and involves a whole lot of love. I used to be very shy. Now I feel able to talk to people with confidence, because I’ve found a passion and a cause I really believe in. I’ve also made some wonderful friends. I’ve not met a group of people more on my wavelength. To be honest I couldn’t imagine not doing this anymore.

“My journey with River hasn’t ended”







Zoe with hearing dog  
in training Kes

### “RIVER MAKES ME FEEL INCREDIBLY PROUD”

Phoebe (14) beams when talking about her hearing dog River: “He has changed my life,” she says. “He has encouraged me to become happier every day and he puts a smile on my face. I don’t know what it would be like without him now.” River learned how to work with young people thanks to volunteer puppy trainer Zoe. A gentle, affectionate and extremely intuitive pup, River grew up to be the perfect hearing dog for young Phoebe, who was born profoundly deaf. Phoebe’s parents Lucy and Nathan say River is a complete joy: “We’ve all fallen head over heels in love with him,” says Nathan.

“Not only does River bring Phoebe so much enjoyment, he’s also been a great help to us – especially when times were challenging during lockdown. We’ll always be grateful to Hearing Dogs and the wonderful Zoe who helped turn River into the little star he is.” The family keeps in touch with Zoe in appreciation of her work training River. Zoe says: “It’s wonderful to hear how well they’re getting on and how much they all love him. Seeing the smile Phoebe has because of River makes me feel incredibly proud to have been part of that. It makes the heartache of parting all worthwhile.”





# “A gift from a kind person changed my life forever”

Sam Pugh has a kind-hearted individual to thank for her hearing dog, who was named and trained thanks to a generous gift in their Will

## DID YOU KNOW

that over half of all hearing dogs are funded by gifts in Wills?

**I** feel so grateful knowing that Oscar has been funded by the generosity of one person,” says 27-year-old Sam, who was partnered with Oscar in August 2020. “This kind of generosity is just astounding.”

Sam has been deaf for as long as she can remember. Diagnosed with a progressive hearing loss at the age of three, her deafness increased quite severely around the time she started secondary school. But it was only when she started university and became profoundly deaf that challenges began to emerge. Sam explains: “I’ve always felt very comfortable in my identity; being deaf is part of who I am. But having to rely on lipreading all the time is exhausting. Poor communication support at university made access to tuition difficult and stressful.

“A lot of the time I felt very lonely. I had lovely friends, but there were often barriers to me accessing the things we were doing together, like eating together and not being able to follow conversation due to

background noise. But the hardest thing of all was my complete lack of privacy. People would just come into my room without any warning because I couldn’t hear them knock. Whether it was when the fire alarm went off or when the cleaners needed to empty the bin, the door would suddenly open and they’d walk straight in. I’d frequently be asleep, in the shower or getting changed. It made me really anxious to be alone in my room. I didn’t feel comfortable in my own space.

“Then I met two people with assistance dogs on a campaigning course. It was wonderful to see how an assistance dog’s quiet presence could give someone so much confidence. That was when I really understood how a hearing dog might help me.

“Oscar settled in from the get-go – it’s like he’s always been here. I wake up happier knowing he’s there to watch out for me. He’s given me independence and I no longer have to rely on other people for my safety. Within two weeks of Oscar being with me I was upstairs playing a video game when he came over, gave me a nudge with his nose, then laid down and stared at me. I went downstairs to find the kitchen full of smoke – I hadn’t heard the fire alarm. Luckily it wasn’t serious, but if it had been, it’s so reassuring to know that Oscar would alert me and keep me safe. He’s a star.



Photo: Paul Wilkinson



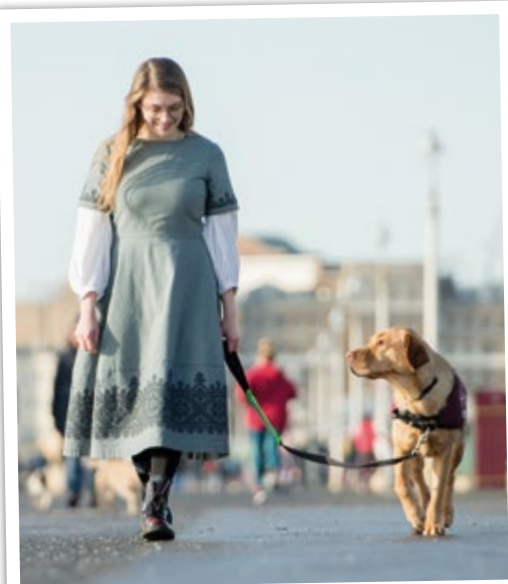
## “OSCAR IS TRULY A LEGACY TO BE PROUD OF”

“The biggest thing Oscar has done for me is to give me back a sense of security. I now know that Oscar will alert me if anyone is knocking on my door, and I feel a lot calmer at home. Oscar gives me confidence out and about too. I don’t worry anymore about people getting frustrated if I don’t hear them behind me. I can tell they’re there from Oscar’s body language. People have also been more respectful towards me and seem a lot more willing to help. They see Oscar in his Hearing Dogs jacket and immediately, without me having to ask, make a real effort to communicate with me. That’s been a huge help.

“I feel a lot more grounded with Oscar in my life. He makes a massive difference to me every single day and makes me feel safe in my home. My aspirations are the same as before I had him, but knowing I can live independently and safely with Oscar is empowering.

“Oscar is a wonderful legacy, an amazing gift made by someone in their Will. We’ll go on to do so many exciting things together and I’m hugely grateful. I’ve been thinking a lot recently about how lovely it would have been to be able to sit down with the person who made the gift, have a cup of tea and tell them all about Oscar. I really hope their family gets the chance to read this and know how much difference the donor’s amazing gift has made. I know the value of such a gift because Oscar is the proof. He’s truly a legacy to be proud of.” 🐾

➔ ***If you wish to discuss leaving a gift in your Will please contact Zoe Cox on 01844 348130 or visit [hearingdogs.org.uk/legacies](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/legacies)***



### REGISTER FOR YOUR FREE WILL

Quite a few of our supporters have asked us about the practicalities of writing a Will during these challenging times. Our new free Will Service provides a simple and safe way to write your Will from the comfort of your own home.

We’re working closely with Farewill, the UK’s largest online Will-writing specialist, to offer for free an online Will-writing service that normally costs £90. A team of friendly experts from Farewill is available seven days a week for support, through LiveChat messaging or by phone.

### How our online free Will service works

Visit our website to register for your free Will. With help from Farewill, you can quickly and securely write your Will and have it checked by a specialist – all for free. You’ll then need to print and sign it in front of two witnesses to make it legally binding.

We treat legacies with the utmost sincerity and respect. There is no obligation to leave Hearing Dogs a gift in your Will, but we hope that after looking after your loved ones, you’ll also consider leaving a gift to our charity. It would help us towards the day when no deaf person feels alone – truly, your gift to deaf people.

### In just three simple steps you can make a difference

- 1. Consider who you want to remember**  
Think about the people and causes you care about and how you would like to remember them in your Will
- 2. Write your free Will**  
You will be taken step by step through the Will-writing process with professional support from Farewill. It should take no more than 30 minutes
- 3. Enter the code hearingdogs-01 at the check-out**  
This code allows you to claim your Will for free. It’s simple!

**Please note:** This free service is available for a limited time to our supporters in England and Wales (unfortunately not Scotland and Northern Ireland due to different laws). Online Wills may not be appropriate for all circumstances.

Request your free Will online: [hearingdogs.org.uk/favourfreewill](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/favourfreewill)

# Ask the experts



Mask wearing presents huge challenges to people with hearing loss. With speech muffled and lipreading impossible, we look at how mobile apps can help with communication

## 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.

**Chatable Universal Hearing Aid**

The affordable, groundbreaking app that gives you back conversation

TALK TO US  
chat@charitableapps.com  
support@charitableapps.com

OUT ON THE APP STORE

- Provides clear, loud voice without background noise
- Doesn't require a hearing test
- Free to use (limited version; full version subscription)
- Replace reliance on lipreading

Download on the App Store

person talking to you during a one-to-one conversation, but louder and clearer. It reduces background noise, such as music, hubbub, reverberation and other sounds. Chatable works for many levels of hearing loss and can be used without the need for a hearing test. It can help people who would normally rely on lipreading, which could prove very helpful when talking to people wearing face masks. You can also connect via Bluetooth to hearing aids. Other amplifying apps are available, plus check out speech-to-text applications for mobile devices such as: Otter, Ava captions, Live Transcribe and Relay UK.

**"I struggle to hear people when they're wearing face masks. I have a mild to moderate hearing loss and wear a hearing aid. I rely on lipreading but masks make it impossible. I remember reading somewhere that mobile apps can help. Please can you advise."**

You're not alone. Millions of people have some degree of hearing loss, and since mask wearing has become mandatory a lot more people have noticed how much we all rely on those important visual clues and facial expressions that accompany speech. Here we answer some of our most frequently asked questions about mobile apps and how they can help.

### What are mobile apps?

The word 'app' is short for 'application'. An app is a piece of software. Each app has its own icon. A few apps are pre-installed on digital devices like mobile phones, tablets or watches (the Weather app for example). Others can be downloaded and installed on your device, by you, from an application distribution platform such as the App Store. Some apps are free and others have a price.

### Which app would you recommend?

There are a number of useful apps available. I'd suggest you try the Chatable app first. Chatable is available on iPhone and Android devices via bluetooth, ear buds or headphones. It can reproduce the voice of the

## CHATABLE WORKS FOR MANY LEVELS OF HEARING LOSS

### How can Chatable help?

The app works like a remote microphone, so it can be useful for one-to-one conversations while social distancing. Some users have found it to be a great substitute for hearing aids in the event of an emergency such as flat batteries, lost or broken aids and not being able to visit an audiologist. A number of our clients use the

For all our hearing loss support services please go to [hearinglink.org](https://hearinglink.org)



app regularly and recommended it to us. Chloe Whitelock, who works in our client services team, tried the app for the first time. To see how she got on, go to: [hearingdogs.org.uk/chatable](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/chatable)

## Is it free?

There is a free and a paid for version of the app, the difference being how much you can modify the volume and level of background noise (on Android), or the number of minutes you can use the service for (100 free minutes on iPhone).

### Follow these simple steps to try Chatable

- 1 Go to the App store and download the Chatable app to your phone
- 2 Open the app and connect to ear buds or headphones (noise cancelling headphones give the best experience). You can also connect via Bluetooth to hearing aids or other listening devices
- 3 Follow the onscreen instructions and click on 'Demo' or 'Instructions' for more guidance
- 4 Try it while watching TV or when having a conversation with music on in the background. Use the sliders on the display to turn up the volume. There's also an option to turn down unwanted background noise
- 5 It may take a little time to get used to, so give yourself time to practise at home before trying it out and about
- 6 For help or support contact [support@chatableapps.com](mailto:support@chatableapps.com) or use the Live Chat function on Chatable's website.



## The past year has thrown up a number of challenges that are unique to dog owners

### If people stroke my dog, can viruses survive on my dog's coat?

We all know about the importance of handwashing to prevent the spread of infection. Some viruses, including coronaviruses, can survive on surfaces for anywhere from a few hours to a few days. You can safely use an alcohol wipe to clean the surface of collars, leads and jackets. There is currently no evidence that the coronavirus can spread to people from the skin, fur or hair of pets, but it's still important to practise good hygiene. It is possible that a virus can survive on your dog's hair for a short period of time and in some pets' mouths for longer. The advice from Public Health England is for people to wash their hands regularly, including before and after contact with animals. As an extra precaution you may decide to carry with you some pet wipes\* so you can wipe down your dog's hair if people do happen to stroke him – see info below.

### My dog is very sociable. When we're out on a walk, people sometimes pet him as if the social distancing rule doesn't apply to dogs. What can I do?

When you're out walking with your dog the two metre rule does still apply and should serve to keep you and your dog safe from contact with people. However, we appreciate that people often have a natural urge to want to stroke dogs, so this may require you to let someone know what you feel comfortable with. If people ask for permission to pet your dog, most will understand if you say no. You can simply let them know you are being cautious because of coronavirus. If you see that your dog is getting too close to people, call him away and put him back on his lead. You can use a pet wipe\* as an extra precaution if contact with someone happens accidentally.

### \*Only use pet-safe products on your dog

A dog's skin is more sensitive than ours, and using antibacterial products made for humans on a dog is not recommended. Many contain ingredients that are toxic or irritants to pets. Canine skin has a different level of acidity to ours, it is more alkaline than human skin. This means that using human products like shampoo will dry out a dog's skin and can cause irritation and skin problems. The same applies to medicated wipes designed for human skin.





### DID YOU KNOW?

Although her *EastEnders* character, Pat Butcher, was famous for her large earring collection, Pam has never had her ears pierced

### Close-up with...

#### PAM ST CLEMENT

➔ Pam St Clement is an English actress. Her acting career began in the late 1960s and she has worked extensively on the stage, in films and on television. She's best known for portraying the role of Pat Butcher in the BBC soap *EastEnders* from 1986 until 2012. An animal lover and keen conservationist, Pam supports several charities. She has been a loyal supporter of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People for over 30 years and remains an ambassador for the Charity.

Photo: Paul Wilkinson



# Paws for coffee...



Famous for her portrayal of Pat Butcher in *EastEnders* for over 25 years, actress and Hearing Dogs ambassador **Pam St Clement** shares a cuppa and a natter

**D**o you prefer tea or coffee? I go through phases. I am very fussy about both though! When it comes to tea, I like an Earl Grey, and I go for a gentle nutty Lungo when it comes to coffee.

**When did you first realise your love for dogs?** I was brought up on a farm, so animals were an everyday part of my life, and I related to all sorts of animals. Dogs were the closest workmates we had and would help to bring in the cattle and sheep. They were our right-hand four-legged friends! Having dogs that carried out specific tasks on the farm gave me an insight into how much dogs love being given a job to do to keep them stimulated.

**Do you have a favourite dog breed?** Collies influenced much of my early life, but I'd have to say Scottish Terriers. They are little dogs who think they're big dogs and have such characters.

**As a long-standing and loyal friend to the Hearing Dogs charity, what inspired you to get involved?** I first came across Hearing Dogs at Crufts in the late eighties and became very interested in what the Charity does. I like charities that benefit both animals and humans. I think that dogs love, and are stimulated by, doing a job. It is great to see this in action when hearing dogs are alerting deaf people to important sounds.

**In 2013 you went 'deaf for the day' as part of a campaign for Hearing Dogs. What did you find most challenging?** Probably the sense of isolation, and the loss of sound cues. If you have hearing,

you tend to take for granted the different sound cues you hear as you go about life – things that help you stay safe, for example. When I went 'deaf for the day', I felt rather clumsy. I found it quite scary being outside, surrounded by things you need to know about but can't hear.

**If you were to lose your hearing what would you miss most?** Music. Undoubtedly, more than the human voice. Music is in my body and soul, because there's so much that is physical as well as spiritual about music.

**Our Hearing Hub offers support and advice on hearing health and well-being. When was your last hearing health check?** Hand on heart I can't say, but it wasn't very recent. It's probably about time I had another one!

**How would your *EastEnders* character Pat Butcher feel about wearing hearing aids?** I think she would have found a way to integrate hearing aids into her earrings. She had learned to be more truthful to herself as she got older, but I think she would have wanted to hide them.

**And face masks?** I don't think she'd have taken to masks at all, but it would have to be a gaudy mask for Pat – the gaudier the better!

**Events of this past year have caused a lot of people to feel isolated. Have you felt this too?** I have definitely noticed the lack of freedom and I've missed the reassuring 'ordinariness' of my own normal routine. In the very early days of lockdown,

it was almost a gentle relief to take a break from normal social pressures, but after that comes the anxiety. I'm very aware that situations like this can have a profound effect on people. So many of the deaf people you help have spent years feeling isolated and lonely because of the barriers they face.

**When the days of shielding and lockdowns are over, what are you most looking forward to?** Having contact with human beings. I do miss my friends. That closeness, that spontaneity, that stimulus that you don't get in a video call. That sort of social interaction is so important to feed our souls. And I'm looking forward to doing things with Hearing Dogs again. I have missed my visits, because it feels like a second home to me.

**Whom would you choose to go on a fantasy dog walk with?** Toto from *The Wizard of Oz*. I love the idea of some magic, of jumping into the screen and being part of the film.

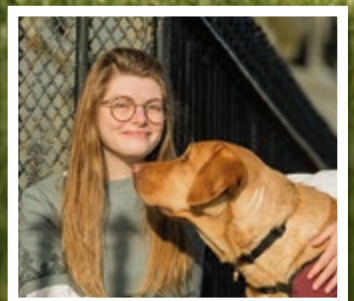
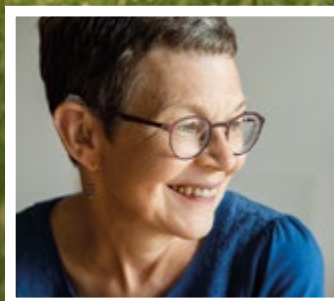
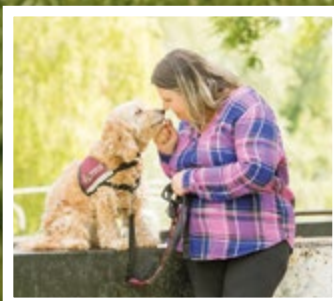


Toto was played by a female brindle Cairn Terrier named Terry. She was paid a \$125 salary each week, which was more than some of the human actors!

# Take on a challenge...



## ...and change a deaf person's life



Whether you decide to take on The Great North Run, trek through stunning scenery or brave an abseil, we'll support you from start to finish, and you'll be raising funds to help train more amazing hearing dogs.

# [hearingdogs.org.uk/challenge](https://hearingdogs.org.uk/challenge)