

# IMPACT REPORT 2024 - 2025



# DEAF CHOICES UK

Thrive with language and literacy for life.

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# INTRODUCTION

**Deaf Choices UK (DCUK)** supports inclusion and the provision of equal opportunities for deaf children within families, communities, and educational settings through the delivery of informed choice, training in Cued Speech, and family-led activities.

Based in Totnes, Devon, DCUK provides nationwide support to families of deaf children through online technologies, in-person home visits across the South West, and a monthly community group for deaf children and their families in Plymouth.

**Deaf Choices UK (DCUK)** is the only UK charity delivering training and support in Cued Speech for use at home and in education.

In 2024, Cued Speech UK rebranded as Deaf Choices UK (DCUK) to better reflect its philosophy and the evolving needs of deaf children. DCUK recognised the significance of offering parents informed, unbiased choices. It is not just a single choice that is needed for a deaf child, but many—throughout their lives—in order to help them achieve their potential socially, emotionally, and academically.

At DCUK, we are passionate about addressing the needs of every deaf child, providing them with visual access to English and empowering them to achieve their aspirations. This report will share the personal

journeys of deaf children, their parents, and the professionals who support them, highlighting how, through DCUK's activities and the use of Cued Speech, they have gained greater access to improved outcomes.

The report will cover our three key areas of work:

- 1. Language and Literacy for Life (ages 0-18)**

- 2. Active** – Our regional family activities delivered through Plymouth Deaf Choices

- 3. Love Literacy** – Focused on our work with schools using the Nan in a Van literacy intervention



# OUR AIM

**Deaf Choices UK (DCUK) aspires to give deaf children improved access to:**

- **Language** – by empowering their families to make fully informed choices.
- **Literacy** – by supporting their educators through access to information, training, and resources.

DCUK provides knowledge, information, and training on the unique benefits, concepts, and skills associated with using Cued Speech. The support offered by DCUK enables deaf children and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to thrive at home, succeed in education, and achieve their full potential.

**Thrive with language and literacy for life.**



**"AT CW, Zoe has been able to do a read/write inc assessment which she hasn't been able to access before. She was able to work out the lists of words by cueing them. Since starting NIAV her speech has also become clearer, and she is very confident using Cued Speech. Her sister loves playing with the "cue it cards" and is also confident at cueing new words."**



Find out about DCUK  
email [info@deafchoicesuk.com](mailto:info@deafchoicesuk.com)  
or call 01803 712853

# WHAT IS CUED SPEECH?

**Cued Speech** is a manual system that enables the speaker to place eight handshapes in four positions around the mouth while speaking, allowing the receiver to lipread with nearly 100% accuracy. (Lipreading, without cues, involves a significant amount of guesswork.)

Cued Speech can be learned in just 6 to 10 hours; after that, fluency develops through practice. Cueing transforms spoken language into a visual language, which can be invaluable for any deaf child, regardless of the degree of deafness.

We all lipread—whether we realise it or not. We instinctively understand that seeing supports hearing. When struggling to hear someone, most of us naturally turn toward them to see their face. Cueing works in harmony with this innate behaviour.

Hearing children typically develop language in the first months and years of life because they have unrestricted access to the spoken language used around them. This process is more difficult for deaf children: how can they access spoken words if they cannot hear them? When cues are added, those words become **visible**.

Here is a quote from a Mum of a deaf child which perfectly summarises how children can combine communication methods

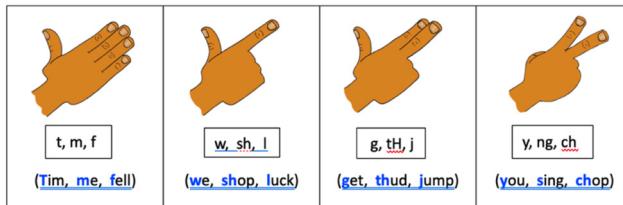
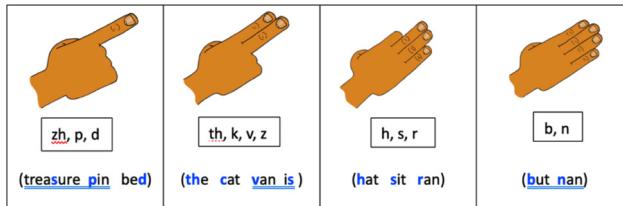
and express themselves clearly:

“I've just had the best interaction I've ever had with Isabelle:

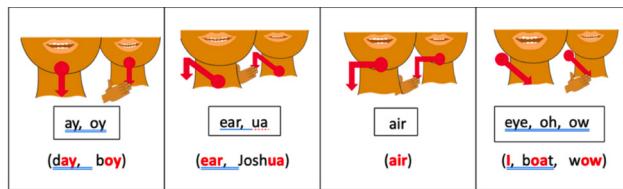
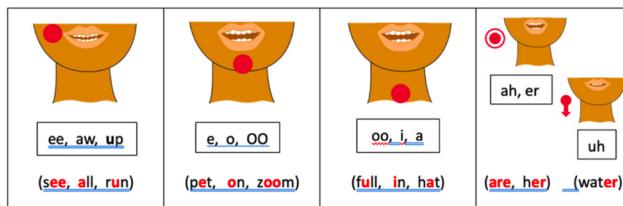
- Isabelle- throws crayons on floor
- Me-cues and says tidy and models tidying 1 crayon
- Isabelle- shakes head no
- Me- repeats
- Isabelle tidies crayons then cues and says park
- Me (not very well today) shakes head and says no park (cued and said park)
- Isabelle signs sad and sits on the floor.
- Me-asks Isabelle with speech sign and cue (for park) Isabelle wants park?
- Isabelle- says yeh then signs coat and hat and gets my shoes for me

The clearest she's expressed her wants ever. Sorry if it doesn't sound like much or if I didn't communicate in the right way with her but she was so good in communicating with me”

## Consonant sounds:



## Vowel sounds:

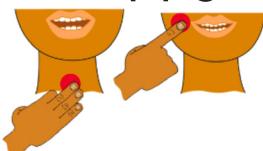


Can you see how to cue these words?

me



happy



we



you



# WHY WE NEED CUED SPEECH

## Language

- Babies begin acquiring language from birth. However, the situation is more complex for deaf children, who often face significant delays in accessing their home language. Cued Speech is quick to learn—requiring only 6 to 10 hours for the basics—and when parents of deaf babies incorporate cues into their speech, the child benefits immediately. Language delay can be avoided.
- Cue-reading (watching someone cue while speaking) helps the child become a skilled lip-reader, a competency with wide-ranging social and educational benefits.
- Research has shown that cueing can play an important role in supporting a child's speech perception following cochlear implantation.



**“Because of Cued Speech I was able to speak English and because of that I now have an A-Level in English Literature”**

## Literacy

### Cued Speech as a bridge between language and literacy

“Children talk their way into print.”

- Before learning to read and write in a language such as English, a child must develop a fluent mental model—that is, the ability to “think in English” and use it confidently in social interactions with family and peers.
- Children who are cued-to are more likely to have age-appropriate language levels. Because Cued Speech is based on the phonemes of spoken language, these children often have a head start on their peers when learning to read.

The quotes below are from a young adult who was cued-to:

**“My skills in being able to read cues meant that my reading age was much further advanced than anyone else in my class at the time”**

**“Often when we were reading, when I was learning to read, I remember my mum going through the words in the book and cueing them out. I've been told I was able to read from about 2 ½ onwards but I don't really remember not being able to read”**



# A CASE FOR DEAF CHOICES UK

## Isabelle's Story: Confidence Through Communication

Isabelle is 28 months old and has both conductive and neurosensory permanent hearing loss. She uses a BAHA device on a soft band and recently had grommets fitted. In addition to her hearing challenges, Isabelle also has a condition known as choanal atresia.

Her parents, Becky and Lee, joined Plymouth Deaf Choices (PDC) group, where they met with Henrietta Ireland the DCUK Executive Director (ED) . The ED has been regularly attending this group since September 2024. It was through the PDC group that they first discovered Deaf Choices UK and were referred to the DCUK Regional Family advisor..

Becky shares: "Attending the PDC sessions has provided us with a support network of families who understand the emotional ups and downs we face and have a wealth of knowledge to share. Everyone is so welcoming, and Isabelle enjoys the sessions as well!"

Both Becky and Lee have been learning Cued Speech to support Isabelle's language development. They combine this approach with some sign language, which Isabelle has responded to with great enthusiasm. She is a highly expressive child who loves creative play and engaging with those around her. She has already learned to sign animals, colours, and emotions, and can identify special people and familiar household items.

At home, Becky and Lee regularly cue words and phrases they use with

Isabelle, including "shop," "park," "time to go to Nursery/childminder," "hello," and "bye bye."

Becky explains: "Learning to cue has helped us communicate with Isabelle more confidently, reducing misunderstandings and frustration. She loves to cue and say words like 'shop' and 'park,' and she feels happy when she's understood. Recently, when I asked Isabelle if we should give the dogs a treat, she responded by signing 'tree,' so I cued 'treat,' and she immediately went to get it for the dogs!"

Having sessions at home has made a big difference for the family, enabling Cued Speech sessions to fit in around their busy work lives. The fact that their practitioner is also a parent of a deaf child has been particularly meaningful, giving them real hope for Isabelle's future.

They've also been using the Nan in a Van resource, Cue-it Cards, and dictionaries, all of which have inspired them to cue more regularly with Isabelle.

Isabelle currently attends Pixieland Nursery and spends some days with a childminder. Thanks to support from ToD Jane Loader, Kathy Kenny was able to deliver an introductory training in Cued Speech to the staff at the nursery. It is always valuable when everyone in a deaf child's circle can support their communication journey.

# OUR ACTIVITIES

## Language and Literacy for Life (Ages 0-18) Training Local Teams in Schools

**St. Margaret's School** in Torquay has been using Cued Speech for several years, with Deaf Choices UK (DCUK) supporting staff in developing greater fluency. School visits involve training sessions and direct support with reading and writing for two pupils, both of whom are making excellent progress using Cued Speech on a daily basis.



I am Nan.

**Cue-it Cards** are regularly used during these visits, and new games are continually developed to support learning.

At **Countess Wear**, staff have trialled the Nan in a Van resource and provided excellent feedback. The school includes children from a British Sign Language (BSL)-first-language family, and these pupils have made substantial progress through using the resource. One child is now applying her Cued Speech skills to fully engage with the Read Write Inc. phonics scheme used in the school.

At **Eggbuckland**, DCUK's Kathy Kenny has been seconded to work as a Communication Support Worker (CSW) in the nursery with two deaf boys. This initiative has offered a valuable opportunity to introduce Cued Speech at the foundational language level. Both boys are showing significant progress in speech, signing, and social development.

**Manadon Vale Primary School** in Plymouth have just started their journey with the Nan in a Van resource. Two teaching assistants have started their training ready to start in the new school year.



# WORK WITH FAMILIES

**Supporting families** remains a central focus for Deaf Choices UK (DCUK). Parents come to DCUK through referrals from audiology departments, Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs), and, in some cases, via self-referral.

Most families prefer face-to-face support. In many cases, this involves weekly home visits from an advisor who helps families navigate the multiple challenges they face in securing appropriate services and funding for their child. These visits also include training in how to use Cued Speech. The new Nan in a Van resource has proven invaluable in helping parents learn and practise cueing.

For families living outside South Devon, DCUK provides support via weekly Zoom calls and access to an online self-study course. When a child transitions into school, DCUK offers training and support to nursery or pre-school staff so they can incorporate Cued Speech into the child's learning environment.

Quote from a parent 'For us as a hearing family of a deaf child, Deaf Choices UK and the support that they have provided for our family has been vital. Having the opportunity to learn Cued Speech has meant that our daughter hasn't had to struggle communicating with us, as we have been able to turn our language into something she can see, rather than having to rely on her hearing aids and lip reading.'

I can say with certainty that she would have never made the fantastic progress that she has if it hadn't been for Cued Speech. Deaf Choices UK also helped us with stepping into the deaf/Deaf world. They taught us about Deaf culture, deaf awareness and introduced us to other deaf children and adults. I hate to think about where we would be now as a family without the vital support that Deaf Choices have provided for us.'



# ACTIVE - OUR WORK THROUGH PLYMOUTH DEAF CHOICES

## Welcome to Plymouth Deaf Choices (PDC).

In September 2024 we finally 'adopted' PDSCS, and they are now Plymouth Deaf Choices (PDC.) We are really delighted to add this extra group to our offer of family support, family group engagement, and activities. We are also hoping to recruit a new trustee as a representative of this group.

Coffee mornings are held on the first Saturday of every month in Plymouth, and the DCUK Executive Director has been along to a number of Saturday events. In January families made a plan for the year ahead, which included activities and information for deaf children and their families.

PDC provides a great opportunity for families to meet and share experiences and for deaf children to have a lot of fun and extra activities with their deaf peers and their siblings. PDC enhances and supports the DCUK outcomes at every level, increasing self-confidence and improving

family participation, and with its links to Cued Speech and Eggbuckland schools, we are also enhancing the opportunities for improved literacy.



# SOUND EXPLORERS

Deaf choices have been very excited to collaborate with a group called Evolve.

They provide music therapy to a variety of groups and individuals across Devon. Their expert team has excellently trained musicians who have a wealth of experience working with different children and adults who have complex needs.

We have been working with them since April to provide a group called 'Sound Explorers.' This has been set up for deaf children in the Plymouth area. It runs for an hour and a half every Tuesday morning. The Teachers of the Deaf in Plymouth have offered this unique service to the children on their caseload, and there have been good numbers of families

who have gotten involved. Some parents have come regularly, and it is these families who have seen the most benefit.

The sessions have 3 parts. The room is set out in a very creative way to invite parents and babies to play with the toys and instruments facilitated by the professionals in the room. This is the part where we have observed more and more interaction between mums and their deaf child. This is then tidied away and followed by a more structured singing section. Again, each week the songs are repeated, and the children get used to the songs and what comes next. The last section is a chance to chat and have some refreshments.



We decided at the beginning of the project to focus on attunement, and for the families who have come regularly, we have noticed a big difference in the confidence mums now have to interact with their babies and to use the instruments to facilitate these moments.

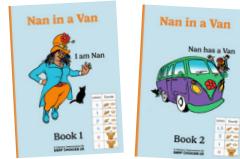
Kathy Kenny has been attending each session to provide communication support with signing and Cued Speech.

**Quote from a visiting TOD** "The playgroup is truly wonderful and clearly brings many benefits to the children and their families. I saw so much amazing practice from each of you: highlights were Steve going under the table to join in with HB's play, Sharon making baby DR beam with delight and Kathy cueing the words to the tidy up song to HB. We really must make sure this group continues so that you can carry on sharing your talents with Plymouth deaf preschoolers."



**Quote from a Mum:** "Sound Explorers has been hugely beneficial to Robbie's development and music now plays a huge part in our daily activities because of this group. It has also improved Robbie's confidence in social skills and interactions with adults and other children. We really enjoy coming to the weekly groups and having access to a wide range of music instruments that Robbie wouldn't have anywhere else."

# LOVE LITERACY NAN IN A VAN



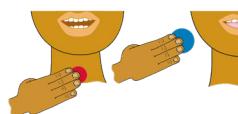
## What is in our NIAV Phonics Intervention package?

- Ten beautiful reading books
- Ten matching eBooks with digital avatars that cue and sign
- Two Teaching Guides packed with over fifty lesson plans, activities and photocopiable resources
- Forty four brilliant sound cards highlighting cued phonemes and a whole range of spelling choices
- Clever game-board that allows users to learn how to cue any word
- Instruction booklet that explains how to use the cards to teach phonetic awareness, make letter-sound links, synthesise and blend new and known words, teach new vocabulary and prepare students for the early phonics screening test

### Success in the Classroom with Nan in a Van.



I am Nan.





## Nan is out in the world!

Buyers include The Government of Jersey. Members of the Jersey Hearing/Deaf Support Team including Teachers of the Deaf, Specialist Teachers and Speech and Language Therapists attended a 2 day workshop held on the island to help them use the Nan resource with their deaf children.

### Gathering evidence for Nan in a Van

We now have a number of trials running in mainstream schools, these wonderful collaborators are using the Nan materials with their deaf students and getting great results.

Quotes from staff using the Nan books and card game:

“x has really grown in confidence with her literacy and you can see she really understands it because she can pick up the words, it's so gorgeous.” (ToD)

“We are delighted that the guidance now says we can use cues for the phonic screen test so we are very hopeful for better results” (ToD)

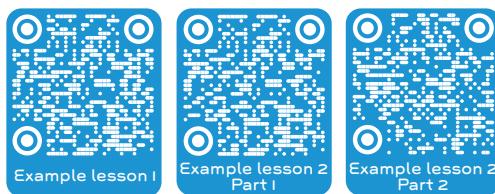
“Nan in a Van (NIAV) is really helpful as we can send it home with him to share with Mum.” (ToD)

“DCUK NIAV books can be used as a foundation to any reading programme used in school. Once deaf children understand how to blend from NIAV they can transfer that skill into any literacy program” (ToD)

“Her expressive language has really developed in the last few month as a result of reading using the cues in NIAV” (ToD)

“It is a joy to see how the cues impact on the accuracy of his speech sounds!” (CSW)

“with the help of cued speech and NIAV, he blends (sounds) beautifully now” (ToD)



## Request for an Assessment based on NIAV

Our trial users have requested we design a Nan-specific assessment protocol that they can use to track and record their student's progress as they use the intervention. We think this is a great idea and work is already underway to create a game-based assessment tool that can be used to track skills at single sound, single word, sentence level and more. We are grateful to have encouragement and advice for this from 3 highly experienced academics at DCAL (Deafness, Cognition and Language Research Centre at University College London).

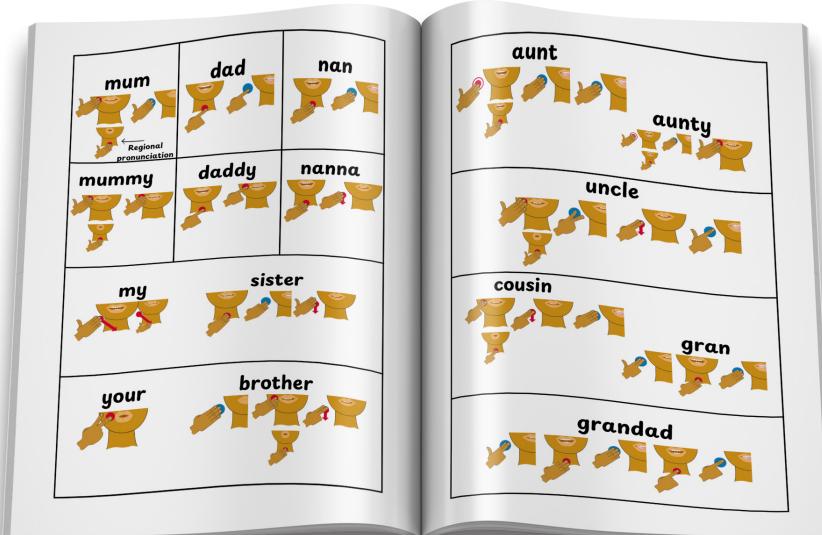
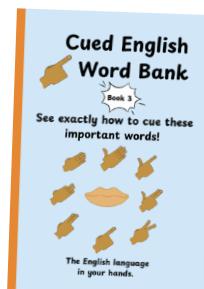
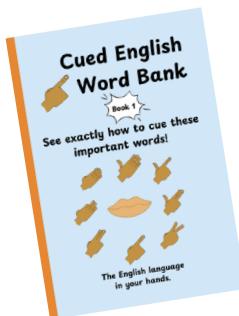


## What's new this year?

### Cued Speech Dictionaries

This year has seen the arrival of a long-awaited resource for our parents and professionals – three Cued English Word Banks. From saying 'hello' to talking about school. Anyone learning to cue can use these books to see exactly how to cue a whole range of important everyday vocabulary. And there are 'how to cue' tips throughout that match with the lessons on our Learn to Cue Self-Study course.

"These books have answered any questions I have about how to cue certain words, they are really helpful!"



# NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

## Manchester University Future Proofing

Event Focusing on the new mandatory qualification for trainee Teachers of the Deaf, how can teachers be effective in their work with deaf students? We heard about the latest research and technological advances and shared the Nan books with some of the delegates.

## SEND Summit London. Kathy and Hen

### BAToD local conference at St Margaret's School in Torquay

An opportunity to display the Nan in a Van resource and network with practitioners from the South West including Dorset.

The Plymouth TODS have since been recommending the resource to schools in Plymouth.

## Cate's trip to Jersey

The government of Jersey invested in the Nan in a Van materials for their Deaf Support Team, a two day training was delivered to a variety of professionals including teachers and SALTS on the island.

## BAToD conference

Focusing on the latest technology and innovation improving the quality of deaf education across the UK. DCUK held a well-attended

workshop and a busy exhibition stand, two excellent leads came from this event for further trials of the Nan resource.

## Access to Communication Services

ACS have a brilliant team of highly qualified staff offering a huge range of support to deaf people in Devon. We benefitted from two excellent talks on Theory of Mind and Metacognition and saw the first person take up the free-trial opportunity for the NIAV package.

## Kathy Kenny on the Radio

An invitation to speak on a podcast with 'Education on Fire' led by Mark Taylor. There are opportunities to highlight educators from around the world to inspire parents who want to support their children to live, learn and grow to their full potential.

Kathy used this as an opportunity to promote DCUK and detail her personal experience of being a parent of a Deaf child.

## Schools and Academies show at the NEC in Birmingham

"Providing the education community with a one-stop show of everything they need to further strengthen their strategic and school improvement plans for a lasting impact". We made valuable contact with a fellow charity The National Association of Special Educational Needs and were invited to attend their conference in the summer.



## SOUTH-WEST BATOD DAY

This was held back in October at St.Margarets school in Torquay. There were many familiar faces and we were able to display the Nan in a Van resource and had good conversations with a number of practitioners from the South west including Dorset. It was an interesting day with a variety of talks from different professionals.

## A Trip to Westminster with the Speech and Language Communication Alliance (SLCA)

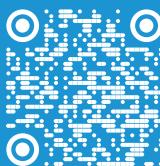
The SLCA is a group of about 33 small charities which all work towards better services and outcomes for children with speech language and communication difficulties. It is basically a lobbying group for this group of mostly forgotten (by education) children. We are stronger together when trying to raise awareness with ministers. This group has had many different names over the last 15 years and the Westminster visit was to raise awareness. Henrietta Ireland (ED) and Peter Bowman (Trustee) attended The launch of the Speech, Language and Communication Alliance

## Crest

Launch of a marketing campaign for DCUK with Crest marketing. An important opportunity for us to promote our work on a wide range of media platforms including online magazines, radio, and TV.

This included the opportunity to introduce our Nan in a Van literacy resource to the children at Eggbuckland School, as part of a feature on ITV Westcountry's evening news. The children were thrilled to take part, fully engaged in all the different activities, and the staff were fantastic in showcasing the various elements of the resource.

Kathy was interviewed alongside Sarah Bradley and Vicky Lowther, Teachers of the Deaf at Eggbuckland. We spoke about the challenges children face when learning English, particularly the additional barriers Deaf children encounter, and how the resource is supporting pupils in the Deaf Education Centre (DEC) to access English more effectively.



Scan the QR code to see the full ITV feature on YouTube.



# OUTCOMES REPORT

## Increased participation within the family - Positive change 72%

E is a baby of four months with complex needs and deafness. On our first visit he was non-responsive. At the six-month review, he is happy, alert and responding to sound. He watches when he is cued to and smiles back. He makes some sounds and noises during interactions

## Increased Literacy - Positive change 78%

Following an eight-week period of using Nan in a Van, Z has been able to access the Read Write inc assessment which demonstrated significant progress as she had not been able to participate in the assessment prior to using NIAV as a literacy support intervention.

## Increased confidence - Positive change 56%

E has been to an adventure park and surfing. This is incredible as during our first visits 24 months ago, E and her mother never left the house. E's communication is improving through Cued Speech and some signs.

Data collected on our Systems Impact Tracker and through questionnaires completed by families who have been offered an intervention.

The mother of L told us: "Cued Speech has made a huge impact on our family and L's potential. Since we started cueing, we've seen a lot of progress. L is very sociable and happy, and while she communicates in her own way, I believe she is absorbing English through Cued Speech."

2024/25

**12**

Deaf related events attended



2024/25

**14**

Nan in a Van demos with another 12 booked



2024/25

**3**

Choices programme sessions



**2024/2025**

## **92 Home visits**

delivering our parent and child Cued Speech training and support package.



2024/25 **560** deaf children have been supported through the work of **Cued Speech UK**.

2024/25

**67**

**Preschool and School visits**



2024/25

**40**

**Love reading sessions**



2024/25

**43**

**Cued Speech workshops Delivered**



2024/25

**13**

**Parent/deaf child groups run**



2024/25

**62**

**Family members trained**



2024/25

**18**

**Online CS self-study attendees**



# REVIEW AND PLAN

## Family Advisors in Herts and the North East

Unfortunately, we were unable to secure ongoing funding for our Regional Family Advisors, Sagira Jethra in Hertfordshire and Carly Simpson in the North East. As a result, in August 2024, we had to part ways with these two exceptional and experienced professionals. Their absence is deeply felt, as they made significant contributions to the DCUK team. Sagira's expertise in inclusion, cultural values, and familial dynamics, as well as Carly's remarkable creative input through film and storytelling, represent a considerable loss to our DCUK offerings.



## DCUK Schools Liaison Officer

The Trustees agreed to explore the market potential of NIAV in the South West during the summer of 2025, with the assistance of a Freelance Special Educational Needs Development Officer (SENDOfficer). In October 2024, Catharine Rusbridge reached out to us. With experience as a SENDCO in Primary Education, Cat was seeking a career change and had learned about CS from a colleague, recognizing its significance in primary education, especially for supporting deaf children in accessing literacy. She has effectively engaged with local schools in her new role. Cat's involvement, along with the strategy of utilizing Freelance practitioners from educational backgrounds to promote Nan in a Van, could potentially enhance our efforts to increase the visibility of NIAV among deaf children and academic leaders.

## Overcoming Challenges and Building Impact

This year has certainly presented its share of challenges, especially regarding funding. Like many small charities, we have felt the strain of a fiercely competitive funding landscape. As more organizations step in to assist overwhelmed children's services—particularly in critical areas such as poverty, mental health, and neglect—resources are more limited than ever. In response, Deaf Choices UK has embraced innovation. We launched our new foundation literacy initiative, Nan in a Van (NIAV), to address significant gaps in deaf education while also



ensuring our long-term financial viability. NIAV delivers specialized support directly to schools and communities and introduces a new revenue stream through our services. Our team focused on training in sales and marketing to bring NIAV to life, and we have made notable progress. However, navigating the education sector to make sales poses its own set of challenges.

Schools operate within a variety of complex frameworks, including academies, trusts, and federations, each with distinct budget holders and decision-making processes. Identifying the right contact can be quite difficult. Additionally, ongoing reductions in education budgets, particularly for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), leave many schools struggling to meet even basic requirements. While there have been assurances of reform, tangible changes have yet to materialize. On a positive note, thanks to our networking efforts, community engagement, and strong word-of-mouth referrals, NIAV is beginning to gain

momentum. Schools that have collaborated with us are already recognizing the benefits of our offerings.

In the upcoming months, our priorities include:

- Engaging more schools to participate in trials of NIAV
- Collecting data and testimonials that highlight the positive impact of NIAV on deaf children
- Collaborating with researchers and evaluators to assess effectiveness and bolster our case for broader implementation.

We look forward to what lies ahead and are immensely thankful for our supporters, partners, and the families we serve. Together, we are dismantling barriers to language and literacy for deaf children through Cued Speech interventions, paving the way for brighter futures.

#### **Conclusion:**

Regarding funding, we maintain a hopeful yet pragmatic perspective. Without crucial funds for our core operations, we risk being unable to sustain our charitable activities, which may necessitate reducing employee hours in the financial year 2025 – 2026, ultimately limiting our capacity. Our goal is to preserve our presence in Plymouth and the Southwest while staying true to our identity and mission.





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# DEAF CHOICES UK

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