IMPACT REPORT 2025 - 2026



DEAF CHOICES UK

Thrive with language and literacy for life.

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DCUK Thrive with language and literacy for life

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"It's so nice to have a place to meet other deaf children and parents of deaf children. We feel so lucky to be able to access PDC. The activities are great and the people are really friendly."

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INTRODUCTION

Every deaf child deserves full access to language, learning and relationships. By equipping families, educators and communities with the skills to communicate effectively, Deaf Choices UK (DCUK) helps deaf children develop the confidence, literacy and connections they need to thrive.

This starts with informed choice. Parents need unbiased information about the communication options available to them and their deaf child. Yet many of the 50,000 deaf children in the UK are growing up without access to this information and may never discover Cued Speech or the difference it could make. We want to change this. Please help us spread the word.

Despite a challenging financial year, we protected frontline services and continued to put children and families first. Our one-to-one work across the South West has grown, combining Cued Speech training with practical language and literacy support through our CHOICES programme, resources, films and books.

With support from The National Lottery Community Fund, we strengthened the pathway from home into pre-school and primary education.

Our Nan in a Van resource provides accessible images, animation and Cued Speech skills to help families and professionals build strong foundations for language and literacy.

We have also seen the power of community. Plymouth Deaf Choices (PDC) has become a thriving hub for deaf children, young people and their families. Regular attendance has doubled, growing from seven to 14 families, with 30 families now registered and 22 deaf children and their hearing siblings attending.

The impact goes far beyond numbers. Families are building friendships, reducing isolation and growing in confidence, while parents are becoming active contributors through volunteering, consultation and feedback. Their experiences also give our team a deeper understanding of the families we support.

This successful model of early intervention, educational support and community engagement is now being extended into Torbay and Devon.



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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.

"Carla was impressed by how much R's confidence has improved through using Cued Speech. He used to cry in unfamiliar situation but today he was super confident and happy.

Find out about DCUK
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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:

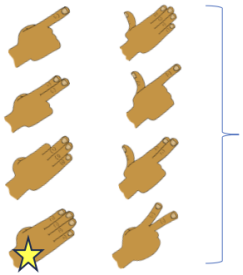
"He watches me cueing far more intently and repeats and mirrors new words and then claps when he has got it right."



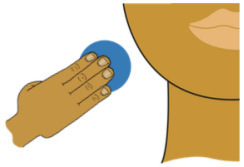
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How to cue single sounds:

1. **Consonant** on its own (no vowel *after* it)



Place the right handshape in the **side** position and say the sound →



e.g /b/

2. **Vowel** on its own (no consonant *before* it)

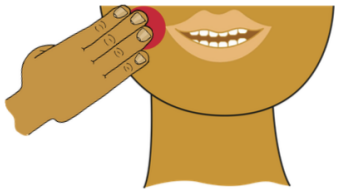


Place the **number 5** handshape onto the right placement and say the sound →



How to cue words:

Place the consonant handshape *onto* the vowel position and say the **word**



e.g BE

Can you see how to cue these words?

off we go



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.

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.



Mum said; "Cueing to him is making such a big difference at home with understanding and communication, and that he looks at her face and mouth intently, for example, I will cue 'go and find your yellow wellies,' and then I just make the sign for wellies too. It's great to use CS and a bit of signing"

A communication support worker in Exeter said; "I've found CS to be so helpful in supporting pupils using the same grammar as the English language, allowing them to perform better in their written exams as they get older."

A CASE FOR DEAF CHOICES UK

In September 2025, our Executive Director received a call from D, a new father whose first child, L, had recently been diagnosed as moderately deaf following newborn screening. D and his wife, E, felt overwhelmed and uncertain about how best to support their daughter.

Having found Deaf Choices UK online, D asked about attending the Plymouth Deaf Choices community coffee morning. During this initial conversation, we discussed the family's needs and introduced our support offer, including home visits from a Regional Family Advisor (RFA) and the use of Cued Speech.

A home visit was arranged, and the family chose to begin learning Cued Speech to support L's early language development. Through weekly visits over eight weeks, D and E quickly developed confidence in cueing and began using it consistently with L. This enabled her to access spoken English visually alongside the auditory input from her hearing aids, supporting early communication and language acquisition.

After three months, the family joined our Sound Adventurers group, delivered in partnershipwith Evolve. This sensory, music-basedgroup supports deaf children aged 0–3 to develop communication through sound, interaction, and visual language. L has now attended for three terms and shows growing confidence and engagement at each session. The group has also provided valuable peer support for D and E, helping to reduce isolation and build connections with other families.

In December, the family attended our Plymouth Deaf Choices Christmas event, bringing together over 30 deaf children and young people. Inspired by their experience, D has since committed to running the London Marathon to raise funds for DCUK, with proceeds supporting the development of a new Sound Adventurers group in Torbay. As Darren notes, Deaf Choices UK has



"provided us with incredible support, guidance, and community — helping us navigate this new journey and giving us the tools to communicate with our daughter through cued speech. Their dedication to supporting deaf and hard of hearing children and their families has already made a huge difference in our lives."

DCUK will continue to support the family through key transitions into early years and education. This case study demonstrates how early, family-centred intervention can improve language access, build parental confidence, and create lasting community impact.

"Deaf Choices has made such a huge difference to our family. When we first found out about our daughter's hearing loss, Deaf Choices were there to answer all of our many questions. We had never heard of Cued Speech, but thanks to Deaf Choices we are now able to confidently communicate with our daughter in a way that lets her view language, and know we are doing everything in our power for her to thrive.

However, one of the most important things for us has been the support network. Meeting other families who are going through a similar experience has made such a difference personally and mentally.

Thanks to Deaf Choices, we feel confident that we are giving our daughter the tools she needs to learn and grow. We are so grateful for the support they have given us and impact they have had on our lives."

OUR ACTIVITIES

Language and Literacy for Life (Ages 0-18)

Countess Weir School
Three children completed NIAV and successfully re-integrated into the mainstream literacy programme after previously being unable to do so. Staff now cue confidently and consistently throughout the school day.

Eggbuckland Community College
Five nursery children made significant progress in language and literacy. A Foundation pupil using NIAV proudly wrote, "I can read." Two Year 1 pupils have also made strong progress and are now confidently reading simple phonics books.

Manadon Vale Primary School
NIAV has increased one pupil's confidence in reading and spelling. Staff have found the Skills Trackers particularly valuable in monitoring progress.

St Margaret's School
Older pupils and staff use Cued Speech confidently throughout the school day. The school is beginning an NIAV trial with younger pupils.

Pilgrim School
Staff have been introduced to NIAV and are preparing to trial the intervention with a deaf pupil and children learning English as an additional language.

Honiton School
School staff and Teachers of the Deaf have been introduced to NIAV and Cued Speech and are now confident using both to support a Foundation pupil.

Collaton St Mary's School
NIAV, alongside British Sign Language and Cued Speech, has increased one Year 2 pupil's confidence in literacy, communication and engagement both at home and school.

Decoy Primary School
Staff are supporting a nursery child using BSL and Cued Speech and are planning to introduce NIAV when the child enters Foundation.

Mayfield Special School
The school remains committed to developing Cued Speech skills, with staff training planned for later in the year.





Quote from a Communication Support Worker "It has been wonderful to watch C grow in confidence and enthusiasm through learning Cued Speech for communication and reading. Cued Speech has become vital for C both at school and at home. Cat's support in teaching me to cue has been invaluable, enabling me to support C's communication and learning. The partnership Cat has built with C, Mum and me has made a real difference. Without Cued Speech, C would miss out on vital communication and access"

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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 the South West region, 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 'At the School Christmas performance, R and H stood in terrified silence only daring to look around them. However, six months later, following specialist intervention in cued speech to support their language and communication, their participation in the Summer assembly was incredible. Cueing and signing all the words to the songs and singing very loudly. It was an extraordinary transformation.

"Both parents were delighted about how Cued Speech has been helping K at school. They wanted to know more about their options for language, communication and literacy, so this first session was a bit of a CHOICES session, explaining the concepts of British Sign Language, and Cued Speech. Both would like to learn to cue."



ACTIVE - OUR WORK THROUGH PLYMOUTH DEAF CHOICES

Over the last year we have continued to develop and support our volunteer-led community group, Plymouth Deaf Choices and with additional funding from the Plymouth LIONS Club, we have been able to provide some great learning experiences and opportunities for our families, which includes deaf children and their hearing siblings.

The Executive Director Henrietta Ireland supports the delivery of this group and she says; *"I love attending this group because it gives me the opportunity to see first-hand the difference DCUK makes to families. Watching deaf children have fun together, build valuable social skills, make friends, and enjoy spending time with their hearing siblings is a real joy."*

The outcomes that we gathered from PDC says it all!

PDC Adult Questionnaire
Does your child enjoy attending PDC? 100% said that their child enjoyed coming to PDC. 100% said that they enjoyed meeting other parents of deaf children and sharing experiences. 100% enjoyed seeing their deaf children playing with deaf peers and being included in all the activities. 100% of parents said that the activities engaged both their hearing and their deaf children.

What benefits do you get as a family from attending?

Increased self confidence
80% said that they were much more confident and 20% said they were a bit more confident.

Improved Communication at home
30%

More inclusion in family activities
70%

More friends with deaf peers
80%

Access to activities we might not be able to afford
20%

Feeling supported as a parent
80% felt very supported and 20% quite supported

"It's so nice to have a place to meet other deaf children and parents of deaf children."

"We feel so lucky to be able to access PDC. The activities are great and the people are really friendly."

"I think that having this monthly meet up is so valuable for both adults and children."

R aged 7 when asked to tell a new child all about PDC said; "It's a really fun place to come and meet friends who are deaf too. We make things and sometimes people come, like magicians or the man with animals. Everybody joins in, sometimes my brother comes; and we even have a Christmas party."

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SOUND ADVENTURERS

Sound Adventurers is for deaf babies aged 0-3 and their parents and carers.

Deaf Choices is delighted to continue its partnership with Evolve Music to deliver this unique programme, giving families the opportunity to experience music-making in a deaf-friendly environment.

Each session has three parts:

- Musical play (45 minutes): A largely non-verbal session designed to create an optimal listening environment while encouraging signing, cueing and attunement between parents and their babies.
- Songs, signs and cues: Families learn simple signs and cues alongside familiar songs, helping parents build confidence and enabling children to join in through signing.
- Refreshments and connection: An extended tea and coffee session where families can chat with one another and with professionals in a relaxed setting, creating valuable opportunities to discuss children's development and share experiences.

Kathy and Cat our two Regional Family Advisors have been providing support with signing and Cued Speech and there are plans for a new group starting up in Torbay in May '26. Future plans include rolling out this successful model in Exeter too. We hope these groups will continue to build strong communities for families of d/Deaf babies and children across the South-West.



Kathy and Cate successfully presented with Evolve at The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf National Conference (BATOD) this year, sharing the success of this model.

Parents from Sound Adventurers
' A huge thank you to you all, for making sure Adventurers continues every week, providing such a safe and supportive space for our family. R is thriving and we believe a huge part of that is with thanks to all of you.'









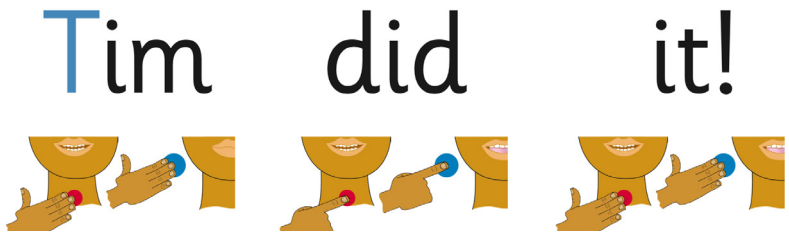
LOVE LITERACY NAN IN A VAN



Going Beyond Sounding-Out

The Literacy intervention that takes phonics for deaf children to the next level. Visual access to language throughout with Cued English and BSL.

- **Blending, synthesising and word-manipulation** in the natural context of whole words, phrases and sentences – this is what makes the Nan resource stand out from other gesture-based tools that only work at a single phoneme level.
- **Meaningful words come first**, phonemes second. Mainstream synthetic phonics programs assume that learners are already competent in the English language, yet we know that is not the case for a many deaf learners.
- **Quick and easy way to put English into your hands**. This approach gives consistent visual and kinaesthetic confirmation of the structure of English words and sentences alongside BSL with copy-me digital avatars and crystal clear graphics.
- **Co-learning is key**, no previous exposure to visual languages is needed for either the learner or the adult reading-partner, this resource is cleverly designed for each of them to learn these skills as they work through the books.



Year-long research project looks at the efficacy of Cued Speech and Nan in a Van

Devon-based Educational Psychologist Dr Adam McCartney and research assistant Jessica Blaker worked with Deaf Choices staff to design a research project looking at the impact of Cued Speech and the Nan in a Van resource with a particular interest in children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder).



Dr Adam McCartney



Jessica Blaker

The research focuses on a deaf child and a hearing child with ASD in two separate schools, each receiving weekly sessions with Jessica to work with the Nan materials and be observed in other lessons.

The areas of study include:

- Cognition/learning
- Curriculum engagement
- Social communication behaviours, such as peer interaction, social awareness, following instructions, attention.

The work so far is showing positive results for both students with each engaging well, the student with ASD is showing particular progress with social awareness and improved engagement. This gives us increasing confidence that Cued Speech and our literacy resource can benefit children with a wide range of Special Educational Needs.



The data collection stage of the project will be completed at the end of July 2026 with results officially published in September.

The results of the skills tracker and external research continuing

New Assessment Package is added to Nan. In response to the request for a bespoke assessment package for the NIAV intervention, each of the ten reading books now has its own assessment protocol. With support from DCAL (Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre at University College London) the assessments were designed to seamlessly follow completion of each reading book, be fun for staff to use and feel like a game for the students!

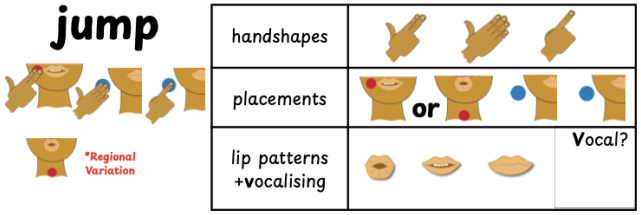
Areas assessed include:

Receptive skills, the ability to:

- Cue-read sounds and words
- Lip-read sounds and words
- Recognise printed letters
- Recognise fingerspelled letters

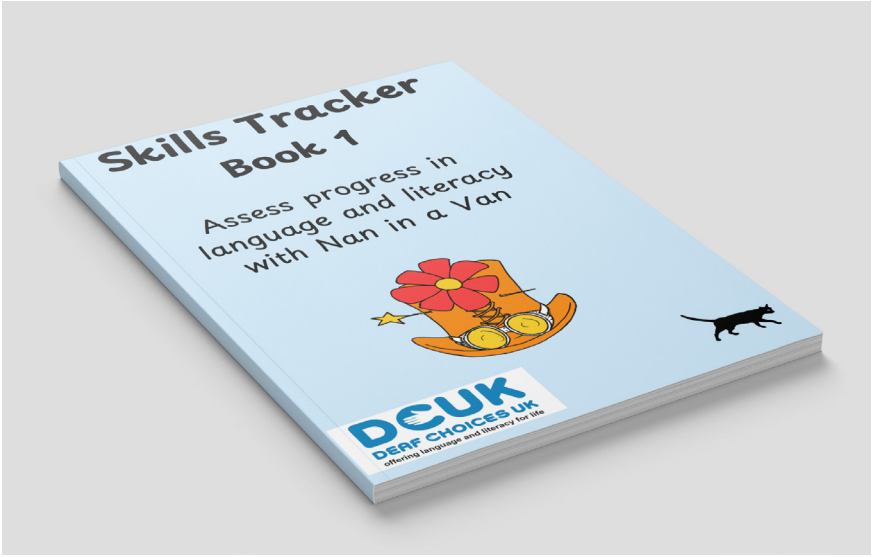
Expressive skills, the ability to:

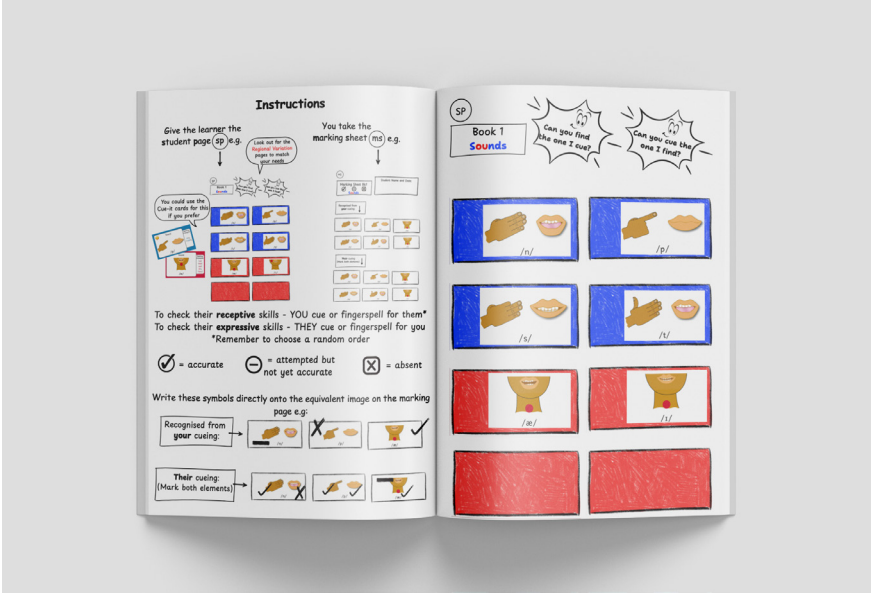
- Cue sounds and words
- Fingerspell the alphabet
- Use English lip patterns (with or without vocalisation)





Skills Tracker





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NETWORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

"H is watching me cueing far more intently and is often repeats and mirrors new words. He knows door, floor, light, sink, toilet, tap"







Birmingham:

- 25th May, Solihull Sensory and Physical Impairment Team NIAV Training

Birmingham:

- 25th July, NASEN (National Association of Special Needs) Live 2026

Birmingham:

- 26th March, The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

Berkshire:

- 25th April, Mary Hare Summer Family Day

Bath:

- 26th January, Division of Educational and Child Pyschology Conference

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OUTCOMES REPORT

We measure three outcomes using data collected on systems impact tracker and by families who have completed a questionnaire.

This year we have included some parental outcomes as it is parents who create the impact of language on their children aged between 0 – 4.

For parents of children aged 0–4, outcomes show reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and improved inclusion.

This is evidenced by:

- 81% of parents feeling more supported and less anxious
- 78% feeling more confident in making language and communication choices
- 87% reporting increased community inclusion

For children, outcomes include improved participation, language development, and confidence: Below shows the % of improvement with qualitative evidence giving examples of the outcome.

68% showed inceased confidence

"We had a lovely morning with R and J taking part in everything from playing instruments to vocalising in the singing section."

"He played so confidently with the different musical instruments. He also joined in the singing at the end."

"We played outside and he is much better now at playing with some of the other children"

"He joins in so well on the carpet in 'home corner' at school and was happy to stand up in the front to be a 'speckled frog' in our story animation."

71% showed Improved Family and peer group Participation

"E had brought her Mum too. It was a lovely session and all the babies were engaged in watching and joining in with the instruments. We sang some songs and then the centre was opened so we had coffee inside. I had a good conversation with E and her Mum. She had had her first visit from SP and had learnt more about how L hears sound. This had upset her and Dad. However, I was able to reassure her that they as parents are doing everything they can and that they are making the best choices for L.

82 % showed improved language and Literacy

"We also started a book 'That's not my bee'. They were coping well with it but obviously slow at this stage. We also talked about the way to introduce BSL and CS together."

"He did some phonics with St today and the sound he has remembered is /s/. In the afternoon I did the phonics cards with him and got him to match the cue cards to the school ones which he did easily."

"He did an Easter egg painting and he said red and yellow without my help and then he said green when I cued it to him. He recognised the shapes; circle and square"

2025/2026

60 Home visits

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



2025/26 **419** deaf children have been supported through the work of **Cued Speech UK.**

2025/26

71

Preschool and School visits

2025/26

27

Online Cued Speech Training Sessions

2025/26

12

Nan in a Van demos with another 5 booked

2025/26

56

Families in community CS groups

2025/26

23

Deaf related events attended

2025/26

34

CS Foundation and further training

REVIEW AND PLAN

Over the next three years, DCUK aims to expand the successful Plymouth delivery model across all three local authorities and establish it as a model of excellence that can be replicated in other regions. Alongside regional expansion, DCUK will continue to maintain its UK-wide offer through online training and remote family support delivered via Zoom, which has proven highly effective over the last year.

Communication and Marketing
DCUK will develop a communications and marketing strategy designed to increase awareness and engagement amongst all stakeholdeårs, ensuring that Cued Speech becomes a familiar and accessible concept for families with deaf children across the UK.

Key Aims

- To ensure all families with deaf children understand the support and services offered by DCUK
- To increase awareness of Nan in a Van amongst primary schools across the UK
- To promote the evidence base, delivery model, and impact of NIAV for deaf children and children who benefit from kinaesthetic approaches to learning
- To strengthen DCUK's profile nationally through digital communication, partnerships, training, and community engagement
- To plan a fund-raising Gala Ball in partnership with Evolve music to engage all stakeholders and increase awareness to corporate sponsors. April 2027.

The success of this integrated model, which combines early intervention, educational support and community engagement, has demonstrated the importance of providing support throughout a child's developmental journey rather than at isolated points in time. As a result of the positive outcomes achieved in Plymouth, we are now replicating this model in two additional local authority areas: Torbay and Devon.

With funding received from Henry Smith in November, in the form of a three-year grant to support the delivery and development of our regional model of intervention, the team felt re-energised and motivated.

Trustees agreed that we could employ an additional Regional Family advisor to add capacity to the team and with her specialist knowledge of working as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator in a primary school. Cat Rusbridge has provided invaluable skills and energy to the team. She has already working towards setting up a Sound Adventurers music group in Torbay and already has families signed up to attend.

It has been wonderful to welcome our Training Lead, Cate Calder, back into the office, following her return to Devon, and to have her combined expertise, skills and knowledge on- hand is priceless. Our Regional Family Advisor, Kathy Kenny has been studying to become a Teacher of the Deaf and has been promoting our work and success in education everywhere she goes, plus she continues her amazing work with families and schools throughout Plymouth.

The people who make up our core administrative staff have been amazing, showing loyalty in a time of challenge and responding to change with good grace, good will and dedication.

The end of this year has seen an exciting trajectory for change and growth with incredibly strong evidence for the efficacy and integrity of Nan in a Van from over seven primary schools from across the UK. We have engaged with more families in our Community groups, and continued to provide ongoing home support for parents of newly diagnosed deaf babies.

This year we are excited about our future.

C's Mum says he is doing so well, he's more confident, he's finding more things funny, and now you are all seeing the boy we see at home.

Since working with C we've had a focus on encouraging him to see the benefit of engagement and communication with others. He sees the fun he can have with everyone now and is finding his voice."





Henrietta Ireland
Executive Director, Totnes Office



Louise Creed
Office Manager,
Totnes Office



Cate Calder
Training Lead,
UK wide



Kathy Kenny
Cued Speech
Regional Adviser,
Devon/Cornwall



Debbie Hawke
Senior Team
Administrator,
Totnes Office



Mark Murton
Fundraising & Administrative
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Freelance Cued Speech
Regional Advisor
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Consultants:
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Harrison Pidgeon, Graphic Design
Nicki Bidgood, Human Resources
Tobin Broadbent, Illustrator

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