

# HEARING MATTERS

2022



**Raising  
Awareness  
in Schools**

**Inspirational  
Community  
Stories**

**Accessibility  
Through  
Innovation**

**Advice for  
Deaf Teens  
& Families**



NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR  
**Deaf & Hard of Hearing**

# "Take That First Step"

## COREY'S LIFE CHANGING HEARING SYSTEM

Corey Benson is a mental health team leader who spends most of his days making a profound difference in the lives of those in his community. Born with microtia and atresia on his left ear, Corey was diagnosed with conductive hearing loss from birth and can only rely on his right ear.

Corey received his first Ponto™ bone anchored hearing system (BAHS) for his left ear at the age of 22 and reflects on how his BAHS has had a positive impact on his social wellbeing and in the workplace.

*"I am engaging with clients every day and I would always find it difficult making sure that I could not just hear them, but also understand what they were saying."*

*Before having the Ponto 5 Mini (BAHS), I would distance myself from my friends. I would avoid social environments where I knew it was going to be a bit of a struggle to hear what people were saying," says Corey.*

*"[Now] I have been able to engage more, and I haven't been so tired from exhausting myself to hear what everyone is saying... there has been a massive difference in the way that I've been able to build rapport and build that relationship with my clients."*

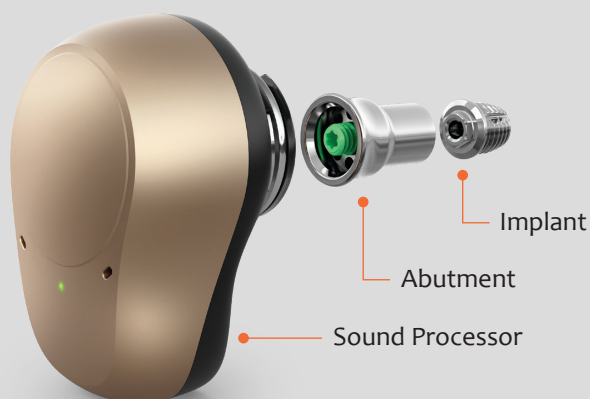
There have also been some big surprises for Corey within the home after he was fitted with the Ponto BAHS.

*"... [I am] able to hear when the door bell goes ding-dong or when the kettle has finished boiling. There have been some really big surprises that I've been able to hear for the first time, even if it's just the ding of the oven finishing."*



A BAHS consists of a small implant that is surgically inserted in the bone behind your ear and a sound processor that you click onto the abutment of the implant. Instead of amplifying sound and sending it through the ear canal like a conventional hearing aid, the BAHS sound processor transforms the sound into vibrations that are transmitted through your bone via the implant and directly into the cochlea in the inner ear.

A BAHS may not be the preferred solution for everyone. When asked about his recommendation for people looking into a hearing device, Corey suggests *"Take that first step. Have that conversation with your audiologists around what options are available and make sure that you explore those options with them."*



Scan this QR code to watch Corey's story.

### Find out more

Your hearing care professional will be able to assess your suitability for a BAHS and recommend the best course of action for your hearing. If you would like to speak to someone about the technology and support, please contact Stacey Butler at Oticon Medical on +64 (0)27 363 0998 or [stbt@oticonmedical.com](mailto:stbt@oticonmedical.com)



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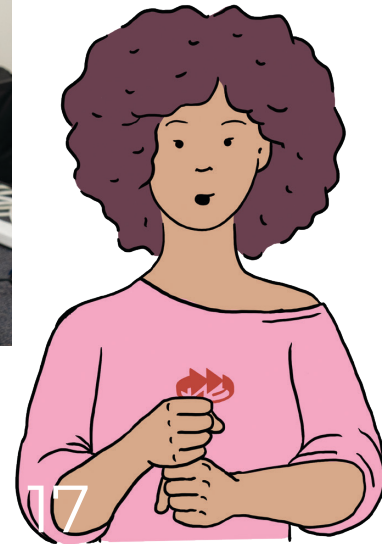
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This edition of Hearing Matters was made possible thanks to funding provided by the Lottery Grants Board.



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Awareness in  
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## Welcome

The last two years have brought unprecedented challenges, and I am proud of the way the team here at NFDHH have worked tirelessly to support our community. We have persevered through the ups and downs of Covid-19, all while striving to improve our services and programmes.

In 2022, the School Screening programme has reached 1,495 students across 18 schools and is on track to meet our target of 40 schools this year. It is a significant jump from the 15 schools we reached last year, enabling more students to receive much-needed hearing loss diagnoses, treatment, and support.

Protecting our littlest ears from permanent harm has also been a primary focus in 2022. Thanks to our community of donors, our Sound Monkey programme has grown substantially since its launch. 70+ preschools are now using our sound monitoring devices around the country. Meaning hundreds of children are learning about harmful noise levels and how to protect their precious ears. What's more, preschools love these devices. In a recent survey, 85% of participants agreed that the Sound Monkey was a useful product for teachers.

Advocating for accessibility also remains a key focus at NFDHH. As a member of the Access Alliance, we continue to work with the Government to progress accessibility legislation and ensure the Deaf and hard of hearing voices are being heard.

These are all incredible achievements, which would not be possible without your support. Thank you for believing in our organisation and the work we do.

On behalf of all the team at NFDHH, I hope that you enjoy this new edition of Hearing Matters and are inspired by the stories of community, connection, and innovation.

Natasha Gallardo,  
Chief Executive



The NFDHH Team are back in the office!



Our School Hearing Screening Programme and our work in preschools has seen significant growth in 2022.

# Hundreds of Young Kiwis Could Be Struggling With an Undiagnosed Hearing Loss



Living with hearing loss can be incredibly challenging. Perhaps even more difficult - is living with an undiagnosed hearing loss.

For many adolescents, managing school with an undiagnosed hearing loss is a constant struggle. At home and in class, they might seem distracted or antisocial, ignoring people or withdrawing. They struggle to follow the teacher's instructions or engage in group discussions. They are exhausted at the end of each day and may even develop social anxiety or suffer from depression.

Sadly, young people internalise their struggle, as the hidden impact of their undiagnosed hearing loss is their 'normal.'



Nathalie, Selwyn College teacher

For Nathalie, a teacher at Selwyn College, this was her experience. She did not receive her diagnosis until she was 27.

*"Everyone just thought that I wasn't paying attention, but actually, I couldn't hear...my hearing is similar to that of a 90-year-old."*

*I also found out that I had a vestibular schwannoma, which is a benign tumour on my left ear. It was scary... especially not knowing what treatment would be required..."*

In hindsight, Nathalie felt her hearing loss significantly impacted her ability to engage in class.

*"Growing up, because we were a migrant family, we didn't have much money to get [my hearing] checked. My parents had no clue that I had a hearing loss... If it was a subject I didn't like, like maths, I'd sit at the back and drift away. And no one noticed to be honest, because in a classroom - there are 30 other kids."*

In Nathalie's experience, an early diagnosis would have helped her to engage with her education.

*"My parents thought I wasn't achieving because they thought I was slack, and so did the teachers. So that sort of ruined my passion for subjects, which is a shame because if I had had the tools earlier on - I think I would have done much better."*

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*"If I had an early diagnosis, I would have enjoyed school more. Because of my hearing loss, I didn't want to speak up. I was worried I wouldn't hear or understand what they were saying...I only got more confident when I learned it wasn't my fault."*

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Unfortunately, hundreds of adolescents are falling through the gaps. It is not only the mild hearing losses that have been missed, but also severe. These children were either missed by the national screening programmes (Newborn Screening, or B4 School Check), or they developed their hearing loss during their primary school years. Tragically, many young Kiwis are struggling, with parents and teachers having little idea how overwhelming their experience might be.

Nathalie hopes to see teenagers with hearing loss picked up early - so that they get the support and tools they need as early as possible.

*"There was no screening programme [in secondary schools] when I was growing up, but I can see how much it would have made a difference, especially in lower socio-economic schools, where the parents aren't able to get their kids hearing checked if there seems like there is a problem."*



they can seek the support and treatment they need during adolescence and not wait as Nathalie did until she was in her 20s.

### Kids Cannot Afford to Wait

The rising rate of preventable youth hearing loss is recognised as being at a crisis level around the world.\* Here in New Zealand, the prevalence of youth hearing loss has been estimated to be as many as 16,549 young people, with the total cost implications of youth hearing loss estimated to be \$18.7 million.\*\* There are also long-term impacts on education, social well-being and future employment prospects. This is why timely diagnosis, support and treatment are so essential.

Since NFDHH launched a pilot Hearing Screening Programme in 2019, the programme has grown significantly from 3 schools to 40. A big driver in expanding the programme has been the alarming number of young people being picked up by the programme with an undiagnosed hearing loss.

In 2022, NFDHH is set to provide free Hearing Screenings to as many as 5,000 students. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are over 350 secondary schools in New Zealand, and potentially hundreds of young people who are managing their hearing loss alone without hearing healthcare or support.

### Meet the Team Behind the Programme

Agnes and Bonnie run NFDHH's Hearing Screening Programme, screening the hearing of year 9 students nationwide. It is busy work coordinating with schools across the North and South Islands and following up with parents to ensure kids who receive an abnormal result attend their free full hearing assessment at a Triton Hearing clinic. The team are motivated by the many hard of hearing teenagers who need support.

*"We see kids isolate themselves and withdraw. Often the teacher thinks there may be a problem with learning. The student is either unaware that their hearing loss is the problem or too shy to let the teacher know. Their education suffers as a result,"* says Agnes.

As well as providing much-needed screening, the team are big believers in the other services the programme provides.

*"We educate kids about hearing health. Most kids have no idea that they're harming their hearing permanently by listening to recreational noise, such as music through headphones. That's why it is so important that they know the risks because they won't get their hearing back,"* says Bonnie.



Bonnie and Agnes

### The Hearing Screening Programme is changing lives

Thanks to NFDHH's pilot Hearing Screening Programme, a total of 1,305 students were screened across 15 schools in 2021. Of the students screened, 20% were picked up with an abnormal result, and 57% of these students had a confirmed hearing loss. These diagnoses have been vital for these young people as they start their secondary school education. It means

# THEIR HEARING IS IN YOUR HANDS

**20%** of young people screened in 2021 received an abnormal hearing result.\*\*

**29%** of students listen to music for more than 3 hours per day.\*\*

**57%** of students referred for a full diagnosis had a confirmed hearing loss.\*\*

Studies indicate up to

**17%** of adolescents have hearing tests that suggest noise-induced hearing loss.\*\*\*

The statistics speak for themselves.

By supporting our work in schools, you'll be helping us to bring Hearing Screening to

**60 schools**

across New Zealand in 2023.



Make a real difference to the hearing health of young Kiwis through screening, treatment and education. NFDHH does not receive government funding. Our work is made possible thanks to our supporters' generosity.

Donate now at [nfd.org.nz/give](https://nfd.org.nz/give)

"We also raise awareness about the experiences of being Deaf or hard of hearing, so kids and teachers are more aware of those students who have hearing loss. Just a few changes to how people communicate can make a world of difference. So encouraging everyone to be more considerate with their communication in the classroom is key," explains Agnes.

## 60 Schools in 2023

NFDHH aim to bring the Hearing Screening Programme to 60 schools in 2023. It is incredible progress, but there are still so many more schools to reach. This is an urgent issue. NFDHH has partnered with the Hearing Sector to push for a national

Government-funded programme, like the Newborn Screening and B4 School Check programmes.

"We want to ensure young Kiwis do not continue to fall through the gaps. But until there is a national programme, we are working hard to ensure young people with an undiagnosed hearing loss can receive the diagnosis they need now," states Agnes.

Learn more about this programme: [nfd.org.nz/school-programmes](https://nfd.org.nz/school-programmes)

**Sources:** \*The World Report on Hearing 2021, \*\* Youth Hearing loss in New Zealand: a focus on secondary schools 2022, \*\*\* NIDCD, 2019.



# Deaf Scene



## Barbie gets hearing aids!

In June, Mattel released the first Barbie with hearing aids, giving children the chance to imagine even more possibilities! "It's important that kids can play out stories with dolls that reflect themselves and the world around them," says Lisa McKnight of Mattel.

## NZSL interpreted theatre for kids.

If you live in Auckland and haven't taken your child to a Tim Bray Theatre Company performance - you're missing out! TBTC were the first theatre company in New Zealand to offer NZSL interpreted performances and welcome Deaf children and their families to enjoy the magic of theatre. Tickets are at the discounted price of \$21.50 for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Find out more: [timbray.org.nz](http://timbray.org.nz)



## Auckland Theatre Company offer NZSL interpreted shows on the main stage

Did you know that every show in Auckland Theatre Company's 2022 main stage season has at least one NZSL-interpreted performance?

The trained interpreters carefully translate the play's script before the performance and work closely with the cast and crew to incorporate the director's vision into the final interpretation.

Tickets for these shows are also offered at a great price of \$20, for those who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Find out more: [atc.co.nz/access](http://atc.co.nz/access)

## The Simpsons first Deaf character

In 2022 The Simpsons featured a Deaf actor and American Sign Language (ASL) for the first time.

"It's very hard to do a 'first' after 722 episodes. But I couldn't be more excited about this one," executive producer Al Jean said.

This comes amongst a welcome increase in the visibility of Deafness on the big screen, including award-winning movies CODA, A Quiet Place II, and Eternals.





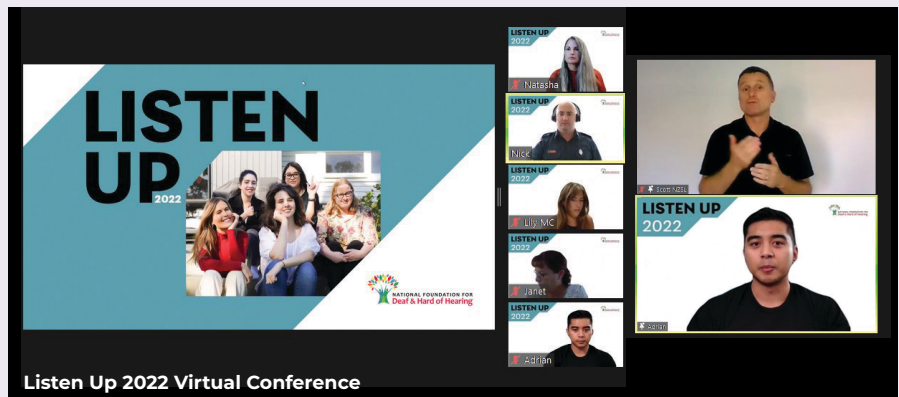
# New Heights for Hearing Awareness Month!

Each March, the Deaf and hard of hearing community gather to celebrate Hearing Awareness Month. Kicking off with World Hearing Day on the 3rd of March, Hearing Awareness Month 2022 was our biggest yet. It featured an incredible line-up of events that shone a spotlight on hearing health and raised awareness for the experiences of the 880,000+ New Zealanders who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

We joined organisations around the world to celebrate World Hearing Day...

This year, the World Health Organization's theme was "To hear for life, listen with care!" It was an important day with the launch of the global standard for safe listening in entertainment venues and the release of the Safe Listening Handbook.

To spread the word, we created an interactive Safe Listening filter for social media that was used by many on the day to share the importance of safe listening with friends and family.



... we hosted our first virtual Listen Up Conference...

In our two-hour webinar, attendees benefited from the experience of industry experts and explored practical changes they could implement to make their workplaces more accessible.

Attendees also enjoyed listening to an honest discussion between panellists Adrian Zuniga, Janet Parker, and Nick Linton who have embraced their hearing loss to reach their full potential in their careers and personal lives.

We ended the day with an interactive workshop on Deaf culture and New Zealand Sign Language. All in all, it was a fantastic morning!

... and we shared the Safe Listening message around New Zealand.

During Hearing Awareness Month, the Foundation provided free hearing screenings at schools, delivered workshops to businesses around New Zealand, opened our grants and scholarships to the community, and ran a free NZSL workshop on our Facebook page.

We also partnered with Triton Hearing to raise funds for our community by encouraging Kiwis to get their hearing tested during Triton's Great Big Hearing Check.

It was great to have so many people involved, and we look forward to an outstanding Hearing Awareness Month in 2023!

**To hear for life,  
listen with care!**



# Jackson

## SHARES HIS STORY



19-year-old Jackson was the recipient of our Noonan Bequest scholarship in 2021. We recently caught up with him to learn how his study has been going and to discover a little more about his hearing loss journey.

Jackson and his mum were researching scholarships online when they found NFDHH's Noonan Bequest Scholarship.

“Receiving the scholarship has had a massive influence on how well I've done this year... I'm studying a Bachelor of Commerce at Otago University and I used the money to buy a computer... In my second semester, all [university] classes were done online, and just having access to a quality computer really helped me...”

“It's so great now how our lectures are all recorded so if I miss something [because I am unable to hear], I'll just write down the time and then can easily go back and look at it later.”

Jackson was diagnosed with hearing loss in primary school and received his first pair of hearing aids when he was seven.

Despite not having any friends at school with hearing loss, Jackson was grateful that his Mum and younger sister could understand what he was going through as they also have hearing loss, which has helped him be open and honest.

“I bring it [my hearing loss] up to people and let them know that I have a hearing issue. At work sometimes people can get frustrated about it, but I'm not too bothered by it – it's nothing I can control.

... I don't think anyone thinks anything differently of me because of it. There might have been a few jokes about it at primary school, but no one really cares about that stuff anyway.”

At times, it can be frustrating getting others to repeat themselves.

“When I'm not wearing [my hearing aids], it's difficult. Especially having to re-ask people “Hey, can you say that again?” Sometimes I even end up asking two times and then people go, don't worry about it. That stuff can be rather frustrating because I clearly want to hear what you are saying, and you just can't be bothered anymore. I get annoyed by it.

I can understand, you don't want to repeat yourself, four or five times, but STILL... That's probably the one thing that can grind my gears a little bit.”

“Hearing loss also meant that at school and even now in lectures you just have to always sit front

of the class and stuff... You know, be closer to people when you're talking to them. It's just the little things where you do need to put in that bit more effort and be aware of it.”

...but Jackson doesn't let his hearing loss hold him back. He'd like other teenagers going through a hearing loss diagnosis to try and focus on the positives because hearing loss is a fact of life.

“Just because you are Deaf, don't take [being Deaf] out on yourself. It's something you can't control and you're not at fault for it. And when you do meet snarky people, don't bother with them.”

“It's also really great to see more schools teaching sign language. I remember in intermediate, we had two weeks of learning sign language. Basic stuff like your name, how to say hello, goodbye etc. And it just normalises it and means other people that aren't Deaf or don't know anyone Deaf, are aware of it.”

## LEARN ABOUT OUR GRANTS

You may be eligible to receive funding through our grants & scholarships. Go to [nfd.org.nz](https://nfd.org.nz)

**HELP FUTURE  
GENERATIONS OF  
NEW ZEALANDERS  
LOOK  
AFTER  
THEIR  
PRECIOUS  
HEARING**



## Let's Make Our Preschools Safe Sound Environments

This year, 70+ preschools across New Zealand have taken a proactive step towards protecting Kiwi kids' little ears. They've installed a Sound Monkey, a sound monitoring device that helps to keep noise levels safe in classrooms and play areas.

The Hits Drive Show radio star Brad Watson is grateful that the ears of his beautiful boy Finn, who was diagnosed as Deaf, will be protected alongside his classmates while at preschool.

"When Finn goes to preschool he'll be protected from harmful noise levels by monitoring devices installed by the National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing called Sound Monkeys, which measures decibel levels in classrooms across the country..."

With your support, we can ensure more little ears are protected and raise the number of preschools to receive a Sound Monkey to 200 in 2023!

**Protect tiny ears today by donating a Sound Monkey device to a New Zealand preschool.**

Head to [nfd.org.nz/give](http://nfd.org.nz/give) to donate.

# Life-proof



A Sonova brand

**Audéo™ Life** is the world's first waterproof\* rechargeable hearing aid with the performance of Phonak Paradise technology. Be reassured you can live life to the fullest with Audéo Life.

**Email us and ask for your free trial**  
[freetrial@phonak.com](mailto:freetrial@phonak.com)

We will get in touch to arrange your free Audéo™ Life trial with a partner clinic.

\* Up to 50cm (excludes receivers)

**PHONAK**  
life is on



# KARA TECHNOLOGIES

## RE-IMAGING ACCESSIBILITY FOR NZSL THROUGH DIGITAL INNOVATION

Imagine a world where pre-recorded messages in public places like train stations, hospitals and airports, even civil emergency alerts, could be easily accessed by people who use New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). For the team behind Kara Technologies, it is not a question of if but when this could be a reality.

The founders at Kara Technologies are driven by the desire to make NZSL more accessible using cutting-edge digital technology. Their solution: hyper-realistic digital avatars that provide astoundingly life-like translations in sign language. The early potential of this technology has been explored through narrated children's picture books and new protocols for Covid-19 support. From here, the possible uses for this technology are limitless.

We talk with Arash Tayebi (Co-Founder) and Grace Covey (Communications Manager and NZSL Expert) at Kara Technologies about the amazing work the team are developing to help make sign language more accessible to the Deaf community.

The team at Kara Technologies have made a lot of progress over the last few years, but I can imagine it wasn't an overnight success.

**Grace:** “When Arash first started...the [Deaf] community looked at the first generation of avatars and rejected them. [They said] give up you're wasting your time. But he was so determined.

And when he went back with the third-generation avatar the response was just so overwhelmingly positive. They said ‘You’ve got to keep going! We just can’t wait to see what else you can create...’”

Underpinning Kara Technologies’ mission is the relationship between Deaf culture and technology. The small team engage the Deaf community from day zero in their design pipeline.

**Arash:** “We believe that the technology and Deaf culture and heritage go hand in hand...Once Kara Tech got the support from the Deaf community, we also got an extra brain. Suddenly, our small company became like thousands of people working with us...they gave us some really good feedback and guidance.”

The support and feedback from the Deaf community have informed the unique motion capture software Kara Technologies has developed to create digital avatars that can accurately sign with full facial

expression, which is so important for expressing grammar and tone in sign language. They have since gone on to explore the potential uses for supporting the Deaf community during emergencies.

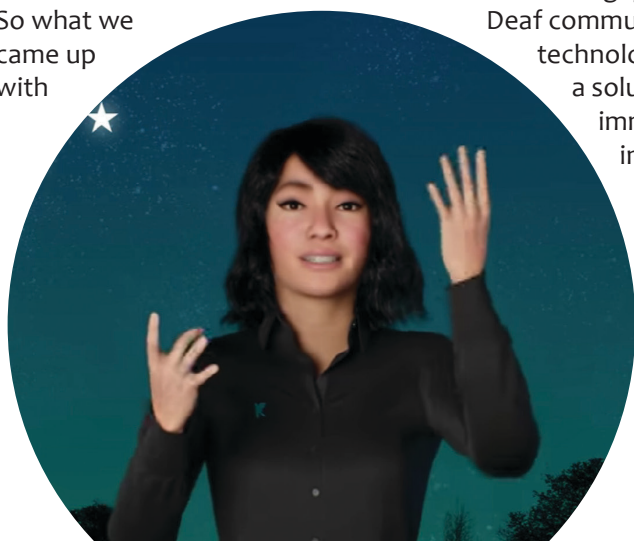
[Can you tell us about the work you've been doing to support New Zealand's Deaf community during the Covid-19 pandemic?](#)

**Arash:** During Covid, the Government started exploring our technology....Every week, they would announce a new level of lockdown... and we would need to deliver a message as soon as possible.

We have developed an approach of putting different vocabulary and sentences together and blending them in a way that doesn't look like Frankenstein... So we pre-recorded everything... then when we know it's level three, we just put the message together... It proved this approach would work.

The Government also announced a new phone line that people could call, and go through certain [Covid-related] questions. Based on your answers you get different results. But how would a Deaf person navigate this call?

So what we came up with



A Matariki message presented by one of Kara Technologies' digital avatars.

is - you log into a website and our pre-recorded message would ask you in sign language: "Hey, do you have a fever?" You say yes or no. With a yes or no question, we could provide some peace of mind, or "hey, you have to stay at home and lockdown" or "go and get tested" or "go to the hospital immediately."

It was a side project showing that in times of hardship if we want to provide a solution we have to go beyond. We can't just provide a phone number."

[How can your digital avatars support interpreters in New Zealand?](#)

**Grace:** "We're here to be a compliment to the interpreters. Human interpreters are wonderful, we cannot do without them. But they are a limited resource. So, if you're using this phone line to ask about Covid and you're getting the same questions again and again...it is not the best use of time to have a human signing the same questions over and over again when you could just record it once."

**Arash:** "When an emergency happens, the hearing community usually hear the news instantly. But there's a gap for the Deaf community and our technology can provide a solution with immediate access in the event of an emergency. Then the human interpreter can come in and provide more detail. [Our service is] all about bridging the gap."

[What's next for Kara Technologies?](#)

**Arash:** "We are working with a branch of civil defense called NEMA, National Emergency Management Agency, who are responsible for sending messages across New Zealand. This is when you get your phone notification text.

So once you receive a text message in english, there should be a link at the end, which says click for NZSL. And when you click, even if you don't have data on your phone, you should be able to see the video message in NZSL. This is something that we are very keen to explore with NEMA."

**Grace:** "It's amazing how many areas you could have this solution.

Anything is possible. We can have a URL link to the video on emergency messages, social media, TVs, bus stations, weather reports, flight announcements, train stations...We can share it anywhere that is possible for the community to access."

*How can the Deaf community get involved?*

**Arash:** "The way we always talk about Kara is like a baby. What you feed the baby is very crucial. Feedback and support are like nutrition for the baby...There are so many unknown areas for innovation, and we need the Deaf community to help open our eyes. It's a two-way conversation. You can support us by sharing your ideas with us."

Check out Kara Technologies' latest children's picture books *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Kiwi One and Kiwi Two* narrated in NZSL by a digital avatar: [kara.tech/library](https://kara.tech/library)

# Helping Businesses Lead the Way



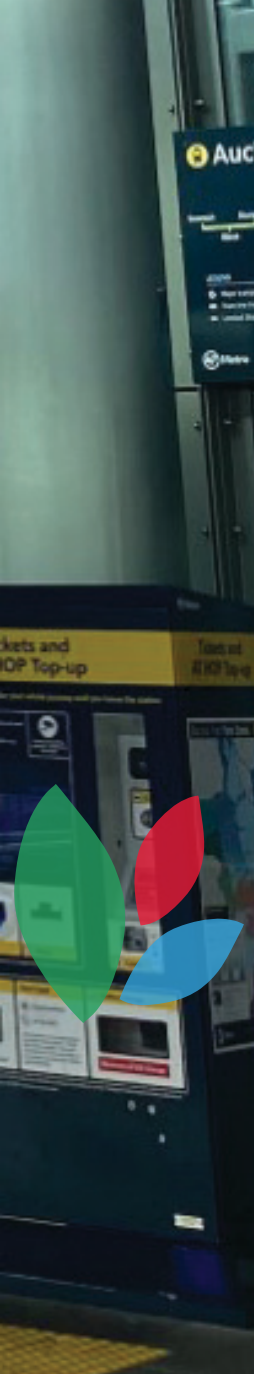
It's no secret that hearing loss affects people of all ages. In New Zealand, more than 880,000 people are Deaf or hard of hearing with 38% aged between 18-64 (working age). As levels of hearing loss continue to rise around the globe, it's only natural that workplaces reflect these figures. This means businesses will have to adapt to support employees and customers with hearing loss.

To help New Zealand businesses to become more inclusive and responsive to the needs of Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwis, we created the Hearing Accredited Workplace Programme (HAWP). Launched in late 2020, we have worked with some incredible organisations, including Heartland Bank, Treescape, Auckland District Health Board, Auckland University of Technology and Auckland Transport.

We also offer our targeted workshops as stand-alone seminars for businesses who aren't ready to join HAWP yet. These cover everything from supporting Deaf and hard of hearing customers to Deaf awareness and an introduction to sign language.

*“We jumped at the chance to partner with NFDHH. We truly value the work we've done to date and look forward to a long and meaningful partnership.”*

- Brett Bishop, Auckland Transport



## Auckland Transport: Creating "Easy Journeys" for the Deaf and hard of hearing.

Auckland Transport (AT) are committed to employing and supporting a workforce that reflects the face of Tamāki Makaurau. With 1 in 6 New Zealanders living with hearing loss, AT has made a strong commitment to the HAWP programme.

Significant action that AT has taken includes:

- Recruitment agencies have been briefed on Auckland Transport's ambition to recruit a diverse workforce, including people with hearing loss.
- Communication support, such as a sign language interpreter, or a speech-to-text app, is available at interviews.
- AT offices provide small quiet rooms for people to use for focussed work.
- Staff have been able to attend Deaf Awareness Workshops.
- Opportunity for staff to test their hearing at onsite kiosks.

*"Auckland Transport is also currently consulting with Warren and Mahoney Architects to further enhance and make improvements to our work environment that will benefit our hard of hearing people. Another thing we are doing is running sign language classes for all people".* Brett Bishop, Auckland Transport.



## Auckland University of Technology: Valuing Inclusion and Diversity.

“Becoming a Hearing Accredited Workplace has given AUT an opportunity to examine our workplace through a new lens and better understand what is working well and highlight areas of improvement.”  
Kate Birch, Auckland University of Technology.

Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is focussed on fostering hearing aware culture; from staff workshops to accessible recruitment processes, the team at AUT have been enthusiastic about their hearing accredited journey from the get-go.



**AUT celebrating becoming Hearing Accredited.**

In 2022, AUT continue to promote student and staff communications about noise-induced hearing loss and how to protect hearing. They are running targeted campaigns for high-risk students and ensure that posters are visible in noisy areas. AUT will also share personal stories from staff who are affected by hearing loss in their TUIA News Stories in 2022. They also offer free NZSL classes to staff.

*“As part of our staff benefits, our employees can complete New Zealand Sign Language papers for free that are offered by the School of Languages. This provides our staff with valuable skills that can be used to communicate with our Deaf community and provide a more inclusive environment. We are excited to continue our journey with NFDHH and work through our activities planned for 2022.”*

Kate Birch, Auckland University of Technology.

# Community, Coffee & Connection

The Otago Deaf Society focuses on creating a supportive space for Dunedin's Deaf community to connect and be themselves. We talk to committee member Amy Taylor-Connell about their NZSL coffee group and the Society's aspirations.

## What is the focus of the Otago Deaf Society?

"We give time and space to people in the community... People need those face-to-face interactions and the friendship connections.

We put on regular events and provide a hall [which is] a hub for people to come. It's a place to make coffee and for people to sit together. It's very much a base for the Deaf community in Dunedin."

## What is it like to attend one of the Society's NZSL Coffee Groups?

"I think, initially, it can be quite intimidating if you're not part of the community... coming into a room with a whole lot of Deaf people who are signing, and they are loud. But once you are part of it, it's a really awesome community.

It's also a nice treat for people. We sponsor people to have a coffee, it doesn't cost them anything. They just come along and everybody chats. Some of it's in sign language and some of it's in English... It's about making connections and having a fun time with your friends."

## Who comes?

"It is hugely intergenerational! And, it is great for people to have that intergenerational interaction... For the older people, especially through COVID, they have been very isolated. Also, a lot of younger people have more connections to the hearing community... thanks to really good hearing aids and cochlear implants... So it sort of bridges a gap.

I've met people I never would have met, in an intergenerational sense. There are people that come along, who have no spoken English language... with huge life experience. [They have] so much to give, so much to learn from."

## Was the coffee group the way that you first connected with the Otago Deaf Society?

"Yes. I've got to say I stood outside the door a long time before I was brave enough to go walk in. But I'm so glad I did it."

## Why are events like this so important?

"We must not underestimate the toll on mental health that being Deaf can have. What matters is the man who is profoundly Deaf, who hasn't seen anybody all week who has now had a conversation in his own language and a social interaction. His mental health status has been lifted. Maybe he goes out that afternoon with a bit more confidence. And maybe he feels like - I can go out in the community... and greet my neighbours, even though I don't speak English.

[Coffee groups are] a very economical way of making a big difference. It's not rocket science, it's just a group of people getting together and speaking their own language and socialising."

Read the full interview on our blog at [nfd.org.nz/blog](http://nfd.org.nz/blog)



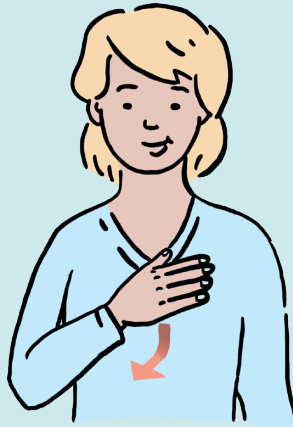


# Learn to Order Your Coffee

## USING SIGN LANGUAGE!



I

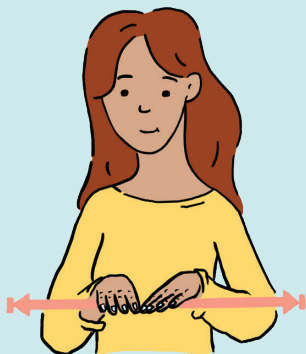


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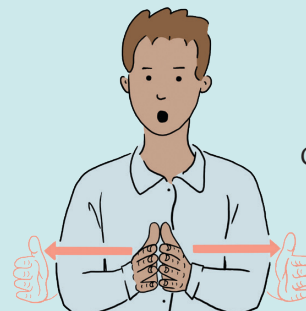


COFFEE

Options you might like to order:

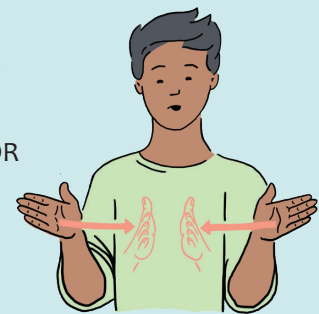


FLAT



LONG

OR



SHORT

OR



WHITE



BLACK



ENJOY!

Find more NZSL resources at [nfd.org.nz/resources](https://nfd.org.nz/resources)

# Shirvaun

## SHARES HER STORY

Shirvaun Abbott is a determined young woman. Although her hearing loss and the Covid-19 lockdowns have not been easy, Shirvaun is not giving up on her dream of becoming a teacher of the Deaf.

She is currently in her second year at university, studying childhood education. Shirvaun was also the recipient of our Deaf Education Scholarship, which has helped her focus on her studies sooner.

“It has meant I can get into the course and study better, not worry about also trying to save up for it,” says the 21-year-old.

“I really like NZSL (New Zealand Sign Language) because it's based on your body language. For English, it takes time to understand academic words...”

Shirvaun was born Deaf, but her hearing parents did not realise until she was two years old as there was no history of hearing loss in the family. When they moved from South Africa to New Zealand, they sought help for Shirvaun's hearing, and she was fitted with a cochlear implant soon after.

“I used to hate it [the cochlear implant] because of the noise. I kept taking it off, and my parents were trying to push me to wear it so I could get used to it.” she recalls.

“They had all the wires and the batteries in the back, so it was quite heavy. As the technology changed, it became smaller and it now it goes to my ears. So I don't feel anything.”

Growing up in Auckland, Shirvaun attended a mainstream school with a Deaf Unit, learning English and sign language alongside her other subjects. Her parents do not know NZSL but have supported her through Deaf camps and events for people with hearing loss, including golf tournaments, cooking classes and movie nights.

Before lockdown, Shirvaun spent one day a week at a preschool gaining teacher aide experience. But now needs to focus on her studies full-time.



“It was good for me, because I could talk to every student – the Deaf child doing sign [language], and [also the] hearing child... It made me want to be a Deaf teacher, to be able to teach both worlds...”

As part of her course, Shirvaun attended an observation week, cementing her desire to teach early childhood.

“I went to an observation week, and loved it. I love working with children. I got involved and played with them. They asked me to teach sign language and I just loved it. Some of the children have Deaf parents so helping teach the children was just amazing.”

**"Deaf is not dumb. Deaf can do anything," she says. "Just follow your dream."**

### SHARE YOUR STORY

Inspire others and show your support for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

Contact Hannah at [hannah.davey@nfd.org.nz](mailto:hannah.davey@nfd.org.nz)

**FIND MORE STORIES AT**  
[nfd.org.nz/blog](https://nfd.org.nz/blog)

# HANDS UP!

## HEARING HEAROES GIVE MONTHLY

**Our monthly donor programme, Hands Up, is essential for ensuring young Kiwis with hearing loss get the diagnosis, tools and support they need.**

Your funds enable us to provide free Hearing Screenings in secondary schools across New Zealand at a time when hundreds of kids with undiagnosed hearing loss are falling through the gaps due to increased environmental risks to their hearing health.

### **Kids who are engaged put their hands up.**

Sadly, many young people with an undiagnosed hearing loss, typically hide at the back of the class, isolate themselves and withdraw. Your support will help them to re-engage in their education.

### **Their hearing is in your hands.**

Your impactful support will ensure Kiwi kids can access a timely diagnosis and the care they need to thrive as they start their secondary schooling.

### **Give a hand every month!**

Your monthly gifts provide predictable income, which in turn helps NFDHH to keep growing this important free Hearing Screening Programme for Kiwi kids in schools throughout New Zealand.

### **Join the Hearing Hearo Community.**

**You'll be joining a committed group of New Zealanders who make our work in schools possible. Have a long-term impact in the lives of Kiwi kids by becoming a Hearing Hearo. Donate today: [nfd.org.nz/give](http://nfd.org.nz/give)**





# HELPING TEENS ON THEIR HEARING LOSS JOURNEY

For teenagers, being diagnosed with a hearing loss at such a pivotal time in their lives can have a big impact on their well-being, especially if this diagnosis has come as a shock. We are excited to announce a new project NFDHH is undertaking, which will focus on supporting teenagers who have been diagnosed with hearing loss.

The “Youth Portal” will be a new tailor-made website providing information, advice, and resources for teens and their families. Our Youth Advisors, Eleanor, Hope and Gaby, are playing a key role in shaping this platform by sharing personal experiences and answering FAQs about high school and hearing loss.

This month Eleanor, Hope and Gaby got together to share a few of their tips with you. Keep an eye on our website and social media for more information about the launch of the Youth Portal.

**What are your top tips for a teenager who has just been diagnosed with hearing loss?**

**Hope:** Don't panic. Being diagnosed can be scary and it seems like your world has been turned upside down but I promise you it has not. You'll be alright. You can live a perfectly happy life being Deaf or hard of hearing. There will be challenges but you will have the strength to face them. Everybody has difficulties in their lives, yours will just be slightly different. Being diagnosed can be pretty disappointing but it doesn't have to be a negative thing. You've lost some hearing, but you also have the opportunity to gain a new language, a new community, and a whole new identity. Deafness doesn't have to be a bad thing. Yes, communication difficulties kind of suck but there are positives to it too. I have found my Deaf identity to be incredibly freeing.

**Eleanor:** I want teenagers with hearing loss to know that they're not broken or defective. My hearing loss is something I now consider really beautiful. It has taught me so much about community, empathy and strength that I never would have learned if I was a hearing person. If I didn't face the challenges of hearing loss, I wouldn't be as kind and as loving as I am today. I am honestly really grateful for everything my APD [Auditory Processing Disorder] has taught me.

When I got diagnosed, I beat myself up a lot about not getting assessed earlier and I felt embarrassed because I felt like I was too young to deal with hearing loss. It's really important for teens to know that other teens also have hearing loss and they're not alone. Especially after the diagnosis, it can feel really lonely, and you think you're the only one your age going through it but you're not. Lots of young people experience hearing loss and I would encourage teens to seek out other young people who have similar experiences to connect with.

**Gaby:** Ask your audiologist or advisor of Deaf children if they know of any other deaf people in a similar age range who have hearing aids or cochlear implants, even if they were born Deaf. They may have had or have a different experience of deafness, but they may also have valuable advice such as





which equipment (e.g. batteries) works the best for them and what their family do to support them.

**What practical advice would you give a parent who has just learned that their child has a hearing loss?**

**Hope:** Don't be afraid of their diagnosis, learn sign language, and make connections with other parents in the Deaf community. I would say that experiencing Deaf culture from a young age and a knowledge of NZSL would have definitely sped up my journey of self-acceptance.

**Gaby:** Even if you aim to use spoken language as the main form of communication for your family, learning sign language or being open to using sign language will help a lot. It wasn't until I went to high school that I learned the ways sign language can really help. Today, being fluent in sign language helps me in many ways to be independent. An example is that I can't use a phone with people I don't know well, and this could be a major barrier to being fully independent as an adult. But, as I know NZSL, I use the NZ Relay Video Interpreting Service (NZVIS), to call places such as the doctor's clinic, book an appointment with the mechanic, if my car needs to be repaired, and the list goes on!

**Eleanor:** Firstly, I just want to say good job! They've already done the amazing first step of getting their child diagnosed with hearing loss. It can take a lot of courage to admit that your child is struggling and

make the decision to explore where that struggle stems from so I'm really proud of parents who proactively get their kids assessed and treated for hearing loss.

It's SO important for parents to know that their child will be absolutely fine! Hearing loss can be scary in the beginning but it's not something that will ruin a child's life. Yes, there will be certain barriers their kids will face that hearing kids will not, but they can support and empower their children to navigate and overcome obstacles as they come up.

They're not alone! There is a massive Deaf and hard of hearing community in New Zealand as well as a massive community of parents and loved ones of people with hearing loss. There is so much support and a community to love them and their child! Being supported and having people around them who are on the same journey is so crucial as they have people around them to celebrate the wins with, ask for advice and connect with.

If their child's hearing loss is something that is impacting them, I really encourage parents to see a therapist to talk through their fears and worries. Their child can sense if they're struggling and not coping with the diagnosis. This can lead to projecting a lot of those fears onto their child. So to support their child as best as possible, it's important they have support themselves.

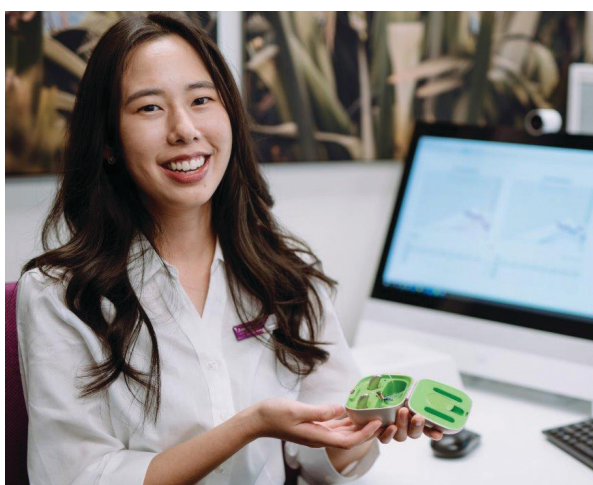
# Triton Hearing

## VIRTUAL CARE



### *Hearing Care That's More Accessible and Convenient*

Triton Hearing always keeps its clients' preferences and comfort front of mind. It believes that clients should be able to choose the way they receive their hearing health care – whether in a clinic or from the comfort of home or work.



**Ashley Kim, Triton Hearing  
Virtual Care Audiologist MNZAS**

“If you can choose to purchase your groceries online and have it delivered or to go into the store – then shouldn't access to hearing health care services be the same? Through Triton's new interactive smartphone app, clients can use their smartphone to act as a gateway to allow the Virtual Care audiologist to remotely adjust their hearing aids in real-time,” explains Lesleigh Smith, the Virtual Care Manager at Triton Hearing.

After a telephone conversation with a hearing expert to confirm the order, the hearing aids are delivered directly to the client's home, free of charge. Once received and fitted, the hearing care professionals at Triton Hearing perform a virtual hearing aid fitting, with in-clinic follow-up appointments, to ensure the device is correctly adjusted.

Lesleigh explains, “The beauty of Virtual Care is choice. Clients can choose their own individual pathway between in-clinic and virtual appointments - whatever is more convenient for them throughout their better hearing journey.”

### *Providing Support Through Challenging Times*

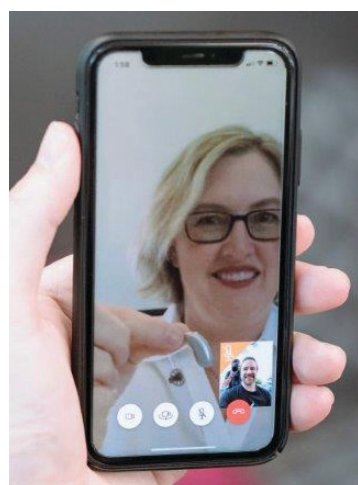
Triton Hearing has an unwavering commitment to help and support Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwis and was one of the only hearing healthcare providers to be able to continue to practice over Level 4 lockdown.

“We continued to provide high-quality hearing health care to our clients when they could not come into the clinic itself - with over 700 virtual client appointments in just one month. We have had great feedback from clients about the convenience of Virtual Care,” says Lesleigh.



**Lesleigh Smith, Triton Hearing  
Head of Audiology & Virtual  
Care**

Now that Triton Hearing clinics are operating as usual, the Virtual Care service appeals to those that don't have enough time to visit the clinics, are living in remote locations or are unable to physically access clinics.



Clients are very grateful to have another avenue to access services they may otherwise not have been able to.

Find out more about Triton Hearing's innovative Virtual Care services: [tritonhearing.co.nz/virtual-care](http://tritonhearing.co.nz/virtual-care) or call 0800 515 515.



# Staying Afloat

## in Challenging Times

*"Thank you... throughout the year I felt supported and heard and part of a greater group of people who have traveled the hearing loss journey."*  
Community member.

When it comes to planning for the future, we never foresaw a global pandemic lasting two years and counting. This disruption had a significant impact on the lives of many Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwi's throughout Aotearoa. It also impacted the Foundation's ability to raise funds. All at a time when our community needed our support and advocacy the most.

It hasn't been easy, but we are proud of the way the Foundation managed to be there for our community as we faced the challenges of Covid-19 together. We are grateful to have made a real difference in the lives of Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwis.

### Paying it Forward

A big part of being able to respond to our community's needs over the last two years has been thanks to the generosity of Kiwi's who believed in paying it forward by leaving a bequest in their Will. The Foundation's resilience has shown how essential legacy gifts are to ensuring the Foundation can weather any storm and be there for our community during the hard times.

We are incredibly thankful to those who have remembered us in their Will. It has meant we have been able to expand our outreach to Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwis, to offer support and care where it counts – at home, in schools and in workplaces.

*"I'm so grateful for NFDHH's screening programme in schools. Last year my son's school was part of this programme, and his hearing loss was picked up..."*  
Community member.

*"I received phone calls, online sign language classes and a care package during lockdown – it really helped me to feel supported at a time when I felt isolated."*  
Community member.

*"Born with hearing loss in my left ear...it's not easy at times and great to share our struggles"*  
Community member.

### Leave a Legacy

The primary purpose of a Will is to ensure the future of your family and loved ones are looked after. Once the important people in your life are taken care of, leaving a gift in your Will is one of the most impactful ways you can make a difference to the Deaf and hard of hearing community in the future.

### Small Can Be Huge!

The Foundation is here today thanks to those who have remembered NFDHH in their Will. These gifts have come in all shapes and sizes, and even small legacy gifts have made a huge difference.

To discuss in confidence how you can leave a lasting legacy to the National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, contact our Donor Relations Manager, Lisa Talbot:

**Phone: +64 9 307 2922**

**Email: [lisa.talbot@nfd.org.nz](mailto:lisa.talbot@nfd.org.nz)**

# Thank YOU for an incredible six months!

During the first half of 2022...



**70+ preschools** installed Sound Monkey devices in their classrooms to protect children's precious ears.



**27** deserving grant recipients received financial support to help them reach their goals!

**18** More than  
New Zealand Schools **1,495**  
Students were screened.

This puts us on track to reach our goal of screening 40 schools in 2022!



We provided **10 workshops** to businesses around New Zealand to help them to become more inclusive of employees and customers with hearing loss.

All of these initiatives would not have been possible without your support.

Thank you.