

2023

# HEARING MATTERS



## Bridging the Silence

Introducing our outreach work in rest homes.

## 5 Ways 5 Days

It's Mental Health Awareness Week!

## NZSL

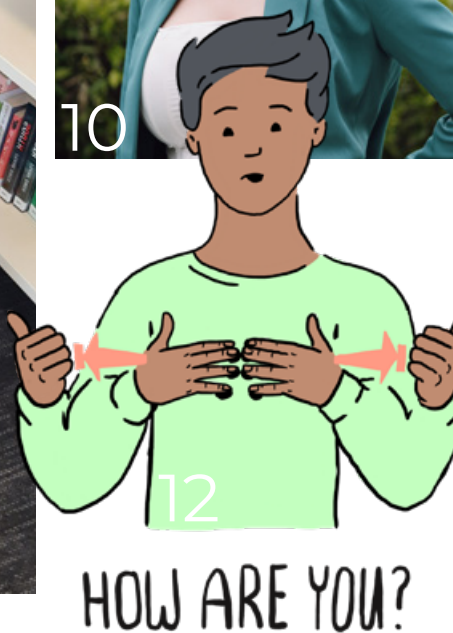
New Zealand Sign Language gaining traction.

## Hearing Screening in Schools

Every child deserves a bright future.

# Welcome

In this 2023 edition of Hearing Matters, you'll discover inspiring stories of connection, innovation and resilience. You'll also learn about our impactful programmes, which are helping to make a tangible difference in the wellbeing of Deaf and hard of hearing New Zealanders.



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# Kia ora

Over the past three years, NFDHH has faced some unprecedented challenges with Covid-19, extreme weather events, and the rising cost of living. Throughout, we have striven to prioritise the well-being of the Deaf and hard of hearing community, to provide increased support to those in need. Your support, along with compassionate Kiwis like you, has been crucial in enabling us to continue serving the community during these tough times.

In 2023, we continue to expand our Hearing Screening Programme in schools and are on track to screen 43 schools, which is a significant leap from the 34 schools we reached last year. This means more young Kiwis with undiagnosed hearing loss are receiving timely diagnosis, treatment, and support.

We are also thrilled to share that we have increased our daily school screening capacity by 400% while reducing screening costs by an impressive 70% thanks to adopting a new screening technology called Hear-X.

We've almost achieved our goal of installing 200 Sound Monkeys in New Zealand preschools thanks to our donor community's generosity and the dedication of early childhood teachers. These devices are pivotal in teaching healthy listening habits early in life, setting the stage for better hearing health.

Our new outreach efforts in rest homes are helping to foster deaf awareness and connection. Residents love our Hearing Health Outreach events, where they learn new communication skills, have fun with basic New Zealand Sign Language and can receive free hearing screenings. This work has been an essential step in combating isolation and nurturing awareness for the older members of the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

Your steadfast support is the bedrock of these achievements. As you explore the pages of Hearing Matters, you'll find stories that celebrate our community, new connections and innovations. Happy reading!

With heartfelt gratitude,



Natasha Gallardo,  
Chief Executive.



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# Deaf Scene

## Introducing Deaf Friendly Painting Sessions by Pinot & Picasso.



**A chance to find your inner artist!**

In August, Pinot & Picasso ran a Deaf Friendly session with an NZSL Interpreter at their Christchurch studio. Attendees learned to paint

"Warm Skies on a Summer Night," a serene and enjoyable artwork. The event was enhanced with lively conversations, wine, and music.

Pinot & Picasso has also run NZSL interpreted classes in the Wellington Region, and look forward to expanding their Deaf friendly sessions in the future.

**Stay tuned for more Deaf Friendly sessions at Pinot & Picasso:** [www.pinotandpicasso.nz](http://www.pinotandpicasso.nz)



Deaf friendly Painting Session in Christchurch.

## Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki is thrilled to be increasing its NZSL tours for Deaf visitors.

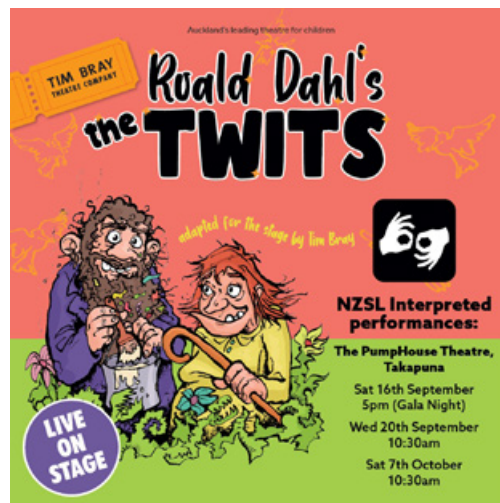
This August, Deaf artist Abbie Twiss, also an art teacher and interpreter, led a tour, (supported by Platform Interpreting NZ), through the new exhibition "Ever Present: First Peoples Art of Australia." This exhibition showcased a



Abbie Twiss, Leading NZSL Tour at Toi o Tāmaki.

comprehensive collection by First Peoples of Australia, marking a significant presentation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**Stay tuned for more NZSL tours:** [www.aucklandartgallery.com](http://www.aucklandartgallery.com)



## Bringing Imagination to Life!

Get the whole family along to enjoy this hilarious story by one of the world's most famous authors, Roald Dahl, adapted for the stage by Tim Bray!

An NZSL Interpreted performance is being held at The PumpHouse Theatre, Takapuna on 7th October. Discount prices are available on accessible tickets, while tickets last.

**Find out more:** [www.timbray.org.nz/the-twits](http://www.timbray.org.nz/the-twits)



# Bridging Silence: OUR OUTREACH WORK IN REST HOMES

Taking care of the most vulnerable members of our community is our top priority. For a lot of Deaf and hard of hearing residents in rest homes, the last three years have been incredibly challenging. Many have struggled with the Covid-19 measures, from mask-wearing that muffles conversations and prevents lip reading to prolonged lockdowns, which all intensify their experience of isolation.

A heartfelt letter from a hard of hearing resident ignited our decision to establish a Hearing Health Outreach Programme to help make a difference in rest homes.

As part of Hearing Awareness Month (March 2023), we launched our first Hearing Health event at Oaks Village in Warkworth. We've since visited 15 rest homes, with many bookings lined up for the months ahead. This is vital work and we are hoping to expand this programme in 2024.

**Advocacy for Deaf awareness and hearing healthcare is essential in rest homes.**

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, "Nearly 25 per cent of those aged 65 to 74 and 50 per cent of those 75 and older have disabling hearing loss."

Many residents may be aware of their hearing loss but have been unable to seek regular care and as a result, they can experience isolation and anxiety in social situations. Sadly, they may go for years without treatment or support.

**That's where our Hearing Health Outreach Programme comes in!**

We talk to Lisa Talbot and Linda Holmes from team NFDHH about this new programme and the difference it's making.

**What happens at NFDHH's Hearing Health events?**

Linda: "We bring residents together for a Hearing Health morning tea, where we talk about the experience of hearing loss and its impact. We have fun, and residents also have a chance to try their hand at some basic sign language."

Lisa: "We show residents how ignoring hearing loss can make life harder and lonelier. And the ways this can impact their emotional and social wellbeing. They nod along because they get it, empathising with partners exhausted from repeating themselves, resonating with the struggle to participate in social activities."



Lisa, providing a free hearing check to a resident.

### How do our events help to support the residents' wellbeing?

Linda: "Our visit helps residents feel more comfortable talking about their hearing loss, dispelling stigma, and not feeling so alone.

Also, as part of our event, we offer free hearing checks on-site. It's a safe place for them to talk and share. An audiologist comes along to help out. They clean hearing aids, change batteries, and chat about hearing issues. This is so helpful for people, as travelling off-site is a considerable challenge for many.

The team also provides resources like a guide to fingerspelling in NZSL, application forms for our Hearing Aid Grant, magazines, and booklets about accessing captioning for devices."

### What do you enjoy about this work?

Lisa: "Our team loves connecting with the residents. They have a lot of stories and experiences. They're wise and don't hold back. Making a difference in their lives gives us a good feeling. Even if we just make a real difference for one person at each rest home, it's totally worth it."



## Pauline's Story

We met Pauline when the team visited her rest home. She moved there when the pandemic started, which was a tough time for her. Pauline is Deaf, and masks made it impossible to read lips. Can you imagine how lonely that would have felt?

She found comfort in the Takapuna library, where books became her friends. Family time was scarce. Letters from her sister-in-law in Australia were not coming through, and her niece was working double shifts. She did find companionship in her cat named Posy though.

Meeting Pauline was touching for our team. Even though Pauline didn't attend the hearing health presentation because she was concerned that she wouldn't be able to participate - she did come and talk to our team afterwards.

**"When Pauline told me how lonely she felt with tears rolling down her face, I cried too. We're still in touch with Pauline and the Village Manager," says Linda.**

Since our visit, Pauline has appreciated how other residents now have a better awareness of how to communicate with her, and she's joining in activities. Even the Village Manager is learning sign language to chat with her.

"Helping Pauline to reconnect and feel less isolated is why we do what we do," says Linda. "Helping people like Pauline really is our purpose."

Garth, the Village Manager, reflects on the ripple effect of our visit and ongoing communication with Pauline has had: "I just want to say thank you to you and your team for putting such a smile on Pauline's face."

### Would you like to help make a difference?

To find out more about how to support this impactful programme, contact Lisa Talbot:

E: [lisa.talbot@nfdhh.org.nz](mailto:lisa.talbot@nfdhh.org.nz) P: 09 307 2922



Pauline helping in library.

# Changing hearing For good

## *Picture a person wearing hearing aids...*

*What do you see?*

*What do they look like?*

*How much did they pay for them?*

*Do they look like you?*

The intuitive answers to these questions for many New Zealanders highlight the barriers preventing nearly 500,000 people with hearing loss from seeking treatment and improving their quality of life.

That's 58% of New Zealanders living with hearing loss who don't wear hearing aids. With an aging population, the prevalence of untreated hearing loss will only increase if these myths and misconceptions are not addressed.

Triton Hearing is on a mission to change this. Their track record of world-firsts would rival that of any tech start-up, and they're driven by a genuine belief that healthcare should advance our collective quality of life. No person, community, or place should be left behind.

Triton Hearing pioneered a \$1-a-day hearing aid subscription, alleviating the barrier of cost. They introduced virtually administered audiological care (a lifesaver for isolated or elderly), and built state-of-the-art mobile hearing clinics to support remote, rural communities. They have partnered with Iwi to address Māori over-representation in hearing loss statistics, and they've brought innovative devices to the New Zealand market, including waterproof, Bluetooth-enabled, and invisible-when-worn hearing aids.

Research states that 95% of hearing aid wearers report a higher quality of life, while 64% regret not acting sooner. Many report the benefits of wearing hearing aids, such as increased social activeness and reduced daily fatigue.

Today, hearing aids are practically invisible. Loved ones, friends and even colleagues comment on the positive changes – not negative ones. And, thanks to government subsidies and subscription payment options, the cost is less prohibitive than many people initially feared.



Sadly, so much of what New Zealanders think they know about hearing aids remains frozen in the 1980s, while the technology in this category has advanced substantially.

*Triton Hearing is smashing down the myths and misconceptions, one barrier at a time.*

Here are just a few ways that they're changing hearing for good:

- Some people think hearing aids are big and ugly. Actually, they're nearly invisible.
- Some think that they start at \$8,000. Try a \$1-per-day.
- Others think hearing devices are old-school. Nope, they connect to your Mobile Phone or Smart TV.
- And, for those who think you'll feel ashamed. Actually, you'll feel proud.

*"Just give it a go!"*

Because life isn't over, with hearing devices, life is better!

Find out more:  
[www.tritonhearing.co.nz](http://www.tritonhearing.co.nz)  
Freecall: 0800 45 45 43.



# Every Child Deserves a Bright Future

## Empowering Students, Transforming Lives.

NFDHH's groundbreaking Hearing Screening Programme in secondary schools has gained momentum in 2023. This initiative is not just about the hearing health of adolescents; it's about giving young minds an equal opportunity to thrive, learn, and succeed. This year, we substantially expanded the programme from 34 schools in 2022 to 43 schools and were able to reach even more young Kiwis with undiagnosed hearing loss or hearing health issues.

## A Beacon of Support.

Imagine life as a young student like Connor\*, who, at just 13 years old, was wrestling with the isolating burden of hearing loss alone. His struggles were silent yet profound. He was cut off from the peer conversations around him



and classroom discussions, and he was unfairly labelled "naughty", significantly compromising his education.

Thanks to our Hearing Screening Programme, Connor's hearing loss diagnosis became Connor's turning point. It was a chance to embrace his education anew.

Now Connor's teachers and family are supportive and aware of his disability, and accommodations are helping to level the playing field in the classroom. These changes have helped Connor find his confidence and re-engage in his education.

## The Need for Early Detection.

Meet Daniel\*, a 13-year-old student at Manurewa High School, who had been experiencing deafness in his right ear for approximately six months, which he had thought was swimmer's ear. However, when our screening team looked in his right ear canal, they discovered blood, indicating an underlying issue.

Our hearing check also revealed that Daniel appeared to have hearing loss in his right ear, significantly impairing his ability to hear in class. The team quickly notified the school nurse, who discovered that Daniel's ear was perforated.

Thanks to our team's quick action, Daniel was referred to the DHB for a full diagnosis and is now on the path to receiving the hearing healthcare and treatment he needs.



## The Unseen Impact of Wax Buildup.

An undetected wax buildup in the ear canal can act as a silent barrier, preventing kids from fully engaging with their education and peers. It might seem trivial, but impacted wax in the ear canal can impede a child's ability to learn, communicate, and connect with others. It can also lead to earaches, headaches, dizziness and hearing loss that may worsen over time.

Moreover, impacted ear wax can increase the risk of ear infections and further complications. Unfortunately, despite being easy to detect and treat, kids can go without treatment for years.

An essential part of the work we do in schools is to provide referrals for wax removal, swiftly restoring children's hearing and helping to prevent further complications.

## Breaking Barriers, Enabling Access.

Our work is not just about diagnosis – it's about removing obstacles and raising awareness for the experiences of Deaf and hard of hearing students. That's why we are developing essential resources for teachers and families. The Quick Guide for Teachers is just one example of a resource for educators to better understand how to accommodate and support students with hearing loss.





**No child should have to manage hearing loss alone.**

We believe that no child should have to manage hearing loss alone. By focusing on transforming schools into environments that are accessible and inclusive to their needs, we're ensuring they are not alone with their disability.

### Make Listening Safe

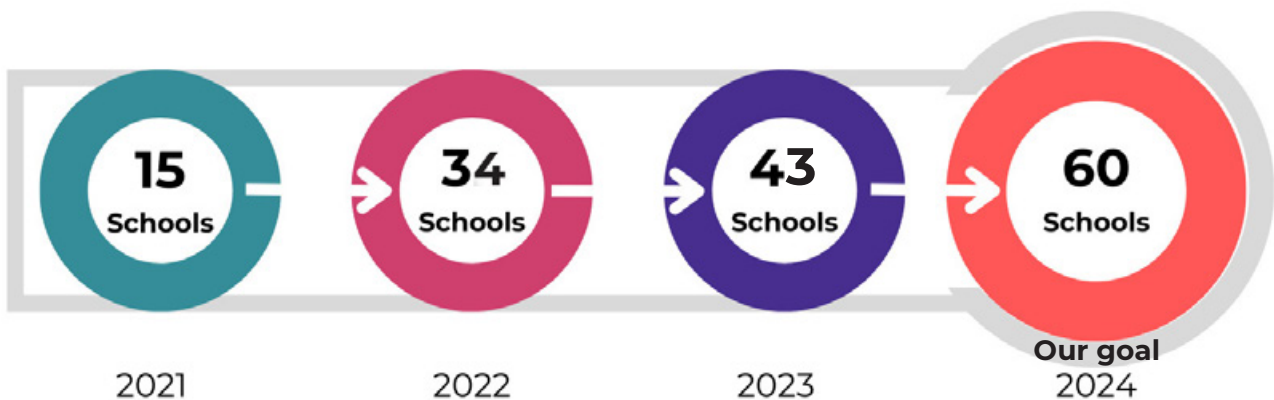
Our ears are more fragile than many of us realise, and often, young people don't know they are permanently damaging their hearing until it's too late.

With youth hearing loss continuing to rise worldwide\*\*, another part of our critical work in schools is delivering our Make Listening Safe Programme to educate young people about the risks of preventable hearing loss. This programme teaches young people how to protect their ears and enjoy music and other recreational noise safely and not at the cost of their hearing.

To learn more about our Hearing Screening or our Make Listening Safe Programme and how you can make a difference, visit our website: [www.nfdhh.org.nz/school-programmes](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/school-programmes)

## Thanks to the support of caring Kiwis, we are reaching more schools.

We've expanded our Hearing Screening and Make Listening Safe Programme in schools from our three initial pilot screenings in 2019. In 2024, we aim to reach 60 secondary schools.



## Their future is in your hands!

**Are you ready to be a Hearing Hero?** Your monthly support will ensure we can grow our Hearing Screening Programme, reaching more schools and making a tangible difference to Kiwi kids and their hearing health. Make a donation: [www.nfdhh.org.nz/donate](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/donate) or talk to Lisa Talbot: **E:** [lisa.talbot@nfdhh.org.nz](mailto:lisa.talbot@nfdhh.org.nz) **P:** 09 307 2922

\*The names of the children featured in this article have been changed for privacy reasons.

\*\* The World Report on Hearing 2021, World Health Organization.

# It's Mental Health Awareness Week!

18<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> September

This year's Mental Health Awareness Week theme is "Five Ways, Five Days." The theme underscores the need to put in place proven tools to boost our wellbeing each day as we navigate the roller-coaster ride of life's uncertainties and challenges.

We sit down with Hope and Lauren from our Youth Advisory Group, who reflect on how their hearing loss impacted their mental health growing up and what helped them through the tough times. They hope that by sharing their experiences, they will provide valuable insights for young people with hearing loss who may be struggling with their mental health or emotional wellbeing.

## Growing up with hearing loss, were there times when your emotional and mental health were impacted?

Lauren: "I always found it hard to cope in social situations, as I struggled to follow the conversations of those around me. It's easy to feel left out and is really tiring trying to 'keep up'. Also, I was always anxious when meeting new people, as I was worried people would think I was stupid because I couldn't hear."

Hope: "It was very hard to communicate in groups and as a result I really struggled socially and was never able to enjoy events like parties or going to the movies. I think that being Deaf itself hasn't negatively impacted me but the resulting isolation from living in an inaccessible society has. This resulted in me developing social anxiety."



Hope, NFDHH Youth Advisor.



Lauren, NFDHH Youth Advisor.

## What helped you to get through challenging times?

Lauren: "Being open and honest with those around me about what was going on really helped. Having them present in stressful social situations got me through. That meant I was able to lean on them when I was struggling to hear, and eventually with their support, learn to overcome my worries. Now I just don't care what hearing people think."

Hope: "Being able to talk through my feelings with a therapist, and with other Deaf and hard of hearing who understood my experiences, really helped me to process my emotions in a healthy way."

## How has connecting with the Deaf and hard of hearing community made a difference to your sense of wellbeing?

Lauren: "It's been huge for me. Finding a community of people just like me, learning NZSL, being able to leave my hearing aids 'at the door' and not worrying about my deafness holding me back - has allowed me to completely embrace it. It helped me to reframe my hearing loss as 'deaf gain' and focus on the positives. I now feel a sense of belonging and a sense of pride."

Hope: "Learning sign language and connecting with my local Deaf community really helped me to socialise and combat my feelings of isolation. NZSL gave me a viable way to communicate and really helped me to advocate for myself and come out of my shell."



Hope, NFDHH Youth Advisor.

Hope: "I find practising mindfulness and meditation very useful for improving my mental health. Little things like making sure to talk to someone each day and go outside make a big difference too. But, the biggest thing that has improved my mental health is therapy."

What do you do to stay positive and look after your mental and emotional wellbeing?

Lauren: "I like to surround myself with people who know and love me for exactly who I am. I think it's really unhealthy to feel ashamed or want to hide my hearing loss/hearing aids. Having a local Deaf community to get involved in always helps me feel proud of who I am. I like to get outside in nature as much as possible, as being outside really helps me to recharge. It's really tiring being a deaf person in a hearing world!"

**One in two New Zealanders will experience mental distress or illness in their lifetime (47 per cent).** We know it can be challenging. That's why NFDHH is supporting Mental Health Awareness Week. To access tools to boost your mental health this September, go to the Mental Health Foundation's page: [www.mhaw.nz](http://www.mhaw.nz)

# Now helping you hear, still helping you save

## Audiology now available



Visit your local qualified audiology professional at Specsavers. They'll take time to understand your individual hearing needs, tailor a solution to suit your lifestyle and help you save on the latest technology hearing aids.



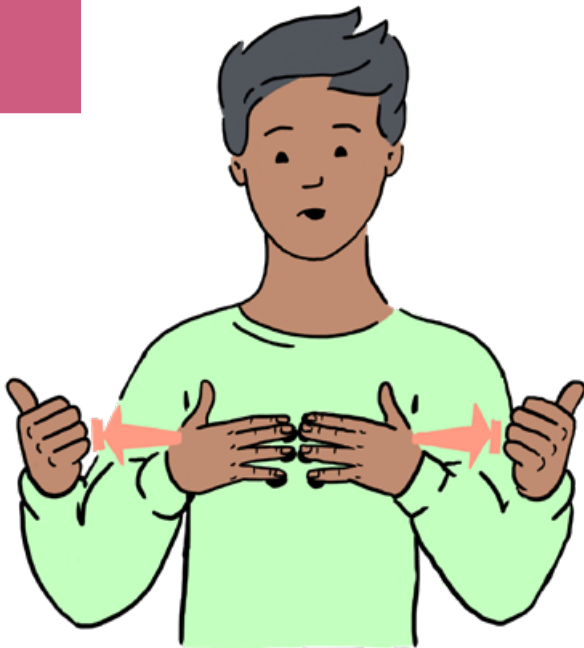
Find a store near you at [specsavers.co.nz/hearing](http://specsavers.co.nz/hearing)

**Specsavers**

Audiology

# Express yourself in NZSL!

Learn 6 signs to help you express your feelings.



HOW ARE YOU?



ANXIOUS



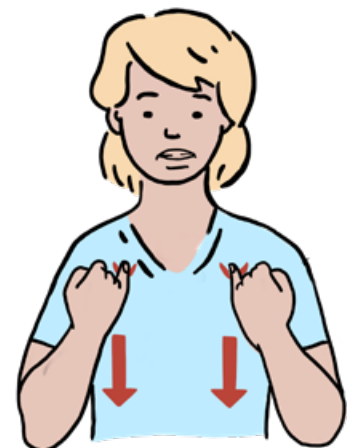
OK



SAD



MARVELLOUS



SICK

**MHAW**  
Mental Health  
Awareness Week  
18th - 24th September

**1737**

NEED TO TALK?  
Call or text 1737 to speak to a trained counsellor.  
This is a free service.

# Nick's wish to give back.

**NFDHH talked to Nick about his journey with hearing loss and his passion for making a difference for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.**

Nick recently qualified as an Audiologist and is about to start his career at The Hearing House in Auckland. His decision to pursue audiology was influenced by the support he received during his own cochlear implant journey. He wanted to give back to others in a similar situation.

To pursue his passion, Nick obtained a master's degree in Audiology and received the Deaf Education Scholarship from the NFD Trust. The scholarship helped cover his laptop and course fees.

*"I'm incredibly grateful for the scholarship. Every cent counts, and I'm thankful for it," says Nick.*

His master's thesis focused on helping parents make informed decisions about the cochlear implant process for their children. "Through my thesis, I examined the experiences and perspectives of parents regarding the cochlear implant process and support services in New Zealand. I hope my research can assist future parents in making informed decisions for their children regarding cochlear implantation."

While there is no universal solution, Nick's own personal experience with a cochlear implant has been a very positive one.

"Growing up with a cochlear implant has completely changed my life, and I want people to recognise the life-changing potential of these devices," he emphasised.

Nick also highlighted that cochlear implant surgery is a cost-efficient procedure that significantly improves the quality of life and opens up new opportunities for individuals.

Born profoundly Deaf, it wasn't until Nick was 17 months old that his Grandfather noticed his condition. "My parents were busy, and they didn't initially notice because I was highly responsive to facial expressions. Eventually, I underwent hearing tests, and it was discovered that I was profoundly Deaf," Nick recounted.

During that time, cochlear implants were still in the early stages of development, and his family faced a significant decision.

*"There was a debate about whether to proceed with the cochlear implant or immerse me in the Deaf world. Ultimately, they chose the cochlear implant, and I received it at three and a half years old."*

Nick was one of the first children in New Zealand to receive a cochlear implant in 1995. "It was a monumental decision for my parents."

Nick's family provided tremendous support throughout his journey. "My Mum was my primary caregiver. Once she learned of my deafness, she began learning New Zealand Sign Language. That bonding experience with my Mum was truly special. My Dad, siblings, and grandparents were also very supportive and signed whenever they could."

Nick also expressed his gratitude for all the support he received from The Hearing House as a child. "The process of getting a cochlear implant and undergoing rehabilitation can be exhausting, especially for children. The support provided by The Hearing House has been invaluable."

Recently, Nick's journey has come full circle as he secured a job at The Hearing House in Auckland. "During my placement, I found great fulfilment in helping others and could relate to clients based on my own hearing journey," he shared.

With his personal experience and expertise, Nick is uniquely positioned to make a difference in the lives of others. "The emotional aspect of the process is significant. I hope to have a profound impact on others who are going through similar experiences."

**Read Nick's full story on our blog:**  
[www.nfdhh.org.nz/blog](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/blog)

## Learn about our Grants

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



# NZSL

## Gaining Traction

NZSL Week, celebrated in May 2023, has emerged as a resounding success in raising awareness and garnering widespread recognition. With a deliberate focus on inclusivity, workshops and interactive events were organised to encourage everyone to put their hands up and sign! This year, our passion for New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) continues gaining traction well beyond Deaf Aotearoa's awareness week.

New Zealand has witnessed a surge in participation and engagement with NZSL, indicating a growing interest and commitment from people of all ages and hearing abilities, to learn and appreciate our nation's third official language.

One of the key factors behind the success was the active involvement of educational institutions. Schools nationwide, such as the Far North's Oturu School and Kaitiāia Intermediate, organised special NZSL sessions, introducing students to the basics of the language and its cultural significance. This initiative is vital for encouraging young learners to embrace NZSL and laying the foundation for a more inclusive future.

Social media platforms also played a pivotal role in the growing interest in NZSL Week. Jon Tai-Rakena, spearheaded the week by acting as Deaf Aotearoa's powerful NZSL Week Hero, drawing on his experience and passion for teaching NZSL on TikTok. Influencers and celebrities, such as Brad Watson from the Hits, also heroed the event. And it was great to see many public figures, including our Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, participate in the NZSL leaders challenge.



*Deaf Aotearoa's annual event plays a crucial role in acknowledging the importance of NZSL as an official language and fostering a deeper understanding of the Deaf community.*

Businesses also stepped up to recognise NZSL Week. They booked NZSL taster classes throughout May to encourage team members to learn the basics. It was fantastic to see bookings soar for our NZSL Lunch and Learn Workshops throughout May and the following months.

As NZSL continues to gain traction and recognition, the success of NZSL Week serves as a testament to New Zealanders' growing commitment to a more equitable New Zealand, fostering connections, and enriching the cultural tapestry of New Zealand.



*Businesses are loving learning NZSL with our Lunch & Learn Workshops and Taster Classes.*



*Many took part in Deaf Aotearoa's 7-minutes of signing challenge, including members of our NFDHH team, featured above.*

**Learn more:** [www.nzslweek.org.nz](http://www.nzslweek.org.nz)

**Discover our workshops:** [www.nfdhh.org.nz/workplace-education](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/workplace-education)

# Tips on Deaf Awareness

**D**eaf people don't always use sign language, some wear hearing aids and lip read.

**E**ye contact is so important when communicating.

**A**lways make sure you have the person's attention before speaking.

**F**acial expressions also help to show what you are talking about.

**A**lways talk clearly, don't over emphasise your lip movements and don't mumble.

**W**hen a person is tired, following conversations will be more difficult.

**A**lways take your time and be patient. Try not to get frustrated.

**R**epeat or rephrase what you have said if required. Some words may be difficult to make out.

**E**veryone's communication methods are different.

For resources to support Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwis, head over to our website:

[www.nfdhh.org.nz](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz)

**“Everyone was just so helpful, and nothing was a problem.”**

Experience the difference great service makes with New Zealand's most trusted hearing specialists.



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**BAYAUDIOLOGY**<sup>®</sup>  
NZ'S HEARING SPECIALISTS



# Prioritising Accessibility For Our Community.



## Breaking down barriers in workplaces.

Listen Up 2023 was held on March 3rd to coincide with World Hearing Day and the start of Hearing Awareness Month. The conference was an engaging and insightful event and offered attendees the opportunity to explore accessibility strategies through a Deaf and hard of hearing lens.

The event saw a high level of participation from industry leaders wishing to enhance accessibility in their organisations. Also in attendance were members of the Deaf and hard of hearing community, wanting to connect with and support better access for their community.

Many speakers presented inspiring real-life examples and offered actionable insights that attendees could implement in their organisations. The everyday challenges that individuals face in their day-to-day lives were highlighted, which helped to bring the accessibility message home, foster a greater sense of empathy and reinforce the need for change.

The highly experienced news presenter Hilary Barry was the MC for the event, and she facilitated some excellent discussions with our notable keynote speakers, including Dan Buckingham, CEO of Able, who shared his experiences from the Paralympics and his work in media accessibility. Arash Tayebi, CEO of Kara Technologies, showcased hyper-real digital avatars that sign! Hope Cotton, a student advocate, shared her journey with hearing loss, advocating for future generations.

## Practical Insights from our Hearing Accredited Organisations.

A panel of industry leaders, all part of NFDHH's Hearing Accredited Workplace Programme, engaged in open discussions about their experiences with enhancing accessibility for employees and customers with hearing loss. It was great to have so many Hearing Accredited members at the event. We look forward to inviting back even more to our next Listen Up Conference as this programme continues to attract more members.



People loved our interactive learning sessions!

Audience participation was an integral part of the day, with interactive sessions that brought home the experiences of hearing loss and Deaf culture. The event included a New Zealand Sign Language session run by Kelly Hodgins of Platform Interpreting New Zealand. Attendees had a lot of fun and enjoyed the opportunity to put their hands up and sign.



**Help us to deliver more events like these.**

As NFDHH receives no government funding, the support we receive from our donor community makes advocacy events like this possible.

**Please support our work:** [www.nfdhh.org.nz/donate](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/donate)

## What people said about Listen Up 2023!

*"Amazing morning at the National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing's Listen Up Conference on World Hearing Day! A fantastic selection of speakers, sharing insights on actionable steps to support how we can enable Deaf and hard of hearing employees and customers at Yellow New Zealand"*

- Nicole Dale of Yellow.

*"A great conference, great speakers. Making accessibility visible and highlighting the need for employers to do more. Thank you!"*

- Adele Thomas of Te Whatu Ora.

*"Listen Up 2023 was a great success and our best conference yet! By showcasing tangible strategies to transform workplaces and improve access to communication, the event had a meaningful impact on all who took part."*

- Natasha Gallardo, CEO of NFDHH.

**Special thanks to our sponsors who made this event possible:** Auckland Transport, Triton Hearing, The Cookie Project, and Project Employ.

# Alex

## Shares Her Story

***"I went to the doctor with a cold and left with hearing aids."***

NFDHH sat down with Alex, an adventurous 30-year-old who was diagnosed with Sensorineural Hearing Loss at age 20.

### A surprise diagnosis.

Even though hearing loss ran in her family, Alex's diagnosis was still a surprise. "I was 20, and it was my first or second year of uni, and I thought it was a really bad cold. I went to an ENT Specialist because I used to have sinus problems... and that was when they confirmed I had moderate to mild hearing loss. It was weird going in thinking I had a cold and coming out with hearing aids."

### Speaking up about her experience.

Opening up about her hearing loss wasn't easy for Alex, but it became necessary when a significant drop in her hearing started impacting her ability to hide her deafness. "For the first six to seven years, I got away with just wearing hearing aids. I never really told anyone. Only in the last couple of years, with more of a decline, I was suddenly like, 'Oh, I have to talk about this...'"

Alex launched her 'Silence Speaks' Instagram account and podcast, which has received support from both the Deaf and hard of hearing community and hearing individuals. The creative endeavour has been cathartic, helping her navigate her emotions and experiences.

"Just recording was helping me to process...There are also a lot

of listeners who are fully hearing, and they're just curious to hear more about the journey. Because I think what a lot of people with hearing loss get is: Oh, you don't seem deaf, you know? It's one of those invisible things that you go through."

"I've also had nice responses from hearing people like: 'Whoa, I had no idea... when I come across anyone hard of hearing, I feel like I'm going to understand a little bit better,'" shares Alex.

### Coming to terms with changing levels of hearing.

With a decline in her hearing, Alex increasingly felt anxious and withdrew from activities she once enjoyed.

***"I was anxious about how tired I was going to get or how much recovery I needed. I would almost call it a hearing hangover - I would need two days with just no talk."***

Over the last six months, Alex has learned to advocate for herself and set boundaries in social situations. She recognises the importance of taking breaks, especially in group settings. "One of the biggest things that's made socialising possible is giving myself permission to have the breaks. So my friends know, and they don't get worried. If it looks like I'm, sitting back, they carry on."



### Focusing on Deaf 'Gain.'

One profound change in Alex's perspective came when she began to focus more on what she gained from her deafness. "I gained a superpower, which is lip reading...A lot of hearing people would probably love to lip-read! And I'm also hoping to gain another language [Sign Language]. When the time comes for me to get a cochlear implant, I think a big part of my journey has been acknowledging that even if I'm still in this hearing world, I will be deaf. I want to embrace that."



**Listen to Alex's podcast Silence Speaks:** [www.nzpod.co.nz/podcast/silence-speaks](http://www.nzpod.co.nz/podcast/silence-speaks)

In our Share Your Story series, Deaf and hard of hearing community members open up about their experiences.

**Read Alex's full story on our blog:** [www.nfdhh.org.nz/blog](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/blog)

# Sound Monkey

## Making Waves in Preschools



In the dynamic and often rowdy realm of early childhood education, safeguarding the hearing health of little ears is essential. That's why NFDHH created the Sound Monkey - a remarkable sound monitoring device for preschools. This innovative tool is helping to instil safe listening habits in young Kiwi kids, setting the stage for better hearing health for life.

**We've almost reached our 2023 goal!**

NFDHH is excited to announce we've almost reached our 2023 goal of 200 Sound Monkeys installed in preschools across New Zealand. Natasha Gallardo, CEO of NFDHH, is amazed at how quickly these have been adopted in preschools:

***"With 187 Sound Monkeys installed in our preschools, we are thrilled to see how these devices are making listening safe for little ears."***

Preschool educators are thrilled with the results too!

"The children just love the Sound Monkey and keep an eye on its smile," remarks one teacher.

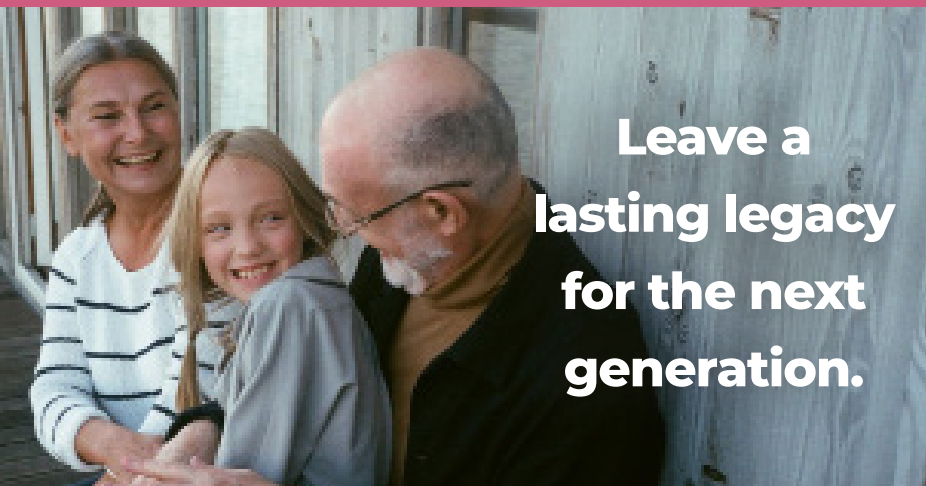
"The Sound Monkey reinforced what we were saying about a noisy room and made the children very aware of the level of noise," shares another educator.

This simple yet powerful tool is a visual aid that resonates with the children and helps them to be more aware of dangerous decibels.

**Thank you!**

Our gratitude goes out to all the preschools and those who have donated Sound Monkeys to support this vital safe listening initiative for tiny ears.

**Would you like to donate a Sound Monkey? Contact Shirley Rippey:  
E: [shirley.rippley@nfdhh.org.nz](mailto:shirley.rippley@nfdhh.org.nz) P: 09 307 2922**



**Leave a  
lasting legacy  
for the next  
generation.**

Imagine a world where  
Deaf and hard of  
hearing Kiwis thrive.

You have the power to  
help turn this vision  
into reality.

Legacy gifts are the cornerstone of NFDHH's support, offering stability during challenging times and ensuring the continuation of our essential work. By including NFDHH in your Will, you're providing future generations of Deaf and hard of hearing Kiwis with a valuable opportunity to thrive.

**A gift that keeps on giving beyond your lifetime.**

Once your loved ones are looked after, please consider leaving a legacy gift to support a better future for our community. Even small contributions can have a significant impact by sustaining NFDHH's crucial efforts in preschools, secondary schools, workplaces, and rest homes across the country. We are deeply grateful to the generous New Zealanders who have chosen to support improved hearing health, Deaf awareness, and accessibility for generations to come. Your legacy will leave a lasting, positive impact for our community.

**To discuss in confidence** how you can leave a gift in your Will to the National Foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, contact our Donor Relations Manager, Lisa Talbot **E:** [lisa.talbot@nfdhh.org.nz](mailto:lisa.talbot@nfdhh.org.nz) **P:** 09 307 2922



Westpac Mangere Branch, NZSL Taster Class.

# Lunch & Learn Workshops

## Our workshops are taking off!

NFDHH's Lunch & Learn and Awareness workshops are transforming businesses into Deaf and hard of hearing friendly spaces.

These fun and educational sessions are gaining momentum across New Zealand. Linda Holmes, NFDHH's Community and Corporate Partnerships Manager, is thrilled about this growing interest:

***"Organisations are genuinely interested in creating more accessible experiences for Deaf and hard of hearing employees and customers. We have already delivered 27 workshops this year, and we're really just getting started."***

From the action-packed 30-minute Lunch & Learn sessions to the more comprehensive hour-long Awareness Workshops, businesses across New Zealand are keen to discover how to remove barriers and prioritise accessibility for our community.

Our workshops introduce organisations to Deaf Culture and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), as well as how to prioritise hearing health. They address challenges faced by the Deaf community and offer strategies for better communication with Deaf or hard of hearing customers and colleagues. Participants learn practical ways to improve accessibility in daily business operations and services.

## What people are saying about our Workshops:

"Thank you for the workshop today! There was much appreciation from the group for the insight received into communicating with our Deaf community. So thank you very much!" - Hastings District Council.

## Introducing the NZSL Taster Class.

NFDHH has also introduced a new NZSL Taster class, which is rapidly growing in popularity. This class teaches participants everyday phrases in sign language as well as signs that are specific to their industry. These classes are a great way for organisations to start their NZSL journey.

The feedback from one of our first participants speaks volumes. A team member from Westpac Mangere shared, "Proud and happy to learn New Zealand Sign Language and better communicate with our Deaf and hard of hearing community. A game-changer for my team. Love this."

Our workshops and classes are provided in partnership with qualified NZSL experts, ensuring a high-quality learning experience. We are thrilled to see the impact of education in fostering a more inclusive and welcoming society for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

## Learn more:

[www.nfdhh.org.nz/workplace-education](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/workplace-education)



# Hearing Accredited Workplaces Change for good.

WSP receives their HAWP Accreditation.

Discover our impactful Hearing Accredited Workplace Programme (HAWP), an initiative helping transform workplaces across New Zealand. This programme equips organisations with practical tools and training to support the accessibility needs of Kiwis who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

HAWP is all about partnering with businesses to implement effective Deaf and hard of hearing communication strategies, such as seamlessly incorporating captioning in meetings. The programme also educates workplaces about hearing health and how to monitor risks to ensure everyone's hearing health is front of mind.

Since its launch in 2020, this initiative has steadily been breaking down barriers and has established a growing number of Hearing Accredited workplaces across New Zealand. Notable Hearing Accredited members include Heartland Bank, Auckland Transport, AUT, Te Whatu Ora, and most recently, Oceania, WSP and Westpac NZ.

Today, we are thrilled to be able to share some of the exciting changes WSP and Westpac are making within their business to support Deaf and hard of hearing staff and customers with our Hearing Matters readers.

## WSP: Building Bridges Through Inclusion.

WSP is a leading engineering and environmental consultancy firm in Aotearoa New Zealand, specialising in property and buildings, transport, water, power, environment, project delivery and strategic consulting. With over 2,400 employees, they have a strong commitment to their local communities and employees, so when the opportunity arose to join HAWP, they jumped at the chance to strengthen this commitment.

By embracing HAWP, WSP has implemented some excellent practical solutions to break down barriers for Deaf and hard of hearing team members and customers.

This includes planning quiet zones for future renovations, establishing a process to identify those

who need assistance or accommodation, providing captions for recorded meetings, offering accessible meeting setup guides, and prioritising inclusivity in their recruitment process.

***"WSP in New Zealand is fully committed to becoming a Hearing Accredited Workplace, nurturing a positive, all-inclusive environment for our employees, suppliers, and clients facing hearing loss. We are also dedicated to proactively managing noise-induced hearing loss." - WSP.***

## Westpac NZ: Elevating Accessibility.

Westpac NZ is a dedicated partner of HAWP and is taking significant strides to enhance services for their Deaf and hard of hearing customers and team.

A key focus for Westpac is effective communication, demonstrated by their commitment to ensure all staff are aware of captioning and its application during meetings. They have adapted emergency evacuation procedures to cater to Deaf and hard of hearing team. Westpac has also established quiet modular pods that serve as dedicated spaces for private discussions and well-being as part of their commitment.

Westpac actively advocates for customers with specific access needs and promotes inclusivity in its recruitment process. Furthermore, Westpac has created an inclusive onboarding plan that integrates online chat and captioning for new employees.

**Great mahi WSP and Westpac!** Thanks for joining our mission toward a more inclusive Aotearoa where the experiences of 880,000+ Deaf and hard of hearing New Zealanders are recognised and supported.



## Wellbeing Pins

Proudly wear a Wellbeing Leaf Pin if you are Deaf or hard of hearing to help those around you to be more aware of your communication needs.

Wear a Butterfly Pin to show your support for our community and help to raise awareness and spread hope.

*Why the butterfly? They're hard of hearing too.*

Visit our online store:  
[www.nfdhh.org.nz/shop](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/shop)

## Grants and Scholarships available now.

Are you seeking a grant or scholarship? The NFD Trust offers grants and scholarships to New Zealanders who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Grants are also available to those who are hearing-able and work in the Deaf and hard of hearing sector.

Our Training and Development Scholarship and Community Fund are open until the 30th of September 2023 and re-open again in March 2024.

Learn more: [www.nfdhh.org.nz/grants-and-scholarships](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz/grants-and-scholarships)

# Meet Jenny



**We are excited to introduce one of our stars from our Donor Relations Team, Jenny Regan!**

Jenny doesn't just call you to have a chat and update you on all the wonderful work we are doing; she also listens, asks you questions, and cares about you and even more so, she cares about why she's calling you.

We asked Jenny a few questions about her personal life and her work life, hoping for you to get to know her a little bit better before you pick up the phone to her again.

**What's your favourite movie?**

"Top Gun."

To all of our readers, the next time you pick up a call from Jenny, be sure to tell her what your favourite movie is too. You never know. It may strike up an inspiring conversation!

**Where's your favourite eatery in Aotearoa?**

"Waihi Beach – Flat White".

**What makes you passionate about telemarketing for NFDHH specifically?**

"Knowing that the donations we make can be used for the wonderful NFDHH programmes and to support Deaf and hard of hearing people. Also, our conversations and rapport with the donors can be very interesting and rewarding, especially when donors remember a conversation from one of our previous calls."

**Tell me about your favourite conversation you've had, what was said, and how it affected you.**

"I spoke to a lovely elderly man who lives on the same road in St Heliers as I lived on 25 years ago, he comes from Burton on Trent, where I was born in England, and he also visits his brother in Chester, where I went to school in England. I felt surprised that there were so many coincidences!"

We hope you've enjoyed getting to know Jenny, and we look forward to introducing you to more of the team and the amazing work they do to support the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

Featured  
Technology



Photo by: Lanna Apisukh For NPR.

# Feel the Music

## Haptic Vests Transforming Musical Experiences

Imagine feeling the vibrations of your favourite song coursing through your body in sync with every note. Philadelphia-based company Not Impossible has turned this dream into reality with its groundbreaking haptic vests.

Not Impossible's Haptic vests, composed of ankle and wrist bands and a backpack, offer a sensation akin to a full-body bear hug from a massage chair.

While haptic technology has existed for years in virtual reality and gaming, Not Impossible's advancements have enabled new possibilities for translating individual musical notes into distinct vibrations and opening doors to more equitable music experiences.

***"These vests aren't just for the Deaf or hard of hearing; they're designed to democratise music enjoyment." - Mick Ebeling of Not Impossible Labs.***

Mick Ebeling and his team initiated this project, driven by a desire to enable Deaf individuals to experience music. In his own words, they wanted to investigate other ways people could hear music.

***"[We wanted to] get around the eardrum, which is basically a receptor of vibration, and go straight to the brain. And the detour that we concluded on was going straight through the skin."***

Composer Daniel Belquer joined the mission, wanting to explore how to translate complex musical nuances into vibration. His goal was to create a technology that would enable Deaf people to feel every instrument, from violins to trombones, and even recognise specific melodies by feeling the pulses on their bodies. "As a composer, artistic expression is important, not just the tech side."

While this is still an emerging technology, it's exciting to think of how this might help create a more equitable musical experience in years to come.



# Hear the celebration.

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life is on

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Conversations shine for everyone with Lumity.

[www.phonak.com](http://www.phonak.com)



# Thank YOU for an incredible 2023!

Thanks to our amazing community, we've been able to deliver the following this year:



**187+ preschools** have installed Sound Monkey devices to protect children's precious ears.

**36**  
New Zealand  
Schools

More than  
**5,200**  
students have  
been screened.

This puts us on track to reach 43 secondary schools this year.



We provided **27 workshops** to businesses helping them to become more inclusive of New Zealanders with hearing loss.



**67** deserving grant recipients

received financial support to help them to purchase new hearing aids or reach their goals!

We provided **15 Hearing Health Outreach events**

in rest homes to help residents access hearing healthcare and support.



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

**Thank you.**

Find out more about our essential programmes and how to support our community: [www.nfdhh.org.nz](http://www.nfdhh.org.nz)



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