

# Overcoming barriers in the early years

The early years are crucial for deaf children given the impact deafness can have on language development, communication and social skills. Your support has meant we can be there for families from the start.

## ★ Family Sign Language

With support from The Access Foundation, Cadbury Fingers and the Department for Communities Northern Ireland, we expanded our online Family Sign Language course. At weekly sessions, families learned signs to use with young children as well as signs specific to their UK nation.

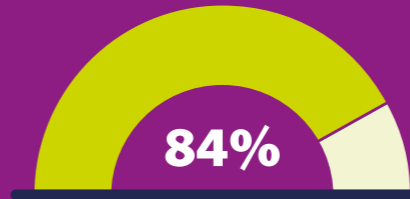
We delivered 29 online courses and three in-person events, reaching 459 people. This was an 84% increase on last year.

In August 2022, we partnered with Cadbury Fingers to encourage more people to chat in British Sign Language. Celebrities including Strictly dancer Giovanni Pernice and Love Island star Tasha Ghouri, supported the award-winning Sign with Fingers campaign.

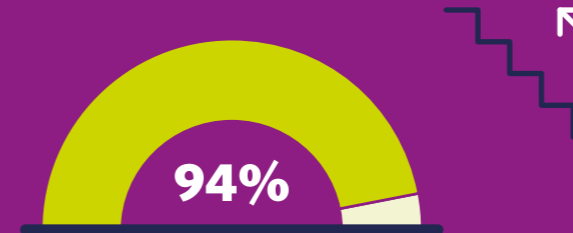


The Family Sign Language tutors were encouraging and enthusiastic. We now feel reassured we can communicate with Pippa at a good level.

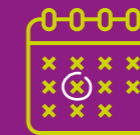
Bev is grandma to Pippa (1), who's severely deaf.



increase in people taking part in our Family Sign Language courses.



of parents who attended our New to Hearing Loss events felt better supported.



444



people took part in our programme of events for under 5s.

## ★ New to Hearing Loss events

More than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who may not know anything about deafness. Our New to Hearing Loss events bring families together to learn from experts in audiology, technology and communication. Our amazing volunteers, including deaf young people and parents, also share their experiences and give support.

We delivered 14 events, attended by 200 families. As a result, 94% said they felt better supported.

## ★ Bright Start programme

Our programme for under 5s includes singing, storytime and some simple sign language. These fun events give parents a chance to meet one another and find out how to support their children.

Last year, 444 people attended our online baby and toddler sessions and our baby sign events. Everyone surveyed reported positive outcomes, including increased knowledge, understanding or confidence.

We're proud of how we've supported deaf children in the early years, but there's still more to do. In 2022, only 34% of deaf children completed their first year of school having achieved expected levels of development, compared with 65% of all children. We want to reach more families and close this gap as soon as possible. You can find out more about our plans on page 16.