

# DEAF+HEALTH CHAMPIONS Newsletter

Deaf Health Matters  
August 2013

**Our Vision: Deaf Health Champions are working towards a future where every deaf person has full access to health services, an excellent patient experience and the information to make the best lifestyle choices.**

*“For deaf people, poor communication is the biggest barrier to health and social care.”*

## Have you been contacted by Deaf Health Champions?

Welcome to our very first 'Deaf Health Matters' newsletter from the Deaf Health Champions (DHC) Team.

Deaf Health Champions is a landmark project aimed at linking volunteers from deaf communities with health and social care professionals in Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cumbria.

Our project has a focus on 'big-D' Deaf British Sign

Language users but we are recruiting deaf and hard of hearing people too.

Deaf people are chronically excluded from health and social care services. They often do not have access to services or to basic health information which means they can't make informed lifestyle choices.

The DHC team is busy in the regions making contact with **Healthwatch Boards,**

**Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities.** If we haven't already met, please get in touch to find out how our project can help you.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter!

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## Message of Support from local Healthwatch Chair Sir Ian McCartney

**“I am delighted to confirm Healthwatch Wigan’s support to the Deaf Health Champions initiative. This is a marvellous opportunity to join forces and highlight the challenges the deaf community face to access the most basic services that many would regard as an automatic right. As the independent champion for Health and Social Care in Wigan Borough we will be an active partner in removing the barriers to health and social care services for deaf people in our community.”**

Sir Ian has 23 years of experience as Makerfield’s MP, five years as a local councillor, and a further four years spent championing health matters as a minister.



*Deaf Health Leader Annmarie Stone pictured with Sir Ian McCartney*

The team are looking forward to supporting Healthwatch Wigan shape excellent health services for deaf people.

## IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Funded until September 2015 by the Department of Health, Health and Social Care Volunteering Fund



# Deaf Health Champions are empowering deaf communities now

We are committed to working in partnership with **Health-watch, Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups** to improve health services for all deaf people. Our promise is outlined in three clear aims:

1. We will empower and train deaf people to volunteer for our project. We will support them to help improve health services for all deaf people by giving them the skills to work with local Clinical Commissioning Groups, Health-watch and Local Authorities.
2. We will support volunteers in health related placements which will reduce social isolation, develop new skills and improve their future job opportunities.
3. We will empower deaf communities to take control of their own health and to increase positive patient experiences through consistent dialogue with health and social care services. Our message of support for deaf people is abbreviated to D.E.A.F. This means:

## **Demand Equal Access First Time**

**We are seeking mainstream opportunities for our volunteers. We will match volunteers to health related roles dependent on their interests. We have two categories of volunteer:**

### **Deaf Health Leader**

Leaders will be trained and supported to engage with providers at a strategic level.

E.g.

Represent the wider deaf community on a local Health-watch Board or Forum.

Deliver Deaf Awareness Training to health professionals.

Organise community health events.

### **Deaf Health Champion**

Champions are volunteers supporting other deaf people in the community.

E.g.

Promoting good health choices to other deaf people

Befriending socially isolated deaf.

Hospital/surgery advocate

*“For deaf people, poor communication is the biggest barrier to health and social care.”*

*Did you know? Only two out of every 10 parents of a deaf child learn to sign.*

**Feeling low or depressed?**

**Anxious or stressed?**

**Having trouble sleeping?**

**Help is available in BSL!**

**Refer yourself or find out more about the service:**

**SMS: 07966 976747**

**Fax: 01494 687622**

**Email: [info@bslhealthyminds.org.uk](mailto:info@bslhealthyminds.org.uk)**

**Web: [www.bslhealthyminds.org.uk](http://www.bslhealthyminds.org.uk)**



**BSL Healthy Minds - SignHealth/NHS in partnership**  
Charity no. 1011056

## Talking therapies need a shared language

About 40% of Deaf people in the UK suffer from common mental health problems such as, depression, stress and anxiety. BSL Healthy Minds is SignHealth's Psychological Therapy Service offering guided self help, CBT and counselling delivered by British Sign Language (BSL) fluent therapists in GP surgeries and community settings.

*Did you know?*

*British Sign Language has a different grammatical structure to English. There is no written form of British Sign Language. This is why some Deaf people can not read or are only able to read simple English.*

## Meet Deaf Health Leader & recently appointed Trustee to Healthwatch Wigan - Annmarie Stone



*Passionate about deaf equality  
Annmarie explains why she's joined  
Deaf Health Champions*

**Deaf Health Champions is all about our volunteers. In each edition of our newsletter we will bring you updates from our inspirational team of Champions and Leaders.**

In this first edition we introduce our first Deaf Health Leader Annmarie Stone.

### **Tell us a bit about yourself?**

Well, I'm in my 30s and currently live in Wigan. I was born Deaf and was diagnosed with Ushers Syndrome at the age of 8. Ushers affects my sight. My night vision is extremely poor and I struggle to see in bright light or sudden light changes.

I am the only Deaf person in my family so I learnt British Sign Language at school.

### **Why have you joined Deaf Health Champions?**

Last year I set up my own project called Deaf Awareness Network. When I found out about Deaf Health Champions I thought 'Wow! That's really similar to what I want to do!

I want to see policies that are fully inclusive and supportive of deaf patients. I want to support and empower other deaf people. After all, I am only one person and there is power in numbers. We need to campaign together to get better services for deaf people.

*"I used to feel hopeless, but now I feel empowered and excited about the future. Thanks to Deaf Health Champions."*

### **Tell us about your project - Deaf Awareness Network**

I set the project up after deciding to do something positive to help other deaf people. I run it on my own and without any form of payment.

I see my role as helping hospitals to become Deaf Aware and improving the deaf patient experience. I started the project in August 2012.

Personally I have had many negative experiences in hospitals mainly through a lack of deaf awareness and poor communication. For example BSL Interpreters not being booked for appointments or staff standing in between me and my interpreter so I can't see them. Even walking through the hospital I've been stuck in corridors and hospital lifts that had audio buzzer systems.

*"I want fair treatment  
and fair communication  
all of the time.."*

I meet lots of Deaf people who tell me about problems they have with doctors or hospitals. For example, Deaf women find it really embarrassing to get a male BSL interpreter for an appointment to discuss 'women's issues'. And I'm always alarmed when I learn about Deaf people being asked to sign lengthy consent forms for operations which they can't fully understand or discuss.

So far, my project is going well and I have been really happy with the response from health services. I am now a member of a User Focus Group at Salford Royal Hospital and recently I starred in an equality and diversity training video for Wigan Infirmary! I have also got a number of signed consent forms for Deaf people asking for my support.

I feel a sense of satisfaction when I achieve something, it makes it all worthwhile.

### **Give us an example of a good healthcare experience**

My old Doctor's surgery in Swinton had a brilliant system. When I arrived at reception for my appointment I was given a paper receipt. It had my appointment number on it, the name of the Doctor and the number of the Doctor's room.

I then sat in the waiting area and watched for my appointment number to come up on an LCD screen. A system like that is much better for deaf people.

### **As a Deaf Health Leader what do you hope to achieve?**

For all health professionals to respect the choice and culture of Deaf people.

To help deaf people understand their rights and support them to make suggestions, or if they need to, access complaint procedures.

I used to feel hopeless but now I feel empowered and excited about the future. It's difficult to find work when you are Deaf. My aim is to get a job supporting Deaf people and to help train GPs and health services on how to be Deaf Aware.

I want to achieve fair treatment and fair communication all of the time.

**In our next edition we will catch up with Annmarie in her new role as Trustee of Healthwatch Wigan.**

## Contact us on:

07707 990743

If you want to get involved with our project or simply want more information please get in touch.

You can:

- Refer a volunteer. If you know a D/deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind person interested in getting involved let us know.
- Discuss how our project can support your services.
- Promote examples of your good practice in delivering excellent health services to deaf people.
- Register for our upcoming free bite-size Deaf Awareness training sessions.

Our contact details are on the right. We look forward to working with you.

### In our next newsletter....

Catch up with Annmarie Stone as she prepares for her new role as a Healthwatch Trustee.

Learn about some exciting developments in the regions, including DeafNest - a unique research project into the maternity experience of Deaf parents.

Also we bring you information on the latest VRI (Video Remote Interpreter) technology transforming BSL interpreter services in health and social care settings.

### SignHealth is the lead partner in the Deaf Health Champions' initiative

SignHealth, the healthcare charity for deaf people

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Beaconsfield,

Bucks HP9 2NB

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Website:

[www.signhealth.org.uk](http://www.signhealth.org.uk)

Reg Charity no. 1011056



# DEAF+HEALTH CHAMPIONS

[www.deafhealthchampions.org.uk](http://www.deafhealthchampions.org.uk)



### Jo Slater

Project Manager

Based: Across the North West

Contact Jo on 0770 799 0743

Email: [jslater@deafhealthchampions.org.uk](mailto:jslater@deafhealthchampions.org.uk)

Jo is hearing and lives in Wigan. Jo has 10 years experience of community engagement and empowerment within social housing and the voluntary sector. She has worked and volunteered with the Deaf community for more than three years. Outside of work Jo is a member of Leigh and District Deaf Society and volunteers for Manchester Deaf Centre.



### Janice Connolly

Volunteer Co-ordinator for Merseyside

Based: Merseyside Society for Deaf People, Queen's Drive, West Derby, Liverpool

Contact Janice via

Email: [jconnolly@deafhealthchampions.org.uk](mailto:jconnolly@deafhealthchampions.org.uk)

Janice has worked within the Deaf Community for more than 10 years. Janice is profoundly Deaf. She has been an active member of the Deaf community since she was in school and is an experienced BSL tutor and amateur photographer. Outside of work Janice is a member of Liverpool Deaf Club.



### Jonathan Swift

Volunteer Co-ordinator for Greater Manchester

Based: Manchester Deaf Centre, Crawford House, Booth Street East, Manchester, M13 9GH

Contact Jonathan on 0161 273 3415

Email: [jswift@deafhealthchampions.org.uk](mailto:jswift@deafhealthchampions.org.uk)

Jonathan is hearing and lives in Manchester. He has worked in the Deaf community for 5 years, establishing Manchester Deaf Centre's successful volunteer project. Previously to working with the Deaf community, Jonathan was involved in youth work and volunteer training. He was also once a guitar tutor.



### Katie Mowat

Volunteer Co-ordinator for Cumbria

Based: Cumbria Deaf Vision, 3 Compton Street,

Contact Katie via 01228 210 205

Email: [kmowat@deafhealthchampions.org.uk](mailto:kmowat@deafhealthchampions.org.uk)

Katie lives in the Southport area but is based in Cumbria. Katie is a profoundly Deaf BSL user and has experience working within the Deaf community and specialises with Deaf/Deafblind and people with Mental Health. Katie is also a board member of the Southport Deaf Centre.