National
Deaf Children's
Society

Summer 2026

How you're making a difference

Connect

In this issue:

"Our happy-go-lucky little lad!"

Families get early access to sign language

Daddy Pig marathon special

Latest news, fundraising updates and fun puzzles.

WELCOME

Hello and welcome to the summer edition of *Connect*, your supporter magazine.

If you're a new supporter, welcome to the National Deaf Children's Society and thank you so much for your wonderful support.

If you received our last issue, you may have spotted our exciting partnership with Hasbro, the makers of the popular children's show, Peppa Pig. In this issue, we share more updates on this partnership on page 18, alongside a puzzle special!

On page 8, you'll meet Nichola and Chris, who are parents to Jacob (2). At 2 weeks old, a hearing test showed that Jacob had hearing loss. Thanks to information on our website, the family were able to pursue testing to identify the cause.

And finally, the spotlight turns on you, our fantastic fundraisers. Turn to pages 20 and 21 to find out how our cover story family took on the Great North run, and how Daddy Pig crossed the finish line at the London Marathon.

Thanks so much for all your support. Together, we're making sure nothing holds deaf children back.

George Crockford

George Crockford
Chief Executive Officer
National Deaf Children's Society

What's inside...

Connect is published 4 times a year by the National Deaf Children's Society. The National Deaf Children's Society is a registered charity in England and Wales no.1016532 and in Scotland no. SC040779.

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ISSN: 1752-3699

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Feel inspired to take on your own running challenge?

From inflatable 5ks to marathons, there are lots of exciting events that you can get involved with. We partner with Run For Charity which gives us access to various events in the UK and overseas.

Visit **go.ndcs.org.uk/ad_fundraising** to see what events are on offer, or get in touch at **ndcs.challenges@ndcs.org.uk**, and begin your journey of fundraising for deaf children.

British Sign Language courses for parents

Last September, we launched an exciting pilot with the Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD) to offer free accredited British Sign Language (BSL) courses. These were aimed at parents and carers of deaf children aged 0 to 5 across the UK.

BSL courses are often expensive – meaning some families miss out on support to communicate with their deaf child. The aim of the pilot was to make early access to sign language a reality for more families.

> **“My son signs that he loves Mummy signing, which makes every second of learning worth it.”**
>
> – Chloe, mum to a 3-year-old deaf boy, who received a funded place on a BSL Level 1 course.

Where we are now

We initially funded 40 places on BSL courses, but this has grown significantly because of the huge interest from families. For example, the BSL Level 1 course was filled in less than a day!

Since the pilot started, we’ve funded 106 places for parents and carers on BSL Level 1, 2 and 3 courses. There are 38 families on the waitlist and we’re planning extra classes this year to meet demand.

Jemma, our director of customer and community says: “Early language development is key for deaf children and choosing to learn BSL is a great way for families to support their child’s communication, confidence and emotional wellbeing.”

Thanks to your support, more families who want to learn BSL have access to the tools they need to communicate. We also have family sign language learning on our YouTube channel: **go.ndcs.org.uk/family-sign/.**

News

Family Fund partnership

In February, we launched our partnership with Family Fund, to deliver a nationwide grants programme to support families raising deaf children aged 0 to 11, or who are still in primary school.

This funding is about giving families choice and flexibility – to try different approaches, create a language-rich environment at home, and remove some of the financial barriers that can stand in the way of early language development.

Families were able to apply for funding to help pay for items that support their deaf child's communication and development, such as:

- **assistive technology related to deafness or hearing loss**
- **standard technology, such as tablets or similar devices**
- **support for learning British Sign Language (BSL), including course fees or related cost**

We've received and **approved funding for 775 grant applications** and are excited to follow the impact they make on deaf children and their family's lives.

To find out more about this funding project, visit: **go.ndcs.org.uk/familyfund**

Driving change with our new campaigns toolkit

Every year, more than 130 children's hearing services working groups (CHSWGs) bring together parents, professionals and young people to shape and improve hearing services in their area. But for many parents, driving change can feel daunting.

To help, we've developed a new campaigns toolkit to support local campaigners in creating change for deaf children and young people across the UK. Drawing on our experience in local campaigning, the toolkit provides a practical, step-by-step framework for starting and running a campaign.

It includes guidance on planning your campaign, drafting your message, gathering evidence, engaging local supporters and working with decision-makers. Ready-to-use templates for letters, petitions and community engagement make it easy to get started.

To see more about the campaign's toolkit, and how you could get involved visit: **go.ndcs.org.uk/campaignstoolkit**

Did you know?

Our advice and guidance officers have supported families to receive **over half a million pounds of essential government funded disability benefits** – and their support is only possible thanks to you.

Our happy-go-lucky little lad!

Finding out their son Jacob has a rare condition that causes hearing loss was a shock for parents Nichola and Chris. But thanks to Jacob's adventurous nature, and with support from the National Deaf Children's Society, they now feel confident that nothing will hold him back.

About the family

Name: Jacob

Age: 2 years old

Deafness: Severe to profound hearing loss in his left ear, mild to moderate loss in his right ear and wears hearing aids.

Family: Dad Chris also wears hearing aids, Mum Nichola and sister Edie are both hearing.

Nichola and husband Chris stand at the touchline watching Jacob (2) chasing after the ball. He loves football and many other energetic activities, including swimming and riding his scooter.

But as a baby, they worried about the challenges he'd face in childhood.

"Jacob's newborn hearing screening flagged up possible issues, but the nurse said it was probably just fluid in his ears from a fast birth," says Nichola. "We also noticed tiny holes, like dimples, at the top of Jacob's ears. Chris has these (they're called pits) and though Chris has mild hearing loss, he's always been told the 2 aren't related. Still, we wondered if any of our children might have hearing loss too.

Then 2 weeks later, a hearing test showed Jacob had severe to profound hearing loss in his left ear, and mild to moderate hearing loss in his right ear.

"We were initially shocked at the level of hearing loss," says Nichola. "Chris has always managed well without hearing aids, but the audiologist said Jacob needed them. I worried about the obstacles he'd face, what his schooling would be like and whether we should learn sign language."

An MRI scan showed Jacob's left ear had enlarged vestibular aqueducts (EVAs), where the tiny bony canal connecting the inner ear to the brain cavity does not become thinner and longer as the child grows, causing deafness. He also had underdeveloped cochleas in both ears.

"The doctor said it meant his hearing might deteriorate, and head injuries could also increase his hearing loss," says Nichola. "There was a long wait ahead for a specialist and a lot of time to worry. We struggled to find information about exactly how this would impact Jacob."

Nichola heard about the National Deaf Children's Society from their Teacher of the Deaf and searched our website.

"There was more information about EVAs than we'd found anywhere else, including about the link between EVAs and underdeveloped cochleas."

At 2 months old, they noticed dimples on each side of Jacob's neck. Nichola searched the National Deaf Children's Society website and saw that hearing loss, ear pits and neck fistulas pointed to a rare condition called branchiootorenal syndrome, a genetic condition that also impacts the kidneys.

"The website gave me the confidence to push for a kidney scan, and our paediatrician referred Jacob, then aged 4 months old, straightaway.

"It was a shock when it was revealed that he has only one kidney, which functions at 75% to 80%. We were told the syndrome may lead to chronic kidney disease. We worried Jacob wouldn't have a normal childhood, that he'd be ill, as well as struggle to communicate.

"But as time went on, we relaxed. He didn't get ill. Jacob's kidney function is regularly monitored, and he's doing fine. He also has regular hearing tests, and so far, his level of hearing loss has remained stable. We take extra care to make sure he does not bang his head, but he's like any other energetic toddler. When he's older, he'll maybe have a helmet for sport, but we won't let it hold him back."

With the prospect of Jacob's hearing loss progressing, Nichola and Chris decided he'd need to learn sign language, so they took part in our family sign language course. They learned signs for everyday words and began teaching them to Jacob and his sister Edie (4).

"Edie spends so much time signing with Jacob, like a one-to-one teacher!" says Nichola.

"Jacob knows quite a few signs and his speech is also good: it's ahead of his age."

"His nursery staff are fantastic and they have learned some sign language from a community support worker. We've done BSL Level 1 and the National Deaf Children's Society is helping to fund us to do Level 2. He loves attending a club called Little Listeners, which is for deaf children. It helps us all to meet other families.

"Thankfully, none of our early worries about communication have materialised. Jacob is incredibly good at letting us know his needs. The thought of giving him a cushioned childhood is laughable. His favourite game is climbing onto the back of the sofa and throwing himself off! And we'd have to stop Edie too – and she's not going to let that happen! Now he's older, Jacob can let us know if he's bumped his head, so it's less of a worry.

"We're so grateful for the support we've had from this wonderful charity. The information on their website is amazing. We've used it for appointments and to share with Jacob's nursery to highlight his medical needs. His condition is so specialist that our GPs don't always have the knowledge.

Chris now uses hearing aids in solidarity with Jacob, and we've come to realise the importance of deaf awareness, interpreters, sign language and hearing technology. It's been a beautiful journey that we've experienced together as a family."

Community connectors

Our community connectors work in their local area to create a strong support network for deaf children, young people and their families.

Why is community support important?

Each community is different – and so are its needs. We're on a mission to understand the challenges families are facing where they live and drive change where it's needed most.

Our community connectors are all parents of deaf children. They work in the heart of their communities, bringing people and services together and creating opportunities for families to connect with one another.

As parents of deaf children themselves, they understand the challenges families might be facing and share their lived experience to help others on their journey.

> **"You're all helping me so much, and for the first time I don't feel like I'm on my own."**
>
> – A mum in Gloucestershire who has received support from our audiology adviser, an advice and guidance officer and a community connector.

What support can they offer?

Kayleigh, who works in the Bristol area, says: "We give families support to access services, provide balanced information to help them make informed choices and act as a friendly face to share the journey with. We also network and build relationships with professionals, organisations, groups and charities who look after deaf children."

Lisa, a community connector in Buckinghamshire, tells us: "Every day brings new opportunities to build bridges, share stories and empower families navigating the journey of raising deaf children."

What difference do they make?

Our community connectors have made a real impact since they started working in local communities just over a year ago.

- We're building strong relationships with Teachers of the Deaf, who are qualified to work with deaf children and support their progress from the moment deafness is identified. They have been referring more families directly to us, joining collaborative meetings and inviting us to healthcare decision clinics.
- We've worked with 28 groups, including local deaf children's societies, charities and Teacher of the Deaf groups.
- 44% of the families supported are new to the National Deaf Children's Society – meaning we're reaching more deaf children for the first time.

Lisa shares just one story of a family she supported who had recently found out their son was deaf: "Their son had just started wearing hearing aids, and they were navigating a world of questions and emotions. We talked through the support available now and in the future, and how to build confidence at home. **Sometimes, just knowing you're not alone makes all the difference – and they left feeling reassured and hopeful."**

A day in the life

Nicola, our community grants coordinator, approves funding for exciting projects for deaf children in the heart of their communities. Here she talks us through a typical day.

As soon as I get up…

I'm deaf and have a hearing assistance dog, so my morning starts with my dog Luca nudging me awake when my alarm clock goes off. He's usually then joined by the cat to remind me it's breakfast time. I feed them both and then walk Luca.

How I help deaf children…

Our community grants enable groups and organisations to deliver community-based projects that make lasting positive change for deaf children. This can be through activities that provide peer support and build confidence, skills, friendships, deaf identity and so much more for deaf children and their families.

A typical day involves…

Each day varies but I might meet with an organisation that's interested in applying for a grant or needs support with their application. Or I might meet with our volunteers who also support organisations to apply. I might process applications to make sure they meet the grant criteria or get information ready for our assessment panel. Or I could be checking in with organisations that have previously been awarded grants to offer support or find out what they've been delivering.

In the last month we've finished an assessment round and funded 15 successful projects, awarding a total of £123,000. These range from weekly stay and play sessions for deaf children and their families to sessions focused on British Sign Language.

The best part of my job is…

Supporting applicants to develop and shape their ideas so they can showcase their passion. The satisfaction of seeing a project be funded and knowing I helped them get through the application process and be successful – that's the best part. I also enjoy seeing what projects have achieved, such as when we received photos and positive feedback about a project we funded in Leeds to install British Sign Language signs in local parks. This project has helped connect deaf children and hearing children, with fun visuals to learn signs together.

It's great to see new ideas come to life that support deaf children and families in their communities, open doors to friendships and support networks and create opportunities for deaf children and young people to grow in confidence and develop their deaf identity. Knowing that these projects would not have been delivered without our community grants makes me feel really proud.

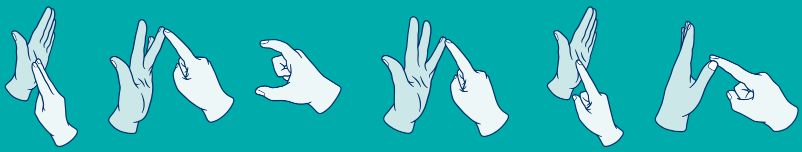
After work...

You'll find me walking Luca, then unwinding in front of the TV. On days off and holidays I like to go out exploring. I get to the beach as often as I can as it's our favourite place to relax. Which is a novelty, as there are not many beaches in Birmingham!

To find out more about successful projects funded by our community grants, visit: **go.ndcs.org.uk/community-grants/stories/.**

Try fingerspelling Nicola's name:

N I C O L A



Mild and unilateral hearing loss

We support deaf children with any type and level of hearing loss, and we're keen to make sure mild and unilateral deafness are not overlooked. Read on to find out more about these types of hearing loss and why it's important we take them seriously.

Mild hearing loss

A child's level of deafness is measured using the range of decibels they can hear. Decibels (dB) are a unit of measurement for the loudness of sound.

Children who have mild deafness can hear sounds within a range of 21 to 40dB. This means they may be able to hear everything a person says in a quiet room, without needing to use a hearing aid. But, if there's lots of noise, or the person speaking is far away or whispering, they might find it hard to hear.

Around a quarter of deaf children have permanent mild hearing loss. Children can also experience temporary mild hearing loss because of glue ear.

Unilateral hearing loss

Unilateral deafness means that a child has hearing loss in one ear. It's also known as one-sided hearing loss or single-sided deafness. A child may have mild, moderate, severe or profound deafness in their affected ear.

Children with unilateral hearing loss may find it more difficult to:

- hear sounds or speech on the side with the deafness
- identify what's causing a sound, locate the direction a sound is coming from and/or judge how far away it is
- understand speech when there's background noise

Around 23% of deaf children have unilateral hearing loss.

Almost half of deaf children in the UK have mild or unilateral hearing loss.

The impact

Although mild and unilateral hearing loss is often downplayed, it can have a bigger impact on family life and education than is sometimes recognised.

For example, **a child with mild hearing loss can miss up to 50% of what's being said in the classroom.** And in England, children with mild hearing loss achieve on average a grade lower than their hearing peers at GCSE.

It's vital that mild and unilateral hearing loss is taken seriously and that children have the right support in place. There are lots of resources and information on our website that can help: **ndcs.org.uk.**

Sign of the season

Hearing

Learn this season's British Sign Language (BSL) sign by scanning the QR code below or visiting: **go.ndcs.org.uk/bsl-summersign/.**

Scan me

Deaf awareness tip

Fingerspelling is used in British Sign Language (BSL) to spell out words (such as names of places or people). If you're new to sign language, learning to fingerspell is a great first step.

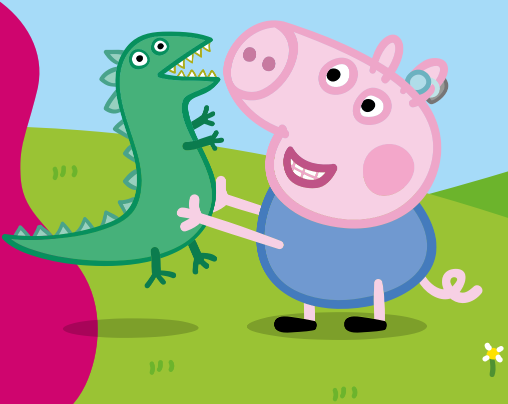
Peppa Pig partnership is oink-tastic!

As you may know, we partnered with popular children's TV show Peppa Pig to advise on deaf representation and audiology information for a groundbreaking new storyline in which Peppa's brother, George, discovers he is moderately deaf in one ear.

We're thrilled about this partnership with Hasbro – a leading games, intellectual property and toy company, behind the much-loved animated series. We believe the episodes, which aired in March, will help parents recognise early signs of hearing loss, understand more about deafness and know where to turn for support.

George will also be wearing his hearing aid in all future episodes of the series, providing visible representation of deafness to help normalise hearing aids and promote deaf awareness among young viewers.

Around half of deaf children in the UK are born deaf. The other half are born hearing but lose their hearing as they grow. This is known as acquired deafness, and it can be harder to spot the signs.



We worked closely with the team at Hasbro to bring George's hearing loss journey to life in a way that reflects the real experiences of deaf children and their families. We've also created Peppa Pig-themed resources, such as fingerspelling postcards and tips for talking to deaf friends.

Since the partnership was announced, over 6,000 people have visited our Peppa Pig webpages. Families viewing our information page about unilateral deafness (deafness in one ear, like George has), has increased by 50%. With an estimated 54,000 deaf children in the UK, this awareness is vital in reaching those who need us.

Have a peek at the George Pig episodes on YouTube and see for yourself the impact of this storyline – just scan the QR code or visit: **go.ndcs.org.uk/georgepig-episodes/**.

Scan me

> **"Our daughter's diagnosis came in the same week that George Pig's hearing loss story was launched. Seeing a character she recognises, begin a similar journey, has been genuinely powerful – and normalised something that could otherwise have felt daunting."**
>
> – Mum to 4-year-old recently fitted with hearing aids.

Do you work with children in the early years?

Raise deaf awareness in your setting with our free resources – now featuring everyone's favourite little pigs at: **go.ndcs.org.uk/georgepig-free-resources/**.

Fantastic Fundraisers

In this issue, we're celebrating some of the incredible ways our amazing supporters have been raising funds, along with a special feature from Daddy Pig himself.

Great North Run – parent duo

Husband and wife, Chris and Nichola, who are the parents of our cover story star Jacob, took on the Great North Run half-marathon last September.

What inspired you to take part?

My husband encouraged me to get involved and we both knew the charity we wanted to run for, given the support we have received in the last 2 years from the National Deaf Children's Society.

How did you prepare?

Trying to fit in running with our jobs and 2 young children was quite the challenge! We tried to embrace the summer months and took it in turns on a morning or evening to get some runs in before the big day.

What was the highlight?

Seeing our children at the final 600m mark. Their faces lit up seeing us run past and it felt like such an achievement to finish.

What was the biggest challenge?

Probably realising I'd started too quick and then hitting a wall at mile 8. The cheer of all the supporters helped push me through the next couple of miles and then, by mile 10, I could smell the pizza waiting for me!

Any final thoughts?

We were overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone we know. We really hoped to hit our target, so to then raise above and beyond made us quite emotional.

The National Deaf Children's Society helped us when we really weren't sure where to turn for answers. We were incredibly proud to raise money for a charity which gave us so much support.

A big thank you to Nichola and Chris for raising an amazing £980.

Daddy Pig's a marathon hero!

Running the London Marathon is nothing to snort at, and this April, Daddy Pig put on his running shoes to show that nothing should hold deaf children back.

How did it feel when you first got your marathon letter?

Daddy Pig: I was excited, but also very nervous – but Peppa has been an incredible little coach and George, Mummy and Evie were brilliant at cheering me on.

How did you train for such a big challenge?

Daddy Pig: Jumping in muddy puddles is actually fantastic cardio! Finding time to train was quite tricky with 3 little piggies at home. But I managed a morning jog to the office most days, plus piggy backs with Peppa and George, and that worked well.

Peppa Pig: Daddy is amazing, even if he did get very pink when he was running!

What was your favourite part?

Daddy Pig: Crossing the finish line and having the most enormous cuddle with my family and seeing George proudly wearing his hearing aid. Plus, Peppa and George had baked some delicious muffins – I may have enjoyed one or 2!

A big thank you to Daddy Pig and his friends at Hasbro who raised an INCREDIBLE £57,000!!

Feel inspired? For more information about events you can get involved with visit: **go.ndcs.org.uk/summer26-events/**.

Puzzle page

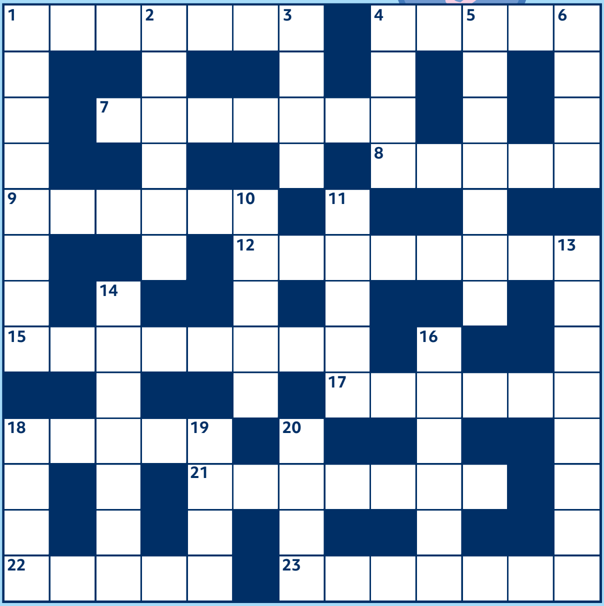
Crossword

Across

1. Wandering (tribesman)
4. Milk-bottle container
7. Cheer
8. Praise highly
9. Cuban capital
12. Brave
15. Idler
17. Sloping (font)
18. Strainer
21. Uncivilised
22. African river-dweller
23. Belt holes

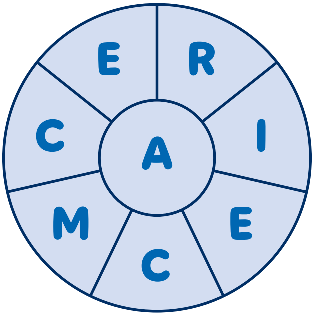
Down

1. In summary, in a ...
2. Charity launch
3. Friendly slap on back
4. Relinquish (land)
5. Yearly handbook
6. Walk offstage
10. Vehicles
11. Desert plants
13. Throws away
14. Over-excited (5,2)
16. Part of battle plan
18. So much
19. Portugal's currency
20. Search (horizon)



Peppa Pig loves?

There's at least one eight-letter word hidden in this word wheel, can you find it? How many other words can you spot?



Wordsearch

E	L	O	F	L	A	M	I	N	G	O	E	C
U	L	A	S	B	E	D	O	S	A	P	I	A
I	C	D	O	R	F	E	I	S	U	E	L	M
Y	R	O	M	L	A	L	G	H	P	L	U	P
G	U	A	P	I	C	N	I	C	A	D	O	E
E	I	U	A	E	O	E	S	A	W	D	S	R
D	S	C	D	N	P	R	U	E	O	U	E	V
P	E	E	L	P	S	P	I	B	S	P	J	A
A	S	S	I	F	O	S	A	L	A	Y	U	N
O	H	G	E	O	R	G	E	R	C	D	E	M
N	I	E	R	U	A	S	O	N	I	D	H	I
I	P	O	S	A	Q	B	U	O	K	U	S	S
D	V	A	L	I	S	T	I	R	C	M	P	E

PEPPA
GEORGE
MUDDY PUDDLE
CAMPER VAN
PICNIC
FLAMINGO
BEACH
DINOSAUR
MERMAID
CRUISE SHIP

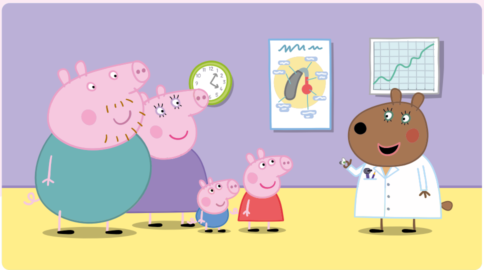
Sudoku

Fill in the empty squares so that 1 to 9 appears just once in each of the nine larger boxes and in each row and column

					3	4		
			6	1		3		9
6				4			8	1
		4	1		2	9		8
	9	1		5		2	3	
3		8	4		7	6		
1	5			7				2
8		2		6	1			
		6	5					

Spot the difference

Can you spot 5 differences in these 2 pictures?



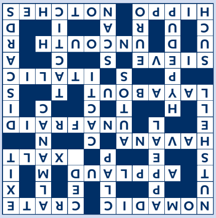
Answers

Word wheel

Eight-letter word:
ICE CREAM

Spot the difference

1. daddy pig's glasses are missing
2. mummy pig's outfit has changed colour
3. the time on the clock has changed
4. baby Evie is missing
5. the hearing aid on the poster has changed colour



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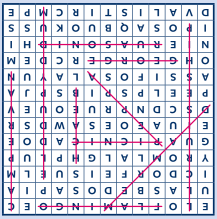
S	■	■	E	■	■	P	■		X	A	L	T
H	A	V	A	N	A	■	C	■	■	N	■	■
E	■	■	L	■	U	N	A	F	R	A	I	D
L	■	H	■	■	T	■	C	■	■	C	■	I
L	A	Y	A	B	O	U	T	■	T	■	■	S
■	■	P	■	■	S	■	I	T	A	L	I	C
S	I	E	V	E	■	S	■	■	C	■	■	A
U	■	D	■	U	N	C	O	U	T	H	■	R
C	■	U	■	R	■	A	■	■	I	■	■	D
H	I	P	P	O	■	N	O	T	C	H	E	S



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Y	R	O	M	L	A	L	G	H	P	L	U	P
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1	5	3	9	7	4	8	6	2
8	4	2	3	6	1	5	9	7
9	7	6	5	2	8	1	4	3

Return Address
National Deaf Children's Society
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Helping parents of deaf children learn about deafness

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