

Hearing Support Service

An external evaluation of Norfolk Deaf Association's Big Lottery Fund project to support people with hearing loss.

Steve Allman | June 2016



Norfolk Deaf Association
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"When you're deaf your world shrinks. If you can't open it up again then it puts you in a place where you feel like you can't do things. The Hearing Support Service says you can do it and helps you find a way."

Person supported by Hearing Support Service

Introduction

Norfolk Deaf Association (NDA) has a long and proud history of improving the lives of young people and adults with all degrees of hearing loss throughout Norfolk, dating back as far as 1898.

The Norwich-based charity supports people with hearing loss and other related conditions by delivering services which include deaf awareness training, advice and information and the provision of practical support, such as hearing aid maintenance and advice on communication and assistive listening technology.

The Department of Health estimates that 10 million adults and 45,000 children are affected by hearing loss in the UK, that's 1 in 6 people and a little over 16% of the population.

Based on these figures, an estimated 142,000 people in Norfolk experience hearing loss and could potentially turn to Norfolk Deaf Association for practical support and advice, or support to come to terms with the impact of hearing loss, which may include loss of independence, low confidence or self-esteem or increased feelings of isolation.

There is a growing need for the services provided by Norfolk Deaf Association. NHS England anticipates that the number of people experiencing hearing loss will increase by 44% to 14.5 million people by 2031, with audiologists largely attributing the level of growth to an ageing

population, but also increased exposure to noise at work and home and the popularity of new portable technology, such as tablets and smartphones.

This unprecedented growth in the need for hearing loss support is evidenced by the number of people requesting help from the Norfolk Deaf Association, which believes increasing numbers of people are identifying hearing loss and having to use, and maintain, the latest hearing aids, therefore impacting on the rising levels of need.

In 2007 the Department of Health estimated that the NHS provided an estimated 2.6 million adult hearing aid appointments each year; composed of 600,000 assessments or reassessments, 500,000 hearing aid fittings in one or both ears and 500,000 follow up appointments and over one million "repair" appointments for new tubes, new batteries, etc.

The charity's Hearing Support Service, in particular, has experienced a significant growth in demand for its services, with appointments soaring by a third to 10,100. In order to meet the growing level of need and reduce pressure on its resources, the Norfolk Deaf Association successfully applied to the Big Lottery Fund in 2013 for a Reaching Communities grant of £284,991 to deliver the Hearing Support Service over three years.

This external evaluation summarises the impact of the Hearing Support Service thus far, in isolation from the charity's wider activities, and considers the next steps as it nears the end of Big Lottery Fund support.

About the Evaluation

Norfolk Deaf Association commissioned this external evaluation in February 2016 to summarise the impact of the Hearing Support Service on people with hearing loss and explore potential challenges, opportunities and next steps for the service with a view to seeking continuation funding beyond the current Big Lottery Fund grant.

Independent evaluator Steve Allman was commissioned on the basis of his previous work evaluating Big Lottery Fund projects that support socially disadvantaged groups and was tasked with evaluating the Hearing Support Service, in isolation from the wider activities of the Norfolk Deaf Association.

A number of key stakeholders engaged in the evaluation and shared their experiences of the Norfolk Hearing Support Service, including approximately 50 service users of the Mobile Clinic at two sites; Taverham, just outside Norwich and Diss, to the south of the county.

Fourteen external stakeholders have given feedback by telephone or online survey; primarily NHS Audiology staff and managers at residential care homes which host community clinics. Eight volunteers have taken part in structured and unstructured interviews and the evaluation has engaged relevant NDA staff throughout, primarily the Services Co-ordinator and Fundraising Assistant.

Furthermore, the evaluator has reviewed a number of key documents relating to the Hearing Support Service, including reports to the Big Lottery Fund, the

Strategic Plan, the results of Satisfaction Surveys, Volunteer Training Records and other relevant documents.

About the Hearing Support Service

Big Lottery Fund support has enabled the Hearing Support Service to have a real impact in the lives of people with hearing loss at a time when NHS budgets and resources are coming under increasing pressure.

In 2015, by the end of the second year, the project had already delivered 7870 appointments to 4566 people with hearing loss and had just under 6000 people with hearing loss active on its database.

The Hearing Support Service delivers advice, support and practical help under three overarching outcomes as follows:

- 1. Increasing confidence and self-esteem.**
- 2. Reducing feelings of isolation and increasing ability to communicate with family, friends and communities.**
- 3. Improving quality of life.**

These outcomes are achieved primarily by providing assistance to enable people with hearing loss to use and maintain NHS hearing aids, undertaking the maintenance of the Hearing Aids on behalf of the user, and by providing advice on communication methods and assistive listening technology; and our evaluation finds that the Hearing Support Service has taken a creative approach to developing new services to meet emerging needs.

How the Hearing Support Service Helps

The Hearing Support Service engages people with hearing loss at home, whether a private residence or care home, and offers a regular timetable of community based and mobile clinic visits across Norfolk.

In addition, Big Lottery Fund support has enabled the Hearing Support Service to develop new and innovative ways of meeting the needs of people with hearing loss. The fortnightly British Sign Language Practice Group, for example, had 44 members during Year Two and provides social opportunities and informal learning in addition to BSL practice.

The mobile clinic delivers its support in towns and villages throughout Norfolk, where its busiest locations may support as many as 50 people with hearing loss in just one two-hour session. By the end of Year Two the mobile clinic had delivered support to people in 40 locations.

Community Clinics are delivered at various locations across Norfolk, including doctor's surgeries and other appropriate venues. 'Closed' clinics are run from residential and nursing homes. Community Clinics were delivered in 118 locations during the first 2 years of Big Lottery Fund support.

The Assistive Listening Technology Service provides advice and demonstrations of specialist equipment for those with hearing loss including smoke alarms, telephones and televisions and the New Users Group, which delivered 21 pilot sessions to 32 people with hearing loss in Year Two, helps people overcome the anxiety of using hearing aids for the first time.

Volunteers

One of the unique features of the Hearing Support Service is that it is delivered by trained volunteers. Many of the volunteers have personal experience of hearing loss, are hearing aid users themselves and are familiar with the potential challenges hearing aids can present.

The 42 volunteers, who supported the project during 2015-16, provided guidance on using hearing aids to their full effect, helping people adjust to using them and providing tips and advice.

Volunteers assist people with hearing loss by carrying out simple repairs, cleaning moulds, replacing batteries, tubes and hooks and ensuring people know how to use the hearing aid correctly and understand the controls.

They provide emotional support to the service users and also provide advice and information to family, friends and carers.

Big Lottery Fund support enables volunteers to undertake extensive training to support their work, in topics including lone working, dementia awareness, first aid, sensory equipment, sight loss and a range of other relevant courses.

Heidi, a volunteer, describes how the learning from her training and the advice of NDA staff has stayed with her during her regular volunteering:

“Don’t make anyone feel like they leave with less than they came in with; that’s how Pam (Service Co-ordinator) trains volunteers and her words of advice are in my head whenever I’m volunteering for the Hearing Support Service.”

NDA volunteer John describes the effectiveness of volunteers being able to empathise and relate to people with hearing loss:

“People feel embarrassed about using hearing aids. Young people grow long hair to cover them and older people might pop them in a drawer and try and forget about them - but they know there's no hiding place from an NDA volunteer! We've been there too, we want to help and we know how to.”

1. Increasing confidence and self-esteem

People with hearing loss can also experience a loss in confidence and self-esteem. Some describe becoming disengaged from family and friends having lost the confidence to engage in conversation, or experiencing difficulties at work through lacking the confidence to discuss their hearing loss with their employer.

The Hearing Support Service measures Big Lottery Fund outcomes via an annual survey which it has developed in house. By the end of Year Two, the survey had been sent to 1147 people with hearing loss supported during the first two years of the project. At 85%, the return rate is extremely positive and, out of 980 responses, 97% report improved confidence and self-esteem.

Confidence

As hearing aid users, volunteers act as role models, which can help people with hearing loss to feel more confident, as volunteer Heidi explains:

"You might sit with someone and explain how to use their hearing aid twenty times but they're still not confident about it, but then they realise that we as volunteers also have hearing loss and we're more confident with it now."

People with hearing loss describe how the Hearing Support Service improves their confidence in a number of ways. Many lack the confidence to travel long distances to hospital appointments so value the ability to access the

mobile or community clinics closer to home. Others feel more confident about communicating with family and friends, as another volunteer explains:

“A 99 year old lady in Norwich called three days before her 100th birthday party to say her hearing aids weren't working and she was worried about making a fool of herself at her party. We went straight round and replaced the tubes for her; we couldn't have her feeling worried on her 100th birthday, could we?”

Liz Bennett, Matron at **Doughty's Housing With Care** which hosts a community clinic says that many of their residents find traditional clinics daunting, they struggle to know where to go and who to ask for, whereas the Hearing Support Service is delivered on site in familiar surroundings and NDA volunteers can work with housing staff to follow up any ongoing issues.

Others report feeling uncomfortable about, what they perceive as, wasting NHS time so may not ask questions during an audiology appointment, but may feel more comfortable about speaking with a volunteer at a later stage.

Some report lacking confidence in using hearing aids and welcome the opportunity for volunteers to provide practical demonstrations at their own pace. A number of people with hearing loss described how the project had given them the confidence to wear their hearing aids and use them properly:

"People don't realise that as soon as new hearing aid goes into your ear, you can't concentrate on what the Audiologist is telling you, there's so much noise; birds, cars, whistling noises, etc.

The Audiologists are helpful, but they don't have a lot of time. You get home and realise you can't work 'the thing' and that's when your confidence goes; you're not sure you're doing it right, so you become nervous about wearing it, so you don't bother."

Self Esteem

People with hearing loss describe how the Hearing Support Service has improved their self-esteem. One lady described how her self-esteem was low after being diagnosed with hearing loss, but the service gave her the boost she needed to stay in work. Another lady described how she had been self-conscious about wearing hearing aids until a volunteer showed her how to style her hair to cover them over, which made her feel better about herself:

“A lot of my friends have problems using hearing aids and it's easy to just give up, but they [HSS] show you how to fit them properly and keep them cleaned and well-maintained.”

“Visiting the mobile clinic is one of the few things my husband can still do independently as he's less mobile so, besides helping with his hearing, just coming here really helps his self-esteem.”

2. Reducing feelings of isolation and increasing communication

"If people can't access the Hearing Support Service, then it can access them. No other (hearing) service in Norfolk can do that."

People with hearing loss engaged in the evaluation suggest that isolation is one of their primary concerns; both social isolation and rural isolation in a large rural county such as Norfolk. Of 976 people surveyed by the end of Year Two, 93% reported reduced isolation through improved communication.

Furthermore, 97% of 974 people surveyed by the end of Year Two report that the Hearing Support Service has enabled them to pursue a hobby or interest and the same number report that the project has made a positive difference to their communication.

Isolation was identified as a key challenge by people with hearing loss who engaged in the evaluation; many described the impact of feeling doubly isolated by having hearing loss and experiencing rural isolation in a large county like Norfolk.

A key advantage of the Hearing Support Service, as opposed to traditional clinics, is that it can be delivered anywhere and external partners in residential care homes that host community clinics describe how the Hearing Support Service enables people with hearing loss to become less isolated.

Phyllis Askew of **Norse Care** has observed elderly residents becoming withdrawn and isolated if their hearing aids are not functioning correctly and Maureen Buckey of **Glaven District Caring** reports that a lack of transport to NHS Audiology clinics further increases isolation.

People with hearing loss engaged in the evaluation describe how the project has enabled them to feel less isolated; either through the practical support and friendship offered at social groups or by having regular contact with volunteers who can empathise with how they may feeling about hearing loss:

"When you have a hearing impairment, sometimes the loneliest place on earth is a room full of people. When I was teaching we had an end of term party and I couldn't hear anyone. My confidence shrank to an invisible amount and I shut myself in a cupboard and vowed I would never go in the staff room again."

"I come here, I talk to other people with the same problems and it makes me feel I'm not so daft after all. It gives me a boost."

3. Improving quality of life

"Hearing Aids are just that; an aid for hearing. They're only part of the solution, but the Hearing Support Service gives you the rest of the solution by teaching you how to use them properly and teaching little tricks, like letting your family know the best place for you to sit and hear them, finding quiet corners, reducing background noise."

People with hearing loss engaged in the evaluation describe a number of ways in which the Hearing Support Service has improved their quality of life, particularly by creating new friendships and social opportunities, or enabling them to communicate fully with existing friends and family.

Of the 978 people with hearing loss surveyed by the end of Year Two, 98% report improvement in their overall quality of life, ranging from being able to secure or maintain employment to being able to simply watch, and hear, a favourite TV programme or have a telephone conversation with a friend.

"People imagine that being hearing impaired you miss out on the big things, but it's the little things I miss more; being able to watch TV, being able to speak on the phone, hearing what your mate says in the pub."

Others credit the support they receive from the Hearing Support Service as enabling them to maintain, or return to, employment. Not only is this impact

felt by people with hearing loss themselves, but also by family carers attending the mobile clinic on their behalf to replace batteries or tubes, remarking that, without the Hearing Support Service, they would most likely be forced to take a day off from work to travel to their nearest NHS hospital.

"There's an economic argument to support hearing aids; I started using mine aged 40 and it enabled me to keep working and contributing to society for another 20 years."

When discussing how the Hearing Support Service improves quality of life, the importance of the Assisted Technology Clinic is frequently referred to. People with hearing loss describe how small pieces of equipment make a huge difference to their quality of life, by providing a practical solution to a problem or giving them confidence and piece of mind. Many also comment on the expert knowledge and advice they receive from NDA volunteers:

"We stayed in a hotel and a fire alarm sounded during the night. Had my husband not been there, I wouldn't have known. That's why trying out phones, doorbells and alarms is so important."

"This morning I got a lovely card from someone whose mother is older, deaf and rather isolated. She's been unable to call family and friends since her phone broke. It's a special model, but we were able to help her find a replacement."

"After my visit to discuss listening devices with Mr Spicer, I ordered a Swing Receiver from Sarabec Ltd. and a headset for my wife, who does not have a hearing aid. Last night we both heard the dialogue of (the TV show) Peaky Blinders for the first time!"

A key outcome of the Hearing Support Service is improving communication with family and friends. Lorna Fish, a volunteer who engaged in the evaluation, describes how the service has helped one lady in North Norfolk:

"I provided details of our Assisted Listening Device Clinics and encouraged them to come along to the November one at the Act Centre, Aylsham to discuss their communication difficulties.

When I followed up with a phone call the following month, mum had been fitted with a new hearing aid and I was greeted with total joy by herself and son.

They had purchased a new phone following our advice and the remainder of her family, including her many grandchildren, were now able to contact her, and speak with her, and she is able to enjoy many lengthy telephone hours which she had missed out on as she could not hear them."

Working in Partnership

"The Hearing Support Service provide a personal service to tenants who are unable to get to hospital or the main office of NDA. They provide batteries, change tubes and give advice on assistive devices. They've even supported us with advice on hearing loops and devices to support an employee who struggles to hear in meetings."

Julie Read, Centra Care & Support

Norfolk Deaf Association is proactive in seeking out potential partners to support the delivery of the Hearing Support Service and, in doing so, has been able to extend the project's impact on people with hearing loss.

Thirteen partner organisations engaged in the evaluation, including Audiology staff from **Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust**, local care providers and residential homes and GP surgeries.

Partners are positive about the impact of the Hearing Support Service, with 100% reporting the service as "very good", the maximum ranking.

Partner organisations report that the Hearing Support Service has delivered real impact against its intended outcomes with 100% of partners reporting that the project has improved quality of life (67% to a very large extent/33% to a large extent), increased confidence and self-esteem (50% to a very large extent/50% to a large extent).

Partners also report that the project has reduced isolation (42% to a very large extent/58% to a large extent), increased access to the community (55% to a very large extent/45% to a large extent) and increased communication with family and friends (58% to a very large extent/42% to a large extent).

The key strengths of the Hearing Support Service, from the perspective of external stakeholders, are that the service can access people with hearing loss living in rural areas who might not have any means of transport to travel to a main clinic, or might be too elderly or vulnerable to make use of the (very limited) public transport available in a large rural county such as Norfolk.

"Without the HSS, our patients would have to travel all the way to Cromer and it would take the whole day on public transport."

Practice Manager at a North Norfolk Surgery

The knowledge and expertise of Hearing Support Service staff and volunteers is also cited by external stakeholders, who say people with hearing loss report feeling confident that the service will resolve their concerns and staff and volunteers demonstrate excellent knowledge, both technical knowledge of hearing aids and assistive devices, but also other services which may help.

"It's great to have such a service on our doorstep, so often people have to trail into Norwich for things. I'm now finding that people are coming in and asking for the latest leaflet either for themselves or for a relative/friend – so keep up the good work!"

Judy, Diss Health Centre

Supporting NHS Colleagues

Senior Audiologists at Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust speak very highly of the Hearing Support Service.

Maureen Chapman describes how it reduces pressure on NHS audiology departments by creating additional resource which enables them to manage referrals more effectively, particularly by fitting domiciliary hearing aids.

Jo Wilkinson says the key strengths of the service are its flexible location and reach, which increases access for patients who may otherwise have difficulty accessing NHS hospitals or clinics.

John Fitzgerald, Head of Audiology at Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust (and a trustee of Norfolk Deaf Association) also shares the view that the service has a real impact:

"The key strength of the Hearing Support Service is being able to reach people in the community close to their home. Many elderly hearing aid users find it difficult to travel long distances for hearing aid support and maintenance.

The service offers well trained volunteers who know what they're doing and offers people with hearing loss good quality advice and care."

John Fitzgerald, Head of Audiology at Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust

Supporting the Action Plan on Hearing Loss

The Action Plan on Hearing Loss, first published in March 2015 by **NHS England and the Department of Health**, outlines health reform levers designed to improve quality, efficiency and access to audiology services.

It's clear from our evaluation that Norfolk Deaf Association, through the Hearing Support Service, is addressing a number of government priorities:

The mobile and community clinics enable people with hearing loss to receive high quality services closer to home and, as NHS partners suggest, the use of trained volunteers reduces wait times and increases levels of responsiveness.

The Hearing Support Service's partnership with NHS colleague in particular is a positive example of that which the Department of Health seeks to achieve and the NDA is already developing partnerships with other local providers.

People with hearing loss engaged in our evaluation report that the Hearing Support Service achieves good access to audiology services and provides an exceptional standard of information and advice, in line with NHS guidance.

Kim Fredericks, Senior Audiologist at Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust, provided a detailed response to our evaluation which not only demonstrates the extent to which the Hearing Support Service addresses current government priorities, but also demonstrates the crucial role of the service in supporting local NHS audiology services:

Case Study: Kim Fredericks, Senior Audiologist, Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust

"We estimate there are around 122,000 people in Norfolk who potentially need support and help with their NHS hearing aids and that over 84,000 of these people are over the age of 70.

Hearing loss can be exceptionally isolating as it makes communication very difficult. It can also mean listening to the radio, television, talking to friends and family is a struggle. All of this, without the right support, can lead to depression, stress and withdrawal from life.

Norfolk has very poor transport links in rural communities which makes getting to hospitals for routine hearing aid maintenance very difficult, particularly for less mobile or elderly people.

For people who are housebound or cannot travel, the knowledge that can just pick up the phone or send an email to request help from the Hearing Support Service is an absolute lifeline.

Hearing Support Service volunteers become a regular visitor to their clients and can provide assistance and guidance about other support services, as well as assistive listening devices to help with their hearing; this all helps people maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life.

Norfolk Hearing Support Service helps to raise awareness of hearing loss in the wider community and volunteers help family members and friends of the hearing aid user to better understand deafness and the isolation it can cause.

The support of Norfolk Hearing Support Service volunteers to our Audiology department is immense; they support over 6000 people, which means there is less demand on our very busy department, shorter waiting lists for appointments and less time waiting in our clinics.”

Potential Improvements

All stakeholders, internally and externally, report positive experiences of the Hearing Support Service and very few can suggest major improvements. There is widespread recognition that the service is delivering at full capacity based on current resources but, should more funding or resources become available in future, there are some potential areas for improvement as follows:

There is interest from external stakeholders to receive more regular input from the Hearing Support Service by increasing the frequency and duration of the community and mobile clinics in order to reach more hearing aid users.

Furthermore, those working in residential homes suggest there may be scope for their own staff to play a more active role in delivering the Hearing Support Service, subject to further training, with a view to increasing current capacity.

The Assistive Listening Technology Clinic is considered a "hidden gem" by both external and internal stakeholders and welcomed by those who fall outside of the criteria for a similar service delivered by Norfolk County Council, predominantly to those who are profoundly deaf and in receipt of social care services. There is some desire to increase availability and accessibility of the clinic, perhaps by combining it with community and mobile clinics.

The evaluation finds some minor room for improvements in terms of ensuring the mobile clinic has sufficient stock and parts for unusual hearing aids, but this appears to be an occasional supplier issue and outside the control of the Norfolk Deaf Association.

Challenges

Our evaluation finds Norfolk Deaf Association to be effective in delivering the Hearing Support Service and the associated Big Lottery Fund outcomes to positive effect on people with hearing loss in Norfolk. There are some current and potential challenges for the project to overcome and these are offered for further consideration by the charity as it considers the likely next steps for the Hearing Support Service:

1. **Commissioning:** the impact of recent changes to audiology commissioning is yet to be fully realised, but there is a sense the commissioning landscape is becoming more challenging. NHS hospitals have reduced their support for people with acquired hearing loss and there is increased competition from private providers that dispense NHS hearing aids under the Any Qualified Provider scheme, although service users report that the level of ongoing maintenance and support provided by the new providers is limited.

2. **Impact Data:** Norfolk Deaf Association has developed its own structure of short and long questionnaires to demonstrate the impact of the Hearing Support Service. The system is unique to NDA and is based on data required by funders, in addition to incorporating some elements of the Glasgow Hearing Aid Benefit Profile, which is a nationally recognised standard.

The system enables NDA to capture a good standard of quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate the impact of the Hearing Support Service but, in common with other advice services, capturing evidence of long-term

impact after receiving advice can be a challenge and the charity are keen to address this in future.

3. **Volunteers:** Although the Hearing Support Service had 35 active volunteers at the end of Year Two, their recruitment has been challenging at times. The technical skills and training required makes the role more advanced than other volunteer roles and there are notable geographic challenges given the large rural geography of Norfolk.

4. **Countywide coverage:** Some involved in the Hearing Support Service, primarily external partners, would like to see countywide coverage and the evaluator believes this may be advantageous to funders and commissioners.

West Norfolk is the only area not covered by the Hearing Support Service and this is because another provider delivers a similar standard of service. Norfolk Deaf Association is in contact with partner agencies in West Norfolk and remains committed to exploring potential opportunities for partnership.

5. **Marketing:** Engaging people with hearing loss in the evaluation, the evaluator senses that some perceived that the Hearing Support Service is an extension of NHS services, rather than independently delivered by NDA.

With the majority of people being referred by NHS services, there is understandably the potential for confusion, but the challenge for NDA is that the charity could potentially lose credit for its impact or lose social capital.

Recommendations

"There's a real need for more Deaf Awareness training. In some care homes, for example, one carer will collect all the hearing aids to go and clean them and you're lucky if you get the right ones back."

Person with Hearing Loss

"I was asked to go to a school near Norwich because one of their pupils with a hearing impairment couldn't hear her lessons. The school had a hearing loop set up but it obviously wasn't working and we sorted it."

Hearing Support Service Volunteer

Having considered the evidence during the evaluation process and taking into account the views of staff, volunteers and stakeholders, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by Norfolk Deaf Association with a view to enhancing the future impact and sustainability of the service:

1. Our evaluation supports the view that there is a need for "more of the same" and we recommend that NDA explores ways in which the service could be extended, perhaps by more frequent or longer clinics, although we recognise the current resource limitations, including volatility of funding.
2. Norfolk Hearing Hub: Whilst the Hearing Support Service is unique to NDA, there are a other services supporting people with specific aspects of

hearing loss throughout Norfolk and there is a desire from service users and professionals to see increased connectivity between services.

This was achieved to some extent by the **Norfolk Council on Deafness**, which facilitated communication between the local authority, NHS and voluntary sector, but there has been limited recent activity and the evaluator believes there is an opportunity for NDA to take the lead and develop partnerships to enable a cohesive offer of support across Norfolk.

3. Whilst the NDA has an excellent track record in consulting people with hearing loss in its own services, there appears to be a gap in wider consultation, particularly in relation to statutory services. NDA has consulted service users on national developments and research and the evaluator believes the charity is well-placed to develop further consultation, perhaps on behalf of statutory services or via the Hearing Hub model.
4. Norfolk Deaf Association already delivers some training on a commercial basis although, in the current financial climate, organisations that may benefit from increased awareness have limited financial resources. The evaluator believes there is scope to develop the offer further, perhaps through commercial partnerships, sponsorships or through fundraising to subsidise places for small organisations with limited resources.
5. Finally, we recommend that Norfolk Deaf Association follows up on its desire to develop existing methods of capturing evidence to include long-term impact and ensure that the high levels of impact achieved by this remarkable service can be fully attributed and demonstrated.

Acknowledgements

The evaluator would like to thank all those who engaged in the evaluation, particularly those with hearing impairments who shared their experiences of how the Hearing Support Service has had a positive impact in their lives.

About the Evaluator

Steve Allman is an independent evaluator with an extensive track record in the disability sector. He enables charities and social enterprises around the UK to evaluate impact and develop strategy.

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