

# LET'S HEAR IT!

NEWSLETTER OF  
DORSET DEAF CHILDREN'S SOCIETY  
SPRING 2020



## SHIRLEY SORBIE MBE

By Kevin Forbes, DDCS Chairman

1992 was an interesting year, for many reasons. Britain crashed out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, we had an election – won by the Tories and the Labour leader Neil Kinnock resigned straight away, Charles and Di separated and although it was actually the Queen's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, she declared it an 'annus horribilis' oh, and Shirley Sorbie joined Dorset Deaf Children's Society and then became a trustee and her first starring role was making jellies at the Christmas Party. Apart from (I have just realised) a disturbing lack of jelly at our Christmas Party, how little has changed. The Queen has had another family caused horrid year, Britain and the EU have separated, the Labour party are still losing leaders after Conservative election wins and Shirley Sorbie is still at DDCS. Albeit (and not to have a go at jelly makers) more involved now.

When I was asked to become Chairman of the society four years ago, it was by Shirley, someone who had been so kind to our family when our own daughter was diagnosed deaf ten years earlier. Of course, I couldn't say no. I quite literally couldn't, as Shirley had me in a persuasive head-lock, one she has mastered over the years in getting things done for the deaf children's community many years before I popped up on the scene. One of the first jobs I realised I had to do when seeing the most exceptional efforts she put in, was to get this officially recognised. I also realised I needed to keep it a secret from her as (1) she probably would try to dissuade me (as not wanting the limelight) and (2) it would be less impactful and less likely to make her cry when she found out (spoiler, she did, a lot). So, I set about a mission of tracking down some names from the past and asking for some references to send off to the Honours and Appointments Secretariat. The dozen or so letters I got back were unanimous in almost every way, from saying what an exceptional person Shirley was, to saying it was long overdue. So, I went through the application process, used my newfound Shirley-taught headlock skill in getting our local MP to back it as well and applied. Then we waited and waited. And waited. I emailed them again and made it clear that if Shirley wasn't accepted, it was 100% down to my inability to articulate how special she was and to let me get more letters. They frustratingly responded that these things 'take time'. I fretted I had mucked it up.

But then I got a phone call one Saturday morning in May 2019 from a sobbing Shirley. I was a little surprised, had Tom finally washed up his plate, had Jamie made his bed, were her boys finally being as lovely as her daughter Kelly? Or more unbelievably, had Charlie finally told a joke that was funny? I dismissed all these as fanciful fantasies; of course they could never happen. "You did this didn't you" Shirley asked, then I realised she had had the initial 'secret' letter not to be shared for fear of being locked in the Tower; she was going to be Shirley Sorbie MBE. How awesome is that!

Since that day, lots has happened. Shirley was on TV, a camera crew went around to her house on the Queen's birthday when it all becomes public and filmed us opening champagne and Shirley announcing to her family and friends that she was in the Queen's honours list.



The local paper ran an article on her. The more annoying of her friends and family now call her ma'am and curtsy when she walks in (me included) oh yea, and of course she went to The Palace. Shirley then met and (being Shirley) joked with Prince William (see the picture) and of course was presented with, in my opinion, one of the most deserved MBEs in the history of the award. Also, for the record, since that day I have been heavily praised for 'sorting it out'.



To give you some idea of what Shirley has done over the years I have put together a timeline of Shirley's career at DDCS:

- 1992 Joined DDCS as a member after Tom was diagnosed at age three.
- 1992 Joined the committee and first event was Christmas Party.
- 1995 Started volunteering for Cards for Good Causes selling NDCS Christmas cards in Ferndown Library raising money for DDCS
- 2000 Invited to join the Children's Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG) as a parent representative (she is now the DDCS representative).
- 2001 Jamie diagnosed with hearing loss.
- 2002 Shirley became Minute Secretary until 2007
- 2003 Became Treasurer
- 2004 Started attending NDCS National Council meetings in London
- 2004 She suggested a DDCS local database/membership
- 2005 Started to organise most of the events
- 2005 Set up and stock the Literature holders and info in Audiology waiting rooms in East & West Dorset. Also started DDCS info library for families.
- 2005 Introduced welcome letters to new members
- 2005 Invited to attend HSS Parent Support Group for babies and pre-school children
- 2006 Took on the job of producing the news flyers and newsletter
- 2007 Due to other pressures, Chairman unable to run website, Shirley took on most of the running of it.
- 2007 Shirley's idea of a DDCS Information leaflet/membership form agreed, printed and sent out and Shirley set up a membership database and became Membership Secretary
- 2009 Helped to organise first residential activity weekend for children 10 -18 years old. 2010, 2012, 2014 followed. Then family weekends 2016, 2018 and 2020! All organised by Shirley
- 2010 Started the Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) Campaign to improve the service for deaf children.
- 2011 Organised inaugural parent meeting with SALT and within two weeks more SALT hours temporarily awarded to deaf children.
- 2012 Funding of £244,000 approved for SALT for disabled pre-school children. Took 2 years from start to finish. See the separate article on our website of Shirley's campaign for this.
- 2014 Organised the Plane Pull team raising over £4875 for DDCS
- 2016 Helped to set up new website and hand over website to another Trustee.
- 2017 Became Vice-Chairperson

This is only some of the work that Shirley has done for DDCS there are just too many to list but one important role she does is being the go to person for help, advice and reassurance for parents, carers, grandparents when they are going through difficult times.

Continued over the page.

I will leave you with some quotes from the letters of support and parents, only limited by the space I have to write this article.

*"She played a central partnership role in the trial work and development of the Quality Standards for Hearing Impaired Children and the National Screening Programme, which now tests hearing for all babies in the UK"*

*"I cannot think of anyone more suited to receive an honour than Mrs Sorbie."*

*"Shirley would not hesitate if I asked her to join me in London for key meetings"*

*"It was instantly apparent that Shirley was a 'Doer'"*

*"She was always not only full of good ideas but willing to get things off the ground and see a project through"*

*"The idea of nominating Shirley for a national award is a fantastic one and I can't think of anyone who deserves this more"*

*"Talking to other friends who are Teachers of the Deaf in different authorities, I am not aware of another society quite like it and that is down to Shirley."*

*"Shirley's knowledge is unsurpassable and her passion and dedication for helping deaf children never wavers"*

*"Shirley would not want to take credit for the group's success....it is Shirley's organisational skills and sheer hard work that has made these meetings so productive"*

*"Shirley's warm, sensitive and extremely approachable manner that has given reassurance and comfort"*

*"Shirley has been a huge part of our lives for 13 years, her support means so much to us."*

*"...immeasurable benefit to so many"*

*"I have seen first-hand how tirelessly Shirley has worked for the charity and how she has always been there to support a person in need, day or night"*

*"Shirley is an inspiration and was an absolute dream to work with, utterly selfless and awe inspiring"*

*"Can't think of a nicer more hard working person than Shirley, she puts her heart and soul into DDCCS"*

*"Shirley always goes that extra step to support and will often be on the phone all night if she is needed"*

*"An outstanding woman!"*

*"Shirley has a wonderful way of welcoming everybody to the group from the littlest baby, all family members right up to the grandparents."*

*"She has an amazing memory and knows all the families and their stories and cares about each and every one of them."*

*"Shirley makes things happen with a can-do attitude and inspires others to help too."*

*"Her welcoming, warm and positive attitude can make a huge difference to parents in the early days of coming to terms with their child's disability."*

*"I and my fellow teachers of the deaf are very aware of our good fortune in having such a strong and active local parent group in the DDCCS.... provide holistic support to deaf parents and children area. Shirley plays a pivotal role in this."*

*"During that time, I saw Shirley's exceptional dedication to the well-being of deaf children and families through her organisation of events, campaigning for better speech therapy services and setting-up of the first residential weekend for older pupils"*

*"A very deserving recipient, we are so proud to say Shirley is part of our lives and always thankful she is"*

*"I think it's fair to say that nearly every family of a deaf child in Dorset has benefitted in some way from Shirley's input over the years"*

*"Her tireless and caring input deserves recognition; she is one in a million."*

I am sure that you would all agree we are all so proud of Shirley getting this award, she has touched the hearts and improved the lives of hundreds of families across our county. You couldn't expect him to know, but Prince William was a very lucky man to have awarded Shirley Sorbie her MBE, I doubt he will award a better one.

**Congratulations Shirley, we all love you!**

#### Message from Shirley:

Receiving this award has been such an honour and was absolutely amazing! I am so proud to be a trustee of Dorset Deaf Children's Society and blessed to be a part of the lives of all the wonderful children and families. It was a total shock when I received the letter from the cabinet office and even now it is still hard to believe. How could this be happening to me! I have cried and laughed a lot from all the wonderful messages and cards I have received. I am so humbled by it all and DDCCS will always be in my heart. Thank you Kevin for all your efforts to make it happen! An important thing I must say is that I could not have done it all without the support of my amazing husband Charlie (plus his jokes) and my family. So it's now business as usual and on to the next event. Thank you everyone.

## CHRISTMAS PARTY 2019



Another great Christmas party attended by 181 members on Saturday 7th December. The children had lots of fun being entertained by Get Up and Groove including his foam/snow machine! Crafts and face painting were popular with the children and everyone enjoyed a finger buffet with plenty of delicious food. Thank you to the school caterers, Cater Link Ltd for help with the food and a big thank you to Sandra Mackrow, one of our parents, who volunteered to make cakes for us.

This year the Wilts & Dorset Deaf Association junior sign choir came along and signed some Christmas songs. Then we had a very special visitor..... Father Christmas who brought presents for all the children. Every family had a photo taken with Father Christmas and these are all available on the DDCCS picture website. If you wish to view and download them you need to contact Nicola Foley on [nicolafoley77@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicolafoley77@hotmail.co.uk). Many thanks to The Blandford School for once again letting us have the venue free of charge

## SNOWTRAX OCTOBER 2019

During October half term Dorset DCS members visited the alpine activity centre Snowtrax at Hurn, Christchurch for a fun day of ski-bobbing and spinning down the slopes in a Ringo. DDCCS last visited Snowtrax 4 years ago so it was great to visit again and exciting for our younger members who hadn't been before.

95 members (50 children and 45 adults) travelled to Snowtrax. The children were put into two groups and each group had half an hour of ski-bobbing and then half an hour of Ringos. Families then either had lunch in the café or bought a packed lunch.

The day was rounded off with a visit to the Alpine Adventure Park, full of trampolines, swings and a huge fort. DDCCS was again lucky with the weather as the sun was shining all day!





# NEWSROUND

## A BIG THANK YOU FROM DDCS!

Dorset DCS wishes to thank all the individuals and organisations who have made donations, fundraised for us or provided something for us free of charge. Without you we could not provide the support for the children and their families!

### THANK YOU TO:

**Strategic Solutions Financial Services for posting all the newsletters free of charge and making regular donations.**

**Martin Bray**

**Mrs Sarah Martin**

**Order of Womens Freemason Lodge Sirius No 31**

**Kelly Hennessey**

**Barking Cat Ale House – Collection Box**

**Nicola Foley & all participants in the Bournemouth Fun Run**

**In Memorium – Christine Mallion**

**Richard George**

**The Nash Family**

**Sheree Eaves**

**The Blandford School - Christmas Party Venue**

**Cater Link Ltd – Christmas Party Food**

**Claire and Bill Hombersley**

**Lush Soap Department**

**In Memorium – Maureen Deeney**

Ideas for fund raising could be a sponsored event, car boot sale, cake sale, donations instead of gifts, a collection box in a work place, raffle or a school mufli day.

**Why not give it a go!**

## SCARLETT JOINS NDCS YAB

My name is Scarlett Henry and I recently got a place on the Youth Advisory Board for the NDCS. I had to go for an interview in London which I was super nervous about, considering that there was a whopping 80 applicants across the UK! When I arrived on the day, we talked about how we wanted to improve/change something for deaf young people in our local area or in the country as a whole. Then we spoke about politics to become familiar with the fact that we were going to send postcards to our local MPs, to shine a light on ways to help the deaf community.



Consequently I am very pleased with the opportunity I now have to represent young deaf people in my area and I am looking forward to being a YAB ambassador for the next 2 years!

## DO YOU HAVE AN EXPERIENCE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHER FAMILIES?

We are always looking for articles for our newsletters. It really helps to read what other families have experienced, or maybe you just have a story to share? Please contact Shirley on 01202 571089 We would love to hear from you!

## PERSONAL

### CD / MP3 LEADS

DDCS provides personal CD/MP3 leads for any hearing impaired child or young person in Dorset.



The leads enable sound to go straight to hearing aids by a special shoe attached to the leads. DDCCS provides these through the Hearing Support Service. If your child would like some leads please ask your Advisory Teacher who can then order them through the Hearing Support Service, Educational Audiologist.

## DDCCS GRANTS

DDCCS has funds available for grants and will consider contributing towards our member's costs or partial costs for deaf related equipment, activities or learning. We have in the past contributed towards signing classes and provided literature to support signing. We have also provided specialist alarm clocks for children to become more independent at getting up in the morning!

We may also be able to offer grants in certain circumstances for financial support with a deaf related project.

Please contact us in writing or by emailing [info@dorsetdcs.co.uk](mailto:info@dorsetdcs.co.uk)

Each case is considered on its individual merits.



## HELP RAISE FUNDS FOR DDCCS

Buy a ticket from BH Coastal Lottery! If you buy a £1 ticket, 50p goes directly to the DDCCS. There is a one in fifty chance of winning each week (that's better odds than the National Lottery and People's Lottery) and the top prize is £25,000!

So if you think you can be lucky and also support Dorset DCS then please log on to: [www.bhcoastalottery.co.uk](http://www.bhcoastalottery.co.uk)

Select buy tickets and then select Dorset Deaf Children's Society!

**Thank you!**



## 'Sign for Change' Junior Sign Choir

Bringing hearing and Deaf children together in a friendly, fun and safe environment learning British Sign Language through signed songs. Open to young people aged 5-15, all abilities welcome.

When: Saturday mornings

Where: Bournemouth Deaf Club, 27a Morley Road, Pokesdown, Bournemouth

'Sign for Change' [https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/udda?utm\\_term=.uabnJ66FV](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/udda?utm_term=.uabnJ66FV)

If you are interested please contact Zoe at [admin@wdda.co.uk](mailto:admin@wdda.co.uk)

## HELP AND CONTACTS

**CHAIRMAN – Kevin Forbes, 11 Heather Road, Bournemouth, BH10 5EE 01202 510078**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON, TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - Shirley Sorbie, Touchwood, 9 Oakland Walk, West Parley, Ferndown, BH22 8PF 01202 571089 07765 304968**

**SECRETARY – Nicola Foley, 37 Meon Road, Bournemouth, BH7 6PP 07980 980019**

**Website – [www.dorsetdcs.co.uk](http://www.dorsetdcs.co.uk)**

**E-mail – [info@dorsetdcs.co.uk](mailto:info@dorsetdcs.co.uk)**

**NDCCS FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 800 8880 (voice & text)**



For more information, news, pictures and future events please visit our website.  
[www.dorsetdcs.co.uk](http://www.dorsetdcs.co.uk)



# BACKCHAT

# FAMILY SIGN LANGUAGE GROUP

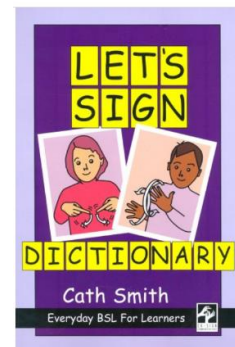
In the Spring Term 2020 the DDCS and Hearing Support Service worked in partnership to provide a 10-week Family Sign Language Group for babies and toddlers using sign language to support communication. This project was funded by the Dorset Community Impact Fund which enabled us to buy books and toys for the group.

Each week we had a different theme such as bedtime, pets, food and shopping with a focus on sign vocabulary to support language development. For each theme we also had a story book and every family had a copy of the book to take home and put into practice the sign language they had learnt.

The sessions were relaxed and fun with lots of sensory toys and activities for the children to enjoy. It was a great opportunity for families to share their experiences and give support and advice to each other. We saw several examples of new signs being used by the children and parents!

Sign language can enable deaf babies and toddlers to communicate with their families before speech has developed and support the understanding of language and early concepts. For parents this means learning lots of signs so they can support play and everyday activities with language learning opportunities, so we also gave every family a sign language dictionary to help them.

It's very tricky to hold a book and sign at the same time, so we gave each family a book cushion; this props up the book so that parents can be hands-free to sign.



The course has been really enjoyable for all the families involved and these are some of their comments:

*"It's been a really helpful way for us to learn signing – it being every week has helped to keep up the momentum. The themes each week make it seem manageable to us as a family and not too daunting. It's also been great meeting other parents at various levels of fluency in sign language and for my daughter to have play time with other deaf/hearing-impaired children."*

*"The relevant themed weeks have made it easy to learn and actually use the new signs and having the books means we can put it in practice at home each night".*

*"It was great to meet other families. It has really built on our deaf awareness."*



## HEARING SUPPORT SERVICE UPDATE



Tracey Henry

The Hearing Support Service was delighted to have two qualified Teachers of the Deaf join the team at the start of January: Tracey Henry and Dawn Wrench.

Tracey, as well as being a qualified Teacher of the Deaf, has a background in mainstream teaching that makes her a valuable addition to the team. Similarly, Dawn's lengthy experience working as a Teacher of the Deaf in a variety of settings in London Boroughs and in Hampshire, makes her a great asset to the service, too.

The HSS team are very much looking forward to working alongside Tracey and Dawn and Dorset DCS would like to say welcome too!



Dawn Wrench