

Signal's New Hub for Shropshire



UK Story



Dear Supporters,

We are delighted to be on the verge of opening a Signal Hub to bring together much needed services for people who are deaf or who have hearing loss in Shropshire. Why is the Hub so important? Please read on!

Rod Clark – Chairman, Signal

THE HUB

Advances in technology mean we can connect with people from all around the planet. So why do we continue to live in a world where many people are still isolated from friends and family?

Losing your hearing can be one of the most isolating of experiences. When living in a world where you take your hearing and spoken language for granted, losing them can be shattering. Often people

are reluctant to ask for help as their hearing deteriorates, leaving them increasingly excluded from their community.

The consequence can be that people close the door and engage less and less with the outside world. This can lead to an increased likelihood of depression and, new evidence is suggesting, a higher chance of dementia.

The services open to people with hearing loss are often not linked together and are run by a range of bodies, from NHS trusts, local councils and charities to private audiology companies. This can be confusing at the best of times, but if you are already withdrawing from communicating, then searching out all the different services that might help you is often the last thing you want to do.



Signal, together with its partners at the NHS, Shropshire Council, Shropshire Rural Community Council, VISS and others, is addressing these issues. In the coming months Signal will be opening a one-stop Hub in the Riverside shopping centre in Shrewsbury. The aim is to house as many hearing related services as possible under one roof, including, hearing tests, assistive devices, information and support in both speech and sign language, deaf awareness training and signposting to other services.

We hope to give deaf people and people with hearing loss friendly support, so they can get the help they need and be part of their community, not outside of it.

Good news from Tanzania



Africa Story

In the Spring Issue we reported on the start of the poultry rearing project at the Vocational Training Centre for Deaf Learners (VTCD) in Tanzania.

Deaf student Fortunata was egg-cited to see that the picture of her

feeding the chickens made the front page, as she read Wave with her friends. The students have taken good care of the chickens and they have now laid some 21,700 eggs! Read more about the VTCD inside.





Signing success!

There were big smiles at Signal's British Sign Language (BSL) taster session in July, as our tutor Kirsty taught us all how to say "Hi" with a grin and a cheery wave.

Our group included learners from school to retirement age, each with a different motivation, and most with a few nerves about trying something new. There was a lively atmosphere, helped by the sunshine and Kirsty's gentle approach, and it wasn't long before all our worries had evaporated and our fingers were flying through the alphabet.

BSL is a beautifully expressive way to communicate, where hand movements, gestures, facial expressions



and lip patterns all combine to convey meaning and feeling. This makes learning fun as well as useful. Imagine how much easier things would be for Deaf people, if everyone in a customer service role had a little BSL knowledge!

As you can see, our group had a great time, with everyone enthused about the chance to go on and learn more. We can't wait to get started with a BSL course - if you would like to join us, get in touch!

Making People Happy

Joanne Rose is Signal's Outreach Worker. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, this means there is somebody they can turn to for help who understands the hurdles they face in everyday life.

Jo is deaf herself and can communicate through both BSL and speech. She visits people in their own homes to make sure they do not become isolated. She can act as an advocate, communicating on behalf of deaf people with carers and others. Having been through the operation to have a cochlear implant fitted, Jo can also support people through this journey.

One of the aspects of Jo's job which requires a lot of sensitivity has been protecting elderly and vulnerable clients and reporting concerns to the appropriate bodies. Although her work can be challenging, Jo enjoys making a difference to people's lives. "If I can leave people happy, I've done a good job," she says.

In her free time, Jo enjoys going to the cinema, when subtitled films are showing, and spending time with friends and her husband and two children. She is also Chair of the Telford Deaf Club.



Tinnitus Support Groups



Friendly groups facilitated by Signal and the Audiology Department at The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

Next meeting in Telford:

Wednesday 3 Sept | 10-12am

With a speaker from the British Tinnitus Association (BTA)

Education Centre, Princess Royal Hospital, Grainger Drive, Apley Castle, Telford, TF1 6TF.

Next meetings in Shrewsbury:

Wednesday 10 Sept | 10-12am

With a speaker from the BTA

Thursday 4 December | 10-12am

The Lantern Community Centre, Meadow Farm Drive, Harlescott, Shrewsbury, SY1 4NG.

£2 per meeting or £5 annual contribution.

Meetings include a tea and coffee break. If you are interested in evening meetings, please get in touch.

Overseas Projects



An informative six days! Our International Programmes Manager Karen Goodman-Jones reports on her visit to our partners in Uganda and Tanzania and on how far both programmes have developed.

Uganda



Our programme helps deaf and hearing impaired children to receive a good education within mainstream primary schools and challenges negative cultural attitudes towards deafness.

A packed schedule organised by our partners Signhealth Uganda (right) really brought home what changes the programme is making. I had the chance to meet some of the people directly involved and learn their stories – from new staff describing the vast geographical areas across which they work, to council officials and community leaders admitting that their attitudes towards children with hearing



impairments have changed and they now embrace all learners in their communities, to the parents.

It is always good to be able to demonstrate how a programme is working and this is often by the numbers of children being reached. Here in Uganda, it can also be shown by the requests being made to our partners to extend the area it currently covers.

Tanzania



The VTCD in the Kilimanjaro Region started as the dream of a group of parents of deaf children and together we have supported the project as it became a reality. From the first ground clearance, to dormitory, classroom and workshop construction, the Centre has been steadily developing.

It is 18 months since I last visited and the place has been transformed! The long-term vision of the staff and Board who manage the Centre means that trees have been planted for shade from both the sun and monsoon rains and a large vegetable garden has been cultivated, providing fresh produce daily. The staff and Board have also embraced the opportunity to try new sustainable environmental projects through the installation of solar panels and water harvesting systems.

Moreover, they have increased student numbers and there are currently 38 deaf learners on the three-year courses, with a further 15 expected to enrol for the next intake. Besides vocational training in tailoring, carpentry and business enterprise, the students also study an academic syllabus, including technical drawing, engineering science, civics, Swahili, English, mathematics and life skills.

The training offered is enthusiastically taken up and the students' results in vocational examinations speak for themselves. The first graduates in 2012 took three of the top four examination places for the entire region, and the latest group of students to graduate took all of the top five places!

Ebenezer (below) is a VTCD graduate now working in carpentry. Our partners Childreach Tanzania gathered Ebenezer's ambitions for the future: "to own a great workshop whereby he can raise income to support his family and provide employment opportunities for other youth, especially, deaf."



Pre-construction

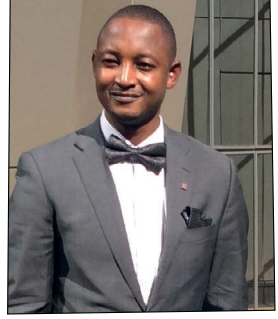


Carpentry workshop



Ebenezer

Musukwa Frankson



Frank is one of the founders of Zambia Deaf Youth and Women (ZDYW), our partners in Zambia.

Why did you set up ZDYW?

The idea to form ZDYW was born out of experience growing up as a Deaf person, encountering discrimination, violation of my individual rights and society's negative attitude in everyday life. This experience prompted me and my colleagues to sit down and reflect on how we can help change the perception of Deafness.

At college we continued to receive poor education compared to our hearing colleagues. Lecturers would force us to lip read, forgetting that our mother tongue for the Deaf is Sign Language. It is against this backdrop that I decided to form ZDYW to champion Deaf rights and equal opportunities in all areas of life - education, health, sports, political, etc - through advocacy and lobbying.

How is ZDYW different from other organisations?

While there are many disability organisations in Zambia, we are a unique organisation that represents the interests and welfare of the most marginalised group and we voice a rights based approach to disability. Our focus is on advocacy and lobbying, using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as our guiding principle.

Society perceives us as individuals who cannot achieve. They say to us, "What can you do?" "How will you be able to do something while being Deaf yourself?" Attitudes like this not only discourage us but also demean our character as individuals who want to contribute to society.

What is a typical day like for you?

My day is always filled with advocacy work and consultation for Deaf clients who need our services in order for them to live a decent life like any Zambian citizen. In reality, I travel a lot fighting for Deaf rights and equal opportunities.

What do you enjoy about your work with ZDYW?

The thing I enjoy most, being with ZDYW, is the fact that the organisation believes in a human rights based approach to Deafness. It becomes enjoyable meeting stakeholders in the advocacy field and nudging them on Deaf issues based on the principles of UNCRPD.

What other thoughts would you like to share?

I want my country to realise that Deaf persons are equal to every other citizen; we have potential and we deserve full rights and representation in the governance process. No amount of political lip service will help; in the end that rhetoric cannot put three meals on the table.

The challenges rest on our shoulders and we must press for change. We are not victims. We will fight the barriers to a better tomorrow - one that the next generation can look to with pride.

Can you help?



Karen has told the story of change at the VTCD in Tanzania, but there is more to be done!

Thanks to a kind grant, we are building a kitchen and dining room, which will enable all the students to eat together for the first time. The students will make the furniture for the building themselves, but we still need funds to buy all the wood, as well as kitchen equipment. Huge thanks to our supporters who have donated so far!

If you can help us complete this project, please send a cheque, no matter how small, payable to Signal. You can also give online via: www.signal.org.uk.



Keeping in Touch

To keep up to date with all our work and projects on a weekly basis follow us on:

 @SignalCharity  /SignalCharity

If you would like further information, to make a donation or get more involved please contact us:

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 give with confidence

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