



**ACTION ON
HEARING
LOSS**

CYMRU

A national charity since 1911

Wales

Impact Report

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Formerly
RNID 



There are 575,500 people in Wales who are deaf or have a hearing loss. That's the equivalent of the populations of Cardiff and Swansea combined. And, as the population ages, this number is set to rise. In 2017, scientists' findings gave the strongest indication yet of the link between dementia and hearing loss. The research, published in *The Lancet*, showed that even mild hearing loss doubles the risk of developing dementia.

This is why the work of Action on Hearing Loss Cymru is more important than ever.

Over the next few pages you'll see that, in 2017, we supported around 5,000 people in Wales who are deaf, or have hearing loss or tinnitus; we continued to campaign for equality for people who are deaf and we held inspiring events, raising money for our cause.

This was an exciting year for me, personally. I took up the role of Director of Action on Hearing Loss Cymru at a pivotal time: 2018 marks the start of our new five-year strategy, which puts the needs of people who are deaf, or have hearing loss or tinnitus at the forefront of our work and aims to

start challenging the public perceptions of deafness.

Now it's time to build on our achievements. We'll continue to work closely with the Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards to make sure deaf people are supported in the right way by social services and healthcare professionals. And we'll continue to support people who have hearing loss to live the life they choose.

Rebecca Woolley, Director, Action on Hearing Loss Cymru



As a deaf person, I know that there is still some way to go to ensure that people are treated equally in our society. I have personal experience of not getting a job interview for years, simply because my CV said I'm deaf, or trouble making a routine GP appointment, because the practice can only do it over the phone – impossible for me.

I'm afraid to say that people in Wales who are deaf or have hearing loss are still experiencing this unacceptable treatment on a daily basis. So it's wonderful to be able to state with confidence

that we can depend on a passionate team in Wales, dedicated to changing public perceptions and transforming the lives of people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

In 2017 our **Working for Change campaign** made giant strides towards improving employer awareness of what it means to employ a deaf person, while the **Access Denied campaign** lobbied social service departments across Wales to ensure they're providing the right equipment for people who have hearing loss, including flashing

doorbells, vibrating alarms and amplified telephones.

I hope 2018 and beyond will mark a growing public awareness of what life is like for people who have hearing loss. I'm certainly confident that Action on Hearing Loss Cymru will be at the heart of this in Wales.

Maggie Hampton, Wales Trustee, Action on Hearing Loss

During 2017 we supported more than **5,000** people in Wales who are deaf, or have hearing loss or tinnitus, and their friends and families.



We supported
300

Armed Forces veterans with hearing loss during 2017.

96%

said they felt less lonely thanks to our support.

In Powys, our local Hear to Help volunteers held **192** free clinics, supporting **1,790** people.



We held deaf awareness sessions and checked the hearing of employees at businesses including:

Act Training, Admiral, Boots, Care and Repair, the Department for Work and Pensions, Go Compare and **LexisNexis**.

Volunteers donated

3,487 

hours of their free time to the charity in 2017.

We supported **20** people who were deaf and looking for work and found **full-time employment** for eight of them.

Our volunteers held bucket collections in local shops, raising more than

£2,000



179 people

gave up their free time to volunteer for us in 2017.



We spoke to **812** people at events across Wales, including **Crickhowell, Llandrindod Wells, Llandudno, Llanfyllin, Newtown, Sennybridge** and **Swansea**.

97%

of the people we helped said our support had improved their day-to-day lives

Our Care and Support Team spent more than **46,000** hours supporting people in Wales who are Deaf with additional needs.

94%

of our volunteers said that volunteering for us gives them a feeling of personal achievement.

People raised more than

£10,000

by taking part in fundraising challenges, including daring **abseils**, a heartstopping **zipwire**, half marathons, cycle races... and even a **naked bike ride!**

Jack's story

In Wales there are 84,000 people who are deaf or have hearing loss and of working age (from 15-64). Yet one in three businesses say they would not be confident about employing a deaf person. That's the equivalent of choosing to discriminate against the entire audience at a Millennium Stadium event.

26-year-old Jack Griffiths from Pontypool has been Deaf since birth and uses British Sign Language (BSL). Here's Jack's story.

"I've always been interested in making things, so construction was a natural career path for me.

"I thought it would be easy to get a job, but after the fourth or fifth time of not getting an interview I started to lose confidence – in fact I got very low.

"I'd done lots of training and had plenty of qualifications so I knew my CV was impressive. I just didn't understand it. Then I realised it was because I was Deaf.

"I was being supported by Action on Hearing Loss Cymru's Care and Support team at the time and they mentioned that the charity had a new Specialist Employment Service to help Deaf people find a job. They found a vacancy at Willis Construction in Cardiff, who asked me in for an interview and immediately offered me a job. After two years of rejections, I was absolutely delighted!"

Paul Cachia, from Willis Construction, said, "There are challenges when

employing a Deaf person but, with support from Action on Hearing Loss Cymru, we were able to overcome them and the process was actually really easy. Jack had the qualifications so the only barrier was communication; we just had to make small adjustments such as providing Jack with some information in writing."

i To find out more about our employment service, or to see a video of Jack talking about his experiences, visit actiononhearingloss.org.uk/wales



If you walk onto any of our sites, Jack is just like any other employee. He's already had a promotion and we expect Jack to have a long career with us.

Paul Cachia, Willis Construction



Excellence Wales Awards

May 2017 saw our third annual Excellence Wales Awards ceremony at the St David's Hotel in Cardiff Bay, presented by ITV Wales News reporter, Megan Boot.

The awards recognise businesses and organisations in Wales that are accessible to people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust was the big winner on the day; they were awarded the People's Choice Award for their innovative use of a mobile app that enables paramedics to communicate with people who are deaf in an emergency.

Speaking at the ceremony, Leanne Hawker from Welsh Ambulance said, "Being able to communicate with

deaf people when they're receiving emergency medical treatment can mean the difference between life and death, which is why we developed our app. We know that it has made a difference for both staff and patients, so we're delighted to have won the People's Choice Award."

Three other awards were decided by an independent panel, made up of people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

A total of four Welsh organisations were presented with awards for their efforts to create a deaf-friendly Wales.

The full list of winners is:

Service Excellence Award sponsored by Hugh James Solicitors

Winner: National Assembly for Wales

Runner Up: Western Power Distribution

Excellence in Health Award

Winner: Cwm Taf University Health Board

Runner Up: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

Excellence in Arts and Entertainment Award

Winner: Sherman Theatre, Cardiff

Runner Up: Taking Flight Theatre Company

People's Choice Award sponsored by gocompare.com

Winner: Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

We really do recognise the importance of ensuring that we're accessible to everyone and we'll improve our service in the years to come.

Leanne Hawker, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust



70 years of service – and still going strong!

“Seeing someone’s face light up when they realise they can hear again is incredible. I’d tell anybody who’s interested in changing people’s lives that volunteering with Action on Hearing Loss Cymru is a truly rewarding experience.”

Molly Faulkner, volunteer

Six Powys volunteers – who have been volunteering for a combined total of nearly 70 years – were awarded for their commitment in 2017.

Denise Hall, Diane Morgan, Phil King, Joe Catley, Ursula Donally and Molly Faulkner have all been dedicating their time to us for more

than a decade. At the moment they’re a big part of our award-winning ‘Hear to Help’ service running hearing aid maintenance clinics across Powys.

The energetic team is trained to service people’s hearing aids at local community centres or in their homes, so people don’t have to travel

miles to their nearest hospital audiology department.

Molly Faulkner, who has volunteered for us for over 12 years, said, “Many people don’t realise the isolating effect that losing your hearing can have. I’ve been privileged to be able to help so many people regain their independence.”

Our magnificent Powys Six have done all sorts of things for us over the years, including setting up social groups for those isolated by hearing loss.

Deborah Lloyd, an audiologist at Brecon War Memorial Hospital, said, “The work that these volunteers do is crucial to helping us run an efficient audiology service. Their training means

that they can deal with minor repairs – this frees us up to concentrate on the more complex cases. Without ‘Hear to Help’ volunteers we’d be utterly inundated. We’d like to congratulate these volunteers on their work and hope the service grows in the future.”

i For more information on our local Hear to Help clinics, or to get involved, visit actiononhearingloss.org.uk/wales

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Deborah Lloyd, audiologist, Brecon War Memorial Hospital

The Hear to Help Powys team also beat volunteers from across the UK to win the Action on Hearing Loss Perfect Partners Award for 2017. The awards mark Volunteers’ Week (1-7 June 2017).

Other Welsh winners were:

39-year-old Cat McCrory from Cardiff who won the People’s Champion award, for running monthly social groups for people with hearing loss in her area.

27-year-old Katie Owen from Porthcawl who was given the Passion in Action title, for using her own experience of hearing loss to support people in her local community.



Caroline sees her artwork up in lights

48-year-old Caroline Lathwell is profoundly deaf and has lived at our Derwen Road supported housing in Carmarthenshire for eight years.

A keen artist, Caroline paints mainly as a hobby and one of her pieces of art was recently chosen to be put on display at Action on Hearing Loss' Headquarters in London.

What Caroline didn't realise until she was invited to see it in person, is that the artwork covers an entire wall in the staff canteen!

Caroline said, "It was a bit wow! I didn't believe it until someone shared the picture of it with me. I am so happy to see the bigger painting, I was very excited."

Support worker, Sally Saunders, added, "She was so impressed. She has lots of her pictures at home and her artwork is beautiful. Caroline has sold a few paintings already. At the moment, Caroline is working, so when she's so busy, painting helps her to relax and de-stress so it's a really positive thing for her."

Our Care and Support team works with people across Wales who are Deaf with additional needs such as mental health conditions, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and much more, offering four main types of assistance;

Residential care

giving people who are deaf with additional needs a home with 24-hour support.

Supported housing

helping people to live independently with their own tenancy agreement and flexible support as and when needed.

Community services

supporting people at home and in the community; helping with personal care, tasks such as managing money or household tasks and support at college or work.

Re-ablement Services

short-term intensive support following illness, disability or injury.



Access denied

In early 2017 our Freedom of Information requests revealed that local authorities had made dramatic cuts to spending on specialist equipment for people with hearing loss. In some parts of Wales, budgets had been slashed by half.

The money goes on 'assistive' products such as adapted telephones, flashing doorbells and personal listeners. This equipment is proven to help people with hearing loss live more independently and to reduce isolation and loneliness.

Despite over 575,500 people in Wales being deaf or having hearing loss, our research found that annual total spending on such equipment adds up to less than £210,000. Our report, [Access Denied \[actiononhearingloss.org.uk/accessdenied\]\(https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/accessdenied\)](https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/accessdenied), reveals

that, from 2010/11 to 2014/15, local authorities in Wales cut nearly £40,000 from their budgets – an average reduction of 15%.

More than 70% of people over 70-years-old have hearing loss and, with an increasing number of people living longer, these local authorities are at real risk of neglecting those likely to experience isolation and mental health issues.

Our research also uncovered a postcode lottery. While some Welsh councils have increased their spending to meet the rising demand, other authorities have cut their budgets to the bone. Some of them spend, proportionally, 10 times less than others. Cardiff, Flintshire and the Vale of Glamorgan are the worst offenders.

Byron Adams, from Neath, said, “The equipment that I’ve got from social services really makes a big difference to my life. Without my specialist telephone, I’d be missing out on so much from my friends and family.

“It makes me quite angry that these budgets have been cut. There will be so many people out there who need this help but aren’t getting it. The councils need to realise how important this equipment is and, more importantly, they need to fund it.”

i Find out more, including a full breakdown of local authority spending, at [actiononhearing loss.org.uk/accessdenied](https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/accessdenied)

More than 700 people took part in our Access Denied campaign and wrote letters to their local authority, asking them to address these spending cuts.

We met with the then Minister for Social Services, Rebecca Evans AM, who agreed to work with us on developing better guidance for social workers in Wales.

This work continues to be one of our main priorities.

Getting better access to your GP

In 2017 we joined with RNIB Cymru to launch our guide for GPs and surgery staff, to make sure patients with sensory loss are able to go to the doctor with confidence.

Understanding your patients’ needs: supporting people with sensory loss is the result of our in-depth conversations with people with varying degrees of hearing and sight loss across Wales.

Heather Patterson, a Deaf sign language user from Cardiff, took part in a focus group: “I’ve found it very hard to see a GP in my area. When I asked

if I could contact them through text message or email, they said that it wasn’t possible because of data protection – meaning I had to get a family member to call for me.

“This not only delayed setting up an appointment, but also stopped me getting the privacy I needed.

“Surgeries across Wales need to read this guide and commit to improving their service for people with sensory loss.”

Every day, around 10,000 people with hearing loss in Wales visit their GP.

Most of the recommendations in *Understanding your patients’ needs* are simple and inexpensive to carry out, but they’ll make all the difference – such as keeping a record of someone’s hearing loss and giving them alternatives to making a phone call.

We’ve also produced a ‘toolkit’ for reception and admin staff. It’s a simple-to-use booklet containing practical tips such as how to book an interpreter.

Download the full documents, in English and Welsh, at [actiononhearingloss.org.uk/sensorywales](https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/sensorywales)

Tips for communicating with someone who is deaf or has hearing loss

- Make sure you have face-to-face contact and their full attention.
- Ask: “Do you lipread?” Or “Do you need a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter?”
- If using an interpreter, talk to the person you’re communicating with, not the interpreter.
- Speak clearly: don’t exaggerate your facial expressions and gestures.
- Don’t cover your mouth.
- Don’t shout! It’s uncomfortable and aggressive.
- If someone doesn’t understand, say it in a different way.
- Make sure people can contact you in **their** preferred way.

Fundraising thrill-seekers



Brave people across Wales took part in a host of hair-raising physical challenges for us last year, ranging from abseils and ziplines to half marathons ... even a naked cycle race!

In March, 15 people whizzed through the skies above Bethesda at over 100mph on the world's fastest zipline, Velocity - raising more than £4,000.



Pamela Whiting of Rhos-on-Sea was one of them: "It was fantastic! I was really pleased to raise so much money - I'd gladly do it again!"

In South Wales, 20 people took on the Big Drop in

October; an abseil of 178 feet (54m) from the top of the iconic Newport Transporter Bridge, raising more than £4,000 in the process.

Kaz Jefferies from Llanelli, who has Ménière's disease, said, "As someone with a condition that has made me deaf and affects my balance, I really appreciate the work Action on Hearing Loss Cymru does across Wales. The Big Drop was a huge challenge - and it was a brilliant experience. It was really nerve-wracking looking over the edge but once you let go, there's no going back!"



Food for thought for Welsh businesses

In 2017 our annual fundraising gala dinner raised **more than £11,000.**

The glittering event at St David's Hotel, Cardiff was hosted by TV and radio presenter, Beverley Humphreys, and featured a stunning performance from Chris Fonseca, the world-renowned, deaf, hip-hop dancer.

And businesspeople and employers, from a range of sectors, got to learn about

what they can do to break down the barriers that exist for deaf workers and jobseekers in Wales.

A huge thank you to everyone who supported our work in 2017.

Special thanks to our supporters during 2017: gocompare.com, Hodge Foundation, Hugh James Solicitors, Oakdale Trust, Powys Welsh Church Fund and Western Power Distribution.



Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) is the largest UK charity helping people who are confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss.

We give support and care, develop technology and treatments, and campaign for equality.

We rely on donations to continue our vital work.

To find out more, visit **actiononhearingloss.org.uk**

Contact our free, confidential Information Line:

Telephone 0808 808 0123

Textphone 0808 808 9000

SMS 0780 000 0360
(standard text message rates apply)

Email information@hearingloss.org.uk

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