

# Hear for Norfolk News

Issue 17 October 2020



Hear for Norfolk is the operating name of **Norfolk Deaf Association (NDA)**

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## Message from our Chairman Peter Prinsley

Well, what can I say? What an extraordinary time we are living through!! Let's recap on our progress since the last issue...

Firstly, I am delighted to announce that in March this year - further to a long and complex 12-month application process - our Chief Executive secured Lottery Funding towards our Hearing Support Service for the next 3 years. This was a much-needed boost to help compensate for the sharp drop off in charitable donations during 2019 and 2020. We still need to strengthen our finances, but this was fantastic and timely news. And then came Covid-19...

As I hope you would expect, Hear for Norfolk (our new working name for NDA) has risen to the challenges of Covid 19, and we have continued to support the deaf and hard of hearing community in Norfolk even during this global pandemic.

Our office team and wonderful volunteers have continued to provide practical support and advice, and both our hearing aid maintenance and aural care services have continued – albeit in new Covid compliant ways! Our response to Covid 19 reflects the very best values of the Charity and our commitment to a most vulnerable community. The Trustees could not be more proud of the team's commitment and flexibility during these challenging times.

Furthermore we have used the summer to pilot new services/approaches and made all the necessary preparations (including buying and kitting out a brand new minibus) to launch our new mobile aural care service (ear wax removal via microsuction) across Norfolk during October. Aliona writes more about this milestone in our charity's history later in this issue.

The Trustees have continued to keep a keen eye on the workings of the Charity and I am pleased to report that we have recruited a new Trustee – Mary Jane Platt, Professor (Clinical) University of East Anglia and a Honorary Consultant Public Health Medicine at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital - to help us support and steer our team. Also during the period I am sorry to say that Chris Doggett, a long standing Trustee (15+years) and our Treasurer for many years, retired from the charity. On behalf of us all I would like to record our most sincere thanks for his active involvement and support for the Charity over very many years.

Notwithstanding the above progress we must never become complacent, and raising funds has never been harder, so please do encourage whomsoever you can to give time to volunteer, or donate or pledge money to help fund our so keenly-needed range of local services. Please do consider leaving a gift in your will or becoming a Friend of NDA. Finally, please do what you can to help promote our wide range of services to all those you know who might benefit from Hear for Norfolk's services, or who might be prepared to help fund or sponsor our services. This newsletter provides a good update, and full details of all our services are always available from the office for you to circulate to those who might be interested.

My sincere thanks go to our dedicated Chief Executive for her leadership and management of the organisation, to our core staff group, our many volunteers, our invaluable donors, and last but certainly not least, a very big thank you to our very many service users for their continued support. Long may it continue.

With all best wishes until next time – and stay healthy!



## An update from the Chief Executive

Aliona Derrett

Life has never been dull at NDA, and if we thought the financial, staffing and new service challenges of 2019 were a little out of the ordinary, the events of 2020 have proven to be even more unexpected!

However, I am very proud to say we have risen to the many and various Covid challenges and our team have responded magnificently. I have much positive news to report.

Our first news item is that following feedback from our service users, in July 2020, after gaining approval from the Charity Commission, we introduced a working name for our charity, which is '**Hear for Norfolk**'. Legally our charity name is still Norfolk Deaf Association (NDA) but to demystify the ongoing issue of some people believing that we support profoundly 'deaf' people only, we have introduced this new name. We hope you like our new logo!

### **Our Services**

We are very pleased to let you know that despite the challenges brought on us by the Covid pandemic we have continued with the delivery of our two core services: Hearing Support (providing emotional support, guidance and hands on maintenance of NHS issued hearing aids) and Aural Care (ear wax

removal using microsuction) albeit we have had to make a number of adaptations to the delivery models to ensure the safety of service users/patients, staff and volunteers.



*Laura in full PPE and ready!*

We are very grateful to Darren Murphy of NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group for helping us secure the required PPE for our aural care practitioners to

ensure that we are compliant with the latest guidance.

Unfortunately, we had to postpone the running of our group support activities (Tinnitus Support and BSL Practice Group) and the Hearing Loss Awareness Training. Whilst we were not able to befriend people face to face, we have made the decision to 'absorb' the Befriending Service into our Hearing Support Service, enabling volunteers who are not able to return to their hearing aids maintenance duties to provide emotional and wellbeing support instead, as well as making the offer of emotional support a standard feature for all involved in the delivery of Hearing Support Service.

**My sincerest thanks and appreciation go to Mark, Lorraine, Laura, Tracy, Jenny, Susan and a small group of volunteers for their hard work, flexibility and resilience during these unprecedented times.**

Saying that it has 'not been easy to keep going' is an understatement, however since the 23<sup>rd</sup> March (the day we officially went into lockdown) we have managed to help 1127 service users, through 1403 appointments, with our Hearing Support Service, and welcomed 595 new people to the service, and treated 814 patients through 1019 appointments at our Aural Care Service clinics.

Later on in this newsletter you will be able to get a more detailed update on our services from Mark and Laura, however here I would like to share with you some typical feedback I have received from our service users/patients, since March. I hope you will agree that we are making a much needed and positive difference to people with hearing loss in our county.

*Mrs M - "Thank you so, so, so much. You are all wonderful and I am truly grateful. Not being able to hear is worse than Covid."*

*Mr H - "It was brilliant that the service was still going ahead as it has such an impact if you can't receive treatment."*

*Mrs T - "Thank you so much I don't know what I would have done without this service - I can hear again."*

*Mrs W - "Just a quick email to thank you for removing my ear wax today! Much appreciated, a thoroughly professional and courteous service under difficult circumstances. Can't tell you the difference it makes, especially realising I am not totally losing it at my age, thanks again."*

*Mr D - "Thank you for the excellent aural care service yesterday morning, and for answering all the questions my GP service haven't done before. You are all very polite, professional, and caring. I will gladly recommend your service to others, and I will come back to you when I inevitably need the service again. Thank you."*

*Mr M - "I am quite overwhelmed and unable to find the words to thank you for your great kindness in providing such a service to me. It was a great pleasure to meet your volunteer (MM) today and to receive the benefit of his experience and skills. Indeed, I find that my hearing has improved by some significance and has been the subject of comment by my wife already. I wish you and your team continued success with your efforts and hope that my modest contribution will be of some help."*

*Mr C - "Your service [Hearing Support] and the ear microsuction that I recently received were both excellent. I'm very grateful and thanks so much."*

*Mr F - "I've just received your package enclosing additional batteries and tubing for my hearing aids and quite overwhelmed by your kindness, consideration and efficiency over and beyond what one has come to expect in our modern society. I was impressed by your helpfulness on Monday when I telephoned. Again, thank you for your kindness, I just had to write expressing my gratitude for your help which I might quote again was quite 'over and beyond the call of duty'."*

Since the last newsletter we had a few changes in our team too.

We said 'goodbye' to Lyn Shelton and Karen Hook, both nurses within our Aural Care Service. Lyn was instrumental in supporting me with setting up the Aural Care Service back in 2018 and having got it off to a flying start she decided to take a much-deserved retirement at the end of March.

We have welcomed to the team Susan Mason, Jane Harvey and Catherine Hall, all experienced nurses with many years' experience in ear care. Laura and I are very pleased to have such a strong and experienced team of aural care nurses, all ready to help as many patients as possible by sorting out their troublesome ear wax. John Austin joined our team as the Mobile Clinics Administrative Support/Driver and is now familiarising himself with all the mobile clinics locations we have planned for both our key services.

### **New service**

As Peter mentions we have been busy behind the scenes preparing for our next big initiative – namely getting our Aural Care Service (ACS) 'on the road'. Further to the generous financial support from a number of charitable trusts that allowed us to buy and convert the vehicle, we have been busy preparing venues and locations across Norfolk to roll out this new service.

I have watched with interest how a standard van has been transformed into a proper clinic over a number of weeks by our supplier RS Vans. Bob Scott and his team have done an amazing job and below I am sharing a few photos of this transformation.



The new ACS mobile clinic will provide Ear Care safely (and Covid compliantly) on the purposefully converted vehicle from 18 locations (once the schedule is fully rolled out).

After a modest launch of the mobile clinic on the 5<sup>th</sup> October by our Patron, Sir Richard Jewson, we took the service on the road the following day providing the service in key locations across Norfolk – in North Norfolk (Holt, Wells-Next-the-Sea, Fakenham), in South Norfolk (Long Stratton, Thetford), in West Norfolk (Swaffham and King's Lynn) and In the East/South Norfolk (Great Yarmouth/Gorleston and Beccles), in addition to the clinics we already run in Norwich.

Additional locations will be added in January 2021 depending on the local area demand.

At the launch Sir Richard wished us every success with this new venture and said: "Hear for Norfolk is a fine charity. It is wonderful how a small charity can show the way. The mobile microsuction ear wax removal service is much needed."



Anyone requiring an appointment needs to contact the office on 01603 404440 to find out the most convenient location for you if you need ear wax removal.

The exact address for each ACS Ear Care mobile clinic will be provided at the time of making the appointment. Our Aural Care Service is run on an appointment basis only, and to a strict protocol. Currently we are able to accept GP referrals for patients that are registered with medical practices in the Central Norfolk Locality of Norfolk and Waveney CCG and self-referrals (for patients that are registered with a medical practice outside the Central Norfolk Locality, or do not meet the referral criteria, or do not wish to get a referral from their GP, however we charge a fee of £40 for the procedure).

## **Fundraising**

As I reported in the last issue, fundraising has been extremely hard over the last 12 - 18 months, probably the hardest I have found in the last 10 years – as both national and local organisations, charities and trusts themselves suffer from reduced income and change their priorities. The pandemic has made it even more challenging as many funders have switched their giving to Covid-related activities. It has made our fundraising efforts even more difficult as whilst we remained ‘open’ during the lockdown and continued supporting people, our activities are seen as ‘business as usual’ and not focused specifically on dealing with the effects of the pandemic.

As mentioned earlier we have had to amend and adapt the services delivery model as a result of Covid to be able to safely support people, which has inevitably impacted on our costs as we are now required to use appropriate PPE, extend the appointments times to allow for the additional cleaning and change of PPE, staff have had to step in and carry out the work previously undertaken by volunteers, many of whom have been and are still shielding, and so on.....

It was therefore very pleasing and very timely to secure the required funding for our new Aural Care Service mobile clinic before the events of the pandemic.

We were also absolutely delighted to finally secure funding from The National Lottery Community Fund for the next three years, towards the running costs of our Hearing Support Service. The process was somewhat long (it took almost one year from the time of the initial application and the final, stage three, step of the process) and I am most relieved it was secured just before Covid ‘struck’.

Our income generation activities continue with us seeking funds from trusts and foundations, raising the income from our contracts with Norfolk and Waveney CCG for our key services, through the Service Level Agreement with the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, and of course through the

generous donations we receive from individuals and the Friends of NDA, and the income from the self-funded patients accessing our ear care clinics.

In July we were approached by the James Paget University Hospital who requested our assistance with helping reduce their waiting list of patients waiting for ear care using microsuction. I am pleased to say that we now have in place a seven month contract and we began to treat people at the James Paget from the beginning of September.

It is a testament to the quality of our staff and services that we have been able to retain, expand and secure new contracts which are enabling us to reach more service users/patients and offer our support in a timely manner. **Thank you again to all my staff and volunteers for their sterling work!**

Unfortunately, the pandemic has completely compromised our ability to raise funds through events and from the corporate ‘world’, and of course we are not able to run any Friends of NDA events at the moment. This, coupled with the challenges of raising funds from trusts and foundations and the increase in costs of running our services through the modified operational model, is putting a lot of pressure on our finances.

**With this in mind, I would be very grateful for any support the readers can offer with raising funds and would particularly appreciate ideas on how we can hold fundraising events in a “Covid” friendly manner. Some people may want to consider leaving a gift to Hear for Norfolk in their will.**

Finally, we always need additional volunteers, fresh ideas and new ways of thinking on how to best reach and support our service users. So, any suggestions you may have on improving our services, are, as always, very welcome indeed. Please get in touch.

With many good wishes, Aliona



## Mark Mabbitt Hearing Support Service Co-ordinator

Who might have imagined what a tempestuous and turbulent six months were ahead when we published our last newsletter in February, certainly not !!!

To suggest it has been interesting and at times 'very trying' would be an understatement but I am very pleased to report that we have now reintroduced many of our much lamented and more recognised working methods to our service users.

Since the beginning of lockdown, we have assisted 1127 service users with Hearing Support Services. Of course, we have sent batteries, tubing, filters and other hearing aids consumables and this has helped a large number of people who might otherwise have been left without, had it not been for our support.

Quite a few of our HSS volunteers have been in regular contact with those service users that they might see on a regular basis, which has been hugely appreciated by all concerned. I have to say that I have been extremely impressed by the commitment shown by all volunteers for the care shown. It is to be applauded and the comments I have received about this have been a joy to hear!

Over the last 10 weeks or so we have conducted more 'doorstep' home visits which continues to work well for those most vulnerable due to immobility and isolation. Obviously, this is a time consuming affair for all involved but the outcomes have been remarkable and rewarding for all. Certainly those service users that have received visits have been extremely appreciative and many have commented that without the support of the NDA they would have felt lost, forgotten and even hopeless!

Again, congratulations to all the team, staff and volunteers alike at Hear for Norfolk, on a job very well done in quite trying circumstances.

During July, we started to run the mobile clinic from the car park here at Meridian Way. Appointment slots are allocated and booked over the telephone or by email and SUs come at time arranged, wait in car and are then escorted to the bus where they are seen and hearing aids maintained/retubed. This has worked so very well that we put the mobile clinic back on the road from September. We have also re-started a number of our community-based clinics where the same operating model is in place.

Anyone interested in attending for an appointment on the hearing support mobile clinic should call the office as we now have a full schedule/timetable for the balance of the year.



## Laura Crowe Aural Care Service Manager

As you can imagine Covid 19 caused many challenges for the Aural Care Service here at Hear for Norfolk. At first, we were unable to see any patients at all but soon realised that this would lead to increased anxiety and hardship for our service users in an already challenging world.

Our main stumbling block was ensuring we had the correct PPE to ensure our service users and staff were protected and safe. Once we had the appropriate guidelines, we were able to get the PPE equipment required and, with all the safety measures in place, our services were up and running again.

It soon became very apparent that this service was needed as our referrals increased dramatically, both fee paying and GP referred. We were one of the few offering this service

in Norfolk. The other limiting factor was the shortage of aural care nurses, so we have only been offering appts on Mondays and Tuesdays with the occasional extra clinic on Wednesdays or Thursdays. The good news is we have now recruited additional nurses and you can read their greetings below.

We have offered our services to the James Paget University Hospital to help reduce their waiting list. We are now running a number of clinics at the JPUH over the next few months.

Our service users are very grateful for the service we offer in these difficult times we are living in. Typical feedback includes:

*“Very professional, friendly, swift service.”*

*“Was treated with respect and kindness, much appreciated.”*

*“Would definitely recommend to others.”*

*“Very friendly staff, would definitely come again.”*

*“Very good, efficient and quick service.”*

Our Mobile Aural Care Clinic cost £70,000 to develop, including the purchase and conversion of a vehicle and the acquisition of medical equipment, such as the microscope, the microsuction machine, couch and medical trolleys.

We are very grateful to our funders the Paul Bassham Trust, the Goodman Trust, Norwich Consolidated Charities and the Clothworkers' Foundation for their support, along with Holden Renault who supplied the vehicle and RS Vans Interiors who converted it.

Running a high quality, safe and accessible service is a key priority and we have recruited a small team of highly experienced nurse practitioners, who operate the microsuction equipment. They are able to identify ear problems and refer patients to primary care for treatment. Our Mobile Clinic Assistant drives the vehicle and carries out the on-site administration, including all Covid-19 safety measures.

## A warm Hello from our new team members!



**Jane Harvey**

**Aural Care Practitioner**

I have worked in the NHS for 38 years, and in ENT outpatients with Laura for 18 years. For 15 years I have been doing aural care which gives me great job satisfaction. I am very pleased to be bringing my skills to Hear for Norfolk and being part of the new team.



**Catherine Hall**

**Aural Care Practitioner**

I qualified at Bart's Hospital in London and have worked in a wide variety of specialities including infertility, intensive care, coronary care, and Community Nursing. In 2010 I graduated from UEA as a Nurse Practitioner and worked in General Practice; this work included a wide experience of ear conditions. I am happy to have joined such a dedicated and hard-working team at Hear for Norfolk, improving the quality of life with our aural care service.



**Susan Mason**

**Aural Care Practitioner**

I have vast experience of working within varied roles in the NHS and private sector. I wanted to be part of the Aural Care team as I see this as a vital service which helps improve peoples' lives. Aural suctioning is a simple procedure that can enable a person to communicate more effectively.



**John Austin**  
**Mobile Clinic Assistant/Driver**

## An update from our administration team



**Lorraine  
Matthews**

Having just completed my first year at Hear for Norfolk (NDA) what a year it has been!

Who would have predicted that 6 months in I would be working from home, a challenge with 4 adults all under the same roof, all with, shall we say, dominant voices jostling for space.

The first frantic couple of weeks ensued with microsuction appointments to postpone and many, many calls from worried service users to offer reassurance and point in the right direction.

Six weeks after lockdown the Aural Care Clinic was back up and running albeit with huge changes to incorporate the new government guidelines. Having called some 50(!) or so people in March to postpone their appointments, to be met with disappointment, disbelief and in some cases utter despair, to be able to call them back in May and book them back in was a huge relief. For some people, the impact of ear wax is far greater than a little inconvenience. Being isolated at home with no one to visit you with only the television and radio to keep you company is bad enough but to then not be able to hear this company must be truly devastating. Being able to help Laura and Susan to deliver the vital service that they provide makes my job at Hear for Norfolk truly worthwhile.

That is not to say it hasn't been hard work. On some days we have seen between 30 and 40 SU's all socially distanced and with the obligatory clean down between. I have never cleaned so much in my life but to see the utter joy on the face of those that have been 'cured' by the two aural care nurses is definitely all worthwhile.

Who knows what the next six months will bring but having adapted to the ever changing situation we find ourselves in we will continue to provide and expand this vital service at Meridian way and in the community through the Mobile Aural Care Unit giving everyone who needs our help access to the service.



**Jenny Hill**

I am writing this as my third contribution to the newsletter, having now worked for Hear for Norfolk (NDA) for over 2 years. A lot has changed during that time and little did I realise how much this year would change everyone's lives forever.

When news of the coronavirus first broke I, like a lot of other people, didn't appreciate the impact that this would have on people's lives. However, I quickly came to terms with the situation and was determined to continue working to help people with their hearing loss.

Following the lockdown, it became apparent very quickly that there was an even greater need for our services. I was taking over 40 calls a day from Service Users who were running short of batteries and worrying about what to do when their hearing aid had stopped working. I was also receiving calls from neighbours, friends and families of Service Users who were desperately trying to help.

It has been a very busy and sometimes upsetting time. However I am very proud of what we, as a charity, have achieved this year and I am personally pleased that I have been able as an individual to be working at Hear for Norfolk for everyone who needs us at this crucial time.

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