

Rebuilding Connection, Companionship, and Confidence – together





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Introduction

Hearing loss shouldn't mean losing the things you care most about...

A phone ringing. A smoke alarm. Your child calling your name. Most people take these everyday sounds for granted. For people like me, who are deaf or have hearing loss, they can be moments of frustration, vulnerability and isolation. I've never heard a bird sing. I can't hear running water, my home's security or smoke alarms and I often miss my 11-year-old daughter speaking to me – much to her frustration.

To me, the world sounds like it is underwater, so I spend an exhausting amount of energy trying to decipher muffled noises. I lip-read, often catching only every second or third word and without hearing aids, I can't hear myself speak. Listening requires concentration, so I rely heavily on body language, expressions and other nonverbal cues. Answering questions is often a calculated guess.

People don't always understand the toll this takes or how isolating it can be. That's why the work of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People matters so much. That's why I became President of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People.

Every day, I see the difference we make. We bring companionship and comfort on the days that feel heavy; safety and confidence when people need it most; and a sense of belonging through our supportive community that understands the realities of living with hearing loss.

This year has been about building strong foundations for the future. We have ambitious goals to achieve by 2030 as we work towards our vision of living well with hearing loss. By rebuilding connection, confidence and companionship through our trained hearing dogs and practical and emotional support services, we can transform the lives of people like me and thousands more in the years ahead.

Thank you for all your support.

Dr Michelle King
President of Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

Why our work matters

Over the past 40 years, thousands of people have shared their realities of living with hearing loss. The frustration of missed conversations. The feeling of isolation. The fear of missing a sound that could have life-threatening consequences.

Their shared experiences show us that hearing loss affects far more than a person's ability to hear. People can feel disconnected from the world around them. Confidence, independence, and the connections that matter most can all start to be stripped away.

And today, more people than ever are living with hearing loss:

- **1 in 3 UK adults are affected by deafness, hearing loss or tinnitus**
- **2.4 million adults have hearing loss severe enough that they would struggle to hear most conversational speech***
- **8 million adults could benefit from hearing aids, yet only around 2 million use them.**

That's why we are more determined than ever to challenge perceptions, provide solutions, and create a world where people with hearing loss can experience connection, companionship and confidence.

*source: RNID rnid.org.uk/what-we-do/data-and-evidence/deafness-and-hearing-loss-prevalence



“

I became totally deaf overnight after fracturing my skull, aged 21. The evening before I was part of the world I knew – filled with music, laughter with friends, and the simple comfort of easy conversation. By morning, that world had gone.

Read Trevor's story on page 37

”

Our Strategy for Change



Our vision

Living well with hearing loss



Our mission

Together, we rebuild connection, companionship and confidence through trained hearing dogs, and practical and emotional support services; transforming the lives of people who are deaf or have hearing loss.

 Goal 1	 Goal 2	 Goal 3
• Creation and support of our life-changing hearing dog partnerships • More people matched sooner and supported for longer.	• Deliver exceptional emotional and practical support • No one living with hearing loss feels isolated or unsupported.	• Transform attitudes and behaviours • A more inclusive society for people living with hearing loss.

Investing in our future / enablers

 People & Culture	 Awareness & Support	 Revenue	 Technology & Data
Great people and volunteers	Stronger profile & access to support	Sustainable, diverse income	Better systems and insight



By 2030:

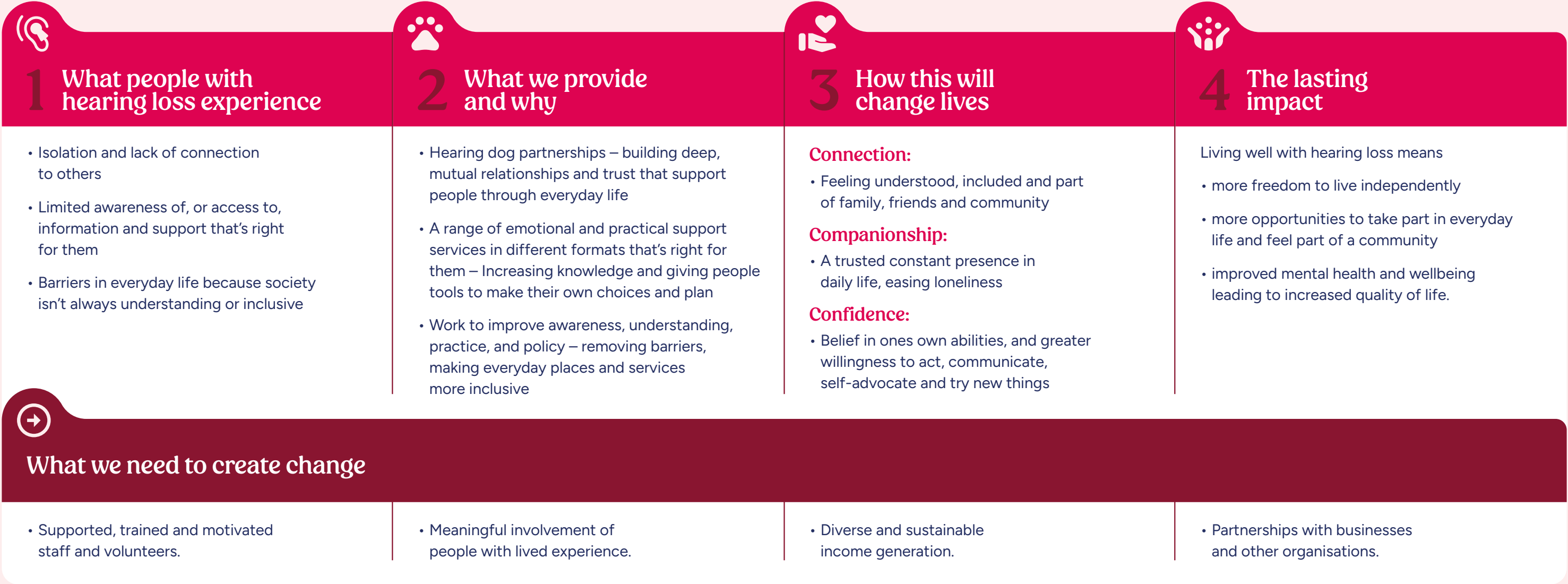
- We are recognised as the UK’s leading and most trusted charity for people affected by hearing loss
- More people understand that deafness and hearing loss affect far more than someone’s sense of sound, and the stories of those we support are helping to change attitudes and behaviours
- Our insights and experience are shaping campaigns, guidance, policies and practices across workplaces, healthcare and communities
- More people living with hearing loss feel connected, confident and supported, through our hearing dog partnerships and support services
- Our network of active, committed and skilled volunteers powers the growth of our vital services
- Our financial model is diverse and sustainable.

From living with hearing loss to living well

Our Theory of Change

Thousands of people have told us that hearing loss affects every aspect of their lives: from isolation to poor wellbeing, low confidence and relationship struggles. But at Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, we believe that while losing your hearing can be life-changing, it should not be a barrier to living well. We know that meeting the growing need for hearing loss support will require transformational change and innovation,

and you've helped us get into the strongest position possible to achieve that. That's why we're committed to making positive change a reality. To guide us on our mission we've developed a theory of change. This maps a clear pathway from our activities to a lasting impact for the **18 million people in the UK living with hearing loss**. Our theory of change was shaped by people with hearing loss and their experiences.



Our impact

As we work towards our ambitious 2030 goals, the last year has been focused on laying the foundations for long-term success. We're building a culture of insight and continuous learning across the charity, making sure we can use data and lived experience to improve outcomes, enhance service design and inform strategic decisions.



Because we believe the most effective services are designed alongside the people who use them, we've created new teams and processes that place people with hearing loss at the heart of every decision we make. And we've invested in the capabilities that will help us achieve our ambitions to reach more people, more quickly, and for longer with life-changing support. Alongside this vital work, we've

- **strengthened our brand and communications, to boost our profile and make more people aware of who we are and what we do**
- **relaunched our website and began work to continually improve the digital experience for all our supporters, volunteers and service users**
- **improved our understanding of supporters to ensure we're giving what you need, when you need it**
- **developed plans to grow and diversify income**
- **invested in our people and volunteers.**

And so that we can fully understand what support is needed, what works, and where gaps remain, we've set in motion new ways of working that will ensure our services continue to evolve in response to the real experiences and changing needs of the people we exist to support.

- **We began developing our theory of change, demonstrating how we'll upscale our services to meet current and future need**
- **We created a dedicated impact and insight team and began developing a new approach to measuring the impact our services have**
- **We've grown our lived experience network, ensuring people with hearing loss are always central to a continuous feedback loop that informs our service design**
- **We're now gathering outcomes data from more of our hearing loss support services, so we can better understand their reach and impact.**

Together, these foundations will enable us to reach more people, deliver greater impact and build a sustainable future to support the growing need for hearing loss services. And they will give supporters like you a much richer insight into the far-reaching, life-changing difference you're making.

“

Ginny gives me so much confidence. I really feel she could save our lives in an emergency.

Heather

”

Goal 1

Life-changing partnerships

Every partnership is a person living a life transformed by the connection, companionship, and confidence a hearing dog brings. And a happy dog living its best life.

In 2025/26, supporters like you made sure that...



1,119

working hearing dogs and their humans got the specialist support they needed to keep leading fulfilled lives together.



10

dogs joined our breeding scheme, ready to make many more new life-changing partnerships possible.



Hundreds

of people and dogs benefited from the dedication of our incredible volunteers who gave their time, energy and personal experience to keep changing lives.



“
I can't fully put into words the comfort Dexter gives me. He's not only my constant companion but my reason to get up in the morning. He's my rock.
”

Kevin



“
You put such a lot into that dog for 18 months to two years, you put your heart and soul into it. It's just so rewarding to help a stranger that you've never met and then to see how that dog has helped them, it's just awesome.
”

Karen Hardcastle, volunteer puppy trainer in Selby for 12 years

Goal 2

Emotional and practical support for life

Our Hearing Link Services are informed, designed and delivered by people with lived experience of hearing loss. The sense of community this creates – the relief of being able to speak with someone who really gets it – is one of its most powerful benefits.

People tell us they get so much more from peer support than the purely practical advice or tools they might access in a clinical setting. It's real-time, tried and tested advice that's working for someone who lives what they do, every single day. And we know sharing it brings mutual benefit, because our peer support volunteers tell us they feel more confident and fulfilled too.

“
These sessions show you how to adapt, adjust and flourish again in day-to-day life with hearing loss.
”

In 2025/26, supporters like you made sure that...



129,999

visitors accessed lived experience led hearing loss information through our website.



2,700

people navigate hearing loss through our events, online services and community sessions across the UK.

“
Now I feel I can speak out and not to be ashamed. Thank you for giving me more confidence.
”

**Just one hour can have
life-changing impact**

Helpful Hours is a free online webinar service available for anyone with hearing loss, their families and friends to join. Our volunteers with lived experience of hearing loss and deafness shaped its design and deliver the sessions, bringing a sense of connection, companionship and confidence to everyone involved.

90% of respondents said they now have the knowledge and resources to make changes that will help them live well with hearing loss.

“

It's very rewarding to think that you can make a little difference... When I meet someone at the start of their hearing loss journey, I want to share what I know and urge them not to be like me and pretend it's not happening. You can live a very full, happy life with hearing loss. But you need that support and advice at the beginning.

Helen, who became a Peer Support Volunteer, after using our Hearing Link Service (pictured below)

”



Attendees to our Helpful Hours webinars

“

I liked the positive approach, focussing on what can be done, rather than what can't.

”



“

It's the first time ever I've had the opportunity to speak to anyone about my deafness.

”

Face-to-face support from people with hearing loss

Taking place in community settings across the UK and facilitated by volunteers with lived experience of hearing loss, these drop-ins offer crucial opportunities to talk, share and get personalised advice on living well with hearing loss.

94% of respondents said they would recommend the sessions to friends or family experiencing hearing loss.

100% said their needs were met by getting in-person advice about hearing loss from a knowledgeable person with lived experience.

All our services are supported by our Lived Experience Network; a community of people with personal experience of hearing loss. This powerful network shapes and guides our work, helping us to create services that are truly people centred. You can find out more on page 27.

“The practical tips were useful takeaways, and I'll definitely be making use of some of the suggestions offered.”

Goal 3

Improving awareness, understanding, practice and policy

To restore connection, provide companionship, and rebuild confidence we need to change the way society perceives and responds to hearing loss. That means making sure more people understand the realities of living with hearing loss, and helping to influence the decisions, policies and practices that affect people’s everyday lives.



Sharing stories, sparking conversations, creating communities

Through partnerships, media activity, campaigns and social media, we continue to raise awareness of hearing loss and share stories that help people feel understood, informed and involved.



In 2025/26, people like you joined the conversation with...



120,000+

people now following our social media channels, accessing information, advice, guidance and real-life stories that help them better understand hearing loss and its impact.



365,000

people viewing posts from our ambassadors Chris Packham (pictured above), Tasha Gouri and Tasha Stones (pictured left) helping us reach an even wider audience with insights into living with hearing loss.



19.3 million +*

people reading, watching, hearing and learning about Hearing Dogs for Deaf People in 664 pieces of media coverage, across print, online, TV and radio.

*based on available readership/audience figures through our media monitoring service, and representing a 26% increase on the previous year.



Improving Accessibility and Inclusion

This year, we asked all our hearing dog partnerships about their experiences of accessing public places with their hearing dogs.

Nearly seven in ten (69%) told us they had been refused access at least once since receiving their dog. We know there can be a huge emotional cost to this; people tell us that being challenged or refused access with their hearing dog can make them less likely to go out in public.

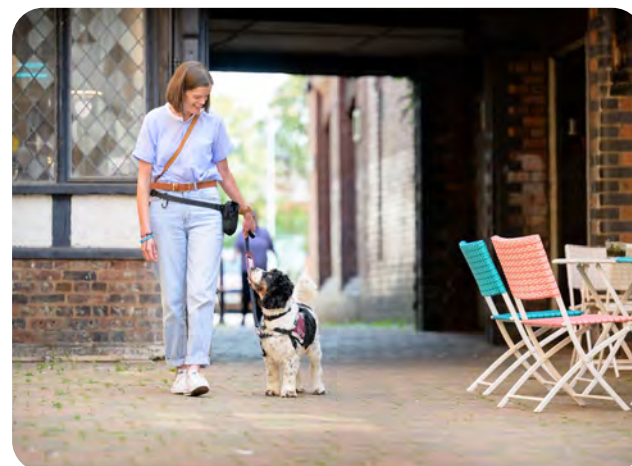
Access challenges or refusals risk eroding confidence and increasing isolation as people withdraw from places they don't feel welcome.

A crucial part of our mission is making everyone more aware of a legal responsibility to admit assistance dogs, and why this matters.

Using insights from our recipients, we've worked with partners and employers, and continued to raise awareness through print, broadcast and social media.

Together, these efforts help challenge misconceptions, improve access for people with hearing dogs, and make sure these life-changing partnerships can keep having their full transformative effect on people's lives.

Raising awareness is only part of the solution. We also work directly with organisations to help remove barriers and improve accessibility for people with hearing loss.



Through our partnership with AXA, we've shared the experiences of people with hearing loss directly with employees across the organisation and helped improve understanding of hearing loss in the workplace.

Specsavers has continued to support our Great British Dog Walk and hosted awareness activities in communities across the UK, helping more people learn about the impacts of hearing loss and the support available.

Specsavers stats:

Over
382,000
people reached through
social media

62
pieces of press coverage
across the UK

Alongside these partnerships, support from organisations including Aviva, CVS Vets, Audika, Assisi Pet Care and Pets at Home helped us raise awareness, generate vital income and reach new audiences.

Improving the hospital experience

After attending one of our Helpful Hours webinars, Reading Hospital invited us to review the patient experience for deaf people and those with hearing loss. Together, we walked through every stage of the patient journey and identified opportunities to improve accessibility.

As a result, the hospital has introduced deaf awareness resources, installed additional hearing loops and is planning further staff training. It is also exploring new ways to help staff identify and support deaf patients more effectively.

Having a better understanding of the needs of deaf people has been a privilege. We are keen to support the charity and continue to improve the experience for deaf patients.

Charlotte Wood, Patient Experience Lead at Circle Health Group's Reading Hospital

“

I felt very comfortable in all areas of the airport. The standout moment from a deaf awareness point of view was how shop staff turned to face me when speaking to me.

Maxine

”

Testing London Luton Airport's assisted travel lounge

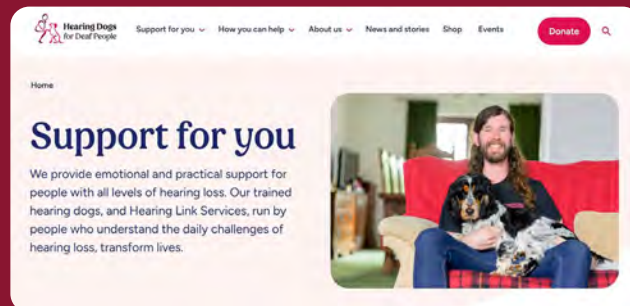
As London Luton Airport launched its Assisted Travel Lounge, it invited Hearing Dogs for Deaf People to help review the passenger experience for people with hearing loss.

Together with Maxine, one of our Peer Support Volunteers, and her hearing dog Walter, we carried out a walk-through of the airport. Visiting shops, facilities and passenger services across the airport, we shared feedback and insights to help improve accessibility and inclusion.

Whether we are working with hospitals, airports, employers or national organisations, our goal is the same: to help create a society where people with hearing loss feel understood, included and able to participate fully in everyday life.



Preparing to reach more people impacted by hearing loss



Awareness and Support

To reach more people, we must increase our visibility so that more people know who we are, why we exist and the difference we can make.

This year, we refreshed our brand to make it more inclusive, accessible and welcoming. We also brought together our Hearing Dogs and Hearing Link Services websites into one unified platform, making it easier for people to find information, access support and engage with our services.

Alongside this, we strengthened our media profile, increased our presence at major events such as Crufts, launched a face-to-face fundraising programme and deepened our understanding of our audiences through new insight and research.

We also continued to work with ambassadors, celebrities and influencers to help amplify our message and reach new audiences, ensuring more people understand the realities of hearing loss and the life-changing difference our work can make.

Technology and Data

We have continued our digital transformation programme, helping to build the foundations for a more connected, efficient and data-informed organisation.

We have strengthened our approach to data, insight and technology, while reviewing the systems and processes that underpin our work. This will help us better understand the people we support and the supporters who make our work possible, make more informed decisions and create a more joined-up experience across the charity.

As we continue this work, digital transformation will play an important role in helping us reach more people, improve efficiency and measure the difference we make.



People and Culture

Our people are at the heart of everything we do. Without the dedication of our employees and volunteers, we simply could not deliver our services or achieve our mission. That's why, this year, we continued to invest in helping our people develop, grow and thrive.

- We launched a new learning and development programme, including Learning at Work Week, British Sign Language taster sessions, deaf awareness training, manager development, and a redesigned induction experience to help new colleagues feel informed, connected and confident from day one
- We created specialist roles and support opportunities that give colleagues access to expert advice, coaching, development and wellbeing support, helping employees and volunteers succeed in their roles

“It feels as if we are all being listened to [being part of the Lived Experience Network] and our thoughts are being acted upon – which can only be a real positive.

Julia Cruse, Lived Experience Network member

- We supported volunteers to develop new skills and knowledge, including Deaf Awareness training, Assistance Dogs UK learning sessions, opportunities to take part in Battersea Academy, a learning hub for people working or volunteering in animal welfare organisations
- We grew our Lived Experience Network in a move away from isolated consultation towards a culture where user involvement is fully embedded across the organisation.

Our Lived Experience Network in numbers:

30 members now part of a continuous feedback loop shaping our services and campaigns, with plans to continue growing the network

460 hours of insight from members in the network's first year

“Lived experience involvement is one of our greatest assets, and the network is already becoming a key part of how we all think, plan and make decisions. The insights it gives are gold dust, helping us challenge assumptions and change where our decisions begin so we can better meet the needs of people living with hearing loss.

Lorna Armstrong, Head of Service Engagement at Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

”

Revenue

Charities continue to face a challenging operating environment, with rising costs and increasing pressure on income. Our fundraising reflected wider national trends as we saw a decline in sponsorship and donations during 2025-2026. However, thanks to the dedication of our incredible donors, fundraisers, volunteers and partners, our financial position remained stable, with £16.3 million total income (excluding investment income of £0.9 million), compared with (£16.4 million in 2024-2025).

To ensure we can keep meeting the growing need for hearing loss support, our Board of Trustees approved a £1million investment to strengthen income generation and build a broader, more resilient funding model. As part of this investment, we established a new Income Generation directorate, expanded our high-value fundraising capability and deepened our understanding of supporters and future opportunities.

Our ambition is to reduce reliance on any single source of income and create a more balanced and sustainable funding base for the future. To support this, we are also exploring new trading and commercial opportunities that can both support people with hearing loss and generate income to sustain our work for years to come.



To help attract more incredible volunteers, we launched **The Best Club. Ever.**

This is a re-imagining of our volunteer programme. It showcases how volunteering for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People can be a life changing experience, being part of a fun loving, passionate and highly motivated club.

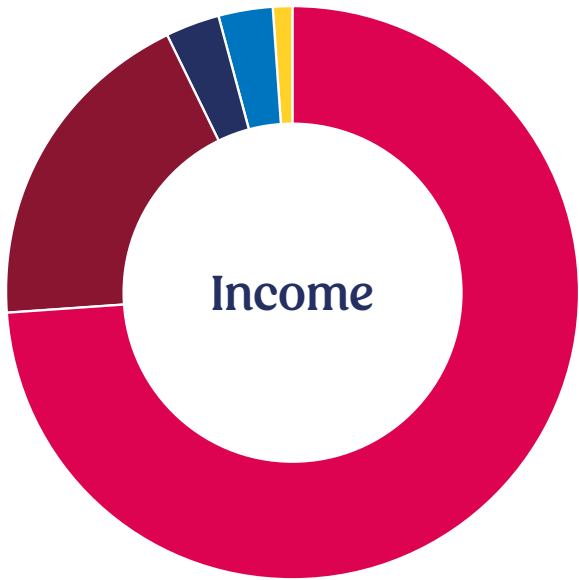


Together, we're transforming lives impacted by hearing loss

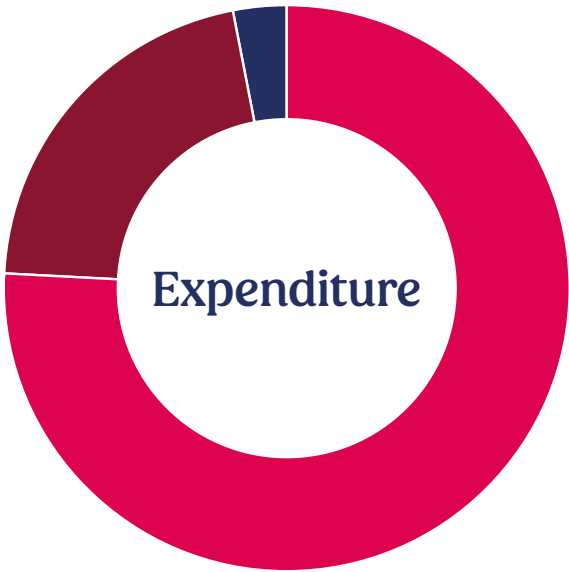
This year, our dedicated supporters raised £15.4 million in donations – an extraordinary contribution that means more people affected by hearing loss can get the support they need both now and in the future. People who chose to remember Hearing Dogs for Deaf People in their wills left an incredible £12m in gifts. Our dedicated puppy sponsors gave month after month, together raising £1.3m. Across the UK, people took on challenges, organised events and brought their communities together, raising an extraordinary £600k. Companies chose to partner with us, raising invaluable awareness and funds, while trusts and philanthropists invested in our work, together raising a further £700k to keep transforming lives impacted by hearing loss.



Financial summary 2025/26



Where our funds came from:	£000	%
● Legacies	£12,014	74%
● Donations	£3,105	19%
● Trading & fundraising	£550	3%
● Investments	£529	3%
● Other	£64	1%
Total	£16,263	100%



How our funds were used:	£000	%
● Provision & support of hearing dog partnerships and hearing loss services	£11,623	76%
● General fundraising	£3,312	21%
● Fundraising trading	£403	3%
● Investment management	£56	0%
Total	£15,394	100%

Thanks to you

We are incredibly grateful to every person and organisation who supported us during the year. Here, we would like to give special recognition to some of the individuals, trusts, foundations and corporate partners whose generous support has had a significant impact on our work.

We're especially grateful to the following people and organisations for their contributions:

- AXA UK
- Assisi Pet Care
- Audika
- Specsavers
- The Dr French Foundation
- The Geoff & Fiona Squire Foundation
- The Thompson Family Charitable Trust
- The Geoffrey and Pauline Martin Trust
- The Fairstead Trust
- Richer Sounds Foundation
- The Hospital Saturday Fund
- The David Brooke Charity
- Help for Health
- Annabel and Daphne Schild
- Trudy and Richard McKeown, in memory of Brenda Gudgeon
- Heather, Kevin, Chris and Anthony O'Connor in memory of Heather's brother Brian who was born deaf.



Whichever way you've chosen to support our work, you've helped change lives impacted by hearing loss.

“We found out about Access to Work funding through Hearing Link Services – I now have supportive technology at work.”

“Hearing Link Services turned several corners for me. I realised I was not alone.”

“Ezra has transformed my quality of life. He brings a sense of comfort, structure and routine every single day.”

“Buddy is my hearing – my ears. I look at him, and he hears.”

“Gizmo has given me the independence I've always wanted.”

Thank you for helping make this happen.

Impact in numbers

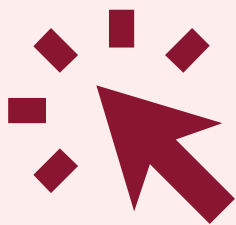


2,870

People who are deaf or have hearing loss who were helped through our specially trained hearing dogs and our practical and emotional support services.

129,999

Visitors accessed lived experience led hearing loss information through our website.

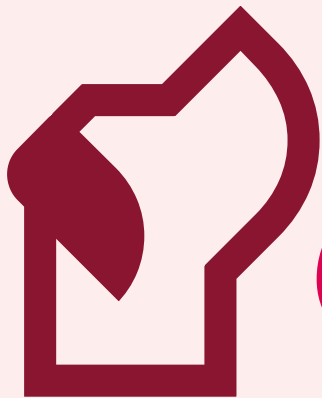


6,582

Downloads of support information and video content.

1,119

Number of hearing dog partnerships supported through the UK.



97

Dogs placed into a core role supporting a person who is deaf or has hearing loss.



38

Number of hearing dogs helping children.

1,189

People who received emotional and practical support, information and guidance through our Hearing Link Services.



People impacted by hearing loss told us how our services helped*

Community drop-in sessions

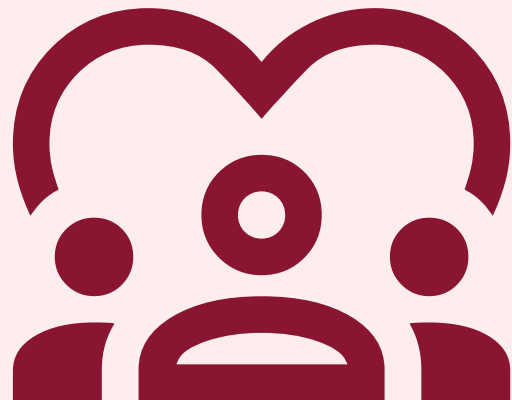


94%

said they would recommend our sessions to friends or family experiencing hearing loss.

90%

reported feeling understood after attending a session.



Helpful Hours webinar

90%

felt they now had the knowledge and resources to make changes that would improve their ability to live well with hearing loss in their home life.



89%

said they felt more confident getting out and about in public, social and community settings after the session.

*outcome statistics from our service user surveys



Trevor's story

'Sorry, that's it,' the doctors told me. 'The sound is over.' And with that, my future had died. It was utterly terrifying and crushingly lonely.

I grieved for many years. I grieved for the next song I would never hear, for all the friends who quietly backed away and for all my dreams and plans. It was all gone.

I learnt that day to day life doesn't have subtitles. People appeared and disappeared without warning, startling me. Their mouths moved in silence. I spoke too loudly, misunderstood conversations and felt the burn of public humiliation, again and again.

When I suddenly lost my hearing, I felt powerless. It was like the world was moving on, leaving me behind.

The hope of having a hearing dog is what got me through those darkest years.

And the arrival of my first hearing dog, Clyde, totally changed the course of my life. Without words, he seemed to say to me, "You're not alone. We've got this." I expected Clyde to alert me to important sounds. But I never imagined the deep emotional connection that we would share.

Over the years, all three of my hearing dogs have freed me from so much isolation – and I've been their totally devoted human companion.

Now, walking with my clever boy, Onyx, is my social life. If I have the same conversation repeatedly – about dogs, the weather, vet visits – it doesn't matter. Even if I don't lipread everything correctly, that doesn't matter either. It's the connection that really matters.

Thank you so much for supporting my journey today. It means more than I can ever say.

Trevor and Onyx

Looking ahead

With your support, we've been working hard to understand more about what deaf people need and how we can make sure our services continue to meet those needs.

We know that people living with hearing loss can feel lonely, isolated and detached from the world and the people around them. And thanks to people like you, we can help them reconnect, through the practical and emotional support services we specialise in.

In 1982, we were set up to provide expertly trained hearing dogs for people with hearing loss. But our year-long consultation, with hearing dog recipients, other hearing loss organisations, audiologists, staff members and volunteers, among many other stakeholders, shows we're uniquely placed to support anyone with hearing loss in many other ways too.

From getting the right support in place for someone to keep doing a job they love, to giving someone the peace of mind to sleep at night, together we can make sure no-one with hearing loss risks missing important sounds – or missing out on important conversations. Together, we can help more people impacted by hearing loss experience connection, companionship and confidence.

As we look ahead, our ambition remains clear: a world where everyone affected by hearing loss can live well, whatever that looks like for each and every person you're helping us support.

Central to this ambition is, and will always remain, listening to people with lived experience. Continuing to work closely with the people we exist to support. Making sure that all our services, priorities and decisions continue to be shaped by people navigating life with hearing loss.

And that's a journey we'd love you to join us on. As we work to meet each person's evolving needs – and the increasing demand for hearing loss support in the population as a whole – we'll need you more than ever.

Together, we can make sure more deaf people get personalised support, find a welcoming community and receive the information they need to lead a fulfilled life with hearing loss. Feeling better equipped to deal with life's daily challenges, and more hopeful about the future.

That's a priceless gift – making sure hearing loss doesn't mean losing all the other things that matter most.

Thank you for being part of this journey. You're transforming lives every day, and we couldn't be more grateful.

Tracy Griffin
CEO





Royal Patron	Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal
President	Dr Michelle King
Co-Founder	Dr Bruce Fogle MBE DVM MRCVS
Chair of Trustees	Harry Hayer <i>(from August 2026)</i> Christina O'Donovan-Rossa <i>(stepped down August 2026)</i>
Chief Executive	Tracy Griffin

Tel: 01844 348 100
Text relay: 18001 01844 348100
Email: info@hearingdogs.org.uk

hearingdogs.org.uk

The Grange
Wycombe Road
Saunderton
Princes Risborough
Buckinghamshire
HP27 9NS