Impact report 2020-21

The Elizabeth foundation

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About us

The first five years is a critical period for all children, when they develop vital cognitive, linguistic, social and physical skills. For deaf children and their families, the early diagnosis of hearing loss and support at each stage of development is crucial. Through our Ofsted rated 'outstanding' nursery programmes, deaf children learn to listen using their hearing technologies and to talk with clarity and confidence. Importantly, our skilled team of teachers, Speech and Language Therapists, specialist nursery assistants and volunteers also provide emotional, educational and practical support to parents throughout the preschool years.

The Elizabeth Foundation is committed to the multi-sensory oral approach, engaging all of a child's senses in learning activities that support them in developing their listening, language, speech and communication skills. The charity was started 40 years ago by the family of a deaf child, and we remain dedicated to providing family-focused services that encourage learning through fun, practical, everyday experiences.

About this Impact Report

This Impact Report provides a summary of our activities during the year from August 2020 to July 2021, encompassing the 2020-21 school year in our nursery.

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"We were supported fantastically well throughout the pandemic, with great communication via email, phone calls and zoom. It was always great to know you could have a chat and the weekly activities gave great ideas to do at home so that we could continue to support our son. You are really the best!"

Message from our Chief Executive

The past 18 months have been a time of great uncertainty and change, when most organisations had to quickly adjust their services to deal with the global pandemic. We had been steadily developing multi-channel services incorporating face-to-face sessions, online programmes, tele-therapy, live and recorded webinars, social media, etc. However, the global pandemic made us fast-forward our action plan so that we could support families when we were unable to offer face-to-face services. Indeed, this time also helped show us the advantage of our strong partnership approach to meeting the needs of children with any degree of deafness and their families.

From our earliest days, we have followed an ethos that all of our services are family-friendly, family-focused and family-centred. Families are at the heart of all that we do from the time of diagnosis onwards. Part of our role is to respond to the emotional needs of parents through listening and empathising, coaching and collaborating, and validating and valuing. We aim to help parents in building their confidence and self-esteem, encouraging them to become partners in this new and often unexpected journey.

With our support and the support of their local professional teams, we help parents to build their confidence to be parents of a deaf child, to be an advocate for their child and to make informed decisions for their child. To be able to do this, parents need to learn information on a variety of topics. In addition they also need someone to listen to their worries and concerns, and help them to work out for themselves the best pathway for them and their family.

The last year has reinforced that there is no 'right' way to support parents – and that an approach that is flexible and adaptable will work best to meet the varied needs of families. Our services provide practical assistance to families, but we also help them to build connections with other parents, families, children, services, organisations and charities. As a small organisation, we rely on working with partners to help the maximum number of children and families. We recognise that we cannot do this alone and we are definitely stronger together.

Working in this way creates a network of support around families that will last for many years. Our services at The Elizabeth Foundation focus on the early years, but the skills that we encourage through partnered working offer a lasting, lifelong benefit.

Julie Hughes
Chief Executive

Our core services

During 2020-21, the global pandemic made us look at how we support parents and think of new and innovative ways that we could continue to work with them, at times when we could not see them face-to-face. Like all services, we had to rethink our plans and ways of working. We were also very aware that everyone was under enormous stress and strain, and life, for many people, had changed drastically.

From September – December 2020, we held our usual face-to-face services, complemented with online parent education sessions and virtual support meetings. From January – April 2021, due to rising number of Covid-19 cases nationally, we moved to virtual services as we felt this was the safest option. From April – July 2021, we were able to open the doors to the Family Centre again, resuming blended services for all families. The children attended our weekly and monthly nursery sessions whilst parent education and support meetings happened virtually.

Baby groups

Our baby programme supported 15 babies and their families throughout the year. We started the year with face-to-face groups, but moved to virtual services in the second lockdown. We provided weekly support and also met fortnightly as a group online for activities with the babies and have discussions. When we resumed face-to-face services in April 2021, we had to alter our services to meet every other week, as we had to allow for restricted numbers of adults in the room at any given time. In this way, we could ensure that all families were seen regularly.

Toddler groups

Families who attended our toddler sessions had a similar mix of blended services for their support throughout the year. 12 families benefited from the advice, guidance, information and practical support we provided through the toddler programme. Face-to-face services were in place for the autumn term, with weekly sessions. The spring term brought restricted services due to Covid-19 so we moved to virtual services – the nursery leader provided weekly support to all families and regularly met online with them. During the summer term, we were able to resume weekly face-to-face toddler services.

Preschool groups

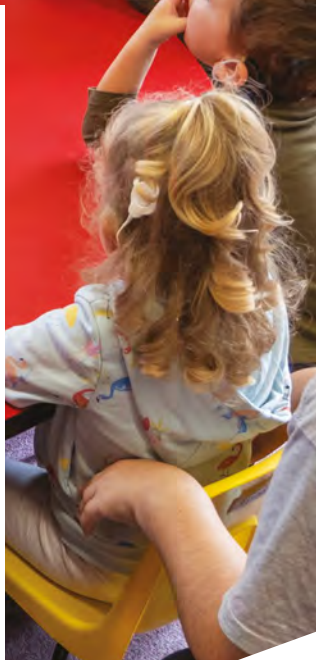
For the 32 families who attended our preschool programme, the same pattern took place – face-to-face services initially, with virtual services throughout the spring term, and then resuming face-to-face services for the summer term. Whilst supporting families virtually, the team sent out weekly and monthly education 'support packages' to families via email – with ideas for thematic games and activities to promote communication development, complete with the resources needed to undertake the activities. For those families without access to computers / printers, we printed and sent the information to them. We had virtual sessions with most families and met for team meetings and annual review meetings with other local professionals to ensure that parents were getting all the support they needed during these difficult times.

Speech and Language Therapy sessions

During the academic year, our specialist Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) provided over 230 therapy sessions for children attending our toddler and preschool services. Sessions focused on developing comprehension skills, building vocabulary, improving speech intelligibility or supporting parents to become communicative partners with their child to enhance their skills. Due to Covid-19, our SLTs provided therapy sessions remotely from January – April 2021. The access to technology also allowed SLTs to participate in meetings to help decide what support children who attend our services would need once they start school.

'Listen' groups

A total of 22 families benefited from our monthly 'Listen' groups, focused on the development of good listening skills in the presence of glue ear, a mild loss, a unilateral hearing loss, and / or additional complex needs for communication development. The groups were a blend of face-to-face and virtual support, comprising of a mixture of information and guidance for parents and practical activities to facilitate communication development.



"Everyone and everything is amazing! We just love coming to the nursery and we are learning so much – not just the children, but us parents too!"

How we change lives

To measure the effectiveness of our interventions, we aim to directly assess language and speech for children in our toddler and preschool classes each term. During the 2020-21 school year, however, this was not possible for all children due to the closure of the Family Centre during the lockdown and the limitations of sound quality in virtual therapy sessions. We used a mixture of direct assessment and parental questionnaires / phone reviews to assess progress with children's language and speech. We also continued to use video-therapy sessions, which were good for language activities and directing parents in how to deliver speech work, but which have inadequate sound and picture quality for detailed speech assessments.

Language skills

On average, children with no hearing difficulties would be expected to make steady progress – in other words, they would make one month of progress for every one month of time that elapsed. Without effective technology and interventions, having a hearing loss will cause delay to children's progress. However, attending our services can help enhance the progress children make:

- Over half of the children assessed (54%) had progressed at an accelerated rate (i.e. they had made more than one month's progress for every month that elapsed) with either their receptive and / or expressive language – they have therefore reduced the gap between their delayed language and the language of their hearing peers.
- Three of the children (8%) made equal progress to that of their hearing peers (one month's progress for one month of time that had elapsed), so although their language was still delayed, they have not fallen any further behind.
- Around one-third of the children (32%) had made some progress, just at a slower rate, and two children did not make progress because of a lack of access to sound.
- At the start of the school year nearly 90% of children had a language delay but, by the end of the school year, 30% of children had language scores within three months of their hearing peers.
- Of the 44 children who attended our toddler and preschool classes during the year, just over one-quarter had additional needs and a similar proportion were learning English as an additional language

Speech skills

Our Speech and Language Therapists carry out detailed assessments of children's speech sounds. They use their specialist skills to decipher and transcribe the individual sounds (phonemes) that make up each word and identify errors that lie outside the typical pattern of development:

- We were able to complete at least two formal speech sound assessments during this year for half of the 44 children attending our toddler and preschool classes. Some children were unable to participate in formal assessments due to limited language or attention skills, but our therapists were able to measure their progress through specific target setting and observations.
- We found that just under half of children (21 out of 44) had made significant progress with their speech sound development during the school year and a further eight children had started to experience progress.
- 15 children were assessed as not having made progress. This included four children for whom we did not have enough information – as they had joined or left part way through the year. Of the remaining 11 children, one child had a significant additional speech sound disorder and others included very young children who have not yet begun to develop a range of recognisable words, children with additional needs who did not yet use much verbal communication, and two children with limited access to sound because of the nature of their hearing loss.

Relationships with peers

Because of limitations with the wide age-bands used in the EYFS 'Early-Years Foundation Stage Framework' (published by the UK Government's Department for Education), we developed and tested our own Social Communication checklist to measure children's social skills this academic year. The checklist was compiled using various published resources and condensed to make it an achievable piece of data collection in a busy academic year. We used the checklist in October and June to assess the children to measure progress over the year:

- Three-quarters of the children (33 of 44) had made progress in social relationships.
- Three children had not made progress according to their scores.
- We did not have start and end data for the remaining children (as they had started or left part way through the year).

Going to school

In July 2021, 21 children left us, ready to start school in September:

- Two-thirds will be attending mainstream placements in local infant schools.
- One-third will be going to schools which have, or will soon have, a language or hearing impairment resource base.

Jenson's story

After Jenson was born, in the first five weeks we had two newborn hearing tests at home and then a test at home with an audiologist, but everyone just kept telling us not to worry, it's probably just fluid from the birth. Then, following what felt like the longest hospital appointment we've ever had, we were given the diagnosis that Jenson had severe to profound bilateral hearing loss. It felt like the earth fell from beneath us. And like that, a whirlwind of emotions and appointments began.

Jenson received his cochlear implants by the age of one, and took to them immediately. By two years, he started speaking and his listening developed quickly. What we didn't account for was his temper, tantrums, frustration, and tears.

We relocated to Portsmouth from Cornwall in February 2021. We had been told about The Elizabeth Foundation by a few people but hadn't really looked into it, as I think everything was a little overwhelming post move. But, thankfully, people didn't stop pushing us to visit, and thank God we did!

It's been life changing for both Jenson and myself! It is a phenomenal facility for our little people and the team are incredible. Each one of them is so supportive, to both the children and us as parents. They are always there for us, whether that's an email or a chat on pick up and drop offs.

Then, the truly amazing part, because Jenson is so lucky to have the most fantastic teaching team, his behaviour has improved dramatically. He's never been naughty although certainly got angry sometimes; however, since starting at The Elizabeth Foundation, not only has he calmed down, but he has also learned how and when to express his emotions. They are what I wish I had as teachers, so patient, knowledgeable and really understand the children.

Jenson attends twice a week, and truly loves being there. The things he has been able to experience since attending are more than I could have wished for.

I wish Jenson never had to leave The Elizabeth Foundation, but I can say from the heart I have no worries about him starting infants next year after the amazing work they have done with him. I honestly wish every deaf child had the chance to go somewhere like this.

Jenson's mother

"I honestly wish every deaf child had the chance to go somewhere like this."

Rosie's story

I am Rosie Adamson and I joined The Elizabeth Foundation in May 2005 at only five weeks of age. I stayed until I was almost four years old. I was born profoundly deaf – a sensorineural deafness – and I got hearing aids when I was five weeks old. I received my right cochlear implant when I was 18 months and my left when I was six years old.

Now I am 16 and, after doing really well in my GCSEs, I am at sixth form college doing A levels in Maths, Physical Education and Geography. I am also doing a coaching course, teaching year four pupils at a local primary school.

Sport is my passion – being deaf and having cochlear implants has never stopped me from doing many sports. I am a county swimmer – my best stroke is butterfly. I am also a regional synchronised swimmer and got into the East Region Synchro Squad. I think I am the only deaf synchronised swimmer in the country! I absolutely love the waterproof processor cover I have. Without it, I wouldn't be able to hear in the water, which would make synchro impossible.

I was a member of all sports teams in my school, playing goal shooter in netball and captaining the rounders team. Now I play for an adult team in a local league and also play cricket for my local ladies' team.

My future plans consist of going to university, travelling the world and finding a job I love. At the moment I don't know what I want to do job-wise, so I am just keeping my options open.

Over the years I have had some amazing Teachers of the Deaf who have always been supportive and have been there for me. They made me feel as though I'm just like everyone else – which is how I like to be treated. People do not notice that I am deaf because my speech is clear and my hair covers my processors.

My family and I continue to keep up-to-date with The Elizabeth Foundation. I made many friends while I was there and still keep in contact and visit them. We are extremely grateful for the support and opportunities that the charity has given us. I was ready to listen before I could hear and this gave me the best possible start in life!

"I was ready to listen before I could hear and this gave me the best possible start in life!"

Rosie Adamson

Reaching out

During the period covered by this report, we remained committed to supporting as many families as possible during the pandemic through our outreach activities.

Summer programme

We had to cancel our Summer Programme 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. We did not take this decision lightly, but we felt it was in the best interest for the health, safety and well-being of all involved. We continued to support these families free of charge through our Let's Listen and Talk programme, and for those who wished to received them, we sent topical ideas for games and activities to promote communication development.

Let's Listen and Talk

Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, we managed to keep our online Let's Listen and Talk programme free of charge to both parents and professionals. The numbers enrolled on the programme continued to grow. By July 2021, there were 848 people enrolled (an increase of 26% on the previous year), of which 568 were families and 280 were professionals.

We also added some new elements to the programme:

- We created a new introduction video for Let's Listen and Talk.
- Working with external specialists, we started work on a new music strand of activities and songs – launching the baby songs section in March 2021.
- Working with Advanced Bionics and University of Southampton Auditory Implant Service, we began development of the Cochlear Implant Technology strand.
- We held virtual parent education sessions and virtual training sessions for sensory impairment teams.

"As a working parent … the ability to have all the information at hand to digest in my own time at home has been invaluable. Each module is clearly written and presented both through text and video. It is so much easier to read, understand and then try out the activities at home rather than hearing everything secondhand from my wife … I would recommend Let's Listen and Talk to any parent."

Working together

We feel very proud that we have the opportunity to work with a variety of partners to help provide the best possible care to families.

Despite visits and student placements being limited due to Covid-19 restrictions, during the 2020-21 academic year, we:

- Participated in a research project with City University / UCL, investigating literacy skills and deafness.
- Participated as part of an Advisory Group for the Early Parent Interaction in Deafness research study by Martina Curtin.
- Presented four parent education sessions virtually for the National Deaf Children's Society: music, sensory play, 'Terrible Twos' and learning through play.
- Wrote an article for British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) magazine.
- Wrote seven articles for the Cochlear Implanted Children's Support Group (CICS) magazine.
- Presented at an ENT regional training day.
- Presented to trainee Teachers of the Deaf at Manchester University.
- Presented to students at Brockenhurst College.
- Liaised with the sensory team in Cornwall to present a virtual music session to parents of deaf children, and present to professionals about the work of The Elizabeth Foundation and working within early years.
- Attended Communication Consortium Meetings and Clinical Excellence Network groups for Speech and Language Therapy.
- Attended the BATOD virtual conference.
- Attended Children's Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG) meetings.
- Attended sensory team meetings virtually across the UK to present on the work of the charity.
- Attended multi-disciplinary support team meetings locally, as well as Portsmouth City Council EYFS cluster meetings and SENCO meetings.
- Mentored a student on the Teacher of the Deaf training programme.

I CAN accreditation

In June 2021, the charity undertook an independent assessment of services through I CAN Early Talk accreditation. We achieved their highest level – Specialist Accreditation. This is an endorsement of a service's ability to meet the standards set for good practice in a highly skilled area of work. The services include Speech and Language Therapists, Teachers of the Deaf and support assistants, working collaboratively to provide integrated therapy and education for children.

We are one of only four programmes in the whole of the UK with I CAN Early Talk Specialist Accreditation. We achieved all ten standards outlined for good practice.

"The service at The Elizabeth Foundation is of high quality, characterised by professional, skilled staff who together provide an excellent example of good practice in early years communication and education for young children who are deaf and their families."

Summary of report from I CAN accreditation team.

Funding

Every year, The Elizabeth Foundation has to secure all of the income it needs to meet its charitable aims and objectives. As we receive no core funding from government, we depend on the support of families, friends, grantmaking trusts, businesses and the community.

Our sources of income during 2020-21* – totalling £1,002,845

Grants
38% £376,299

Donations and gifts
21% £205,390

Contracts and fees
19% £192,335

Legacies
13% £132,425

Fees for use of charity property
5% £54,980

Fundraising events
3% £29,474

Investments and interest
1% £11,942

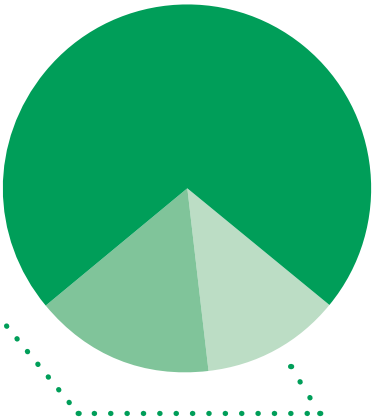
How we spend your money*

For every £1 donated:

72p goes directly to helping deaf babies and children learn to listen and speak

16p goes on raising funds and awareness

12p goes on governance costs and running the charity



*We have based these summary figures on the audited figures in our Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21.

Fundraising highlights

While the global events of the last 18 months have significantly affected all our lives, one positive outcome has been a clear coming together of the public, business and charity communities.

Events and challenges

We saw a seismic shift as fundraising moved towards more virtual and individual challenge events. Many of you took to continuing to support our work in a variety of different ways, from tackling physical challenges such as runs, cycle rides and sea swims, to other creative fundraisers involving yarn bombing, bake sales and BBQs. We are, as always, incredibly grateful for all the hope and inspiration that you give us. Some highlights included:

- Putting his best foot forward in January this year, parent Adam (pictured below, top left) took on a gruelling 496km challenge. Beginning with running 1km on 1st January, 2km on 2nd January, 3km on 3rd January... and so on until 31km on the 31st January, Adam raised an incredible £4,066.
- Completing 300 skips a day for one month, Lydia (pictured below, top right) was one of our youngest fundraisers this year, raising a fantastic £1,338.
- Jason and a team of his friends and family undertook an epic 100-mile cycle ride from London's Trafalgar Square to Portsmouth's Gunwharf Quays, raising a combined total of £4,419.
- Parents Dave and Debbie raised a staggering £15,600 hosting a Golf Day at Southampton Municipal Golf Course, with dinner at The Saints Pub. Dave also found time to train for a fundraising run in the 2021 London Marathon!

Community groups and schools

Over the last year, many schools and community groups embraced technology so they could continue fundraising for causes close to their heart by holding virtual talks and fundraisers, and we made many online presentations about our work. By the summer, schools and groups began to make a return to in-person meetings, for example we visited Colden Common Cubs to run a workshop with fun and engaging activities about communication and hearing loss.

We were delighted to be selected as the charity of the year by Portsmouth High School's Head Girl team (pictured, bottom right). They faced a challenge like no other, running a fundraising campaign during school closures and social distancing restrictions, but they persevered and succeeded, raising over £3,400 for our work!

Corporate support

We are incredibly grateful to Lightning Safety Systems for all the support they have given us, most recently ensuring our children, volunteers and staff are kept safe and secure with a new fire alarm and security camera system at our Family Centre. We were also delighted to work alongside a volunteer videographer to produce a short video featuring the team at Lightning Safety Systems discussing the benefits of corporate–charity partnerships (you can view it on our website!).

Zurich Insurance UK chose The Elizabeth Foundation as the charity to benefit from their festive fundraising challenges in 2020. The team designed and hosted an online festive quiz in support of our work as we dipped our toes into the world of virtual fundraising! They also generously donated time in writing letters to all our children on behalf of Father Christmas and gave presents for every child at the charity.

We are extremely grateful to all our corporate supporters and look forward to working further alongside them, and many more, in the coming year.

Grantmaking Trusts

As a result of the generosity of our grant funders, we have been able to continue providing our outstanding education and welfare services – both in-person and virtually – to beneficiaries attending our Family Centre. We have also been able to significantly increase our reach through our national online learning programme Let's Listen and Talk in response to rising demand.

We would like to thank all grant-funders who have contributed so much help, support and kindness during this crisis, including, but not limited to: The Edward Gostling Foundation, Ovingdean Hall Foundation, Generation Foundation, The Mikado Trust, Global Make Some Noise, The GJW Turner Trust, Comic Relief, The National Lottery and The Louis Ross Foundation.

To show how their support makes a difference, Comic Relief highlighted 4-year old Arlo's story in a short film broadcast at the start of their appeal show on BBC1 on Friday 19 March 2021. Arlo attended The Elizabeth Foundation's preschool services before starting school.

There's still much more we can do to support the needs of children with all degrees of hearing loss. We are keen to cement the future sustainability of the charity and work hard to recover from the effects of the pandemic. With this mind, we are always happy to welcome funders to our Family Centre, discuss our work via online presentations and submit written grant proposals.

Future plans

Having developed our strategy 'Looking Forward 2020-25' to support our growth and development over the five-year period, our plans for the next academic year include:

- Maintaining and continuing to improve our Ofsted 'Outstanding' core early years services to support deaf children and their families.
- Implementing the revised EYFS curriculum in line with government guidance.
- Initiating a new Educational Psychology consultancy service.
- Building staff skills around teaching bilingual children.
- Completing a book audit to ensure equality and inclusive representation in our resources.
- Trialling a virtual parent education programme.
- Continuing to explore teletherapy as an added way of supporting children and families.
- Taking part in relevant research projects that will impact on the lives of deaf children and their families.
- Exploring new ways to collect data and measure impact.
- Maintaining and growing our partnerships with Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust Audiology Department / ENT Department and University of Southampton Auditory Implant Service.
- Building new partnerships to provide wraparound care to families.
- Increasing awareness of our charity and our services across the UK.
- Sharing our experience and expertise at training seminars and conferences.
- Involving more professionals, more families and more volunteers to extend our reach.
- Ensuring the charity remains sustainable through continued development of our fundraising and professional and voluntary partnerships.
- **Continuing to celebrate 40 years of family-centred services!**

Thank you!

To donate or support our work please visit our website or get in touch.

The Elizabeth foundation

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The Elizabeth Foundation – helping deaf children learn to listen and talk.

Registered Charity No. 293835.
A charitable company limited by guarantee, No. 1960980, registered in England. Registered office as above.

"Every single one of you has made the world of difference to our family. We came to you 3½ years ago and now our son is leaving as a very confident, happy chatterbox! Thank-you for taking the best care of us as a family. We will remember you always!"