

'People Stories' - Case Studies for R.A.D.

Royal Association for Deaf People

Story 1: Jo Giles, Fundraiser

[title]:

Jo's Story - Running To Help RAD

[body text]:

Jo Giles is Customer Safeguarding Manager at Cadent, part of National Grid Plc, who distribute gas around the UK. She's a huge supporter of RAD, and is running the Royal Parks Half Marathon this October to raise money for our work.

Jo has been helping to improve customer experiences for more than 20 years. She is dedicated to customer safety and is passionate about ensuring equal access for Deaf people both to utility services and also to the safeguarding services for customers who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

Jo also chairs the energy and water industry Safeguarding Customer Working Group (SCWG), giving her the perfect position to support and promote our activities.

"I have seen the great work you do," says Jo, "and am keen to raise awareness of what being Deaf means and how we (the utilities) can adapt our actions appropriately and respectfully to try to remove some of the barriers in communication and access that have existed."

Our 175th anniversary celebrations in 2016 inspired her to think about what she could do on a personal level to support RAD's future as well as celebrate its past. Drawn to running 12 years ago as a way of dealing with sciatica and keeping mobile, Jo is no stranger to longer distances and finds running to be a great source of calm, mentally as well as physically.

For her, running is all about the preparation. "Eating the right food a good hour before you run makes all the difference," she says. And the most important thing? "Invest in a pair of comfortable running shoes!"

As a runner, she's happy if there's simply a firm road ahead of her, but the scenery at the Royal Parks makes it one of Jo's favourite runs.

We wish Jo all the best in her work to improve services for Deaf people and good luck in the Royal Parks Half Marathon this October! If you can, please sponsor Jo through her [Just Giving?] page: [insert link]

Do you want to run for RAD?

If you fancy taking on a challenge and raising money to help our work, we have some fantastic running events coming up.

To get an information pack, please call our fundraising team on 0300 688 2525 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), or email: fundraising@royaldeaf.org.uk

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Story 2: Molly Coker - Volunteer

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Molly's Story – Helping RAD To Help Others

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Molly was taking a gap year from her BSL studies and, between reading her assigned texts and scrubbing up on driving theory, she needed to get some real-life work experience. Coming from an all-hearing family, her involvement with Deaf people had been limited to that within the scope of the course, and she knew this needed to change.

Molly had previously heard about RAD at a fundraising event, and, as our activities tied in with her interests and studies, we seemed like exactly the right place for her to work. "I was interested in learning about the Deaf community and culture," she says, "and gaining confidence using BSL in real-life situations, as opposed to just in class."

She went onto our website to do some research, and what she saw of our activities, services and commitment convinced her that volunteering with us would be a positive use of her time and energy.

Molly got in touch to offer her help, and soon became a welcome addition to the admin team in our Colchester office two days a week. She enjoyed having flexibility in her hours, and helped us to stay organised and efficient by filing paperwork and covering the phones. With all our projects and activities, the work had more than enough variety to keep it interesting!

She also loved going to fundraising events when possible, bringing her smile and enthusiasm with her. Molly really enjoys meeting people – it's an important chance for her to listen to their stories and talk to them about RAD.

"I like the bucket collections best," she says. "You get to interact with the public and have some really interesting conversations about how they relate to RAD and Deaf culture."

Molly's input has been invaluable to our team, and we hope that she'll leave us with plenty of experiences and insights to help her going forward. We wish her all the best in her ongoing studies and future career creating positive outcomes for Deaf people!

Do you want to help us create better futures for Deaf children and adults?

If you're interested in volunteering in any capacity, we'd love to hear from you.

All the details of how to get involved are in our volunteer's handbook, available for download from our website at: <https://royaldeaf.org.uk/support-us/volunteer/>, or you can contact our volunteering team by email at: volunteer@royaldeaf.org.uk

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Story 3: Queen's Hospital Romford – Deaf-Aware Quality Mark

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Queen's Hospital Romford – Raising The Bar

[text]:

Victoria Wallen is Head of Patient Experience at Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust, covering Queen's Hospital Romford and King George Hospital in Ilford. Her determination to provide better access and services for Deaf people across the Trust resulted in Queen's Hospital meriting an RAD Deaf-Aware Quality Mark, and King George Hospital should soon follow suit.

In 2015, the Trust believed they had appropriate support in place for Deaf patients, until Healthwatch Redbridge undertook an 'enter and view' visit to the hospitals, which turned this belief on its head.

Their report revealed several areas where staff were unaware of the Trust's support policies, and not always giving Deaf patients the support they needed. This was echoed at the first meeting of the Havering Deaf Community Action Forum, where the 50 attendees all told Victoria about the problems they faced accessing services at the Trust.

"My perception of what was in place to support our Deaf patients was not the same as their lived experience," says Victoria.

Her first move was to set up the Deaf Patient Access Group with members of the local Deaf community and, following one of their meetings, Victoria approached RAD for help in further developing and enhancing the Trust's services and staff training, and to explore achieving the RAD Quality Mark.

Her timing could not have been better. We were looking to expand our portfolio of Quality Marks, and realised hospitals had a genuine need for support and recognition. Working together, we designed the RAD Deaf-Aware Hospital Quality Mark, and Queen's Hospital was its first recipient in June 2017.

Among the measures the hospital put in place were Deaf Awareness Training sessions for all staff (with two extra sessions aimed especially at reception staff), and development of a 'Deaf awareness top tips' video to help staff understand how to communicate with Deaf people. Material from this video formed the basis for a poster displayed in staff areas and is being turned into an essential eLearning course for all staff members.

They have also introduced a text service so Deaf patients can communicate with staff directly, and developed videos with BSL signing and subtitles to convey important patient information, putting Deaf patients on a more equal footing with the hearing community.

Victoria was very happy with the progress they've made at the Trust. "Apart from the prestige of achieving the Quality Mark, we felt this would demonstrate we had reviewed our services and put in place additional support to ensure our Deaf patients are not disadvantaged."

Queen's Hospital is currently undergoing a review for revalidation of their Quality Mark, while King George is also under assessment and should gain the Mark within the next couple of months.

We are proud to support Victoria's and the Trust's ongoing efforts to improve access and outcomes for Deaf people, and look forward to working together again in the future!

Want to gain a Deaf-Aware Quality Mark?

If you'd like support to develop your services to be more accessible to Deaf people and become a RAD-accredited 'Deaf Aware' service provider, we'd love to hear from you.

Simply email our team at info@royaldeaf.org.uk and we can talk about everything you need.

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Story 4: Lisa - Employee

[title]:

Lisa's Story – Proud and Working at RAD

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Lisa's start in life was perhaps familiar to many Deaf people. She was born Deaf, but grew up in a hearing environment where no-one signed, and was one of only two Deaf people at secondary school.

With no support with sign language at school, Lisa found communication difficult and often felt she should be signing rather than trying to use speech. However, she made the most of the situation, and barriers to communication did not prevent her from getting 6 GCSEs. Lisa really found herself in 6th Form, where she worked hard and showed her intelligence and determination by gaining 3 A-Levels.

As well as being overjoyed with her achievements, she was also much more comfortable in her identity. “I became proud to be Deaf!” she says. “It was who I am.”

Out of school, she was keen to get into employment, but it was hard to find work on her own. After a stint of volunteering, she was desperate for any job and became a part-time Business Admin Apprentice before eventually finding a meaningful role as a Family Support Worker at RAD.

Lisa’s work with RAD played a hugely significant part in her life, and with support from the Deaf Achieve Project, she continued to learn and grow personally. RAD was able to really bring Lisa on in life, helping her to become independent, manage finances, and travel on public transport. The friendship and support from all RAD staff has helped her to move out of her old comfort zone - she’s even done some public speaking!

RAD’s support has helped Lisa on a personal level as well practical. “I have so much more confidence now in my ability to communicate and achieve my ambitions,” she says. “The future is in my hands, and not with others’.”

Lisa loves to help other people and pass on what she has learned, especially about the Access To Work programme and options for Deaf people to get help to gain employment. Her increased confidence means she easily develops a great rapport with clients, and will adjust her signing register to meet their needs, especially those from abroad who use their native sign language to communicate.

Her team leader at RAD was impressed with Lisa’s transformation: “Lisa is a strong team member at RAD and an excellent role model for other Deaf people.”

Want to learn more about RAD’s programmes to help Deaf people into employment?

Our specialist advisers help create positive outcomes for Deaf people and employers, so that jobs and workplace relationships can work long-term. Read about it on our website at: <https://royaldeaf.org.uk/services-partners/employment/>

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Story 5: Rita – Information, Advice & Guidance Service User

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Rita’s Story – A New Home and United Family With RAD’s Help

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Rita is profoundly Deaf and came to RAD for help after Social Services advised that her son would not be able to stay with her and her husband while they remained in their one-bedroom house. Her son had previously been living with his father, but circumstances had changed and he had moved into Rita's care.

One of our Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) Officers immediately took her situation on board and helped her to contact the council about their housing scheme. To find out if she was eligible, she needed to complete an online form written in quite complex English. As Rita's first language was BSL this could have been a problem, but our IAG Officer helped her to overcome this barrier and navigate all the terms and questions. Frustratingly, the council's system declined her application, and Rita felt like she was back to square one.

With Rita's family life in the balance, our IAG Officer was not to be deterred. She encouraged Rita to look for a two-bedroom house on the private market and helped her to use websites like Rightmove and Openrent.

Soon, Rita returned with printouts of several suitable houses, and the IAG Officer helped her through the process of contacting estate agents, arranging viewings, completing further forms and making sure landlords would accept housing benefit tenants.

The hard work paid off, and Rita was delighted to finally move in to the two-bedroom house that she needed, together with her son and husband. It's possible that without RAD's help Rita would have given up when the council turned her down, but our IAG Officer helped her to find other avenues to secure a home, and to overcome the communication barriers along the way.

The IAG officer was overjoyed with the result. Now, Rita's son has his own room, and her family can stay together. We wish them all the best!

Can you help us create better futures for Deaf adults and children?

If you'd like to volunteer in any capacity, help us with fundraising, or make a donation we'd love to hear from you.

Log on to our website to explore ways you can support us at: <https://royaldeaf.org.uk/support-us/> or talk to a team member on 0300 688 2525.

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Story 6: Samuel – Building Better Opportunities Service User

[title]:

Samuel's Story – Breaking Down Barriers To Employment

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Samuel from Basildon came to us after years of frustration trying to secure a job. He is profoundly Deaf and had applied for numerous roles with all sorts of local companies during the twenty years since he left school, but had never been accepted for work.

Many times, he got no feedback after interviews, and on other occasions he was told he couldn't even apply for certain roles because he was Deaf. Over the years, this constant rejection became more and more disheartening, and it seemed there was nothing he could do to overcome the barriers to communication, or acceptance.

This changed when Samuel heard about RAD's Building Better Opportunities Project. When he approached us, one of our Specialist Employment Advisors immediately engaged with his issues and set about turning around his fortunes in the job market.

Our Advisor guided him through creating an attractive CV, showed him how to search for jobs online effectively, and also booked him onto a 'Communicating With Employers' workshop. All this helped Samuel to see himself in a new light, to regain confidence with job hunting, and to also become a positive option for employers.

The work paid off – eventually, he found himself shortlisted for an interview. In the past, communication may have posed problems for both Samuel and the employer, but thanks to Access To Work funding - a Government scheme supporting access to employment for people with disabilities - we were able to secure an interpreter for the interview.

This was a key moment for Samuel. With an interpreter present, he had a positive exchange with the interviewer and conveyed his strengths and personality in a way he had not been able to before. It was a great success, and he was offered the job as a Sort Line Operator.

Thanks to RAD's support, Samuel now has a new life and career path. His advice to other Deaf job-seekers: "Don't be downhearted; be confident and determined to succeed. You can do it!"

We wish Samuel all the best in his career and the future!

Can you help us to help others like Samuel?

If you'd like to volunteer in any capacity, help us with fundraising, or make a donation we'd love to hear from you.

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