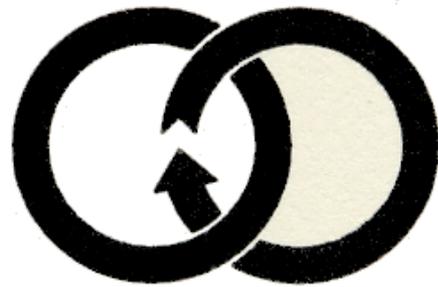


# **Annual Review 2020-2021**

The Trust for Deaf  
Studies

The Vassall Centre  
Gill Avenue  
Bristol BS16 2QQ  
Charity Number: 289302

[www.deafstudiestrust.org](http://www.deafstudiestrust.org)



## Chair Report

This is my fourth report as Chair of the Trust. It was the year of the pandemic. It was the year when we could not meet on-site, when all our Trustee discussions were held on Zoom and Facetime. It was a bad year for the deaf community. Some of this appeared in my last report and our concerns are even more heightened



now by the loss of deaf club meetings and even of the deaf clubs themselves. As well as all other social events where the deaf community meets, be it a cafe, pub or a social gathering. The very nature of the progression from deaf schools to deaf youth activities to deaf community and older life has been disrupted. Everywhere we look, we see deaf life as being more isolated, more marginalised, less community engaged and less empowered.

The fiasco where daily briefings were a struggle because the English Government refused to have an onsite interpreter in BSL ... on the ridiculous grounds that there was no space at Downing Street, while both the Scottish and Welsh Governments managed this without a problem. The interpretation which had to be delivered remotely from a different studio in London, was hampered by lack of advance information and by the obscure personal style of the senior Ministers. And not all briefings/announcements were interpreted.

At the start of May 2020, the Trust set up a daily news service on DeafStation – all in BSL and all delivered by a team of deaf news signers. This multi-platform initiative meant that the over 2,000 registered users could watch and search the Covid, national and international news every weekday morning. Even with over 1,500 news stories in BSL, the deaf community was only partially served and still well behind the hearing community in the depth and extent of information. We had a 6-month Community Fund award for the service. Deaf people got Covid and went to hospital where face masks were mandatory and as a result the communication between doctor and patient was almost impossible. The only bright spot was that deaf people could more easily communicate in BSL through the window in care homes.

All on-site activities of the Trust had to be postponed and will mostly occur in 2021-2022, that is if we manage to become free of Covid.

I would just like to thank Jim Kyle, our secretary, to Esther, our Treasurer and to the other Trustees for their efforts in a very challenging time.

Clark Denmark, Chair, 2021

## Secretary's Report

Although at the time of writing these comments, we are supposedly released from the lockdown and from restrictions on socialising, we are not much further forward in analysing the impact of Covid on the deaf community's everyday life. There is an urgent need for research with deaf community members and with service providers. Mask wearing and social distancing has certainly created a major disturbance as deaf interaction relies on facial expression and also on physical touching. For nearly 18 months, the famous "deaf hug" has not been allowed. There is some suggestion that we can undertake the research in 2022 needed to determine the status of the community (our last national study was around 2000).



Although the trustees have not met on-site in the last year, the work of the Trust has continued and is described in the following pages.

Our priorities remain the same as in the last year – everything has simply been paused by 18 months: dealing with dementia, working with families with deaf members and in increasing opportunities for activity for deaf children and adults – right through to training and competitions in athletics. There is also a commitment to research, develop and promote Deaf history and to utilise the extensive database of sign language materials which we hold. We are planning carry out at least a pilot study on deaf health to follow up on the work in 2012-14. When we reach the end of the tunnel of the Covid epidemic, the Trust will be ready to move on with these aims.

Special thanks as always to Esther Drewe who manages our finances and to our Chair, Clark Denmark who shares his enormous experience in all matters to do with the deaf community.

Jim Kyle, Secretary

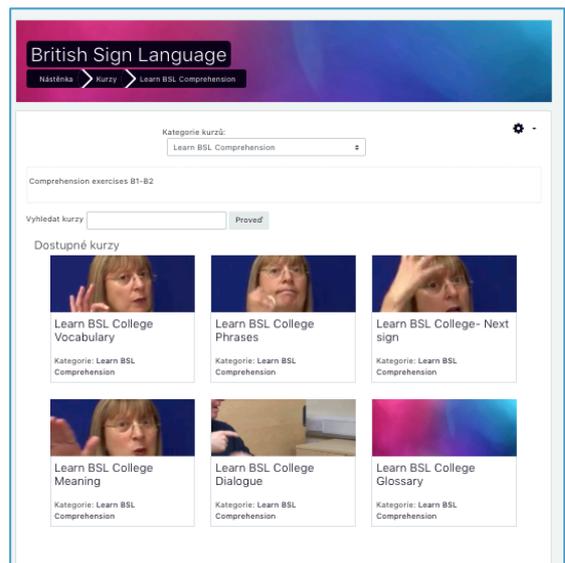
## Language Skills Project (Erasmus+, 2017 to 2020)

The major R&D collaborative project continued to the end of 2020 (although as usual with EU projects, administrative activities have continued until March. The fact that we were unable to provide a summer school in the summer of 2020, meant the project was underspent and we think that the managing team had to return an amount to the Czech national ERASMUS+ body.

The Language Skills project was a cooperation with partners in Czech Republic (coordinator), in Hungary, in Austria and also with UCLAN in Preston in the UK.

DST supported the preparation of an online English course for deaf people designed by the Czech partners and a set of accompanying teachers' resources (developed by UCLAN). DST had two main tasks (a) the organisation and delivery of a summer school in Bristol for deaf college students in June-July 2019 and 2020 and in parallel, for teachers of English a week-long seminar on approaches to teaching English to deaf students in each of the partners' countries; and (b) the creation of a BSL online course, suitable for deaf people who are users of a non-BSL sign language.

This course was aimed at deaf students who were likely to study in English potentially in contact with other deaf BSL users. We made considerable progress in preparing self-teaching materials online. However, the breakthrough came with the advanced use of Zoom where we were able to provide BSL video backgrounds which students were then able to set up on their own computer and could then simultaneously record themselves in copying signs and in taking part in dialogue.



Student self-records on left side then matches to the model

In regard to the online BSL course, progress had



originally been slower than expected, partly as a result of materials and curriculum, prepared in one country being supplied to a partner (without BSL) in another country where the course was to be mounted. The result was that the specification from DST could not be met exactly. However, over the last few months (paradoxically) because of the extensive use of Zoom for our DST work, we realised the productive self-teaching component of the BSL course could be achieved as well as the receptive aspect.

Our projects on Dementia and on Families with deaf members and Active sports have all been postponed into 2021 and 2022.

## **Training of Medical Students in University of Bristol**

This continues to be a rewarding and effective programme. Students from the university are provided with an immersive course of three weeks duration. This is delivered remotely and this format has been very successful. Using the techniques developed in the Language Skills project, we are able to provide live remote BSL sessions with small groups and also the materials for self-teaching where the student matches their own signing to that of the doctor (or the patient).



Interestingly the course also allows the students to practise remote video consultations with a deaf patient and an interpreter online. This has become a more common form of interaction during the pandemic when on-site consultation has been considerably reduced.

## **Finance Report**

<this is being updated – if you you wish to attend the meeting email  
jim,kyle@deafstudiestrust for the finance statement>

### **The Statement of Financial Activities for the Year to 31st March 2021**

The financial situation in outline (31<sup>st</sup> March) is as follows:

Esther Drewe

September 2021

**The Deaf Studies Trust continues to move forward in its work. It succeeds with low overhead margins and does not seek to generate large profits on its work.**

**The Deaf Studies Trust strives continuously to make Deaf people's lives more valued and understood by the society at large.**



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Chair: Clark Denmark



Secretary:  
Jim Kyle



Treasurer:  
Esther Drewe



Trustee: Hilary  
Sutherland



Trustee:  
Mike Gulliver



Trustee:  
Heather Pender