LET'S HEAR IT!

NEWSLETTER OF
DORSET DEAF CHILDREN'S SOCIETY
SPRING 2026

Rock Reef fun!

It was a gloriously sunny day on Saturday 14th March at Bournemouth beach when 72 of our members with 41 children and young people rocked up to have fun at Rock Reef at the end of the pier. It felt like Spring was finally here and watching the surfers make the most of the wonderful sunshine felt like summer wasn't too far away too!

We organised all the children and young people into three groups, two in the morning for children of all ages and one in the afternoon for the teenagers. After the safety instructions and the guidance for parents of the under 16 year olds on being a 'clipper' they were able to enjoy themselves on the climbing walls.

Rock Reef has a series of 28 climbing based activities for all abilities and ages. They could climb commando style on the jungle vines or race their friends and siblings up the speed wall! We also booked for them to navigate the Highline aerial obstacle course 20 feet up in the air. Some who were very brave even attempted this blind folded!

It was so good to see everyone enjoying themselves and to see some of the children and young people face their fears and attempt the hard climbing walls.

We also welcomed two new families and parents and carers were also able to have a catch up with other families.

Thank you Rock Reef for making us so welcome!

A BIG THANK YOU FROM DDCS!

Dorset DCS wishes to thank all the individuals and organisations who have made donations, fundraised for us or provided something for us free of charge over the past year.
Without you we could not provide the support for the children and their families!

THANK YOU TO:

Strategic Solutions Financial Services for posting all the newsletters free of charge and making regular donations.

Mauveworks for printing our newsletters free of charge.

Richard George
Fisher Charitable Trust – Donation for PGL Activity Weekend
Andre Brito – Cycle ride to Paris
Durnovarian Lodge of Mark Master Masons No.1635
Scott Gray – Bournemouth Half Marathon
Gary Baxter
Swanage Carnival
In memory of Marjorie Castle
Clare Hombersley – Talk Fee donation
Sandra Brightman bequest
Scarlett Gray – Sale of Loom Band bracelets and cakes
Caspian Developments Ltd
Nikki's Little Play Café – Collection Boxes
Chrissie Hudson
Denis Earles

The Blandford School - Christmas Party Venue
Bournemouth Deaf Club – Venue for our AGM & Awards
Circus Star – Providing free tickets for their show

Ideas for fund raising could be a sponsored event, car boot sale, cake sale, donations instead of gifts for a birthday or anniversary, a collection box in a work place, raffle or a school mufti day.
Why not give it a go!

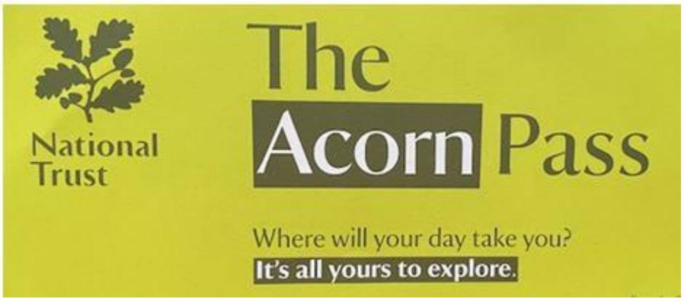
Support DDCS by buying a lottery ticket from BH Coastal Lottery,
If you buy a £1 ticket, 50p goes directly to DDCS!
There is a one in fifty chance of winning each week and the top prize is £25,000!
if you think you can be lucky and also support Dorset DCS then please log on to:
www.bhcoastallottery.co.uk
Select buy tickets and then select Dorset Deaf Children's Society.
Thank you!

DO YOU HAVE AN EXPERIENCE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHER FAMILIES?

We are always looking for articles for our newsletters. It really helps to read what other families have experienced,
or maybe you just have a story to share?
Please contact Shirley on 01202 571089

DDCS is on Instagram!

Follow us @dorsetdcs to see event pictures & updates, testimonials & other useful information.



The National Trust is now issuing 'The Acorn Pass' to charities to allocate to families for access to most of their venues. The pass is for two adults and up to six children for one visit.
If you would like a voucher please contact Maddy Forbes by text on 07413 042255 or email maddytforbes@hotmail.co.uk
If you would like more information about this visit National Trust free or discounted pass / National Trust.

NDCS HELP LINE

Do you need help and advice about DLA claims or education for your child? If so please ring the NDCS help line number 0808 800 8880 or Email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

Welcome to Jamie Bartlett HSS Advisory Teacher

In January, Jamie Bartlett joined the Hearing Support Service as an Advisory Teacher. Jamie brings a wide range of experience in education and communication support. After graduating, he taught English in Italy and Slovenia for five years before returning to the UK to work as a primary school teacher, an SEN teacher and a qualified Speech and Language Therapist.
This varied background has given him experience of supporting children and young people with a wide range of communication and learning needs. Jamie works across Dorset Council and BCP, supporting deaf children and young people in educational settings. In September, he will begin the Mandatory Qualification for Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People.

HELP AND CONTACTS

CHAIRMAN – Kevin Forbes, Hamilton Court House, 1-3 Alum Chine Road, Westbourne, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH4 8DT 01202 769890

VICE-CHAIRPERSON, TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY - Shirley Sorbie, Touchwood, 9 Oakland Walk, West Parley, Ferndown, Dorset, BH22 8PF 01202 571089

SECRETARY – Julie Hansford, 34 Fernside Avenue, Poole, Dorset, BH14 0PN 07973 737687

Website – www.dorsetdcs.co.uk E-mail – info@dorsetdcs.co.uk

NDCS FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 800 8880 (voice & text)

For more information, news, pictures and future events please visit our website.
www.dorsetdcs.co.uk

MATILDA’S JOURNEY

By Holly Bryant

Hi! I’m Holly, mum to Matilda who is 5 years old, profoundly deaf and wears bilateral cochlear implants. Matilda was born in 2020 at home, amid COVID. We had a roller coaster ride in getting Matilda implanted. Matilda didn’t pass the newborn hearing screening. It seemed that every hearing test we went to, it was unclear what level of deafness she had. To start, Matilda was diagnosed with a unilateral profound left sided deafness, but we were told her right ear would compensate so Matilda wasn’t fitted with hearing aids until she was 18 months old. This was after we were put in touch with Teresa McCabe, our wonderful Teacher of the Deaf. Teresa by chance happened to be visiting the school where my mum worked at the time. My mum started chatting to Teresa who suggested that it didn’t sound right that Matilda had been left unaided all this time, so then we finally started our journey for Matilda being aided and then eventually implanted.

As we have no history of deafness in our families, we tried to find out the reason why. After some medical investigations and 3 years later, we were given the diagnosis of CMV (cytomegalovirus) as the cause of deafness. One of the traits of CMV is deteriorating hearing loss. Every hearing test we went to, Matilda’s hearing had deteriorated that little bit more. Her hearing aids were getting bigger and more powerful but were no longer doing much for her; it was a race we were not winning. This process was hard to face every 3 months that Matilda was tested, and we found that there were no stories online that were like Matilda’s case. We got to the point where we were just waiting for Matilda to fall into the criteria to be referred for cochlear implants. We knew it was coming but didn’t know how long it would take. It felt frustrating that we were holding our little girl back from being able to access sounds when we knew the inevitable was coming. In December 2022, Matilda’s deafness had progressed to a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss; profound in her left and severe-profound in her right.

We were finally referred to USAIS for assessment and it was agreed that Matilda did meet the criteria. After what felt like another long year of appointments and scans, Matilda underwent the operation in February 2024 and was activated a month later, aged 3.5 years. The operation went well and her recovery was straightforward. Activation day didn’t bring the momentous moments you might see on YouTube, nor did Matilda dislike being switched on. So, we were very happy with how it went! Matilda said her first words “mummy” and “daddy” on a September evening in 2024, at the beach, the sun was setting, the tears were instant!

Due to Matilda’s late start in accessing sounds, it felt like she had more catching up to do than most. Matilda started attending The Elizabeth Foundation in September 2023 one day a week. It is an amazing specialist deaf pre-school in Portsmouth. At the start I was worried about making the journey once a week, but it was the best decision we could make for Matilda and our family. Matilda absolutely thrived at The Elizabeth Foundation, it felt like a home from home. Every member of staff understood and speaking with other families really helped. With the help of my parents, Matilda was able to attend a second day each week for the last year of pre-school. This really set her up well for starting school.

We were often told that Matilda’s progression at The Elizabeth Foundation was the best they had seen. She started with hearing aids, not recognising her own name and she finished 2 years later being able to say 3-4 word sentences. Even as a parent, we would suddenly hear Matilda coming out with a new word or sound or reacting to environmental sounds in a way that only the previous week had not happened. Thanks to TEF and our TOD Teresa, Matilda really did shine and put a lot of our worries to rest about how she would cope at school.

Matilda started school recently in September 2025. She has an EHCP enabling 1:1 help and has fortnightly visits from Teresa. The school have been really supportive and are aware when Matilda needs a listening break or extra support. Matilda is very tired by the end the week, but she appears to love school and has made friends. It is hard to not compare your child to others, especially when attending mainstream and having an older son who is hearing. But when I remind myself that Matilda has the listening age of a 2-year-old, she is above and beyond where we thought we’d be right now. Matilda is now learning to read, although we are met with challenges in doing this that her peers and her brother didn’t face, it just reminds me how resilient Matilda is.

We were told about DDCS towards the end of 2022. We attended the Christmas Party and it was lovely to see so many families come together all due to the same reason. It made us realise that we were certainly not alone in this unknown world we had found ourselves in. It was, and still is, so wonderful to see the older children who have made friends through DDCS. Whilst Matilda is still young, we are confident that DDCS will bring Matilda many years of friendship ahead with children just like her. We are aware that the mainstream school she attends has no real deaf presence so it is important for her to meet with other children who she can relate to. I did a year studying BSL and would love to continue that to a greater level and continue to teach Matilda as it is such a beautiful language and is a great communication tool for when Matilda prefers to not wear her processors after a busy day.

When I think back to that initial diagnosis and every hearing test saying that Matilda’s hearing has deteriorated again, it felt like grief. Grieving the life you think your child will miss out on. The guilt, did I do something wrong during pregnancy? I remember a lot of tears. There are still occasional tears but also so much more hope that Matilda will lead a very happy and fulfilled life. Being deaf will not hold her back! We are excited to see what the future holds. Matilda was the first deaf person we met, and I do feel grateful that we have had our eyes opened to a new world we previously knew little about. As a family we have more compassion and Matilda shows such empathy to her peers. That’s not a quality that you can teach easily but you learn it from experience, and she has been through a lot in such a short time. As amazing as the support for Matilda has been, we must give credit to her, she is so strong willed, social and determined and that has driven her development so rapidly. There is still a long way to go but it wonderful seeing her personality develop now she is at school.

SCARLETT'S FUNDRAISING

By Lisa Gray

Scarlett began using a hearing aid in 2024, and as a family we discovered the wonderful charity DDCS. Scarlett has already enjoyed the family fun day and a trip to Dorset Adventure Park, and she has loved making new friends. She always looks forward to reading the DDCS newsletter and noticed that some people had been taking part in fundraising events, which inspired her to do something herself.

She decided on a loom band and cake sale at her school. With help from some of her lovely classmates, she made more than 100 loom bands to sell. We also baked cakes and asked the parents in her class for cake donations. Scarlett painted a poster to display on the table with the items she was selling, and we created a flyer to advertise the sale at school.

Dorset Deaf Children's Society

Friday 24th October (pm)

Bracelet and Cake Sale - after school

Scarlett Gray in Year 5 is raising funds for the Dorset Deaf Children's Society (DDCS) who have been fantastic in supporting her.

Please bring some money in to support this fantastic charity!

She spent many hours making loom band bracelets and necklaces, and decorating toilet and kitchen rolls to display them. She was absolutely overjoyed to have raised £223.78 for DDCS, and she felt a huge sense of pride.

Thank you Scarlett for raising this amazing amount for DDCS!

Well Done Scarlett!

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2025!

On Saturday 29th November 2025 we held our annual Christmas Party at The Blandford School and what a wonderful time we had! Just under 200 members came along to enjoy the day and have fun!

We started with music and games with Richard, face painting, photo booth and a delicious finger buffet and refreshments for all. This was followed with the Lovely Bubbly Show with some children finding themselves inside a giant bubble!

Then it was time for a special visitor…… Father Christmas who brought gifts for all the children!

Thank you to The Blandford School for providing the venue and thank you to all the trustees and volunteers who helped to make the party such a success!